

# All views should be heard in climate debate

Cardinal John Henry Newman, beatified by Pope Benedict XVI last September during his four-day visit to the United Kingdom, is famously associated with an idea of what a university is and what it should attempt to be — both for those who seek education within its confines and for the society in which it exists.

The name of Newman, an Oxford Anglican who famously arrived at Catholicism after setting out on a quest to prove that Anglicanism was part of the Catholic Church, is now almost synonymous with the idea of a university as the locus of intellectual development. The Newmanic vision of a university is most notably set out in sections of his magnum opus, *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, and in the series of Dublin lectures that were eventually published as "The Idea of a University".

Newman had a deep faith in an intellectual, rational vision of the importance of truth for its own sake that he saw could not possibly conflict with Christianity and the Gospel. He very clearly foresaw the dangers of stagnation that could quickly develop if those who proposed new theories, methods or approaches perceived that authority or others who disagree were waiting to pounce on the slightest perceived error.

Newman's name is therefore synonymous with intellectual freedom in the service of the primacy of truth. . . .

The hallowed name of Newman came to mind in an unexpected way in the recent controversy generated by the visit of English peer Lord Monckton and his speech at the University of Notre Dame in Fremantle.

When it came to the crunch over Lord Monckton's

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speech, the University of Notre Dame Australia did what many

other institutions in Australia, including not a few universities, probably would not do: it not only talked the talk of academic freedom, it walked the walk. In doing so, the university's vice chancellor, Celia Hammond, and College of Business executive dean, Professor Chris Doepel, resisted a considerable degree of blatantly attempted intimidation from within academia on the part of those who could not tolerate the idea that an Australian university would ever host a talk by an individual sceptical of their version of climate change. The intolerant demanded tolerance — but only of their view.

Therefore, among the really illuminating lessons of the controversy were not only the importance (and example) of academic courage in the service of concepts such as the very idea of a university and its service to intellectual progress, but the way in which, by attempting to bludgeon Notre Dame into cancelling his speech, anti-Monckton protesters looked very much as if they were confirming the British peer's point about the seemingly innate totalitarian tendencies of many fervent believers in climate change.

It was also remarkable to consider how often many academics attack the Catholic Church as close-minded and opposed to truth and reason when every reading of history confirms that not only the inventor of universities and the Western tradition of scholarship, but their greatest defender as well, is none other than the Church. Notre Dame and those who organised Lord Monckton's speech, therefore, are to be congratulated for refusing to bow to a pseudo-intellectual lynch mob masquerading as the acceptable face of public opinion.

Excerpted from an editorial by Peter Rosengren, editor, *The Record*, the weekly newspaper of the archdiocese of Perth, Australia, July 6.