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978-1-107-01644-6 - The Oxford Movement: Europe and the Wider World 1830–1930

Edited by Stewart J. Brown and Peter B. Nockles

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## *Introduction*

*Stewart J. Brown and Peter B. Nockles*

### I

The Oxford Movement transformed the nineteenth-century established Church of England with a renewed conception of itself as a spiritual body. It reminded adherents of the established Church that theirs was a branch of the holy, catholic and apostolic Church, and not merely a creation of the Tudor state at the Reformation, as many of its critics asserted. In the ‘mind of the Oxford Movement’, to borrow Owen Chadwick’s phrase,<sup>1</sup> the Church of England was an integral part of the Church Catholic that had been instituted by Christ, guided through time by the Holy Spirit, directed by the apostles and then by their episcopal successors, preserved in doctrinal truth, enriched by long centuries of tradition, venerated by generations of the faithful, infused with divine grace through the sacraments and destined to abide until the return of Christ in glory.

The Oxford Movement was initiated in the early 1830s by members of the University of Oxford, notably Oriel College, largely as a response to the threats to the established Church posed by British Dissenters, Irish Catholics and Whig and Radical politicians who seemed poised to subjugate or even abolish the established Church and appropriate its property and income. It was also, as the late Frank Turner has argued, a response to the predominant evangelical ethos – what John Henry Newman called ‘the religion of the day’ – with its emphases on individual piety, the conversion experience, justification by faith and personal Bible study and its sense that the Ordinances of the Church were relatively unimportant when compared to the religion of the heart.<sup>2</sup> The movement became particularly associated with the ideas expressed in a series of ninety ‘Tracts for the Times’, conceived by Newman, written by various authors and issued between 1833 and 1841. The Tractarians, as supporters of the movement

<sup>1</sup> O. Chadwick, *The Mind of the Oxford Movement* (London, 1960).

<sup>2</sup> F. M. Turner, *John Henry Newman: The Challenge to Evangelical Religion* (New Haven, 2002).

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became known, proclaimed boldly that the Church of England represented the divine authority that society needed in order to meet the challenge of the spread of religious and political liberalism and unbelief, and was a counterpoise to the growing influence of evangelical individualism with its emphasis on private judgement. In contrast to the latter, the movement's leaders promoted an unostentatious but deep spirituality which emphasised awe, obedience, reverence and the principle of reserve when communicating religious knowledge. The Tractarians placed a particular value on fasting, self-denial and asceticism.

By the later 1830s, some Tractarians also began directing attention to the worship, devotion and architecture of the medieval Church. Their thought reflected a more general revival of interest in the Middle Ages as well as the early Church that was also finding expression in Romantic literature, especially the historical novels of Sir Walter Scott or the celebration of chivalry in Kenelm Digby's *The Broad Stone of Honour*. Some Tractarians went beyond a traditional high church insistence on observance of the rubrics and called for more elaborate ceremonial and liturgical dress, and the marking of saints' days and festivals of the Christian year. They were drawn to more ornate church furnishings – including stone altars, sedilia, lighted candles, reredoses, crosses, pointed arches, tapestries, stained glass and wall murals. Some Tractarians, or to be more precise, their Cambridge counterparts associated with the Camden Society, became advocates of church restoration and aimed at recovering the original beauty and symbolism of medieval structures. A few eventually became drawn to devotional practices associated with the medieval Church, including private confession, clerical celibacy, the monastic life and sisterhoods. Continued reflection on the history and nature of the Church, meanwhile, brought a minority of more extreme Tractarians to question whether the established Church of England was indeed a true branch of the universal Church after all. They grew openly critical of Protestantism, and began to look towards the Roman Catholic Church as a model, if not the one true Church. The minority who eventually submitted to the Roman Church did so because they could not feel sure of salvation outside her fold. These 'Romanisers' aroused bitter opposition from those who cherished the Protestant identity of the Church of England. Some viewed the conversion of John Henry Newman in October 1845 as marking the effective end of the Oxford Movement; certainly growing distrust of the 'Romanising' tendencies of the movement had by now seriously weakened its influence in the Church of England, and Newman's conversion, along with a number of his followers, did represent a milestone. Many more Tractarians, notably E. B. Pusey

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and John Keble, however, remained within the Church of England after 1845, and these Anglo-Catholics, as they became known, continued the work of transforming the established Church through what they termed ‘Church principles’, or a fuller understanding of the essential marks of the true Church.

There is a rich theological and historical literature on the Oxford Movement within the Church of England. We have a detailed understanding of how the movement contributed, not only to conflict and controversy in England, but also to the revival of the Church and religious belief in nineteenth-century English national life. We have some fine scholarly biographies of Newman and other key figures and an increasing understanding of the role of personal influence and friendship in shaping the movement. We have a growing appreciation of how the Oxford Movement – in practice, though certainly not in its original intent – helped to reshape the Church of England into a more diverse and pluralistic religious body, in which Anglo-Catholics, high churchmen, evangelicals and liberal churchmen alike could find a spiritual home. What is far less well known, however, is the nature of the influence of the Oxford Movement on Churches outside England. To what extent were the beliefs and ideals of the Oxford Movement communicated or exported to other Churches and to other countries? Did the Oxford Movement promote missionary activity and if so, how was this activity the product of its distinctive Church principles? The Tractarians believed that they were recovering and restoring universal principles of the Christian faith, and not simply addressing certain difficulties within their own particular national Church. How far was this view shared by Christians outside England? Did the Tractarian understanding of the Church promote, or inhibit, closer relations among the Churches of the world-wide Anglican Communion? Did the Oxford Movement contribute in significant ways to the emerging ecumenical movement of the nineteenth century? What role did the Oxford Movement play in the nineteenth-century global expansion of Christianity?

The essays of this volume engage with these questions through a series of case studies involving different regions of the English-speaking world and the European continent during the first century of the movement, from approximately 1830 to 1930. In what is the first volume on this theme since the classic *Northern Catholicism: Centenary Studies in the Oxford and Parallel Movements* of 1933,<sup>3</sup> our international team of authors have viewed

<sup>3</sup> N. P. Williams and C. Harris (eds.), *Northern Catholicism: Centenary Studies in the Oxford and Parallel Movements* (London, 1933).

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the Oxford Movement as an international movement within a global context. Most of the chapters in this volume began life as contributions to an international conference on the Oxford Movement in its world context organised by Professor Nigel Yates and Dr Peter Nockles and held in September 2008 in Pusey House, University of Oxford. Following the conference, a number of authors were invited to develop their papers into book chapters, and another chapter was commissioned. This volume owes a particular debt to the vision and inspiration of the late Professor Yates, who recognised that the influence of the Oxford Movement extended far beyond its English heartland and that a proper understanding of the movement must involve consideration of its global context. We dedicate the volume to him, in warm gratitude for his many contributions to the history of the modern Church, and especially of the high church movements within the Anglican Communion.

## II

Peter Nockles opens our volume with an account of the origins of the Oxford Movement at Oriel College, Oxford. His chapter, ‘The Oxford Movement in an Oxford college: Oriel as the cradle of Tractarianism’, explores how a small group of gifted and devout young churchmen largely emerging from within the confines of a single college brought to life a movement of religious revival that would profoundly affect the wider Church. While the movement soon flourished on a wider canvas, Oriel College, Nockles demonstrates, ‘was truly the cradle, crucible and making of Tractarianism’. The beginnings of the movement reflect its origin in a particular milieu or ‘genius loci’, and demonstrate the power of religious ideas, and of a small community of thinkers, banded together in order to seek to restore the Church of their day to what they conceived to be its primitive glory.

In the first part of the volume, our authors consider the expanding influence of the Oxford Movement in the English-speaking world, first within the British Isles and then beyond. In chapter 2, ‘Isaac Williams and Welsh Tractarian theology’, John Boneham explores the impact of the Oxford Movement on the Church in Wales, especially the Welsh-speaking community. As he shows, despite the predominance of evangelical dissent, the Oxford Movement did establish an early presence in Wales, largely through the influence of Isaac Williams and his circle of followers. The Welsh Movement, Boneham demonstrates, was moderate and pastoral in nature, and was implacably opposed to any Romanising

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positions. In chapter 3, Stewart Brown considers ‘Scotland and the Oxford Movement’, discussing both the impact of the movement on the small and struggling Scottish Episcopal Church, and also the rather surprising and hitherto largely uncharted influence of the movement on the established Presbyterian Church of Scotland through the Scoto-Catholic movement of the later nineteenth century.

In chapter 4, ‘The Oxford Movement and the British Empire: Newman, Manning and the 1841 Jerusalem bishopric’, Rowan Strong provides fresh perspectives on Tractarian involvement in the debates over the formation of the Jerusalem bishopric in 1841, giving particular attention to the role of the Tractarian-influenced high churchman Henry Manning in the expansion of the colonial Church, and to the formation of the Colonial Bishops Fund in 1841. As Strong demonstrates, in spite of John Henry Newman’s opposition to co-operation with the ‘heretical’ German Lutheran Church, Manning and other Oxford Movement sympathisers initially viewed the Jerusalem bishopric as a promising move towards the expansion of Anglicanism world-wide through missionary bishops. In chapter 5, ‘The Australian bishops and the Oxford Movement’, Austin Cooper develops the theme of Tractarianism, missionary bishops and the further expansion of Anglicanism overseas. He considers the influence of the Oxford Movement on the six Australian Anglican bishops who met in synod in the autumn of 1850 in Sydney, noting how they gave a practical expression to Oxford Movement principles and conceived of themselves as establishing the ‘Church catholic’ in Australia, despite ‘the tyranny of distance’ separating them from the mother Church. David Hilliard then explores the longer-term impact of the Oxford Movement in Australia in chapter 6, ‘Anglo-Catholicism in Australia, c.1860–1960’, noting both the importance of the movement in Australian Anglicanism, and also the way in which the Australian context gave a distinctive shape to the Anglo-Catholicism that grew out of the Oxford Movement. This distinctive Australian Anglo-Catholicism included the work of the bush brotherhoods, which carried on a mission in the more remote regions of the continent. Hilliard’s account of Australian Anglo-Catholicism carries him beyond the end date of the volume, to 1960, but the nature of his material required the longer time period. Peter Nockles closes the first section with a chapter on ‘The Oxford Movement and the United States’, in which he examines Tractarian influence on the Protestant Episcopal Church in the new republic. He notes how Tractarian views contributed both to an existing, if embattled, high church movement in the Episcopal Church and also to the growing cultural divergence between England

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and the United States, especially from the mid 1840s, as more and more American Protestants grew hostile to the ‘Romanising’ elements of the Oxford Movement and left the Episcopal Church vulnerable to its critics as a consequence.

The second section of the book shifts attention from Britain and the wider English-speaking world to the influence of the Oxford Movement on the European continent. In chapter 8, Geoffrey Rowell, bishop of Gibraltar, provides a broad survey of the European context of the Oxford Movement, exploring the engagement of leading Tractarians with the scholarship and Church movements on the Continent. He observes that there were ‘important continental parallels to and influences on the Oxford Movement’, not least in the shared response to the ‘mythological reductionism’ of the German biblical scholar David Friedrich Strauss. He concludes by reminding us that his own diocese of Gibraltar was formed in 1842, and that soon afterwards churches were being formed ‘which clearly affirmed that the Church of England in Europe had a catholic inheritance and a catholic identity’.

Rowell’s opening survey is followed by three chapters that examine the engagement of the Oxford Movement in specific Western European nations. Albrecht Geck gives an account of the movement’s engagement with Germany in chapter 9, ‘Pusey, Tholuck and the reception of the Oxford Movement in Germany’. He considers the responses of the different theological schools in Germany to the Tractarians, including that of the celebrated ‘Tübingen school’ to Tractarian views on the history and nature of the Church. The affinities between the English and German cultures helped ensure a close German interest in the Oxford Movement, though it is also clear that Tractarians continued to view German theology of all schools with intense suspicion. In chapter 10, ‘The Oxford Movement: reception and perception in Catholic circles in nineteenth-century Belgium’, Jan De Maeyer and Karel Stobbe explore the reception and perception of the Oxford Movement in Belgium through a systematic analysis of leading Roman Catholic French-language cultural and Church periodicals, as well as tracts, treatises and books. As they demonstrate, the prevailing Anglophilia in mid-nineteenth-century Belgium helped to ensure considerable initial interest in the Oxford Movement. At the same time, many Belgian Roman Catholic observers also believed the movement would soon bring the Church of England under the authority of Rome, and when it became clear that this was not going to happen, Belgian interest in the movement waned. In chapter 11, ‘“Separated brethren”: French Catholics and the Oxford Movement’, Jeremy Morris

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considers the reactions in France to the Oxford Movement. French responses to the Oxford Movement, he observes, demonstrated ‘the tenacity and ubiquity of French suspicion of Britain’, with concern over British misgovernment of Irish Catholics becoming a major cause of continuing distrust. There was little confidence in France that the Church of England could be reformed. For most French commentators, the greatest hope was that the Oxford Movement might bring the English nation, the ‘separated brethren’, into conformity with the Roman Catholic Church. As in Belgium, interest in and enthusiasm for the movement tended to be predicated on its potential for conversions or submission to Rome.

The final three chapters explore the impact of the Oxford Movement on emerging ecumenical visions in nineteenth-century Europe. In chapter 12, ‘The Oxford Movement, Jerusalem and the Eastern Question’, Mark Chapman discusses how Tractarian responses to the proposal for the Jerusalem bishopric contributed not only to a new interest in, and sensitivity to, the situation of the Eastern Churches, but also to the ecumenical hopes for reunion with the Eastern Churches. Angela Berlis further considers ecumenical concerns in her chapter on ‘Ignaz von Döllinger and the Anglicans’, giving particular attention to the correspondence of the Roman Catholic historian Döllinger and the Tractarian Edward Bouverie Pusey, conducted over several decades, and to their search for understanding and unity. Finally, in chapter 14, ‘Anglicans, Old Catholics and Reformed Catholics in late nineteenth-century Europe’, Nigel Yates closes our volume with a survey of Anglo-Catholic ecumenical commitments in the later nineteenth century, giving particular attention to controversial efforts by some Anglo-Catholics to seek unity with Old Catholics and Reformed Catholics in Europe on the basis of the historic episcopate and catholic order.

There has been a tendency for the Oxford Movement to be viewed too much in insular terms and within the confines of a familiar historiography of Anglicanism. To understand how the Oxford Movement transformed the Church of England is certainly important but it is only half the story. Broader continental vistas have been occasionally opened up, notably by the work on Anglo-French interactions over the movement by the late Louis Allen and as exemplified in W. G. Roe’s important study of Lammenais (1966), but a certain Anglican insularity in the treatment of the movement has prevailed. Therefore, it is hoped that our collection of essays breaks away from Anglocentricity to new ground and adopts a fresh approach. The case studies in this volume aim to present fresh interpretations of the impact of the Oxford Movement outside England

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and the Church of England in a more systematic and sustained way than has hitherto been the norm, and seek to explore the movement in its broader world context. Within the confines of our volume, it has not been possible to present a comprehensive world history of the Oxford Movement, however desirable such a study might be. We are aware that there are notable gaps in our coverage. There is, for example, no chapter on the Oxford Movement in Ireland – although two of our authors, Peter Nockles and Austin Cooper, have published studies on this subject, to which interested readers are directed.<sup>4</sup> We have not explored the impact of the Oxford Movement in Canada, New Zealand and Sweden,<sup>5</sup> where there are interesting stories to be told, nor of the Tractarian influence on the high church Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. All this said, we do believe that our volume provides valuable new perspectives on the impact of the Oxford Movement, not only on world Anglicanism but also on the global expansion of Christianity.

<sup>4</sup> P. Nockles, 'Church or Protestant Sect? The Church of Ireland, High Churchmanship and the Oxford Movement, 1822–1869', *Historical Journal*, 41 (1998), pp. 457–93; A. Cooper, 'Ireland and the Oxford Movement', *JRH*, 19 (1995), pp. 62–74.

<sup>5</sup> See O. Bexell, 'The Oxford Movement as Received in Sweden', in A. Jarlert (ed.), *Kyrkohistorisk årsskrift*, Publications of the Swedish Society of Church History (Uppsala, 2006), pp. 143–52. Peter Nockles has explored the insights into the Oxford Movement of the Swedish Lutheran Church historian Yngve Brilioth, one-time archbishop of Uppsala. See P. Nockles, 'The Oxford Movement and Its Historiographers: Brilioth's "Anglican Revival" and "Three Lectures on Evangelicalism and the Oxford Movement" Revisited', *ibid.*, pp. 133–42.



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## *Prelude*

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