New Blackfriars

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Newman and Victorian Doubt

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Abstract

Of the two sorts of doubt, interdenominational doubt and fundamental religious doubt, Newman does not seem to have suffered from the latter and did not write a great deal about it. What he did write, especially about conscience, is not convincing for a later secular age. What is more fruitful is how Newman related to other doubters of his age: his younger brother Francis who finished a Unitarian, and Matthew Arnold and his younger brother Tom who (twice) became a Catholic. John Newman first shunned his brother but in the end maintained friendly but distant relations with unbelievers. But Victorian doubt was inherited and the real threat to what Newman stood for came from a later generation.

Keywords

John Henry Newman; Francis Newman; Matthew Arnold; Tom Arnold; doubt

There are two kinds of religious doubt: interdenominational doubt and fundamental doubt. In the first sense John Henry Newman may count as the age's top doubter – as described in the *Apologia* his doubts extended from 1839–1845 - but I want to focus on the more fundamental religious doubt, doubt about the existence of the kind of God portrayed by the Abrahamic faiths. Unlike many of his contemporaries Newman, I think, never felt this at any time in his life.

> I thought life might be a dream, or I an angel, and all this world a deception, my fellow angels by a playful device concealing themselves from me, and deceiving me with the semblance of a material world.[1]

Newman's starting point resembles that of Descartes in his *Meditations*. Both men treat the self as a disembodied intellect, both wonder whether life is a dream, and Newman's playful angel corresponds to Descartes *génie malin.* Until he was 22 Newman mistrusted the reality

[1] J. H. Newman, *Apologia pro Vita Sua*, Part III, History of my Religious Opinions up to 1833.

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of material phenomena and rested 'in the thought of two and only two absolute and self-evident beings, myself and my Creator'. Again he resembles Descartes: the order of intellectual discovery is first the self, then God, then matter. It is all quite unlike Aquinas, where the order of intellectual discovery is first matter, then the intellect, and finally God.

Many years later, when writing the *Grammar of Assent*, Newman is still a phenomenalist.

> When it is said that we cannot see God, this is undeniable; but still in what sense have we a discernment of his creatures, of the individual beings which surround us? The evidence which we have of their presence lies in the phenomena which address our senses, and our warrant for taking these for evidence is our instinctive certitude that they are evidence. By the law of our nature we associate those sensible phenomena or impressions with certain units, individuals, substances, whatever they are to be called, which are outside and out of the reach of sense . . . the presence of unseen individual beings is discerned under the shifting shapes and colours of the visible world.[2]

So, like Descartes, Newman thought that mind was better known than body, and that God was better know than the physical world. Hence, he was, throughout his life, uninterested in proofs of God's existence from material phenomena, such as were to be found in Paley's Evidences and other formulations of the argument from design. In this he was unlike Manning who, having read Paley at an early age, said, 'I took in the whole argument, and [–at 70 –] I thank God that nothing has ever shaken it'. In one of his University sermons Newman went so far as to write 'It is indeed a great question whether Atheism is not as philosophically consistent with the phenomena of the physical world, taken by themselves, as the doctrine of a creative and governing power'.[3] He reprinted this sermon years later as a Catholic, qualifying it only mildly in a footnote.

Because of his low valuation of cosmological arguments for the existence of God, such as the argument from design, made concrete in Paley's invocation of the great watchmaker, Newman could accept with equanimity the ideas of Darwin that met with such opposition in other ecclesiastical circles. Shortly after the appearance of *The Origin of Species* Newman observed that if one were to believe in the separate creation of each species one would also have to believe in the creation of fossil-bearing rocks. 'There is as much want of simplicity in the creation of distinct species', he wrote, 'as in those of the creation of trees in full growth or of rocks with fossils in them. I mean that it is as strange that monkeys should be so like men, with

[2] *Grammar of Assent*, Ch. 5 1. Belief in One God.
[3] *University Sermon 10*, Faith and Reason Contrasted as Habits of Mind.

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no historical connexion between them, as that there should be . . . no history or course of facts by which fossil bones got into the rocks.'[4] He was quite prepared 'to go the whole hog with Darwin' and he took no part in any controversy between science and religion.

For Newman, the justification of religious faith came from quite different sources. For him, faith, understood as belief rather than commitment, is an operation of the intellect, not of the will or emotions. But, he asks in the *Grammar of Assent*, is it a reasonable operation of the intellect, or is it rash and irrational? He accepts that the testimony on which faith is based is in itself weak. It can only convince someone who has an antecedent sympathy with the content of the testimony.

> Faith . . . does not demand evidence so strong as is necessary for . . . belief on the ground of Reason; and why? For this reason, because it is mainly swayed by antecedent considerations . . . previous notices, prepossessions, and (in a good sense of the word) prejudices. The mind that believes is acted upon by its own hopes, fears, and existing opinions.[5]

Newman is well aware that his stress on the need for preparation of the heart may well make faith appear to be no more than wishful thinking. He emphasizes, however, that the mismatch between evidence and commitment, and the importance of previous attitudes, is to be observed not only in religious faith, but in other cases of belief.

> We hear a report in the streets, or read it in the public journals. We know nothing of the evidence; we do not know the witnesses, or anything about them: yet sometimes we believe implicitly, sometimes not: sometimes we believe without asking for evidence sometimes we disbelieve till we receive it. Did a rumour circulate of a destructive earthquake in Syria or the South of Europe, we should readily credit it; both because it might easily be true, and because it was nothing to us though it were. Did the report relate to countries nearer home, we should try to trace and authenticate it. We do not call for evidence till antecedent probabilities fail.[6]

Two objections may be made to Newman's claim that faith is reasonable even though acceptance of it depends not so much on evidence as on antecedent probabilities. The first is that antecedent probabilities may be equally available for what is true and for what merely pretends to be true. They supply no intelligible rule to decide between a genuine and a counterfeit revelation.

> If a claim of miracles is to be acknowledged because it happens to be advanced, why not for the miracles of India as well as for those of

[4] Quoted by David Brown, *Newman: A Man for Our Time* (London: SPCK 1990) p. 5.
[5] University Sermon 10.
[6] Ibid.

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> Palestine? If the abstract possibility of a Revelation be the measure of genuineness in a given case, why not in the case of Mahomet as well as of the Apostles?[7]

Newman, who is never more eloquent than when developing criticisms of his own position, nowhere provides a satisfactory answer to this objection. Secondly, it may be objected that there is a difference between religious faith and the reasonable, though insufficiently grounded, beliefs to which we give assent in our daily lives. In Newman's own words, Christianity is to be 'embraced and maintained as true, on the grounds of its being divine, not as true on intrinsic grounds, nor as probably true, or partially true, but as absolutely certain knowledge, certain in a sense in which nothing else can be certain'. In the ordinary cases, we are always ready to consider evidence which tells against our beliefs; but the religious believer adopts a certitude that refuses to entertain any doubt about the articles of faith.

Newman responds that even in secular matters, it can be rational to reject objections as idle phantoms, however much they may be insisted upon by a pertinacious opponent, or present themselves through an obsessive imagination.

> I certainly should be very intolerant of such a notion as that I shall one day be Emperor of the French; I should think it too absurd even to be ridiculous, and that I must be mad before I could entertain it. And did a man try to persuade me that treachery, cruelty, or ingratitude was as praiseworthy as honesty and temperance, and that a man who lived the life of a knave and died the death of a brute had nothing to fear from future retribution, I should think there was no call on me to listen to his arguments, except with the hope of converting him, though he called me a bigot and a coward for refusing to enter into his speculations.[8]

On the other hand, a believer can certainly investigate the arguments for and against his religious position. To do so need not involve any weakening of faith. But may not a man's investigation lead to his giving up his assent to his creed? Indeed it may, but,

> my vague consciousness of the possibility of a reversal of my belief in the course of my researches, as little interferes with the honesty and firmness of that belief while those researches proceed, as the recognition of the possibility of my train's oversetting is an evidence of an intention of my part of undergoing so great a calamity.[9]

There is no need to follow in detail the arguments by which Newman does his best to show that the acceptance of the Catholic religion

[7] *University Sermon 12*, Love the Safeguard of Faith against Superstition.
[8] *Grammar of Assent*, Ch. 6 2. Complex Assent.
[9] Ibid.

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is the action of a reasonable person. He maintains that the enduring history of Judaism and Christianity through the vicissitudes of human affairs is a phenomenon that carries on its face the probability of a divine origin. But it does so, Newman admits, only to someone who already believes that there is a God who will judge the world.

But what reason is there in the first place to believe in God and a future judgement? In response, Newman makes his celebrated appeal to the testimony of conscience.

> If, on doing wrong, we feel the same tearful, broken hearted sorrow which overwhelms us on hurting a mother; if, on doing right, we enjoy the same sunny serenity of mind, the same soothing satisfactory delight which follows on our receiving praise from a father, we certainly have within us the image of some person, to whom our love and veneration look, in whose smile we find our happiness, for whom we yearn, towards whom we direct our pleadings, in whose anger we are troubled and waste away. These feelings in us are such as require for their exciting cause an intelligent being.[10]

It is difficult for members of a post-Freudian generation to read this passage without acute discomfort. It is not the mere existence of conscience – of moral judgements of right and wrong – that Newman regards as intimations of the existence of God. Such judgements can be explained – as they are by many Christian philosophers as well as by utilitarians – as conclusions arrived at by natural reason and common sense. It is the emotional colouring of conscience which Newman claims to be an echo of the admonitions of a Supreme Judge. The feelings that he eloquently describes may indeed be appropriate only if there is a Father in Heaven. But no feelings can guarantee their own appropriateness in the absence of reason.

Newman says that belief is the natural state of mankind, when not corrupted by false philosophy, as it was in classical times and as it is again in modern life. In support of this he points to the beliefs of primitive peoples. He is right that anthropomorphism is the default position of the primitive and the uneducated. Monotheism is, no doubt, the highest form of anthropomorphism. But this does not settle whether anthropomorphism is the most appropriate reaction to the physical world. However, in support of the claim that belief is the natural, the default, state of mankind, Newman could appeal to the fact that in old age even John Stuart Mill veered towards religion.

Because the *Grammar of Assent* is addressed only to those who already believe in God and, in a final judgement, it is not an adequate justification of belief to the doubters of a secular age. Hence, a purely theoretical discussion of Newman's relationship to fundamental religious doubt yields only a very meagre harvest. So in the

[10] *Grammar of Assent*, Ch. 5 1. Belief in God.

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second part of this paper I wish to turn from theory to practice, and ask what was Newman's personal attitude to doubters and unbelievers, and what was their attitude to him. After all many of the famous Victorian doubters – Arthur Hugh Clough, James Antony Froude, Mark Pattison, Matthew Arnold, for instance – began their careers as pupils or admirers of the future Cardinal.

The field is too broad a one to cover in half a lecture so I will illustrate it by concentrating on two families: the Newmans and the Arnolds. By 1836 John Henry Newman and Thomas Arnold, the headmaster of Rugby, had emerged as the leaders of two wings of the Church of England, the Anglo-Catholic and the liberal. When in 1836 the Anglo-Catholics, in alliance with evangelicals, got Oxford University to censure the liberal Professor of Divinity, Renn Hampden, Arnold wrote an article, 'The Oxford Malignants' in which he focussed his attack on the Tractarians. 'The attack on Dr Hampden', he wrote, 'bears upon it the character not of error but of moral wickedness.' Newman, on a continental tour in 1837, wrote in a letter than the one thing that would convince him that the Church of England should be disestablished would be if the government were to make Arnold a bishop. When someone defended the orthodoxy of a particular scriptural interpretation on the grounds that it was approved by Arnold, Newman riposted 'But is Arnold a Christian?' In 1837 he wrote to a friend, 'What I fear is the now rising generation at Oxford, Arnold's youths. Much depends on how they turn out'.

One of the first of Arnold's Rugby boys to arrive in Oxford was Arthur Hugh Clough, an adoptive member of Arnold's own family. Clough rapidly fell under Newman's spell, and it was he who persuaded his tutor W.G. Ward, to join the Tractarians, among whom he soon stood out as an extremist. But by the time Clough had become Newman's colleague as a fellow of Oriel in 1842, he had moved some distance away from his influence. Newman, for his part, had moved to Littlemore, and Clough had begun a journey that Ward had prophesied to him in 1838: 'There is no mean between Newmanism on the one side and extremes far beyond anything of Arnold's on the other'.

I have traced elsewhere the history of Clough's beliefs and doubts. Here I want to tell the tale of two pairs of brothers, John and Francis Newman, and Matt and Tom Arnold. The two pairs resemble each other quite closely. In each case you have a distinguished elder brother with a scapegrace younger one. In each case the elder got a second class, and the younger a first class in the Oxford schools. In each case the elder's religious views progressed in a constant direction, while the younger's beliefs yo-yoed to and fro.

For John Henry Newman doubt had long ago begun at home, with the young Francis, whose undergraduate career he had paid for. Francis became a Fellow of Balliol; he supported Catholic emancipation

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while John Henry was denouncing Peel. Francis proposed marriage to John Henry's lifelong friend Maria Giberne, but he was rejected. He then fell in with the Plymouth Brethren, and in 1830–3 he went on an evangelical mission to Middle East, where he was stoned for distributing Bibles. In 1836 he became a Baptist. On learning that Francis had become a dissenter John Henry's reaction was to cut off all social intercourse with him. As he told others of his family,

> On his determining to preach the gospel, as it is called, I wrote to tell him that while he did so I could have no intercourse with him – my tie to the Church as a clergyman destroying the claim of relationship on the other hand and leaving the Scripture rule to act.

John Henry justified this excommunication by saying that he also cut Roman Catholics.

Later, hearing that Francis was not actually founding a new sect, John Henry, still unwilling to sit at table with him, agreed to meet him, and when Francis married, he relented enough to entertain the young couple. In 1840–6 Francis was at Manchester College (the ancestor of Harris Manchester College, Oxford) where George Eliot called him 'our Blessed St Francis'. He went on to reject the authority of the Bible, and wrote a critical work on the history of the Hebrew monarchy.

In the meantime, Matthew Arnold, the eldest son of the Rugby headmaster, had come to Oxford, taking up a Balliol scholarship in 1841. On his matriculation he objected to subscription to the 39 articles 'especially that which expresses an approval of Athanasian creed & that which denounces the Pope of Rome'. During his undergraduate career Matt had a reputation as an idle, dandyish, flaneur. Some of his best poems record rambles and hikes in Oxfordshire and Berkshire with his younger brother Tom and with Arthur Clough, who had coached and crammed him enough to scrape through schools with a second class.

At this period both Clough and Matthew Arnold began to lose their faith. But while Clough, in the words of Lytton Strachey, was made so uneasy by the loss of his faith that he went on looking for it everywhere so long as he lived, Arnold seems to have lost his with the effortless superiority on which clever young Balliol men pride themselves. Throughout his life, however, he retained a great admiration for John Henry Newman, and he shared his disapproval of the sceptical publications of brother Francis. He told Clough that he found the *History of the Hebrew Monarchy* offensive, but went on to say that 'poor Newman being insane should not be judged harshly'.

Later Francis published a spiritual autobiography, *Phases of Faith or Passages from the History of my Creed*. In May 1850 Matthew wrote to Clough, 'F Newman's book I saw yesterday at our 'ouse. He seems to have written himself down an hass . . . . One would think to

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read him that enquiries into articles, biblical inspiration &c &c were as much the natural functions of a man as to eat & copulate.' He "bepaws the religious sentiment so much that he quite effaces it in me.'

By now Francis Newman was Professor of Latin at University College London. He became briefly head of the College's University Hall, but resigned soon after taking office, fortuitously providing employment for Clough, who took up the vacant post. As well as an autobiography Francis Newman wrote a book entitled *The Soul: its Sorrows and Aspirations*. Clough reviewed this in a benevolent but slightly mocking tone, using the text to lay out his own rather chaotic religious position. He chastised Newman for emphasising interior, personal, relationship to God or Jesus. Such spiritual communion he wrote, may in abstract theory be possible, but 'to expect it is perilous; to seek it pernicious; to make it our business here is simply suicidal'.

Having offended the believers and doubters in equal measure, Francis Newman went on to a distinguished academic career in classics, linguistics, and obscure languages, and as a campaigner for a variety of good causes ranging from Italian nationalism through female suffrage to anti-vivisectionism and total abstinence.

Of all Victorian doubters the one who had closest contact with John Henry Newman was Matthew Arnold's younger brother Thomas, always known as Tom. He was also the archetypal doubter, figuring as such in the novel *Helbeck of Bannisdale* written by his daughter Mrs Humphry Ward. Tom lost his faith at about the same time as his brother Matt, and he gives a vivid, if third-personal, account of the unbelief that overtook him in Oxford on reading Strauss and George Eliot in 1841.

> He read about this time one or two works by materialists; in one of which especially a fatalistic view of nature and of man was sustained with wonderful ability and power of expression. He fell into a state of dejection such as he had never before known and which, by the mercy of God, has never since returned. Outward nature seemed to harmonize with the gloom of his mind. The spring of that year (1841) was unusually cold, and the blasts of the NE wind shook the large Oriel window of his room, and made him shiver with cold as he crouched over the fire. A universal doubt shook every prop and pillar on which his moral being had hitherto reposed. Something was continually whispering "What if all thy religion, all thy aspiring hope, all thy trust in God, be a mere delusion?"

After an unsuccessful proposal of marriage to Henrietta Whately, the daughter of one of John Henry Newman's earliest Oriel colleagues, Tom set off in 1847 to New Zealand to start a new life. (He may or may not be identical with Philip, the hero of Clough's narrative poem *The Bothie,* who did likewise). After a while he moved to Tasmania, and married Julia Sorell, the daughter of the registrar of

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the supreme court in Hobart. He became a schools inspector, having by now recovered faith in God; but his religious convictions took a surprising turn. In April 1855 he wrote to John Henry Newman for religious advice, and he was received into Roman Catholic Church at Hobart Town in January 1856. His conversion infuriated his wife, who was reported to have thrown a brick through the window of the Cathedral where he was baptised.

Anti-Catholic prejudice forced Tom Arnold to give up his inspectorship, and he returned to the British Isles, where Newman appointed him Professor of English Literature in his new university in Dublin. There Tom was snubbed by Whately, his once hoped for father-in-law, now Anglican Archbishop of Dublin.

What was brother Matthews's reaction, you may wonder, and how did it compare with John Henry's treatment of his errant brother Francis? In a letter to Tom of December 1857, mainly devoted to a discussion of his own newly published tragedy *Merope*, Matt wrote, 'in literary matters we may still have strong sympathy. Là vous ne vous êtes cramponnée à une légende morte – Admire my politeness in having recourse to French to say an uncivil thing'.

In 1859 Tom sent Matt a copy of the *Idea of a University*. However, after a couple of years as a Dublin professor he was poached by Newman to teach classics in the Oratorian school in Birmingham. In January 1862 Matthew wrote to Tom, 'when you are at Birmingham you will easily run up to see us. I should so much like to see and hear Newman once more; but I am told he has withdrawn into his shell and is very timid and changed.'

In 1861 Matthew clashed publicly with Francis Newman. In his Oxford lectures as Professor of Poetry Arnold criticised Newman's translations of Homer, and Newman wrote a substantial tract in reply. Relations between the two were never fully restored and a further controversy ensued in January 1863 when Newman judged that Arnold had made unfair criticisms of Bishop Colenso.

The publication of the *Apologia pro Vita Sua* marked a turning-point in the relationship between John Henry Newman and Matthew Arnold, as it did in the relationship between Newman and the British public at large. In praising the work in a letter of June 1864 to his brother Tom, Matthew wrote, 'The interesting thing in a man is [not] the positive result at which he finally arrives; this does not matter much and is always more or less inadequate; what does matter is the power of life and spirit which he develops on his way to it. And it is the richness and elasticity of this power in Newman which is so interesting.'

Tom Arnold, however, had not yet acquired religious stability. For a while he collaborated with Acton in the liberal Catholic journal *The Rambler,* and he came to feel that Acton had been badly treated by the hierarchy. In 1865 he gave up his job at Birmingham, and

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left the Church because he could not stomach the doctrine of infallibility. Neither brother Matthew nor Father Newman approved of this latest tack. Matthew tried to get him another job but warned him, in a letter of 22 February 1865 'in the educational line you have used up your advantages as Papa's son'. Since he was regarded as a Catholic, Tom had not the faintest chance of a job in an educational department. 'If you cease to be a Catholic, this objection to your employment will cease; but it will die away very gradually.'

In response to the news of Tom's lapsing, Newman wrote,

> A man must follow his own convictions, and it is not I who am his judge. While I say this I must ask your indulgence also to say, what in honesty I cannot keep from saying, that I think such a step as you have taken a sin, that I shall ever pray you may one day reverse it, and that I believe you will. Meanwhile, having said this once I don't see why I should say it again.

Tom returned to Oxford and as a private tutor prospered sufficiently to establish a large lodging house in Banbury Road, which is now Wycliffe Hall. Matt visited him there from time to time, while himself lecturing in the university that he rather ungallantly described as the home of lost causes and forsaken beliefs.

In 1867 Matthew published Dover Beach, the poem which was to become the iconic statement of Victorian doubt.

> The Sea of Faith
> Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore
> Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furl'd
> But now I only hear
> Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,
> Retreating, to the breath
> Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear
> And naked shingles of the world.

In the following year John Henry Newman sent Matthew Arnold his own *Verses on various occasions.* In a letter of thanks Arnold said, 'I find their simple clear diction come very refreshingly after the somewhat sophisticated and artificial poetical diction which Mr Tennyson's popularity has made prevalent'. The verses, he said, reminded him 'how much I, like so many others, owe to your influence and writings; the impression of which is so profound, and so mixed up with all that is most essential in what I do and say, that I can never cease to be conscious of it and to have an inexpressible sense of gratitude and attachment to its author'. Newman would not, perhaps, have been pleased to know that in Arnold's mind he was linked with Senancour and Sainte-Beuve. In October 69 Arnold wrote, 'When George Sand and Newman go, there will be no writers left living from whom I have received a strong influence'.

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In the 1870s the two men corresponded frequently and cordially. In November 1871, for instance, Arnold told Newman, 'In all the conflicts I have with modern Liberalism and Dissent, and with their pretensions and shortcomings, I recognise your work; and I can truly say that no praise gives me so much pleasure as to be told (which sometimes happens) that a thing I have said reminds people, either in manner or matter, of you'. In the following year he had developed an ampler form of acknowledgement of his indebtedness. 'There are four people, in especial from whom I am conscious of having learnt – Goethe, Wordsworth, Sainte-Beuve and yourself.'

The two men argued with each other about the authorship of the latter part of Isaiah, and at the end of 1875 Arnold sent Newman a copy of his book on the topic. Newman replied, 'it is a most attractive book – and your (excuse me) standing apart from Revelation does not mar its beauty. It is that sympathy you have for what you do not believe, which so affects me about your future. It is one of my standing prayers that you and your brother may become good Catholics'.

One half of Newman's prayer was answered. In October 1876 Tom Arnold visited him and was reconciled by him to the Church. This second conversion was just in time to prevent him – so his family believed – from being appointed to the Chair of Anglo-Saxon in Oxford. Arnold's wife wrote to Newman a letter which began, 'You have now for the second time been the cause of my husband's becoming a member of the Church of Rome and from the bottom of my heart I curse you for it. You know well how very weak and unstable he is, and you also know that he has a wife and eight children.'

One of Tom's qualifications for the Chair, which he failed to obtain, was a scholarly translation of Beowulf. Matthew, thanking him for a copy, compared it to Benjamin Jowett's translation of Plato. He went on to say, 'As to the Catholicism, that is a long story. Catholicism is most interesting and were I born in a Roman Catholic country I should most certainly never leave the Catholic Church for a Protestant; but neither then or now could I imagine that the Catholic Church possessed the truth, or anything like it, or that it could possess it'.

Tom's second conversion brought to an end the game of pass-the-parcel for his soul between Newman and Matthew. Tom remained Catholic for rest of life. His troubles were a topic of discussion on the one occasion when the two great men met in the flesh. While Newman, as Cardinal, was staying in the Duke of Norfolk's house, Matthew Arnold, at Newman's request, was invited to the levee; in more than one of his letters he described the meeting with great satisfaction, while making clear to his Protestant correspondents that he had honoured the Cardinal with no more than a bow.

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In 1883 Arnold, in Boston Mass., in the course of a lecture on Emerson, gave his most famous description of Newman, as part of a nostalgic piece about the Oxford of his youth. Newman's genius and style, he said, were still things of power, but,

> Forty years ago he was in the prime of life; he was close at hand to us in Oxford; he was preaching in St Mary's every Sunday.... Who could resist the charm of that spiritual apparition, gliding in the dim afternoon light through the aisles of St Mary's, rising into the pulpit, and then, in the most entrancing of voices, breaking the silence with words and thought which were a religious music – subtle, sweet, mournful?

Matt sent this lecture to Tom to pass on to Newman, confident that it would give him pleasure. Perhaps it did, but the pleasure must have been mixed with pain when he read '[the Cardinal] has adopted, for the doubts and difficulties which beset men's minds today, a solution which, to speak frankly, is impossible'.

Meanwhile, the Cardinal had resumed courteous if not warm relationships with his own brother. In 1876 Francis Newman had become Vice President of the British and Foreign Unitarian association. Every day, after breakfast, he conducted family prayers, some of which he later published. In 1897 he wrote to a friend, 'while I cannot be a Christian if weighed in any historical balance yet my moral and spiritual sentiment is unchanged since I joyfully surrendered myself to God in 1819'.

Tom Arnold, with Newman's help, became a Fellow of the Royal University of Ireland and Professor of English at University College Dublin, where he was a colleague of Gerard Manley Hopkins. Matthew was relieved that his brother was once more provided for, but from time to time he teased him about his religion, calling the student lodgers in his house 'novices', and marvelling at his editing Wyclifite texts when he must be yearning to be lighting the faggots at the feet of those heretics.

Though the Cardinal was civil to his brother and to Matthew Arnold, he continued to resist any serious intellectual relationship with unbelievers. He refused to join the Metaphysical Society, which included T.H. Huxley, Sir James FitzJames Stephen, Morley and Tyndall, and discussed issues such as 'What is Death?' and 'Is God unknowable?' He expressed surprise that Dean Church and Manning attended a meeting of the society at which T.H. Huxley read a paper in refutation of the Resurrection.

Of the sibling quartet, the two younger brothers were the last survivors. Julia Arnold died in April 1888, and Matthew Arnold followed her to the grave within two weeks. Tom Arnold made a second marriage to a devout Irishwoman. John Henry Newman lived

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on to 1890; his brother, shortly before his own death in 1897, wrote a bitter memoir of their earlier life.

Tom Arnold was one of those who attended the Cardinal's funeral. His final verdict on Newman was this: 'A fine and honourable consistency marked his long career, but there was a lack of the saint's self-immolation, the missioner's fire, hence his service to the Church was hardly what might have been expected, considering his extraordinary powers'. Tom the doubter had become a narrow and conservative Catholic; the one-time liberal acolyte of Acton had become as ultramontane as Manning. He died in 1900 and was buried in Newman's university church.

The genes of doubt, however, descended to later generations. Tom's daughter Mary, Mrs Humphry Ward, became the novelist chronicler of religious doubt. Another daughter, Julia junior or Judy, having won a first at Somerville, married the son of T.H. Huxley and gave birth to Aldous Huxley and Julian Huxley. It was not the boys of Arnold's Rugby who were the real threat to all that John Henry Newman stood for: it was the generation of Arnold's great-grandchildren.

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