

NATIONAL APOSTASY

150 YEARS OF THE
OXFORD MOVEMENT

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How the Oxford Movement began

It is popularly understood that the Oxford Movement began on July 14, 1833, when John Keble preached his assize sermon on 'National Apostasy' in the pulpit of St. Mary's Church, Oxford. This is probably because Newman himself wrote in his *Apologia*, "I have ever considered and kept the day, as the start of the religious movement of 1833."¹ It would, however, be more accurate to say that the movement was really begun some three months earlier, in April 1833, at a meeting between Newman, Hurrell Froude and Monsignor (later, Cardinal) Wiseman, not in Oxford, but in Rome. The meeting was something which Newman passed over quickly in his own account in the *Apologia*. He tells us that when his health suffered from his writing the book *The Arians of the Fourth Century*, he went abroad with his friend, Hurrell Froude, a man who was already far ahead of Newman in his interest in, and sympathy for, the Church of Rome. They went to the Mediterranean and to Rome. "We kept clear of Catholics throughout our tour", wrote Newman, but adds, "Froude and I made two calls upon Monsignore [sic] (now Cardinal) Wiseman at the Collegio Inglese, shortly before we left Rome".² With this brief mention he dismisses the matter. But we know from Hurrell Froude's account that it was of much greater significance than that. Indeed, it was a turning point in the experience of both. It was the birth of Newman's sense of vocation in the English Church, which was to seek to re-Catholicise it, to reintroduce those doctrines which had been thrown over at the Reformation and to make it again a church which was in all essentials compatible with the Church of Rome and capable of being reconciled to it.

Significance of meeting with Wiseman

Froude, in his account of this meeting, tells us he

formed an acquaintance with . . . Monsignor Wiseman, the head of the English college, who has enlightened Newman and me on the subject of our relations to the Church of Rome. We got introduced to him to find out *whether they would take us in on any terms to which we could twist our consciences*, and we found to our dismay that not one step could be gained without swallowing the Council of Trent as a whole.³

It must be clear that this was no chance meeting, and that their specific purpose was to enquire into the terms on which the Church of England might be reconciled to the Church of Rome. The phrase "twist our consciences" is ambiguous, but it would appear from the context of the entry as a whole that individual secession was not what they had in mind. They discovered that Rome was prepared to make no concessions; there could be no easy terms. They were disappointed. But the rebuff led to the formation in Newman's mind of the plan to revive Catholic doctrines in the Church of England. Since the Church of Rome cannot change, the Church of England must. When he parted from Wiseman he said with great gravity, "We have a work to do in England".⁴ Wiseman understood what he meant; he was to watch this movement with great interest. He

¹ J. H. Newman *Apologia pro vita sua* (Fontana edition, 1959), 122.

² *Ibid.*, 119-120.

³ H. Froude, *Remains*, I, 306-307.

⁴ Newman *Apologia*, 121.

afterwards wrote in his *Essays*:

I watched with intense interest and love the movement of which I *then* [in April, 1833] caught the first glimpse. My studies changed their course, the bent of my mind was altered.

And again he wrote of this same interview

From that moment it [the Oxford Movement] took the uppermost place in my thoughts, and became the object of their intensest interests.¹

So there was a clear understanding when Newman left Rome, both in his and Wiseman's mind, of the work that was to be done in England. If Rome was not the place where the Tractarian Movement began then it is difficult to assign it a place at all. Keble's sermon at Oxford was a convenient occasion for the manifestation of the movement in England and a respectable banner under which to fight, but it was neither the origin nor the cause of the movement. The Oxford Movement was conceived in Rome and born in Oxford. In keeping with the bent to secrecy of Newman's mind he kept hidden as far as possible the true source of the movement.

‘National Apostasy’

Keble's sermon was a rather indifferent affair and passed off with little notice at the time. In its tone it was uncharitable towards dissenters. Keble saw the church apostolical in this realm, by which he meant essentially the bishops and clergy of the Church of England, threatened by a rising tide of liberalism and dissent. Keble was particularly concerned about the rise of dissent and its growing influence in the nation as undermining the distinctive place of the Church of England. In the course of his sermon he said

Do not parents [by which he meant Church of England parents] commit their children to be educated, do they not encourage them to inter-marry, in houses [that is, National Schools and Non-conformist chapels] on which Apostolical Authority [that is, the bishops] would rather teach them to set a mark, as unfit to be entered by a faithful servant of Christ?

The answer to this state of affairs, which Keble chose to term ‘National Apostasy’, was, he suggested, to pray and work for the defence and integrity of the apostolical understanding of the Church of England, in the face of opposition and even persecution. Others might regard these views as narrow and exclusive, but that was where the duty of faithful churchmen lay. “I do not see”, said Keble, “how any person can devote himself too entirely to the cause of the Apostolical Church in these realms”. He may do so calmly and soberly, knowing that “sooner or later, HIS WILL BE THE WINNING SIDE”. That served, of course, as the confirmation for Newman of the call he had received to his work in England. That was how he understood the task too, and sitting in the congregation he realised that his plan had now to be implemented.

Hadleigh Conference

There were different opinions as to how the work should be undertaken. A conference was called eleven days after the sermon at Hadleigh Rectory, Suffolk, the home of Hugh Rose. It was attended by Froude, Palmer, and

¹ N. Wiseman, *Essays on various subjects* (1853), II, 94; vii.

others. Newman and Keble were unable to be present. From that meeting came the formation of an association to maintain, pure and inviolate, the doctrine, services, and discipline of the Church of England. There followed an appeal to churchmen to unite for that object, and an address signed by 7,000 clergymen was sent to the Archbishop of Canterbury. But Newman saw the task differently. He considered that "Living movements do not come of committees, nor are great ideas worked out through the post, even though it had been the penny post."¹ He saw that something must be done by those at Oxford, and that a movement of that kind must spread out from an intellectual and spiritual centre. Oxford, we must remember, at that time was one of the two places for the education of the clergy of the Church of England. Newman saw that a work begun there would eventually extend through the whole Church.

The Tracts

He thus hit upon the idea of tracts, and anonymous tracts, which would act as terse and vivid statements of the doctrines and principles that Newman wished to see revived in the Church of England. Tract No. 1 dealt with apostolic succession in a plain and simple way: the apostles appointed their successors and they appointed others right down to the present bishops of the Church of England; to hear and obey the bishop is to hear and obey Christ. In this way the tracts ran through all the subjects and doctrines that Newman and his friends wanted to see re-established in the church: baptismal regeneration, the real presence in the eucharist, eucharistic sacrifice, confession, fasting, and so on. By way of justification of their position they appealed to Archbishop Laud and the non-jurors, and alongside the tracts reprinted their works in order to show that such opinions had been held since the Reformation in the Church of England. They also began to ransack the writings of the early Fathers of the church for quotations which would seem to support their position. Catenae of sayings were printed which were intended to prove that the teachings Newman and his friends were advancing were the teachings of primitive Christianity.

Via Media

The position that Newman sought to establish as being the position of the English Church he called the *Via Media*, the middle way. It was supposed to be neither Protestant nor Roman Catholic, but yet truly Catholic in the sense that it retained all that was fundamental to the true faith throughout the ages. But where was this Catholic Faith to be found? On what authority did it rest?

Newman tells us that he had long before given up the idea that it was the Bible which was the source of doctrine. "Surely", he had written in his book *The Arians of the Fourth Century*, "the Sacred Volume was never intended, and is not adapted, to teach us our creed".² It is for the church

¹ Newman, *Apologia*, 124.

² J. H. Newman, *The Arians of the Fourth Century*, 50.

to teach doctrine and the Bible to prove. In that case, where was the teaching of the church to be located, but in the traditionary element? This took Newman back to the Fathers of the Early Church. He was convinced that pure Christian teaching was to be found there. But having abandoned the Rock of Holy Scripture he was to find that he was on shifting sand. Why should the true faith of the Catholic Church be located in the teaching of the Fathers of the first four centuries? Why not also the fifth, sixth and seventh? And why stop there? Is not any resting place merely arbitrary? If the Fathers of the first four centuries formulated the faith in answer to heresy, is not heresy always recurring and is not the church always having to add to her formulations of doctrine? In this way Newman was led to see that his position was untenable. "The *Via Media*", he later confessed, "was an impossible idea; it was what I later called 'standing on one leg'."¹ The vision of a Church of England which was neither Roman Catholic nor Protestant, holding all the essential teachings of Catholicism in a pure form, was a chimera; it had no reality. As soon as he came to test it, it melted into nothing.

Protestantism and Roman Catholicism

There were in fact only two positions—Protestantism and Roman Catholicism—only two poles towards which it was possible to gravitate. Newman found increasingly that the inner logic of his position impelled him relentlessly towards Rome. It is a nice question whether he did not realise this from the start. Writing to his sister Harriet, soon after his arrival in Rome in the spring of 1833, he said,

And now what [can] I say of Rome, but that it is of all cities the first, and that all I ever saw are but as dust, even dear Oxford inclusive, compared with its majesty and glory. Is it possible that so serene and lofty a place is the cage of unclean creatures? I will not believe it until I have evidence of it.²

There certainly came a time long before he left the Church of England when he fully realised and acknowledged that the course he was pursuing could only end in Rome, yet he held back from taking that step in the hope that he would later be able to take others with him. He was against individual secession because he hoped that there might yet be some significant move towards the reconciliation of the two churches.

However, from the beginning of 1833 Newman was engaged in an experiment which was meant to prove how far the Church of England could be taken in the direction of Rome; how much Catholic teaching it could absorb into its system. If the experiment was successful and the formularies of the Church of England could be shown to be, if not 'patient' of a Roman Catholic interpretation, then not hostile to Roman Catholic dogma, it would be only a matter of time before the two churches could be reconciled. If, on the other hand, the experiment failed, then at least it would reveal exactly how things stood and show the way that those of a Catholic persuasion must take—the path of secession and submission to Rome.

¹ Newman, *Apologia*, 211.

² *The Letters and Diaries of John Henry Newman*, III (1979), 230–1.

Tract XC

The experiment begun in the first of the tracts, in the challenge there thrown down to the clergy, "*Choose your side; since side you shortly must, with one or other party, even though you do nothing*"—the experiment thus begun came to its climax in 1841 with Tract XC.

Tract XC was a culmination of the process, it contained in essence all that was implicit in the movement from the beginning. Its purpose was to attempt to show that the XXXIX Articles of Religion of the Church of England were compatible with the teaching of the Council of Trent; that in fact the Articles were not aimed against Trent at all, but against certain popular abuses in the Church of Rome which were in no way representative of her true teaching. Wiseman had told Froude and Newman at the beginning that there could be no reconciliation between their two churches unless the Council of Trent was "swallowed whole", and this was Newman's attempt to thrust it down the throat of the Church of England.

The "great stumblingblock", Newman acknowledged, to the realisation of his dream lay in the 39 Articles. Here, he said, was a "positive Note" against the Church of England being truly 'Catholic'. If the Church of England were the "Old Church" its voice "must live and speak in the Anglican formularies, in the 39 Articles. Did it?" asked Newman.

Yes, it did; that is what I maintained; it did in substance, in a true sense. Man had done his worst to disfigure, to mutilate, the old Catholic Truth, but there it was, in spite of them, in the Articles still. It was there, but this must be shown. It was a matter of life and death to us to show it. And I believed that it could be shown. . . .¹

Experimentum crucis

Newman recognised that he was engaged in a desperate venture. He called it an *experimentum crucis* and likened it to proving cannon. A cannon was proved by priming it with a charge greater than it would normally bear. If it survived the experiment it would be 'proved'. Newman felt the time had come to subject the formularies of the Church of England to a similar test to see if they were capable of bearing a 'Catholic' interpretation, by which he meant a Roman Catholic interpretation, one which was compatible with the Council of Trent. He wrote

I do not think that we have yet made fair trial how much the English Church will bear. I know it is a hazardous experiment,—like proving cannon. Yet we must not take it for granted, that the metal will burst in the operation. It has borne at various times, not to say at this time, a great infusion of Catholic truth without damage. . . . For what we know, it may be the providential means of uniting the whole Church [i.e., English and Romish] in one . . .²

It was perhaps with no great degree of surprise that Newman proved both to himself and the world by this experiment that the 39 Articles were in fact a declaration that the Church of England at the Reformation had taken her place in the Protestant camp. That camp was not necessarily unanimous, but on certain points it was agreed. It was agreed on accepting Scripture as the final authority on all matters of doctrine, on Justification by Faith as contrasted with Justification by Works, on the fallibility of

¹ Newman, *Apologia*, 196.

² *Ibid.*, 200.

General Councils, on repudiating the doctrines of Transubstantiation and of the Mass as a propitiatory Sacrifice, on the abolition of the worship of all Images, and on renunciation of Papal authority, the Pope being regarded as Antichrist.

The fate of Tract XC, meeting as it did with condemnation from the Hebdomadal Board and from the Bishops, finally shattered Newman's dream and marked the destruction of his hopes for the Church of England. Forty two years later Newman wrote of Tract XC, and in particular of its attempt to turn the force of Article XXXI, which condemns the sacrifice of the mass, by suggesting that it refers only to abuses of the mass and not to the mass itself:

The Tract, as a whole, I have been able to defend but not this portion of it. It argues that what the Article condemns is not the authoritative teaching of Rome, but only the common belief and practice of Catholics as regards Purgatory and private Masses. But the words in which the Article condemns the so-called abuse are *ipso facto* a condemnation also of the ordinance itself which is abused. This will be seen at once by comparing the language of the Article with the language of Pope Pius IV and the Council of Trent. What the Article abjures as a lie is just that which the Pope and the Council declare to be a divine truth. . . . Nothing can come of the suggested distinction between Mass and Masses, as if 'the Mass' were the aboriginal Divine Rite, which the Article left alone, and 'the Masses' were those private superstitions which the Article denounced. . . .

Attitude of the Church of Rome

How did the Roman Catholic Church regard the Oxford Movement? We have seen how Wiseman was in at the beginning of it and viewed it with keen interest thereafter. Indeed, he confessed that it changed the whole tenor of his mind and made him think positively of the conversion of England. Mr. Ambrose Phillipps de Lisle, who was afterwards intimate with Newman and was appointed by the Pope to act as a go-between to the Oxford Movement and the Church of Rome, exclaimed after reading the fourth of the *Tracts for the Times*, "Mark my words, these Tracts are the beginning of a Catholic Movement which will one day end in the return of her Church to Catholic Unity and of the See of Peter."¹

By 1841 when de Lisle was appointed secret emissary to the leaders of the Oxford Movement it was clear that the Movement was heading towards Rome. The great desire of the Roman Catholic Church was not to gain a number of individual secessions, but to capture if possible the Church of England itself. If this was to be accomplished it was necessary to do two things. Protestant dissenters and Low Churchmen had to be put off the scent, for they were becoming suspicious that something was afoot; and, secondly, everything had to be done to encourage the leaders of the Oxford Movement to stay where they were until the moment was right and the fruit was ready to fall into the lap of Rome.

Thus de Lisle wrote in 1841 to Lord Shrewsbury:

. . . the dissenting party is on the alert, . . . and as they are joined, politically at least, by the Low Church Party, we find it necessary to *blind* them, the more so as we are not ready to act yet . . . Urge at Rome the necessity of immense prudence and forbearance, to do everything to *encourage*, nothing to *damp*; not to call upon these Men to quit their own communion in order to join our's, but to proceed

¹ E. S. Purcell, *Life and Letters of Ambrose Phillipps de Lisle* (1900), I, 199.

on courageously with their holy and glorious intention of *reconciling* their CHURCH to OUR'S: remember this involves the reconciliation of the *kingdom*, of the *aristocracy* with all its wealth and power, of the *Nation*. A false step would spoil all, would produce a protestant reaction, and would defeat the hopes of the Holy See for another century . . .¹

As Newman himself pointed out when he wrote to a Roman Catholic in 1841, "Only through the English Church can you act upon the English nation".² The Roman hierarchy knew this well enough. They had made, and were making, no headway in converting the ordinary people of England to the Roman Catholic Faith. The chief hope lay in the re-Catholicisation of the Church of England from within, by her own leaders. Tract XC, and the general condemnation that followed it, to a large extent frustrated those immediate hopes expressed in de Lisle's letter, but they were only laid aside for a time. Later, in 1857 we find Newman writing "I think that it is for the interest of Catholicism that individuals should not join us [he was then, of course, a Roman Catholic] but should remain to leaven the mass—I mean that they will do more for us by remaining where they are than by coming over".³

The leaders of the Oxford Movement who succeeded Newman thought so too and the *Church News* of October 28, 1868, stated

England will never become Catholic through the Roman part of the Church. The Roman Catholics minister to their own people and to the Irish, and make a good many converts from the upper classes, but they can never leaven the lump and touch the people as we hope and intend to do with the blessing of God. What Cardinal Wiseman said was this—England must return to Catholic Unity through the established Church . . .

Our Evangelical fathers in the Church of England were under no illusions as to the direction and object of the Oxford Movement. Bishop Ryle, in his tract, *What do we owe to the Reformation?* asks

Is the movement towards Rome or not? . . . Hundreds of well-meaning and simple-minded Churchmen reply, No! They would have us believe that the movement only aims at a more ornate ceremonial, and that they are not Romanizers at all. . . .

I believe they are utterly and entirely mistaken. That it is a Romeward movement and a departure from the Reformation, and that it leads to Popery, is as clear to my mind as the sun at noonday.⁴

They had ample reason for their apprehensions and their warnings and all that has happened since, and is happening to-day, only serves to confirm the rightness of the view they held. The movement began in Rome and is intended to end in Rome, but it proposes to achieve that object in a subtle way, by working from within, and by approximating the worship and teaching of the Church of England to that of the Church of Rome.

We must therefore trace *the effects of the Oxford Movement upon the Church and nation*.

Despising the Reformation

It taught people to despise the Reformation and in this way sought to cut the nation off from its spiritual heritage. There is no question that the leaders of the Oxford Movement were men who were bitterly opposed to the Reformers and what the Reformation stood for. Keble said, in

¹ Purcell, *op.cit.*, I, 217-18

² *Protestant Dictionary*, 628.

³ Newman *Apologia*, 242

⁴ J. C. Ryle, *What do we Owe to the Reformation?*, 16.

opposition to the building of a memorial to the Martyrs of the Reformation at Oxford, "Anything which separates the present Church from the Reformers I should hail as a great good". Newman wrote of Hurrell Froude's influence upon him, "He made me look with admiration towards the Church of Rome, and in the same degree to dislike the Reformation".¹ They looked upon the Reformation as a great tragedy, a sinful schism, something which needed to be undone and obliterated from the English Church.

All this did enormous spiritual harm, the effects of which are still with us today. We hear from all sides, from leaders of the ecumenical movement and even from some evangelicals, the parrot cry that the Reformation was a mistake and a tragedy. They were taught it by the Oxford Movement. What can we make of such language when we reflect seriously upon the real nature and benefits of the Reformation—that great movement of the Spirit of God which Churchmen of all persuasions, prior to Newman and Pusey, regarded as second only to Pentecost—but that it is shallow, foolish, intemperate and wicked?

There is a real and indissoluble connexion between the Protestant Reformation and the Gospel. The Reformers were men of the Bible, they rediscovered the teachings of God's Word, they set the Gospel forth with clarity and power: to be against them is to be against the Gospel. Wherever men, as individuals or a party, entertain an animus against the Reformation, or manifest a spirit of indifference to or embarrassment about it, we can be sure that something has gone seriously wrong. We must "try the spirits whether they are of God" and this spirit is not of God. It is the spirit of Antichrist! By teaching men to despise the Reformation the Tractarian Fathers set the Church upon an erroneous path, they sought deliberately to deprive the nation of its spiritual birthright, and in so doing they sinned against the light.

Dividing the Church

Secondly, the Oxford Movement divided the Church of England. No one will pretend that before the advent of that movement all churchmen were of one mind and persuasion; there were different schools of thought. But it can be truly said that the Church was one and united in that it was Protestant—none was ashamed to call himself Protestant. The Oxford Movement broke up and destroyed that unity. It divided men upon fundamentals, not merely secondary questions. It introduced into the Church of England alien doctrines from the Church of Rome, as necessary to salvation, doctrines which were diametrically opposed to the Biblical doctrines of her Protestant formularies. It set men in the same house against each other and reduced the Church of England to anarchy.

Dr Arnold of Rugby wrote to Pusey to warn him that the doctrines his party were trying to revive were "too mischievous and too foolish ever to be revived with success. But they may be revived enough to do harm—to cause the ruin of the Church of England".² His words of warning were gradually fulfilled as the century wore on, as contumacious ritualist priests

¹ Newman, *Apologia*, 114.

² E. A. Knox, *The Tractarian Movement*, 133.

defied the laws of their church and the courts of the land, and as lay people were alienated from their parish churches. I do not need to cite particular cases: the picture of disorder and chaos brought about in the church by the Oxford Movement in the nineteenth century, and this, is all too painfully clear. The net result has been a divided church, a divided mind, and a divided loyalty.

Bishop E. A. Knox wrote that the Oxford Movement

has left behind it a disruption within the Church [of England], making that Church almost a collection of Sects held together by Endowments and by a precarious connexion with the State.¹

The Tractarian legacy to the Church of England is that of doctrinal confusion and incoherence. A church with two different Gospels and two different creeds is a church without a Gospel and without a creed. It is every bit as much a monstrosity as a creature with two heads, and just as likely to survive. The imminent danger in which the Church of England now stands is that of ceasing to exist any longer in its own right. A house divided against itself cannot stand. It may not fall immediately, but its fall is inevitable because it is weak radically. That is the condition of the Church of England today. If it is not delivered from its doctrinal incoherence by the recovery of its Reformed doctrines it must in time fall to Rome. Animals weakened by disease fall victim to other animals which prey upon them. The Church of England cannot continue indefinitely in its present condition of moral and spiritual weakness: it must go one way or the other.

Loss of Biblical Authority

We have seen how Newman enunciated the principle that the Church does not derive its doctrine from the Bible but from Tradition. In this way the Oxford Movement has sought to wean the Church of England from the Word of God and back to the traditions of men. It has conditioned the minds of many people to look in that direction and to regard the Scriptures with some detachment and even suspicion. The fundamental and formal principle of the Reformation and of the Church of England itself, Scripture alone, has been pushed into the background, and the Bible, instead of being regarded as authoritative and sufficient, has been looked upon as a mere co-ordinate of Tradition.

This has prepared the ground for the present supposed rapprochement with the Church of Rome. In these discussions Tradition has played a vital role. The A.R.C.I.C. Reports and Agreed Statements, while beginning by paying lip service to Scripture, very soon wander off into the realms of Tradition, and that is why they have been able to justify, as they see it, their advocacy of priesthood, mass sacrifice, and the authority of the Pope.

When a church ceases to regard the Bible as the sole and sufficient authority in all matters of faith, then it not only gains Tradition but loses the Gospel. That is the most terrible disaster and judgement that can overtake a church. It is the judgement Christ threatens the churches with

¹ E. A. Knox, *The Tractarian Movement*, 383.

in Revelation. He will come and remove the candlestick: He will take away the light of the truth where there is unfaithfulness to His Word. And where there is no Gospel there is no church. It may lose its bishops, its buildings, its wealth and survive, but not the Gospel.

The supreme mistake that Newman and his colleagues made was to fight what they termed apostasy in the nation with the wrong weapons. As they observed the rising tide of secularism and liberalism in the church and the nation, instead of resolving to fight it with the Word of God, they chose to revive pre-Reformation doctrines and to introduce the doctrines of the Council of Trent, those very teachings which had been rejected as repugnant to the Word of God. "I saw", said Newman, "that Reformation principles were powerless to rescue her [the Church of England]."¹ He deemed them powerless because he did not understand them, because he did not know the power of the Gospel of justification by grace through faith. That must be perfectly plain to anyone who has read his *Lectures on Justification*. Having, therefore, no knowledge of their efficacy he resorted to other means to save the church, to the most disastrous remedy he could possibly employ. Like an ignorant man dealing with a fire, who spurns the chemical foam extinguisher and seizes a bucket of water, with the result that the flames engulf him and the building, so Newman turned his back upon the Bible, the Gospel "which is the power of God unto salvation," and seized the doctrines of the unreformed Church of Rome with which to fight apostasy. He used apostasy to fight apostasy. He employed a remedy, as bad if not worse than the disease, with the most terrible results for himself and the Church of England.

We hear much about what the Oxford Movement is supposed to have done for the Church. It is said to have revived interest in religion, in colour, in architecture, in flowers and music. It may well have done so. But are these what the Church is about? Will these save England? In reviving these things together with the doctrines of the Church of Rome it has lost the living faith which Englishmen once had in the Word of God. Is that, in all reason, a profitable exchange? Only a fool or a madman could say, Yes! Is it not like the natives of Australia who traded with Captain Cook's sailors and exchanged gold and precious stones for coloured beads and trinkets? The Oxford Movement has taught men to exchange gold for trinkets because Newman and others did not understand its worth. And is not that the very exercise in which the heirs and successors of the Tractarians are now engaged—bartering the solid spiritual heritage of the English Church for the false glory and worldly power of Rome?

Moral Downgrade

Pure Biblical doctrine is the stream that should run through our national life to purify it. If things begin to go wrong morally in society we can be sure it is because of corruption in the fountainhead, corruption of the doctrines that are taught and the beliefs that are held by the Church. The order of this is set out in Scripture. Paul describes in Romans 1 the fall of man, and begins with his rejection of God's truth and the consequent

¹ Newman, *Apologia*, 119.

substitution for it of false doctrine and idolatrous worship. He then describes the result of this state of spiritual darkness in the practical and moral consequences that attend it when men fall into every kind of perversity and aberration. This is the law of cause and effect which operates in the spiritual and moral realm: first false doctrine then immorality.

The departure of the English Church from Biblical doctrine is a most serious matter which is not confined to the Church itself but has the most important consequences for the nation as a whole. I am not suggesting that the Oxford Movement is alone responsible for the moral condition in which we now find our society but it has been and is an important contributory factor. That which was purported to be the remedy for apostasy has itself been an instigating cause in our moral decline and the departure of our nation from Biblical standards of morality.

First, as the Oxford Movement advanced in the Church of England so the place of the law of God the Ten Commandments receded. They had occupied a prominent place in the Protestant, Prayer Book services of the Church of England. They had been placed at the beginning of the Holy Communion service by the Reformers, but as the service approximated to the mass they disappeared. This was a grievous loss. If the law of God is not heard in the church, where will it be heard? As Luther said, "When the law is cast out of the church, there is no more acknowledging of sin in the world."

Secondly, the secrecy which surrounded the Oxford Movement, especially in its dealings with the Church of Rome, together with its adoption of the doctrine of economy or reserve have been things which have been injurious to the cause of true morality in the Church and society. The doctrine of reserve, in the system of Roman Catholic moral theology, justifies equivocation and dissimulation where, it is argued, it may be employed for some 'good' end or for the 'greater glory of God'. We have noticed how at the very beginning Froude tells us that he and Newman were prepared to "twist their consciences" to accommodate the terms of the Roman Catholic Church. The adoption of these principles of 'Catholic' moral theology by the Oxford Movement made it possible for clergy to assent under solemn oath to the Articles of the Church of England while dissenting from them in their hearts. God, the Bible declares, desires "truth in the inward parts". If truth is vitiated there, how can it be expected to manifest itself outwardly? Such principles can only corrupt morality at its source. If truth is "fallen in the streets" it is because it has first been attacked in the heart. The twisting of conscience did more than accommodate Roman Catholic doctrines, it also accommodated moral turpitude.

Church at the Cross Roads

The conclusion of all this must by now be very clear. We are faced today in the Church of England with a choice: either we recover the principles of the Protestant Reformation, the doctrine that the Bible is the sole and sufficient authority in matters of faith, or the Church of England must fall to the Roman Catholic Church. An article appeared some time ago in a church newspaper with the title, 'Evangelicals at the Cross Roads'. Some-

body said, they have been at the cross roads ever since I remember; if they stay there much longer they will be run over. It is not only Evangelicals who are at the cross roads now: the Church of England is at the cross roads. If we do not act soon we shall be run over. We have not much longer to make up our minds. The path we must take is, to me, as clear as daylight: we must return to the Bible, we must honour God's Word, we must embrace the doctrines of the Reformation enshrined in the Articles of Religion. That is the only way open to us, if we are not to sin against the light.

We must not let anybody fool us into thinking that we do not have to choose between being a Protestant Church or being a Popish Church, that there is a third way, a middle path or, to use Newman's phrase, a *Via Media*. Sometimes the deliberations of A.R.C.I.C. and the idea of a 'uniate church', which the Archbishop of Canterbury is fond of speaking about, are represented as being a kind of middle path, a position where the Church of England might have the Pope as primate and yet, supposedly, retain its own liturgy and discipline. This is the nearest ecclesiastical equivalent we can find to cloud-cuckoo-land. Newman discovered that the *Via Media* was an illusion, that the abandonment of the Bible as the source of authority leads inexorably by the force of its own logic to submission to Rome. The installation of the Pope as primate would spell the end of the Reformation in the Church of England, whatever jargon may be used to disguise the fact from simple people.

Faith or Apostasy

The decision then is ours; but not for much longer. We must act now if we would recover the Gospel in the English Church. The Oxford Movement, as we have seen, works from within. The object of that movement has been, and is, to carry the Church along until it is virtually indistinguishable from the Church of Rome and ready for re-absorption within the Roman system. There are those who are working within the Church of England to that end. If the end should be achieved that would be *National Apostasy*, that would be the falling away from the light and truth of God's Word which He has until now preserved to us in the Church of England.

We must, as far as it is within our power, not allow this to happen. Newman believed that Protestant principles were powerless to save the Church. We know differently. We must put this to the test. We are engaged in what I have elsewhere called 'the battle for the soul of the church'. We must go out like David against Goliath, trusting only in the Lord our God. We do not have the numerical or physical strength to grapple with the colossus that advances towards us, but there is a single spot on his person where he is supremely vulnerable, and we have the one weapon that can destroy him, the Word of God. The Word, as Luther said, will do it. But the question is this: Have clergy and people in the Church of England today the will to do this and to stake everything on it?