

## Newman and the Americans

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In 1843, when John Henry Newman was living at Littlemore, the religious retreat he set up outside Oxford, he had an unexpected visitor: Jacob Abbot, a Congregationalist minister from Maine, whom Newman had taken to task for a book of his called *The Corner-Stone*, (1834). There Newman detected the same tendency to deny the divinity of Christ that he saw in the work of such liberal broad churchmen as Thomas Arnold and R.D. Hampden. In *Tract 73*, Newman complained that Abbott's book "savours unpleasantly of pantheism. It treats the Almighty, not as the great God, but as some vast physical and psychological phenomenon."<sup>1</sup> And, he saw Abbott's misapprehensions as redolent of a much larger problem—a problem that is with us still. "There is a widely, though irregularly spread School of doctrine," Newman wrote, "within and without the Church" that "aims at and professes peculiar piety... I do not hesitate to assert that this doctrine is based upon error, that it is really a specious form of trusting man rather than God, that it is in its nature Rationalistic, and that it tends to Socinianism." *Socinianism* is another word for Unitarianism, which, as I shall show, Newman regarded as the besetting sin of American and indeed British religion. "To tell the truth," he wrote, "one special enemy to which the American Church, as well as our own... lies open is the influence of a refined and covert Socinianism."<sup>2</sup> Still, if Abbott's views were mistaken, the man himself was engaging. Before they parted, Newman noted, "We talked on various matters for an hour or so, and when he rose to go I offered him my *Church of the Fathers*—in which he made me put my name... I showed him on his way, accompanying him in the twilight through the village and across Mr. Allen's field into the road, and we parted with a good deal of warm feeling. He is a Congregationalist Minister—not much above 30, I should think—with somewhat of the New England twang, but very quiet in manner and unaffected. How dreadful it is that the sheep of Christ are scattered to and fro..." This Anglo-American encounter shows how both countries, however dissimilar, were alike in their susceptibility to precisely that denial of the divinity of Christ, which, Newman recognized, even as early as the 1830s, was readying what he would later call the "plague of unbelief."<sup>3</sup> It also shows the personal interest that Newman took in Americans, which, by and large, Americans reciprocated.

The scope of my topic is immense so I shall limit myself to a few themes. I shall compare the reception Tractarianism met with in England and America to show how it deepened Newman's understanding of that "temper of Socinianism," from which both countries suffered. I shall also show how America demonstrated to Newman that if the laity were susceptible to this temper, they could also be made the means of combating it, as Newman himself combated it, especially in his role as Rector of the Catholic University of Dublin. Since Newman intended this center of Catholic learning—his Oxford on the Liffey—to benefit not only Ireland and England but the United States, it is fitting that he first encountered examples of vibrant Catholic education in his study of a land otherwise rife with sectarianism. Accordingly, I shall show how Newman's idea of Catholic education, far from being "narrow," "exaggerated," and "sterile," as the historian and former Warden of Merton, J.M. Roberts contended, was profoundly creative, though many of America's Catholic colleges have gone gravely astray.<sup>4</sup> And

lastly I shall endeavor to show how the personal interest Newman took in America and Americans embodied his hopes for the future of Catholicism.

America always appealed to Newman's sense of awe. One suspects that he would have had no difficulty entering into that memorable passage in *The Great Gatsby* where Nick Carraway imagines how "for a transitory enchanted moment man must have held his breath in the presence of this continent, compelled into an aesthetic contemplation he neither understood nor desired, face to face for the last time in history with something commensurate to his capacity for wonder."<sup>5</sup> In one of his sermons, Newman describes the sixteenth-century society which produced his patron saint, the Florentine Philip Neri as one in which "America... became known to Europe, and the extent of the earth was doubled... The public mind was agitated by a thousand fancies; no one knew what was coming; anything might be expected; a new era had opened upon the world, and enormous changes, political and social, were in preparation. There was an upheaving of the gigantic intellect of man, and he found he had powers and resources which he was not conscious of before, and began in anticipation to idolize their triumphs."<sup>6</sup> Here was a Jazz Age with which Fitzgerald could identify. Certainly in those rueful essays of his that Edmund Wilson collected in *The Crack-Up* (1936), he wrote of idolatry's end with great cautionary conviction.

Newman also saw America as a means of showing how we arrive at certainty. In one letter, written a year after he composed that marvelous book, *A Grammar of Assent* (1870), Newman actually likened America to Heaven. "I believe absolutely that there is a North America, and that the United States is a Republic with a President-- why then do I not absolutely believe, though I see it not, that there is a Heaven and that God is there? If you say that there is more evidence for the United States than for Heaven, that is intelligible -- but it is not a question of more or less. Since the utmost evidence only leads to probability and yet you believe absolutely in the United States, it is no reason against believing in heaven absolutely, though you have not 'experience' of it."<sup>7</sup> Newman also liked to cite America to explode the branch theory for the catholicity of Anglicanism.<sup>8</sup> Granting Anglicanism's secession from her parent Rome, Anglicanism could no more be thought a branch of the Catholic Church, than America could be thought a branch of the United Kingdom. And finally in that rollicking send-up of English bigotry, *Lectures on the Present Position of Catholics in England* (1851), Newman likened the vastness of America to the vastness of Catholicism. Speaking of that contempt for the monastic that has held sway in England since at least Cromwell's visitations, Newman wrote: "It is familiar to an Englishman to wonder at and to pity the recluse and the devotee who surround themselves with a high enclosure, and shut out what is on the other side of it; but was there ever such an instance of self-sufficient, dense, and ridiculous bigotry, as that which rises up and walls in the minds of our fellow-countrymen from all knowledge of one of the most remarkable phenomena which the history of the world has seen? This broad fact of Catholicism—as real as the continent of America, or the Milky Way—which Englishmen cannot deny, they will not entertain; they shut their eyes, they thrust their heads into the sand, and try to get rid of a great vision, a great reality, under the name of Popery."<sup>9</sup>

Something of Newman's interest in Americans and their country may have come initially from his father, a banker in the City of London, who, as Newman's brother Frank attested, was an admirer of Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson.<sup>10</sup> Like his father, Newman, for all his Englishness, saw the world in rather cosmopolitan terms and his attitude to Americans, while not uncritical, was certainly never dismissive. The attitude of the Anglican churchman F.W. Hook, who was at Christ Church, was rather more typical. "It is obvious that surrounded as the Church there [in the United States] is by papists and fanatics, our grand hope, under God, must rest with a learned clergy ... Certainly the divinity of some of our transatlantic brethren (and fathers even) is somewhat crude ... We can purchase a complete set of the Fathers for (I should suppose) £350. Now why should not some two or three hundred of us subscribe this sum, and present these books to the Episcopal College of New York?"<sup>11</sup>

Hook is an instructive figure because as vicar of Leeds he was presented with many of the same challenges that confronted Episcopal churchmen in America, most pressingly, how to integrate the Anglican Church into the new industrialized city and how to put Tractarian principles to work in the pastoral life of the Church. Hook was successful in negotiating the first challenge. Although Leeds was a Methodist stronghold, he doubled the number of Anglican churches and significantly increased the number of Anglican schools.<sup>12</sup> When it came to introducing Tractarian principles into his churches, however, he was less successful. When Edward Pusey came to him with the idea of building St. Saviour's as a model Tractarian church that would operate as a kind of Tractarian seminary, Hook offered his strong support, though he soon regretted it. He was particularly aghast when troops of Roman converts issued from the church.<sup>13</sup>

When it came to integrating Tractarian principles into the American Episcopal Church, American clergymen encountered comparable problems. Apropos some of these, Newman wrote Hook in 1835: "I feel quite what you say about the American Church.... They have a great gift and do not know how to use it -- Pusey tells me... that there is great fear of their splitting in to two parties or rather Churches on the point of Baptismal Regeneration -- the Western taking the ultra protestant view, the New York connexion the Catholic. Bishop Chase, now of Illinois, has lately been here... He was very unsatisfactory altogether, and Pusey says he is one of the ultra protestants..."<sup>14</sup>

Throughout the 1830s and 40s, Newman would receive warm testimonials from Episcopal churchmen convinced that Tractarianism could help them strengthen the Church in North America. One bishop wrote Newman, "The sound principles which your writings and those of your friends are disseminating in England are rapidly gaining ground in the United States ... Many of my clergy, who were rather low in their opinions on the Sacraments and sacred character of the Church are very much changed for the better."<sup>15</sup> Prominent American churchmen also puffed Newman's Parochial Sermons. "For close pointed, and uncompromising presentation of the truths and duties of the Gospel," the Bishop of New York, Benjamin T. Onderdonk (1791–1861) attested, "I know not their superiors..."<sup>16</sup> George Washington Doane (1799-1859), the Bishop of New Jersey agreed: "While they are not above the level of the plainest readers, they will interest and satisfy the highest and most accomplished minds."<sup>17</sup>

In 1843, the writer of these brilliant sermons responded by sharing with his American admirer how little his productions were appreciated by the Anglican Church, especially one, as he said, “about which there might be a difference of opinion.”<sup>18</sup> Of course, Newman was alluding to Tract 90, in which he argued that the 39 Articles, to which all Anglican clergymen were required to subscribe, might be accepted by those who were otherwise “catholic in heart and doctrine”—an argument which sharply delineated the battle-lines between those who considered the Anglican Church protestant and those who considered it catholic.<sup>19</sup> In seceding from the Established Church, Newman showed his English and indeed his American friends that, as far as he was concerned, the catholic claims of Anglicanism were unsustainable.

If Tract 90 precipitated the crisis of Tractarianism in England, the ordination of an extraordinary young man named Arthur Carey precipitated it in America. Carey was born in London in 1822 and moved with his family to America in 1830. After a brilliant undergraduate career at Columbia College, he formed a Tractarian group at the General Theological Seminary and in 1842 was ordained deacon. In 1843, before his ordination as an Episcopalian priest, he was questioned by Dr. Hugh Smith, who was not prepared for the answers he received to his routine questions. Carey blithely admitted that he was “not prepared to pronounce the doctrine of transubstantiation an absurd or impossible doctrine;” he did “not object to the Romish doctrine of purgatory as defined by the Council of Trent;” he was “not prepared to consider the Church of Rome as no longer an integral or pure branch of the Church of Christ...;” and he believed that the Reformation was “an unjustifiable act, and followed by many grievous and lamentable results...”<sup>20</sup> After receiving these startling answers, Smith refused to sign the required testimonial. Questioned further, Carey serenely informed his inquisitors that if he was refused ordination from the Episcopal, he would apply to the Catholic Church. Despite the controversy caused by the inquest, which divided High and Low Churchmen in the Episcopal Church for a generation, Carey was eventually ordained and became assistant to Samuel Seabury (1801-72), Rector of New York’s Church of the Annunciation.<sup>21</sup>

To recuperate from overwork and poor health, Carey set sail for Cuba in 1844 but died en route. He was buried at sea on Good Friday. For Seabury, “Mr. Carey was, without exception, the ripest man of his age that I ever knew; and seldom have I conversed with one of any age whose conversation impressed me with a deeper sense, both intellectually and morally, of my own weakness... On the abstruse subjects of metaphysics, on the profound dogmas of theology, he discoursed with the wisdom of a sage; bringing up from the deep of thought and placing in a clear and intelligible light, truths which the generality even of cultivated minds seldom approach without bewilderment or discuss without confusion: and this with the unconscious ease and simplicity of a child...”<sup>22</sup>

Newman was profoundly affected by the news of Carey’s death. Years afterwards, in 1866, he wrote Carey’s memoirist to tell him “how touching your Memoir of your dear friend is...” For Newman, it had, as he wrote, “a special interest, over and above its own, from the circumstance that I have for so many years followed the history

of the religious school in the United States, of which you tell us so much.” Then again, Carey reminded Newman of Hurrell Froude, his dearest friend and one of the prime movers of the Oxford Movement, a dashing, witty, athletic young man who died at the age of 36 in 1836 of tuberculosis before instilling in Newman some of the core catholic principles that led him Romewards. “Perhaps it was from the likeness to Hurrell Froude,” Newman wrote, “but I was much moved by what I heard of Arthur Carey... every year since I have been a priest, up to this very morning, I have, before I began my Mass, mentioned his name with that of Hurrell Froude and of other Anglican friends, in my Preparation, recommending them to the mercy of God.”<sup>23</sup>

That Tractarianism inspired the same Protestant fears in America that it inspired in England is clear from a report of Carey’s ordination written by perhaps the most articulate critic of the Oxford Movement in America, John Duer (1782-1858), a prominent Low Church Episcopalian, who studied law with Alexander Hamilton and eventually rose to become Chief Judge of the Superior Court of New York City, the state’s commercial court. Indeed, commercial law was the judge’s *métier*—a not insignificant detail in light of what Newman saw as the influence of commerce on the character of Anglo-American religion.

In his account of Carey’s ordination, Duer asked: “Why is it that the minds of some of our clergy, and of a very large portion of our laity, are filled with suspicion and alarm? I shall answer these questions frankly and fully... The doctrines of the Tractarian writers of Oxford have, in certain quarters, been openly embraced--have been propagated in the diocese with unusual diligence and zeal...” And “the doctrines in question are neither warranted by Scripture nor reconcilable with our Articles... On the contrary... if adopted as the doctrines of the Church, they would gradually efface and abolish its true, distinctive, Protestant character.” For Duer, Tractarianism was crypto-Catholicism, which, if unstopped, would lead to Catholicism proper.

Another proof of how seriously the Episcopal Church took the threat of Tractarianism can be found in its vilification of the man most receptive to Tractarian principles. In 1844 Bishop Onderdonk was falsely accused of public drunkenness by an assembly of Low Churchmen who gave the condemned man no opportunity to defend himself. Ironically, the man who finally suspended Onderdonk from the Anglican priesthood was none other than Bishop Chase of Illinois, the ultra protestant whom Newman found so distasteful. Chase, according to one biographer, shared the battle cry of the Evangelical party, “No priest, no Altar, no Sacrifice”—not a cry likely to win much sympathy from John Henry Newman, who once observed, “If the word, Altar, Absolution, or Succession are not in Scripture... neither is the word Trinity.”<sup>24</sup>

The taint of Romanism was of particular concern to the American Episcopal Church because it was faced with such aggressive competition from other Protestant sects ready to poach disaffected members. In a review of a book on the Anglo-American Church by Henry Caswall, an Englishman who travelled to America as a young man, studied at Kenyon College, and was ordained Deacon by the Bishop of Ohio, Newman described some of the sects driving the great evangelical revival in Antebellum

America.<sup>25</sup> “Besides the old Calvinistic Baptists,” he wrote, “there are the Free-will, the Seventh-day, and the Six-principle Baptists; the Christian Baptists, who deny the proper Divinity of Christ; and the Campbellite Baptists.... Besides these there are the Seed and Snake Baptists... Besides these, there are, among other sects, 600,000 Universalists, who teach the annihilation of the wicked...”<sup>26</sup>

Catholics listening to this catalogue might be inclined to snigger but they should recall what Newman said about the Catholic hierarchy after he worked so hard to make the Catholic University succeed, against immense apathy and opposition: “I cannot help feeling that, in high circles, the Church is sometimes looked upon as made up of the hierarchy and the poor, and that the educated portion, men and women, are viewed as a difficulty, an encumbrance, as the seat and source of heresy; as almost aliens to the Catholic body, whom it would be a great gain, if possible, to annihilate.”<sup>27</sup> One result of Newman’s study of the American Church was to convince him that the laity, however inclined to private judgement, could not be ignored, though he also recognized that the Church could not simply truckle to the prejudices of the laity, especially those of the educated laity. At the same time, by founding the Catholic University, Newman sought to form an educated laity expressly, as he wrote: “To provide a series of sound and philosophical Defences of Catholicity and Revelation, in answer to the infidel tenets and arguments, which threaten us at this time.”<sup>28</sup>

In comparing the Episcopal Church to the various Protestant sects, Newman was happy to concur with Caswall that its very survival argued a certain staying power. The Anglican Church, which first held services in America in Jamestown in 1607, and eventually became the Episcopal Church, with its own episcopate, in 1789, was disestablished after the American Revolution, which Lyman Beecher saw as a good thing. “They say ministers have lost their influence,” he wrote, but “the fact is, they have gained. By voluntary efforts, societies, missions, and revivals, they exert a deeper influence than ever they could by queues, and shoe buckles, and cocked hats and gold-headed canes.”<sup>29</sup> Newman would have agreed, though he never lost sight of the fact that if the Episcopal Church was free of the American state, it was still liable to become thrall to the American laity.

What is also striking about this essay, from the standpoint of Newman’s own religious development, is that it was written in September, 1839, a month after he experienced his first serious doubts about the legitimacy of the Anglican Church while reading about the Monophysites.<sup>30</sup> Following what he described in the *Apologia* as “that great revolution of mind,” he resolved to test his doubts before acting on them—a period which consumed six long years of his life and involved him in sedulous deliberation.<sup>31</sup> In his review, we can see Newman extolling the putative vitality of the American Episcopal Church, even as he calls it sharply into question. Later, in July, 1840, he would write a Scotch Episcopalian, who eventually converted with his wife and children that “A great experiment is going on, whether Anglocatholicism has a root, a foundation, a consistency, as well as Roman Catholicism, or whether (in the language of the day) it be ‘a sham.’ I hold it to be quite impossible, unless it be real, that it can maintain its ground... I will not defend it if it will not stand it.”<sup>32</sup>

Still, Newman was candid enough about what he saw as the corrupting influence that a proud, self-satisfied, commercial people naturally exerted on a church that could never afford to offend the public will. “Nor in this respect are we better circumstanced than they,” Newman pointedly reminded his English readers; “we too in the time of the third William and the first Georges had certain impressions of the same kind made on us, which chilled, attenuated, and shrivelled up our faith and spirit. What, indeed, is that desire of Evidences, that delight in objection and spontaneous incredulity, that pursuit of secular comfort, that contentment with mere decency and morality... but remains of the Socinian temper inflicted on us during that calamitous period?” In returning to this “Socinian temper,” Newman got at a fundamental feature of the American Episcopal Church.

A trading country is the *habitat* of Socinianism... Not to the poor, the forlorn, the dejected, the afflicted, can the Unitarian doctrine be alluring, but to those who are rich and have need of nothing, and know not that they are "miserable and blind and naked;"—to such men Unitarianism so-called is just fitted, suited to their need, fulfilling their anticipations of religion, counterpart to their inward temper and their modes of viewing things. Those who have nothing of this world to rely upon need a firm hold of the next, they need a deep religion; they are as if stripped of the body while here,—as if in the unseen state between death and judgment; and as they are even now in one sense what they then shall be, so they need to view God such as they then will view Him; they endure, or rather eagerly desire, the bare vision of Him stripped of disguise, as they are stripped of disguises too; they desire to know that He is eternal, since they feel that they are mortal.<sup>33</sup>

Notwithstanding Newman’s deep sympathy with the immigrants whose material wants would soon transform America, he also recognized that the typical Episcopalian obviously did not suffer these wants, and he asked himself how the comparative and the peculiar type of wealth enjoyed by the Episcopalian influenced his religion. The Episcopalian tended to be a self-made tradesman, with none of the responsibilities of the landed gentry, and this, as Newman recognized, colored his religion. “He has rank without tangible responsibilities; he has made himself what he is, and becomes self-dependent; he has laboured hard or gone through anxieties, and indulgence is his reward. In many cases he has had little leisure for cultivation of mind, accordingly luxury and splendour will be his *beau ideal* of refinement. If he thinks of religion at all, he will not like from being a great man to become a little one; he bargains for some or other compensation to his self-importance, some little power of judging or managing, some small permission to have his own way.” Newman’s conclusion was withering: “a religion which neither irritates their reason nor interferes with their comfort will be all in all in such a society. Severity whether of creed or precept, high mysteries, corrective practices, subjection of whatever kind, whether to a doctrine or to a priest, will be offensive to them. They want only so much religion as will satisfy their natural perception of the propriety of being religious. Reason teaches them that utter disregard of

their Maker is unbecoming, and they determine to be religious, not from love and fear, but from good sense.”<sup>34</sup>

No better description of nominal Christianity has ever been penned. What is also striking about the passage is that, for Catholics in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it captures the ethos not only of Protestant but Catholic Christianity. While it is true that America’s immigrants were mostly poor Catholics, who had no difficulty recognizing that they were “blind and miserable and naked,” their descendants put poverty behind them and many of them now are indistinguishable from their former Episcopalian betters. They, too, preen themselves on their private judgment and cleave to a worldly, self-congratulatory, nominal faith.

One notably heroic American who had the God-given grace to differentiate the true Faith from private judgment was Levi Silliman Ives, the only Episcopal bishop to convert to Catholicism, who visited Newman at the Oratory for a week after he converted. Before converting, Ives was the Episcopalian Bishop of North Carolina. In 1852 he resigned his see and submitted to Pope Pius IX at Rome. In 1854, he returned to the United States with his wife, where he became a Professor at St Joseph's Seminary and St John's College, Fordham. Like Newman, Ives was converted by the Church Fathers. In his spiritual autobiography, *The Trials of a Mind in its Progress to Catholicism* (1853), he shows how the Fathers disabused him of the Protestant fallacy that there was something called the “Primitive Church” different from the Catholic Church. Ives brilliantly brought the witness of the Fathers to bear to reaffirm the Early Church’s subscription not only to transubstantiation and baptismal regeneration but papal primacy. “In short,” he concluded, “the first five centuries taught as distinctly... as did the Fathers of the Council of Trent, the various dogmas set forth by that Council as necessary to the faith and practice of the Christian man.”<sup>35</sup> Still another Newmanian aspect about Ives was his respect for the unprevaricating voice of conscience. In his autobiography, Ives recounts how, before finally converting, he actually tried remaining where he was—in effect, following Pusey and Keble’s example. “I had actually flattered myself into the belief that my doubts had left me, and that I could henceforward act with a quiet conscience on Protestant ground. But... I found myself fearfully deceived; found that what I had taken for permanent relief of mind was only ... momentary... When I came again to myself... I was visited with reflections which no man need envy. The concessions I made, in good faith... for the peace of the Church, and, as I had falsely supposed, for my own peace, rose up before me as so many concessions, and cowardly ones too, *to the god of this world*.”<sup>36</sup> Here was an affirmation of the primacy of conscience formed, as Newman recognized that it must be formed, by the authority of what he called the “One True Fold.”<sup>37</sup>

In speaking of the competition that the Episcopal Church faced from other denominations, Newman could not but acknowledge that “the Church of Rome... by means of its numerous and well-conducted schools and colleges... is daily acquiring a more powerful hold upon the public mind...”<sup>38</sup> Antebellum America might have welcomed every conceivable species of dissident Protestantism but it also saw the rise of a robust Catholicism, which could boast the allegiance of more than Europe’s struggling

immigrants. Disaffected Episcopalians, Methodists, even Transcendentalists made their way to what St. Jeremiah called its “ancient paths.” The contribution that Newman himself would make to these “numerous and well-conducted schools and colleges” would be immense, based as it was on the educational principles that he first articulated in his *Idea of a University* and put into practice in the Catholic University in Dublin, of which he was Rector from 1851 to 1858. That influence has always had to contend with precisely the forces of errant private judgment that Newman warned against so prophetically in 1839. Nevertheless, now more than ever, Newman’s principles guide the true Catholic University. As Newman affirmed in his sermon preached in the University Church in Dublin in 1856, “A great University is a great power, and can do great things; but, unless it be something more than human, it is but foolishness and vanity... It is really dead, though it seems to live, unless it be grafted upon the True Vine...”<sup>39</sup>

Corroboration for Newman’s influence on American Catholicism can be found in an article Evelyn Waugh wrote for *Life* magazine in 1949. Waugh was never an uncritical observer of the United States. To his friend, Graham Greene, he once wrote, “*Of course* the Americans are cowards. They are almost all the descendants of wretches who deserted their legitimate monarchs for fear of military service.”<sup>40</sup> But Waugh also saw the good points of America, and especially of its Catholicism. Speaking particularly of the contribution that the Irish made to the American Church, Waugh noted: “The Irish with their truculence and practical good sense have built and paid for the churches, opening new parishes as fast as the population grew; they have staffed the active religious orders and have created a national system of Catholic education.” Waugh does not say as much explicitly but it is clear that this system of education was, in character, largely Newmanian. If Newman’s idea of Catholic education hardly prevailed in Dublin against the shilly-shally of the Irish hierarchy or the indifference of Irish and English Catholics, it found fertile ground in America. And this bore out Newman’s recognition of the true meaning of failure, for as he told Lord Brayne, an old Etonian with whom he was friendly in his dotage, “It is the rule of God’s Providence that we should succeed by failure.”<sup>41</sup> Certainly, Waugh’s description of the highly successful American system of Catholic colleges shows its distinct affinity with objects that Newman identified for the otherwise abortive Catholic University.<sup>42</sup> “Without help from the state,” Waugh wrote, “indeed, in direct competition with it—the poor of the nation have covered their land with schools, colleges and universities, boldly asserting the principle that nothing less than an entire Christian education is necessary to produce Christians. For the faith is not a mere matter of learning a few prayers and pious stories at home. It is a complete culture infusing all human knowledge... Their object is to transform a proletariat into a bourgeoisie; to produce a faithful laity, qualified to take its part in the general life of the nation; and in this way they are manifestly successful. Their students are not, in the main, drawn from scholarly homes. Many of them handle the English language uneasily... But, when all of this is said, the Englishman, who can boast no single institution of higher Catholic education and is obliged to frequent universities that are Anglican in formation and agnostic in temper, can only applaud what American Catholics have done in the last hundred years.”<sup>43</sup>

The autonomy of this Catholic network of schools and universities, which Waugh justly singled out for praise, was something Newman also valued, though his understanding of self-reliance had nothing Emersonian about it. In using the term, Newman was careful to distance himself from “every wild religionist who makes himself his own prophet and guide, and despises Holy Fathers and ecclesiastical rulers.” Still, he confirmed that “One of the main secrets of success is self-reliance. This seems a strange sentiment for a Christian journalist to utter; but we speak of self in contrast, not with a higher power, but with our fellow-men. He, who leans on others, instead of confiding in his own right arm, will do nothing great.”<sup>44</sup>

Newman’s insistence on self-reliance can serve as a well-deserved rebuke to those American Catholics who have abdicated their self-reliance and made very dubious alliances indeed with a secular state and its agents that have nothing but contempt for the very idea of Catholic education—indeed, with Catholicism itself. Newman remarked how literary men, throughout history, often relinquished their self-reliance for the same reason as universities, because they were convinced that none could “possibly prosper without the sanction of the State and the favour of great personages.” To prove the fallacy of this, Newman cited the example of the English universities: “They have been dragooned, indeed, by tyrannical despotism; they have had theories, or have felt the passion of loyalty; they all but worship the law as the first of all authorities in heaven or upon earth; but when the question is that of submitting to the Government of the day, or to persons in power, it requires but little knowledge of the history, for instance, of Oxford, to be aware that it has been its rule to rely upon itself—upon its prejudices, if we will, but still on what was its own.” And here he cited the example of how Oxford had voted out Sir Robert Peel, “its favourite son, the Leader of the Commons,” after he apostatized over Catholic Emancipation—an ousting in which Newman himself played an ardent part. In conclusion, Newman wrote, “we hope that no Catholic University that is or that shall be, with its vantage-ground of higher principles, will ever show less self-respect, consistency, and manliness, than Protestant Oxford, in standing on its own sense of right and falling back upon its own resources.”<sup>45</sup>

One American who agreed with Newman that Catholic education, in order to be authentically Catholic, must exercise Catholic self-reliance was a man named, oddly enough, Jenkins, a priest of the diocese of Louisville, who was also a passionate defender of Catholic schools.<sup>46</sup> Now with a surname like Jenkins this might strike my audience as rather improbable.<sup>47</sup> But, as a matter of fact, in 1882 Thomas Jefferson Jenkins wrote a book insisting on the indispensability of autonomous Catholic education. When Newman received his copy, he assured Jenkins that it was “as seasonable here and important as it is in America.”<sup>48</sup>

Earlier, I had occasion to touch on the ill-fated Tractarianism of St. Saviour’s, Leeds. Well, St. Saviour’s had an interesting American connection. Bishop Doane of New Jersey, the leader of the High Church party in America was invited to preach at the opening of St. Saviour’s in 1845. Ten years later, Doane’s son converted to Rome, to his father’s profound chagrin. In 1856, when he was studying in Rome, George Hobart Doane met Newman. Later, he even considered joining the Oratory, but chose instead to

return to the United States, where he became a well-known monsignor in the Newark diocese, founding many churches, hospitals, schools, orphanages and academies, as well as the Catholic Young Men's Society, which, in 1880, sent Newman very handsome congratulations on his receiving the red hat from Leo XIII. In these American young men, Newman might have seen the antithesis of certain other young men he had known at Oxford, who were as contemptuous of religion as they were keen on getting on. In his sermon *God's Will the End of Life*, Newman addressed these would-be fashionable young men directly. "You my brethren have not been born splendidly; you have no high connections; you have not learned the manner or caught the tone of good society ... yet you ape the sins of Dives while you are strangers to his refinement ... you think it the sign of a gentleman to set yourself above religion ... to look at Catholic or Methodist with impartial contempt ... The Creator made you it seems... for this office and work, to be a bad imitation of polished ungodliness."<sup>49</sup> Well, the Catholics in America who wrote to congratulate Newman had in view another office and it was Newman who helped form them, who continues to form their counterparts today. When John D'Arcy, the Bishop of South Bend, described the events that led to President Obama being honored by Notre Dame, he gave his compatriots and indeed the world a useful lesson in the baleful moral consequences that follow from educated men delivering themselves up to the direction of "polished ungodliness." In his statement, Bishop Darcy wrote:

President Obama has recently reaffirmed, and has now placed in public policy, his long-stated unwillingness to hold human life as sacred. While claiming to separate politics from science, he has in fact separated science from ethics and has brought the American government, for the first time in history, into supporting direct destruction of innocent human life. This will be the 25th Notre Dame graduation during my time as bishop. After much prayer, I have decided not to attend the graduation. I wish no disrespect to our president; I pray for him and wish him well. I have always revered the Office of the Presidency. But a bishop must teach the Catholic faith "in season and out of season," and he teaches not only by his words — but by his actions. My decision is not an attack on anyone, but is in defense of the truth about human life... Even as I continue to ponder in prayer these events... so must Notre Dame. Indeed, as a Catholic University, Notre Dame must ask itself, if by this decision it has chosen prestige over truth.<sup>50</sup>

As this clear rejection of our own followers of Dives shows, the promise that Newman saw in American Catholicism is alive and well, though the "Socinian temper" spreads apace.

One of the great 'what ifs' of Newman's career is what might have resulted if he had traveled himself to America. In June, 1854, Archbishop John Hughes of New York wrote to assure Newman that the money and students America could offer the University would be immense. He also invited Newman to cross the Atlantic to give what he was convinced would be a lucrative lecture tour.<sup>51</sup> Thackeray, after his 1852 tour, described it as including "plenty of good fellows, merry dinners, and pleasant cigars."<sup>52</sup> In the first six weeks alone, he earned £500—a tidy sum—especially since he put it into US railway stocks, which yielded a profit of 8 percent.<sup>53</sup> Newman might not have been interested in

the cigars but he could have used the lecture fees. As it happened, Newman never made the crossing: he was duty bound to leave Dublin and return to his Oratory. So, willy-nilly, a huge opportunity for raising funds for the Catholic University was lost. Still, Newman would always be grateful to Americans for their generous support. He was keenly aware that the ties he was forging with the Catholics of America would bear long-lasting fruit. “This our first step,” he told Archbishop Kenrick, “important as it is, will be by the Divine blessing, only the humblest in a long series (of successive movements) which are to follow; that, many as may be our difficulties, we shall, by the generous prayers and the persevering alms of the faithful, be carried over them; and, that an undertaking, founded in the union of Catholics so widely dispersed and so various by circumstances, will issue in more than corresponding benefits, external and temporal, to many countries and many generations.”<sup>54</sup>

The “generous prayers and persevering alms” of American Catholics will always make conclusions about Newman and the Americans inadvisable. Their heroic story remains unfinished. Nevertheless, some provisional conclusions can be made. While Tractarianism initially galvanized the Anglican Church on both sides of the pond, it never overcame its inherent contradictions. At the same time, the Tractarian movement embroiled Anglicanism in an identity crisis that, far from resolving its divisions, exacerbated them. What was perhaps most instructive about Tractarianism for Newman was that it corroborated something John Adams told Benjamin Rush in 1812, “No clear headed Man; no Man who sees all the consequences of a proposition can be an orthodox Church of England Man without being a Roman Catholic.”<sup>55</sup> After Newman converted, despite his hopes for the revival of the English Catholic Church, which he expressed so unforgettably in “The Second Spring” (1852), it was in America, and, particularly in its network of schools and colleges, as Waugh intimated, that his vision for the future of Catholicism found its amplest embodiment.

I shall end where I began in Newman’s personal interest in Americans and their country. In 1885, an anonymous friend of Newman’s sent him a circular soliciting support for the nascent Catholic University of America. Newman wrote to James Gibbons, the Archbishop of Baltimore, welcoming “with the warmest interest the eloquent appeal of your University Board to the Catholics of the United States... At a time when there is so much in this part of the world to depress and trouble us as to our religious prospects, the tidings which your Circular conveys of the actual commencement of so great an undertaking on the other side of the Ocean... will rejoice the hearts of all educated Catholics in these Islands...”<sup>56</sup> Gibbons assured Newman that: “though you have reached the evening of life, you are still regarded by us all as a tower of strength.”<sup>57</sup> And so he remains. Now, as the beatification of Venerable John Henry Cardinal Newman nears, we must redouble our efforts to ensure that the magnificent legacy of this “tower of strength” is faithfully transmitted.

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<sup>1</sup> The man most responsible for reviving pantheism in nineteenth-century Britain was Wordsworth. As a brilliant new intellectual history shows: “Wordsworth’s rhapsodies on the active powers immanent in the fabric of nature troubled some commentators, because he could be understood to be expressing pantheism and seemed to disregard Christian doctrine.” For the poet James Montgomery, “We do not mean to infer that Mr. Wordsworth excludes from his system the salvation of man, as revealed in the Scriptures, but it is evident that that he has not made ‘Jesus Christ the corner-stone’ of it.” Coleridge was even more censorious, admitting that “the vague misty, rather than mystic, Confusion of God with the World & the accompanying Nature-worship... is the trait in Wordsworth’s poetic works that I most dislike.” See P.M. Harman. *The Culture of Nature in Britain 1680-1860* (New Haven, 2009), 169 At the same time, Wordsworth can be seen as laying some of the groundwork for the Oxford Movement. As Juliet Barker writes in her biography of the poet, “In John Ruskin’s beautiful phrase, William had taught [his admirers, including John Keble and John Henry Newman] that, ‘A snowdrop was to me, as to Wordsworth, part of the Sermon on the mount.’” In the Latin oration, which Keble was required to deliver as Professor of Poetry at Oxford, he extolled this aspect in Wordsworth. “What Keble’s oration also did was to claim William for the Oxford Movement, which sought to rise above doctrinal squabbles and regenerate the heart of the Anglican Church.” Keble, Newman, and Frederick Faber “had been disciples of his poetry since youth, so that, in influencing them, he might even be said to have laid the foundations for the Oxford Movement. It was a debt which Newman himself identified, saying [Wordsworth] had been central to the ‘great progress of the religious mind of our Church to something deeper and truer than satisfied the last century.’” See Juliet Barker *Wordsworth: A Life*. (London, 2000), 467. However, Barker is wrong when she claims that Newman and Keble wished “to rise above doctrinal squabbles.” On the contrary, they deliberately set out to increase such squabbles, which they meant not to rise above but to win. Still, her point about the influence of Wordsworth on the Tractarians is well-taken.

<sup>2</sup> Newman, “The Anglo-American Church,” in *Essays Critical and Historical*, I, 347

<sup>3</sup> LD, 27:102 JHN to Mrs. Wilson (3 August 1874) “I think our Lord's words are being fulfilled, 'When the Son of Man cometh shall He find faith upon earth?' The plague of unbelief is in every religious community, in the Unitarian, in the Kirk, in the Episcopalian, in the Church of England, as well as in the Catholic Church. What you want is faith, just as so many persons in other communions want faith. The broad section of the Church of England wants faith -- you in the Catholic Church want faith. The disease is the same, though its manifestations are different.”

<sup>4</sup> See J.M. Robert. “The Idea of a University Revisited” in *Newman after 100 Years* ed. Ker and Hill, (Oxford, 1990), 219.

<sup>5</sup> From *The Great Gatsby* in F. Scott Fitzgerald. *The Bodley Head Scott Fitzgerald* (London, 1963), 162-3

<sup>6</sup> “The Mission of St. Philip” in *Sermons Preached on Various Occasions*, 205

<sup>7</sup> LD, 25:324 JHN to William Robert Brownlow (29 April 1871)

<sup>8</sup> William Palmer (1803-85) of Worcester College, was one of the most learned of the Tractarians, and a champion of the 'Branch Theory' of the Church. In 1846 he published an answer to Newman’s “Essay on Development” entitled “The Doctrine of Development and Conscience considered in relation to the Evidences of Christianity and of the Catholic System.” He condemned Newman's understanding of development as rationalistic.

<sup>9</sup> *Present Position of Catholics.*, 43

<sup>10</sup> See Francis W. Newman. *Contributions chiefly to the early history of the late Cardinal Newman*. (London, 1891), 6

<sup>11</sup> LD, 5:60 W.F. Hook to JHN (11 April 1835)

<sup>12</sup> See entry for Hook in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* by George Herring.

<sup>13</sup> One of the St. Saviour’s converts was the gangling, indecisive, dutiful William Neville, who joined the Oratory in September, 1851 and later became Newman’s secretary. 'William, William' were Newman's last recorded words. After his death, as literary executor, Neville diligently collected and copied Newman's letters and papers. See also Neville’s comment in his preface to Newman’s *Meditations and Devotions* (London, 1907), xi: “One name more there is to mention—and it belongs to America, where though our Cardinal had so many friends, one was pre-eminently such—that of Bishop James O’Connor, Bishop of Omaha, whose unaffected kindness was most grateful to our Cardinal, lasting as it did through all but the whole of his Catholic lifetime. For Bishop James O’Connor the Cardinal had a great affection, remembering always, with something of gratitude, the modesty and simplicity with which, as a youth, the future Bishop attached himself to him and to Father St. John when the three were at Propaganda together, thus forming a

friendship which distance and years did not lessen, and which later on was enlivened by personal intercourse when the visits *ad limina Apostolorum* brought Bishop O'Connor through England.”

<sup>14</sup> LD, 5:180 JHN to F.W. Hook (21 December 1835)

<sup>15</sup> LD, 7:164 John Strachan to JHN (23 May 1840)

<sup>16</sup> LD, 9:293 B. T. Onderdonk testimonial for Parochial sermons

<sup>17</sup> LD, 9:293 G.W. Doane testimonial for Parochial sermons

<sup>18</sup> LD, 9:304 JHN to G.W. Doane (7 April 1843)

<sup>19</sup> See Introduction to Tract 90 (1841)

<sup>20</sup> See “The Ordination of Mr. Arthur Carey” in *The New Englander and Yale Review*, Volume 1, Issue 4, October, 1843, pp. 586-596

<sup>21</sup> See Francis McGrath’s biographical entry for Carey in LD, 9:785.

<sup>22</sup> Samuel Seabury. *The Joy of the Saints: A Discourse on the Third Sunday After Easter A.D. MDCCCXLIV Being the First Sunday after the Intelligence of The Death of the Rev. Arthur Carey, A.M. An Assistant in the Church of the Annunciation, New York* (New York, 1844), 5

<sup>23</sup> LD, 22:234-5 JHN to Augustine Francis Hewit (16 May 1866)

<sup>24</sup> From Tract 85, later published as “Difficulties in Scripture Proof of Doctrine” in John Henry Newman. *Discussions and Arguments on Various Subjects*. ed. James Tolhurst (South Bend, 2004), 123

<sup>25</sup> Henry Caswall (1810-70) was the author of *America and the American Church* (1839) and studies of Joseph Smith and Mormonism. In 1843 he returned to England, and was Vicar of Figheldean, Wilts. 1848-70, and from 1860 a Prebendary of Salisbury.

<sup>26</sup> JH Newman, “The Anglo-American Church” in *Essays Historical and Critical*, I, 326

<sup>27</sup> JH Newman quoted from an unpublished manuscript in *The Living Thoughts of Cardinal Newman* ed. by Henry Tristram (London, 1946), 21

<sup>28</sup> See, LD, 16:557-561

<sup>29</sup> Lyman Beecher from his *Autobiography*, I, 253 quoted in Daniel Walker Howe. *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America 1815-1848* (Oxford, 2007), 165.

<sup>30</sup> See LD, 7:138 JHN to Mrs. John Mozley (8 September 1839) “I have no news to tell you. The thing uppermost in my mind of course is the B.C. Keble’s Article on Gladstone is a very impressive one. I have written what I fear is a flippant one on the American Church, though I respect her members too much to mean to be so.” The B.C. is the *British Critic*, which Newman edited from 1838 to 1840; hence his referring to himself in the article on the Anglo-American Church as a “Christian journalist.”

<sup>31</sup> JH Newman. *Apologia Pro Vita Sua: Being a History of His Religious Opinions*. ed. Martin J. Svaglic. (Oxford, 1967), 90

<sup>32</sup> LD, 7:369 JHN to W.C.A. Maclaurin (26 July 1840) A clergyman at Elgin and later Dean of Moray and Ross, Maclaurin converted with his wife and family in 1850, after which he suffered great poverty. According to a biographical note in the *Letters and Diaries*, “In 1851 he hoped to become a professor at the Catholic University, and told Newman that he was about to spend his last five pound note. In 1854 he wrote from Yarmouth giving his name to the University, and still hoping for a professorship.” See LD, 22:368.

<sup>33</sup> JH Newman, “The Anglo-American Church” in *Essays Historical and Critical*, I, 347-8

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 348-9

<sup>35</sup> Levi Silliman Ives. *The Trials of a Mind in its Progress to Catholicism: A Letter to his Old Friends* (Boston, 1854), 229

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 230-1

<sup>37</sup> LD, 11:7 JHN to F.W. Faber (8 October 1845)

<sup>38</sup> JH Newman, “The Anglo-American Church” in *Essays Historical and Critical*, I, 348-9

<sup>39</sup> “The Secret Power of Divine Grace” from John Henry Newman. *Sermons Preached on Various Occasions*. ed. James Tolhurst (South Bend, 2007), 58-59

<sup>40</sup> See Waugh to Greene (27 February 1952) in *The Letters of Evelyn Waugh*. ed. Mark Amory (London, 1980), 370

<sup>41</sup> LD, 30:142 JHN to Lord Bray (29 October 1882)

<sup>42</sup> Newman laid out these objects in a memorandum on the Catholic University in April, 1854. See, LD, 16:557-561

1. To provide means of finishing the education of young men of rank, fortune, or expectations, with a view of putting them on a level with Protestants of the same description.

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2. To provide a Professional education for students of law and medicine; and a liberal education for the mercantile class.
  3. To develop the talents of promising youths in the lower classes.
  - 4 To form a school of Theology and Canon Law, suited to the needs of a class of students, who may be required to carry on those sciences beyond the point of attainment sufficient for parochial duty.
  - 5 To provide a series of sound and philosophical Defences of Catholicity and Revelation, in answer to the infidel tenets and arguments, which threaten us at this time.
  6. To create a national Catholic Literature.
  7. To provide school books, and, generally, books of instruction, for the use of Catholics of the United Kingdom, the British Empire and the United States.
  8. To raise the standard, and to systematise the teaching, and to encourage the efforts, of the Schools, already so ably and zealously conducted throughout Ireland.
  9. To give a Catholic tone to Society in the great Towns.
- <sup>43</sup> Evelyn Waugh. "The American Epoch in the Catholic Church" (1949) from *The Essays, Articles, and Reviews of Evelyn Waugh*. ed. Donat Gallagher. (New York, 1983), 385
- <sup>44</sup> See LD, 18:580 (13 March 1858)
- <sup>45</sup> LD, 18:580 from the *Weekly Register*, (13 March 1858) Speaking of his own independent role as Rector of the Catholic University, Newman wrote from Dublin: "What a great thing it is to be independent... good people here don't seem to have comprehended that nothing brought me here, nothing keeps me here, but the simple wish to do some service to Catholic Education. Even the Nation, in puffing me, talks of an honourable or natural ambition. Nor is the irksomeness of being here compensated by having every thing my own way -- for the more autocratical I am, the more may fairly be expected of me -- which is not pleasant." See LD, 18:45 JHN to Henry Wilberforce (20 May 1857)
- <sup>46</sup> See Thomas Jefferson Jenkins. *The Judges of Faith and Godless Schools. A compilation of evidence against secular schools the world over, especially against common state schools in the United States of America, wherever entirely withdrawn from the influence of the authority of the Catholic Church*. (New York, 1882)
- <sup>47</sup> In March 2009, Father John Jenkins, CSC, President of Notre Dame invited President Hussein Obama to Notre Dame to receive an honorary law degree and address the graduating class.
- <sup>48</sup> LD, 30:405 JHN to Thomas Jefferson Jenkins (3 October 1882)
- <sup>49</sup> John Henry Newman, "God's Will the End of Life," in *Discourses Addressed to Mixed Congregations* ed. James Tolhurst. (South Bend, 2002), 113-14
- <sup>50</sup> See *Catholic News Agency* story, "Bishop D'Arcy will not attend Notre Dame commencement featuring Obama," (24 March 2009)
- <sup>51</sup> See LD, 15:363 for reference to a meeting of the clergy and laity of New York, held on March, 14, 1853, "in support of the exiled Archbishop of Bogotá and Newman. Archbishop Hughes spoke of how Newman, whom he called a 'doctor of the Catholic Church,' 'might have looked forward to the highest honours of that high, wealthy and powerful religious community to which he belonged; but, weighing the things of time against those of eternity ... he espoused the cause of that scattered and down trodden flock, the remnant of once Catholic England. Nor has he done this with impunity....' The Archbishop then described Newman's suffering during the Achilli trial, and appealed for a collection, 'a purse for his private use.' *The Tablet*, XIV (9 April 1853), p. 228, quoting the *New York Freeman's Journal*."
- <sup>52</sup> See D.J. Taylor: *Thackeray: The Life of a Literary Man*. (London, 1999), 330
- <sup>53</sup> *Ibid*, 332
- <sup>54</sup> LD, 16:284-85 JHN to Francis Kenrick, Archbishop of Baltimore (November, 1854)
- <sup>55</sup> See John Adams to Benjamin Rush (17 August 1812), in *Old Family Letters*, ed. Alexander Biddle (Philadelphia, 1892), 420
- <sup>56</sup> LD, 31:85-6 JHN to Cardinal Gibbons (10 October 1885)
- <sup>57</sup> LD, 31:86 Cardinal Gibbons to JHN (24 October 1885)