

III

Accessories and Further Developments of the Movement.

The sources upon which I have drawn for the materials of the two preceding Papers have included only in a very limited degree the results of my own experience, and this remark applies for more to the last than to the former of them. I left Oxford in 1839, nearly two years before the publication of Tract 90, and only made brief and occasional visits to it after that time, though I was always kept *au courant* with the movement by correspondence and occasional intercourse with its leading characters. In the last of my Papers, therefore, I have depended much more upon the testimony of credible witnesses on the spot than upon my own direct knowledge.

In my present Paper, on the other hand, I come to a part of the subject upon which I am to give almost exclusively the result of my own personal impressions and actual observation. And here, again, I must ask the reader to bear in mind that I am writing not a philosophical dissertation but an historical sketch; and the only mode of narration which comes naturally to me is that which transfers, as I may say, to canvas, with all its lights and shadows, the picture which is before my mind's eye. There are certain phases of the movement in which, owing to the anomalous character of our position, that which was at the core sound and genuine had a tendency to wear the appearance of absurdity, or to degenerate into caricature. With these few words of preface I proceed at once to introduce the subject of Margaret Chapel.¹

I am not insensible to the temptation of attaching too much historical importance to that part of the Tractarian Movement which has naturally a peculiar interest in my own eyes, yet, on the whole, I do not think that I can properly give it a less prominent place in my narrative; for Margaret Chapel had undoubtedly exercised a very powerful influence upon the conversions to the Catholic Church, which after all are the real tests of the importance of the movement as well as the true index to its

character. The ministerial staff of that establishment alone, at one or another period of its history, has yielded six or seven zealous converts, most of whom have since become priests; while certainly not fewer than a hundred of those who have been at different times attached to its congregation have since passed into the ranks of the Church. The truly magnificent edifice which now occupies its site is the direct historical result of its existence, and if not precisely its successor in principle, is, at any rate to a considerable extent, its sequel in effect.

Time was when Margaret Street was as devoid of romantic interest and ecclesiastical prestige as any other member of that peculiarly dull family of public highways, redolent of Queen Anne and the first Georges, which occupies the neighbourhood of Cavendish Square. Like them it consisted of two parallel lines of moderate-sized dwelling-houses, most uninterestingly uniform and almost depressingly dismal. Towards its eastern and more unfashionable end, however, it subsided into a collection of buildings of a more motley character—lodging-houses, houses of public entertainment, shops, and carriage manufactories. Buried among these was a humble structure which the boldest of prophets and the most anguine of speculators would hardly have ventured to select as the scene of a religious movement and the site of the future Tractarian cathedral. Old Margaret Chapel had passed through a series of remarkable vicissitudes, and its history was a kind of type of the variations of Protestantism, ranging as it did between a form of that system which was only just removed from atheism, and one which was only just short of Catholicity. About the time of the great French Revolution, Margaret Chapel was a temple of deism; and between that period and the year 1835 it had proceeded upwards through the various gradations of Dissent and Low-Churchism till it settled, at least for a time, in some of the milder forms of the religious system which is connected with the name of Mr. Irving.² About this period it was administered by the late excellent Mr. Dodsworth,³ who by the weight of his amiable character, and by a mode of preaching far more solid and earnest than that which prevailed in London at the time, succeeded in attracting, and attaching, a large and highly respectable congregation, through whose exertions and influence a church was built for him in Albany Street, to which he removed about the year 1838, and where he continued to minister till near the time of his conversion. Upon Mr. Dodsworth's removal Margaret Chapel fell to the charge of Mr. Thornton, a very estimable young clergyman, of weak health, who soon broke down under its weight. In the summer of 1839 it again became vacant by his resignation, and was thereupon offered to a fellow of one of the colleges at Oxford who had no spiritual charge at the time, and who was known to desire an opportunity of trying the effect of Tractarian principles upon a practical scale.

A more unpromising sphere for carrying out such a project than Margaret Chapel presented when first he visited it would be difficult for the imagination to conceive; and in looking back on the period he finds it hard to master the state of

mind under which he accepted the offer. In the first place, of all the relations which can exist between a clergyman and his congregation, that of the minister of a proprietary "chapel-of-ease" would seem to be the most hopeless as regards any chance of valuable influence. Again, as a part of the object was to elevate the popular idea of Divine worship above its thoroughly low level, it might have been thought, beforehand, that a building of some pretensions to an ecclesiastical character would be a *sine quâ non* in the arrangements. That, in spite of the singular disadvantages under which this attempt laboured, it should have succeeded even to the extent it did, is a proof of nothing else than of the natural attractiveness of Catholic principles and Catholic practices, even in the miserably imperfect and purely inchoate and tentative form in which they were there exhibited.

The chapel itself was a complete paragon of ugliness; and all that can be said in its favour is, that its architect had adapted it with masterly skill to the uses which it had previously subserved. To the religious and ecclesiastical type it presented a perfect antithesis. It was low, dark, and stuffy; it bore no other resemblance to the Christian fold than that of being choked with sheep-pens under the name of pews; and its only evidence of being "surrounded with varieties" was that it was begirt by a hideous gallery, filled on Sundays with uneasy school-children. But the triumph of its monstrosities was just where, upon the principle "*corruptio optimi pessima*,"⁴ we might have expected,—in the chancel. From the floor almost to the roof there arose a tripartite structure, beginning with the clerk's desk and terminating in the pulpit, the minister's "reading-pew" occupying the interval. Thus the preacher was elevated on a kind of throne, as if in parody of that which surmounts a Catholic altar; and there he stood, claiming, as it were, the adoration of the people. Where was the communion-table? I will answer the question. It filled the space between the reading-desk and under the pulpit. The first act of the new minister was to demolish this three-headed monster. All attempts at improvement in the general arrangements of the chapel were hopeless, and were at once abandoned. The congregation, which had been somewhat acclimatised to their new position by the efforts of the two preceding ministers, bore the change with more equanimity than might have been expected, and some of them (including my respected friend Mr. Serjeant Bellasis⁵—already a distinguished barrister) came forward zealously and generously to aid in the work. One person, however, all but openly rebelled against the proposed changes,—the clerk. He had been there, man and boy, nearly fifty years, and declared that of all the transformations he had witnessed *this* was the most insufferable. To have dismissed this poor old servant would have been an act of cruelty of which, let us hope, the minister was incapable; all that could be done, therefore, was to trust that argument might reconcile him to his disappointment, or time wear it away. Finally dethroned from his ancient pre-eminence, he looked about for some mode of gaining at least a portion of his privilege. He was accordingly caught, a

few days afterwards, "building himself up a solitude" in a remote part of the chapel; and when frustrated in this design also, he had no alternative but to subside into the general body of the congregation, and there assert his ancient right in the only way which was left to him, by reciting the responses with vociferous obtrusiveness.

This clerk was a great trial. He occupied rooms adjoining the chapel and communicating, by a doorway, with its gallery. In these apartments he always seemed to keep a family of cats, which had a habit of diffusing itself over the chapel. To the incumbent for the time being there was something singularly, and perhaps unduly, repulsive in the notion of cats in a church. Could it be that the clerk kept these creatures as ministers of his wrath and avengers of his insulted dignity—a sort of auxiliary legion or train of obsequious furies to be let loose at pleasure? We will hope not. At any rate the effect was the same. Sometimes, during the First Lesson for instance, one of these animals would utter its peculiar cry from some obscure corner or indefinite abyss; and the only consolation was that the evil was irremediable, or that the remedy would have been worse than itself. They did not, however, always maintain the incognito. On a memorable occasion one of them, more venturous than its companions, advanced to the balustrade of the gallery and there perched herself, like a fiend. In that instance the clerk did come to the aid of offended discipline, and proceeded from his place, by stealthy steps, to arrest the culprit. What was the inevitable consequence? The cat, hearing a measure tread behind her, chose, with a ready instinct, the only practicable alternative; and accordingly, by a strong leap, descended headlong into the sanctuary, only just clearing the head of an eminent divine, who happened on that day to be assisting, as it were pontifically, at the morning service. The animal, on gaining the ground and finding herself in so unusual a situation, was seized with a fit of despair, and, by another strong leap clearing the altar-rails, she rushed in terror through the building and made her exit at the door. Such details, however much they may fall below the dignity of history, convey a better idea of the spirit of the scenes I am portraying than more lofty and elaborate descriptions.

Margaret Chapel soon gathered to itself a considerable congregation, in which were many members of the aristocracy, and more than one personage in high official position. They seemed to find in its quiet, orderly, and reverent services, on Sundays and weekdays, a relief from the turmoil of the world, and a contrast to the usual tone of popular chapels; they relished its music, which was of a more ecclesiastical and varied character than was then usual even in cathedrals, and, perhaps, also recognised in its preaching a somewhat more earnest and consistent view of religious truths than in the ordinary Protestantism of the day. At any rate, this mixed congregation very soon yielded many zealous and devoted disciples, who were thus brought into more immediate spiritual relations with the clergy than were customary in chapels-of-ease, and even in district and parochial churches. It was a great though

very common mistake to suppose that the principal object in this chapel was to obtrude upon people new and strange ceremonies, or to elevate the merely formal side of religion, to the exclusion or depression of the practical and devotional. Whatever was done towards promoting the beauty of Divine worship, so miserably degraded and falsified by the mere Protestant exhibition of it, was done upon a definite principle and with a religious aim; nor was the object what it was commonly, and perhaps not unnaturally, supposed to be, to dissatisfy Anglicans with the system in which they found themselves, but rather to give that system all the advantages of which it seemed capable, and leave Divine Providence to work out the conclusion. I do not, of course, deny that there may have been many instances in which these principles were not steadily kept in view, as there were certainly many more in which they failed of their effect through the errors and inconsistencies of those by whom they were represented. Still less do I deny that their practical exemplifications were marred by some childish absurdities, which, by the help of those exaggerations which true stories never fail to receive in their transmission, tended to bring needless odium upon the principles themselves. In many of the stories which were current there was truth enough to give them an impetus, abundance of fiction to dress them out, and contrariety enough to the usual modes of thinking to secure them a ready acceptance with the enemies of the movement. Yet, after a large allowance for prejudice and embellishment, I am afraid we must say with the poet,

Pudet hæc opprobia nobis
Et dici potuisse, et non potuisse repelli.⁶

We were extensively charged with a kind of ecclesiastical smuggling—with introducing contraband goods upon the most frivolous pretexts and by the most undignified methods: with importing candlelight, for instance, upon the back of a friendly fog, or insinuating incense in the train of some imaginary effluvia. The first imputation was not without some foundation, the second was entirely untrue. But the first gave as incorrect a view as the second of the whole spirit by which the ministry of Margaret Chapel was animated.

The anomaly of our position, and the consequent mistakes and even faults which it superinduced, might have been obviated in one of two ways, or in both of them—either by a largeness of spirit on the part of the bishops, or by a clearer view of the duty of obedience on the part of the clergy. Which was the more in error—they for their exclusiveness, or we for our want of simple obedience—I cannot pretend to say, but I am inclined to suspect that the fault was far more in the system than in either of us. The excuse of the authorities was a very good one. It was their duty, they said, to put down practices which were novel, offensive, and savoured of Popery.

The excuse on the other side was founded on unrepealed though obsolete rubrics; on the reasonable construction of those which were acknowledged; on the practice of the Universal Church, by which the language of one of its professing “branches” was to be interpreted in doubtful cases. On these and similar grounds it was considered, or pretended, that a bare obedience to the literal commands of the superior was all which could in duty be required on the part of subjects who regarded the episcopal authority as, at any rate, only co-ordinate with that of the Church; and all, on the other hand, which could be fairly claimed by authorities who had themselves abstained from vigorous exercises of their power in the case even of the most flagrant violations of ecclesiastical duty.

There was one mode of conciliating opposition and averting the blow of authoritative interference which I am truly glad to think was never for a moment even contemplated at Margaret Chapel. When one of the scales had been depressed by an undue infusion of the ceremonial element, it would always have been possible to restore the equilibrium by loading the other with anti-Catholic teaching. Could we have defended ourselves against attack by pointing to some strong Protestant demonstration in the pulpit, we might have lived on, as far as popular opinion was concerned, to the present day. But this would, of course, have been to transform a real and consistent movement into a sham of the first water, and it never therefore occurred to us even in the way of a temptation. It was thoroughly understood that special Catholic doctrines and practices were never to be publicly impugned: and, on the other hand, those principles, as apart from dogmas, were constantly inculcated, or implied, which rest on the immutable basis of Catholic truth.⁷

It must be admitted again, in all fairness, that the aspects of ecclesiastical authority and public opinion were greatly weakened in their impressiveness and seriously marred in their effects by the inconsistencies with which they were clouded. It was too evident that they proceeded on no fixed principle, but were uncertain, capricious, and impulsive. This circumstance, again, created a strong temptation to criticise, rather than obey, and to ignore rather than conciliate. We might have candles, we were told, provided we would not light them. We were restricted to one bouquet of flowers on the communion-table, and were required to take especial care that white did not predominate on the feast of a virgin, nor red on that of a martyr. We might collect offerings on a dish, but a bag was considered “popish.” We must not gaze intently on the alms-dish, lest the people should think that we worshiped it.⁸ We might preach in a surplice in the morning if we would wear a black gown in the evening, and thus neutralise Rome by Geneva. Duty was rendered very difficult, and life very uncomfortable, by having to defend ourselves against objections which presumed such a want of common-sense, and to confide in authorities who evidently had no confidence in us. Still we bore the trial longer than might have been expected, under the consciousness of good intentions, and for the

sake of the many sincere and earnest persons who seemed to be attached to our ministry.

Had the Tractarians acted as a party, instead of wisely leaving each one to follow out what may be called his own special "vocation" in the work, it is probable that this purely collateral and tributary movement in London would either have been checked altogether or, at any rate, materially crippled. Though a really spontaneous and independent effort on the part of persons who were nowise bound to the Tractarian leaders, and one therefore which those leaders felt that they had no right to obstruct, yet there was another course which they might have taken, and which some of them perhaps, if animated by a less generous spirit, would have been disposed to adopt—that, namely, of publicly disavowing it. Nothing has impressed me more, on reviewing the events of that period with the light cast upon them by contemporary publications, than the admirable spirit of moderation and forbearance by which the Tractarian leaders were actuated: more especially those of them who, like Dr. Pusey and Mr. Keble, were somewhat in arrear of Mr. Newman in their religious opinions. Here they were, themselves perhaps not altogether pleased with what they heard of certain proceedings at a distance, surrounded too by persons who, no doubt, were continually urging them to separate themselves by some formal protest from the acts and words of disciples who, by extravagance and imprudence, were helping to undo their work. Yet, far from in any way publicly disengaging themselves from those acts or words, they wisely let things take their course, as if diffident of their own right to put obstacles in the way of what might be God's method of effecting His own purposes. As time goes on, and still further developments of the movement come before us, we shall find more and more reason, in the fact I have just noticed, for admiration and gratitude.

In spite, however, of the many ways in which Divine Providence seemed to bless our work in London, it was impossible not to feel sensibly, from time to time, that our position was in the highest degree anomalous and critical. The best which could be said of it was that it was a state of transition; and then the question would recur, of transition into what? And, again, even as a state of transition could it be justified? We were at cross purposes with our ecclesiastical superiors; looked upon by the great body of our communion as the fomenters of division; an occasion rather of generous forbearance than of active sympathy, even to most of those who might be said to be of our own party; cut off upon a theory which bore every appearance of being got up to meet a difficulty, from Catholics of England and Ireland, and absolutely disowned by those "foreign Churches," as we called them, with which we regarded ourselves as in real though invisible communion. Many were the ways in which these various inconsistencies would be practically forced upon our unwilling attention. There were, perhaps, not more than two or three of the London clergy, if so many, whom we could invite to preach in our chapel without almost a certainty

of having the whole fabric of our religious teaching smashed in its very stronghold by some anti-Catholic protest. Again, there would come, from time to time, those official acts on the part of authorities or tribunals, popularly, at any rate, identified with the "Church of England," which, if not each one by itself, yet at all events in their cumulative force, seemed to strike at the root of her claims, and which sounded in our ears like minute-guns ushering in the funeral of our hopes.

But, of all the trials to which we were exposed, none were harder to bear than those which came from the attitude taken in regard to us by foreign Catholics: an attitude, on the one hand, of kindness and sympathy towards us as individuals, but, on the other, of evident protest against our religious position. I remember, on one occasion, a French Catholic gentleman (I forget if he were a priest) calling upon us at Margaret Chapel. After a short conversation he requested to "see my church." As it was close at hand the request was easily granted. We walked across the street, and, on observing its exterior, my companion appeared to be somewhat surprised. He probably, however, remembered, or was reminded, that even abroad beautiful churches have sometimes a poor outside (St. Paul's, at Rome, for instance)—that "*omnis gloria Regis ab intus*,"⁹ &c. &c. We entered the chapel. He put out his hand for holy water, which he did not find. He walked straight up to the communion-table, and there, after surveying the cross and candlesticks, addressed the minister of the chapel nearly as follows:

"Mais, monsieur, qu'est ce que c'est ça; quelle espèce de religion?"

He was answered, somewhat hesitatingly, "*C'est l'Église nationale.*"

"Nationale et Protestante?" he asked.

"Non, monsieur," was the somewhat indignant rejoinder; "*nationale et Catholique.*"

"Pardon, monsieur," he mildly responded; "*ce n'est pas Catholique ça; de tout, de tout.*"

About this same time an Oxford graduate was traveling in the North of Italy. It should be observed that, although disciples of the Oxford School had a general sympathy with all "foreign Churches," it was much stronger with some than with others, accordingly as they supposed those "Churches" to have retained more or less of the national or "primitive" element. As, therefore, many of them hoped, though in vain, to make common cause with France on the ground of the "Gallican liberties," so Milan seemed to offer a point of contact with the early against the existing Church, in the Ambrosian tradition. To Milan, accordingly, our travelers repaired, and there fell in with a priest. As few Oxford men could speak Italian, whereas all Italian priests can speak Latin, the conversation which ensued was carried on in that language.

“*Catholicus es?*” said the priest to one of the travelers.

“*Utique, Domine, sum Catholicus: non tamen Romano-Catholicus.*”

“*Catholicus, non Romanus?*” said the priest, in evident surprise. Then, putting his hand to his chin, and looking, as it were, into the air for a solution of the difficulty, he exclaimed, as if having hit the point, “*Ah, Puseyista forsan!*”

We endeavoured, especially the younger and less occupied members of our society, to improve our relations with foreign Catholics by occasional visits to the Continent. For this purpose Belgium was preferred to France, because of the greater external manifestation of religion in that country. Whatever our Tractarian friends may have been on this side of the Channel, there could be no doubt of their perfect Catholicity on the other. It was, in fact, of so enthusiastic and demonstrative a character as to astonish the natives themselves, and sometimes even perhaps to shame them. Our friends used to distinguish themselves by making extraordinary low bows to priests, and genuflecting, even in public places, to everyone who looked the least like a bishop. In the churches they were always in a state of prostration, or of ecstasy. Everything, and everybody, was charming; and such a contrast to England. Catholics might have had their faults like other people, but even their faults were better than Protestant virtues. There was always a redeeming point even in their greatest misdemeanours; their acts of insobriety were far less offensive than those of Englishmen, and evidences of their Catholicity might be traced in their very oaths.

There is an anecdote of a different kind connected with these visits to the Continent which, with strict fidelity to historical fact, combines so much of the interest and beauty of romance, that I may almost be thought to have borrowed it, to adorn my pages, from one of Mr. Burns’s series of edifying religious stories. When at Antwerp, in the year 1842, I made acquaintance with a youth of twelve or thirteen years of age, who was then one of the choir-boys in the cathedral of that city. I was so much struck by his piety and intelligence that, on my return home, I wrote about him to my friend Mr. Ward, who thought the account worth publishing in his *Ideal of a Christian Church*, among the testimonies to the practical effects of Catholicity which are collected in the appendix to that work. I said in my letter,—

I was pleased beyond measure with the tone and demeanour of this boy, who, we learned, was in the habit of confessing every fortnight. He spoke with delight of his duties in the church, and of his hopes of one day attaining to the dignity of the priesthood.¹⁰

This was in 1842, when I was still a Protestant. In 1853 I visited Antwerp as a Catholic priest, and one day, after saying mass in the Church of St. Charles Borromeo, a young man came up to me in the habit of a priest, and made himself known as the little choirboy whom I had met sixteen years before, producing from his pocket a book of French devotions which I had given him, as a keepsake, on taking leave of him. In the interval we had both become priests—he who was then not even a student, I who was then not even a Catholic; and we met, after an interval of sixteen years, saying mass together in the same church.¹¹

It is needless to add that we were by this time growing out of what was once called, in the *Dublin Review*, the “ultramarine” theory, or that according to which a Catholic became a schismatic by crossing the Straits of Dover. About this time there was an opinion among us parallel to that development of Donatism which is associated with the name of one Tichonius, according to which both the Catholic and Anglican bishops were considered to have lawful jurisdiction in the same territory. But this theory would not hold; and accordingly the view which excludes one or the other from communion with the *orbis terrarum*¹² was restored, only with this difference, that now the Anglican, not the Catholic, was the side excluded.

With the view of counterbalancing the tendency to an undue elevation of ceremonialism, attempts were about this time made in more than one quarter to bring out the devotional and ascetical side of Catholicity. The ascetical fell by a natural attraction to Dr. Pusey, who published a series of valuable Catholic books in English. The devotional was taken up in London and elsewhere, and several little manuals were put out; such as *Devotions on the Passion*; *Devotions for Holy Communion*; *St. Bonaventure’s Life of Christ*; &c.¹³ These books were eagerly bought and read by our own friends, though even to some of these they were not wholly palatable. But upon the bishops they produced no effect whatever in mitigating opposition; on the contrary, they seemed even to embitter it. The *Devotions on the Passion* happened to come out while Bishop Baget of Oxford was holding his visitation; and that amiable prelate, who was really one of the most liberal members of his bench, felt it his duty to add an Appendix to his Charge, in which he denounced these Devotions as a mischievous publication.¹⁴ Perhaps among all the various notes against the Anglican communion, this was the most discouraging.

A powerful stimulus was given to the movement by the periodical appearance of the *British Critic*. This review passed under the editorship of Mr. Newman about 1838, and from that time till October 1843, when it was discontinued, it may be said to form a faithful reflection of the progress of Tractarian opinions. Some of the earlier articles are unsatisfactory, and occasionally offensive; one upon which I have happened to stumble, called the “Revival of Jesuitism,” I do not hesitate to say is, in parts, actually though of course unconsciously profane. But, as time goes on, we shall find that this heretical *virus* is to a great extent, though never of course wholly,

discharged; while the contributions of the editor himself, of Mr. Ward, and others exhibit continual advances upon the tone of the earlier numbers. It were to be wished, indeed, that those of Mr. Newman might be revised and republished by him, as they are undoubtedly some of the most precious of his pre-Catholic writings.¹⁵

It may not be uninteresting, nor altogether out of season, to wind up this paper by inquiring briefly into some of the causes to which the *British Critic* may be thought to have owed its extraordinary influence. The subject is intimately connected with the general one upon which we are engaged; for this periodical may be said to have been the principle channel through which Tractarianism passed out of its early and more technical form, and entered upon that more interesting stage of expansion and development in which it directly prepared the way for the conversions to Rome. The *British Critic* has also an important place in our history, as it helped to conglomerate and cement the various forms of Tractarianism into something like a consistent whole, and to give them a practical bearing upon society at large. It cannot be denied that the *British Critic*, like other accessories to the great work at Oxford, owed much of its success to the influence of party feeling. People wrote, I am afraid, all the more forcibly, read all the more greedily, worked all the more vigorously, gave all the more liberally, because they had a cause to vindicate before bishops and against objectors, and a great problem to work out, if possible, on the side of quiescence and conservatism—a Church, as they considered, to elevate, unsettled minds to steady, and stragglers to keep within bounds. Our motives of action in Christ's true Church are infinitely higher, infinitely purer, and therefore infinitely more powerful; but proportionately less exciting. In the Church of Christ things do not depend, thank God!, upon our individual efforts; the work is indefinitely distributed, and secured by guarantees which would remain in all their force if we were out of the way. It would be sad indeed if these consolations should ever be a check rather than an incentive to exertion; that the advancement of a cause, or the defence of a party, should nerve the arm with vigour, or open the hand to liberality, with greater power than the graces of the Church and the association with the communion of saints.

But there were other circumstances which had to do with the success of the *British Critic*, happily less limited and partial in their operation. Among these the first place must be given to the editor.¹⁶ If he had a fault as an editor, it was that he erred on the side of forbearance and largeness of spirit. He used the pruning-knife, if anything, too sparingly; and as to some of the articles actually published, like that on the "Revival of Jesuitism," it might be said that one erasure would have been better than many; the "*una sola litura*"¹⁷ which would have expunged the whole at once. But, in general, the Review gained by these expansive principles of tolerance. In matters of detail and administrative policy the *Critic* was worthy of all admiration. Light articles, which must always be an editor's great difficulty, are mingled in due

proportion with the graver, and they are generally pervaded by a brilliant and accomplished tone of kindly wit.¹⁸

What is still more to the point, the writers, as a general rule, seem to write as if they mean what they say. This may be considered a very modest demand upon authors, but it is really one of their greatest and rarest merits. Sincerity in authorship is the essential condition of a valuable influence. “*Si vis me flere, dolendum est primum ipsi tibi.*”¹⁹ Hence, too, it was a great, perhaps the greatest, element of success in this periodical, that the Review, on the whole, presented an aspect of unity and consistency. To preserve this in company with the spirit of freedom and forbearance, which has been already mentioned, must be the main problem of every editor of a periodical: and the *British Critic*, in spite of all its varieties, offers a successful solution of it. Nay, even those very varieties are evidences of the genuineness and geniality of the work, since they are owing, in great measure, to the progressive course and shifting phases of the movement itself, of which the Review, indeed, is a kind of index or epitome.

But that which constituted the crowning excellence of the *British Critic*, as compared with the leading Protestant periodicals of its time, was its thoroughly religious spirit, pervading as that spirit did, on the whole, not only its directly ecclesiastical articles, but those which were engaged with other subjects. Nothing was treated—whether history, biography, travels, fiction, or subjects of the day—in a simply worldly or literary point of view, or as if religion were a kind of professional peculiarity, or official badge, the assumption of which out of its place was gratuitous, pedantic, or in bad taste. Yet, on the other hand, nothing is more remarkable in this Review than the entire absence of what is called “cant,” the opposite and vicious extreme, between which and irreligiousness the golden mean is so hard to preserve. Nor, again, was the spirit in question maintained at the very slightest cost of literary ability or even public reputation; for I believe I am correct in saying that it was Mr. Newman’s articles in the *Critic* which led to his being invited by the proprietors of *The Times* to come out in that journal with some remarks upon literary projects of the day, and that the result of these overtures may be seen in the celebrated letters of “Catholicus.”

It is almost needless to say that the articles of the illustrious editor himself were always looked out for with anxiety, recognised with ease, and read with eagerness. Though conceived in a spirit of singular caution and moderation, calculated rather than purposely intended to disarm suspicion, they could not fail, as the compositions of so genuine a writer, to betray, at least to observant and sympathising readers, very perceptible tokens of what was passing in his mind. The article on the “Catholicity of the English Church,” which appeared in January 1840, was followed at the distance of eighteen months by another, somewhat of the same character though on

a different subject—that on “Private Judgment,” which, though not actually the last, was the last significant and characteristic paper of the gifted writer.

The contents of this essay must have surprised many who had formed their expectations of it from its title. With High Churchmen of the time, “private judgment” was synonymous with self-will, and involved, as it would involve with Catholics, the spirit of heretical insubordination. In this article, however, a certain place and function were assigned to private judgment in the actual state of religious interests and parties in England. It might be employed, said the writer, in discriminating not between religions but between teachers or, in other words, “Churches.” It was plain that the argument of St. Augustine against the Donatists had worked itself into the writer’s mind; indeed, he refers to it even more definitely than in the article of January 1840, upon the “Catholicity of the English Church.” He almost admits that the note of schism rested on the Anglican communion, and parries the charge by an *argumentum ad hominem*, or rather *ad Ecclesiam*,²⁰ founded on a parallel note, as he considers, of “quasi idolatry.” Things being thus reduced, he argues, to an alternative of difficulties, it is, he implies, the duty of Anglicans to stay where they are—the fact of “possession” determining their course, under the circumstances, on the side of remaining in the state of life in which it had pleased God to place them. With the slight exception of the paper in the *Critic* of April 1842, on the “Works of the Rev. J. Davison,” this article on “Private Judgment” was Mr. Newman’s last appearance on the stage of Protestant critical literature. Its final words are eminently characteristic of himself and significant of his state of mind:—

If, *nefas dictu*,²¹ our Church is by any formal act rendered schismatical, while Greek and Roman idolatry remains not *of* the Church but *in* it merely, denounced by Councils though admitted by authorities of the day; if our communion were to own itself Protestant, while foreign communions still disclaimed the superstitions of which they are too tolerant; if the profession of ancient truth were to be persecuted in our Church, and its teaching forbidden,—then, doubtless, *for a season Catholic minds among us would be unable to see their way*.²²

Catholics will be tempted to exclaim, upon reading these last words, “O most lame and impotent conclusion!” But their writer was one of those who always kept his words in arrear of his practice, instead of allowing them, as is the way with many, to outrun it. Meanwhile his example stands forth as their comment or their apology. In my next Paper I will follow Tractarianism through its final stages into that which is now proved, almost demonstratively, to have been its providential end,—the amplification and expansion of the Holy Catholic Church in England.

Notes

1. Margaret Chapel was afterwards, in 1849, renamed All Soul's Chapel, and on 28 May 1859 was consecrated as the Church of All Saints (Randall Davidson and William Benham, *Life of Archibald Campbell Tait*, 2 vols., 3rd ed. [London: Macmillan and Co., 1891]: 1: 416-17. *Ed.*

2. Edward Irving (1792-1834), founder of the "Catholic Apostolic Church," came to London in 1822 as minister at Hatton Garden Chapel, where his preaching soon made him a well-known figure. He had a new church building erected in Regents Square, but was forced to retire from it on account of controversy surrounding his approval of "speaking in tongues." His followers built a church in Gordon Square in 1854. *Ed.*

3. William Dodsworth (1798-1861), M.A., Trinity College, Cambridge, adopted Tractarian opinions before becoming minister of Margaret Street Chapel. He joined the Roman Catholic Church in 1851, after the judgment in the Gorham case. *Ed.*

4. *Corruptio optimi pessima*: "The corruption of the best is the worst (corruption of all)." *Ed.*

5. Edward Bellasis (1800-1873), a barrister who—at the time of which Oakeley speaks—was highly respected and much in demand by railroad companies. In 1844 he was given the honorary title Serjeant-at-Law. Although for many years an Evangelical, he adopted Tractarian opinions and, in December 1850, converted to Roman Catholicism. *Ed.*

6. "I am ashamed that these reproaches can be cast upon us, and that they can not be repelled" (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 1.758). The Latin quotation also appears in J. H. Newman, "Private Judgment," *British Critic* (July 1841); rpt. in *Essays Critical and Historical* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co, 1907), 2:336-74, 366. *Ed.*

7. One of the many evidences of a Catholic spirit which the congregation manifested was that of a munificent and self-denying liberality towards religion and the poor. As an instance I may mention that on a weekday in the summer of 1844, when the first collection was made towards the building of the new chapel, the offertory exceeded £600, though fewer than eighty persons were present. I have heard that the same spirit exists in the present congregation of Margaret Street. I will take this public opportunity of bearing testimony to the value of the assistance which I received when at Margaret Chapel from my esteemed co-adjutor in its ministry, the Rev. W. U. Richards.

8. A distinguished divine wrote me a long letter to prove that alms-bags were perilous novelties. We accordingly had the alms, when collected, placed in a large

dish which a clergyman held at the communion rails. To prevent looking about him he very properly, cast his eyes down upon the dish. Then a person wrote to the bishop, saying that we made an idol of the dish, and his lordship seriously brought the matter under my notice.

9. *Omnis gloria eius filiae regis ab intus in fimbriis aureis*: “All the glory of the king’s daughter is within in golden borders” (Psa. 44.14). *Ed.*

10. Ward’s *Ideal*, Appendix, p. 600.

11. His name is the Rev. John Baptist Van Aarsen, and he is at present one of the chaplains of the Antwerp Prison.

12. *orbis terrarum*: “theater of the world.” *Ed.*

13. Bibliographical references to *The Gospel Narratives of Our Lord’s Passion Harmonized: With Reflections*, by Isaac Williams (London: Rivington, 1842); *Manual of Devotions for the Holy Communion* (London: James Toovey, 1843); *The Life of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*, by Saint Cardinal Bonaventure, translated by Frederick Oakeley (London: James Toovey, 1866). *Ed.*

14. Richard Bagot, Bishop of Oxford, *A Charge Delivered to the Clergy of the Diocese of Oxford at His Fourth Visitation, May 1842* (Oxford: J. H. Parker, 1842). *Ed.*

15. Most of Newman’s essays from the *British Critic* have been reprinted in the two volumes of *Essays Critical and Historical* (1871), and one essay, “Medieval Oxford” (July 1838) is reprinted in the third volume of *Historical Sketches* (1872). *Ed.*

16. Thomas Mozley (1806-1893) succeeded J. H. Newman as editor of the *British Critic* in July 1841. *Ed.*

17. *una sola litura*: “one single erasure.” *Ed.*

18. See especially one on “Exeter Hall,” July 1838; and another on “Letter-writing,” Jan. 1842.

19. Horace, *Ars Poetica*, 102: “If you want me to weep, you must feel sorrow first” (O. B. Hardison and Leon Golden, *Horace for Students of Literature: The Ars Poetica and Its Tradition* [Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1995], 41). *Ed.*

20. *argumentum ad hominem*, or rather *ad Ecclesiam*: “argument directed at the man, or rather at the Church.” *Ed.*

21. *nefas dictu*: “to suggest what would be horrible.” *Ed.*

22. *British Critic*, vol. xxx. p. 134.