Newman and a Catholic Arnold

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In the struggles that divided the Anglican community in the 1830s one of the hardest fighters was Thomas Arnold, reforming headmaster of Rugby School and polemical Broad Church divine. He attacked the Tractarians in a notorious article called 'The Oxford Malignants' (though the title was an editorial insertion) and regarded Newman as his principal opponent; his opposition was quite impersonal, since he believed that he had never met Newman. He was annoyed when it was reported by a third party that Newman was alleged to have asked if Arnold was a Christian.[1] Arnold's vehemence spoiled his hopes for a bishopric, but Lord Melbourne, the sympathetic Whig Prime Minister, had him appointed to the Regius Chair of History at Oxford. Early in 1842 Dr Arnold was in Oxford delivering his first series of lectures, accompanied by his family; his eldest son Matthew was already in residence as a Balliol undergraduate. On 2nd February Arnold dined in Oriel, his old college, where Newman had been a fellow for many years. Though Arnold was initially apprehensive and ill at ease, the encounter of these old opponents was courteous and good tempered; they talked of non-controversial subjects such as North African myths. Newman reminded Arnold that they had in fact met once before, when he had been one of Arnold's oral examiners for the degree of Bachelor of Divinity; Arnold had not identified him on that occasion, believing he was Edward Pusey, another leading Tractarian. Nearly fifty years later, after Newman's death, Arnold's younger son Tom recalled his father's account of the meeting: 'I recollect as well as if it were yesterday how pleased and radiant dear Papa looked when he came back to the Beaumont St lodgings, and how he described Newman's cordiality (which was evidently more than he quite expected)...[2] There were no more meetings. In June 1842 Arnold died of a heart attack at the age of forty-seven.

That autumn Tom Arnold went up to Oxford as a scholar of University College; he joined Matthew and their older friend, Arthur Clough, whom they had known at Rugby and who was now a junior fellow of Oriel. Clough was a brilliant and unhappy young man who is now remembered as one of the finest poets of the Victorian age. All three were moving away from Dr Arnold's kind of fervent Christian belief—though not from Christian morality—into what he would

https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-2005.2000.tb06461.x Published online by Cambridge University Press

have condemned as 'infidelity'. But Matthew, like many undergraduates, liked to attend the sermons that Newman, then in his last years as an Anglican, gave in the University Church of St Mary. He remembered them years later: '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 thoughts which were a religious music,—subtle, sweet, mournful?'[3] Tom Arnold, however, did resist Newman's charm: 'I went certainly once—perhaps twice—to hear one of his afternoon sermons at St Mary's, but the delicacy and refinement of his style were less cognisable by me than by my brother, and the multiplied quotations from Scripture introduced by "And again"—"And again"—the intention of which I only half divined, confused and bewildered me'.[4] There were only a few months in which Tom Arnold could have heard Newman preach, for he delivered his last sermon in September 1843. Two years later he entered the Catholic Church.

Thereafter the paths of Newman and the younger Arnolds diverged so sharply that one would not have looked for any further contact between them. Matthew made his name as a poet and critic and eventually as a commentator on his age; the foppish young man about town was transformed into a serious-minded and hard-working inspector of schools. Tom's religious struggles made him unhappy at Oxford, though he found satisfaction in political radicalism. He was clever and hard-working and earned a double first in *Litterae Humaniores*, unlike Matthew and Clough, who had both been placed in the second class. Tom's academic attainments meant that he could have acquired a fellowship, certainly at his own college, perhaps at the more intellectually prestigious Balliol. But he turned his back on Oxford; he was unwilling to subscribe to the Thirty Nine articles of the Church of England, as was necessary for appointments in what was still a closed Anglican community; and he was driven by idealistic restlessness. He briefly studied law in London, then took a post in the Colonial Office; but he needed to move on, and in 1847 he emigrated to New Zealand, where his father had previously bought some land. Before long he realized that be was not cut out to be a farmer and started a small school, but the settlers were keener on having their sons educated than in paying the school bills. In 1850 he moved to Tasmania, or Van Diemen's Land as it was still called, where, on the strength of the Arnold name and his own intellectual abilities, he had been offered the post of inspector of education for the colony. He enjoyed the work and after only a few months in Tasmania he married a young woman from a well-known local family. They settled down happily to married life in Hobart; their first child, Mary, was born in 1851: she was one day to

https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-2005.2000.tb06461.x Published online by Cambridge University Press

become famous as the best-selling novelist Mrs Humphry Ward.

Tom Arnold looked set on a promising career in the rapidly expanding educational services of Australasia. But in 1855 Newman received a letter that startled and delighted him. On 6th July, writing to Lord Dunraven, a recent convert, he remarked, 'The same post, which brought your letter this morning, brought one from the other end of the earth, showing the working of God's grace in a way so wonderful, that it is distressing to have it all to oneself, and not be at liberty to mention it'.[5] The letter was from Tom Arnold, who apologizes for writing out of the blue. He gives a brief history of his personal and religious life, describing his move at Oxford from liberal Protestantism to doubt and uncertainty, and then his plunge into what he called 'the abyss of unbelief'. But the previous year, following a spiritual crisis, he had recovered his Christian faith. Now, he tells Newman, 'You who have said that a man who has once comprehended and admitted the theological definition of God, cannot logically rest until he had admitted the whole system of Catholicism' will not be surprised to know that he has followed a comparable course, and wishes to become a Catholic. That is his intention, but he is worried about timing, and the effects his conversion will have on his family: 'My dear wife, who is without any positive religious convictions (in a great measure, alas! through my fault) has imbibed the strongest prejudices against Catholicism, and I see no prospect, humanly speaking, of her altering her mind. My mother and sisters—all in England—are sincerely Protestant, and I cannot doubt that my conversion will be a serious blow to them'. He asks for Newman's advice on these human dilemmas; he would also like to know if he would be justified in keeping on with his public employment after becoming a Catholic, assuming that he would be able to. And in a final request he asks Newman if he would be able to find work as a teacher in a Catholic environment if he returned to England (Arnold was much given to asking his friends and family to help him find employment).[6]

It was not necessarily remarkable that someone from Arnold's background should have become a Catholic at that time, as so many others had done. In Meriol Trevor's words, 'In reading nineteenth century memoirs it is surprising how often we find, in the same family, a variety of religious belief or the lack of it; nearly every educated family had its dissenter, its freethinker, its Roman Catholic, as well as its members, more or less committed, of the established Church of England'.[7] As she remarks, those who came to (or returned to) Christianity from complete unbelief were quite likely to find its fullest expression in Catholicism. Nevertheless, there was something very unexpected in Arnold's conversion. His earlier letters exhibit the anti-Catholicism that was engrained in British Protestant culture, reinforced

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by the republican radicalism he had assumed in Oxford. 'The great scarlet iniquity is not prospering in the world, thanks be to Heaven',[8] he wrote in 1849, referring to the Pope's misfortunes during the Roman revolution. His comments on specific Anglican converts to Catholicism are unflattering. He refers to Frederick Faber, who had been a fellow of University College when Arnold was an undergraduate, as 'slightly cracked' after reading in a review extracts from Faber's lives of foreign saints; he remarks of another Oxford acquaintance, 'So young Palgrave has been goose enough to turn Roman Catholic', and adds, 'I have little doubt that he will change to something else before very long';[9] this man, William Gifford Palgrave, was to play a significant part later in Arnold's life.

The process of Arnold's conversion was as mysterious as these things often are. In his autobiography, *Passages in a Wandering Life*, published in 1900, he refers to an occasion when a passage in the First Epistle of Peter made a sudden impression on him: 'the words of Peter sounded to me rather as a command than as a theme for discussion, and made a direct appeal to the practical reason and the will. But who was this Peter? What was his general teaching? Who were his helpers and successors?'.[10] The command was not only to make a commitment to Christ, as it would be in a Protestant context, but to consider the nature of authority, the question which had led Newman and the other Tractarian converts into the Catholic Church. This, at least, is how Arnold presented it, writing long after the event. He refers too to reading Tractarian accounts of early saints and martyrs, which had given him a sense of the unity and continuity of the church. Somewhere on his travels in Tasmania he came across a volume of Butler's *Lives of the Saints* and was much moved by the life of St Bridget of Sweden; when he discovered that her feast day was on the date in October on which he had had a sense of special revelation on reading the Epistle of Peter he felt that a significant spiritual link had been established. And as he told Newman, there were passages in Newman's writings that had been illuminating.

When Tom wrote to his mother in October 1854, announcing his return to Christian belief, it seemed that he had adopted a fervently evangelical form of Anglicanism. This would have been good news to his mother and sisters, and to his wife Julia, who, though not very religious had been disturbed by the infidel Tom's indifference to the christening of their children. But unfortunately for his family, it was only a transitional position; by the following spring he was convinced he should become a Catholic, as he announced in his letter to Newman. Arnold's misgivings about the ferociously anti-Catholic Julia proved to be justified; she responded with horror. Their daughter Mary Ward, allowing her novelistic imagination a certain freedom in the

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autobiography she published towards the end of her own life, refers to the supposed Huguenot antecedents of Julia's family; she sees her mother's resistance to Catholicism as going deeper than the English evangelical tradition, taking on the sternness of French Protestantism 'Had some direct Calvinist ancestor of hers, with a soul on fire, fought the tyranny of Bossuet and Madame de Maintenon, before—eternally hating and resenting "Papistry"—he abandoned his country and kinsfolk, in the search for religious liberty?'.[11] However that may be, Julia fought hard to keep her husband away from Rome. She made him promise that he would take no decisive step until he had consulted his mother, Dr Arnold's representative on earth. This was an effective way of buying time, since it would be many months before Arnold would be able to reach England and see his mother; and it was inconceivable that she would approve of his conversion. Arnold was unhappy with the promise and soon came to feel that he should never have made it.

A dramatic letter from Julia reveals her detestation of Catholicism: 'my whole soul revolts from a religion so utterly to my mind inconsistent with the true worship of Christ'; she threatens to leave her husband if he does become a Catholic: 'I love you dearest Tom most deeply, and in separating from you I shall strike my own death blow, but as things are now it must be so'.[12] Matters remained in an indeterminate state until on the 1st of October Arnold received a remarkably prompt reply from Newman; it has not survived, but he described it as 'kind and most comforting'; it evidently encouraged him to go ahead and become a Catholic, whatever the difficulties. In his reply, Arnold says that this is what he intends to do, though he still entertains the idea of going to England to talk to his mother. He also says that he will consult the local Catholic bishop, Robert Willson. He tells Newman apologetically that he may receive an abusive letter from Julia: 'forgive, I entreat you, its unjust and half-frantic language, and pray for the unhappy writer'.[13] Julia blamed Newman for all the family's subsequent troubles and sent him more than one angry letter. A letter to Arnold's mother reveals the later course of events. He refers to his correspondence with Newman, whom he calls 'that living saint' (a rather higher opinion than he held either earlier or later). The bishop's advice to Arnold was that his promise should not have been made, and that if his wife would not release him from it, it could be broken. Furthermore, Julia was doing all she could to make life difficult for him by telling everybody about the change in his opinions. On 18th January 1856 he was received into the Catholic Church by Bishop Willson. Julia did not leave him as she had threatened, but according to Newman's later account she threw a brick through a window of the Pro-Cathedral during the ceremony. Arnold's conversion was a brave and lonely act which isolated him; it provoked Julia's anger, and hostility in the local community. He was attacked in

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the press; it was thought inappropriate that education in the colony should be under the direction of a Romanist. Eventually the Colonial Secretary sent for him and said that though he personally believed that Arnold's conversion should make no difference to his career, several members of the legislative council were hostile to him, as was much public opinion. Arnold acknowledged that he was, in effect, being forced out of his job, but did not resist, as he was concerned that his work involved him in colluding with religious indifferentism in education. He accepted an offer of eighteen months' home leave on half-pay, with the proviso that he would not return to the colony. In July 1856 Arnold and his pregnant wife and their three children set sail for England. He had followed the call of his conscience, at the cost of his career and his domestic harmony. Taking a broad view, one can say that they were the victims of public anti-Catholicism, and the particularly virulent form of it that Julia had adopted.

They arrived in October, after an uneventful but unpleasant voyage: the five-year old Mary remembered the rats that infested the ship at night and the primitive salt-water baths. After stopping briefly in London the family travelled on to Fox How in the Lake District, the house which Dr Arnold had built as a holiday home and where his widow now lived permanently. Tom and his family were affectionately received by his mother and sisters, who, whatever they thought about his conversion, were more restrained than Julia. He wrote to Newman to say that he had arrived and enquired about the possibility of finding work as a teacher in Dublin, where Newman was Rector of the Catholic University, and offered to come and see him. Newman's reply was quick and emotional: 'How strange it seems! What a world this is! I knew your father a little and I really think I never had any unkind feeling towards him'. He recalls their meeting in Oxford in 1842. 'I was glad to meet him. If I said ever a harsh thing against him I am very sorry for it. In seeing you, I should have a sort of pledge that he at the moment of his death made it all up to me'.[14] More concretely, Newman offered Arnold the post of Professor of English Literature at the Catholic University, which had become vacant. The idea of appointing a Catholic Arnold had great resonance for Newman; he wrote to a colleague a few days later: 'Only fancy Arnold's son being our Professor of English Literature! there is a great chance of it'.[15]

Tom Arnold was gratified at the offer, though worried that his intermittent stutter, which he called his 'hesitation', would affect his lecturing. But he and the Catholic University agreed to give each other a trial. The post sounded impressive, but it had its drawbacks; the stipend was rather low and Arnold would have to uproot himself once more and settle with his family in Ireland. But the job was waiting and he needed employment, so he travelled to Dublin, leaving his family at

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Fox How, to meet Newman and then started work at once. The Catholic University was a noble idea which in practice was failing badly, as Arnold discovered when he joined it. In 1851 Newman had been asked to advise the Irish bishops in setting up a university to provide higher education for Catholics, who could not attend the Protestant Trinity College. When in Dublin he gave a number of lectures which provided the nucleus of *The Idea of a University*. He accepted an invitation to serve as Rector for the new institution and became an enthusiast for the project, which he thought of as a second Louvain: 'It will be the Catholic University of the English tongue for the whole world'.[16] But the Irish bishops were more concerned with local needs, and in time this division of aims became fatal. Newman set to work planning the new university; he was given papal approval to take extended leave from the Birmingham Oratory, but he retained many responsibilities there and had to make frequent trips back and forth across the Irish sea. Paul Cullen, the Archbishop of Dublin, who was ultimately responsible for the project, believed in moving slowly if at all, and was frequently obstructive. Cullen valued Newman's name and reputation, but had little time for his ideas, wanting something more like a seminary than a university as Newman envisaged it. He also resented the division of Newman's activities between Dublin and Birmingham, and thought the Oratory should be transferred to Ireland.

One cause of resentment was Newman's wish to appoint the most qualified teachers regardless of who they were. In practice, this meant that several of the founding professors were English converts of high academic attainments like Tom Arnold (when he arrived in Dublin he found that he knew, or knew of, a number of his new colleagues from Oxford days). This policy seemed like anti-Irish discrimination and the University was often attacked as an English outpost. In his thinking about a liberal education Newman gave importance to the study of literature; this was primarily Greek and Latin, but he also wanted English Literature to be widely studied, before this was at all common in higher education. Tom Arnold was replacing a professor who had resigned because of ill health; his initial appointment was temporary, to be confirmed if both parties were satisfied. Arnold did not know that when Newman previously offered the post to someone else he acknowledged that it 'imperatively demanded drudgery'.[17] Writing to his wife Arnold remarked that Newman seemed weary and anxious to give up the Rectorship: 'There is an immense deal of mere business connected with the office which many could manage as well or better than Newman, his mind is too refined, too polished, for such work; it is like cutting blocks with a razor'.[18] This was true, but Arnold had not yet realized the extent to which the Archbishop's obstruction, which took the maddening form of not answering letters which contained urgent

https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-2005.2000.tb06461.x Published online by Cambridge University Press

enquiries, was wearying Newman of the task he had embarked on with high hopes.

Arnold was back in Fox How for the Christmas vacation of 1856; In the New Year the family moved to lodgings in Dublin, with the new baby who had been born in December and without Mary, who had been left to live with her grandmother and aunts, and who was to be largely educated in boarding schools. Arnold decided that he wanted to stay in the post, but it was many months before Archbishop Cullen, no doubt irritated that Newman had imported yet another Oxonian, confirmed the appointment. Arnold spent five years at the Catholic University, learning about English Literature as well as teaching it; in those days no-one had a degree in the subject, and one imagines him often being only one jump ahead of his students. The fruits of his labour were usefully collected in his first book, *A Manual of English Literature, Historical and Critical*, 1862. It was one of the first works of its kind; it was frequently revised and reprinted and went on appearing for many years.

After Arnold's appointment was finally confirmed, Newman wrote to a friend, 'I had been feeling very much for Arnold's anxieties, and (if I may say it) had only this morning been praying for him. He has a great many troubles of various kinds, I doubt not, which he alone can know. I think it affects his spirits, if I judge from his manner'.[19] Arnold's troubles were, one imagines, financial and domestic; the family was growing—two more children were born whilst they were in Dublin—and Julia was still unreconciled to life with a Catholic husband in a Catholic city, though she made friends among the Protestant community, which was quite large in Dublin at that time. Tom's spirits may not have been helped by a friendly letter from Matthew which ended with a waspish comment: 'in literary matters we may still have strong sympathy. Là, vous ne vous êtes pas cramponné à une légende morte. Admire my politeness in having recourse to French to say an uncivil thing... [20] He underwent a degree of culture-shock from life in Ireland; writing to Clough he complained that compared with the Protestant clergy the Catholic priests were not gentlemen and were poorly educated.[21] But his main problem, which was to dog him for the rest of his life, was shortage of money. At intervals he sent out feelers about the possibility of finding other work in education; in 1859 he told Clough, 'If you ever hear of a berth in the public service which might be suitable for me, and for which an application from me would have any chance of being successful, I know you will not forget me. I am ground down to starvation pitch where I am...'[22] He asked Sir John Acton if he could use his influence to secure him a vacant inspectorship: 'with my large family, the income which I derive from the Catholic University is something like starvation'.[23] These endeavours were

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unproductive. Newman's stint as Rector of the Catholic University came to an end, much to his relief, and in 1858 he left Ireland for the last time; there were no adequate arrangements for a successor, and Arnold's letters express his growing discontent at conditions. Newman continued to think highly of him; Acton reported 'Newman is very fond of Arnold, and expects that someday he will settle in Edgbaston'.[24] Eventually this came to pass; early in 1862 Arnold accepted the post of Head Classics Master at the Oratory School, which Newman had founded as a Catholic public school, and the family moved to the Birmingham suburbs. Newman was delighted to have him; his high regard for Arnold was a matter both of his name and his intellectual abilities, though it was never clear which predominated. There were good reasons for Arnold to feel more at home in England than in Dublin, and he was pleased to be in contact with Newman again. But the pay for the post, though as much as the school could afford, was less than he needed.

He did, however, earn some money with his pen. It was the great age of higher periodical journalism; Arnold wrote fluently, had a lively mind and a wide range of interests. Reasonably, he thought he had something to contribute; and he expected to be paid for it. He was unsuccessful in an attempt to break into the celebrated *Edinburgh Review*, but he started to write for Catholic publications, such as the *Dublin Review*, which Wiseman had founded, and *Atlantis*, which Newman had launched as a scholarly organ of the Catholic University. He then began a significant connection with *The Rambler*, which had been founded in 1848 as the organ of a group of intellectual converts to Catholicism; it had a checkered history and was often at odds with the bishops for its liberal opinions and alleged lack of orthodoxy.[25] In 1859 Newman briefly and reluctantly acted as editor, since the bishops had found the existing editor, Richard Simpson, who was one of the owners of the journal, to be doctrinally suspect and *persona non grata*. Sir John (later Lord) Acton, who was another owner, shortly took over from Newman, who told him of a proposed contribution from Arnold, 'I suspect Arnold would not write without pay. His name would be good'.[26]

Acton was interested in having Arnold write for *The Rambler*, and so was Simpson, who remained a close editorial collaborator; he told Acton, in familiar terms, 'the difficulty about asking men to write is the uncertainty of where the pay is to come from... But let us have Arnold by all means; it is a good name, and the man is worth a trial'.[27] Arnold became a regular contributor, writing on a wide variety of subjects—philosophical, historical, geographical, religious—first in *The Rambler* and then in its successor, *The Home and Foreign Review*. Acton was happy to have Arnold on his team and to pay him for his work, but he

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was a hands-on editor who was not always satisfied with Arnold's contributions and sometimes took it on himself to rewrite parts of them. The connection with Acton enlarged Arnold's horizons but took him rather out of his intellectual depth. Sir John Acton, unlike most of the Catholic writers of that time, was a cradle-Catholic, though of a distinctly exotic kind. He inherited his father's baronetcy when he was three years old; his mother was a German aristocrat whose preferred language was French; his grandfather had been Prime Minister of Naples, and Cardinal Acton, a dignitary of the papal court, was an uncle. As a Catholic, Acton could not attend an English university and his later education took place in Munich as the pupil and, in effect, intellectual apprentice of the theologian and historian Ignaz von Döllinger. In the words of David Mathew, Acton's biographer, he 'was an English gentleman brought up on German scholarship'. When he took over *The Rambler* in 1859 he was only twenty-five, but he was learned beyond his years, fluent in several languages, with a wide European acquaintance; and no respecter of persons, clerical or lay. His habitual, inherited Catholicism reflected the South German milieu where he spent much of his time and had a different resonance from that of most post-Tractarian converts. Richard Simpson, though a convert clergyman, shared Acton's ideas and stance; his taste for theological speculation and his iconoclastic, witty tone were a particular provocation to the bishops.

Acton and Simpson were a formidable pair: intellectual, articulate, independent-minded, wealthy. Acton added to these qualities a degree of aristocratic *morgue*. They were strongly committed to Catholicism, but their notion of it was different from that current in Rome or among the English bishops. Newman understood it and was in qualified sympathy; but his own situation and temperament made him circumspect, and he was often critical of *The Rambler* on points of detail. Acton's ideal was that the Catholic emphasis on the primacy of conscience should be extended to the primacy of truth in historical and other intellectual enquiries: the historian should seek the truth even when it is embarrassing to the institutional church. The Catholic hierarchy had been established for only a few years after the 'papal aggression' of 1850 and was still a target for anti-Catholic attacks; in Rome Blessed Pio Nono was lamenting the advance of modern ideas and infidelity and feared the loss of the papal lands to the forces of united Italy. It was not a propitious climate for Acton's kind of liberal Catholicism, which was perhaps a century ahead of its time: an attempt to institute the ideals of Vatican II before Vatican I. Acton was adroit in respectfully resisting the bishops, but when their hostility became too great he closed *The Rambler* in 1861 and relaunched it as *The Home and Foreign Review*, a quarterly modelled on the leading magazines of the

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age, as a platform for educated Catholic opinion.

Tom Arnold's correspondence shows him on cordial terms with Acton, who lent him books from his large library and had him to stay at his country house at Aldenham in Shropshire. Arnold made an attempt to share Acton's liberalism, but not without anxiety, as is evident from a letter he sent him in 1862:

> As far as we laymen are concerned, no doubt the cause of free speech and freedom of intellectual movement is too sacred, and has been too shamefully trodden under foot in Catholic countries in time past, to allow of our being debarred from the prosecution of legitimate inquiries under any circumstances likely to arise. Still I must say that these episcopal censures make a very painful impression on me—as I am sure they must on you—and I do most earnestly hope that for the future no just occasion for them will be afforded.[2]

Liberal Catholicism was heading for trouble. In the autumn of 1863 Acton attended a conference of Catholic scholars and intellectuals in Munich, sponsored and chaired by Döllinger. They professed their loyalty to the Pope and received his blessing by telegram. Acton was encouraged by the proceedings, writing afterwards that the congress 'will enable the Catholic writers of Germany to vindicate the Church from the reproach that faith is inimical to freedom, that we are hampered in our investigations, that we acknowledge a power which may prevent the publicity of truth, or impose untruths on our belief'.[29] But Rome would have none of it. A papal brief sent to the Archbishop of Munich implicitly condemned Döllinger and explicitly condemned the conclusions of the conference; scholars, it insisted, were required to submit not just to dogmatic definitions but to the decisions of Roman Congregations.

A bitterly disappointed Acton responded by winding up *The Home and Foreign Review*. As he told Simpson, the principles set out in the brief were not compatible with the ideals of intellectual freedom that inspired the review; to have defied Rome would have attracted condemnation and deprived it of any claim to represent Catholic opinion. The doctrines of the brief were not unfamiliar, but the aggressive tone and the will to enforce obedience were new and unwelcome. Simpson agreed, and the last issue, containing an article by Arnold called 'The Colonization of Northumbria', appeared in April 1864. Newman regretted the disappearance of *The Home and Foreign Review*, and so did Matthew Arnold.

Meanwhile, Tom Arnold was doing well at the Oratory School, or so Newman thought, though he acknowledged that like many teachers of an academic bent, he was better with the cleverer pupils, and was a

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poor disciplinarian. Newman's letters contain regular expressions of his high regard for Arnold, praising both his gentlemanliness and his devotion: 'He is, as a Catholic, liberal to a wonderful degree—yet with a simple faith and spontaneous devoutness, which are most edifying'.[30] Yet the financial problems which had dogged him in Dublin were still in evidence, perhaps exacerbated by Julia's incompetence as a housekeeper. Early in 1864 he complained to Newman about the deductions that had been made from his salary when he was ill for several weeks and a substitute had to be paid. Later in the year he asked for a rise, pointing out that at other public schools masters with his qualifications were a lot better paid. Newman sympathised but refused; the Oratory School was not Rugby but a struggling foundation and could not afford to pay more. Arnold, like others in that situation, replied that he might have to look elsewhere. Newman, who, for all his gentle and complicated nature, could be a tough bargainer, responded by saying that he assumed Arnold wished to resign and suggested that he terminate his employment the following April. Arnold's bluff had been called and he had to agree. It was not clear what he meant to do, and the move had an air of going from frying-pan to fire. This is what Matthew felt, describing his brother's move as 'stark madness'.[31] The remainder of Arnold's time at the Oratory passed amicably, and when he left in April 1865 he received what he regarded as a generous severance payment.

As far as Newman was concerned Arnold's departure from the Oratory was simply a move, regrettable and ill-advised, to some other form of employment. But on 25 April 1865 he wrote to Arnold to say that he had heard what he called 'a shameful report'[32] that Arnold had not only left the school but had given up Catholicism, though not wishing it to be known while he was still at the school. Apart from personal factors, such a report was damaging to the reputation of the school and Newman asked Arnold if he could contradict it. Arnold's was reply was disingenuous and hardly reassuring; he said the report was false and that Newman had his authority to contradict it, but, he added, 'I fear I must pain you by saying that I cannot guarantee where, or in what form of opinions, the course of thought might eventually land me'.[33] In June Newman wrote to Arnold again, saying that despite the earlier assurance he had heard that Arnold had given up belief in the doctrine of the infallibility of the Church. Newman expressed his sorrow and said that Arnold would continue to be in his prayers over 'these sad waverings of faith'.[34] In his reply Arnold said, 'yes, it is true that I can no longer believe in a permanent and living infallibility in the Church. I tried hard to believe it for a long time, in spite of the objections that constantly presented themselves, but at last I broke down'. His letter indicates a confused state of mind; he denies a

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newspaper report that he had returned to the Church of England, but adds that if he stayed in Oxford he would want to take his master's degree, which at that time involved religious tests, 'which, I suppose may be called in one sense "returning to the Church of England"'.[35] Newman was baffled as well as distressed by Arnold's defection, since there had been no clue that his discontents were anything other than financial; he remarked to another correspondent, 'we had no suspicion of anything till Easter for he was just what he had been all along'. But Arnold's correspondence with his brother earlier in the year contains suggestions (as indicated in Matthew's replies, for Tom's letters have not survived) that his ideas are changing and that he might not go on being a Catholic.[36] In his autobiography, written long after the event, he says, 'In the course of 1864 the Oratorians began to think I was drifting towards Liberalism, and gradually growing out of sympathy with them and their aims...' He refers to an occasion when he gave one of his students a copy of Döllinger's *The Church and the Churches*. Newman and his lieutenant Fr St.John intervened and would not allow the boy to have the book, allegedly because of its 'liberalism'. Arnold objected, but looking back he conceded that they may have better known the direction in which Döllinger's mind was moving than he did.[37] I suspect that their concern was more political than doctrinal. The 'Munich brief' had indicated that Döllinger's ideas were unacceptable in Rome, and it could have been damaging to the school if his works were known to be handed out there.

After the 'Munich brief' a further blow for liberal Catholicism fell at the end of 1864 with the encyclical *Quanta Cura*, and the attached 'Syllabus of Errors', with its notorious final proposition that it is wrong to think that the Church could or should reconcile itself to progress, liberalism and modern civilization. In Owen Chadwick's words, 'No sentence ever did more to dig a chasm between the pope and modern European society'.[38] Acton, a tough-minded product of a Continental tradition that combined Catholic belief and practice with resistance to excessive Roman claims, battened down the hatches to engage in a long campaign against the concept of papal infallibility. English converts, Simpson excepted, found it difficult to adopt this stance. They were temperamentally Ultramontanist, since it was the question of authority which had brought them into the Church, and they were more likely to break away than to resist from within, as Acton and Simpson resolved to do.

There is a significant clue in a letter from Newman to Fr Henry Coleridge SJ. He says of Arnold's problems, 'he told Mr Palgrave that he could not receive the infallibility of the Church, and was in the same boat with him'.[39] 'Mr Palgrave' was William Gifford Palgrave, whom Arnold had known at Oxford (the younger brother of F.T.Palgrave, of

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Golden Treasury fame). In 1849 Arnold derisively remarked that Palgrave had been 'goose enough to turn Roman Catholic' and said he had little doubt that he would become something else before long. In fact he became a Jesuit and served as a missionary in Syria and Arabia. In 1864 Arnold resumed contact with Fr Palgrave when the latter was briefly in England and attempted to introduce him to Acton, whom Palgrave wanted to meet. The meeting could not be arranged, but Acton accepted an article by Palgrave on asceticism in Mohammedan nations for *The Home and Foreign Review*. Palgrave's theological radicalism was suggested by Simpson's comments on his manuscript: 'It would be good to print it, if possible, in order to say that we had a Jesuit writing such a theory of religion as he opens with—a theory which certainly goes beyond any Catholic theory I have yet seen in fundamental inconsistency with any absolute revelation'.[40] Palgrave was one of those who found *Quanta Cura* and the Syllabus of Errors unacceptable. He left the Jesuits, abandoned Catholicism, and worked in the diplomatic service for many years but returned to the Catholic Church in 1885. Newman's remark that Arnold was in the 'same boat' as Palgrave suggests a similar process of crisis and rejection.

Arnold's defection naturally hurt Newman, though he subsequently tried to make the best of it by saying that it would save the Oratory a good deal of money in salary. It did not sever their relations, and they corresponded from time to time. In February 1868 Newman wrote to his friend Maria Giberne:

> [Arnold] is a very good amiable fellow, but weak and henpecked. His wife is a Xantippe. From Australia, before he was received there, she sent me two abusive letters, and vowed he never should be a Catholic. When he was received there, she threw a brick through the Church window. When I gave him a professorship at Dublin she was still unmitigated—and when he came to Edgbaston, she used to nag, nag, nag him, till he almost lost his senses. She preached against Catholicism to her children and made them unmanageable. Tho' we gave him a large salary, she took care to make him feel he had nothing, and was out at elbows. He did not take enough to eat and drink—and got ill. Then came Protestant friends and talked to him. Moreover, I always thought he had been badly instructed and did not know his religion... .Then he left us and went to Oxford, not *allowing* he was a Protestant—nor is he. He is a non-practising Catholic, if he is any thing. Very friendly still, and interested in our matters. He was very religious, when with us—used to delight to be before the Blessed Sacrament etc etc. And now there is nothing bitter in him; he takes pleasure in Catholic matters. I *fear* he has never had *faith*.[41]

Julia's abusive letters would still have rankled; but Newman gives a persuasive account of Arnold's temperament and of his difficult

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domestic situation. He may be right in saying that Arnold had been badly instructed before his conversion, but at that time converts were admitted to the Church with very little formality or instruction, like the hero of Newman's own novel, *Loss and Gain*. Newman's exasperated claim that Arnold had never had faith is certainly not what he thought earlier in their relationship.

Arnold moved to Oxford and began a new life as a free-lance tutor, with the encouragement of the influential Arthur Stanley, now Dean of Westminster, who had been his father's friend and biographer and Tom Arnold's tutor at University College. For several years he made a reasonable living at this work and did well enough to build a large house on the Banbury Road, which is now part of Wycliffe Hall. He was a regular worshipper at the Anglican church of St Philip and St James. It was a great satisfaction to Julia that Arnold had abandoned Rome, and so it was to his old Oxford acquaintances, such as Benjamin Jowett; he was moving back into a larger social and cultural life after the years of seclusion among the papists of Dublin and Edgbaston. Soon after his arrival he attended what he called a 'strange gathering' at Jowett's where the guests included Robert Browning, the sculptor Thomas Woolner, J. W. Colenso, the notoriously heretical bishop of Natal, Frank Palgrave and his ex-Jesuit brother Gifford, and Mrs Mark Pattison, the vivacious and learned young wife of the Rector of Lincoln, who was not present himself. When Arnold was not teaching he was editing literary and historical texts, including a selection of Wycliff's English writings from the original manuscripts. He was also becoming an accomplished Anglo-Saxon scholar, and was one of the first editors of *Beowulf*.

After some years Arnold's latent or suppressed Catholic sympathies showed signs of strengthening. Travelling in France in 1874 he made a point of visiting Lourdes, and two years later he entered on the last of the spiritual crises that overturned his life at intervals. He told his wife and family that he was returning to Catholic practice; the reasons for his decision are as uncertain as those for his original conversion, though the timing makes plausible Meriol Trevor's suggestion that Newman's studiedly moderate interpretation of the Infallibility decrees in his *Letter to the Duke of Norfolk*, published in 1875, was a factor in Arnold's return to the Church.[42] The news had much the same disruptive effects on his immediate circle as his conversion twenty years earlier. Julia's visceral anti-Catholicism reappeared; she told Tom that she loved him as much as ever, but that by becoming a member of the Church of Rome 'you cut off in our present circumstances the possibility of our living together'.[43] Mary and other members of the family tried to mediate, but to no avail. She was devoted to both her parents, and her sense of Catholicism as a threat and a cause of contention was dramatized years later in her novel *Helbeck of Bannisdale*, 1899. Allowances have to be made for Julia, since she was

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beginning to suffer from the cancer which was eventually to end her life.

Arnold's situation was complicated by the fact that the Rawlinsonian Chair of Anglo-Saxon, which had lain vacant for some years, was being reinstated as a permanent appointment; previously it had been held for five years at a time. With the rise of systematic study of the early Teutonic tongues it had acquired a new academic importance. Arnold was keen to apply, and had lots of ideas about what he might do if he were appointed, which included entering into correspondence with professors in other European universities, thoroughly searching Anglo-Saxon manuscripts in libraries, and publishing a complete catalogue of the extant literature. The post would also have given him and Julia social status and a decent standard of living, since professors were handsomely rewarded, compared to his hand-to-mouth existence as a tutor. For several months he made no further definite move back towards Catholicism; he continued living in Oxford with Julia and allowed his name to go forward for election to the Chair.

The election was by members of the University Congregation; it was to be held in October and as the date approached Arnold's mood and outlook changed. His conscience was increasingly troubling him and he came to feel that he could not wait for a prudent time before publicly declaring himself a Catholic; he issued a statement to the effect that 'any member of Congregation, who thinks of voting for me at the election to the chair of Anglo-Saxon, should know that I intend, as soon as may be, to join, or rather to return to, the communion of the Catholic and Roman Church'.[44] Arnold has been condemned for this move by later commentators, who imply that until then his election to the Chair was a certainty and that he wantonly threw it away. That is not so. His edition of *Beowulf* made him a strong contender, but so was one of the other candidates, John Earle. He was a productive Anglo-Saxon scholar who had previously held the Chair for five years, and in the words of the *DNB* turned it from 'little more than an elegant sinecure' to a 'position of real usefulness'. Worldly wisdom suggests that Arnold could at least have waited until after the election before going public about his religious intentions, in a reversal of Henri IV's *Paris vaut bien une messe*. The recent University Tests Act meant that academic posts (other than specifically clerical ones) could be held by men of any religion or none, so that in principle there was no barrier to a Roman Catholic becoming Professor of Anglo-Saxon. But there was more to the situation than Arnold stubbornly following his conscience regardless of consequences. He was distressed to find that the election had become politicized. This was liable to happen in Oxford; Owen Chadwick has pointed out that in a climate of theological controversy previous elections to chairs 'showed signs that the constituency judged a candidate more by his religious opinions, which they could understand, than by his scholarship, of which

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they knew nothing'.[45] H.P.Liddon and the High Church party intended to use the election for the Chair of Anglo-Saxon in their campaign to maintain the Anglican identity of the university, in defiance of the Tests Act. They resolved to support Arnold, who was still on the face of it an Anglican of Catholic sympathies (who had at the same time escaped the false embrace of Rome) and the possessor of a distinguished name. He was, in effect, being set up in an ecclesiastical-academic power struggle. If he had been elected with the support of Liddon's faction in Congregation it would have been very difficult for him to have then presented himself as not an Anglican but a Romanist; not impossible, but it would have taken someone tougher-minded and more calculating than Arnold to do it.

John Earle was elected by what the *Times* report described as a large majority. Arnold heard contradictory opinions about the result; one Oxford acquaintance said that Earle would have won anyway, another that with the votes of Liddon's party, which he had forfeited, he would have succeeded. The double blow of Arnold's failure and his public return to Catholicism was intolerable to Julia and she renewed her insistence that he could no longer live with her. Arnold called on Newman on 16th October to tell him that he was returning to Catholic practice; writing a few days later he thanks Newman for his charity and expresses his joy and relief at the restoration of faith; at the same time he is distressed at the effect on his family: 'The state of my wife is very sad, and it seems likely that it will be found the best course for me to remain in London for a while. I think of taking lodgings somewhere near the British Museum, where I can find plenty to do. If any of the Fathers know of good and cheap lodgings in that part of London, I should be very glad to be informed of them'.[46] The request for a helping hand was characteristic.

Writing to Mary the following day Arnold reveals the complexity and intensity of his feelings:

> I could not feel with more painful keenness than I do the bitterness of the disappointment and shock which what I have done has caused your mother. Would to Heaven that she were linked to some one more capable of satisfying the ambition and aspiration of her nature than I am. And yet I must own to you, that when I look back, the horror of the thought of the mental state into which I must have fallen had I let myself be elected through Liddon and his friends, avowing—as he has himself avowed to me—that the policy on which they vote in university elections is guided by their views and hopes for 'the religious future of Oxford',—the horror of this thought, I say, makes me even now tremble and shudder.[47]

Like his original conversion, Arnold's return to Catholicism was a

https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-2005.2000.tb06461.x Published online by Cambridge University Press

lonely and courageous step. When he first became a Catholic Julia blamed Newman and sent him two abusive letters; at this latest turn of events she sent him a third:

> 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. You know well that he did nothing for the Roman Catholic Church in the ten years he belonged to it before, and you know well that he will do nothing for it now, but the temptation of having one of his father's sons under your direction was too much for you, and for the second time you counselled him to ignore every social duty and become a pervert. He has brought utter ruin upon us all, but what is that to you?

Julia Arnold was a good hater with an energetically vituperative style. In fact Newman seems to have played no active part in Arnold's to Catholicism, He commented dryly, 'It was fitting, by way of contrast, that so sweet and amiable a fellow as Arnold should have such a yoke fellow—but except as an aesthetic contrast, it is marvellous that such a pair should be'.[48]

The next phase of Arnold's life was bleak and obscure. He lived in lodgings in London, engaged in journalism, acting as an examiner for the Civil Service Commission, editing medieval manuscripts. Julia remained in Oxford in a smaller house and took in lodgers. But the marriage was semi-detached, not ended, and Tom returned to Oxford at regular intervals; he and his wife kept up a copious correspondence. Their financial problems were as nagging as ever. Then in 1880, Cardinal Newman, as he had just become, made a further intervention on Arnold's behalf; he wrote to his friend Lord Emly, a leading Liberal politician and a Catholic, asking if anything could be found for Arnold at University College Dublin, as the Catholic University was now called. Eventually, in 1882, Arnold got his old job back as Professor of English. The college was now run by the Jesuits, who were trying to get it into shape after years of neglect. There must have been an element of *temps retrouvé* about Arnold's return, as some of the colleagues he had known in the 1850s were still in post, rather the worse for wear, though he was shortly joined by a new Professor of Classics, Fr Gerard Hopkins SJ, whom few people then knew to be a great poet.

Arnold now had a regular income, but Julia flatly refused to move to Dublin, so he still had the expense of keeping up two homes and having to travel to England at intervals. In April 1888 Julia's cancer became terminal; Tom and several of their offspring were with her, and she asked him to read to her from the Psalms shortly before she died. Despite their physical separation and the painfulness of their divisions,

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Tom and Julia had remained, in their own way, in love, and he was overthrown by her death; so much so, that that he was initially unable to respond to the sad event that followed a few days later: the sudden death of Matthew from a heart attack.

Julia's death simplified Arnold's life, and reduced his financial difficulties; he was also materially helped by Mary, who was now well off, following the phenomenal success of her novel *Robert Elsmere*. She made plans for her father, but he upset them by marrying again in 1890. His second wife was Josephine Bennison, whom he and Julia had known in Dublin in the 1850s, and who had become a close friend of Tom's after his return to the city. She came from a Protestant family, but was a convert to Catholicism, with Nationalist sympathies. The autumn of Arnold's life was serene. He and Josephine were now a Catholic couple accepted in Dublin society; she liked entertaining, though he was shy and seemed like a guest at his own parties. In 1898 he travelled in Sweden, investigating the origins of *Beowulf*, and visited the shrine of St Bridget; the following year Tom and Josephine went to Rome for the first time, at Mary's invitation; the visit satisfied both his Catholic and his Classical interests, as his agnostic daughter complacently recalled.[49]

Newman died in 1890. Arnold had last seen him a couple of years before, and when congratulated on how well he looked, the aged cardinal replied with a smile, 'But you know Arnold, I am so very old'. Despite his expressions of devotion, Arnold tended to blow hot and cold about Newman. Writing after Newman's death, he is distinctly cool:

> It is 45 years since he became a Catholic, and the time has been honourably and not inactively spent: and yet one sighs to think how small has been the result. Consistency is an excellent thing, and that Newman may claim; but it should not tend towards *immobility*; unceasing activity, advance, and achievement should be no less characteristic of it than stability. The Cardinal's life for many years has been more immobile than his admirers liked to see.[50]

As James Bertram has commented, it was not until the Second Vatican Council that Newman's significance was fully apparent.[51] Writing to Acton in 1892, Arnold looks back to the early days of the Catholic University and the opposition between Newman and Cullen (who had done his best to obstruct Arnold's original appointment): 'Cullen was a strong man, and not hostile to learning and culture on principle; and if Newman had been less shrinkingly sensitive, less English, less Oxonian, in short something different from what he was, the two might have worked together to some profitable account'.[52] It is as if Arnold's increasing assimilation to Irish life and culture made his account of those ancient battles more sympathetic to Cullen than to

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Newman, whom he tends to caricature.

Arnold writes more warmly of Newman in the bland and rather evasive autobiography that he published in 1900. Later that year he fell ill with a lung infection, which worsened; he died in November, with his family around him, having received the viaticum from Fr Darlington, an English Jesuit at University College, who has been preserved in literature as the Dean of Studies in Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Tom Arnold is commemorated by a plaque in the University Church that Newman built on Stephen's Green, next to the college. During his life he knew many interesting and some celebrated people: his immediate family; Wordsworth, Clough, Newman, Acton, Hopkins; and, at the very end, James Joyce, whom he taught at University College. In his autobiography, he defined himself as a 'wanderer'. Physically, that is appropriate, in a career that took him from England to New Zealand to Tasmania; back to England, to Ireland, to England again; and finally returning to Ireland. Spiritually, too, he wandered from unbelief to Catholicism, to Anglicanism, and back to Catholicism. In terms of intellectual history, Arnold can be seen as bridging the gap between the national culture represented by his family and the growing sub-culture of Victorian Catholicism. Beyond all this, though, he was a talented and attractive person in his own right; idealistic, impractical, maddeningly vacillating at times, who more than once suffered a great deal, morally as well as materially, from following his conscience.

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