

The Trumpet Call and the Recording Angel: A Historiographical Study of the Catholic Revival

A Lecture by

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"No story in the whole history of the English Church since S. Augustine landed in A.D. 597, is so splendid as the story of the Oxford Movement. It has every sort of interest. It is exciting, romantic, chivalrous, like the story of a crusade. It has its humour as well as its tragedy. And the actors in it were among the most spiritual men who ever lived in England. They were men of genius besides:- poets like Keble, Newman, Isaac Williams, and Faber; men of letters like Newman and Dean Church ... divines and theologians whose fame will last as long as Christianity endures."¹

THE TIMES in which we live may no longer be chivalrous, they may no longer be glorious, but we live in interesting times. Compared with the instability and terrifying uncertainty in the world in which we live the crisis in the Church to which we belong may seem relatively small beer but, nevertheless, it is a matter which bears pressingly upon us. It bears heavily because it bears personally upon us. We are living in a time of sustained crisis for the Anglo-Catholic Movement, or the Catholic Revival, in the Church of England. When the Society of the Holy Cross met at S. Alphege, Solihull, in December 1992 to consider its position and its response in the aftermath of the General Synod's vote on 11 November 1992 to permit the ordination of women to the presbyterate, it was addressed by the then Chaplain of Keble College, Oxford, Dr Geoffrey Rowell, (now Bishop of Gibraltar in Europe) who was intended to provide some necessary historical and theological perspective to the debate. As he approached the platform one of the Brethren of the Society called out, "You can write the last chapter now, Geoffrey."

In this paper which I am to deliver I am not about to write that last chapter: for one thing, I am not as good an historian as Geoffrey Rowell. But what I would like to do today is to look at how historians have written about the Oxford Movement, or the Catholic Revival, or Anglo-Catholicism, we go under a number of disguises; to consider its changing perspectives and, in the course of this consideration, to try to offer some context for present circumstances and difficulties. Of course it is self-evidently true that we share a common history and context. We simply have to rehearse who we are and where we come from today to see that. The Guild of All Souls, a Catholic devotional society meets in S. Stephen's House, a Catholic theological college, where several of us were trained for the priesthood. S. Stephen's House occupies the former premises of the Society of S. John the Evangelist, "the Cowley Fathers," one of the most significant missionary religious orders of the Revival. The meeting is addressed by the present Custodian of Dr Pusey's Library from Pusey House which numbers among its founders Edward King who is numbered among the founders of this House and Richard Meux Benson who founded the Society of S. John the Evangelist. The Custodian is also the Patronage Secretary of the Society for the Maintenance of the Faith, which was founded to exercise patronage in the Catholic interest, and his stipend as Custodian is generously supported by the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament. And, indeed, the House acknowledges with much gratitude the financial support of the Guild. Pusey House has some modest claim to be a sort of central office of the Movement and because of its archival holdings the custodian of the Movement's historical heritage: Guardians of the Sacred Flame may

¹ S. L. Ollard, *A Short History of the Oxford Movement* London, Mowbray [1915] p 1

be going too far. Amongst those who hold office in the Guild is the Chairman of the Church Union and the Priest Director of the Catholic League. We have not touched all the Anglo-Catholic bases in that summary but no doubt most of us are Associates of the Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham and / or members of the Society of Mary. The intricate network of the Anglo-Catholic Movement may need a book of its own. It may not be the last chapter but it might be the most significant. Beyond that, it is the sort of thing that appeals to our sentimentality but sentimentality has been something like the besetting sin of the historical writing of the Anglo-Catholic Movement.

The words with which I opened this paper, bold and inspiring words as they may have been, have a distinctly sentimental ring to our ears. We are attuned nowadays to something rather different, something rather more down-beat. We live, for better or worse, in a more prosaic, less flamboyantly rhetorical age. The opening words of S. L. Ollard's excellent book *A Short History of the Oxford Movement*, for a long time the standard text, his words speak of a more confident age. They were written in 1915 and the mud of Flanders had not yet sapped the confidence of English society and engulfed the high-Victorian ideal. His words, even in 1915, can still reflect a degree of triumphalism. Ollard's story is cast in heroic terms. It is the apogee of a particular, and of a particularly partisan, version of history. He tells a story, vividly and compellingly, of "a small but courageous band of reformers battling against the forces of a hostile Establishment, and enraged protestantism, and a growing liberal tendency in theology."² It has a frighteningly contemporary resonance. Much of the historiography of the Catholic Revival has been shaped either by Anglo-Catholic partisans, such as Ollard, or protestant detractors like Walter Walsh who wrote that superb and immensely enjoyable polemical work *The Secret History of the Oxford Movement*.

The way that historians wrote about the Catholic Revival reflected a truth about the Movement itself. The Oxford Movement was a polarizing force in English ecclesiastical history. For some the early Oxford Movement Fathers were champions of Church liberty, pursuing the ideal of the Church as a divine society and pitched against the erastian state and the control of a parliament that was no longer an expression of an Anglican hegemony. What right, they asked, did Jews and Roman Catholics, and later agnostics and atheists, have to legislate for the Church of England. For their detractors they were nothing less than traitors to the protestant inheritance of the sixteenth century Reformation. All this is reflected in the early histories of the Oxford Movement, certainly clearly visible in those early classic texts which were so influential, and for so long the unchallenged orthodoxy, which so formed and shaped our understanding for many years and which defined the contours of the conflict. These older narratives, while still accorded a classic status, still readable and enjoyable, now seem dated and fatally flawed. We are now in a period of modern historical revisionism which is being pursued, not through general narrative, but through specialist monographs that are re-shaping our thinking and our understanding about aspects of the Movement. The era when one faction contemplated the heroes of the Catholic Revival, the giants in the land, and the opposing faction saw "villains secretly believing the doctrines of Rome and attempting to subvert the true protestant faith of England," is passing.³

Our understanding was formed by such classic texts as R. W. Church's *History of the Oxford Movement*. It is a very great work, it is a classic text, but it is a work of its time, a prisoner of its presumptions, a victim of its author's virtues. The saintly Dean Church knew John Henry Newman and idolised him. Richard Church was one of the Proctors of the University of Oxford who exercised their right of veto to prevent the condemnation of Newman's Tract XC by the University. His portrait of Newman is a vivid and sympathetic one, but Newman is a hero without blemish and Church silently slides over occasions when Newman dirties his hands in some political plotting and manoeuvring. To us there is nothing wrong in that aspect of Newman; we all know that it happens, that it was a necessary and an inevitable part of their pursuit of the theological and doctrinal aims of the early Oxford Fathers. There was naturally a political dimension to their Movement. Tactics and strategies were discussed then as they surely are now. The corridors of Pusey House and, no doubt, this House are often alive with the whispered susurrations of conspiracies, plots and faction. But beyond that limitation in Church's sketch of

² George Herring, *What Was the Oxford Movement?* London, Continuum [2003] p 2

³ Quoted in Herring *Op cit* p 2. Walter Walsh, *The Secret History of the Oxford Movement: Twelve Years 1833 – 1845*

Newman, writing, as he was, in a pre-Freudian age, Dean Church misses or ignores the complexity of Newman's highly-strung, febrile and neurotic personality. We must look elsewhere nowadays for a more comprehensive and psychologically acute portrait.

Similarly, Henry Parry Liddon in his mighty four volume biography of Dr Pusey, the labour of which and the intensity with which he threw himself into the task led Liddon's friends to say that the task would kill him, which it did, suppressed details of, or at least played down details of Pusey's early, youthful flirtation with theological liberalism and German protestant theology. It was something Pusey later repudiated; and none could really doubt his commitment to a distinctly irredentist position made all the more convincing in that he had matured from his youthful reverie but, even after his death, and despite his steady record, Liddon still felt the need to massage the evidence of Dr Pusey's early years.

Neither of these authors was guilty of a falsification of history. Both Liddon and Church regarded Newman and Pusey as great men; and great men they were, but to say such a thing is not to say very much. The admission of flaws, of light and shade in character and personality do not detract from greatness but, rather, enhance it. But that is not how biography was viewed until comparatively recently. The pendulum has swung so far that biography has become an added terror to death.

The early history of the Catholic Revival was to a degree bedeviled by a concentration on great men: John Keble, Edward Bouverie Pusey, John Henry Newman, Richard Hurrell Froude, the Wilberforces, Henry Edward Manning: the roll-call is a familiar one. But the "great men" school of history is a precarious one. Its signal danger is the descent into hagiography; and the history of the Movement has not been a stranger to that unfortunate tendency: a tendency which events exacerbated. This was particularly evident in the furore surrounding the parliamentary passage of the Public Worship Regulation Act in 1874 and its subsequent implementation. Benjamin Disraeli's unpleasant and politically opportunistic attempt to put down ritualism, "the Mass in masquerade," "a system of salvation by haberdashery"⁴ was met with ferocious and sustained opposition in which history became a weapon in the war. The partisans were also the historians: the historians were partisans. This particular campaign was part of a wider struggle to capture the Church of England; and it is here where the contemporary conflict and history meet in a peculiarly potent configuration.

The founding Fathers of the Oxford Movement were primarily motivated by their sincerely held and eloquently articulated belief that the Church of England was the local embodiment and the national expression of a wider concept of Catholic Christendom. Their aim was to convince Anglicans, all Anglicans, that they were Catholic and reformed and not protestant. They sought to re-awaken and to make them aware of their latent Catholicism which was enshrined in their liturgies and formularies but which had lain dormant, submerged by an accretion of protestantism and anti-Catholicism inherited from the political and dynastic disputes of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Their aim was complete conversion. They did not aim to create a party within a pluralist, tolerant and comprehensive Church.

This fundamental belief was recently given a rhetorical revival in the sermon by the Master of the Society of the Holy Cross delivered in the Royal Albert Hall as part of the triumphant celebration of the one hundred and fifty years of the Society's history. In his sermon Fr David Houlding, for it was he, said: "It is not just the people at 'Stand up for Jesus' who are Catholics. It is the clergy in the grey suits from that large charismatic evangelical parish who are Catholic priests, if they did but know it. It is the low church village parson at matins in his scarf and hood who is a Catholic priest, if he did but know it. It is every single Anglican man, woman and child who are Catholic Christians, if they did but know it. I am dissatisfied that we who know we are Catholics are content to settle to be merely a party within the Church of England. This is a shabby second-best. The claim of the Oxford Movement was that the whole Church of England is Catholic by her very nature and they started to behave like it."

⁴ David Lloyd George quoted in G. I. T. Machin, *Politics and the Churches in Great Britain 1869 – 1921* Oxford, UP p 244

Sadly that rhetoric seems to me to be precisely that, rhetoric; it has a dated and a rather forlorn ring about it; echoes in long abandoned corridors. Admirable though it may be in theory, it belies the history of the Movement and forms no part of the self-understanding of the Church of England, certainly not by its expressed votes in General Synod. Nor is it, I suggest, any longer part of an Anglo-Catholic's self-understanding. It is not how we perceive ourselves now, and it is not how we are perceived. Our present position is the result of the law of unintended consequences. The Catholic Revival brought about "not a unification of Anglicanism [as an expression of Catholic unity] but ... an intensification of those very divisions they sought to eradicate."⁵ As time went on, the aims of the Movement shifted. Anglo-Catholics lost their zeal for conversion and sought, rather, tolerance of their beliefs and their ceremonial expression and practice and it can reasonably be argued that Anglo-Catholicism was "saved by the very tolerance of difference that became the trademark of modern Anglicanism."⁶ Anglo-Catholicism's teeth were drawn. The *coup de grace* of the nineteenth century ritualist disputes might be said to be the passage in 1964 of the Vestments of Ministers Measure. On one reading this was a vindication for all that the nineteenth century ritualists had been fighting. The Measure made the wearing of Eucharistic vestments legal in the Church of England but, and here is the rub, at the same time it was clearly and unambiguously asserted that no particular doctrinal significance should be attached to them. Mackonochie, Tooth, Bell Cox, Enraght, Pelham Dale and the others may well ask from the grave, "What was the point?"

It gave, however, retrospective point to Cardinal Manning's tart observation that "Ritualism is private judgement in gorgeous raiment ... Every fringe in an elaborate cope worn without authority, is only a distinct and separate act of private judgement; the more elaborate, the less Catholic: the nearer the imitation, the further from the submission of faith."⁷ At least now we have legislative authority for private judgement but we are a long way from the ideal of our forefathers in the Oxford Movement.

There has been a marked change in the way the history of the Catholic Revival has been approached and has been written since those days of the classic texts and the formative battles. This should not surprise us. History is not written in a vacuum. Historians bring to their task the intellectual and the emotional preconceptions of their own time. There can be no such thing as ultimate history, as unsullied or untainted objectivity. The past is invariably refracted through the prism of the present. However, distance from the immediate events of the past does lend a degree of perspective, if not complete objectivity, that might well be lacking in those historians who participated in the events they chronicled. If distance lends perspective, it also allows a context to be more fully considered and detailed. Engagement in the battle tends to obscure what is happening in other theatres of the war. Let us take a relatively small and simple example.

It is one of the givens of Anglo-Catholic history that the Oxford Movement began on Sunday, 14 July 1833 when John Keble preached the Assize Sermon before His Majesty's Judges in the Church of S. Mary the Virgin in Oxford. It is the date which John Henry Newman identified and kept as an anniversary. However, although it was widely accepted and repeated in countless books and articles, it is not set in stone and historians have more recently begun to question its accuracy and its helpfulness. As a matter of common sense this is perfectly understandable. Few historical events have such a definitive and specific starting-point. Were we to be asked when the Second World War began, we would probably reply, 3 September 1939 when the United Kingdom formally declared war on Germany; but I well remember, as an undergraduate, the historian A. J. P. Taylor begin a lecture with the startling assertion that the Second World War began with the Japanese invasion of Manchuria six years earlier. Most of these short-hand terminal dates are fairly arbitrary, although undeniably useful.

Church and Ollard, not surprisingly, follow Newman but as early as 1933 F. L. (Frank Leslie) Cross, while a Librarian at Pusey House, added an appendix to his biography of John Henry Newman which he entitled, "The Myth of July 14" and in which he raised questions about

⁵ *Op cit* Herring p 94

⁶ *Ibid*

⁷ H. E. Manning, *England and Christendom* London, Longmans [1867] pp lxxviii – lxxxiv.

that date being too prescriptive. More recent scholarship has continued this trend. Piers Brendon in his biography of Richard Hurrell Froude sees the period from 1828 to 1830 a crucial in that it brought Newman and Froude together in alliance by the pressure of political, national and religious events, but also by domestic University events where they both sought to reform the tutorial system. This nexus of mutual concerns and interests was more important in the development of a coherent group than any one sermon, and Keble's Assize Sermon was but the most prominent public expression of this rapidly cohering group.

Peter Nockles in his book published in 1994,⁸ which has some claim to be the most significant publication on the Oxford Movement since Ollard: it is a work of scrupulous and detailed scholarship containing many significant insights which alter our perspective: one of which is that Nockles argues for locating the beginning of the Oxford Movement to 1829. This year marked the passage into law of Catholic Emancipation and the defeat of the Prime Minister, Sir Robert Peel, as the Member of Parliament for Oxford University. Peel had changed his mind from that of an opponent to a proponent of Catholic Emancipation and felt himself duty-bound to offer himself for re-election to his University seat, as the University was the expression of the Anglican hegemony in the state. Newman and other of his friends helped to organize the opposition campaign against Peel and it proved entirely successful when they were triumphant and Peel was defeated. In this campaign, suggests Nockles, were the seeds of the group whose members wrote the *Tracts for the Times*. In the light of this modern and persuasive scholarship it would appear that "the best we can now say is that the phenomenon we call the Oxford Movement had its origins in the crisis years 1828 to 1833 and that the Assize Sermon represents more a stage in the process of genesis than it does the precise moment of birth."⁹ Be that as it may, I would not expect 14 July 2008, the 175th anniversary of the Oxford Movement by Newman's reckoning and the popular memory, to go unremarked, or uncommemorated. It might be the last time we can celebrate before we shut up shop.

The Oxford Movement, then, was born during the years of crisis in the complex and changing relationship between the Church of England and the State from 1828 to 1833. The continuing history of the Movement was one of a series of crises, mainly played out within the setting of the University, but with increasingly wider, national implications and effects. It also became increasingly clear that this was far more than merely a reaction by a handful of recalcitrant clerical dons to a particular set of events. Rather, it became clear that here was something more pro-active, something more coherent, more doctrinally and more politically defined; their campaign representing a far-reaching programme not only to change the basis of the relationship between the Church and the state but also to change the very nature of the National Church itself; or rather, as they would have it, to recover its true identity. The Oxford Movement marked the abandonment of one source of historical ecclesial authority, the protestant reformation, for another, the replacement of the authority of the Reformation with the authority of antiquity and of the primitive and undivided Church.

One area where historical revisionism has been particularly thorough and effective is in our view of the religious life and temper of the eighteenth century. The traditional historical view held that the eighteenth century was a period of religious torpor, aridity and stultification, of complacency and gross abuse and that the Oxford Movement, rather like Methodism, was, in part, a reaction to that unsatisfactory and slothful state of things. In this analysis, the Oxford Movement sought a revivification of Church life, both intellectually and pastorally. It is a convincing enough explanation and fits the facts that the early Oxford Movement Fathers were young men, "Young Turks", and young Tories; and it is a characteristic of "Young Turks" that they react violently against the immediate past and seek to distance themselves from it.

Tractarian historiography has been characterized, as has much history writing, by selectivity. This formed the basis of a critical essay by James Anthony Froude in 1883 where he compared the Oxford Movement with the Counter-Reformation. He argued that the Tractarians

⁸ Peter Benedict Nockles, *The Oxford Movement in Context: Anglican High-Churchmanship 1760 – 1857* Cambridge, UP [1994]

⁹ *Op cit* Herring p 47

had deliberately exaggerated, and then distorted, the supposed evils and shortcomings of the Hanoverian Church “in order to add lustre to their own religious endeavours.”¹⁰ However, we must not necessarily take the Movement’s critics on trust, nor ignore their own bias and prejudice. In this instance Froude may well be right in his conclusion but we need to remember that he was once himself a follower of the Oxford Movement who had abandoned a youthful Tractarianism for agnosticism: he was “a notable Tractarian apostate.”¹¹ We might gain some insight into his new hinterland if we consider this telling passage from the same essay: “The Church of England may play at sacerdotalism and masquerade in medieval garniture; the clergy may flatter one another with notions that they can bind and loose the souls of their fellow-Christians, and transform the substance of the sacramental elements by spells and gestures, but they will not at this time of day persuade intelligent men that the bishops in their ordination gave them really supernatural powers. Their celebrations and processions may amuse for a time by their novelty, but their pretensions deserve essentially no more respect than those of sprit-rappers, and the serious forces of the world go on their way no more affected by them than if they were shadows.”¹² Reader, beware when approaching the critics.

A more demonstrably true and damaging criticism came first from the Anglo-Catholic camp. That excellent liturgical and ceremonial scholar J. Wickham Legge, too much under-valued today, writing in 1914 commented that “the lustre of the age in which [the Tractarians] wrote would be heightened by darkening the age which went immediately before.”¹³ He identified here something like the underlying assumption endemic in the Whig view of history which took as axiomatic that the nineteenth century was the apogee of civilization, enlightenment, culture, artistic, political and constitutional development. It was a view to be swallowed up in the carnage of the First World War and in a masterly and definitive demolition by Herbert Butterfield in *The Whig Interpretation of History*.¹⁴ This was “a plea not to privilege certain parts of history simply because these appeared to point to the present day, and to understand ideas in their historical rather than their contemporary contexts.”¹⁵ The irony, or rather, the intellectual dishonesty if you want to be harsh, is that in other areas of their intellectual conspectus the Tractarians disdained and repudiated such historical determinism; the inevitability of progress, principles of material advance, artistic and constitutional liberty. In that they were undoubtedly correct. But the Tractarians cannot be acquitted of adopting a romantic reading of history. It is not a skill we have lost. Romance is so much better than the real thing.

The centenary of the Oxford Movement in 1933 provided more romance and saw an outpouring of a great deal of historical material, much of it hagiographic and most of it accepting the Tractarian orthodox view of the religious life of the eighteenth century. Following the success of the Anglo-Catholic Congresses leading up to it, 1933 was preeminently the high-watermark of the Catholic Revival and there was more than a hint of triumphalism in its celebrations but it was a triumphalism that was to be short-lived. The seeds of decline were sown in the very nature of its apparent triumph. The tide was turning. Historical revisionism was beginning to take hold. We can track the descent from the pinnacle of 1933 in small and large ways. The historian Norman Sykes began the rehabilitation of the eighteenth century Anglican Church in a sympathetic study of latitudinarianism. More recently Dr J. C. D. Clark’s book *English Society 1681 – 1832*¹⁶ has become the bench-mark for eighteenth century studies. Dr Clark, a former Governor of Pusey House, reasserts the vitality of an Anglican confessional state in the eighteenth century and

¹⁰ J. A. Froude, “The Oxford Counter-Reformation” in *Short Studies on Great Subjects* 4 vols, London [1883] pp 231 – 252

¹¹ Peter Nockles, “Survival or New Arrivals? The Oxford Movement and the Nineteenth-Century Historical Construction of Anglicanism” in Stephen Platten (Ed), *Anglicanism and the Western Christian Tradition: Continuity, Change and the Search for Communion* Norwich, Canterbury Press [2003] p 150

¹² *Op cit* Froude p 233

¹³ J. Wickham Legge, *English Church Life from the Restoration to the Tractarian Movement* London, [1914] p viii

¹⁴ Published in 1931

¹⁵ Brendan Simms in H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Edd), *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* Volume 9. Oxford, UP [2004] p 256

¹⁶ J. C. D. Clark, *English Society 1681 – 1832: Ideology, Social Structure and political Practice during the Ancien Regime* Cambridge, UP [1985]

emphasizes a particularly potent and influential strain of High-churchmanship. In other of his writing, for example, he identifies Samuel Johnson, not merely as a High Churchman, which was well enough understood, but as more decidedly a non-juror. These sorts of pieces of evidence amount to rather more than straws in the wind to undermine one of the historical foundations of the Movement and the use the Tractarians made of history.

We cannot be surprised that the Tractarians used history as a weapon, or that history was the battle ground where they contended for the soul of the Church of England. The Christian religion is a religion of history, of the Incarnation at a specific time and place in human history, of the direct intervention of God in his Son within the sphere of space and time, the confines of humanity and of human history. There was also a particular historical heritage that had to be assimilated and confronted. The Church of England, as distinct from the Church in England was the product of an act of state, governed and sanctioned by the state. But beyond the specificity of an historical debate, more generally, the nineteenth century was a period which had to come to terms with a sense of discontinuity and dislocation which had been engendered by fierce, violent and disturbing phenomena like the French Revolution abroad and the Industrial Revolution at home. We should not underestimate these cataclysmic shifts in the tectonic plates of the national psyche that such events produced. Against that background the Tractarians used history to further the cause of the Catholic Revival by contending with an overtly and predominantly protestant historiography. This had significance beyond the merely academic because by contending with a protestant historiography the Tractarians were contending with the link between protestantism and England's national identity. We can see that John Henry Newman's interest in the early Church and his appeals to antiquity have resonances with those contemporary controversies in which he was engaged, and they were employed as such as much as with any sense of impartial scholarship. His highly influential book *Arians of the Fourth Century* related heresies of the early Church to current controversies, such as the hegemony of the protestant state, protestant dissent and Unitarianism.

Proponents and opponents used history to further their cause and, not unnaturally, the debate and intellectual conflict was fierce because history could still be used by either side to demonstrate and to determine what sort of Church the Church of England ought to be. Many of the fruits of this conflict can be found in the extensive pamphlet collection in the Archive at Pusey House. We may well be conscious how these debates are not at all resolved and how we are still in the midst, or the final those, of them.

On the substance of the Tractarian claim, the Oxford Movement Fathers appealed to history underpinning their claim of the apostolic continuity of the Church of England. This foundation claim later became widened to the centrality of the undivided Church as a model for Church communion. There was deference to the evidence of antiquity, to the early Church Fathers and to the early Ecumenical Councils of the Church. Their approach was best summarized in the words of S. Vincent of Lerins: "We within the Catholic Church are to take care that we hold that which has been believed everywhere, always and by all men (*ubique, semper, omnibus*) and that we shall do if we follow universality, antiquity and consent." That might stand as the articulation of the fundamental approach of Catholics in the Church of England. It is the line drawn in the sand which we cannot cross. The *Tracts for the Times* articulated that approach with a wealth of historic and patristic evidence recalling to the mind of the Church of England the doctrine and practice of the primitive Church. They pointed out the parallels between antiquity and their contemporary situation, of the Church threatened by the secular state power, mirrored by the Whig government suppressing several Irish bishoprics and applying their alienated revenue to secular educational purposes, which was the immediate subject and the inspiration for John Keble's Assize Sermon.

All the core doctrines of the Oxford Movement, which continue to constitute our core doctrines today, are historically based: the apostolic succession, the divine rights of the episcopate (rightly understood), the teaching authority of the Church, the character of the priesthood ministerial order, the apostolic tradition, Catholic consent, the Real Presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist, the sacrificial nature of the Mass, baptismal regeneration; all allied to the disciplines of the Catholic life; fasting, mortification, frequent recourse to Holy Communion, the observance of fast days and feast days, festivals and saints' days, almsgiving, and clerical celibacy. This list must

seem commonplace to us now but was revolutionary and highly contentious then. The ultimate point of reference in all this is unmistakably the early and undivided Church. As an antidote to the protestant assertion of the primacy of the Reformation, the Tractarians transmuted the evidence of antiquity through the medium of the Caroline Divines. However, the use of the Caroline Divines was not without controversy in that it was selective and, at times, distorted. The Caroline Divines certainly exhibited a common theological temper, and the familiar tripartite appeal to Scripture, Reason and Tradition, but they did not exhibit a coherently articulated doctrinal unanimity. The Tractarians used the Caroline Divines, and other aspects of the Church of England's history, in ways which suited their polemical purposes in that construction of a Catholic identity designed to supercede the prevailing national and establishment identity, to the extent that Peter Nockles concludes with J. A. Froude that it amounted to a "deliberate re-writing of Anglican history."¹⁷ Nockles presents his evidence which leads to his conclusion with a wealth of detail both in his seminal book *The Oxford Movement in Context*¹⁸ and in an extended essay in the book *Anglicanism and the Western Christian Tradition*¹⁹ which accompanied an exhibition and colloquium on the history of the Church of England and Anglicanism held in Rome in 2003.

This analysis casts the Oxford Movement in a much more radical light. For all the eloquent rhetoric about Anglican continuity and the rediscovery of a neglected tradition, the Oxford Movement as it gained momentum represents one of the most radically significant discontinuities in the history of Anglicanism. In the midst of the Centenary celebrations in 1933; in the midst of the adulatory publications and hagiographical excesses the Roman Catholic historian Christopher Dawson, unduly neglected nowadays, published *The Spirit of the Oxford Movement*. His interpretation of the Movement emphasized the contribution of Richard Hurrell Froude, who, had he lived, may well have been the most significant figure to the Movement. Dawson recognized the polemical tone Froude brought to controversy and his aggressive historical revision of the protestant Reformation and its heritage. He contributed to the early Tractarians, before his premature death, a dynamic intellectual approach. He had been unimpressed, unenthusiastic and unpersuaded by Newman's efforts to demonstrate the apostolicity of Anglicanism through the theory of the *via media*: the idea that in its comprehensiveness Anglicanism sought to hold together the orthodoxy of the Catholic tradition while acknowledging the insights of the reformed tradition: the "half-way house" of John Betjeman's autobiographical poem *Summoned By Bells*.

Frank Turner in a recent sharp study of Newman during his Anglican years²⁰ argued that in his pursuit of an ideal Catholicism, Newman was less than rigid in his adherence to theological traditions, whether Anglican or Roman Catholic, and that he acted, as a Tractarian leader, on a sectarian principle in thought as well as in practice. In his *Apologia* he sought retrospectively to impose an orderly theological development on his Anglican career which, according to Turner, was singularly lacking at the time. However, as Peter Nockles comments, "Newman's later defence of his religious integrity and motivation deserves to be taken at face value."²¹ Although it is undoubtedly true that Newman, like other Tractarians, used history, some might say manipulated it, and his anti-protestant polemic was supported by a selective reading of history and in the Caroline Divines, nonetheless, the key to understanding his role as the foremost leader of the Oxford Movement is to be found in his abiding quest for sanctity and his accompanying search for religious truth, rather than in "considerations of more personal self-interest which might be gleaned from psychological speculation based on dubious modern criteria of motivation."²²

Dawson maintained that Froude argued against the theory of the *via media* but argued instead for the idea of the *via ultima*: the assertion of a thoroughly Catholic doctrine and practice, and the sweeping away of the protestant experiment. This undoubtedly failed and Dawson maintained that thereafter Tractarianism or Anglo-Catholicism was only tolerated by the laxity of the liberal establishment rather than owned as the authoritative teaching of a living Church

¹⁷ *Op cit* Survivors of New Arrivals? p 182

¹⁸ *Op cit*

¹⁹ *Op cit*

²⁰ Frank M. Turner, *John Henry Newman: The Challenge to Evangelical Religion* Yale, UP [2002]

²¹ *Op cit* Survivals or New Arrivals? p 160

²² *Ibid* p 161

speaking with one voice, as Newman had originally envisaged. Anglo-Catholicism was only saved by that very tolerance of difference which was the hallmark of the comprehensive Anglicanism which in the Oxford Movement had originally protested. Here, from a different perspective, we come to the same conclusion outlined earlier in this paper. The route, however, has been a more radical one and one that leads to a more recent and more radical re-appraisal of the Oxford Movement: one that moves decisively beyond the ecclesiastical ghetto.

In his book *Glorious Battle*,²³ which made full use of the Nineteenth Century Pamphlet collection at Pusey House, John Shelton Reed uses a sociological approach, with some persuasive power, by which he seeks to examine Anglo-Catholicism in a wider context as a counter-cultural phenomenon. As we know, the Movement began in the Universities, especially in this one²⁴ and it made a marked and early appeal to the young of the University; not only among the young dons, like Froude, Newman, Pusey and Keble, but also among the undergraduate population. Significantly, it went beyond merely a harmless outlet for youthful high-spirits. Rather, it offered a spiritual meaning and purpose to lives that were being increasingly lived in a materialistically dominated society. Karl Marx offered a different, historically deterministic, alternative to a similarly conceived view of the world: his, however, was the wrong answer and one that did untold damage. Yet, while being theologically and spiritually serious and sober, it also had an intellectual excitement and a fascinating degree of iconoclasm. Light, vivid colour, costumes, incense, music, arts, poetry were all transmuted expressions of a spirit of hedonism, self-indulgence, decadence and moral decay, the perfumed life of a new sensibility that sometimes seems particularly attractive to a rebellious youth. The Oxford Movement allowed the young to break away from the conventional religiosity of their parental generation. Here was something new which in its ornate, anti-rational mysticism offered a reaction and counter-weight to the Enlightenment which had led to the French Revolution which had shocked the English consciousness. It was a reaction against both scientific empiricism and rationality.

As the Movement developed, however, it exhibited within itself a similar generational division. The leaders and the intellectual spokesmen for the Movement inevitably were older and were in positions of academic prestige and influence. They were held in great respect and affection by their followers. They were quoted approvingly and honoured, but their younger followers were more extreme, more hot-headed, more aggressively confrontational. However, this alliance held firm despite the generation gap and despite the divisions between radicals and conservatives; and it held firm because they were united against a common and virulent opposition. So it was that, although members of the older generation such as Dr Pusey and his disciple Henry Parry Liddon may not have approved of everything done by such as Alexander Heriot Mackonochie and others in their defiance of authority, they were, nevertheless, prepared to defend and to support them. Perhaps the young radicalized the elderly because in his last controversial pamphlet, published within a few months of his death in September 1882, Dr Pusey declared that he performed every ceremonial act for which S. F. Green had been condemned, and he appealed with a moving eloquence that he be similarly prosecuted and similarly share Green's fate. It was a striking protest against the vulgarity of the times.

The politics of the Movement were varied ranging from state socialism through romantic communitarianism, espoused by such as William Morris, to a kind of political otherworldliness and mixed with a more concrete and traditional Tory paternalism. What was distinctive was the expressed community of interest with the poor: an expression not confined to the great slum priests of popular memory. There was also a challenging and defiant contempt for the protestant erastian establishment. This contempt was returned by most politicians who sought by punitive and prescriptive legislation to restore law and order to the Church in that attempt to put down ritualism cynically engineered by Disraeli. The gangs of patriotic protestant working men who disrupted Anglo-Catholic worship and meetings was a late flowering of a manifestation of the

²³ John Shelton Reed, *Glorious Battle: The Cultural Politics of Victorian Anglo-Catholicism* Nashville, Vanderbilt UP, [1996]

²⁴ Oxford

mob mentality which had met with some success in the eighteenth century. But lawlessness did not lie exclusively on one side.

The concerted civil disobedience of Anglo-Catholics, the trials, imprisonments, the image of lawlessness ending in the grotesque spectacle of priests behind bars for ceremonial offences, as John Shelton Reed suggests, has parallels with the civil disobedience prevalent in the 1960s and could be seen as evidence of a similar counter-cultural phenomenon. According to his argument the Youth Movement of the Sixties in the Twentieth century and the Anglo-Catholics of the 1860s “each stood in opposition to some of the dominant values of its times and place, appealing to people who were ... disaffected from those values. Both were ... counter-cultural movements.”²⁵ Like the Sixties radicals, Anglo-Catholicism thrived on confrontation; compromise was not a word in its dictionary, not part of its vocabulary, not in the lexicon of the young bloods of the revolution. “Part of the Movement’s appeal,” says Reed, “part of the story of its success, was that it offended the stuffy and the powerful, contradicting them and denying their cultural hegemony.”²⁶

The historian John Kent identified a similarly radical if more specifically reactionary counter-culturalism when he asked a pertinent question, “Why did a section of the nineteenth century Anglican Church move so dogmatically and successfully back to a style of religious behaviour that had seemed so entirely abandoned in England?”²⁷ Tackling this question John Shelton Reed suggests that considering Anglo-Catholicism as a counter-cultural movement is a way into understanding both its appeal and its lack of appeal, its opposition and its support. He argues that it can be no surprise that stalwart protestants opposed the Movement. They found its theology objectionable, its practices bizarre, provocative and abhorrent. But the objections to Anglo-Catholicism went beyond the protestant heartland: “Many common sense English folk,” says Reed, “with little discernible interest in doctrine, also found the Movement contemptible and infuriating.”²⁸ He maintains that we cannot understand the opposition to Anglo-Catholicism, nor indeed its appeal, without some reference to, and understanding of, broader cultural implications and, to what is sometimes loosely called ‘the spirit of the age.’ Many of the practices which the Movement championed were symbolic affronts to the central values of Victorian middle-class culture, and some went beyond affront to be perceived as a threat to those values and to those cultural certainties, rooted in a drab protestantism and intermittently rabid anti-Catholicism. Offence was, therefore, understandable. Sometimes they were supposed to be offended. Within a broad cultural context Anglo-Catholicism offered the fashionable a mode of religious expression which was closely linked with the avant-garde in culture and taste. It was what set them apart and distinguished them from the stuffy, the vulgar, the pushing, what we would call now the ‘upwardly mobile’ or ‘aspirational’ commercial classes who more often than not sprang from, or embraced on their upward trajectory, aspects of evangelicalism or non-conformist dissent. Although some Anglo-Catholics flirted with socialism, there were others more inclined to a kind of medieval neo-feudalism. Whichever route they took, however, they saw the ideal society was one in which trade and the values of trade were subordinate.

Anglo-Catholicism ran radically counter to the prevailing ethos in its appeal to the urban poor. This was not a question of bringing colour and drama into their drab lives in the gorgeous apparel of worship, which has always struck me as an overly simplistic, trivial and patronising reason to explain the attraction of Anglo-Catholicism. Rather, the appeal to the working-class urban poor was to be found in more tangible benefits such as nursing the sick, tending the dying, providing food, shelter and fuel, offering solace and comfort, but also building friendships and a common bond of worth across the chasms of social divisions and exclusivity. It did not wipe out the divisions of social standing or money but it put those divisions into a different context of their common, shared humanity, and their equality of worth in the sight of God. It gave a new and better meaning to the sloganising of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. In many ways this breaking down of social barriers may have been the most radical heritage of the Movement.

²⁵ *Op cit* Reed p xxi

²⁶ *Ibid* p xx

²⁷ John Kent, *The Study of Modern Ecclesiastical History Since 1930*. J. Daniélou, A. H. Couratin, John Kent (Edd), *Historical Theology. Pelican Guide to Modern Theology* Volume 2. London, Penguin Books [1969] p 324

²⁸ *Op cit* Reed p xxii

Contrary to prejudicial surmise the Movement also took women seriously. We can claim Anglo-Catholicism to be in some measure in the forefront of the emancipation of women in the nineteenth century. They certainly valued women more than was customary according to the conventions of the time and this was illustrated through the burgeoning of religious orders and through the important and useful work which accorded them a status and utility they had rarely enjoyed before. It is, therefore, to a degree ironic that the great fissure of present times should concern the role of women. But what proponents of the ordination of women do not understand or accept is that for most of us it is not about women as such but that the issue goes to the heart of three interconnected fundamentals of Tractarianism: authority, ministry and sacraments. The Church of England has presumed an authority radically to alter the nature of Apostolic Ministry and it has done so not in succumbing to the secular power but by initiating and originating the change within the Church itself.²⁹ To the young it was an attractive form of rebellion. It was daring to be part of an embattled minority pitted against the forces of conventional respectability and dull conformity. The young, women and the poor, both rural and urban, can in the nineteenth century, be seen either as culturally subordinate or in decline, threatened, oppressed, ignored or bored by the values of a suffocating, conventional and narrow society. In such a position they would have been ready to hear and to respond to subversive messages.

For later generations, however, this explanation, or this way of looking at the Catholic Revival, becomes less applicable and helpful. For those later generations who were raised as Anglo-Catholics, it was the conventional form of religion; it was the conventional piety of their parents' generation and expressed their values and social and religious assumptions. It had been embraced, well perhaps we should more accurately say more or less grudgingly tolerated, within the system. It was no longer daring. It was no longer cutting-edge. It no longer kicked over the cultural traces. This denouement begins towards the end of the nineteenth century when Anglo-Catholicism becomes to a degree respectable, when it could not be put down by law and won its right to exist, but not to conquer, not to carry all before it. It became a legitimate expression, a tolerated party. It even had bishops, and not all returned from the colonies. Ironically and paradoxically, its victory and its acceptance lost it its most potent attraction; its outlaw charm and cavalier bravura. The modern parallels are too painful to outline.

In Anglo-Catholicism at the height of its powers we see a Movement so impolitic, so indifferent to the offence it caused, so adverse from cultivating goodwill: a Movement whose offensiveness was not accidental, not the result of thoughtless lack of tact or shortsightedness but part of its very being, an expression of a searing contempt for the cultural values of the time and "many were drawn to the Movement because it offended those whom they wished to offend."³⁰ We might reasonably conclude by recognizing that such a Movement had little to gain and much to lose by compromise. Once it compromised, once it accommodated it lost. It is a lesson we might wish to take to heart in present circumstances.

²⁹ It marks the re-assertion of a protestant, independent identity. It speaks of the Church of England's self-identification, an assertion of an innate authority recognising no authority beyond itself. It is its own authentication. Anglo-Catholicism died in the voting lobbies of General Synod: its obsequies are long extended.

³⁰ *Ibid* p xxiv