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**THE LEADING
INTERPRETATIONS ON
THE SIGNIFICANCE AND
NATURE OF THE OXFORD
MOVEMENT**

**Extracto de la Tesis Doctoral presentada en la Facultad
de Teología de la Universidad de Navarra**

**PAMPLONA
1988**



**Ad normam Statutorum Facultatis Theologiae Universitatis
Navarrensis, perlegimus et adprobavimus**

Pampilonae, die 5 mensis octobri anni 1985

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**Excerpta e Dissertationibus in Sacra Theologia
Vol. XIV n. 3**



PRESENTATION

The Oxford Movement has been the object of numerous studies. Books, articles and introductions to editions of source works have abounded during these last years. The subject is treated by authors of different Christian confessions and analyzed from various and at times heterogeneous points of view. As such, they are often difficult to integrate within a global vision.

This situation urgently demands at least the establishment of some basic coordinates for reading and interpreting the abundant source materials. It is a task which would permit a true progress in the understanding of Tractarian ideas, the personality of the protagonists and the historical sense of the Movement.

The present article, which is part of the broader study undertaken for the doctoral dissertation, describes and classifies a number of interpretations on the Oxford Movement advanced over a period of one hundred years. It is the conviction of the author that the critical analysis he offers will pave the way for visions of the Tractarian Movement more in keeping with its true nature.

I wish to acknowledge the help given to me by Professor José Morales, of the School of Theology of the University of Navarra.





GENERAL TABLE OF CONTENTS *

	Pág.
TABLE OF CONTENTS	i
ABBREVIATIONS	v
BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER I: CHRISTOPHER DAWSON'S THE SPIRIT OF THE OXFORD MOVEMENT (1933)	6
A. Commemorating a Centenary: 1833-1933	7
B. The Character of the Leaders. Keble and Froude	15
C. Froude's Influence on Newman	18
D. Newman, the Leading Figure	21
E. The Progress of the Movement	23
F. The Death of the <i>Via Media</i>	29
G. The Independence of the Church	32
H. Dogmatic Foundations of the Tractarian Reform	36
I. Oxford and the <i>Tracts for the Times</i>	39
J. A Summary of Dawson's Ideas on the Oxford Movement	41
CHAPTER II: THE LEADING INTERPRETATIONS ON THE SIGNIFICANCE AND NATURE OF THE OXFORD MOVEMENT	45
A. General Remarks	45
B. The Oxford Movement Viewed as a Spiritually Enriching Impulse Emanating from the Anglican Church on Behalf of the Anglican Church ...	54
1. A Standard Interpretation	54

* Pages are numbered after the original text of the Thesis extant in the archives of the School of Theology.

2. The Anglican Classical Account of the Movement	58
3. Some Writings on the Occasion of the Centennial	62
4. The Oxford Movement as a Part of an English <i>Common Tradition</i>	70
5. The Movement and the <i>Zeitgeist</i>	72
6. The Alleged Evangelical Influence	74
7. Final Remarks	77
C. The Oxford Movement as Tending toward Rome, and Foreign to the Spirit and Principles of Current Anglicanism	79
1. The Evangelical Reaction	79
2. The Liberals and the Movement	84
3. The Oxford Counter-reformation	89
4. A Modern Anglican View	90
D. The Movement, an Utopian and Futile Endeavour to Catholicize Anglicanism	96
1. A Roman-Catholic Perspective	96
2. Critical Notes on R. W. Church's History of the Movement	97
3. The Impossibility of Making Anglicanism Really Catholic	100
4. Some Severe and Friendly Judgements	103
E. The Oxford Movement Considered as an Undertaking which both Reformed the Anglican Church and was Leading it by its own Principles to the Catholic Church	107
1. Wiseman's Acquaintance with the Tractarians and His <i>Lectures</i> in England	107
2. Wiseman, Russell and Newman	114
F. A Spiritual Restoration not Derived from Anglican Principles	121
1. A Due Modern Revision of the Tractarian Movement	121
2. The Reliability of Newman's Lectures of 1850 as a Correct View of the Oxford Movement	125
3. A Complementary Notion	128
CHAPTER III: THE NATURE OF THE OXFORD MOVEMENT	133
A. The Oxford Movement, a Religious Party Well-defined by Common Principles and Clearly Different from Other Groups	134
1. A Coherent Group	134
2. The Gradual Formation of a Vision	140
B. A Description of the Oxford Movement according to its Central Features	144
1. Not Evangelical, but Dogmatic and Inimical to Emotionalism ...	144
2. Not Simply Romantic but Essentially Religious	155
3. Not Typically Anglican	169
a. Anti-Erastianism	169



b. The <i>Politics</i> of the Movement	175
4. Critical of Protestantism	181
a. A General Trend	181
b. Froude's Contribution	184
c. Newman's Decisive Assault and Systematic Criticism	188
5. Not Stationary, but a True Movement toward a Goal	200
6. Alien to the National Religious Spirit	206
C. The Oxford Movement as Founded on a Precise Doctrinal System	209
CONCLUSIONS	216
BIBLIOGRAPHY	227





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ABBREVIATIONS

Apologia	Apologia Pro Vita Sua
AW	John Henry Newman: Autobiographical Writings
CHR	Catholic Historical Review
DA	Discussions and Arguments on Various Subjects
Diff. I	Certain Difficulties Felt by Anglicans, I
DoRev	Downside Review
ECH	Essays Critical and Historical
ER	Edinburgh Review
IER	Irish Ecclesiastical Record
LD	Letters and Diaries of John Henry Newman
PPS	Parochial and Plain Sermons
Remains	Remains of the Late Reverend Richard Hurrell Froude, M. A., I-IV
SSD	Sermons Bearing on Subjects of the Day
Ward	The Life and Times of Cardinal Wiseman, I-II





THE LEADING INTERPRETATIONS ON THE SIGNIFICANCE AND NATURE OF THE OXFORD MOVEMENT

A. GENERAL REMARKS

1. The interpretations concerning the value which ought to be attributed to the activity of the Tractarians remount to the very same beginnings of the Movement in 1833. Since its outset, commentaries, praises, and attacks accompany the footsteps of Newman and his companions, and demonstrate that the judgements on the new reformers and the work they did were always very varied as understood by their contemporaries.

The variety of opinions and reactions must not surprise us if we are to think that practically all active sectors in the religious life of England felt bound to take position concerning a religious Movement which did not have any equal in the country since the 16th century.

The period of interpretations contemporary to the events terminates towards the end of the decade of the '40's and is not followed by any other epoch of interest for our topic till 1891. In this year there was published an important work of R. W. Church, *The Oxford Movement*, which brings about a new wave, a more modest one this time, of commentaries and postures.

The centenary of the Movement in 1933 witnesses the emerging of a third phase of interpretative literature. It is a brief period which demonstrates, nevertheless, very rich in monographs and minor works of different mark.

The increasing interest for Newman and for his work, Anglican as well as Catholic, generated new contributions which in some way culminate in 1983, the 150th anniversary of the Movement.

We can consider this as the fourth stage of the bibliography which we are going to examine.

Anyhow, our study will not follow a chronological order, an order which would be least useful to us. The nature of the writings which we are to study demands that we examine and present them according to criterions of content. We will therefore attempt to group them homogeneously in keeping with the theses which they explicitly or implicitly assert concerning the Oxford Movement.

In our opinions, we can form five groups of authors and works, each group defending a distinct idea of the Movement, which can be considered different among themselves. These conceptions should be the following:

1. impulse of Anglican Church reform which proceeds from the same and is ultimately resolved in and within her;

2. catholicizing and roman (romantic and popish) Movement, alien in its very root to the principles and spirit of traditional Anglicanism;

3. utopian and futile endeavour to make Anglicanism Catholic;

4. spiritual movement in order to reform the Anglican Church which given its principles, necessarily directs her towards the Catholic Church as its natural destiny;

5. radical movement of reform whose principal ideas of ecclesiastical independence do not proceed from Anglicanism and contain a negative judgement, at least implicit, concerning the divine character of the Anglican Church.

These notions regarding the Oxford Movement are not radically opposed to one another and they possess aspects which can be considered complementary. Some of them are derived, nonetheless, from religious suppositions and interests or from very different denominations.

The authors who form n. 1 are in great majority Anglicans and they offer us the standard vision of the Oxford Movement which have predominated in Anglicanism.

The authors of n. 2 and 5 maintain points of common interest, when they both deny whatever affinity between the Movement and the atmosphere in which it is born, but this thesis presupposes in the authors of n. 2 a protestant disqualification

of the Movement while in those of n. 5, it represents a praise for its *Catholic* character. Some condemn the Movement as well as others praise it.

The writings contained under 3 and 4 express in the last end common theses and almost all are derived from Catholic authors.

2. Before examining the interesting bibliography regarding the Oxford Movement according to the mentioned sections, we shall cursorily go over the commentaries and allusions of secondary importance which can be found scattered in the religious and profane literature of the last 150 years. A very important phenomenon like Tractarianism has been the object of much attention and received numerous labels —keen and superficial— on the part of adversaries and sympathizers.

A standard description considers the Oxford Movement as a «group within the Church of England from the 1830's seeking to restore the High Church traditions of the 17th century»¹. The same source explains in the forthgoing that «the Movement arose out of anxiety over the implications of Catholic Emancipation and the Parliamentary Reform Act of 1832. It was led by three Fellows of Oriel College, Oxford, and led to a strong Anglo-Catholic revival.»

Not all the descriptions of the Oxford Movement are so aseptic and vague like this one. Some exceptionally adopt an aggressive tone like that of Ronald Pearsall² who permits himself a violent and sarcastic attack against the Tractarians, their intentions and their activity.

The author thinks that the Oxford Movement was an undertaking «of young men in perplexity», which «created a schism in the established church.» «It was a disaster to those who were swept into it by the insidious personality of Newman»³.

He recognizes that Newman was the decisive factor and that without him «the Oxford Movement would have been shortlived and unimpressive.» But the influence of Newman was

1. Ch. COOK and J. STEVENSON, *The Longman Handbook of Modern British History 1714-1980*, London, 1983, 292.

2. *The Oxford Movement in Retrospect*, *The Quarterly Review* (1966) 75-83.

3. *Ibid.*, 75.

precisely what, according to Pearsall, converted the Movement into a lamentable episode of Anglicanism's history. «The Tracts succeeded. The theology became more and more tortuous, and the element of what Orwell later called doublethink began to make an appearance»⁴.

There are few judgements more severe on the intentions and activity of the Tractarians and particularly of Newman. Says Pearsall: «Although it was perfectly clear to outsiders that Newman was drifting towards the Church of Rome, he was happily oblivious; he was God intoxicated... What Newman did, of course, was a matter of his own conscience, but the confusion he produced upon the young minds of Oxford can scarcely be overestimated... Without Newman, the Oxford Movement could have become a quiet, somewhat, typically English episode»⁵.

This is a judgement typical of one who has not comprehended the religious nature of the Oxford Movement and maintains toward Newman and what he represents an animosity very rare even among Protestants.

The great majority of modern authors adopt a respectful attitude toward the Tractarians.

The Oxford Movement is almost to everyone an impetus of spiritual revival within the bosom of the Anglican Church which has extended its influence in other religious groups. The Movement is considered as «the finest attempt ever made in the Church of England to educate her people in their religion»⁶.

Some authors consider its role in expanding the *High Church* sector of Anglicanism and arouse attention on the fact that «since the beginning of the Oxford Movement, the boundaries of High Churchmanship had been extended; it was no longer 'High and Dry' or even necessarily Tory»⁷.

Others refer to the Tractarian revival as a factor of great importance in containing the advance in England of the subjective and rationalist ideas of Schleiermacher. «No Schleierma-

3. *Ibid.*, 75.

4. *Ibid.*, 76.

5. *Ibid.*, 77-79.

6. T. HARDY. *The Tractarian 'Blind-Spot'*, *DoRev* LI (1933) 238.

7. J. W. BURROW, *A Liberal Descent*, Cambridge, 1981, 100.

cher era ever dawned in Britain, I. Ellis says; there was no revolution of theology on the lines that he proposed. The hostility to German thought, the Tractarian revival and the upheavals of the church parties were too recent to allow such a development to take place»⁸.

Authors interested in determining whether the men of the Oxford Movement had or had no interest on public questions of their time are not lacking. R. W. Church and G. M. Trevelyan⁹ maintain that the Oxford reformers had little interest on political affairs. But the point is debatable. Alvan S. Ryan defends a contrary view. Says he: «it is no exaggeration to say that the Movement was as much concerned with politics as with religion, for from its inception the central question was that of the relation between Church and State»¹⁰.

Perry Butler opines that the Oxford Movement can be considered under two viewpoints, that is, «primarily in terms of ecclesiastical politics and partisanship, or in terms of a revival of devotional life and spiritual discipline»¹¹.

The forthgoing exposition will demonstrate —we hope— that in practice similar division of optics is untenable and that the Oxford Movement can only be understood correctly when it is studied as a whole.

René Kollar has called attention recently on the eventual connection of the Oxford Movement with monastic ideals: «One can detect three major themes in the Oxford Movement: a reaction against the secularism of the age, a desire to elevate the importance of the Pre-Reformation tradition, and a dedication to the principles of the ancient pristine Church». «These characteristics,» Kollar concludes, «nurtured the growth of monastic ideals in 19th century England»¹². Be it as it may, it is a matter of secondary interest for our subject.

8. *Schleiermacher in Britain*, *Scottish Journal of Theology*, XXXIII (1980) 420.

9. *British History in the Nineteenth Century and After, 1782-1919*, 1922, reprinted in Harmondsworth, 1965, 276.

10. *The Development of Newman's Political Thought*, *Review of Politics* VII (1945) 211.

11. *Gladstone. Church, State and Tractarianism*, Oxford, 1982, 157.

12. *The Oxford Movement and the Heritage of Benedictine Monasticism*, *DoRev* CI (1983) 281.

B. THE OXFORD MOVEMENT VIEWED AS A SPIRITUALLY ENRICHING IMPULSE EMANATING FROM THE ANGLICAN CHURCH ON BEHALF OF THE ANGLICAN CHURCH

1. *A Standard Interpretation*

This thesis represents the standard interpretation of the Oxford Movement. It is maintained by almost all Anglican authors, scholars as well as Churchmen, and by some Catholics today.

This view has a lot to say for itself, since it rests on elementary and *prima facie* historical evidence. The events clearly depict the Oxford Movement as an undertaking of Anglican clerics to rescue their Church from the crisis it was suffering in the first decades of the 19th century.

Contemporary observers of the Oxford Movement and its activities necessarily perceive it as a campaign to revitalize the dormant Anglican Church and to guard certain rights of the Church discreetly against excessive state influence. This simple but valid interpretation suffices for them as an adequate and almost self-evident description of the Movement. To the ordinary Anglican, the Movement is merely what is seen and needs no interpretation.

One observes this point of view in the first Anglican episcopal pronouncement on the *Tracts* and other writings of Newman and his companions¹³. The Bishop of Oxford, led on by the different opinions of many who thought the activity of the Tractarians disturbing, publishes a descriptive and pointed charge. Writes Bagot: «You will probably expect that I should say something of that peculiar development of religious feeling in one part of the diocese, of which so much has been said, and which has been *supposed* to *tend* immediately to a Revival of several of the Errors of Romanism»¹⁴.

The Bishop considers the Oxford Movement as basically a source of healthy and even necessary reform. Says he: «In these days of lax and spurious liberality, anything which tends

13. *Bishop Bagot's Charge of July-August 1838 to the Clergy of the Oxford Diocese on the Tractarian Movement, English Historical Documents XII(1)*, London, 1956, 344.

14. *Ibid.*, 344-345.



to recall forgotten truth, is *valuable*: and where these publications (the *Tracts*) have directed men's minds to such important subjects as the union, the discipline, and the authority of the Church, I think they have done good service... In speaking therefore of the authors of the *Tracts* in question, I would say, that I think their desire to restore the ancient discipline of the Church most praiseworthy; I rejoice in their attempts to secure a stricter attention to the Rubrical directions in the Book of Common Prayer; and I heartily approve the spirit which would restore a due observance of the Fasts and Festivals of the Church»¹⁵.

The bishop however, also includes a warning: «There may be some points,» he continues, «in which, perhaps, from ambiguity of expression, or similar cause, it is not impossible, but that evil rather than the intended good, may be produced on minds of a peculiar temperament.. I would implore them, by the purity of their intentions, to be cautious, both in their writings and actions, to take heed lest their good be evil spoken of; lest in their exertions to re-establish unity, they unhappily create fresh schism; lest in their admiration of antiquity they revert to practices which heretofore have ended in superstition»¹⁶.

These moderate but clear words temper Bagot's acceptance of the Movement; he affirms that it can hold a legitimate place within Anglicanism only if it admits a limit to its teachings and projects of reform. It is interesting to note that Newman, after awaiting the episcopal charge with expectation¹⁷, suffered a big disappointment upon hearing it¹⁸.

Bagot's second charge on the Oxford Movement published in 1842¹⁹, permits us to see the idea which the Bishop, like many other Anglicans, had formed of what he considered upright Tractarianism or corrupt Tractarianism. Says Bagot: «The last four years have witnesses the rapid development of these principles, which the world has identified with Oxford... I

15. *Ibid.*, 345.

16. *Ibid.*

17. «The Bishop delivers his charge tomorrow-in which he speaks favorably, I am told, of the Tracts» *LD VI*, 284: To H. A. Woodgate, August, 13, 1838.

18. «I am just come away from hearing the bishop's charge-and certainly I am disappointed in the part in which he alluded to us» *Ibid.*, 286: To John Keble, August 14, 1838.

19. Bishop Bagot's Charge of May 1842 to the Clergy of the Oxford Diocese on Tractarianism and Tract 90, English Historical Document, XII(1) 350-354.

cannot but think, that those four years will be hereafter looked upon as the commencement of one of the most eventful epochs in the history of the English Catholic Church»²⁰.

After insisting that the Oxford Movement has peculiarities which render it quite unlike anything hitherto observed among Anglicans, Bagot rebuke the temper in which its advocates have been attacked and praises the virtue and good intention of the Tractarians: «Whatever may have been the errors... I will say this for them, that the moderation and forbearance they have shown under insults the most galling and provoking that can be imagined, has been exemplary»²¹.

The main point of the charge is, however, that the Movement, by deviating from its original purposes, is losing its Anglican legitimacy. According to Bagot, this is especially evident in Tract 90, which is incongruous with the spirit of true Anglicanism.

«With respect to the 90th Tract, which was the immediate cause of my interference, I have already expressed my opinion, that it was objectionable, and likely to disturb the peace of the Church. I thought so last year, and I think so still. I deeply regret its publication,... I am aware, that the Articles of our Church were rather drawn up with the view of including, than excluding men of various shades of opinions,... Still, I cannot persuade myself, that any but the plain obvious meaning is the meaning which as members of the Church we are bound to receive; and I cannot reconcile myself to a system of interpretation which is so subtle, that by it the Articles may be made to mean anything or nothing»²².

These remarks imply that Tract 90 betrays a certain inclination towards Rome and is no longer in keeping with the Anglican spirit of the Movement.

2. *The Anglican Classical Account of the Movement*

The same approach and line of thought can be read not only between the lines, but also on the surface of R. W. Church's classic *The Oxford Movement, Twelve Years; 1833-1845*, written in 1891.

20. *Ibid.*, 350.

21. *Ibid.*, 352.

22. *Ibid.*, 353.

Faithful to the historical facts, Church observes that «the movement of 1833 started out of the anti-Roman feelings of the Emancipation time. It was anti-Roman as much as it was anti-Sectarian and anti-Erastian»²³. It sprung out of the conscience and character of its leaders, to whom religion was a very personal matter which was to be taken most seriously. It was not a popular appeal; it addresses itself «not to the many but to the few»²⁴.

Church rightly sees that the Oxford Movement was not one of mere opinion. Says he: «It took two distinct thought connected lines. It was, on the one hand, theological; on the other, resolutely practical. Theologically, it dealt with great questions of religious principles—What is the Church? Is it a reality or a mode of speech? On what grounds does it rest? How may it be known? How is it to be discriminated from its rivals or counter-faits?... But on the other hand, the movement was marked by its deep earnestness on the practical side of genuine Christian life»²⁵.

It is this practical aspect which prevails in Church's view: «Even more than a theological reform, it was a protest against the loose unreality of ordinary religious morality»²⁶.

Writes Church: «in the first stage of the movement, moral earnestness and enthusiasm gave its impulse to theological interest and zeal»²⁷. A minimum of good theology was necessary to elevate the spiritual temperature of Anglicanism and above all, to avoid defections to Rome. Now Church seems to think that the main reason for the Movement going out of control was an excess of theological speculation.

«The fundamental conceptions and assumptions were reversed. It was not the Roman Church, but the English Church which was put on its trial; it was not the Roman Church, but the English, which was to be, if possible, apologised for perhaps borne with for a time, but which was to be regarded as deeply fallen, holding an untenable position, and incomparably, unpardonably, below both the standard and the practical system of the Roman Church. From this point of view the object of the movement was no longer to elevate and improve an independent

23. *The Oxford Movement, Twelve Years: 1833-1845*, 1891, reprinted in Chicago/London, 1970, 165.

24. *Ibid.*, 91.

25. *Ibid.*, 133.

26. *Ibid.*, 22.

27. *Ibid.*

English Church, but to approximate it as far as possible to what was assumed to be undeniable—the perfect catholicity of Rome»²⁸.

Very much in keeping with his basic presuppositions, Church maintains that it was the indifference and hostility of the Oxford authorities which made Newman leave the Anglican Church. Thus, the project of reform embodied by the Oxford Movement was not by itself sufficient to cause Newman to defect.

Says Church: «The movement was, for its first years at least, a loyal and earnest effort to serve the cause of the Church. Its objects were clear and reasonable; it aimed at creating a sincere and intelligent zeal for the Church...»²⁹. But «the men who by their place ought to have been able to gauge and control the movement... simply set their forces steadily to dis- countenance and discredit it»³⁰. «In their apathy,» continues the author, «in their self-satisfied ignorance... the authorities of the University let pass the great opportunity of their time. They had not taken the trouble to understand the movement, to discriminate between its aspects. It would have been a great thing for the English Church if the movement had gone on, at least with the friendly interest, if not with the support, of the University rulers»³¹.

According to Church, the big mistake of the authorities was their failure to recognize the true nature of the Movement, which was genuinely Anglican. The author is convinced, and this is his principal thesis, «the movement, whatever else it was, or whatever else it became, was in its first stages a movement for deeper religion, for a more real and earnest self-discipline, for a loftier morality, for more genuine self-devotion to a serious life, than had ever been seen in Oxford. It was an honest attempt to raise Oxford life, which by all evidence needed raising, to something more laborious and more religious, to something more worthy of the great Christian foundations of Oxford than the rivalry of colleges and schools, the mere literary atmosphere of the tutor's lecture room...»³².

28. *Ibid.*, 165-166.

29. *Ibid.*, 167.

30. *Ibid.*, 169.

31. *Ibid.*, 170.

32. *Ibid.*, 206.



After taking into account Church's comments and insights, the Movement emerges as something which is not exactly a *movement* —something in motion—, but rather a sort of stationary undertaking to improve Anglicanism but not to secede from it or to overthrow it.

3. *Some Writings on the Occasion of the Centennial*

Church's view reappears in the majority of Anglican writings published in 1933 on the occasion of the Oxford Movement's centenary.

Francis Cross points out that there was «nothing new» in the ideology of 1833³³. This remark is typical of the approach taken by these authors.

E. Knox, Anglican bishop of Manchester, considers the Oxford Movement one more manifestation of a general spiritual revival and writes that «we cannot conceal from ourselves the fact that the fervent piety of the founders of the movement was part of the religious awakening of their day, taking hold of them as it did of other schools and churches around them»³⁴.

This means that the Oxford Movement had antecedents and that it is not completely original in its more important aspects, such as its opposition to Erastianism. This thesis is defended by J. R. H. Moorman, among others. Moorman points to the Anglican figures of William Jones of Nayland, William Stevens, Charles Daubeny and Thomas Sikes, who in the 18th century «were driven by the spectacle of the Wesleyan Movement to turn their minds to a serious consideration of the nature of churchmanship»³⁵. Neither Alexander Knox nor John Jebb should be forgotten, according to Moorman, as harbingers of the Movement.

The essential fact remains that the Oxford Movement «was in the English Church the clearest and fullest re-affirmation of the primacy of the spiritual»³⁶. Here lies the key to interpreting

33. *The Oxford Movement and the 17th Century*, London, 1933, 7.

34. *The Tractarian Movement, 1833-1845*, London, 1933, 377.

35. *Forerunners of the Oxford Movement, Theology XXVI* (1933) 3ff. Cf. John T. McNEIL, *Anglicanism on the Eve of the Oxford Movement, Church History III* (1934) 95-114.

36. W. G. PECK, *The Social Implications of the Oxford Movement*, New York, 1933, 4.

it correctly. The Oxford Movement was the first to bestow to the Church of England as a whole the richness of spiritual life of which it was the repository.

Tractarianism did not carry therefore within itself any Roman tendency. C. Webb insists on this point. The Movement perhaps assumed various ends but «approximation to Roman Catholicism was certainly not one of them»³⁷. «Upon the whole,» the author points out, «the tendency of the Movement has been by no means Romeward»³⁸. In support of his assertion Webb gives principally two reasons: a) the services of the Anglican Church meet the needs that a large number of persons experience for dignity of ceremonial and sense of mystery; and b) the *ethos* of Anglicanism is quite different from that of the Roman Communion³⁹.

Three decades later we find the same accents and emphasis in Anglican literature which deals with this theme. A. Hill says it is impossible to understand Tractarians separated from the main intellectual and social trends of their time. Says he: «And yet a fresh examination of the Oxford Movement would seem to suggest that it was immediately caused by the political and social development of the eighteen-twenties and thirties, and that therefore the Tractarians were not so cut off from the concerns of their contemporaries»⁴⁰. In this context Hill makes his principal remark: «It would, after all be a mistake to think that the central ideas of Tractarianism were something new in the Church of England. They were commonplaces of Caroline and Non-Juring theology. But why did the Tractarians revive them; and why did their movement succeed in the eighteen-thirties and forties, and then decline?»⁴¹. The author gives the rather superficial answer that in an age of social unrest people were apprehensive of change, and when it was suggested by the Tractarians that the Reformation and the 1688 Revolution were responsible for the unhappy state of the country, almost every-

37. Cfr. *The Significance of the Oxford Movement in the History of Anglicanism*, *Theology* XXVI (1933) 25-36.

38. *Ibid.*, 31.

39. *Ibid.*, 31-32.

40. *The Tractarian Challenge*, *Theology* LXVI (1963) 280.

41. *Ibid.*

body was willing to give the older religious formulas and principles one more chance»⁴².

What Hill calls 'Rome attractions for the extremists' «were not,» he says, «typical of the movement as a whole. Many moderate high-churchmen deplored the hot-headedness of Hurrell Froude and the intellectual subtleties of Newman»⁴³.

Eugene Fairweather provides an interesting exposition of the view which we are discussing in his *introduction* to an edition of Tractarian writings⁴⁴.

The author identifies and defends the genuinely religious motives of the men of the Oxford Movement and the non Protestant character of its theology: «It was the Church, not the existing social order, that they defended; it was on dogma... that they relied as the sure witness to supra-rational reality; it was in the Church and its sacraments, as 'extensions' of the redemptive Incarnation of God the Word, that they found the case of vital Christianity»⁴⁵.

According to Fairweather, the Oxford Movement was an affirmation of the Church's God-given authority and inherent power, but this affirmation was part of an attempted renewal of the Church in the interests of supernatural religion. The author affirms that «the Oxford Movement began as a struggle for what the Gregorian reformers had long before called the 'freedom of the Church' (*libertas Ecclesiae*),» and he recognizes that «the great paradox of the Anglo-Catholic Revival lay in the fact that, in attempting to rescue and renew the Anglican Church by means of a thorough going application of historic Anglican standards, it actually wrought a massive transformation»⁴⁶.

It cannot be denied that the Oxford Movement, for all its profound conservatism, seriously altered the patterns of Anglican thought and practice. Yet for the author «it is hard to think of a significant Tractarian thesis for which substantial precedent cannot be found in earlier Anglican theology»⁴⁷. «Anglican standards,» «substantial precedent,» «profound conservatism»

42. Cfr. *Ibid.*, 285.

43. Cfr. *Ibid.*, 282.

44. *The Oxford Movement*, New York, 1964, 3-15.

45. *Ibid.*, 4-5.

46. *Ibid.*, 8.

47. *Ibid.*

— Fairweather deliberately uses a terminology which suggests the limits to which this «Anglo-Catholic revolution» was subject.

The Oxford Movement must therefore be defined in function of the visible results it wrought within the Anglican Church, its natural home.

«For one thing, the Oxford Movement recovered long-forgotten forms of spiritual discipline... A second Anglo-Catholic achievement has been the widespread revival of the 'religious life' as a recognized path to Christian perfection... Thirdly, in its 'ritualistic' continuation the Oxford Movement has contributed largely to a spectacular transformation of Anglican eucharistic worship... Finally, the Oxford Movement did much to prepare the Anglican communion for the modern 'ecumenical dialogue.' Insofar though the Movement was in its original concern and conceptions, its inner logic has compelled its sons to open their eyes to Christendom»⁴⁸.

The reader cannot help noticing the contrast between the promising beginnings of the Oxford Movement and its modest results. And one questions whether Fairweather has been successful in identifying the true 'inner logic' which moved the Tractarians.

A. M. Ramsey, Archbishop of Canterbury, briefly describes the Oxford Movement in terms typical of Anglicans, in his prologue to *The Rediscovery of Newman*, published in 1967. Writes he: «I believe that the renewal of the Anglican Church will involve the recapturing of something of the spirit of J. H. Newman, and by that I mean not the recapturing of Tractarianism in its particular polemical theses, but rather the recapturing of that spirit of scriptural holiness which pervades his writings from the first to last»⁴⁹.

Piers Brendon adopts a similar stance when he says that «the Oxford Movement stamped its mark permanently on the Church, and thus on England»⁵⁰. He is in one sense grateful to the Oxford Movement for working «revolutionary results in the Anglican Church, but he does not say exactly what these results are. Rather, he simply maintains vaguely that «even though Newman did secede to Rome in 1845, his spiritual

48. *Ibid.*, 12-13.

49. *Ibid.*, 8.

50. *A High Road to Anglican UDI?*, *The Times*, July 9, 1983, 6.

impulse has been so strong that it enriched both the Church he left and the Church he joined.» Full of optimism, Brendon concludes that «today it is the High Church brigade who resist joining the methodists... They prevent the ordination of women. And it is probable that they will lead the way to the inevitable disestablishment of the Church of England»⁵¹.

E. R. Norman calls attention to the spiritual resources which, according to him, the Anglicans possessed at the beginning of the 19th century. The mere existence of these energies explains in great part the appearance of the Oxford Movement and is at the same time an argument in favor of the accessory and totally Anglican character of this movement. Says Norman: «The Church was not spiritually ill-adapted to meet the challenges of a new age-as High Churchmen of the Tractarian School were at pains to suggest. Touched by the late 18th century ferment of spiritual and organizational renewal, the Church scarcely, as the Oxford apostles claimed, reflected the 'loose unreality of ordinary religious morality' (Church, *The Oxford Movement*, 22)»⁵².

Even though the author admits that the style of public worship was not such as to suit the sensibilities of a later age, he says that the spiritual life of the Church of England in the early years of the 19th century had an «impressive integrity.» «Despite all the assertions to the contrary,» he concludes, «there was a sense in which the Oxford Movement was not so much a protest against a totally and religious terrain as itself a manifestation of an existing religious renaissance»⁵³.

4. *The Oxford Movement as a Part of an English Common Tradition*

A view which supports those we have already seen is that of the Catholic writer John Coulson in *Newman and the Common Tradition*⁵⁴. Coulson does not discuss so much the Oxford Movement as Newman and the presumed influence of anterior

51. *Ibid.*

52. *Church and Society in England 1770-197*, Oxford, 1976, 71.

53. *Ibid.*, 72.

54. Oxford, 1970.

authors on his ideas. However, Coulson's conclusions have important implications about the nature of Tractarianism.

The principal thesis of Coulson is that Newman's concepts of the Church and its sacramentality, as well as the development of doctrine, proceed from a single, Anglican 'common tradition' whose most important representative is Samuel T. Coleridge.

«Such a sacramental conception of the Church is at the heart not only of the Oxford Movement and of Newman's idea of the Church, but also of that other movement which derives even more directly from Coleridge and is associated with F. D. Maurice»⁵⁵.

According to Coulson, Coleridge was too intelligent not to realize the need for some kind of doctrinal development, and one of his notes 'anticipates' the questions which provoked the Oxford Movement and the publication of Tract XC, when he criticizes some of the 39 articles⁵⁶.

Coulson concludes, summing up, that «the Oxford Movement is one of many reactions through the Church's history which have been provoked by a desire to preserve its sacramental integrity. What separates Newman, not only from Coleridge and Maurice, but from his membership of the Church of England is the degree of importance he attaches to the dangers arising from a Church which is too much committed to society»⁵⁷.

The difference between Newman's position as a Roman Catholic and an Anglican would not be, therefore, essential or qualitative but only of degree and intensity. The supposed strictly Anglican character of the Oxford Movement is a subject which Coulson glosses over.

Martin Roberts follows the footsteps of Coulson in what refers to the influence of Coleridge on the Oxford Movement⁵⁸. According to Roberts, one can observe in Coleridge two broad

55. *Ibid.*, 39.

56. *Cfr. Ibid.*, 47.

57. *Ibid.*, 234.

58. *Coleridge as a Background to the Oxford Movement, Pusey Rediscovered*, ed. P. BUTLER, London, 1983, 34-50.

areas of concern: «that of the ascent of consciousness and its concrete ecclesiastical focus or shape»⁵⁹.

Both areas dwell in each other and presuppose each other. Says the author: «Perhaps it is just this double concern of Coleridge's which prefigures some of the basic concerns and interests of the Oxford Movement... This sort of Coleridgean ethos is in some way echoed within the spirituality of the Tractarian tradition»⁶⁰.

5. *The Movement and the Zeitgeist*

The exaggeration of these and other similar opinions does lessen their importance as attempts to situate the Oxford Movement in its historical framework in order to understand it. That the Oxford Movement may have assumed certain characteristics from the Romanticist spirit of its time does not diminish its religious originality.

B. Reardon⁶¹ has pointed out the connections between the Tractarian writings and *ethos* and the Romanticism which prevailed at the time⁶². «In England the Oxford divines of 1833, under the increasingly forceful leadership of J. H. Newman, are evidence of a similar tendency»⁶³.

Reardon's conclusions are, nevertheless, not very precise. Those of Michael Bright, who has studied with depth and better results the relation between the Oxford Movement and Romanticism, holds greater interest⁶⁴.

Bright observes that it has become quite common among cultural historians to regard the Oxford Movement as sharing certain aspects of Romanticism in English literature. He admits a possible parallel between the two movements inasmuch a both

59. *Ibid.*, 45.

60. *Ibid.*

61. *Religion and the Romantic Movement, Theology* LXXVI (1973) 403-416.

62. Newman himself did it already in an article, *The State of Religious Parties, British Critic*, April 1839, included later in *ECH* I, pp. 262-306 under the title *Prospects of the Anglican Church*.

63. B. REARDON, *op. cit.*, 413.

64. *English Literary Romanticism and the Oxford Movement, Journal of History of Ideas* XL (1979) 385-404.

express the so-called 'spirit of the age.' But our author does not seem satisfied with such a vague explanation, he acknowledges that both literature and theology of the Romantic age «share the emphasis upon the supernatural that arises in opposition to the mechanistic idea of the universe of the 18th century»⁶⁵, and points out that «at times the (Tractarian) descriptions of the spiritual experience assume distinctly Romantic overtones»⁶⁶. But he summarizes his findings with the remark that «more often, however, these descriptions are put in peculiarly religious terms, wherein one sees that the way to spiritual truth is not the imagination, as it is with the poets, but instead Christian faith»⁶⁷.

No doubt Bright has found the right approach to look into the nature of the Oxford Movement. His conclusions, though modest, are not irrelevant.

6. *The Alleged Evangelical Influence*

One important question concerning the factors which influenced the Oxford Movement is its relation with *Evangelicalism*.

This theme has been studied in certain detail but the opinions remain divided. In what sense did Evangelicalism influence the Tractarian Movement?

It is generally admitted that the Oxford Movement in its beginning counted on support from the Evangelicals, who were its natural allies «on behalf of the Christian tradition, of the Christian interpretation of experience, of the truth of the doctrines which justify the awe and loving reverence wherewith Christians were accustomed to regard the divine dispensation which they had learned from the Bible to acknowledge both in the history of the world and in the course of individual lives»⁶⁸.

But there are at least two points, according to Webb, on which the Tractarians parted company with the Evangelicals:

65. *Ibid.*, 386.

66. *Ibid.*, 392.

67. *Ibid.*, 393.

68. C. C. J. WEBB, *The Significance of the Oxford Movement in the History of Anglicanism, Theology* XXVI (1933) 28-29.

their individualism and what we may call their religiosity⁶⁹. The Oxford Movement took upon itself the task of incorporating various important aspects of the Evangelical religiosity in a more *Catholic* system from which the Evangelicals torn themselves away.

In any case, the Oxford Movement should not be considered a mere continuation or offshoot or Evangelicalism: «Of popular misconceptions concerning the Tractarian Movement none is more misleading than that which regards it as a continuation or outcome of the Evangelical Movement»⁷⁰.

The undeniable fact that the Oxford Movement manifested personality in religion does not entitle one to assert that this «Catholic revival was from the outset, and always has been, truly evangelical in character»⁷¹. The author of these words goes so far as to define the Oxford Movement as «an Evangelical revival within the Church of England»⁷².

The Oxford Movement certainly restores the ideal of personal religion and personal devotion to a personal Lord, expressed in the life of prayer and holiness. But this ideal, as understood by the Tractarians, had a firm basis in dogma unlike the Protestant-Evangelical ones.

Yngve Brillioth is another author who has investigated the connections between the ideals of the Oxford Movement and those of Evangelicalism⁷³. His study boast a deep religious sense and an uncommon perspicacity, as well as an absence of any partisan spirit. Brillioth tries to see behind the insights of Protestantism the great ideas which underly all Catholic thought.

More than the concrete results obtained, the truly interesting aspect of the works of this Norwegian author of the school of Lund is his analysis of the *interior life* of Tractarianism and Evangelicalism, pointing out their differences and similarities.

«The final cause of the Movement was holiness»⁷⁴. Here

69. *Ibid.*, 29.

70. E. KNOX, *The Tractarian Movement*, London, 1933, 53.

71. Alfred A. COCK, *The Oxford Movement and Personal Religion*, *Theology* XXVII (1933) 7.

72. *Ibid.*

73. *Three Lectures on Evangelicalism and the Oxford Movement*, London, 1934; *The Anglican Revival*, London, 1925.

74. Y. BRILLIOTH, *The Anglican Revival*, London, 1925, xii.

one sees the important connection between the Movement and Evangelicalism. But the solid Tractarian Creed has given the Oxford Movement a universality which marks it off from the spiritual trends arising from Protestantism. Says Brillioth: «They have become witnesses of the truth of the Catholic Church, not only to their own people, but also to other parts of Christendom. The Oxford Movement is not only an interesting incident in the past, it does not belong to one country only; it is a living factor in the universal Church»⁷⁵.

7. *Final Remarks*

Brillioth, who is not an Anglican, tends to be an exception (although not completely) in his interpretation of the Movement. It is, as we have seen, a simplistic interpretation of the Oxford Movement, which tends to diminish its importance as well as its religious originality and to present it, with some minor adjustments, as a normal episode within the history and evolution of Anglicanism.

This interpretative trend not only tend to downplay the Oxford Movement and study it almost exclusively within the framework of the historical circumstances (political, cultural) in which it was born, but also stresses repeatedly its presumed *stationary character*. Such an interpretation in effect denies what was most important in Tractarianism, that is, that it was a *movement towards* a new situation of the Anglican Church, and arbitrarily minimizes its true reforming character. Moreover, this view tends to doubt that the Oxford Movement had any particular importance or aspects over and above its historical context.

An editorial of *Theology* in 1932, which compared Newman with Thomas Arnold, shows how inaccurate such a view can be: «the Church of England could not have dispensed a century ago, and could not dispense now, with either of the two types of religion which these great personalities embodied. If we had to do without one of the two, it would be Newman; and indeed

75. *Three Lectures on Evangelicalism and the Oxford Movement*, London, 1934, 75.

we did have to do without him and survived it. But the force of England would be other than it is if Arnold had not lived»⁷⁶.

This opinion was later modified so that it admitted that the Oxford Movement had a character of its own, but this character was attributable much more to Keble than to Newman. Writes V. Burch: «Newman is a defaulter from the Vision (of Keble)»⁷⁷. «The native and poetic drama of self and anti-self has taken on an intellectual cast. It is with that sort of mind Newman came to the Church of England... He brought it to the Oxford Movement. It was not made by the Movement»⁷⁸. According to Burch, Newman and the Oxford Movement are independent factors.

C. THE OXFORD MOVEMENT AS TENDING TOWARD ROME, AND FOREIGN TO THE SPIRIT AND PRINCIPLES OF CURRENT ANGLICANISM

1. *The Evangelical Reaction*

Within the Church of England, the principles put forth by the men of the Oxford Movement were not accepted with open arms by all Anglicans. There were indeed English Churchmen who maintained that Tractarianism was firmly rooted in the Established Church, but many Protestants opposed such an attempted Anglican revival. To this latter group of men, the doctrine of Church reform as espoused by the Tractarians was completely unfounded; they thought the Movement alien to the English Church, a gratuitous slap at the Anglican establishment and something as incompatible with it.

Practically from the beginning, the Oxford Movement encountered a strong opposition and criticism among Anglicans of the so-called Evangelical sect.

The preface of the Evangelical periodical *Christian Observer* of 1833 considered incipient Tractarianism a menace, rampant in all sectors of British society: «... we see a Society

76. Anonymous author, *Concerning a Centenary*, *Theology* XXV (1932) 1.

77. *Newman and the Vision Keble Saw*, *Theology* XXVII (1933) 130.

78. *Ibid.*, 137.

formed at Oxford, the members of which, professing themselves to be the most orthodox upholders of the Church, have begun to scatter throughout the land publications which, for bigotry, Popery and intolerance surpass writings of even Laud and Sacheverell» ⁷⁹.

An article which appeared in the also *Evangelical Record* of December 2, 1833, a few months after the beginning of the Movement, confessed its surprise on the contents of the Tractarian doctrine which, the author warned, could undermine English Church teaching, and expressed outrage at the *Catholic* nature of the Tracts. Said the author: «we must confess the surprise was extreme and the sorrow poignant with which we read the tracts of the Apostolical Society at Oxford, extracts from which appeared in our last number. Had we not read them with our eyes it would have been difficult to persuade us that such effusions could have escaped, at any time, from the pens of Protestant clergymen... In time of need to go for spiritual weapons to the armoury of the 'Man of Sin' —to solid support to that lapsed body, the *heretical* Church of England, but on which the only true apostolical Church of Rome has ever rested in imaginary security and triumph, alike in prosperity and adversity— deliberately, learnedly, zealously to pursue such a course as this would, if persevered in, be ominous of nothing less than destructing.»

The Evangelicals saw the Oxford Movement as something which must be despised and expelled from the Anglican fold. They accused the Tractarians of sustaining non-Anglican principles.

Nor were mordant accusations of Popery long in coming from the Evangelicals. One of them, for example, writes in the *Record*: «Supposing the Pope had sent out a body of Jesuits into the country and they had assumed the garb of clergymen of the Church of England, we cannot suppose them to work more skilfully and more effectually for the return of England into the bosom of Papacy, than by the promulgation of such unsound and unscriptural principles as are developed in these Oxford publications...» ⁸⁰.

79. S. C. WILKS, Preface of *Christian Observer* 1833.

80. *Evangelical Record*, April 21, 1836.

The *Christian Observer* ironically laments in 1838 what it calls «the failure of Newman's enterprise» in defense of the Church of England. Reviewing the «Prophetical Office,» the anonymous Evangelical writer points out that «the chief error, ingrained, interwoven, incorporated with his whole treatise is the deference to be paid to the authority of *human* writings and the disparagement of the *sacred* records»⁸¹.

But the normal tone of the Evangelical's attack on Tractarianism is not so moderate as depicted above. In a publication of 1836 entitled «Remarks on the Progress of Popery,» E. Bickersteth bitterly complains that «a highly respectable, learned and devout class of men has arisen up at one of our Universities, the tendency of whose writings is departure from Protestantism, and approach to papal doctrine. They publish 'tracts for the times' and while they oppose the most glaring part of popery, —the infallibility of the Pope, the worship of images, transubstantiation and the like,— yet, though the spirit of the times is marked by the opposite fault, the very principles of popery are brought forward by them, under deference to human authority, especially that of the Fathers: overvaluing the Christian ministry and sacraments and undervaluing justification by faith».

This type of religious denunciation is maintained by Evangelicals throughout these years and comes to the accusation of *Romanism* as James Garbett, for example, expresses in 1842. Garbett considers the religious system of the Tractarians as nothing less than pure Romanism, not only in some of its aspects, but in its very essence. «Romanism,» he writes, «as it has, in all ages, represented itself to the young and to the devout... Romanism, as it combines with itself all that is grand and beautiful in art, spacious in reason and seductive in sentiment»⁸².

Garbett warns that Romanism, however disguised, cannot co-exist with the Articles of the Church of England.

So great a commotion was produced by the Oxford Movement among the Evangelicals that as late as 1845, the *Christian Observer* still thought it necessary to sound the alarm, as

81. p. 312.

82. *Prophet, Priest and King*, Oxford, 1842, 502-503.

the following words indicate: «Tractarianism, in its essence, we fear is scarcely checked among us. It is inflicting its ravages in our parishes and in invidious forms; it is working its way in schools, colleges and training establishments; it is poisoning the very foundations from which should flow the streams of life in missionary labours; and it has made gigantic efforts by means of the press to extend its baneful influence»⁸³.

The Evangelical hostility toward Tractarianism demonstrates clearly that the thesis (*vide supra*) of the supposed continuity between the two movements lacks foundation.

It also indicates, in spite of the Evangelical theological criticism of the Oxford Movement as weak and incoherent in its basic points of doctrine, —such as the Rule of Faith, Justification, the Nature of the Church, the Sacraments and the Ministry⁸⁴—, that the Evangelicals recognized relatively early the non-Anglican character (according to the consecrated sense of the term) of the basic principles of the Movement; and saw that the *Via Media* was untenable. It could be said that they realized this even before Newman himself did.

For the Church of England as a whole, a sad aspect of the controversy was the generally negative attitude that it bred among the average clergy and laity towards the early Fathers and to the usefulness of tradition. As a consequence, it produced an unhealthy antagonism towards any kind of innovation in ceremony, rituals or architecture.

Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that the Evangelicals did help preserve for the Church of England aspects of her Protestant heritage. It was not a difficult victory, if we consider that the reformatory measures proposed by the Oxford Movement were relatively Utopian.

2. *The Liberals and the Movement*

Under a different viewpoint and with other instruments of analysis, the liberal *Edinburg Review* grasped with the same

83. Preface, iii.

84. Cfr. Peter TOON, *Evangelical Theology, 1833-1856: A Response to Tractarianism*, Atlanta (USA), 1979, 2, 7, 32.

intensity and clarity as the Evangelicals the non-Protestant character of the Oxford Movement. The cold rational analysis of the review's writers arrived so far in their diagnosis to such a point as the refined Protestant instinct of the Evangelical to recognize a radical enemy of their religious ideas.

The *Edinburgh Review*, an organ of Whig thought and politics, hinted at Romish tendencies in Oxford as early as 1836 when it reviewed Newman's *History of the Arians*⁸⁵, and above all, in the notorious article *The Oxford Malignants and Dr. Hampden*⁸⁶.

The review placed itself in a favourable intellectual position for a reasonably fair debate with the Tractarians. Unlike many who, from the religious left and right, tried to sully the character of the Oxford men, this periodical acknowledged that the Tractarians were men of remarkable abilities and high ideals, sincere and virtuous leaders who were moved by a sort of «divine command to recall their country to a piety more profound and masculine, more meek and contemplative»⁸⁷.

The people of the *Edinburgh Review* seemed to be convinced that the integrity of the Tractarians had impressed others and had allowed them to play a greater and greater role in the lives of the clergy and laity. It was clear that the men around Newman were not mere antiquarians. «They are men of our own times —holding opinions which sway the tone and temper of many a mind at this day; and wielding an influence whose centre is perhaps to be placed in our universities, but whose circumference is wide enough to enclose the remotest corners of the land»⁸⁸.

But having once recognized the merits and virtues of the Tractarians the review did not hesitate to declare itself wholeheartedly against the spirit and ends of the Oxford Movement, and decided to combat it with all the intellectual means within its reach.

The Oxford Movement posed a grave danger for the Church of England as well as for the civic order of the country. The

85. LXIII (April 1836) 44ff.

86. *Ibid.*, 118-125.

87. *Oxford Catholicism*, ER LXVII (July 1838) 524.

88. LXIII (April 1836) 44.

Edinburgh saw much better than other British periodicals that no defense of the government would be adequate which did not grapple with the roots of Tractarian theology. That's why from the beginning it attacked the very ideas which constituted the essence of the Movement, that is, the Church as a divine institution, the supremacy of authority over private judgement, and the dogma of apostolic succession.

The analysis amounted to penetrating insight into the nature of Tractarianism, and there was in it a good understanding of the aims of *Puseyism*.

In spite of everything, in the pages of the *Edinburgh*, severe attacks of Protestant furor and of incomprehension towards some men who, like the Tractarians, can only be judged well from a correct religious view, were also present.

For the magazine, the men of the Oxford Movement were vivid examples of the «fanaticism of the English High Churchman... the fanaticism of mere foolery. A dress, a ritual, a name, a ceremony; —a technical phraseology;— the superstition of a priesthood, without its power; —the form of Episcopal government, without the substance;— a system imperfect and paralyzed... Such are the objects of High Church fanaticism»⁸⁹.

These words written by Thomas Arnold, are unjust towards the Oxford Movement but at the same time contain some truth as regards the claims of the High Church to be Catholic, leaving aside the Movement.

At any rate, the principal thesis of the magazine can be summed up in the following words: «Their doctrines may be right, but they are not those of the English Church»⁹⁰.

The conclusion of the *Edinburgh* was that the Tractarian theology failed because it tried to uphold Roman Catholic doctrines in a Protestant Church. Such an attempt, it said, was futile; it only injured the Church and did violence to the consciences of the Tractarians themselves.

«The journal admitted that, for those who desired it, there was an authority which claimed inspired infallibility in faith

89. T. ARNOLD, *The Oxford Malignants and Dr. Hampden*, ER LXIII (April 1836), 123.

90. *Tracts for the Times*, ER LXXIII (April 1841) 273.



and morals. But that authority was to found in the Roman Church, not the Anglican. The Tractarian doctrines could be held consistently within the framework of Roman Catholic theology, where they did not repudiate Britian's development during the preceding three centuries. The Tractarians have renounced history, said the journal; now they should sever their ties with the English Church»⁹¹.

For the sake of the Establishment, the review demanded that the Church authorities forbid *Puseyism*. For the sake of consistency, it urged Newman and Pusey to enter the Roman Church.

Newman's conversion to Catholicism in October 1845 was generally considered by the publications we have mentioned, and by other similar ones, as simple proof of the view they had maintained in their polemics with the Oxford Movement.

So runs an editorial note in the *Churchman's Monthly Review* in 1847: «A great change has taken place during the eight years of our existence. The leaders of the Tractarian party have taken the step which we ever declared they *must* one day take: namely, a departure from our Protestant Church. And their literature, formerly so flourishing, has departed with them. We say not that Tractarianism is *dead*; but at least its apparent and active vigour and energy is gone.»

3. *The Oxford Counter-reformation*

The historian, James Anthony Froude, provides a testimony in his own person of the radically non-Protestant and therefore non-Anglican character of the Oxford Movement.

Born in 1818, Froude was the younger brother of Hurrell, one of the founders of the Movement. He had known and dealt intimately with Newman, and this friendship and influence had helped him to see through the errors of Protestantism. Unfortunately, the criticism directed by the Oxford Movement at Protestantism was not sufficient to bring James Froude over to Catholicism, and he remained in the end an agnostic.

91. Cfr. John L. MORRISON, *The Oxford Movement and the British Periodicals*, *CHR* XLV (1959-1960) 152.

According to Froude, the Tractarians had made a mere traditional Anglicanism impossible, and he never forgave them. It was the revolutionary, upsetting and non-Protestant character of Tractarianism he found most objectionable.

Newman and his followers, he writes, «were to tear up the fibres of custom by which the Establishment as they found it was maintaining its quiet influence. They were to raise discussions round its doctrines, which degraded accepted truths into debatable opinions»⁹².

He dramatically viewed his own generation as people «who had been floated out into mid-ocean upon the Anglo-Catholic raft» and left by Newman's conversion «like Ulysses, struggling in the waves»⁹³.

In Froude's words, which in this case are not wholly unfair to the Tractarian spirit, the Protestant Reformation became for the Oxford Movement «the great schism, Cranmer a traitor, and Latimer a vulgar man. Milton was a name of horror...

«Similarly we were to admire the Non-jurors... to look for Antichrist, not in the Pope, but in Whigs and revolutionists and all their works»⁹⁴.

It goes without saying that James Froude seems always to have thought of Tractarianism and its fate as the success or failure of *an attempt to reverse the verdict of the Reformation*.

4. *A Modern Anglican View*

Lastly, we should examine the opinions of Owen Chadwick, a contemporary Anglican historian, who maintains essentially the same thesis as those already seen, although in a subtle and indirect way.

Chadwick, Regius Professor of Modern History in the University of Cambridge since 1968, is the author of *The Victorian Church* (1966), a sort of official history of the English

92. *The Oxford Counter Reformation*, 1855, *Short Studies on Great Subjects* IV, 1877, 252.

93. *Ibid.*, 334.

94. *Ibid.*, 248.

ecclesiastical bodies in the 19th century. He has also written several books on Newman and the Oxford Movement⁹⁵.

The balance and moderation with which Chadwick expresses his thought correspond to the just prestige he enjoys as an historian and to the ample information of which he avails. Nevertheless, one can detect in his judgements about the Oxford Movement and its central personalities a certain antipathy towards Newman and his significance in Anglicanism.

Hand in hand with sincere praises and others which seem more conventional, Chadwick cannot avoid a tendency to judge with severeness the *Catholic* aspect of the Oxford Movement, to minimize Newman's role in the undertaking and to describe in a derogatory way the process of the Tractarian leader's conversion. Everything seems to indicate that for Chadwick, the Oxford Movement was not Anglican in character, but rather Catholic. This interpretation forces Chadwick, as it would any Anglican who respects his Church's tradition, to adopt a negative attitude toward the Oxford Movement.

Our author relishes detaining himself above all in what he considers the weaknesses of Newman's character. Writes he: «as leader of a party Newman suffered from defects. His powerful mind was trained in dialectic by Whately. Enjoying clever argument, he was open to the logician's vice of being easily convinced by his own skill. In religious belief he heaped scorn upon dialectic, in religious controversy he relished subtle twists and turns. His subtleties puzzled his friends and fortified his enemies»⁹⁶.

According to Chadwick, it is Newman's unrelenting logic which would one day lead him to abandon Anglican soil and to convert the Oxford Movement into a sort of reformism foreign to the spirit of the Church of England.

Chadwick thinks that there is another factor which apparently contradicts this first one, but which is, according to him, key in explaining Newman's spiritual itinerary. The leader of the Oxford Movement had a strong tendency to despise reason

95. *From Bossuet to Newman. The Idea of Doctrinal Development*, Cambridge, 1957; *The Mind of the Oxford Movement*, London, 1961; *Newman*, Oxford/London, 1983.

96. *Victorian Church I*, London, 1971, 171.

and to underestimate the capacity of the individual to orient himself in religious matters. If a careless *logic* separated him from Anglicanism, an increasing doubt about his own judgement brought him *fatally* closer to the Roman Church.

This interpretation allows Chadwick to write that «the papacy, threatened by a new Italy, was as illiberal and reactionary as possible. Newman, educated a Protestant, a famous Oxford don with a large following of young men in the University, chose to submit his mind to this reaction... And Newman boasted of this submission... He not only joined a reactionary institution but made frequent public profession that he was himself a leading reactionary»⁹⁷.

A similar cursory description of Newman's spiritual growth goes along with an attempt by Chadwick to remove any originality from the doctrine preached by Newman during the Oxford Movement. Chadwick interprets the Movement rather simplistically as an undertaking impulsed by simple religious sentiments.

«Like its predecessor the Evangelical Movement,» he says, «it was more a movement of the heart than of the head...; it was primarily concerned with the law of prayer, and only secondarily with the law of belief (sic!). It was aware that creed and prayer are inseparable... It always saw dogma in relation to worship, to the numinous, to the movement of the heart, to the conscience and the moral need, to the immediate experience of the hidden hand of God»⁹⁸.

Chadwick tries, besides, to minimize the specific religious drive behind Newman's Sermons and dismisses them as a sort of expression of a general spiritual mood. He maintains that the 18th century used a lot of religious language that was sacrificial, and was comfortable in not practicing what it preached. The Victorian, on the other hand, confessed the gap between effort and success, but were at least determined that the gap should be seen and that Christians should rest content with themselves.

Writes Chadwick: «This would have happened without Newman. But Newman came into the pulpit just when people felt the discontent but had not quite expressed it. He articulated

97. Newman, Oxford/New York, 1983, 2.

98. *The Mind of the Oxford Movement*, London, 1961, 11.

what they felt, drove it home, and spread the discontent to an ever widening circle of minds. This was what led some of his followers to adscribe vast consequences to his words, and to believe that he altered the entire feeling among the English people towards religion»⁹⁹.

According to Chadwick, the positive elements of Newman and his preaching came from Anglicanism rather than from Newman himself. It was the faults of his character —implacable logic and uncertainty in his own judgement— which led him out of the Anglican communion, after turning the Oxford Movement into something foreign to the Anglican Church.

In spite of these premises, Chadwick does not think that Newman's *Lectures* of 1850 offer an accurate idea of the Oxford Movement as foreign, in the last analysis, to the Church of England. He thinks that Newman's explanation was merely tactical, and that the facts about the Movement are much more complex.

He describes the *Lectures* thus: «It was an appeal to members of the Oxford Movement. He considered that Movement historically, to show that its logical end was Rome, that it was always an excrescence upon the Church of England and never at home there... The most offensive utterances of the book, to the persons at whom it was directed, were the violent onslaughts upon the Church of England —in the eyes of faith a mere wreck— a mere collection of officials depending on and living in the supreme civil power —but an aspect of the state— its life an act of Parliament—...

«Ten years later Newman would not have written in this language. He was suffering a little from the disease of being a new convert, of burning what once he had adored; but the occasion, while the high church party tottered upon the precipice of disruption, persuaded him to shout louder than his inward judgement truly approved»¹⁰⁰.

Chadwick maintains in his last book on Newman that «the Church of England would look back upon the days of Newman's Oxford Movement as days to which its spirituality owed

99. Newman, *Oxford/New York*, 1983, 19.

100. *Victorian Church I*, London, 1971, 289.

a permanent debt»¹⁰¹. But he seems to contradict himself in the end when he argues that Newman is the principal figure of the Oxford Movement¹⁰² and foreign to Anglicanism.

D. THE MOVEMENT. AN UTOPIAN AND FUTILE ENDEAVOUR TO CATHOLICIZE ANGLICANISM

1. *A Roman-Catholic Perspective*

As we have seen from the preceding discussions, some Anglican Churchmen consider the Tractarians as authentic vanguards and bulwarks of their Church, while others accuse them of being foreign elements within the Anglican fold or «Catholic infiltrators» or leaders of an association for the catholicization of the Established Church.

We will focus our attention on the insights and interpretations of some Catholic writers about the significance of the Oxford Movement.

A theory which many of these writers often bring to light is that the Tractarian Movement was an Utopian endeavour to make the Anglican Church Catholic, to unite it with the One True Church of Christ. It was Utopian, since the Tractarians were fighting for an ideal which flatly contradicted Anglican principles and therefore impossible. It was also futile, for the very simple reason that the Movement had failed to carry out its basic principles. These writers consider it clear proof of the failure of this effort the fact that many Tractarians entered into the Roman Catholic Church. The Movement was, at any rate, a serious effort, of the highly learned and capable men of Oxford who despite difficulties, both within and without their very own Church struggled to carry out the Tractarian cause.

101. *Newman*, Oxford/New York, 1983, 77.

102. Cfr. *The Limitations of Keble*, *Theology* LXVII (1964) 46-52. «Keble was the author of no movement. Keble set Newman to work; but only as the perception of a sublime picture drives the apprehender to start painting» (p. 47).

2. *Critical Notes on R. W. Church's History of the Movement*

Some of these authors perceive in Newman the clearest manifestation of this catholicizing effort of the Movement. They postulate that the Movement and its development, were an expression of that interior intellectual and spiritual development of Newman. «As we said of the *Apologia*,» Evelyn Mordaunt observes, «so we may say of the movement, that it is mainly the history of the emancipation of Newman's soul»¹⁰³.

In 1833, when the Movement was beginning, and even some years before, Newman completely rejected union with Rome. But with time, he began to sympathize more and more with the Church of Rome and to doubt the authenticity of the Established Church, till he finally converted to the Catholic Church in 1845.

«The Tractarian movement,» Mordaunt writes, «was an attempt to obey the not unneeded summons (of reform), and its promoters may be considered as striving to justify the existence of their Church, in reply to the attacks of the Liberal school, by trying to bring it more into harmony with the lofty pretensions of many of its formularies, to put life and reality into its doctrines and discipline, and to imbue its members with a high standard of holiness»¹⁰⁴.

The author rightly observes that Newman had realized early on that true holiness cannot exist unless it be based on a firm and consistent faith. Though he thinks that «on the doctrinal side the movement was weak and easily answered by a theologian»¹⁰⁵, he considers that the dogmatic tenets put forward by Newman were ultimately the cause of division and conflict among the Tractarian themselves.

The division in the party soon became apparent. «Whilst most of the earlier members still confined their labour to improving the existing Church of England, Newman and the more recent recruits were searching their hearts as to whether the body in question was a part of Christ's Church at all»¹⁰⁶. The

103. E. MORDAUNT, review of R. W. Church's *The Oxford Movement, Twelve Years: 1833-1845*, *IER*, XII (1891) 995.

104. *Ibid.*, 986.

105. *Ibid.*, 987.

106. *Ibid.*, 998.

Movement came when they were anxious «not so much to improve the Establishment on the old lines, as to approximate it so far as possible to the perfect Catholicity of Rome»¹⁰⁷.

Mordaunt points out —let us not forget that he is reviewing Church's book of the Oxford Movement— that the story of the great *catastrophe* which shattered the party and destroyed all hope of changing the Establishment into an integral part of the true Church «is told, not without a certain pathos, by Dean Church, though he fails to admit its full destructive force»¹⁰⁸.

According to Mordaunt, Church does not satisfactorily answer the question, why so many men who went the first mile with Newman should have refused to go the second mile¹⁰⁹.

The author seeks the answer in the simple fact that the Church of England was irreformable from a Catholic point of view. This would be clearly perceived by Newman, so that it can be argued that the end of the Tractarian hope to redeem the Establishment was caused more by the action of its own leader than by any outward opposition. Says Mordaunt: «The enmity of Protestantism would only have braced the party; the defection of its chief annihilated it. Its foes proved, indeed, to be those of its own household»¹¹⁰.

Contrary to Church, the author thinks that these events are of great importance; «and considering,» he says, «the high hopes of 1833 and their result, not only in 1845, but today (1891), we cannot but think that with the final relinquishment of Newman's hopes for the Establishment, the Tractarian movement ceased to exist»¹¹¹.

Mordaunt's summary is a bit pessimistic though very consistent with the actual development of events. He maintains that the principal result of the Tractarian Movement, putting aside its happier effect in leading many souls into the Church, was simply to bring another element of discord into the Anglican Church. «So far as the movement aspired to prove her to be

107. *Ibid.*, 1000.

108. *Ibid.*, 1001.

109. Cfr. *Ibid.*, 985.

110. *Ibid.*, 1000.

111. *Ibid.*, 1001.

one with the Church of Christ, it failed disastrously»¹¹². The Tractarians had set for themselves an impossible aim.

3. *The Impossibility of Making Anglicanism Really Catholic*

Cecil Clayton defines the endeavours and the activity of the Tractarian leaders as a «vain effort to catholicise the (Anglican) Establishment»¹¹³.

The author concedes —perhaps out of politeness— that with the *Tracts for the Times* the change began in the Establishment which enables Anglicans to speak of Newman as the founder of the English Church as we know it. But he points out that the Tractarians' plan was exceedingly bold.

Says Clayton: «It was none other than to work a radical change in the religion of their country; to force a Catholic meaning into every ambiguous formulary; and to ignore the Protestantism which for centuries their Church had been supposed to teach —in fact, had taught»¹¹⁴.

As a result of this lamentable spiritual state, every religious instinct in the England of those days was «antagonistic to the Catholic Church,» and these instincts, Clayton writes, were quite incapable of drawing the subtle line between what Newman called *Roman* as distinct from *Catholic* teaching¹¹⁵. This religious-historical background proved ominous from the beginning for the fate and prospects of the Oxford Movement.

Newman's personal development reflects these circumstances quite well. Having once appealed to the Fathers as the authority on which he based his teaching, so honest a mind could not ignore their teaching when it went further than his argument required. He soon realized that he could not quote them merely when it was convenient for his own personal purposes while remaining indifferent to what he found elsewhere in their wri-

112. *Ibid.*, 1002.

113. Review of *Letters and Correspondence of J. H. Newman, during his Life in the English Church*, edited by Anne MOZLEY, 2 vols., 1891, *IER* XII (1891) 579.

114. *Ibid.*, 694.

115. Cfr. *Ibid.*, 695.

tings, even if such intellectual honesty led him to what he had hitherto considered sheer *Romanism* ¹¹⁶.

In the end, it was impartial study of the Fathers and the history of the Church which persuaded Newman to change religion. He discovered that all the action of his own Church had been disquieting; and conviction that he was risking his own soul by remaining stationary was too overwhelming to be ignored.

«Anglicans foundly imagine,» says Clayton, «that had Newman at this time (1841) been treated with more sympathy, they might have kept him in their ranks. This is, of course, a surmise from which we differ» ¹¹⁷.

God's finger was on him, and once discovered that the Anglican Church could not be reclaimed for the Catholic faith, Newman had no choice, but to join the Roman Church.

4. *Some Severe and Friendly Judgements*

The English Dominican Vincent MacNabb describes with a certain admiration in 1910 ¹¹⁸ a «strange religious awakening» that took place in Oxford in 1833, which he thinks «the result of an almost inexplicable auto-suggestion» ¹¹⁹.

Facing with the danger of being eliminated by the same sovereign Parliament which had brought their Church into existence in the sixteenth century, a group of Anglicans struggles valiently to reclaim their right to be spiritual sons of the Catholic Church. MacNabb observes that for a while it seemed that the forces coming out of Oriel —the College of Newman, Keble and Froude— were about to save the English Church from the destructive designs of the state ¹²⁰.

But the Tractarian scheme, the author avers, was an impossible plan, because there did not exist any channel by which the High Church could show, as Anglican, that it was truly linked with the Catholic Church.

116. Cfr. *Ibid.*, 702.

117. *Ibid.*, 705.

118. *Le Mouvement Tractarien, Revue Thomiste XVIII* (1910) 308-320.

119. Cfr. *Ibid.*, 308.

120. Cfr. *Ibid.*, 310, 311.

«Depuis les temps de Newman,» MacNabb writes, «nulle autre théorie n'a été élaborée par le parti de la *High Church*, qui puisse légitimer la parenté de la Haute-Église avec l'Église anglicaine et en même temps avec l'Église Catholique, de la quelle dérive sa foi»¹²¹.

On the occasion of the centennial of the Oxford Movement in 1933, Shane Leslie observes that, considered from a Catholic point of view, the Movement very soon took a direction quite different from the one started by its founders. Accordingly, she thinks that the centennial can be seen as the definite burial of the early Tractarian ideals¹²².

But in this section, we examine rather the thorough study of the Oxford Movement's aims, written by the English Catholic Thomas Hardy¹²³.

Hardy states his thesis in few words. What he calls Tractarian «blind spot» was their failure to realize that the Church of England as a creation of the State could not change, and that, therefore, to try to eliminate what was Erastian of liberal in it was tantamount to destroying it. «How could their real object be achieved otherwise, than by a return to the 'old religion'?»¹²⁴.

Hardy observes that even before Keble preached his sermon on «National Apostasy» or Newman wrote a line of the Tracts, there was all over England a sort of widespread alarm occasioned by the Erastianism of the day¹²⁵. He agrees with the opinion that «the Oxford Movement arose actually out of the Reform Bill of 1832, not out of the Catholic Emancipation of 1829, but both measures were tinged with the same spirit of Liberalism and it was to react against the consequences of both that the Tractarian Anglicans stiffened their orthodoxy»¹²⁶.

In this sense the Movement can be said to have been—according to Hardy—as little calculated or deliberate as was the rest of Newman's spiritual course. But he thinks it very

121. *Ibid.*, 319.

122. Cfr. *The Oxford Movement, 1833 to 1933*, London, 1933, 166 p.

123. *The Tractarian 'Blind Spot'*, *DoRev* LI (1933) 231-250.

124. *Ibid.*, 247.

125. Cfr. *Ibid.*, 233.

126. *Times Literary Supplement*, April 11, 1929.

important to note that the real cause of the Movement was never that of the Church for the Church's sake.

Writes Hardy: «It was utterly different from the kind of 'Church defence movements' that have from time to time been aroused by the threat of disestablishment. It was, in fact, less a campaign than a mission. Whether secularization manifested itself in political animosity or in 'poisonous' opinions, it was the spread of irreligion at which the leaders took alarm. No one who wishes to understand it can afford to lose sight of the fact that the Oxford Movement was first and foremost a religious movement»¹²⁷.

However, the seriousness and sincerity of the leaders in their purposes of reform blinded them, —in Hardy's opinion—, to the real nature of the Church of England. For Hardy, we cannot ignore the extraordinary oversight they committed, if we want to understand the reason for the failure of the Movement.

This oversight explains both the opposition of the authorities and the divergent courses taken by those who were drawn into the Movement.

«It seems never to have occurred to the leaders,» Hardy says, «that the erastianism and Liberalism against which they reacted were precisely the elements to which the Church of England, as a communion separated from the Roman obedience, owed its existence»¹²⁸.

Strange as it may seem, the Tractarians did not see that their own crisis was on all fours with that out of which the national church they were defending arose¹²⁹.

The author maintains that the Protestant instincts of the Evangelical, Liberal and ordinary Anglican opposition to Tractarianism were sound. The Movement was definitely foreign to all genuine Protestantism. The average Anglican churchman rightly perceived that his Church's enemies were those of its own household. «Men like Arnold unerringly saw that to reclaim the nation on Catholic lines was to put Rome in possession of the field. They saw, as Newman himself came to see, when the dust of conflict had subsided, that the Movement was 'not

127. T. Hardy, *op.cit.*, 237-238.

128. *Ibid.*, 238-239.

129. *Cfr. Ibid.*, 240.

supplemental to the Church of England, nor complementary, nor collateral nor correlative to it, not combining with it, nor capable of absorption into it, but on the contrary was a teaching most uncongenial, floating upon it, a foreign substance, like oil upon water' (*Diff. I, 36*)»¹³⁰.

Hardy's conclusion of 1933 agrees with those of Mordaunt and Clayton in 1891 (*vide supra*). Says he: «So far as concerns its initial purpose, the Oxford Movement remains one of the minor tragedies of history. One hundred years after the publication of *The Christian Year* —the choral prelude to the awakening— brought the Church of England to the Revised Prayer Book to find herself powerless in the iron grip of the State...»¹³¹.

E. THE OXFORD MOVEMENT CONSIDERED AS AN UNDERTAKING WHICH BOTH REFORMED THE ANGLICAN CHURCH AND WAS LEADING IT BY ITS OWN PRINCIPLES TO THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

1. *Wiseman's Acquaintance with the Tractarians and his Lectures in England*

This optimistic view of Tractarianism was maintained by Nicholas Wiseman, practically since 1833, the year in which Newman and Froude made a courtesy visit to him.

It seems certain that Wiseman was the Catholic ecclesiastic who dealt most with the Oxford Movement and especially with Newman. The future archbishop of Westminster (1850) and cardinal had increasing contact with the Tractarian leader during his time in Rome as Rector of the English College, his trips to England since 1836, and his activity as Coadjutor of Bishop Walsh, as President of Oscott (1840) and lastly as Apostolic Pro-Vicar of London.

Wiseman saw in the Oxford Movement and in the spiritual renewal which it signified for Anglicanism, a decisive step

130. *Ibid.*, 249.

131. *Ibid.*, 250.

toward the eventual return of England to the Catholic Faith and union with Rome. He saw the Movement as a realistic and trustworthy attempt at union between the two Churches, unlike the attempts at corporate reunion, proposed by Phillips de Lisle and a group of convert followers; de Lisle's idea for union and others like it were looked upon with distrust not only by Wiseman, who considered them Utopic, but also by old Catholics, as well as by Newman and his followers¹³². In effect, time would show that such schemes were impracticable.

Wiseman thought that the effect of the Tracts, which expressed the theological principles of the Oxford Movement, would be to steer the Tractarians to Rome, if they would follow their principles out to their ultimate consequences.

In the event, only Newman and an important group of followers persevered in the path which led to the Roman Church. In any case, one cannot say that Wiseman had been misled by his instincts, for these were later proven true by the conversion of several important individuals.

The future cardinal probably never thought seriously that the Anglican Church as a whole would end up following Newman. Such a happening would be too wonderful to be true. However, Wiseman did see behind the schism in Anglicanism a definite benefit to Roman Catholic Church in England.

In his first direct contact with the leaders of the Oxford Movement (March 1833), Wiseman had occasion to explain to Newman and Froude amiably but clearly his view of the religious situation of the Church of England.

«It is not difficult to imagine what could be more or less the content of the conversation... (Wiseman) would admit that the Anglican communion was without doubt close to the Roman Church in many dogmatic and ritual aspects, and he would probably add that this same circumstance... should remind Anglicans of the error committed by separating themselves from Rome. In effect, the facts demonstrated that separation led not only to schism which was obvious—, but also to heresy.

«As an argument, Wiseman could very well have called to mind that Our Lord commanded and foretold that His Church

132. Cfr. W. WARD. *William George Ward and the Oxford Movement*, London, 1890, 190.

would be One; and that, therefore, the Roman and Anglican Churches could not both be the Church of Christ. It may be that 'Catholic' Anglicans admit that Rome is a branch of the Church founded by the Lord, and that they recognize the validity of her sacraments, including Holy Orders. However, Rome does not recognize any of these aspects in Anglicanism. It is therefore more prudent and safe for Anglicans to unite with Rome, because in fact they find themselves alone, left to themselves and separated from the great visible body of the Catholic Church. Moreover, Anglicanism—even though it likes to call itself 'Catholic'—allows the propagation of every type of schism and heresy in its womb, a fact which is inconceivable in an ecclesial community that is really guided and vivified by the Holy Spirit. These facts—although there might be others—already constitute a formidable argument against the true, catholic ecclesial character of the so-called Church of England»¹³³.

The conversation must have produced a certain consternation in Newman and Froude and caused them to give up any weak hopes they had of union with Rome at that time. Wiseman, however, considered this conversation an event of utmost importance and pregnant with hope for the future. In a memorandum of 1847 he wrote that «from the day Newman and Froude's visit to me... never, never, for an instant, did I waver in my full conviction that a new era had commenced in England»¹³⁴.

For Wiseman, it was clear that the Oxford Movement could and should be utilized in the endeavour to gain for Catholic principles their rightful influence in England. He, the one English Catholic who personally knew and sympathized with Newman and Froude, saw that the positive aid of the rising Oxford School was indispensable, if any considerable number of Englishmen were to be taught to esteem what had so long been deemed beneath serious argument: namely, celibacy, the sacramental system, the monastic life, Church authority, etc.

At first, Newman did not receive very cordially the signs of intent of Wiseman and his collaborators in him and in the

133. J. MORALES, *Newman. El cambio hacia la fe*, Pamplona, 1978, 54-55.

134. Cfr. W. WARD, *The Life and Times of Cardinal Wiseman I*, London, 1897, 347. Henceforth abbreviated as Ward I.

Tractarians generally. On the occasion of a visit to Oxford in August 1835 of a Catholic priest named Maguire, with whom Newman maintained a long conversation about the question of *the Churches*, he wrote to Frederic Rogers, a disciple and friend of his: «I see in him the very same spirit I saw in Dr. Wiseman, the spirit of the cruel Church. I believe he would willingly annihilate the English Church»¹³⁵.

In Lent of 1836, Wiseman delivered various lectures at St. Mary's Moorfields on *the principal doctrines and practices of the Catholic Church*. They formed an important part of his *offensive* in order to expound with clarity the Catholic view on basic matters, to remove prejudices and to move the wills and minds of those who were disposed and able to understand his words.

Newman followed the progress of the *Lectures* attentively with a mixed air of curiosity and preoccupation. In September he wrote Manning that «Dr. Wiseman will do no harm at all; I think not»¹³⁶, and with this same confidence in the Anglican position, he did not see any problem with writing a generous and favorable review of the lectures¹³⁷, which had been already published in London.

The positive tone of the review, nevertheless, displeased the editor of the journal and other Anglicans, as S. F. Wood communicated to Newman in December: «Boone is immensely disgusted with your Wiseman article... They say you make Wiseman a peg to hang your attacks on Protestantism»¹³⁸. Even the most reasonable and diplomatic Anglicans considered Wiseman as «the able and not overscrupulous chief» of the Roman disputants¹³⁹.

Always eager to take full advantage of any encounter with the Tractarians, Wiseman had an opportunity of expressing his opinions again in a long review¹⁴⁰ of the polemical *Remains of*

135. *LD V*, 132: August 20, 1835.

136. *Ibid.*, 349: To H. E. Manning, September 4, 1836.

137. Cfr. *Dr. Wiseman's Lectures on the Catholic Church*, *British Critic* XIX (1836) 373-403.

138. *LD V*, 396: December 20, 1836.

139. R. W. CHURCH, *The Oxford Movement, Twelve Years: 1833-1845*, ed. G. BEST, London, 1970, 147.

140. Cfr. *Dublin Review* VI (May 1839) 416-435.



the Late Reverend R. H. Froude, published by Newman and Keble in 1838.

In assessing the writings, sermons, essays and diary of the see him take the salutary resolve, to embrace the conclusions reserve, but emphasized above all the *Catholic* character of the *Remains* and the inevitable Roman tendency which they contained.

Wrote Wiseman: «Mr Froude was one of the contributors to the *Tracts for the Times*; but does not seem to have been satisfied with the point at which the principles of that collection stopped short»¹⁴¹.

According to Wiseman, Froude saw that consistency of reasoning ought to have carried his friends farther than they ventured to go. And Wiseman thought that the Tractarian was prepared to go to the extreme that logical deduction would carry him.

«Longer life alone,» the writer concluded, «was wanting to see him take the salutary resolve, to embrace the conclusions of his theories to their fullest legitimate extent. While the writings of the new divines seem to represent their theories as perfectly formed, and their views quite fixed, the extracts we have just made (from the *Remains*) show them to be but the shifting and unsettled opinions of men who are yet discovering errors in what they have formally believed, and seeking farther evidence of what they shall from henceforth hold»¹⁴².

2. *Wiseman, Russell and Newman*

Wiseman perceived that the Tractarians were men on the move and that their spiritual and doctrinal progress would soon bear fruits of union with Rome.

In 1839 Wiseman unwaveringly sent Newman, whose growing insecurity he had guessed, an article on the Donatists of St. Augustine's time¹⁴³. Wiseman was confident that Newman

141. *Ibid.*, 424.

142. *Ibid.*, 435.

143. N. WISEMAN, *Anglican Claims of Apostolic Succession*, *Dublin Review* VII (August 1839) article 6.

would grasp the similarity of his own position as Anglican with that of the African schismatics and would draw out the consequences. The ploy succeeded, as we know from Newman's correspondence and the *Apologia*¹⁴⁴, and the bishop saw that his hope had not been in vain.

In November 1839 Wiseman wrote from Schelde to Bagshawe, editor of the *Dublin Review*: «I feel completely at a loss to discover what can have gained we the influence I have been able to exercise upon others... For everything I have done has fallen wonderfully short of my desires...»¹⁴⁵.

It was around this time —1839— that the Oxford Movement, which had experienced a critical change, and its apparently new attitude towards Rome became Wiseman's special concern. During the same period he was named President of the Catholic College of Oscott, near Birmingham. Oscott was to be the fulcrum that would guide the Catholic movement in the Established Church towards the Holy See.

The course of events developed quickly around a crisis which arose in Oxford with the publication of Newman's Tract XC in February 1841 and the bitter conflict between the leader of the Oxford Movement and the authorities of Oxford which ensued. The secession of a sector of Anglicans seemed imminent and a first wave of conversions in the offing.

«Let us have an influx of new blood,» wrote Wiseman to Phillipps de Lisle enthusiastically at the beginning of April 1841; «let us have but even a small number of such men as write in the Tracts... let even a few such men... enter fully into the spirit of the Catholic religion and we shall be speedily reformed, and England quickly converted»¹⁴⁶. He writes in the same tone to Charles Russell, professor of the Irish seminary of Maynooth, who maintained a cordial relationship with Newman: «I see no insurmountable difficulties in Oxford against the return to Unity. The passions of men and the gross prejudices of the mass of the people are our real adversaries. The latter *they* are more likely to remove than we»¹⁴⁷.

144. Cfr. pp. 109ff.

145. Ward I, 335.

146. Ward I, 385.

147. *Ibid.*, 391 (April 28, 1841).

It was around this time that Wiseman began a correspondence with Newman, whose steps toward the Catholic Church he had tried to facilitate and encourage. The bishop explains to Newman that he is writing him because of «his earnest anxiety to convince one who has given so much proof of candour and sincerity,» and further on he does not hesitate to be playfully aggressive and clear. Says Wiseman, «Why not suspect your judgement, if you find that they vary?... Why not suspect that a further approximation may yet remain; that further discoveries of truth... may be reserved for tomorrow...?»¹⁴⁸.

Newman did not answer this letter, but Wiseman was so sure of the efficacy of his words that later on he attributed to them a decisive role in the conversion of Newman and his followers. He felt himself to be at least partly responsible for the flood of converts in 1845 and after¹⁴⁹.

The optimism of the future cardinal, however, contrasted sharply with the distrustful attitude of the so called «old Catholics» toward the Tractarians. The old Catholics thought that most of the words and gestures of the Oxford men were purely tactical or superficial, and that they were not seriously considering any union —personal or collective— with Rome. The historian John Lingard, who represents such an opinion in this matter, did not hesitate to warn Wiseman of the danger of placing excessive trust in Newman and his friends¹⁵⁰.

But Wiseman did not share such feelings. In April 1841 he wrote Charles Russell: «I feel now quite satisfied that Mr. Newman is acting with the greatest sincerity, that his whole efforts are directed towards a reunion, not a distant, theoretical union, but a practical one, and that as soon as it can be openly agitated without causing too great alarm...»¹⁵¹.

Russell felt he same as Wiseman and could understand his position perfectly. In May 1841 he took advantage of an article about the ecumenical initiatives of Leibnitz in the eighteenth century, to describe the fervent hope with which the German Protestant philosopher had witnessed the struggle of the Catholic-

148. *Ibid.*, 337.

149. Cfr. N. WISEMAN, *The Religious Movement, Dublin Review* XIX (December 1845) 522-538.

150. Cfr. Ward I, 378.

151. Ward I, 388.

minded Anglicans to reconcile their Catholic premises with the following words: «This led him (Leibnitz) to formulate the wish that those Anglicans who were searching for Catholic roots of their faith would find the truth they sought where it could only be found —in a union with the Catholic Church»¹⁵².

In May 1841, when Newman sent Russell a volume of his *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, Russell answered immediately, «not put up off by Newman's declaration of loyalty to Anglicanism»¹⁵³, and politely maintained his confidence in the outcome of the Tractarian Movement. Responding to Newman's point about individual movement towards Rome, Russell specified that what he hopefully envisaged was not just the accession of a few individuals from the Church of England to Rome, but that «that Church itself under the influence of the great Catholic Movement... (would) bring itself into communion with ours»¹⁵⁴.

It is not likely that Russell really expected something so great as the reunion of both Churches or, better said, the entrance of the Anglican Church into the Church of Rome. But he certainly did look forward to the conversion of Newman and his Tractarian friends. Such is the idea he clearly manifests to Newman in response to the publication of *Apologia* in 1864.

Writes Russell: «It would be a deep and lasting source of comfort to me to think that I had any share in helping towards your conversion, but I have always felt that, with God's grace, your own mind worked out its own problem.

«I did wish to 'let you alone,' and I felt that in me... it would be ungentle and unwise... to push rudely upon the struggle, which I saw in many of its results in what you were writing from time to time, and of the issue of which I never once entertained a doubt»¹⁵⁵.

In spite of his strong optimism, Wiseman too asked himself in April 1841 how the Oxford Movement would finally unravel.

152. C. RUSSELL, *Protestant Evidence of Catholicity: Leibnitz*, *Dublin Review* X (May 1841) 394-429. Also see A. MACAULAY, *Dr. Russell of Maynooth*. London, 1983, 160.

153. A. MACAULAY, *Dr. Russell of Maynooth*, London, 1983, 88.

154. Cfr. *Ibid.*

155. Cfr. *Ibid.*, 97.

«The Catholic Movement is not merely, as some imagine, in the outward forms and phrases adopted by the Tractarians, but is in their hearts and desire. They are every day becoming more and more disgusted with Anglicanism...

«Their advance is so steady, regular, and unanimous, that one of two things must follow: either they will bring or push on their Church with them, or they will leave her behind»¹⁵⁶.

A few months later he thought that the extreme slowness of the Movement's leaders would result in many younger people breaking off with it: «my own impression...» he wrote to de Lisle, «is that the first break-up of Protestantism will be the secession of a large body of young men who will not have patience to wait for the more prudent measures of their leaders...»¹⁵⁷.

Time proved that Wiseman was only partially right. The Church of England had not absorbed the principles of the Oxford Movement as much as he had thought. Still, one has to say that Wiseman judged correctly when he said that the only logical and consistent terminus of the best Tractarianism was to be found in Rome.

F. A SPIRITUAL RESTORATION NOT DERIVED FROM ANGLICAN PRINCIPLES

1. *A Due Modern Revision of the Tractarian Movement*

The interpretation of the Oxford Movement as a positive and reformatory trend that did not proceed from Anglicanism is defended principally by the American Catholic John Griffin. This author has systematically laid out his opinions in the book *The Oxford Movement: A Revision*¹⁵⁸. But he had already begun to expound the same ideas previously in the articles *The Anglican Politics of Cardinal Newman*¹⁵⁹ and *The Radical*

156. Ward I, 387-388.

157. *Ibid.*, 393.

158. Christendom Publication, Front Royal, Virginia (USA), 1981; Edinburgh, 1984, 100p.

159. *Anglican Theological Review* LV (1973) 434-443.

Phase of the Oxford Movement ¹⁶⁰. He has recently reiterated his insights in *Newman's 'Difficulties Felt by Anglicans': History or Propaganda?* ¹⁶¹.

Griffin's interpretation has something in common with the opinion which considers the Oxford Movement as an unfortunate undertaking foreign to the spirit and principles of current Anglicanism (*vide supra*). But while the supporters of this latter thesis condemn the Movement for being non-Anglican, Griffin considers it an original and positive chapter in the history of Anglicanism.

Griffin's main thesis is that the revival of 1833 did not have its origin in the Anglican Establishment. The reason behind this assertion is simple but solid enough to account for it: the distinguishing mark of the revival was anti-Erastianism which was a principle directly opposed with the traditions of the national Church.

Accordingly, the kind of spiritual life and ecclesiastical policy for which the Oxford Tractarians has argued was completely foreign to the aristocratic ethos and governmental dependency of the Church or England.

Since a very widespread interpretation of the Oxford Movement emphasizes the notion that the Movement did not signify anything especially new within Anglicanism as far as ideology is concerned, Griffin's view contradicts a lot of conventional and usually accepted wisdom about Tractarianism.

The author tells us that the Oxford Movement was not elitist and conservative, as many have wrongly characterized it. On the contrary, it was popular and somewhat politically radical in outlook.

According to Griffin, the original Oxford Movement was *radical* in the sense that it gave a completely *new* answer to the vexing and difficult question of the relationship between Church and State in England.

Griffin thinks that the «most pressing question» at the beginning of the Movement in 1833 was Erastianism, i. e., the theoretical and practical ascendancy of the State over Church

160. *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, XXVII (1976) 47-56.

161. *Catholic Historical Review*, LXIX (1983) 371-383.



in ecclesiastical matters. He argues that the foremost exponents of Erastianism in the 19th century were neither the Whigs nor the Radicals nor Non-Conformists, but the Tories.

Given the fact that the Oxford Movement originated out of opposition to the dominating Erastianism in the Church of England, it is clear to Griffin that the original political and class feelings of the leadership of the Oxford Movement—Keble, Froude, Newman—were anti-Tory and anti-aristocratic.

The Church of England was at the time, as it is now, the established or official Church of the realm, and its head was not the Archbishop of Canterbury but the monarch. Its legal situation really made the Church a (real) captive of the state and the government. Hence, the Church's orientation was one of loyalty to the aristocracy and to the ruling classes, and, as a result, the whole ecclesiastical establishment was practically alienated from the common people.

Against this social and religious background, the Oxford Movement attempted to give the Church back to the people, (as it were), and according to the view of its leaders the most effective way to accomplish this was to separate the Church from State. In other words, their aim was simply to disestablish the Church, a position which the Whigs and Radicals used to favor more than the 'Throne and altar' Tories.

Though the original leaders of the Oxford Movement, says Griffin, tried to avoid becoming political and had felt no special inclination towards Whigs and Radical Dissenters as such, they took an indulgent view of them. The attitude of Newman, who according to Griffin was the most advanced of the group, was to enjoy their fruit without committing themselves.

The author thinks that Newman was particularly critical of the wealth and privileges of the Church and the clergy. He believed that Christians were supposed to look to God, not the Tory Party, to rescue the Church. While the Tories appeared to be protectors of the Church of England they were actually corrupting it step by step.

Thomas á Becket, whose figure and character was the special study of Hurrell Froude, was a sort of model for the Oxford Movement. Becket was able to withstand King Henry's II efforts to dominate the Church. The Archbishop enjoyed a

great popularity among the common people and, confronted with a choice, he chose the people.

For the leaders of the early Oxford Movement, heroism was a mark of a truly apostolic bishop, and Griffin is eager to quote Newman's words significantly written in one of the first batch of *Tracts for the Times*: «black as it would be for the country, yet... we could not wish them (the bishops) a more blessed termination of their course than the spoiling of their goods and martyrdom.»

For Griffin, the Oxford Movement lost its momentum when Newman seceded to Rome. Leadership of the Movement passed to Dr. Pusey who, according to the author, was an Erastian and changed the basic direction of the revival started in 1833.

Griffin suggested that the second or 'Puseyite' phase or the Movement was so radically different in character from the first that it really should be placed under a different heading.

2. *The Reliability of Newman's Lectures of 1850 as a Correct View of the Oxford Movement*

If the Oxford Movement is really what Griffin thinks it is, and if its roots cannot be found in Anglicanism, then Newman's description of the Movement put forth in his famous lectures of 1850 should be considered accurate and true.

Griffin asserts that this is precisely the case, very much in keeping with his basic ideas regarding the nature of the Oxford Movement, and maintains that the *Lectures on Certain Difficulties Felt by Anglicans in Catholic Teaching* are neither religious propaganda nor a biased retrospective vision of the Movement, as some authors think. Rather, the *Lectures* delivered by Newman in 1850 are real *history*¹⁶².

Griffin attempts to show that the *Lectures* are a valid and trustworthy account of the «origins, development and *telos* of the religious revival of 1833 and an accurate portrait of the Anglo-Catholics in 1850»¹⁶³.

162. Cfr. Newman's 'Difficulties Felt by Anglicans': *History or Propaganda*, CHR LXIX (1983) 371-383.

163. *Ibid.*, 371.

From an historian's point of view, the most controversial aspect of the lectures is in fact Newman's insistence that the revival did not derive from the Church of England and was completely 'foreign' to that Church.

According to Griffin, the strongest case for the historical reliability of the lectures lies in its fidelity to the original literature of the Oxford Movement. There are sufficient passages in the writings of Newman and Froude to show clearly that the Tractarians «understood the nature of the Church far better than they understood the nature of the religious communion which they sought to defend»¹⁶⁴.

The author thinks that when Owen Chadwick describes Newman's remarks on the Church of England as an «attempt to burn what he had once worshipped» (*Victorian Church* I, 288) he is neglecting the extensive and always negative comments that Newman had made about the Establishment since the start of the Movement.

Griffin points out that Newman successfully shows the extreme difference between his own version of the revival and that of later Anglican historians, for it was «Newman's thematic insistence» that it was the national Church itself which provided the essential support for the heresy of Erastianism brought about by Henry VIII and Elizabeth I.

According to Newman, the aberrations begun in the 16th century could not be set right by the Tractarian program without destroying the Church itself.

Writes Griffin: «The Movement and the Establishment were in simple antagonism from the first, although neither party knew it; they were logical contradictories...; what was the life of the one was the death of the other»¹⁶⁵. Griffin thinks that the reason for the satiric treatment of the Church of England in the *Lectures* is that Newman wished to *disabuse* those Anglo-Catholics who remained in the Anglican Church of the fallacy that had given rise to the revival. It was clear that there was no apostolic system in the Church.

164. *Ibid.*, 376-377.

165. *Ibid.*, 377.

«A final defense of the *Difficulties* text,» says Griffin, «is to be found in its prophetic element, that the Anglo-Catholics could not influence or change the Church of England. In spite of the Anglican insistence that the Oxford Movement was 'full of life' (Clarke, *The Oxford Movement and After*, 1932, 304-5)... and Eugene Fairweather's comments on the victories of the later Anglo-Catholic priests in their 'skirmishes against Parliament, Privy Council, and the Crown' (*The Oxford Movement*, 7), the later trials of Anglo-Catholic doctrines and practice record no such victories»¹⁶⁶.

3. *A Complementary Notion*

Harold L. Weatherby¹⁶⁷ has defended an interpretation of the Oxford Movement which coincides in substance with Griffin's. The Movement, according to Weatherby, is the development of an anti-Erastian idea of the Church, and the interpretation offered by Newman in his *Lectures* of 1850 should be taken as correct.

Weatherby points out that looking at the Movement in retrospect, Newman treats it as the development of «one idea,» and that idea or first principle was ecclesiastical liberty. «In other words,» says he, «the heart, the very life, of the Oxford Movement was its anti-Erastianism; that idea was responsible for the whole Tractarian development. 'The object of its attack was the Establishment, considered simply as such' (*Diff.* I, 101), for the very 'essence' of that Establishment was Erastianism»¹⁶⁸.

In Weatherby's opinion, the conflict between the Movement and the Establishment is really fundamental disagreement between *two different ideas of religion*, each with its own formal development and hostile to the other. A certain measure of radicalism or anti-traditionalism was unavoidable in the Tractarians, for there could be no compromise or peace between movements produced and empowered by mutually exclusive ideas¹⁶⁹.

166. *Ibid.*, 383.

167. *Cardinal Newman in His Age. His Place in English Theology and Literature*, Nashville, 1973, 296p.

168. *Ibid.*, 235.

169. Cfr. *Ibid.*, 236.

The author observes that the Movement is generally regarded as a conservative episode in the history of the English Church and he acknowledges indeed that Newman with other members of the Tractarian party were all insistent upon obedience to bishops and submission to all the forms of the Establishment.

If that is the case, «how can such obviously conservative and traditionalist teaching be reconciled with Newman's own later view that the whole idea of the Movement was in radical, ideological opposition from first to last on the traditions of the national Church?»¹⁷⁰.

Weatherby thinks that Newman himself answers the question for us to the effect that the apparent conservatism of the Tracts was accidental rather than essential to their central teaching.

The anti-Erastian idea *seemed* to demand a defense of the national Church because —according to Weatherby— the Tractarians «mistakenly believed that that Church had its own Catholic idea, its own Catholic life, apart from the establishment»¹⁷¹.

But they were to discover before long that the bishops and the Prayer Book were, after all, no more than forms or developments of the Erastian idea and could be defended on no other terms.

Says Weatherby: «It is one thing to believe in the bishops and the Prayer Book as institutions in their own right, justifiable on their own terms in light of Scripture, tradition, and reason. It is quite another thing to measure their worth as forms expressive of an idea antecedent to and independent of them»¹⁷².

For Newman the Oxford Movement was not a simple *stasis*, a mere defense of the Established Church in the face of Whig and Liberal attack. And there lies the difference between the apparent conservatism of Newman and the real conservatism of Anglican authors such as Hooker.

While Newman defended English bishops because he believed, and only so long as he believed, their existence to be a valid development of the idea of Catholicism, Hooker defended

170. *Ibid.*

171. *Ibid.*, 237.

172. *Ibid.*, 238.

them —says Weatherby— on the basis of their worth as an institution, not so much with reference to the *idea* of Christianity, but because of the warrant of existing historical facts such as Scripture, Antiquity, the customs of the English realm, and the reasonableness of the institution in its own right¹⁷³.

From this point in his exposition, Weatherby begins to differ with Griffin's, insisting on his principal thesis about the significance of Newman's philosophical and theological outlook.

«The primary difference between the Tractarians and old High-Churchmen was that the former *moved* under the impulse of the idea while the latter *stood* in the defense of the established order. The former *thought*; indeed their point of origin was the noetic and consequently reforming atmosphere of the Oriel common room. The latter simply acted on the basis of an inherited system»¹⁷⁴.

The reader will observe that Griffin defends the same basic thesis of Weatherby, at least at the beginning and within moderate limits. Though Weatherby concludes somewhat arbitrarily that there is a «tendency to Newman's thought toward subjectivism and relativism»,¹⁷⁵ both authors coincide in affirming that for a while, accidentally, the two parties (Tractarians and High-Churchmen) found themselves on the same ancient institutions, but as the Tractarian mind moved forward, the anti-Erastian idea gradually set itself free from the allegiance to the Establishment and pursued its own course of development.

Therefore it could be said that in this sense the Oxford Movement did not really grow out of Anglicanism.

173. Cfr. *Ibid.*, 239.

174. *Ibid.*, 251.

175. *Ibid.*, 64.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Pág.
PRESENTATION	157
GENERAL TABLE OF CONTENTS	159
BIBLIOGRAPHY OF THE THESIS	163
ABBREVIATIONS	171
THE LEADING INTERPRETATIONS ON THE SIGNIFICANCE AND NATURE OF THE OXFORD MOVEMENT	
A. General Remarks	173
B. The Oxford Movement viewed as a spiritually enriching impulse emanating from the Anglican Church on behalf of the Anglican Church ...	178
C. The Oxford Movement as tending towards Rome	193
D. The Movement, an Utopian and futile endeavour to catholicize Anglicanism	204
E. The Oxford Movement considered as an undertaking which both reformed the Anglican Church and was leading it by its own principles to the Catholic Church	211
F. A spiritual restoration not derived from Anglican principles	219