

# Edward Bouverie Pusey: Post Reformation Saint?

A Lecture delivered as part of a series on Post-Reformation Saints in All Saints' Clifton

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By

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As a preliminary I want to mention two people. Father Peter Cobb, as well as being a former distinguished parish priest here, served two periods as Priest Librarian at Pusey House. He was a leading authority on Dr Pusey and at the beginning of this term we acquired his collection of Oxford Movement books (some of which had been missing from our Library shelves for some thirty years) and his notes on Pusey's life and work towards the biography of Pusey that we hoped he would write. It is sad that his decline in health makes the fruition of that work unlikely but we will ensure his material is available to scholars of the future.

It was also a real pleasure to welcome members of the Bristol Church Union to the House some weeks ago and they, you, proved a knowledgeable and keenly interested group. The visit was overshadowed by the sudden death of Paul Musson. We remember his life and his contribution to the Anglo-Catholic cause, especially at Holy Trinity, Westbury on Trym, and pray for the repose of his soul.

Your series on "Post-Reformation Saints?" is timely not least because of the impending Beatification of John Henry Newman and, we must pray, his canonization in due time. He, with John Keble and Edward Pusey have found themselves commemorated in the Anglican liturgical books of recent times but the Church of England has no mechanism for the making of saints, and there remains a substantial body in the Church that does not look on saints as we do.

Keble, Pusey and Newman are certainly saintly. So what of Dr Pusey whom your series asks us to consider as a Post-Reformation saint?

"Dr Pusey was not in the least a picturesque or tremendous character, but only a sickly and rather ill put together English clerical gentleman, who never looked one in the face, or appeared aware of the state of the weather."<sup>1</sup>

Those of you familiar with the *Vanity Fair* cartoon of Dr Pusey by Ape, will recognize that description by the art critic and cultural *savant* John Ruskin of the Regius Professor of Hebrew and Canon of Christ, Oxford. Ruskin was an undergraduate at Christ Church but remained unaffected by the Oxford Movement although later drawn to Catholicism.<sup>2</sup> Another contemporary observer, William Tuckwell, was equally disobliging, although probably accurate, in his description of Dr Pusey's "always ruffled hair ... exceeding slovenliness of person, dusky always, as with suggestions of a blunt or half-used razor."<sup>3</sup> This unprepossessing academic, scholarly figure, however, died full of years and greatly beloved, revered and respected by vast numbers. His pall-bearers at his funeral in Christ Church

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<sup>1</sup> John Ruskin, *Praelerita* [1978 Edn] Vol 1 Ch 11 p 190

<sup>2</sup> He described Protestantism as "the debris of Catholicism."

<sup>3</sup> William Tuckwell, *Reminiscences* pp 136, 138

Cathedral included three theological professors, including Edward King, later the saintly Bishop of Lincoln, Charles Wood, later Viscount Halifax, the Earl of Glasgow, the Warden of Keble College and the Prime Minister, William Ewart Gladstone. A future Prime Minister, the Marquis of Salisbury was to head the appeal committee which raised funds for a permanent memorial in Oxford, Pusey House. But Dr Pusey also died as one of the most controversial and abhorred men of his age. To his detractors he was a traitor to the Church of England, a fifth columnist intent on its subversion, a radical and stubborn reactionary.

On the Sunday after his funeral (he died on 16 September 1882 at his foundation Ascot Priory), Richard Church, Dean of S. Paul's, preached in the University Church of S. Mary the Virgin on the High, and said that "one of the great men has passed away from us. No man was more variously judged, more sternly condemned, more tenderly adored. What," he asked, "is the judgement upon him ... on the man? ... there is but one answer from those whose hearts thrill at the memory of all that he was to them, and from most of those ... who stood against him, disapproved, resisted him ... he was one who lived his life, as above everything, the servant of God. They will see in him one who sought to make religion a living and mighty force over the consciences and in the affairs of men, not by knowledge only and learning and wisdom and great gifts of persuasion, but still more by boundless devotedness, by the power of a consecrated and unfaltering will."<sup>4</sup>

Edward Bouverie Pusey was born on 22 August 1800 at Pusey House in the village of Pusey in Berkshire. His father was the Honourable Philip Pusey, the youngest son of Viscount Folkestone, who had taken the surname Pusey as a condition of inheriting the Pusey estate. His mother was Lady Lucy Sherard daughter of the fourth Earl of Harborough and she had been, at the age of twenty-one, the widow of Sir Thomas Cave before marrying Pusey's father. Pusey was educated at Eton and Christ Church, Oxford. He became a Fellow of Oriel, then the most academically prestigious college in the University. The nervous tension of his Fellowship Examination had induced a severe headache and he had torn up his examination scripts and left the room but they were pieced together by a Fellow and he was elected.<sup>5</sup> In the Oriel Senior Common Room he joined John Keble and John Henry Newman to form a triumvirate of life-long friends. Their relationship continued when Pusey left Oriel to become, at the age of twenty-eight, the Regius Professor of Hebrew to which Chair was attached a Canonry of Christ Church. He died in office fifty-four years later. After Keble's withdrawal from Oxford as Vicar of Hursley and Newman's conversion in 1845, there was inevitably physical distance between them but not much less warm correspondence between Pusey and Newman. Pusey and Keble met from time to time and maintained a regular correspondence but there was a twenty-year gap before the three friends met again. They met in September 1865 at Hursley Vicarage where they dined "simply by themselves ... for the first and last time."<sup>6</sup> The press reported that Newman and Pusey had been "reconciled after twenty years." Pusey wrote to acknowledge that he had "spent some happy hours with my friend Dr Newman" but to correct the inaccuracy about a reconciliation. He wrote: "The deep love between us, which now dates back for above forty years, has never been in the least

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<sup>4</sup> Quoted in H. P. Liddon, *The Life of Edward Bouverie Pusey* Vol IV p 389

<sup>5</sup> M. G. Brock and Mark Curtoys, *History of the University of Oxford* Oxford, UP [] Vol VI Pt 1 p 21

<sup>6</sup> Roderick Strange, *Reflections on a Controversy: Newman and Pusey's Eirenicon in Pusey Rediscovered* (Ed Perry Butler) London, SPCK [1983] p 332

overshadowed. His leaving us was one of the deep sorrows of my life; but it involved separation of place, not diminution of affection."<sup>7</sup>

If Dr Pusey's most characteristic voice was one that articulated "the terrible candour of insistent orthodoxy"<sup>8</sup> it was a voice that emerged from a more liberal youth. During a sustained period of study in Germany; he spent two years in Göttingen, Berlin and Bonn, Pusey had been much influenced by the German rationalist biblical criticism and scholarship which was a radical examination of Scriptures and saw the texts as open to historical and literary scrutiny as any other document. This influence he later repudiated; he had been originally excited but was also anxious. Gladstone remembered that when he was at Christ Church as an undergraduate and the putative "rising hope of those stern and unbending Tories"<sup>9</sup> Dr Pusey was viewed with suspicion as favouring rationalism and was seen as strongly liberal in his politics. Harriet Newman thought him "a desperate radical." When Sir Robert Peel faced the electorate of Oxford University in 1829 after his *volte-face* on the question of Catholic Emancipation, the successful opposition to him was led by Newman, Froude and Keble: Pusey supported Peel. He had approved the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts in February 1828 saying that "in their means and ends [they were] a disgrace and deterrent to religion. They ... kept alive the bitterness of party spirit among Christians, agreeing in the same essentials of faith in England."<sup>10</sup>

When the second part of his study of the German rationalists was published in May 1830, it was given a favourable notice in the liberal *Edinburgh Review* for maintaining that episcopal churches were as vulnerable as Presbyterianism to the ravages of rationalism. However, Pusey began his swift retreat from liberalism and rationalism from 1830. He was influenced by his friendship with Newman and Keble and had concluded, around November 1830, that the German theologians were in a worse state than he had supposed. He later suppressed his historical enquiry into the causes of the rationalist character of German protestant theology. He withdrew his books from publication in 1848 and in his will of 1875 he expressed his wish that these works should never be re-published.

Pusey was not, unlike Keble, Newman and Richard Hurrell Froude, the iconoclastic *enfant-terrible*, one of the initiators of the Oxford Movement. The Oxford Movement began as a rallying of young Fellows and tutors, academic "Young Turks" in defence of the High Church or Catholic tradition of the Church of England in response to and in defiance of a liberal, erastian challenge to the apparent rights and independence of the Church as a divine society. Their weapons of choice were tracts and sermons. Pusey was not long delayed in joining the Tractarians. The transformation which began in late 1830 and was largely effected between 1833 and 1835 has been characterized by one writer as "a second intellectual revolution."<sup>11</sup> In those years he abandoned his liberal principles and his broader churchmanship. Although he had always been a serious and somber individual, perhaps tending to the depressive, he became markedly less worldly in those years and subsequently:

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<sup>7</sup> The Guardian 9 October 1865

<sup>8</sup> Jonathan Keates, *Smile Please* London, Chatto and Windus [2000] p 5: a phrase used in an entirely different context in the novel but which seems entirely appropriate as a description of Dr Pusey.

<sup>9</sup> Thomas Babington Macaulay in the *Edinburgh Review*. Originally a marginal addition to Macaulay's draft review, the original formulation was "the darling hope of those stern and uncompromising Tories." See H. C. G. Matthew, *Gladstone 1809 – 1874* Oxford, UP [1986] p 29 footnote.

<sup>10</sup> Letter to Marie Baker 21 February 1828. *Ibid* Liddon Vol I p 133. Also in David Forrester, *Young Dr Pusey* pp 14 – 15

<sup>11</sup> Gabriel O'Donnell OP, *The Spirituality of Edward Bouverie Pusey in op cit Pusey Rediscovered* p 231

he became more personally austere in his habits and routines. His first contribution to the Tracts was a learned and intensely felt treatise on fasting.

It has been suggested that his “overly severe attitude towards his children, with a determination to impose upon them a standard of behaviour and sense of responsibility far beyond their years” marked him out as more stringent than the stereotypical Victorian paterfamilias.<sup>12</sup> Against this must be set the devotion he elicited from generations of undergraduates, then as now demanding judges, and the life-long affections he engendered. His friendship with Newman survived the submission to Rome in 1845, they corresponded frequently and over Pusey’s *Eirenicon* engaged in a disagreement which did not shake that affection. Also his immense generosity from his considerable personal wealth, not least in the building of S. Saviour’s, Leeds, must be set in any balance. It is true, however, that his emotional stability suffered several hammer-blows. The death of his father left him so grief-stricken that he was unable to attend the funeral. He saw the death of his infant daughter, Katherine, as a punishment for his own sins and following his wife’s early death in 1839 he effectively retired from society for several years. He continued to mourn and assume the burden of personal guilt until the end of his life.

The extremity of his emotional turmoil is visible in a letter to Keble on 26 September 1844: “I am scarred all over and seamed with sin, so that I am a monster to myself: I loathe myself, I can feel of myself only like one covered with leprosy from head to foot.”<sup>13</sup> Such lurid, morbid, self-flagellating psychology is not attractive but it does indicate a passionate nature, a depth of feeling and a degree of, admittedly extravagant, self-realisation that militates against the image of a harsh, cold human being. And that sense of self-scrutiny provides something of the impetus for Pusey’s striving to recover the sacrament of Confession in the Church of England. A recent conference sponsored by the House has begun the rehabilitation of Pusey’s personal life and character. The discovery in Pusey House of the original draft of Liddon’s biography of Pusey shows how the editors who took over the work after Liddon’s early death removed or adjusted material that had the result of making the biography more hagiographical and Pusey a less complicated and interesting figure.<sup>14</sup> Other papers at the Conference undermined the one-dimensional and unattractive portrait of Pusey presented in David Forrester’s book which has been so influential for more than twenty years. The image of a dour and unsmiling Dr Pusey does not accord with the evidence of laughter, humour and a degree of relaxed playfulness that is evidenced in memoirs and correspondence.<sup>15</sup>

Pusey was much sought out for spiritual advice and direction both in personal encounters and in correspondence. The Oxford Movement’s call to the holiness of living was given practical effect in Pusey’s ministry. He was concerned with a practical spirituality and was much influenced by continental Catholic devotional spiritual books, some of which he translated and edited. Although he was never attracted to the popular expressions of devotion of post-Tridentine Catholicism, he was drawn to the example of the *devotio moderna* of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. For Pusey the spiritual life was essentially a hidden and interior

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid* p 232

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid* p 235

<sup>14</sup> The paper give by Kenneth Macnab is of particular importance

<sup>15</sup> The paper given by Ian MacCormack is relevant here

disposition, a struggle to combat evil and to seek after good and this, for him, militated against external expressions of piety and devotion, and even undue ceremonial in worship.

Of its nature relatively little of Pusey's ministry of confession and advice has entered the public domain, although there is evidence in his extensive correspondence. Much of that advice is rooted in spiritual practicality. Frederick Lygon, while an undergraduate at Christ Church, was a great friend of Henry Parry Liddon through whom he was introduced to Dr Pusey. From Lygon's correspondence it would appear that he had made a private promise of celibacy in the hope that a Uniate Church might evolve in which Canterbury would be in communion with Rome and that, if this happened, he might be ordained a priest. When, later, he succeeded as the 6<sup>th</sup> Earl Beauchamp and as hopes for such an ecumenical outcome faded, he sought advice from Liddon as to whether he could be released from his vow. Liddon consulted Pusey who advised that as it had only been a private promise of celibacy rather than a public vow, Lygon did not require formal dispensation, and that because of his changed circumstances and his inheritance of a title and an estate, it was his duty to marry and instead of a priest should remain a faithful Christian landowner and employer.<sup>16</sup>

In his advice there is no doubt that Pusey stressed the weakness and sinfulness of human nature and that he was convinced of the need for humility, humiliation even, and a degree of self-detachment that may seem extreme to a less robust sensibility. This may be, as some have argued, a result of the particularities and peculiarities of his background and personality, his depressive nature<sup>17</sup> and this led him to impose a discipline and mode of individual and community living, especially in the religious orders with which he was connected, that "made it impossible ... to develop the healthy flexibility and joy which might have attracted new recruits."<sup>18</sup> However, while it is true that the rules of life he suggested for the communities and the Society of the Holy Cross were rigorous and involved a high doctrine of prayer and religious observance, they also offered ideals of generous love, perfect humility and an abandonment to the will of God and loving reliance on him. Perhaps this aspect of Dr Pusey is too much forgotten and undervalued by those contemporary and modern critics who would seek "to censure the intellectual cowardice and dishonesty which motivated Pusey's spiritual as well as academic life."<sup>19</sup>

For Pusey, as for most Tractarians, two mysteries of faith were central to his belief and understanding, the Incarnation and the Cross, the glory of Christ's Passion. He had been baptized on Holy Cross Day and kept it devotedly throughout his life. The themes of imitation of the crucified Christ and the efficacy of the Precious Blood run through his spiritual life, public and private, and they are drawn from those Catholic devotional sources with which he was so familiar but they were also drawn from the writings of the Early Fathers of the Church.

Pusey discovered through his study of the Early Fathers the rule of orthodoxy, the safeguard against erroneous doctrine, the test against which faith and belief should be judged, the Catholic tradition. The Tractarians adopted the formulation of S. Vincent of Lerins: "what has been believed everywhere, always, and by all". For the Oxford Movement Fathers, the lived experience of faith was set out in the Scriptures as interpreted by the

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<sup>16</sup> Dorothy E. Williams, *The Lygons of Madresfield Court* Logaston Press [2000] pp 78 – 79

<sup>17</sup> *Op cit* O'Donnell p 250

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid* O'Donnell pp 250 – 251

<sup>19</sup> A. N. Wilson, *God's Funeral* Abacus [2000] p 132

Church and the Tractarians pursued continuity with the Early Church Fathers in the restoration of a sacramental and ecclesiological economy of the patristic era. The Library of the Fathers brought patristic teaching and literature into the contemporary debate. Arguments in the Tracts were buttressed with patristic writings, not least Dr Pusey's major contribution on Baptism. Pusey's defence of the Real Presence in his sermon *The Holy Eucharist* comfort to the penitent was a *vade mecum* of patristic evidence. It did not prevent, however, his suspension from preaching in the University for two years.

For the Tractarians, as in patristic thought, there was no clear distinction between Scripture, the theological, the doctrinal and the spiritual: there was a common unity of vision. This placed the Church of England in a wider context and a longer historical perspective and its life was to be lived in the Catholic tradition, rather than as the offspring of a protestant Reformation. Particularly in the breadth of Pusey's writing and expression we see a fusion of the Early Fathers and a post-Reformation continental spiritual ethos. To understand the Tradition and to stand consciously within it, become part of it, there needed to be continuity with the past and with the previous developments of the Tradition and familiarity with interpretations of the Tradition. In their concentration on the Early Fathers, and the Caroline Divines, many of whom we see as maintaining the patristic tradition, it may be that the Tractarians underplayed medieval theology and the English mystic tradition in favour of a post-Tridentine spiritual expression. One student of Pusey's writing has identified that Pusey borrowed from, or was influenced by, several traditions which were expressions of the same basic faith, belonging to the Catholic tradition but felt that he "did not necessarily distinguish cultural expressions from fundamental principles."<sup>20</sup> Newman identifies the same sort of thing in Pusey's construction of an argument when, with no loss of friendship, they disputed over Pusey's book *Eirenicon*.<sup>21</sup>

Dr Pusey had written his first volume as a sustained and learned refutation of a pamphlet by Cardinal Manning *The Workings of the Holy Spirit in the Church of England* in 1864. This was a public letter to Pusey rejecting his assertion that the Church of England was "the great bulwark against infidelity in this land." Pusey rebutted Manning's denigration of his former Church by describing the most extreme of Roman Catholic popular practices, prayers and devotions as typical of Roman Catholicism, even though most of them were continental rather than English practices, and at least one of the works he cited was in the *Index Errorum* of the Church. The book is one of Pusey's most problematic. In part it is an onslaught on Roman Catholicism for teaching or permitting without censure Ultramontane extravagances and he appeals to an older English Catholic tradition, rather than to the spiritual piety of the Continent. Yet it was also a moving, passionate, enthusiastic plea for reunion with Rome.<sup>22</sup> Ironically it was published only a short time after Newman had met Keble and Pusey at Hursley Vicarage. Newman replied in his first *Letter to Pusey*. He described the *Eirenicon* as a rhetorical and an unfair book and complained, not without some justification, that "you discharge your olive branch as from a catapult."<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> *Op cit* O'Donnell p 249

<sup>21</sup> *The Church of England a Portion of Christ's one Holy Catholic Church, and a Means of Restoring Visible Unity: An Eirenicon, in a letter to the Author of "The Christian Year"*.

<sup>22</sup> Sheridan Gilley, *Newman and his age* London, Darton, Longman and Todd [1990] p 339

<sup>23</sup> *Letter to Pusey* p 361

Pusey's stated aim, and no doubt it was fairly and genuinely held, was to find out which Roman Catholic beliefs were dogmatic and which were not, what was authentic authorised devotion and what was not His more pressing purpose, perhaps unconsciously held, was to defend Anglo-Catholicism against protestant charges that it was merely covert Roman Catholicism. The weapon he chose was to describe the corruptions in Roman Catholicism as normative and to maintain Anglo-Catholicism, or the English Church, as the true defender of ancient Christian teachings. It is difficult to believe other than that Newman emerged more favourably from these exchanges, not least because he wrote more lucidly and compellingly than did Pusey, and conducted the dispute with an immense affection for Pusey (duly reciprocated), made more telling by their recent meeting. This affection did not prevent Newman in his reply to the *Eirenicon* driving home the point that "it was one thing to say that no one is saved without the intercession of the Virgin Mary (meaning simply that she is the Intercessor who prays according to the will of her Son and is therefore the channel by which the will is carried out), but quite another to conclude from this that without the invocation of Mary no one is saved. You did not have to have a devotion to Our Lady to be saved, but nevertheless, the Church believed that the intercession of Our Lady is a necessary part of the economy of redemption."<sup>24</sup> Central to Newman's defence was the patristic writing that regarded Our Lady as the Second Eve, and the Mother of God, the very title *Theotokos* revered and used by Pusey. He did not convince everyone. Liddon wrote to Halifax on 4 February 1866: "I have been struck this morning by the unsuccessful attempt of even Newman's genius to make out a case for the Immaculate Conception from the Fathers of the second century, and from a passage within the apocalypse, a case for the cultus. Never were inferences more shadowy - and he certainly would not be content with a shadowy inference if he could command a substantial one."<sup>25</sup>

Dr Pusey's understanding of Our Lady was most obviously exemplified by his advocacy of the use of her title *Theotokos*, which means God-bearer, but is more usually translated as Mother of God. With this description, he also praised her for being "a moral instrument of our common redemption."<sup>26</sup> The Council of Ephesus in 431 declared that Our Lady was *Theotokos* as part of its proscription of the Nestorian heresy that Our Lord's human and divine natures were separate. Dr Pusey expressed the argument clearly when he wrote, "Inseparable in his Godhead from his Body, in any way of Being, natural or supernatural. This follows from the doctrine of the Incarnation; that God the Son took man's nature in the womb of the Blessed Virgin of her substance, so that two whole and perfect natures, that is to say, the Godhead and the Manhood, were joined together in One Person, never divided."<sup>27</sup>

Dr Pusey did not agree with those who believed that ascribing characteristics to Our Lady would inevitably and necessarily lead to worship of her, or the displacement of her Son

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<sup>24</sup> Ian Kerr, *Newman: A Biography* Oxford, Clarendon Press [1988]

<sup>25</sup> Halifax Papers: Borthwick Institute. I am grateful to Father Barry Orford for this reference

<sup>26</sup> E. B. Pusey, *First Letter to the Very Rev J. H. Newman DD in Explanation Chiefly in Regard to the Reverential Love Due to the Ever-Blessed Virgin Theotokos, and the Doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, with an analysis of Cardinal de Turrecremata's work on the Immaculate Conception* Oxford, James Parker. London, Rivingtons [1869] p 23. Quoted in Carol Marie Engelhardt: *Victorian Masculinity and the Virgin Mary*. In Andrew Bradstock, Sean Gill, Anne Hogan, Sue Morgan (Edd), *Masculinity and Spirituality in Victorian Culture* London, Macmillan [2000] p 50.

<sup>27</sup> E. B. Pusey, *The Real Presence of the Body and Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ the Doctrine of the English Church, with a vindication of the reception by the wicked of the adoration of Our Lord Jesus Christ truly present* Oxford, John Henry Parker [1857] p 330

from his unique role in our salvation. He did, however, fear that the extravagance of language and uninstructed popular piety could distort Our Lady's proper role in the scheme of salvation. This lay behind his resistance to the dogmatic assertion by the Roman Pontiff in 1854 of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of Our Lady. In the bull *Ineffabilis Deus* uttered on 8 December 1854 Pope Pius IX declared and enjoined upon the faithful the belief that the Virgin Mary had been preserved from original sin in anticipation of the merits of Christ.<sup>28</sup> This marked a distinct divergence between Roman Catholics and Tractarians. It was partly because Pusey was steeped in the writings of the Early Fathers that he found this doctrine difficult to justify. Insofar as the Early Fathers spoke of Our Lady, they either stated explicitly or implied that she had been conceived and born with original sin. Pusey could argue this position from his study of the Fathers.<sup>29</sup>

This excursion in the *Eirenicon* illustrates both Pusey's reliance on patristic evidence and his lacuna when it comes to medieval theology and development within the Tradition, but it also shows the orthodoxy of his Marian understanding even though he may have been unmoved by popular Marian piety. Even though his aim in the *Eirenicon* was ecumenical, and unity with Rome has remained a tenet of traditional Anglo-Catholicism, he remained clear that the English Church was the national expression of the Catholic Faith. But it also illustrates weaknesses in his argument. This is what Newman pointed out in a letter to T. W. Allies, a Tractarian covert to Rome. Allies had accused Pusey of "untruthfulness" in his argument. Newman wrote to him that "it is harsh to call any mistakes of his untruthfulness. I think they arise from the same slovenly habit which some people would recognize in his dress, his beard. He never answers letters ... which do not lie in the line of the direct work which he has on hand. And so, in composing a book, he takes uncommon pains about some points ... but he will combine this with extreme carelessness in respect to other statements."<sup>30</sup> Both in his prose and in his appearance in portraiture Newman is fastidious in comparison with the invariably disheveled and prolix Pusey. But, as Professor Henry Chadwick once remarked to me, "Pusey said everything Newman said before Newman said it, but Newman said it so much better."<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> The Immaculate Conception was a feast and a doctrine first developed in the West in Anglo-Saxon England of the early eleventh century. It has a claim to be an English doctrinal contribution to the universal Church. It was the medieval Oxford scholastic John Duns Scotus, in the early fourteenth century, who first formulated convincing arguments for Our Lady's Immaculate Conception, and it was at about this time when the feast began to be celebrated. This was confirmed by Pope Sixtus IV before 1484, extended from local observance to the whole Church in 1693 by Pope Innocent XII, and made a Holy Day of Obligation by Pope Clement XI in 1708. The cause received a massive popular impetus in 1830 when a Sister of Charity, Catherine Labouré, in her convent in the Rue de Bac in Paris had a series of visions of Our Lady, and saw her surrounded by the legend, "Oh Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee." In commemoration the Miraculous Medal was struck and began its widespread distribution and incredible popularity. It was against this background and in this historical context that John Henry Newman was able to say, with that degree of circumspection that had marked his Anglican Marian observations that Roman Catholics had not come to believe in the Immaculate Conception because it had been defined, but that it had been defined because Roman Catholics believed it. Such a sentiment neatly prefigures the defence of the dogmatic assertion of Papal Infallibility in 1870, that it was not an innovative, nor an arbitrary, nor a capricious doctrine but an articulation of the mind of the Church.

<sup>29</sup> Most significantly, Origen, Athanasius, Basil, Gregory of Nazianzen, Gregory of Nyssa, John Chrysostom, Ephraem, Cyril of Alexandria, Tertullian, and Cyprian.

<sup>30</sup> John Henry Newman, *Letters and Diaries* Vol 22 p 158

<sup>31</sup> In conversation



Once Newman had converted to Rome, once Keble had dedicated himself to his country parish, the leadership of the Oxford Movement fell, *force majeure*, on Pusey. In most of the political battles for the thirty-five years from 1845 until his death in 1882, he was a reluctant leader but in one crucial area he struck out boldly. His concern with the call to the holiness of living (it was the subject of his first sermon in Pusey Church), his interest in the devotional material from the Continent, his conviction that the spiritual life was an interior disposition brought him to a realization that the religious life ought to be revived in the Church of England. He had also been impressed with the selfless work of devoted women in the slums of London during one of the periodic outbreaks of cholera. He had spent a University vacation working there and on 26 March 1845, under his guidance, a small group of women formed themselves into a community in Park Village, Regent's Park. He was conscious of the important role these women had played in deprived areas, areas impoverished not only materially but spiritually. He once said that "I would long ago have asked leave to preach in the alleys of London, where the Gospel is unknown."<sup>32</sup> His wife's early death and his reading of S. Augustine and S. Jerome led him to an appreciation of the single life of men and women consecrated to the service of God. He was also much influenced by his daughter and her desire to lead a consecrated life. It is unfair to suggest that Pusey bullied and cajoled her into a religious vocation. Her early death in 1844 did not bring her wishes to fruition but it may have impelled Pusey only a year later to have a hand in founding the Park Village Sisters. The nucleus of the community was Jane Ellacombe and Mary Bruce and Pusey was their "spiritual superintendent." What might be described as their manifesto, or mission statement as we have to say nowadays, was "to afford opportunities for persons apart from the world and its distractions to perfect holiness in the fear of God, and to grow in the love of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, especially by cherishing and showing forth love to him in his poor and afflicted brethren."<sup>33</sup>

In 1848 Priscilla Lydia Sellon formed a community in Devonport and some of the Park Village Sisters, who now numbered eight, went to help her during the Plymouth cholera epidemic. In 1854, when Florence Nightingale appealed for nurses to go to the Crimea, sisters from both communities volunteered their services. In 1856 the two communities amalgamated as The Congregation of Religious of the Society of the Most Holy Trinity. Pusey had been much involved in discussions and plans and worked closely with Miss Sellon. Money from her father and from Pusey bought forty acres of woodland and gardens outside Ascot in Berkshire and a new priory, designed by Butterfield, was built as well as an orphanage and a convalescent home. Pusey was Warden of the Community, spending most University vacations there, until his death there in 1882.

From those beginnings the religious life became re-established in the Church of England and flourished in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. We now see a period of decline as communities contract, or complete their tasks. The last member of the Ascot community, the Revd Mother Cecilia, died on 12 February 2004. Their task was over, their work was done.

Other, more political and contentious aspects of the Oxford Movement as it developed and changed after 1845 did not sit so easily with Dr Pusey, nor elicit the leadership that some may have expected. As the most prominent remaining member of the Tractarians, the

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<sup>32</sup> *Op cit* Liddon Vol III p 32

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid* Liddon Vol III p 23

leadership and its accompanying deference fell on him but he never regarded himself as a leader. He wrote to Archbishop Tait on 26 April 1860 about the growing question of ritualism and ceremonialism, the outward garments of the Oxford Movement, or “salvation by haberdashery,” as detractors would have it. He said to Tait: “I am in this strange position that my name is made a byword for that which I never had any sympathy ... I have no office in the Church which would entitle me to speak publicly. If I had spoken, it would have been to assume the character of one of the leaders of a party, which I would not do.”<sup>34</sup>

As an ecclesiastical politician Pusey ploughed an idiosyncratic but powerful furrow. He had no wish to encourage a spirit of party or faction within the Church. He believed entirely and completely in the Catholic nature of the Church of England and it was always this that he was anxious to defend and to promote. In that pursuit his relationship with Catholic societies fluctuated. He was an early supporter of Father Charles Lowder and the foundation of the Society of the Holy Cross and wrote its first Rule but he withdrew from membership after a short period. He remained well-disposed to the Society and much admired the work of Society members as missionary priests in the worst slums of the country, not least the work of Lowder himself in London Docks and Alexander Heriot Mackonochie, Vicar of S. Alban’s, Holborn, then full of teeming tenements, pubs and brothels. Pusey was also an active supporter of the English Church Union, the political wing of the Anglo-Catholic Movement, under its President, Lord Halifax. Pusey’s interventions, however, were more often to moderate its positions and policies. Lord Halifax, in effect, allowed Pusey a silent veto on Union affairs by means of a careful presentation of business.

He was “thrown headlong into ecclesiastical politics,”<sup>35</sup> through his membership of the Union, and it was a new, more divisive and more violent form of ecclesiastical politics after 1866. He had joined the English Church Union as an act of piety towards the recently deceased John Keble and because he admired its first President, Colin Lindsay. He was a clerical Vice President and a Council member. Not surprisingly for such a singular individual, Pusey had an uneasy relationship with the Union. He felt that it expended too much time and energy on ritualist disputes rather than put their resources into opposing what he saw as greater threats to the Catholic position in the appointment of Frederick Temple as Bishop of Exeter, or the liberalizing doctrines contained in *Essays and Reviews*, or the proposed changes to the use of the Athanasian Creed; all matters of greater moment, he felt, than altar lights, incense, vestments and prostrations.

Pusey’s pre-eminent position may help to explain one of the inherent weaknesses of the Catholic Movement in the Church of England. There was no obvious leader. There were too many separate societies with different sectional interests, representing different shades of Catholic opinion and they found it difficult to act in unison. The English Church Union’s role was to try to give some common shape and purpose, to voice a common response of the Movement, to articulate a shared policy on contentious issues as they arose, to provide some sense of direction. But this was no easy task when the only possible leader had no wish to act as a leader.

Pusey was ever willing to put his learning and scholarship at the disposal of those defending Catholic doctrine and practice and he participated with unrelenting energy in disputes employing all the familiar controversial weapons of the time; protests, petitions,

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<sup>34</sup> *Ibid* Liddon Vol 4 pp 211 ff

<sup>35</sup> Peter G. Cobb, *Leader of the Anglo-Catholics? In op cit Pusey Rediscovered* p 354

pamphlets, writing, addressing public meetings, preaching. Yet his intention was invariably irenic. He had no wish to alienate Evangelicals, nor to narrow the comprehensiveness of the Church of England. His plea was usually one of tolerance for Catholic practices. He could be stubborn and stringent in committee and was not without recourse to the threat of resignation, having a keen enough understanding of the power of such a gesture; and on one occasion was on the point of walking out of a meeting of the English Church Union when it was formulating its reaction to the Gorham Judgement unless some of the more extravagant statements being proposed were modified.

But if Pusey disappointed the new Young Turks of the Catholic Revival, the advanced ritualists and ceremonialists such as William Dodsworth and Thomas Allies, both of whom felt a sense of betrayal by Pusey's position and ceded to Rome, he also, on occasion, alienated more moderate High Churchmen such as Archdeacon Denison and William Palmer when Pusey opposed an anti-Roman declaration proposed in a meeting of the English Church Union. This led to the resignation of these, and other, moderate Tractarians, although they later conceded that Pusey has been right.

The sustained and bitterly contested disputes about ritual and ceremonial saw Pusey, reluctantly, embroiled in public conflict. The attempt to "put down ritualism ... the Mass in masquerade," in Disraeli's opportunistic phrase, which came to be focused on the Public Worship Regulation Act, highlights several of Pusey's characteristics and complexities. He could feel sympathy for those priests who suffered episcopal disapproval and discipline for liturgical innovations (or revivals) as he had been similarly the subject of what was regarded as persecution by the University authorities and bishops. He had been inhibited from preaching in the University for two years. He had been attacked by Bishop Blomfield of London for using Roman Catholic devotional books and for the use of the sacrament of confession. He had been inhibited by Bishop Wilberforce of Oxford from preaching in his diocese. He had defended Catholic Eucharistic doctrine in the cases of Archdeacon Denison, W. J. E. Bennett and Bishop Forbes of Brechin. So he had suffered the slings and arrows of episcopal displeasure even if, by his own lights, he was not a party man.

He was never entirely at ease with ritualism and described himself as "embittered" with ritualists accusing them of "fussiness, pettiness, arbitrariness, pedantry - being Presbyterian towards their bishops and Popes towards their people."<sup>36</sup> He thought it unwise to introduce ritual practices before the doctrines they exemplified had been rooted in the hearts and minds of the people. He failed in an attempt to persuade the Union Council that vestments were not essential to the validity and consecration or dignity of worship. He thought that the advanced ritualists had brought the Public Worship Regulation Act on themselves. Ritualist clergy became impatient with Pusey, while still revering and honouring him: it was partly because the younger generation of clergy was pushing the boundaries further than the older generation thought necessary or, having grown more cautious, were prepared to go. Pusey tended to conciliation rather than confrontation, acquiescence to the law, under protest, rather than defiance.

A crisis in his relationship with the English Church Union came in May 1874 when the Union adopted the six points of ritual practice most in contention: altar lights, vestments, incense, the eastward position, the mixed chalice, and the use of unleavened bread. Pusey

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<sup>36</sup> *Ibid* p 357

wished he “had never joined the [Union] and ... that someone else could take my place.”<sup>37</sup> Although he was placated by Halifax, the crisis was exacerbated by Father Arthur Tooth’s determination to refuse to acknowledge the authority of the court set up under the Public Worship Regulation Act: he would neither plead before it, nor accept its decision. The Union pledged to support any priest suspended or inhibited, and Pusey privately resigned. Halifax was determined that the leader of the Movement, its most senior and venerable member, should not be lost: it may have dealt the opposition to the Act a fatal blow. Halifax fashioned a policy whereby the Union denied that the secular power had any authority in matters spiritual but balanced it with an acknowledgement of the authority of all courts legally constituted in all things temporal. This was sufficient to convince Pusey to remain a member.

Pusey came gradually to change his mind about ritualism. He had always been sympathetic to Father Mackonochie in his ritual difficulties in the years before the Act. Although Pusey did not agree with Mackonochie’s practices, he had a great personal affection and liking for him which tempered his reactions.<sup>38</sup> In Pusey’s defence of Mackonochie, he appealed to liberty of conscience, as he had in his own defence of his sermon on the Holy Eucharist, a comfort to the penitent, both for Mackonochie and for those others prosecuted for their use of ceremonial and ritual. He was also much influenced in his support of Mackonochie because he was supported to the hilt by the people of S. Alban’s, Holborn. Other ritualist clergy had imposed ceremonial against the wishes of parts of their congregations.

Pusey’s mind was also changed by the continued relentless pursuit of the ritualist clergy by the protestant Church Association, and as the court continued to make decisions within an ecclesial and a spiritual sphere, and to enforce compliance to its orders by imprisonment for contempt of court unless and until the priest had purged his contempt by compliance. In the face of the grotesque sight of priests languishing in prison, “prisoners for conscience sake” as the *Church Times* put it, Pusey became more vocal and more public in his support of persecuted ritualist clergy, if not of ritualism itself. His orthodoxy became more militant, that he became more radical as his years advanced. Although he was constrained by the corporate decisions of the Christ Church Chapter, in private at Ascot Priory he wore a chasuble from 1874 and adopted other of the six points of ritual practice. His last pamphlet, published in 1881, was a forthright (insofar as his prose was ever forthright) defence of ritualism as a legitimate development of the Oxford Movement and his final public act, a few weeks before his death, was to send a letter to *The Times* in support of the Revd Sydney Fairthorne Greene, languishing in prison for ritualist offences. In a moving protest against the temper of the times, he said that he did all that Greene did and invited prosecution and imprisonment on himself. The letter was published on 24 August 1882: he died on 16 September.

Father Peter Cobb thought that Pusey could only be described as a leader of the post Oxford Movement Catholic Revival in a qualified sense. He had an innate authority that came from his personal connections and an influence over several generations of undergraduates. He had about him an unworldliness and was undistracted by worldly or material things. He was unfailingly generous of his time, learning and wealth, a wealth and “massiveness and immovability” that allowed him to stand alone if necessary. While he lived Anglo-Catholics

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<sup>37</sup> *Ibid* p 359

<sup>38</sup> This was reciprocated when Father Mackonochie became one of the founders of Pusey House

could not act without him and they could not act against him. What was obstinacy to his opponents could prove equally frustrating to his friends and supporters.

Any summing up must begin with the admission that Pusey remains something of an enigma, a man of paradoxes, if not contradictions. He was much misunderstood in his lifetime and has been much misrepresented by hagiographer and opponent since. A remote and cloistered academic but one who tended cholera victims in Bethnal Green. An unnatural and reluctant leader but one to whom many looked for leadership and guidance on public and private matters. An establishment grandee by background, upbringing and temperament but one of immense humility and one who denied the authority of the state within the sphere of the spiritual and ecclesial life. An academic insider constantly at odds with the University which he served piously and diligently. He sought to avoid controversy but was one of the most controversial men of his age. A prose writer of stunning prolixity, lacking the lapidary literary grace of Newman but one who could rise to a pitch of prophetic, ecstatic abandon. Painfully shy and retiring but who lived the most public of lives. A life marked by tragedy, sadness and grief but one whose every "sentence was instinct with his whole intense purpose of love, as he struggled to bring others into communion with the truth and person of him who had purified his own soul."<sup>39</sup>

A. M. (Donald) Allchin, has written that Pusey was "a man living through a series of tempests, intellectual, spiritual, psychological ... often seen as constrained by rigidity of intellectual reflection, fossilised in convention, imprisoned by upbringing, background, intellectual and moral temper [yet] ... remarkably creative and original in many aspects of the spiritual life and in response to direct pastoral need."<sup>40</sup> He changed Anglican prayer and devotion; he opened up the interior life, he rediscovered and re-established the Religious Life in the English Church; he pioneered the recovery of sacramental confession; he preached the Real Presence of Christ in the sacrament of his Body and Blood; he encouraged the frequent celebration of the Eucharist and played his significant part in securing the centrality of the Mass in the worship of the Church. He was ever engaged, for himself and others, in the pilgrimage to the perfection of holiness. In his work and life, there is to be found the beauty of holiness and a generous Christian spirit, compassionate and catholic. He brought together the theology of the Trinity and the Incarnation where faith, experience, knowledge, and love all cohere. The sanctification of the world and of man was the essential way to express our entry into the life and the love of the Holy Trinity. Man is restless until he finds his rest in the love of God and in the Holy Trinity. Man is made for God.

If Pusey remains little known and if he remains to be re-discovered, and if his presence still disconcerts and disturbs, if he is neither the hero once thought, nor the villain once traduced; if he troubles our sceptical age with the violence of his consciousness of sin, equally with the violence of his joy, by his intensity and his unrelenting insistence on the claims of God on human lives, he also "gives us hope that our human life may not be doomed to ultimate frustration and absurdity and waste but may find its unimaginable fulfillment in the knowledge and love, the presence and the joy of the one by whom and for whom we were made."<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> *Op Cit* Liddon Vol II p 61

<sup>40</sup> A. M. Allchin, Pusey, Servant of God, in *op cit Pusey Rediscovered* p 369

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid* p 388

In another context and of another, and an entirely different kind of hero, Thomas Carlyle wrote these words that might well be applied to Dr Pusey:

“We cannot look, however imperfectly, upon a great man without gaining something by him. He is the living light fountain which it is good and pleasant to be near. The light which enlightens, which has enlightened the darkness of the world ... a natural luminary shining by the gift of Heaven ... in whose radiance all souls feel that it is well with them. On any terms whatsoever, you will not grudge to wander in such a neighbourhood for a while.”<sup>42</sup>

However, we are invited in this series to consider Dr Pusey as a Post-Reformation Saint. John Henry Newman is poised for beatification and possibly canonisation. Even if we forget about the process and the miracles for a moment, there is something right about that because Newman spent half his life as an Anglican and half as a Roman Catholic. He represents one vital strain of Anglo-Catholicism. Keble and Pusey represent another strain, and if the recent papal offer of an Ordinariat that respects and values an Anglican, and more specifically, an Anglo-Catholic patrimony, they would be candidates for admission to the saintly band and could share with Newman a patronage and saintly oversight, joined in heaven as they were in the life of the Oxford Movement. Until that day dawns, perhaps our last image should be of those three profoundly great and holy men dining alone in Hursley Vicarage on the one occasion that they met after Newman’s conversion: Keble at seventy-three, Pusey at sixty-five, Newman at sixty-four, not quite all passion spent. Three elderly clerical gentlemen who had met at Oxford, “the fulcrum from which [they] ... hoped to move the Church,”<sup>43</sup> together after twenty years. Keble had only one more year to live, Pusey seventeen, Newman twenty-five. The shadows are lengthening, the candles are guttering, the tempest and turmoil of the battle has stilled for a moment as they talk and reminisce quietly and easily. We can only hear the murmuring of voices as we back silently out of the room and quietly close the door: *ex umbris et imaginibus in veritatem* (out of the shadows and images into truth).

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<sup>42</sup> Thomas Carlyle, *On Heroism*

<sup>43</sup> R. W. Church, *The Oxford Movement* p 407