

### Sermons of St John Henry Newman: (3) The Weapons of Saints

This is the third in this series of articles which try to convey the tenor of some Newman sermons (1). What follows is my summary of his sermon with the above title, knowing that any summary can only glimpse into its profundity.

Newman began the sermon with: *“Many that are first shall be last and the last shall be first”* (2). He said that these words are fulfilled in the Gospel in many ways. One way is that under the Holy Spirit all things were to become new and to be reversed. That which the world values: strength, wealth, philosophy, experience of life etc. are contrary to the kingdom Christ has set up. What before was great has become little and vice-versa; the hidden strength of God is made perfect in weakness; death has conquered life, for in that death is a more glorious resurrection. Mary’s Magnificat foreshadowed this: *“...He has cast down the mighty from their thrones, and has lifted up the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty....”*. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus declared the principles: *“Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.....Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.....”*. Always in process is the supernatural work by which all that man thinks great is overcome, and what he despises prevails. The Saints continue to take charge of God’s kingdom with weapons of truth, meekness and righteousness.

This great truth applies to us as Christians; we are the sons of God, the soldiers of Christ in whom, among whom and around whom is His kingdom. Do we realise this in ourselves and take part in this wonderful appointment from God? After youthful ideals, the world comes upon us with its deadening influence. Yet the Christian rule is that there is a real connection between true advancement and self-abasement. If we minister to the humble and despised, feed the hungry, tend the sick, succour the distressed, submit to insult, render good for evil, we get power over the world. God does His wonderful works via the poor and despised who are busy doing works the world thinks petty, their names unknown, not set on great worldly projects, failures in the eyes of the world. And how should we deal with our enemy? By turning the other cheek or, as St Paul says (3): *“Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink”*. This is the only true Christian revenge, returning good for evil. Forgiveness to those who abuse us, will, ideally, bring them to repent. The strongest, most powerful response to persecution and hatred is to love your enemies (4).

Therefore we must understand our place as redeemed children of God. Some must be great in this world, but it should not be their object to set out to make themselves great. The world does not understand the real power of Christ’s cause upon earth. The world can do nothing against us, as it could do nothing against the saints before us, if we use the weapons of patience, meekness, purity, resignation and peace. For in heaven all is order, repose, love and holiness. There is there no anxiety, no ambition, no remorse, no resentment, no

discontent, no bitterness and no remorse. We must, like the saints, strive to live that kingdom of heaven on earth.

Stephen S.

(1) Realizations: Newman's own selection of his sermons: Ed. Ferrer Blehl (2009); (2) Matthew 19:30; (3) Romans 12:20; (4)<https://www.bibleref.com/Romans/12/Romans-12-20.html>