

NEWMAN VERSUS NEWMAN: THE APOLOGIA PRO VITA SUA OF 1864 AND SUBSEQUENT AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL WRITINGS COMPARED.

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John Henry Newman (1801-1890) was the nineteenth century's most noteworthy convert to Roman Catholicism from evangelical protestantism. Raised in a middle-class home, the father of which experienced bankruptcy, he was won to Christ through the influence of his evangelical schoolmaster. In this faith, he had commenced studies at Trinity College, Oxford University in 1817 ; but he had certainly moved beyond this position by the time he was made a fellow of Oriel College five years later. From 1833, he had lent his support and his pen to the creation of the series of *Tracts for the Times* which aimed to rekindle in the Church of England both a sense of spiritual independence from the state and a recovery of pre-Reformation ideals of doctrine and worship. This series, ended abruptly with his penning of Tract 90 in 1839. Because the latter urged the holding of the Anglican 'Thirty-nine Articles of Religion' in a remarkably Catholic sense, it brought the censure of the Bishop of Oxford and a requirement that the series be ended. By 1845, Newman, thus-silenced, was received into the Roman communion.

That John Henry Newman was a man deeply concerned with his place in the historical record will be apparent to anyone who has ever taken in hand the *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*.¹ This, the account of the period of his life through 1845 (the year of his re-affiliation to Roman Catholicism) had been written in the year 1864 in reply to aspersions cast on his candor and transparency by the contemporary clergyman and historian, Charles Kingsley (1819-1875). The ease and rapidity with which Newman churned out weekly installments of this autobiography disclosed both his determination to be favorably portrayed *and* his possessing of a wealth of material covering the preceding half-century of his life. Writing the installments from his Oratory in Birmingham, Newman had at his fingertips notebooks, clippings, and correspondence in an amazing abundance. He wished to seem - and indeed did seem - unassailable in his treatment of the decades in question.

¹ For the purpose of this essay, I employ the *Apologia* edition prepared by Longmans and Co., London, 1934.

Two different biographers² have drawn attention to Newman's predilection for hoarding up, as year gave way to year, these materials which were drawn upon in 1864. He had begun the process of collection, apparently, while still in his teens; the accumulation was accelerated both in his Oxford undergraduate years and those spent as a fellow of Oriel College. From the reckoned commencement of the Oxford Movement in 1833, this stream of materials gathered by Newman became a flood.³ In retrospect, it seems that from early adulthood he was desirous of being remembered by posterity, and aimed to facilitate an autobiography with no thought whatsoever, that in future, his relationship with the Church of England might change. That he did pass over to the Catholic Church in 1845 only made the undertaking of some biographical or autobiographical effort more likely still.

Thus, when Newman set to work to clear his own name against insinuations that he had concealed a secret Roman Catholic loyalty for years prior to his actual re-affiliation in 1845, he had at hand all the materials necessary to assist him in setting forward an account favorable to himself – an account which, in the event, also went far to rehabilitate his public reputation.

Now our interest is justifiably piqued when it comes to light that Newman did not think it sufficient – even in light of the *Apologia's* marked success – to leave well enough alone; by it, at age 64, he had successfully caught the English-speaking world's attention. No, Newman was determined that there should be a *further* substantive biography in two parts: the first (to be written by a protestant)⁴ would cover his Anglican years,

² Henry Tristram, ed. *John Henry Newman: Autobiographical Writings* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1956), pp.26-7. W. Robbins, *The Newman Brothers: An Essay in Comparative Intellectual Biography* (Cambridge, Mass. Harvard University Press, 1966), p. 16 speaks of 20,000 letters preserved and archived by J. H. Newman in the course of his life. He asserts that this illustrates a self-consciousness and self-absorption.

³ This being the case, it is very difficult to know what sense to make of Newman's claim, when writing the *Apologia* of 1864 that he possessed 'no autobiographical notes' and yet 'an abundance of letters from friends, with some copies or drafts of my answers...for the most part unsorted' pp. xxv,xxvi. The collection of autobiographical writings compiled by Tristram contains numerous items written by Newman *in advance* of his composing the *Apologia*. These included personal journals extending back to his pre-University days, an extensive sketch of his Mediterranean cruise of 1833, another regarding his services rendered to the Catholic University of Dublin, and two biographical sketches produced for reference works.

⁴ The individual was Ann Mozley, whose *Letters and Correspondence of John Henry Newman* (2 volumes), were issued in 1891.

while the second (to be written by a fellow Catholic) would survey the balance of his life. And to further this work by biographers selected by himself, Newman – in his 74th year – began to compose an autobiographical memoir consisting of four parts. The memoir, when completed, was to be furnished to the chosen biographers, who were also to be permitted access to the trove of letters and other records Newman had amassed.

That Newman would undertake this project a mere decade after the success of the *Apologia*, in reliance on this same hoard of materials, makes a statement of its own about the man's determination to be remembered on terms chosen by himself. Yet the existence of *two* kinds of autobiographical writings, composed only a decade apart, also raises the highly interesting question of how they compare. Was the second effort necessary because the first was inadequate? Or too brief? Or incomplete? Or had new evidence come to light? This paper will proceed to compare the two documents in connection with several questions. Upon highlighting variations between the *Apologia* of 1864 and the *Autobiographical Memoir* composed in 1874, the paper will make some attempt at explaining these. We proceed to the comparison of the following items:

1. Accounts of his religious conversion while still a schoolboy at Ealing, and attachment to evangelical Christianity.
2. The roles played by various Oxford individuals in moving Newman from his early evangelicalism through a liberal phase, and then finally to an exaltation of the theology of the Church Fathers.
3. The circumstances under which Newman ceased to be a tutor in Oriiel College in 1832.

I ACCOUNTS OF HIS RELIGIOUS CONVERSION AND EARLY ATTACHMENT TO EVANGELICAL CHRISTIANITY

In composing his *Apologia* of 1864, Newman had shown himself remarkably willing to acknowledge his former indebtedness to evangelical individuals and influences spread across the first twenty-five years of his life. His experience of conversion, in 1816 – as recalled in 1864 was :

that the inward conversion of which I was conscious (and of which I am more certain than that I have hands or feet) would last into the next life.

As regards the means of that conversion, Newman spoke of his Ealing schoolmaster,

the excellent man, long dead, the Rev. Walter Mayers of Pembroke College, Oxford who was the human means of this beginning of divine faith in me.

He spoke also of the authors which this Mayers had urged him to read, writers ‘all of the school of Calvin’. He went on to specify by name the writers (William) Romaine (1714-1795), Thomas Scott (1747-1821) – to whom, he added ‘he almost owed his soul’, Daniel Wilson (1778-1858) thereafter Anglican bishop of Calcutta, Jones of Nayland (1726-1800) and Joseph Milner (1744-1797).⁵ Though it is clear that Newman was in a steady process of disengagement from these evangelical influences during the 1820’s, the disengagement was gradual enough that he still contributed a series of letters to the ultra-Protestant *Record* newspaper as late as 1833.⁶

We find quite a different story when we consult the *Autobiographical Memoir*, which he began to compose in 1874. ‘Subdued’ would be the appropriate phrase to describe the one-sentence account of his early evangelical faith which Newman supplies, one decade after the *Apologia*. Walter Mayers, of whom he had spoken with tenderness in 1864 was now only

an excellent man ... from whom he received deep religious impressions, at the time Calvinistic in character, which were to him the beginning of new life.⁷

The *Memoir* does not shrink from acknowledging that Newman entered Oxford with a strongly Protestant cast of mind; it acknowledges that in 1819 he wrote an extensive poem recalling the terrors of the St.

⁵ *Apologia* pp. 4, 5, 7.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 42, 43. Newman admits to having made a donation to the launching of this newspaper at its inauguration in 1828. Frank M. Turner, author of *Newman: The Challenge to Evangelical Religion*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), p. 121 reports that in this same period Newman was an active supporter of both the Bible Society and Church Missionary Society. The former was a pan-evangelical trans-denominational organization, the latter entirely supported by concerned individuals in the Church of England. There is just a hint of this activity, spread across the 1820’s given in the *Memoir* in Henry Tristram, ed. *John Henry Newman: Autobiographical Writings*, p. 78.

⁷ Henry Tristram, ed. *John Henry Newman: Autobiographical Writings*, p. 29.

Bartholomew's Day Massacre of 1572.⁸ Yet none of the authors earlier recommended to him by Walter Mayers are considered worthy of mention until, in this *Memoir* of 1874, Newman is prepared to speak of the influences and forces that shifted him to a theological position standing beyond evangelicalism. In this connection, the names of John Newton, Thomas Scott and Philip Doddridge are introduced as representatives of a system which,

from the first failed to find a response in his own religious experience as afterwards in his parochial. He had indeed been converted by it to a spiritual life ... but he had not been converted in that special way which it laid down as imperative.⁹

To say that this represents revisionism, as regards the *Apologia* of 1864, would be to put matters lightly. The 1864 document had granted the substance of the conversion episode at age fifteen; a decade later the writer is dismissive. What did it all suggest about the author of both documents? To this question we must return below.

II THE ROLES PLAYED BY VARIOUS OXFORD INDIVIDUALS IN MOVING NEWMAN FROM HIS EARLY EVANGELICALISM

In the 1864 *Apologia*, Newman had proceeded on the assumption that he owed his various readers an extended explanation of how the early influences over him of the Ealing schoolmaster, Walter Mayers, and the authors which he recommended to Newman were gradually displaced by those of distinctly different views. This he proceeded to do in considerable detail.¹⁰

From Edward Hawkins, Provost of Oriel College and Vicar of St. Mary's Church, Oxford, Newman learned to distance himself further from the Calvinistic influences of his late teens, to embrace the hitherto unattractive doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration, and to esteem Tradition more highly – though not as a thing independent of Scripture.¹¹ A fellow of the same college, Rev. William James, brought Newman to accept another doctrine hitherto ill-esteemed – the existence of an Apostolic Succession operative in the Church of England. From Richard Whately, another fellow of Oriel College and subsequently (from 1825) Principal

⁸ Tristram, p. 42 fn.1 indicates that Newman instructed that this recollection be deleted from his hand-written memoir.

⁹ Tristram, p. 79.

¹⁰ *Apologia* pp.8-25.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

of St. Alban Hall, he received the steadfast encouragement to develop his own reasoning powers. Whately was the first to press him to think clearly about the Church's existence as a substantive, free-standing body and the corollary of this – that the State ought never to interfere in what, properly considered, was the domain of the Church.¹²

John Keble, fellow of Oriel, was also named among those who had special influence upon Newman. To this man, he attributed his coming to embrace 'the Sacramental system; that is the doctrine that material phenomena are both the types and the instruments of real things unseen.'¹³ And then there was Hurrell Froude, a pupil of Keble. Froude was Newman's travelling companion on the celebrated Mediterranean cruise of early 1833, and a closest friend until his premature death in 1836. From Froude, Newman learned

to look with admiration toward the Church of Rome, and in the same degree to dislike the Reformation. He fixed deep in me the idea of devotion to the Blessed Virgin and he led me gradually to believe in the Real Presence.¹⁴

Here then was Newman's admission in 1864 of his having undergone a steady drift from an early, staunch evangelicalism into a mixture of rational belief and High Church thinking in the period to 1833. Would Newman construe those early years in Oxford similarly when compiling his *Memoir* a decade later?

In that *Memoir* Newman supplies both *more* and *less* than in the *Apologia*. Of his connection with Richard Whately, we are told far more about the influence of this Oxford don's system of logic upon Newman than in the earlier account.¹⁵ Once more, we read of the influence of Edward Hawkins; here in particular we read more fully of Hawkins' determination to push Newman beyond his lingering evangelical predilection to divide, when preaching, his audiences 'into two classes; the one all darkness and the other, all light'.¹⁶ In this connection, it is important to note Newman's new insistence in 1874 that it was not (as implied in the *Apologia*) the 'give and take' of discussions with liberally-minded senior colleagues in Oriel College which led to the softening of his formerly

¹² Ibid., pp. 10-13.

¹³ Ibid., p. 18.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 25.

¹⁵ Tristram, ed. pp. 66-69.

¹⁶ Ibid., p.77. At page 8 of the *Apologia*, Newman clearly dated his religious changes not to the period in which he commenced pastoral ministry (1824) but from 1822.

dogmatic evangelical views, but rather the undertaking of pastoral duties under the watchful eye of Hawkins.¹⁷

But there are more striking differences still to be observed. Two academics who formed little or no part of the 1864 discussion of how his earlier evangelical views were modified, are introduced in the 1874 *Memoir* and indicated to have been highly influential. As neither was of the rationalist or speculative tendency of Whately and Hawkins, we should suppose that these are additions of some considerable significance. Newman now treats Dr. Charles Lloyd, a Canon of Christ Church and Regius Professor of Divinity – in whose Divinity lectures he was a robust participant in the period 1823-4, as of as deep influence upon him in that era as was Whately. Lloyd, characterized by Newman as of the ‘high and dry school’ (High Church) undoubtedly upheld formal orthodoxy as it was then understood, and provided a kind of counterpoint to the un-dogmatic approach of Whately. We have Newman’s word for it that Lloyd looked on him with considerable approbation, and urged him to compose a theology textbook.¹⁸

Also appearing *de novo* as a formative influence in the mid-1820’s, according to the 1874 *Memoir*, is Edward Pusey, the future Regius Professor of Hebrew in the University. In the *Apologia* of 1864, this eminent person exits from the narrative after a few lines by reason of his leaving Oriel.¹⁹ Pusey is not encountered again until after the launching of the *Tracts for the Times*, in 1833. But in the 1874 account, Pusey – a fellow of Oriel before Newman gained the honor – is ranged with Charles Lloyd as the upholder of High Church orthodoxy in this formative stage of Newman’s life. A definite shift in portraiture is apparently underway.

Strikingly absent from the 1874 *Memoir’s* treatment of this formative period are two persons with whom Newman was undoubtedly associated, as indicated in the earlier *Apologia*: John Keble – then shortly to be famous for his publication, *The Christian Year* (1827) and Hurrell Froude, to whom Newman undoubtedly was indebted for the softening of his perspective on Roman Catholicism and the role of Mary.²⁰ But Newman has chosen, deliberately it seems, to lay all stress on formative figures who were of an older generation than his own. Again, we will return to the possible significance of these variances below.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 78.

¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 69-72.

¹⁹ *Apologia* p. 16.

²⁰ *Apologia* p. 25 and fn. 14 above.

III THE CIRCUMSTANCES UNDER WHICH NEWMAN CEASED TO BE A TUTOR IN ORIEL COLLEGE IN 1832.

That Newman's future course was decisively affected by the phasing out of his Tutorship (though not his Fellowship) in Oriel College in 1832 is obvious to all. It was the liberty that this release gave him that permitted him to invest himself so heavily in the writing of his first major theological work, *The Arians of the Fourth Century* (manuscript completed July 1832) and to undertake in December of the same year his extended tour of the Mediterranean. Yet the *Apologia* stops far short of indicating the strained and awkward circumstances under which this release from tutorial responsibilities occurred. Cryptically, Newman had declared simply that:

At this time I was disengaged from College duties, and my health had suffered from the labour involved in the composition of my Volume (i.e. *Arians*) ... I was easily persuaded to join Hurrell Froude and his Father , who were going to the south of Europe for the health of the former.²¹

Yet, in light of the disclosures entrusted by Newman to his 1874 *Memoir*, we are enabled to see that the words 'disengaged from College duties' (above) were very pregnant with meaning.

Simmering just beneath the surface of Newman's language in 1864, were recollections of a chain of events so trying that he would one decade later describe it as a gradual 'dying out of his Tutorship'. He would estimate the significance of this turn of events as of such magnitude as to provide the actual *terminus ad quem* for the launch of what he termed 'the Oxford theological movement' and which we simply call the Oxford Movement.²² The launch of the latter, according to the well-known statements of the *Apologia*, had been provided by the notable sermon of John Keble 'National Apostasy', delivered on July 23, 1833.²³

As the *Memoir* goes on to explain, a strong difference of opinion arose between Edward Hawkins, Provost of Oriel College, and two of the four college tutors – Hurrell Froude and Newman. At issue was the question of whether it was necessary or desirable that college tutors be ordained persons; Hawkins took the negative view while Froude and Newman took the affirmative. Hawkins in holding the negative opinion had no thought of dismissing the two who were otherwise-minded. It was simply the case

²¹ *Apologia* p. 32

²² *Memoir* p. 86

²³ *Apologia* p. 35

that Froude and Newman meant to function as clergymen as well as academic tutors in their relationship with the students assigned to them.

Newman, at least, refused to act deferentially to the numerous ‘young men of birth, wealth, or prospects whom he considered (of course with real exceptions) to be the ruin of the place’. He also opposed the long-standing practice of compelling all College students to participate in Holy Communion.²⁴ Strong differences of opinion on such subjects existed between tutors and the college Provost, Hawkins from 1826 forward. In June of 1830, however, Hawkins informed a group (now consisting of three, rather than two tutors) that he had determined to assign no further students to them ‘thus gradually depriving them of their office, according as their existing pupils took their degrees and left the University’.²⁵ The practical effect of this was that Newman was freed to write *Arians of the Fourth Century* and to accompany Froude (also relieved of his tutorial duties) to the Mediterranean. And the net effect of that, according to Newman’s perspective of 1874 was that:

In the year after his relinquishing his College office, on his return from abroad, the Tract movement began. Humanly speaking, that movement never would have been, had he not been deprived of his Tutorship.²⁶

The Wider Significance of these Variants

With the help of the hoard of materials accumulated since his youth, Newman had written a largely plausible account of the first 45 years of his life, the *Apologia*, when 64 years old. We may grant that he had a legitimate desire in seeing some independent, yet sympathetic biographer or biographers describe his life as a whole, as it came nearer to its end a decade later. To that end, it was not inappropriate for him to provide access to copious pertinent materials he had accumulated over the preceding seven decades and even to provide sketches of portions or particular noteworthy incidents in his life. But when we have said all this, we are far from accounting for numerous stark discrepancies between the record Newman compiled for *public* consumption in 1864²⁷ (his *Apologia*) and that reflected in *private* memoir for his biographers after 1874 – especially when we consider that during all the intervening years and beyond, the *Apologia* was, through reprint editions, rapidly establishing itself as a

²⁴ *Memoir* pp. 87-8

²⁵ *Memoir* p. 83

²⁶ *Memoir* p. 96

²⁷ Perhaps the most glaring of which had been his complaint in the *Apologia* xxv of possessing no autobiographical notes!

religious and literary classic. Evidently, Newman felt no particular obligation to uphold the *Apologia* version of his life to 1845 when it did not suit his purpose. And after 1874, he seemed to pursue another purpose, distinct from that of 1864. Having achieved public rehabilitation in 1864, he was now determined to go further and fix his own place in the historical record.

In broad outline, this paper has drawn attention to the following:

- *First*, Newman's septuagenarian determination to insist that he had never *truly* been an evangelical Protestant, over against his earlier insistence that he had carried beneficial parts of this outlook with him through his subsequent developments. Would it be too much to say that now, near the end of his life, Newman had nothing more to gain by speaking warmly of his evangelical roots – whereas in 1864 a stress on evangelicalism's positive contribution to his formation was an important component of his appeal for rehabilitation in the court of public opinion?
- *Second*, Newman's septuagenarian determination to recast the story of his 1820's theological development so as to strongly downplay the influence upon him of the budding theological liberalism in that period and to stress instead that the leading influences on him in that period, while not evangelical, were undoubtedly orthodox persons such as Lloyd and Pusey.

The 1864 account had stressed that it was a return to Patristic theology which had stabilized him after a 'bout' of liberal teaching. By 1874, that liberal teaching was re-portrayed as something which while present, never really touched him. Not strong personalities associated with Oriel College, not questions about Scriptural authority,²⁸ but the challenges of pastoral ministry had been the catalyst for rethinking major theological concepts. Newman's theological development had, as portrayed in 1874, been guided by persons and emphases deserving of unquestioned admiration. The net effect of these changes was to portray a Newman whose theological development had been relatively seamless, and characterized by continuity.

²⁸ The *Apologia* (p. 9) of 1864 had admitted that Newman had, for a time, imbibed from Blanco White 'freer views on the subject of inspiration than were usual in the Church of England at that time'. The volume (p. 25) also had Newman describing how, circa 1828 he moved 'out of the shadow of liberalism'. All traces of this had vanished in 1874.

- Finally, Newman's reluctance in 1864 to speak of the developments in Oriel College which facilitated his long absence in the Mediterranean in the first half of 1833, and his clear determination to lay the whole story bare in 1874 are not properly explained by him. The explanation does not lie in any reluctance on Newman's part to speak of Edward Hawkins, provost of Oriel, for the *Memoir* of 1874 no less than the *Apologia* of 1864 records Newman's sense of satisfaction at ever having been connected to this prominent Oxford don. It may properly be said, however, that in 1864 when Newman was struggling both to recover his reputation (assailed by Kingsley and others) and to overcome his consignment to the relative obscurity of a Birmingham Oratory, he would have made his case harder to establish by admitting that he had been dismissed from a coveted Oriel tutorship. In that, perhaps, readers in 1864 might have claimed to find evidence of intransigence, ambition and singularity. But the net effect of suppressing this information in 1864 is that it will have prevented him from affirming, as he clearly did in 1874, that his freedom to depart from England on a Mediterranean tour meant that he (with Froude) was in fact on the path towards Tractarian radicalization a half-year or more before Keble's 'National Apostasy' sermon of July 1833; the latter has generally been taken to mark the launch of the Tractarian movement. The linking of these phenomena (as Newman did in fact link them in 1874) opens for us the clear possibility that Newman, the proto-Tractarian, was acting both in a kind of theological reaction against Hawkins, as well as in reaction to a perceived current intrusion of the State upon the Church.

In 1864, Charles Kingsley had, tongue in cheek, posed the question 'and what does Mr. Newman mean?' thereby provoking Newman to write his *Apologia*. That same question would appear to have been warranted by the multiple discrepancies incorporated into these autobiographical writings separated by a decade. In modern parlance, we might say that Newman had been busy spin-doctoring.