

Society of the Faith

Liddon Lecture, 23rd May 2019

Gerard Manley Hopkins and Henry Parry Liddon

“Confession, Conversion, Catholicism”

On 17 October 1866, Edward Pusey wrote to his close friend Henry Parry Liddon¹ thus:

‘My dearest L,

Our young friends at Balliol seem to be worrying one another out of the church. One takes alarm because another does. I had a letter from Addis² yesterday which seems as if he were gone (but I don't understand it) and yet he mentioned to me the Roman question only incidentally three weeks ago as if it were one which he must consider one day.

Today I had a letter from Coles of Balliol not about himself but about his friend, whose relations wish him to see you and me before he goes. I wrote word that seeing a person to satisfy relations with his own mind made up is a mere mockery. But that on my return I would gladly see any one who wishes to see me, but that it was useless for a person to come with his mind made up.’

Only when Liddon's journals were moved to Pusey House, and sat next to the voluminous Pusey correspondence, did it become possible to deduce that the unnamed friend of Coles is Gerard Manley Hopkins. Pusey's letter is a good example of a number of documents which survive in Oxford's libraries, and which relate to the undergraduate Gerard Manley Hopkins. Although he died in 1889, Hopkins did not begin to gain fame as a poet until after Robert Bridges published his poems in 1918. The early biographers and editors of Pusey, Liddon and

¹ MS Pusey House, Liddon Bound Volumes (hereinafter cited as LBV) 67, 152. Pusey to Liddon, 17 Oct. 1866.

² Addis, to whom Pusey refers, is Hopkins's great friend William Edward Addis (1844-1917), also of Balliol, who shared lodgings with Hopkins in New Inn Hall Street and who was confirmed with Hopkins on 4 November 1866. Two of Hopkins's letters in the week before his reception mention the fact that Addis had already been received, despite deciding later than Gerard to convert. (*The Collected Works of Gerard Manley Hopkins* ed. by Lesley Higgins and Michael Suarez, S.J. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006 –) Volume 1, Correspondence 1852-1881, ed. R.K.R Thornton and Catherine Phillips, p.112 [Hopkins to Newman 15 Oct. 1866], and p.114 [Hopkins to his father, 16 Oct. 1866]).

other Oxford figures of the time would have had no sense whatsoever that the young Balliol convert, so controversial in the 1860s, was a figure of any significance. Yet recourse to Tractarian materials shows us much about that young man and his youthful theological development, and the particular part taken by Liddon in that journey.

Confession

Important and understudied is an organisation called the Brotherhood of the Holy Trinity, a devotional and ritualistic group to which Hopkins' closest friends belonged, which Hopkins himself almost joined and which played a part in his undergraduate life, and to which the young Liddon had also belonged. Among the Brotherhood's resolutions was a commitment to "practise self-examination daily" and the members' manual for 1858 suggests, "If the conscience be troubled, to open one's grief to a priest." The priest to whom Hopkins confessed most often when an Anglican was Liddon. In the diaries Liddon kept as an undergraduate, he occasionally records events in Latin, a common enough custom that Hopkins would later employ in recording sexual sins in his confessional notes. Two particular recurring events cause Liddon to depart from English: his confession, and the chapter meetings of the Brotherhood of the Holy Trinity. Not surprisingly, Pusey heard Liddon's first confession.

It is natural to suppose that Liddon's own ministry as a confessor was enormously influenced by his friend and colleague to whom, as an undergraduate, he records confessing on at least five occasions. Hopkins, of course, made his confession to Pusey as well during his undergraduate career, and kept ten months' worth of "confessional notes". They begin on

March 25 1865, a day on which Liddon records having heard Hopkins's confession: there can be little doubt that the notes began at Liddon's suggestion.

Shortly afterwards, the subject of auricular confession in the Church of England exploded into controversy. The context was one of the most lurid of Victorian crimes, known as the Road Hill House Murder.³ In June 1860, Francis Savill Kent, a boy of three, had been found stabbed and with his throat cut near the back door of his family house. Francis was the son of Samuel Kent and his second wife, Mary Drewe Pratt, whom he had married in 1855, having had four children by his late first wife. Three people were separately suspected of the murder – Samuel Kent himself, who was unpopular in the local community, Elizabeth Gough, the child's nursery maid, and Constance Emily Kent, then sixteen years old, Samuel's third daughter by his first marriage, a girl who was known to have no love for her stepmother or the children of the second marriage. There was much publicity, but the police investigations bore no fruit. Elizabeth and Constance were separately arrested and subsequently discharged. Constance was sent to a finishing school in Brittany, but the scandal followed her, and she spent two years living in a convent in the town of Dinan. After this she resided at St Mary's Home in Brighton, a haven for "female penitents" founded by Arthur Wagner, Curate of St Paul's and a member of the Brotherhood of the Holy Trinity. The home run by the sisters of the Community of the Blessed Virgin Mary, which Wagner had also founded. Constance was a paying guest who helped the sisters in their work and gained an increasing religious devotion, leading to her Confirmation.

³ See Bernard Taylor, *Cruelly Murdered: Constance Kent and the Killing at Road Hill House* (London: Grafton, 1989); Anthony Wagner and Antony Dale, *The Wagners of Brighton* (London: Phillimore and co., 1983)

Wagner had been hearing confessions regularly at St Paul's for some time. In Holy Week 1865, Constance confessed to him that she was guilty of her half-brother's murder, which she carried out as an act of revenge upon her stepmother, who had been Samuel Kent's mistress for some time before his first wife died. Wagner instructed Constance to confess to the police. This she did, and subsequently appeared before Trowbridge Magistrates for a preliminary hearing. At this hearing Wagner, a witness, refused to answer two minor questions on the ground that to do so would have been to break the seal of the confessional. The public reaction to this refusal was fierce. For most Anglicans, the idea that a priest of the Church of England was encouraging his flock to habitual auricular confession was unacceptable. Questions were asked in both Houses of Parliament,⁴ and five separate leading articles appeared in *The Times* on the subject.⁵

Hopkins could not have been unaware of this furore particularly during May 1865, when the controversy was at its height. However, we can go further in supposing that he discussed the matter both with Liddon and with friends. In his journal for May 13 1865, Liddon memorably records a walk with Hopkins – memorably, because after commenting on the beauty of the bluebells, Liddon notes “O Lord, lift my heart up to thee.” Jude Nixon is right to note the uncharacteristic nature of this entry – Liddon's journals are for the most part merely factual, and often dry. But immediately above those lines Liddon has noted the appearance of “a fierce article agst A.Wagner in *The Times* of today.” An extract from this leading article gives a flavour of the contempt in which the English establishment held the practice of confession.

⁴ *Hansard Parliamentary Debates*, Third Series, CLXXIX (9 May 1865 – 9 June 1865), pp.178-187 (House of Lords, May 12) and pp.767-775 (House of Commons, May 23).

⁵ *The Times*, 26 April, 1865, p.8; 27 April, 1865, p.10; 6 May, 1865, p.9; 11 May 1865 p.11; 26 May 1865, p.9.

Most persons probably were aware that, in a more or less modified form, the Practice of Confession was recommended by a certain school of clergymen. But it is so notoriously contrary to all English feeling, it had been hit so hard whenever it had ventured to show itself, and it was so certain to elicit equal vigour whenever it reappeared, that it was no doubt generally supposed to lurk only in an enfeebled shape in the twilight which separates the broad day of English Protestantism from the gloom of Romanism.⁶

The same article calls the use of the confessional by Church of England priests “an outrage on common morality”. (Later in the month, on May 26, we find the *Times* leader confidently asserting that any residual Tractarian practices are merely a shadow of the defunct Oxford Movement. “They are for the most part a mere gratification of a taste for ceremonial or of a sentimental pietism.”⁷)

Liddon’s walk with Hopkins on May 13 was a long one. It is unreasonable to suppose that they did not discuss the Wagner case, given the fact that Liddon was concerned enough by the *Times* leader to record it in his journal. Furthermore, two weeks earlier, Liddon had walked with Coles and Bright and discussed the fact that Jowett (of Balliol) “appears to be much horrified at the spread of confession in the ch. of England, and especially in Oxford.”⁸

Constance Kent pleaded guilty at her trial in July 1865, and the initial sentence of death was commuted to life imprisonment. The controversy on confession continued unabated in Parliament, in pamphlets, and in newspapers. Wagner paid a heavy price for his involvement,

⁶ *The Times*, 13 May, 1865, p.9

⁷ *The Times*, 26 May, 1865, p.9

⁸ Pusey House, Liddon Journals, 29 April 1865.

being the victim of what the Times called a brutal assault in the street. The Brotherhood of the Holy Trinity had discussed the attack on May 16 1865, and sent a message of congratulation to Wagner.⁹

Conversion

In the early 1850s, when Liddon was a young man preparing for ordination, the Brotherhood of the Holy Trinity refounded itself after the loss of many converts. Intellectual questions of authority were dominant among adherents to the Oxford Movement. The Gorham Judgement of 1850 saw a judicial committee of the Privy Council overturn the decision of Bishop Philpott of Exeter not to institute a clergyman, Mr Gorham, who, in the Bishop's view, failed to adhere to an orthodox Baptismal doctrine. This decision put the Puseyites on the defensive, and the detailed and reasoned manner in which they carried out that defence did little to repel the accusations of rationalism which their Roman Catholic friends were quick to make. Ten or fifteen years later, the High Church Movement had moved on. It is not that the intellectual questions disappeared, but they were by then accompanied by something else: the very practical context of the ritualist controversies. The Brotherhood of the Holy Trinity had a rule of life which allowed what we might call the personal ritualism of its young members to find an outlet, and to which Hopkins own youthful remarks on ascetic practices bear witness.¹⁰ A glance through the minutes of Brotherhood meetings during Hopkins's undergraduate career almost always reveals reference to some dispute concerning confession, vestments or incense, or features the names of the so-called ritual martyrs: in fact, on March 5 1866 the Brotherhood records that Charles Lowder was to make a visit requesting alms for the Mission at St George's in the East.¹¹ The rather shameless attempts of some in the High Church party to claim, after he died on 29th March 1866 that John Keble was "by nature a ritualist",¹² make it clear that this issue had become the touchstone of authenticity for many high church people England. This partial shift from ecclesiological argument to practical discovery of Catholicism

⁹ BHT 7, 18 May, 1865. Coles's "Memoir of Liddon" recalls this discussion.

¹⁰ For example, his comments to Bridges about Challis of Merton College in *Correspondence* I, p.92

¹¹ BHT Minute Books VIII, 5 March 1866

¹² *The Church Review*, April 7 1866, extract in Keble Papers, Keble College.

is echoed by Hopkins's explanation of the reasons behind his conversion: passing briefly, and not in order, over arguments "partly my own, partly others; common sense; and reading the Bible", he writes of "an increasing knowledge of the Catholic system (at first under the form of Tractarianism, later in its genuine place) which only wants to be known in order to be loved - its consolations, its marvellous ideal of holiness,"¹³ and so on.

A remarkable document concerning the Roman Question survives, for a long time wrongly catalogued among the papers of John Keble, at Keble College.¹⁴ Forty pages in length, it takes the form of a dialogue between two characters, one "Romanus" and another "Oxiensis". Pencil marginalia in Liddon's own hand¹⁵ make it clear that *Oxiensis*, the representative of the Puseyite position, was Liddon himself. Behind this debate we find not just the influence of events, but the shadows of individuals. Most prominent is the figure of Pusey, and it is here that the young Liddon contrasts most strongly with the young Hopkins. Another and less well remembered character is one Thomas William Allies. He was no stranger to Liddon, having been a few years senior in Oxford. He too was a member of the Brotherhood of the Holy Trinity, and Liddon records him as having been present when he, Liddon, was admitted to that group.¹⁶ Allies left Oxford and took orders, but his own examination of the Roman question took him further and further towards secession. In particular, it is his large and controversial work entitled *The See of Peter*¹⁷ which is significant here. At its initial publication, Allies remained a parish priest in the Church of England, but the Gorham judgement had taken its toll.¹⁸ The defence Allies offers of papal primacy, in contrast with what he perceives to be the secular supremacy which was forced upon the Church of England, was to prove highly influential in the years ahead, Henry Edward Manning being the most celebrated of converts whose decision was influenced, in part, by Allies work.¹⁹

¹³ *Correspondence I*, p.116.

¹⁴ "Notes concerning Roman Catholic controversy", Keble Papers, Keble College, Oxford.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.1a

¹⁶ Loose note in Liddon's hand, BHT Papers, Pusey House.

¹⁷ *The See of Peter: The Rock of the Church, the Source of Jurisdiction and the Centre of Unity* (London, Burns and Lambert: 1850)

¹⁸ For a biographical account, see Mary H. Allies, *Thomas William Allies* (London: Burns, Oates and Washbourne:1924), ch.V

¹⁹ See James Pereiro, *Cardinal Manning* (Oxford, OUP: 1998), p.117.

Allies is a major target of Pusey's Eirenicon, the title of which is ironic, given the oxygen it gave to controversial flames in 1865, perhaps the year of Hopkins greatest High Church zeal. Allies completed a third edition of his work on the See of Peter in December of that year, and added to its title the phrase "with corrections offered against Pusey's Eirenicon." Perhaps deliberately, he inscribed his good wishes on a copy he sent to Pusey, on the 30th January 1866, the date all old fashioned Tractarians know to be the date of the so-called martyrdom of Charles I.²⁰

Allies was not finished there. Again in 1866, the year in which Hopkins converted, he produced a pamphlet entitled "Dr Pusey and the Ancient Church", which rails at the professor for his refusal "to look in the face such facts of history as are disagreeable to him: as for instance, the civil supremacy which rules in his own community or, the immense body of proof which supports the Principiate of the Apostolic Chair." He goes on: "The complete and accurate consideration of those two supremacies which determine in fact the position of his community as a whole, he shirks."²¹

Accusations made by converts against the infuriating intransigence of Dr Pusey were common. They take us back to the young Liddon's dialogue, and provide another connection with Hopkins. From the very beginning the charge is made against Liddon: you are only a member of the Church of England because of Dr Pusey. It is a charge he does not fully rebut. Romanus is able to contrast the seemingly open and reasonable position of Manning – who found himself unable in conscience to remain in the Church of England largely as a result of the Gorham judgement – with the intractable avoidance of the issue which Pusey displays. Recalling Pusey's stated intention to die in the Church of England, Romanus asks the young Liddon to consider whether this is not simply a refusal to consider the full consequences of Gorham, as Manning had done. Romanus here concludes: "Comparing Manning with Keble and Pusey, his conduct seems to be marked by a resolute adherence to principle, which they have not yet shown."

²⁰ The copy survives in Pusey House, Oxford.

²¹ T.W. Allies, *Dr Pusey and the Ancient Church* (London, Longmans, Green & Co.: 1866), p.128.

Liddon – Oxiensis – does not demur when Romanus accuses Pusey of simply dismissing anyone who considers conversion as suffering from some spiritual malaise. Later in the dialogue Romanus accuses Liddon of having Dr Pusey stand in the place of our Lord. His role could hardly be more highly perceived.

Liddon’s near obsession with Pusey characterizes his life from undergraduate days onwards. Hopkins, too, was to come under Pusey’s spell, and would write, “Dr Pusey I revere most of all men in the world”,²² but for him the trance was temporary, and his puzzlement at the contents of the *Eirenicon* was not too far removed from the frustration felt by Allies. His own decision to convert, he maintained, was not in the end a matter of the influence of this rather than that person. In fact, personalities seem at their strongest when he explains not having seceded earlier, since he says of Pusey and Liddon, “the fact that they were Anglicans kept me one”.²³ More than two weeks before his reception, Hopkins wrote that “for a good time past I have been uninfluenced by anybody, especially from the Catholic side.”²⁴

In many ways, Liddon was to Hopkins as Pusey to Liddon. But Pusey was altogether a larger figure, personally as well as theologically, and Liddon chose freely to be cowed. Hopkins was different: as Jude Nixon has put it, Liddon could not “keep” him.²⁵ Hopkins was sure enough of his own position actively to seek an audience with Pusey before his reception, and this is the point at which we began.²⁶ Here Pusey is at his sternest but also his most perceptive: he has seen convert young men countless times before, their minds are made up, and he will not waste his time with them. Unkind as his letter to Hopkins was, it was also probably correct: Hopkins wanted to see not Liddon but Liddon’s master, to reassure his own conviction by Pusey’s inability to persuade.²⁷

²² *Correspondence I*, p.125

²³ *Ibid.*, p.117.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.106.

²⁵ Jude V. Nixon, *Gerard Manley Hopkins and his contemporaries: Liddon, Newman, Darwin and Pater* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1994), p.43.

²⁶ See for example *Correspondence I*, p.125.

²⁷ *Correspondence I*, p.123, previously wrongly dated as 10, rather than 20 October. See Peter Groves, “The Conversion of Gerard Manley Hopkins: Some documents from the archive of Pusey House, Oxford”, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 53 (2001)

There's a minor point to be added on the question of personal influence. Hopkins protested that none had been or could be brought to bear. Pusey admitted it was too late, but another experienced Oxford politician took no chances. It is no accident that Newman was keen for Hopkins to be admitted as close to the beginning of Michaelmas Term as possible. The long vacation was the obvious opportunity to tempt those who were drifting away from their Oxford overseers. Allow them too much time back in the Oxford round, and the big guns of Tractarianism might fire to good effect, and the chance be lost.

We have heard that Liddon identifies himself as "Oxiensis", but who is "Romanus"? The handwriting of the main text is not Liddon's, and no identification is made in the main text itself. The document post-dates Liddon's ordination as priest, but clearly not by much, and refers to correspondence which has taken place between the dialogue partners, who are described as friends. If it is wrong to say that the figures of Hopkins's career haunt the earlier life of Liddon, the coincidence might still be said to be "spooky". The initials by which Liddon refers to "Romanus" are H.J.C. – Henry James Coleridge, formerly Fellow of Oriel and member with Liddon of the Brotherhood of the Holy Trinity, ordained deacon but not priest as an Anglican before being received into the Roman Catholic church in 1852, studying theology in Rome and entering the Jesuit Novitiate in 1857. In November 1865, a letter from Keble to Pusey names Coleridge – son of his own friend Sir John – as the author of a fierce article in *The Month* against Pusey's Eirenicon.²⁸ In 1867 Coleridge SJ conducted Hopkins's Holy Week retreat, and in 1876 Coleridge was the editor of *The Month*, who would not publish a strange and lengthy poem called *The Wreck of the Deutschland*.

Catholicism

Critics tend to call "Tractarian" that early poetry which looks and sounds far more "reserved" than Hopkins's better known verse, but people are happy to find Tractarian characteristics

²⁸ Keble to Pusey, 24 November 1865, LBV 51, Pusey House. See H.P. Liddon, *Life of Edward Bouverie Pusey* (London, Longmans, Green & Co, 1898) vol. IV, p.127.

throughout his work. To what extent is this legitimate? No doubt Hopkins has a strong sense of Christ's incarnational presence, no doubt he is committed to finding the revelation of God in nature, but are these not symptoms of his adhering to orthodox Christian doctrines (of incarnation and creation in this context)? Take *Hurrahing in Harvest* and its "azurous hung hills" which are the "world wielding shoulder" of Christ. Psalm 121 is clearly a source for these, as the repeated phrase "lift up" makes clear; and this echo of both the Authorized Version of the Bible and the Book of Common Prayer psalters itself might remind us of Hopkins's Tractarian days, but caution is in order. Anglican sources were not the property of Tractarians, just as reading the Church Fathers was not a peculiarly Tractarian activity, and patristic Christology was hardly unknown to the Jesuits.

The problem is, of course, the difference between establishing context, making connections between Hopkins and Tractarian themes, and demonstrating specific causal links. The point can be made by the analogous consideration of a different aspect of Hopkins's thought and output, one almost unknown to Tractarian theologians. Few would now regard his fascination with John Duns Scotus as the product of an accurate philosophical exegesis of Scotus's epistemology; much of what has been said in the past about Scotus's thought in relation to Hopkins could have been said about almost any Scholastic Aristotelian.²⁹ The particular intellectual influences which Hopkins critics have been suggesting and asserting often belong in a context far wider than the specific thinker or text which Hopkins happens to mention in correspondence or journal, and Tractarian theology and poetry both fall into this category.

Patristic resonances, found in those who knew and influenced Hopkins, are an obvious example. A legacy of the *Tracts* themselves had been an ever closer assimilation of doctrinal discussion with patristic study, a development fostered by the lengthy and ambitious *Library of the Fathers* project which Keble, Newman and Pusey led. The project continued into and beyond Hopkins's Puseyite years, and marks a direct link between the Oxford Movement proper and the early Anglo-Catholicism of the 1860s. Liddon's Christology is theologically unremarkable largely because its content was so immediately recognisable to those who had

²⁹ For emphasis of this point see Justus George Lawler, *Hopkins Reconstructed* (New York, Continuum, 1998), p.195ff.

read, even thinly, a range of patristic theology. Nixon quotes Liddon's assured rhetorical prose in the contention that Christ's unique relationship with God is "like a ray of light from the parent fire with which it is unbrokenly joined"³⁰; the English belongs to Liddon, the image to Tertullian. The *Apology*, in which the ray analogy for the relationship of Father and Son appears, had been published in the *Library of the Fathers* in 1854, translated by the Curate of Daresbury, Charles Dodgson, whose better known son was to be Liddon's friend and colleague at Christ Church.

A claim to patristic orthodoxy, and to rediscovering the Fathers, was an integral part of Tractarian apologetics. Hopkins's mature poetry, with its robust statement of Christ's incarnational participation in created humanity, reflects themes which Tractarians and Roman Catholics alike, indeed all Christians, might own. Nixon is right to comment on the absence from Hopkins's early efforts of "the sustaining ministry of the Holy Ghost in *God's grandeur*",³¹ but it is a poetic, not an intellectual, absence; Hopkins would, as a Tractarian, hardly have been unaware of such basic pneumatological teaching. Famous lines such as "Acts in God's eye what in God's eye he is. Christ" in *As kingfishers catch fire*, or "I am all at once what Christ is" in *That nature is a Heraclitean fire* reflect a tradition which goes back at least as far as Irenaeus's contention that Christ "for his immense love's sake was made that which we are, in order that He might perfect us to be what He is".³² Fittingly, the translation is Keble's. That particular *Library of the Fathers* volume appeared six years after his death (though Pusey assures readers in the Preface that Keble had completed the work).

In finding poetic emphases of patristic teaching in Hopkins, and comparing them with Tractarian writings, scholars demonstrate not that Hopkins was a Tractarian, but that both he and his High Anglican colleagues claimed to be faithful to early Christian theology. Hopkins's

³⁰ Henry Parry Liddon, *The Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ* (London, 1867) p.326, quoted in Jude V. Nixon, *Gerard Manley Hopkins and his Contemporaries: Liddon, Newman, Darwin and Pater* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1994), p.38. See Tertullian, *Apology* 21, 12 "sed sol erit in radio, quia solis est radius, nec separator substantia sed extenditur".

³¹ Nixon, *Gerard Manley Hopkins and his Contemporaries*, p.42

³² Irenaeus, *Against all Heresies*, Preface to Book V, tr. John Keble (Library of the Fathers, Oxford, Parker & Co, 1872) p.449.

interest in Eucharistic participation was alluded to earlier. One of the most enduring Tractarian poetic statements of the position, William Bright's Eucharistic hymn beginning "And now O Father, mindful of the love" appeared in his *Hymns and other verses* in 1866, the year Hopkins converted to Rome. Bright, like his friend Liddon, was a Tractarian more than a ritualist, although, also like Liddon, he was a member of the Brotherhood of the Holy Trinity. The lines "Look, father, look on his anointed face/ And only look on us as found in him" are as strongly rooted in patristic participatory Christology as the sonnets of Hopkins mentioned earlier.

Repeated insistence on Hopkins's patristic orthodoxy is not intended to diminish the significance of Tractarian attempts to place patristic teaching at the heart of Anglican theological debate. Rather, we should observe that because the theological character of Tractarianism was claimed to be "catholic", identifying specifically Tractarian traits is not easy. Take the concept of "Reserve". The sense of the term when used to describe the poetry of *The Christian Year* is very different from that sense intended by Isaac Williams's two *Tracts* on the subject, in which "reserve" is, among other things, a defence against theological modernism.³³ In her study of Tractarian poetics, Margaret Johnson finds a simple and effective application of the term in relation to *The Windhover*, "where the links between Christ's broken body and the revelation of great inner beauty in other humble objects occur without Christ being mentioned once in the poem. Following Tractarian tradition, the connection is made in a prefatory dedication."³⁴ Yet the explosive manner in which Hopkins frequently crashes consonants into one another, and the rhythmic contortions which create, so as to release, extraordinary tension, might make his poetry seem quite lacking in, even opposed to, the gentle "reserve" of Keble or Newman. Williams's *Tract 80* makes much of those passages in the gospels in which Jesus seems hesitant or secretive about his true identity, but fails to observe the equal and consequently climactic stress on that identity's revelation in the events of the passion;³⁵ a possibly analogous build-up and release characterizes many clusters of

³³ Isaac Williams, *On Reserve in Communicating Religious Knowledge, Tracts for the Times* 80 and 87 (London, J.G. & F. Rivington) 1839.

³⁴ Johnson, *Gerard Manley Hopkins and Tractarian Poetry*, p.37.

³⁵ See for example Mark 14.61, in which Jesus accepts the title "Christ" for the first time in the gospel when questioned by the High Priest.

Hopkins's lines. However clearly one might discern reserve in his poetry, nevertheless that reserve is often accompanied by unreserved effusion.

The difficulty is more biographical than critical. What is lacking, perhaps, from discussions of Hopkins and Tractarianism is a sense of the conflict and controversy into which he and his undergraduate friends so enthusiastically waded. Tractarianism proper, the movement which surrounded the controversial *Tracts for the Times*, was long gone by the time Hopkins arrived in Oxford, but religious warfare within the Church of England and outside it raged as wildly as ever. Margaret Johnson, referring to Hopkins's undergraduate years, describes Keble "working quietly in his country living",³⁶ but this quiet work had seen him throw himself into the defence of Alexander Forbes, Bishop of Brechin, condemned in 1860, and even publish his 1865 letter "On the Ritual of the English Church", to defend from prosecution those with whom he was broadly out of sympathy. Forbes, accused of Eucharistic heterodoxy, was a member of the Brotherhood of the Holy Trinity during his time as a student at Brasenose, and Hopkins's association with that fraternity saw him indulge some typically undergraduate tendencies to zealotry in a quest for personal holiness. Frequent communion, monastic style offices and a serious and ascetic rule of life, were the nearest the young men could come to sharing in the ritualistic practices which had become the principal source of strife among the successors of Tractarianism.

Anglicans who thought of themselves as those successors were, by the 1860s, viewing ritualistic practice as the defining characteristic of their party (despite the coolness towards it displayed, separately and differently, by all three of Keble, Pusey and Liddon). As mentioned earlier, on Keble's death, in the year of Hopkins's conversion, High Church publications moved quickly to identify him as "by nature a ritualist",³⁷ in brazen defiance of his own self-confessed ignorance and his moderate practices at Hursley.³⁸ Doctrinal issues were, for many Anglo-Catholics, inseparable from these practices. Whether the alterations to the Eucharistic

³⁶ Johnson, *Gerard Manley Hopkins and Tractarian Poetry*, p.3.

³⁷ *The Church Review*, April 7 1866, extract in Keble Papers, Keble College.

³⁸ On which see Nigel Yates, *Anglican Ritualism in Victorian Britain* (Oxford, OUP: 1999), p.55.

theology of Keble's *Gunpowder Treason* constituted "Ritualistic falsification of The Christian Year" was a question debated on the letters page of *The Times*.³⁹ The same year saw the publication of S.J. Stone's *Lyra Fidelium: Twelve Hymns on the Twelve Articles on the Apostles Creed*, in which the hymn we know as The Church's One Foundation appears as an explicit defence of "the Holy Catholic Church and the Communion of Saints" against the controversial Biblical teaching of John William Colenso, Bishop of Natal.

The successors of Oxford's Tractarians lived in a heated and divided academic and ecclesiastical world. Hopkins's upbringing – we might call it moderately high church – had not been intended to prepare him for the extreme positions he adopted as an undergraduate. Tractarianism was one of many treasuries from which he drew poetic and intellectual inspiration, but it was also, for a headstrong young man, a vehicle for student rebellion. In that sense, Hopkins's conversion began several years before he finally recorded seeing "the impossibility of staying in the Church of England."⁴⁰

³⁹ *The Times*, December 18, 1866, p.8.

⁴⁰ Gerard Manley Hopkins, *The Collected Works of Gerard Manley Hopkins Vol III, Diaries, Journals and Notebooks*, ed. Lesley Higgins (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2015), p.381, entry for July 17 1866. A significant emphasis of the close reading offered by Eric Griffiths, *The Printed Voice of Victorian Poetry* ch.4, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1989) is on the disrupted rhythm which resulted from Hopkins's conversion to Roman Catholicism. For comments see Ian Ker, *The Catholic Revival in English Literature 1845-1961: Newman, Hopkins, Belloc, Chesterton, Greene, Waugh* (Leominster, Gracewing, 2003), pp.33-37.