
John Henry Newman

by Meriol Trevor & Léonie Caldecott



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Front cover image: *John Henry Newman.*

JOHN HENRY NEWMAN
Apostle to the Doubtful

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THE EARLY YEARS

A Turning Point

On the night of October 8th 1845, in the midst of a heavy rain-storm, an Italian Passionist priest called Dominic Barberi arrived at Littlemore, a small village just outside Oxford. Father Dominic had been riding on the top of the coach and was soaked to the skin. His destination was some converted stables, where the famous Anglican preacher John Henry Newman and some of his friends were living whilst they attempted to discern the will of God for their lives. As the missionary priest was attempting to dry his worn and shabby clothes in front of the fire, Newman strode swiftly into the room and cast himself at his feet. He asked to be received into “the one true Fold of the Redeemer”, and begged Father Dominic to begin hearing his confession immediately.

The confession continued the following day, as did those of two of Newman’s companions, and in the evening they all made the profession of faith and received conditional baptism. On October 10th, the very table on which Newman had spend the previous few years writing *On the Development of Christian Doctrine* - and writing himself out of the Anglican Church - was used to celebrate the Mass during which Newman made his first Holy Communion.

Newman was then obliged to leave his peaceful haven at Littlemore in order to place himself at the service of the Church. He was at the mid-point of his life, no longer a young man, with a wealth of learning and experience behind him, and yet he submitted himself to a completely new life, leaving behind uncomprehending and often unsympathetic friends and family. After years of holding a respected position as Fellow of Oriel College Oxford and the Vicar of the University Church, not to mention his central role in the controversial Anglo-Catholic "Oxford Movement", he was now to be instructed and prepared for the priesthood in Rome alongside much younger and less eminent men. Newman did all this without a murmur, peaceful in the knowledge that after years of painstaking deliberation, he had made the right choice. He had said that he wanted to be sure to act from reason, not from feeling alone. Having done so, he became a guide for others in the integration of head and heart on the path to Rome.

The elements of that fateful evening in October 1845 - the rain-storm, the suppliant on his knees, and the fire blazing between the two men from such different backgrounds (echoing the flame of Christ's love shown on the Italian missionary's Passionist habit) - all in a sense give the key to Newman's life. He was beset by storms and controversies, both as an Anglican and as a Catholic. A man of powerful intellect, he nonetheless submitted his mind to that of the Church, even in the

midst of misunderstandings and intense ecclesial debate. Finally, Newman was possessed by the love of God to such a degree that he gave his whole life over to his service, a devotion which showed as much in his pastoral work among ordinary people, as in his thought and writing, much of which was ahead of its time: that is to say prophetic. Newman is frequently referred to as the Father of the Second Vatican Council.

A Man of the Nineteenth Century

Born on February 21st 1801, John Henry Newman lived through the turbulent nineteenth century, when Europe, while expanding its colonial empires in Asia, Africa and Australasia, was struggling at home with wars and revolutions, political and mental. Darwin, Marx and Freud were three men of the nineteenth century whose ideas shaped the course of events all through the twentieth, and all in the direction of atheism - disbelief in any creating Spirit beyond the world of sense. Newman's influence may seem weak in comparison with theirs, but it is like the yeast in Christ's similitude, slowly leavening the lump of human dough and still active a hundred years after his death. People unfamiliar with his life and work may wonder why.

John Henry Newman saw the Christian Church as an historical fact, its ideas and practice in continual but consistent development. This historical way of looking at the Church's ideas was quite new when Newman wrote his

Essay on The Development of Christian Doctrine in 1845, nearly fifteen years before Darwin published *The Origin of Species* (1859), introducing the theory of biological evolution, which shook people's confidence in the truth of the Bible even more than had the Copernican revolution in the sixteenth century. From this historical base Newman was able to build a defence of the truth of Christian tradition which could meet the scientific scepticism that was spreading among educated people in the second half of the nineteenth century and in our own time has affected almost everybody.

Newman, who once wrote in a letter that he "could go the whole hog with Darwin" without disturbing the foundations of faith, realised that the rationalising methods of inquiry would attack the credibility of the Bible, as the infallible vehicle of God's revelation to mankind. He perceived that it was the Church which mediated the revelation in Christ, and had done so since the Risen Lord had commissioned the Apostles and after his Ascension sent the Holy Spirit to unite them in one Body guide them into all truth, till the end of time. It was in studying the early Fathers of the Church that Newman realised how theological ideas had developed over the centuries, like a tree growing from a seed. That seed was Christ, the Word of God.

Search for the Truth

Perhaps Newman was able to pursue this original line of thought because his personal religious development came

through an arduous search for truth, always accompanied by a moral determination to live according to the faith he had been given. As a clever schoolboy of fourteen he read Tom Paine's tracts against the Old Testament and some of Hume's Essays - "so at least I gave my father to understand, but perhaps it was a brag," he wrote modestly in the *Apologia*. He copied some French verses denying the immortality of the soul and thought, "How dreadful, but how plausible!" And decided he would like to be virtuous but not religious. Then only a year later, after his father's bank had failed in 1816, he fell ill and was left alone at school in the summer holidays. Here, he recorded much later in a private journal, God "turned me right round, when I was more like a devil than a wicked boy." He saw his sin as spiritual rather than sensual: the intellectual pride that easily becomes arrogant self-sufficiency.

This first conversion, to which he gave a duration of five months (prompting some Evangelicals in later years to assure him he had never been converted at all) he called in the *Apologia* "a great change of *thought*" and indeed the books lent him by Mr Mayers, a young Evangelical master at the school, first started Newman *thinking* about the Christian religion. *The Force of Truth* by Thomas Scott, a Unitarian who had thought his way to belief in the Trinity of God and the Incarnation of the Son, or Word, in the man Jesus of Nazareth, not only implanted in Newman's mind the doctrine itself but presented religious truth as a quest

and the understanding of it as a personal development. Scott's sayings: "Holiness before peace" and "Growth the only evidence of life," became proverbs for the young Newman, and so from the start Christianity was for him not merely a system to be accepted, but a way of life.

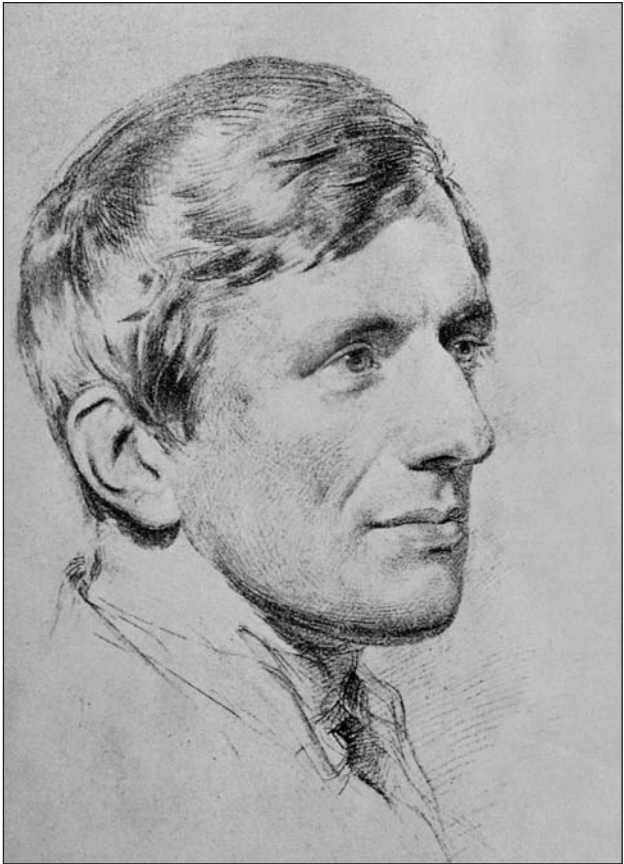
Milner's *Church History* had an equally profound effect, for there Newman first discovered the Fathers of the Church, the great Christian thinkers of the early centuries. He compared the action of their thought upon him to music, his favourite art - he had learned to play the violin from the age of ten. In the Fathers, greek clarity of reasoning met the concrete symbolism of the Hebrews and this fusion of intellect and imagination answered the unusual balance of Newman's mind, in which these forces were equal. He was shown the way into a world where the supreme mysteries were neither devitalised into an abstract system, nor subjected to the degenerative process of uncontrolled feeling. Moreover, he was introduced to the Church as it was before the period of medieval Christendom, out of which had burst the Protestant revolution, which still in Newman's day was shaped by reactions against that medieval form of the Church. So, in 1816, at the age of fifteen, Newman started on the way that was to make him an agent of the Catholic revival in the Church of England and later to draw him, slowly and painfully, into the Catholic Church in communion with the see of St Peter.

Education and Early Years in the Anglican Church

John Henry was the eldest of six children and the leader in their games, writing plays for them to act. Their father was a banker, one of the rising middle class, and their mother Jemima Fourdrinier was the daughter of a papermaker of Huguenot descent.

After a happy childhood Newman was sent to an enlightened private school at Ealing, where he did so well that he was entered at Trinity College Oxford when he was only sixteen. Although (or perhaps because) he worked very hard, he did badly in his final examinations, but was able to stay on at the university to study for ordination because he had earlier won a college scholarship. In 1822, when he was just twenty-one, he was elected a Fellow of Oriel College, then the centre of intellectual excellence. This gave him entrance to an academic career and a regular income, much needed, as Mr Newman never recovered his position after his bankruptcy and died in 1824, leaving Newman responsible for finding a home for his mother and sisters, and for his brother Frank's education. Besides coaching Frank, he made some more money by taking other pupils.

That year Newman had been ordained deacon and took on an arduous curacy at St Clement's, on the edge of Oxford. He was ordained a priest of the Church of England at Whitsun, May 29th 1825. "I was dedicating myself forever, consecrating myself to the service of



'The Richmond Portrait', John Henry Newman as a young man.

Almighty God,” he wrote many years later, correcting the impression that he was thinking about the Apostolical Succession at such a serious and sacred occasion.

Nevertheless he was revising and broadening his views on the Church and discussing its present situation with his friends, and when in 1828 he was made Vicar of the University Church of St Mary the Virgin, he gained a position of considerable influence in Oxford. The Catholic revival, or Tractarian Movement, which got under way in 1833, was originally a protest against state interference in Church affairs. It was Newman who wrote the first *Tracts for the Times*, short and to the point. The Church had been supported by the state: “Should these secular advantages cease, on what must *Christ’s* ministers depend?” And he answered, “*Christ* has not left His Church without claim of its own upon the attention of men. Surely not. Hard Master he cannot be, to bid us oppose the world, yet give us no credentials for so doing... I fear we have neglected the real ground on which our authority is built - *our apostolical descent.*”

Italy and the Oxford Movement

In 1833, Newman and a friend, Hurrell Froude, travelled to Italy on vacation. He had the chance to observe a number of Catholic devotions, and his impression of the Roman Catholic Church as intrinsically corrupt and spiritually decayed (the received notion in English

Protestant circles) began to be altered, even though the religious practices of the Italians felt culturally alien to his English sensibility. The experience of another illness, this time serious enough to be life-threatening, whilst staying alone in Sicily, marked a watershed for Newman. It is here that he wrote his famous poem, “Lead Kindly Light”, and pledged himself to undertake the work of renewing and purifying the Church of England, no matter what the cost. Immediately on his return, Keble preached his famous sermon “On National Apostasy” and the Oxford Movement was launched.

The Tracts of the Movement were delivered by keen adherents to vicarages around the country; Newman rode out on horseback to deliver some himself. The Movement caused great excitement in the 1830s, especially among the young, stirring them up to consider the nature of the Church and its position vis-à-vis the State, with which it had been inextricably entwined ever since King Henry VIII had declared himself, and not the Pope, its head on earth in England. Newman, who at this time had begun his pioneering studies on the Fathers (then much neglected), had realised that the Church, though sometimes forced to acquiesce in virtual state takeovers, had always conceived itself to be an autonomous community - communion - and Catholic, that is, universal, supra-national, with the bishops as guardians of the Apostolic Faith.

Although he regarded himself as merely one of a group of friends, Newman was undoubtedly the most dynamic leader of the Movement and his influence grew not only from the Tracts (unsigned), but from his sermons, which because he published them in a series of books reached a nationwide audience. Readers, expecting controversial Catholic views, were faced instead with a psychologically penetrating preaching of Christ the Lord, the Christ of the Gospels, his words, his works of healing, his mysterious self-sacrifice on the cross, his resurrection from death and continuing presence in the communion of his followers - and the challenge he presents to all to change their lives in following him. Thus the Catholic revival was a true religious revival, addressed to conscience.

From 1833 till 1841 Newman was the chief instigator of the Oxford Movement, which was growing all the time, reviving interest in the Catholic elements in a tradition long overlaid with Protestant ideas, but also arousing strong opposition from the majority of establishment men. For these, Tract 90 was the last straw. In it, Newman argued that the 39 Articles, which had to be signed by all ministers of the Church of England and all members of the University, were not so much a Protest against the Catholic Faith, as against medieval errors and corruptions. They could therefore be taken in a Catholic sense. This was essential to the case that the Church of England was part of the Catholic Church. But it provoked an uproar in London

as well as in Oxford, where Newman acknowledged his authorship in answer to a censure from the university authorities. London papers proclaimed that popery was unmasked at Oxford: this was the beginning of the legend of Newman as a guileful, dissimulating, secret papist.

The Littlemore Years

It was also the beginning of Newman's retreat to Littlemore, an outlying part of St Mary's parish, where he had built a small church in 1836 and started a school for the poorer children of the village. It is here that we see Newman's pastoral side coming to the fore. He personally taught the children their catechism, and how to sing the psalms, leading them with his fiddle; but he also had a care for their physical needs, kitting the girls out with new pinafores. He kept a rigorous Lent each year, with severe fasting, though he walked into Oxford most days to perform his duties there. He converted some stable buildings into a simple residence, where he was soon joined by various young men who were beginning to feel that there was no place for them in a Church of England which maintained its Protestantism so vociferously.

During the years at Littlemore Newman, who had stopped the Tracts at his Bishop's request, had to endure condemnation from almost all the Bishops, in their triennial Charges, thus demonstrating to him that they repudiated the role of guardians of the Catholic and

Apostolic faith, except as it had been Reformed in the sixteenth century. Newman gave up St Mary's in 1843, and lived at Littlemore as a layman, the services being said there by his curate and friend, William John Copeland. Newman read the daily offices of the Roman Breviary, from the volumes that had belonged to his friend, and fellow anglo-catholic Hurrell Froude, who died in 1836.

The process of moving from the Church of England to the Catholic Church in communion with the Holy See of Rome, was painful for Newman, as conscience seemed to be prizing him out of his life's work and away from his oldest friends towards a Catholic Church which in England had long been suppressed under penal laws, lifted only in 1829, and consequently was little known, few in numbers and with few educational opportunities. He was also uncertain that the Roman Church had not been seriously corrupted in its long history.

The Development of Christian Doctrine

In writing *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, Newman concluded that although there had been some corruptions in practice, and devotional exaggerations, the changes in doctrine had been the result of collective meditation on the original revelation of God in Christ, and that the Church in all ages had been guided into all truth by the Spirit, as Christ had promised. Newman was looking for the signs or characteristics

which legitimate development in Church teaching should display, and which theologians had for the past eighteen centuries implicitly accepted as criteria. These signs show that an idea is founded on something real (an emphasis on the “real” is characteristic of Newman’s thought throughout his life), which is both revealed by God and understood more deeply by men as the centuries unfold.

“The development then of an idea is not like an investigation worked out on paper, in which each successive advance is a pure evolution from a foregoing, but is carried on through and by means of communities of men and their leaders and guides; and it employs their minds as its instruments, and depends upon them, while it uses them.” This applies in the first place to the revealed truth of Scripture. Developments in doctrine after the completion of the Bible, that is to say throughout Church history, should display “certain characteristics...as a test to discriminate between them and corruptions.” Newman uses “corruption” in a sense analogous to human biology, where a malfunction of the body leads to its eventual death. The characteristics of authentic doctrinal development (Newman lists seven) are analogous to those of a well-functioning body. The Church is such a body: the body of Christ on earth.

So he wrote himself into conviction at last and was received into Catholic communion on October 9th 1845. It is perhaps significant that the man who

performed this favour for one of the leading lights of Oxford University (and who later described Newman as one of the most humble and lovable men he had ever met), was a priest whose principal mission was to the poor in the industrial midlands. For it was to be in this context that Blessed Dominic Barberi's most famous convert would serve the Roman Catholic Church for the last forty five years of his life.

THE LATER YEARS

Ordination and the Oratory

One of the worst trials of Newman's last year at Littlemore had been the mass of letters he had received as the result of a report in the papers that he had already gone over to Rome, many berating and abusive but others, more painful, from anguished Tractarians who felt he was deserting them. But his actual conversion was followed by an exodus from the Church of England of professional men, clergy, lawyers, doctors, schoolmasters and their families, which naturally enraged the public, the newspapers, Parliament and Protestants of all parties. Newman himself was given a temporary home, with his younger disciples, at Old Oscott College, outside Birmingham, which he rechristened Maryvale (he also took the name of Mary as his confirmation name). But he was soon sent to Rome, with Ambrose St John, to study for the priesthood. There, at the College of Propaganda Fide, he was ordained a Catholic priest and said his first mass, on the feast of Corpus Christi 1847.

After much thought and prayer and discussion with his band of young ex-Oxford men, Newman decided to join the Congregation of the Oratory, a religious institute which had grown up round the charismatic Philip Neri, a

Florentine who spent nearly all his long life in turbulent sixteenth century Rome. St Philip was a great original, an ecstatic contemplative who lived in the world, a shrewd practical psychologist with a sense of humour, a lover of scripture and of music, who scandalised conservative clerics by giving frequent communion to lay people, even to “little married women.”

When his devoted disciples determined to form a community he insisted that they should not take monastic vows, but each keep their own property so as to be free to leave if he wished. The priests were to live together, following a Rule of life, forming in towns a centre for lay people to gather and deepen their understanding of the faith, in discussion, and prayer. This seemed to Newman the community best suited to his university converts and also for the expanding industrial towns of England, which he regarded as the future seats of political power. For this reason he was content to be sent to Birmingham, where Nicholas Wiseman, the patron of the converts, was Bishop of the Midland District, with his seat at Pugin’s redbrick Gothic College of (new) Oscott.

Newman had been authorised to adapt the 16th century Rule for 19th century England, and in February 1848 he formally set up the Oratory at Maryvale. The Oratorians wear a long, waisted cassock, and an open, not a roman collar, which originally was simply the collar of the shirt. The first year was full of the human problems of forming

into a community the very various individuals who wanted to stay with Newman, but at the beginning of 1849 he moved into Birmingham, where he had bought the lease of an old gin distillery in the backstreets of Deritend, converting the big room once filled with vats into a chapel. Here, almost at once, rather to Newman's surprise, poor factory children came crowding in every evening, "like herrings in season", as he said. They worked so late in the presswork factories that he could not start a school for them, but he formed a choir (for girls as well), and the young Fathers instructed them in the faith. For the next few years Newman was living here, working extremely hard and so short of money that he could not afford a new pair of shoes. At one time he played the organ in the chapel.

Father Faber

Another element in the picture was Father Frederick Faber, an enthusiastic Oxford convert thirteen years younger than Newman, who arrived with a train of followers, young university men and village youths from his old parish. He had already formed them into a community which he called the Brothers of the Will of God (Fr Dominic Barberi called them Brothers of the Will of Faber). They outnumbered Newman's group and came saddled with the responsibility for a mission in the country, at old Cotton College, where a church had been

built by Pugin for Lord Shrewsbury - who was not at all willing to be thus deserted. In consequence several Fathers had to be posted there to run the mission, until Newman could achieve a settlement with the Earl and the diocese.

Faber, who had taken the name of Wilfrid, pushed Newman into making a foundation in London almost before the back-street one in Birmingham, and got himself put in charge as Rector. This forced Newman to divide his group before they had really grown together, and send some of his best men to London. From 1850, when Wiseman became the first Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster in the restored hierarchy, the London Oratory inevitably became the one in the public eye. Wiseman invited Newman to give lectures there on the Movement, a task which he disliked but carried out in the hope of winning hesitating Tractarians to the Roman obedience. And many did "come over" as a result.

Reaction and Counter-Reaction

The restoration of the Catholic hierarchy (with territorial dioceses instead of mission districts) caused the biggest anti-papal uproar since the Gordon Riots of 1780, with hostile leaders in *The Times*, cartoons in *Punch* (cadaverous Newman appearing almost as often as rotund Wiseman), angry public meetings of respectable people up and down the country, mob attacks on convents, pelting of suspected priests with mud and stones (a fate

which dogged Blessed Dominic Barberi, who is said to have turned the other cheek by picking up one of the stones and kissing it). Bonfires were lit, with effigies of the Pope and Wiseman burning on top.

Disturbances continued into 1851 and in the summer Newman gave a series of lectures at the Birmingham Corn Exchange on *The Present Position of Catholics in England*, intended to calm 'No-Popery' passions, using his favourite weapon: satire. He showed up the absurdity of the anti-Catholic legends by inventing parodies - for instance, ignorant foreigners misinterpreting legal phrases such as "the King can do no wrong" as meaning that the British believed their monarch impeccable and sinless. The lectures were printed separately and sold at the door, the book was published soon after; the audience laughed and went away enlightened.

The Achilli Affair

In the course of the lectures Newman made a serious attack on an ex-priest, the Italian Giacomo Achilli, who was touring the country, backed by the Protestant Alliance, posing as a victim of the Inquisition for conscience sake, inflaming passions with his tales of torture and clerical vice. Wiseman had exposed Achilli's real background in the *Dublin Review*, saying that he had been brought to court in Rome for repeated seduction of virgins, expelled from the Dominican order and

sentenced to detention in a monastery - from which he had escaped. Few people other than Catholics read the *Dublin Review*, but everybody read Newman, and the Protestant Alliance persuaded Achilli to bring a libel case against the Apostate Newman, as the papers called him.

Newman had relied on Wiseman's papers to back him, but as the Cardinal had mislaid them, he was forced to get direct evidence from abroad, including several of the women from Italy, who were chaperoned by Maria Giberne, a family friend who had followed Newman into the Church (she left a memoir of her adventures at the Oratory). Yet when, after many delays from the other side, the trial at last began, Achilli brazenly denied all the charges. The jury held that Newman had proved none of them, except that Achilli had been deprived of his lectureship! There was another delay while Newman's lawyers asked for a new trial, but it was refused, and on January 31st 1853 Newman was sentenced to a £100 fine and jail till it was paid. He had been prepared for prison, with his portmanteau packed, but his friends paid up on the spot. Newman received from Judge Coleridge (a friend of Keble's) a severe lecture on his moral deterioration since his perversion to Rome, and Achilli shortly afterwards decamped to Canada, leaving a trail of seduced chambermaids behind him.

Although the Achilli trial reduced Newman's reputation among Protestants (so shocking to refer to

seductions in a public lecture), it raised it among Catholics, who regarded him as their champion, subscribed to a fund for his expenses and cheered him loudly as he left the court. But it had been a gruelling experience, especially trying to Newman in the suspense and uncertainty, which was still hanging over him when he was asked to preach the sermon at the first Synod of the restored hierarchy in 1852. He called it *The Second Spring* - the Catholic Church rising again in England after a winter three hundred years long.

Dublin and the Idea of a University

The same year, still not knowing his fate, he went over to Ireland to deliver his lectures on *The Idea of a University*, at the Rotunda in Dublin, where he had been invited by Archbishop Cullen to found a Catholic university. There were delays here too, and Newman was not inaugurated as Rector till 1854, though he had taken a house and put things in motion before that. Newman's struggles to found the Catholic university on the right lines were prolonged and exhausting, hampered as he was by Cullen's suspicions of his aims at a liberal education for laymen and by the other Irish Bishops' suspicions of Cullen, regarded as too much of a papalist, with influence in Rome. He certainly had that, and it was he who prevented Newman's being made a (titular) Bishop, which Wiseman thought he had secured for him, spreading the news

around, which became very embarrassing when nothing happened. Newman would have accepted it solely because it would have given him a seat on the university commission; but later he was glad of the omission, since it left him freer to pursue his own work. Newman was looking for work, not honours, in the Church.

Newman made many lay friends in Ireland, even among the Young Irelanders, but this only increased the clerical mistrust. Yet he succeeded in setting up faculties, appointing well-qualified lecturers and starting examinations. He also presided over a group of students from various countries who lived in his own house. (He shocked Cullen by allowing them a billiard table). He was also able to build a university church out of the remainder of the fund for his defence in the Achilli Trial, employing the convert John Hungerford Pollen as architect, who used Celtic marbles to excellent effect. Pollen, newly married at the time, long remembered the charm of Newman's company, walking in Phoenix Park and visiting the Zoo. "He shed cheerfulness as a sunbeam sheds light, even when many difficulties were pressing."

London and the Idea of an Oratory

Difficulties were pressing, not only in Dublin, but in England. All the time Newman was travelling to and fro across the Irish Sea (56 times in the service of the university, he recorded) he was trying to deal with a series

of crises in the two Oratories, which issued in a serious conflict between them in 1855. This tension is the origin of the misunderstanding whereby Newman has been called “sensitive” - modernised as “difficult” - supposedly taking offence easily and brooding resentfully on imaginary slights. This is almost the opposite of the truth: few men have more patiently endured undeserved slander and contempt, first as an Anglican and later as a Catholic. For while Newman forbade any talk to outsiders by the Birmingham Oratory, Faber and the London Oratorians told their side of the story freely to Wiseman and all their influential friends, showing Newman’s letters about and some of their replies. What they did not show were their own letters to each other, in which their real motives and their attitude to Newman are clear enough.

Faber enthusiastically adopted the current ultra-papalism of Rome, which was largely a reaction against the increasingly secularist nationalisms of European countries. The ecclesiastical powers of the Pope were magnified as his temporal sovereignty was eroded by the forces of the *Risorgimento*, fighting for the national unification of Italy. Newman did not think the Temporal Power (a medieval creation to ensure that the Pope was not a subject of any Emperor or prince) was essential to the papal office in modern times. This attitude was not congenial to the London Fathers. They also persisted in thinking intellectual work “un-Philippine”, in spite of the fact that St Philip had

encouraged one of his first disciples (later the famous Cardinal Baronius) to write Church History - keeping him humble by also making him the cook.

Although Newman had given the London house its independence very soon after its foundation, reserving only the right to be consulted in matters of importance, the London Fathers and he somehow ended up disagreeing over the interpretation of the Rule to the different houses (an all-important issue because it was the one thing that bound the Oratorians together in their common life). Newman, who was deeply committed to St Philip's Oratory and responsible for its development in England, was extremely concerned. He decided that he must go to Rome himself to sort out the situation, for the sake of the future. At that time he expected to found other houses - Liverpool and Leeds were both possibilities, and another house in London, in the East End.

Blessings in Rome, Chills in England

In Rome, during a private audience with the Pope, Pius IX, Newman told him of his community's work at the prison, the workhouse, orphanage and poor schools. The Holy Father was very pleased, saying that this was an age for active works. And when Newman asked his blessing for the women who assisted in these works of mercy, he said enthusiastically that women did more than men in this age. Newman had wished for "not nuns but nunnish

ladies” to help with the poor women and girls in Deritend, and he soon got them, mostly converts, widows and spinsters of mature age, who became invaluable assistants. Besides his blessing the Pope gave them a Paschal Candle and his own picture of St Philip, and granted indulgences for writing books, for painting and music. Newman had also asked a papal blessing for the London Oratory. On his return in February 1856, he transmitted it to London and almost at once went back to Ireland, whither he had been summoned by Cullen.

But the quarrel between the original two Oratories, as publicised in London, proved so damaging to Newman’s reputation as a religious superior that he was never able to found another Oratory anywhere in Britain. Newman’s friends, both inside his own Oratory and outside it, wanted him to defend himself, but he refused. He could not do it without attacking Faber, and this he would not do. Faber was doing good work in London, making converts among high society, preaching fervent sermons and writing hymns and devotional books. To attack him would be to introduce division among the beleaguered Catholics. Newman once said it was better that he should be thought a tyrant, than Father Faber double-dealing. But of course this left the London version holding the field. People thought it a mere matter of Faber’s accidentally infringing Newman’s authority in a trivial case, for which he and his had made grovelling apologies,

in vain. This suggested that Newman was not so much a tyrant as touchy about his own dignity, retiring into brooding resentment when the game went against him.

Wiseman, for instance, was turned against him, and let drop the new translation of the Bible which he had earlier asked Newman to supervise. Newman had consulted seminary professors (who were enthusiastic and urged him to abandon the chapter and verse arrangement in favour of paragraphing) and appointed his team, among them Fr Ambrose St John, who had studied Hebrew under Pusey, and Fr Edward Caswall, the Latinist translator of many ancient hymns still sung today. But now, when he wrote asking if he could hold the copyright for a year or so, to finance the work, he got no reply. It was Wiseman's method of dropping the whole project. Catholics in England had to wait a hundred years for a new translation.

The Rambler and the Role of the Laity

Unfortunately this loss of reputation in London was compounded soon afterwards by suspicions of his orthodoxy in Rome. This came about through his connexion with the *Rambler*, a bimonthly magazine which had been started by a married convert clergyman, John Moore Capes, whom Newman had advised, out of his long experience with Anglican periodicals - and he had carried on as a Catholic, starting a university Gazette in Dublin and later *Atlantis*, a magazine aimed at English-speaking

Catholics further afield. In 1858 the *Rambler* was acquired by the young Sir John Acton, scion of an old Catholic family, who had studied in Germany (his mother's country) under the Church historian Dollinger, and followed his stepfather Lord Granville's Liberal politics. Acton was in partnership with Richard Simpson, another married convert clergyman, who did most of the editorial work.

Newman saw the need for a high quality literary magazine with a Catholic, but not a narrow, outlook and continued to advise. Unfortunately the lively-minded Simpson could not resist quoting historical scandals and making his points in a witty polemical way - "discharging peashooters at Cardinals who happened to pass by the window" as Newman (who liked him) once remarked to Acton. The newly restored hierarchy became so annoyed at what they regarded as disloyalty that they threatened censure, which would have deprived the magazine of most of its readers. Newman was asked to mediate but the bishops stipulated that the proprietors must resign the editorship. Acton and Simpson said they would only do so if they could hand the paper over to him. Eventually he accepted, intending to blue-pencil any remarks "offensive to pious ears" in the number in preparation and to introduce a correspondence section so that views could be aired without editorial responsibility.

But, as it happened, it was Newman himself who caused the worst offence to episcopal ears, through a comment on

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