***His Grace and I***



***Chats with Cardinal Newman***

***Table of Contents***

His Grace and I:

Chats with Cardinal Newman 3

His Grace and I:

More Chats with Cardinal Newman 6

[](http://inmemoriamc33.com/britten_procession.mp3)***His Grace and I***

***A Conversation with Cardinal Newman***

♫

1.

I kept your portrait, and the Pope’s,

In my rooms in the University.

Was it a gesture of perversity?

A diptych of my fears and hopes.

Reading your books again reminds

Me why I was afraid to meet

With you: the great charm would defeat

Me of a man born to mold minds.

Oh, I have dallied with the Lady

From time to time, your Grace, but faltered

At the Altar. You would say I’ve paltered

With God. My character is shady.

But many a time I have been half

In love with her, the Scarlet Woman.

How like a Siren did she summon

Me in those days! My friends would laugh

To see how earnestly I talked

With priests, and nattered about Rome

As being my spiritual home.

At the church door I stood, but balked.

My own half-heartedness dispirited me.

Worse than religious, a financial

Crisis! Penalties were substantial:

My father would have disinherited me

If I had left the Fold. As ‘twas,

My uncle nearly cut me from

His will for making eyes at Rome

Merely! The flesh is weak, *hélas*!

And the intellect is sceptical.

Each finds a questionable nutrition,

Whether in money or ambition,

Two gods that rule after the Fall.

2.

It was so tenderly dogmatic,

Your ‘look’ in the sartorial

Splendour of gravely beautiful

Vestments, say, a stiff flowered dalmatic.

And ah, the comely altar boys

Sweetly composed in solemn rite,

The incense-rich, subdued delight

Of hymns sung in a clear high voice!

You consecrate the Eucharist

With just a *soupçon* of ennui—

*Te deum vitae* (pardon me!)—

As with a somewhat languid wrist

You sway the censer. Incense smoke

Drowses communicants like bees,

Drugged by sublimest Mysteries.

You speak the words the Saviour spoke,

You magically consecrate,

With *hoc est corpus,* daily bread

Into the flesh of One who bled

To heal our wounds, Word increate

And boundlessly creative Holy

Ghost of the blessed Trinity.—

But what can all this do for me,

A moral leper, one whose *Noli*

*Me Tangere* is Lazarus’ warning,

Confession of uncleanness, foul

Contagion? My unsightly soul

Wears the veil of a sinner’s mourning.

3.

*The primitive, true Revelation*

*Lives on in Rome, and the tradition’s*

*Seemingly novel definitions*

*Are clothing only, and illustration*

*Of ageless Truth in time unfurled.*

*The Church’s mission is to fight*

*A giant evil, and shed light*

*Upon the darkness of the world.*

What is this ‘giant evil’, then?

Does it include, say, paederasty

Among the priests? *You have a nasty*

*Imagination. Priests are men,*

*And men are prey to lust and greed.*

*In every human institution*

*Is found some ethical pollution.*

*We are the flower of Adam’s seed.*

4.

*There’s talk I shall be made*

*A saint. They do not know, you see,*

*That I remain in Purgatory.*

Because you countenanced the slave trade?

*I felt it wrong, but thought it right*

*That, being fallen, Man’s condition*

*Should be so harsh, whilst abolition*

*Defied God’s plan. I see the light.*

I’m glad you see it, Cardinal Newman.

Our social evils cannot all

Be solved by finding texts in Paul!

The righteous can be so inhuman.

*One also finds in Paul the text*

*On resurrection in the flesh.*

*I trust yours will be cleanly, fresh,*

*And unambiguously sexed.*

You had a boon ‘companion’,

Your Grace, a man who lived with you

Some thirty years—is this not true?

One could elabourate upon

The implications of this fact…

That ex-Dominican who denounced

The Pope: how angrily you pounced

On *him*, how fiercely you attacked

His morals! With such animus

Did you impugn his character,

You triggered such a public stir,

A jury found it libelous.

5.

*But what bad conscience* you *betray*

*With your scurrilous imputations.*

*Your aesthete pose would try Job’s patience.*

*Yet even a drunken man, one day,*

*By miracle or luck, may lurch*

*His way home. At the door I see*

*You stand. Before you is the key:*

*The Apostolical, one true Church.*

Will the Lord own me as his son?

Surely, I have been prodigal,

Have eaten of the fruit of all

Life’s tempting trees, and battened on

The husks of my humiliation!

*Suffering is kindest when most cruel…*

Then shall I don the brilliant, jewel-

Encrusted robe of my salvation?

*I trust that is a metaphor.*

*Say rather the garb of humility.*

Yes, certainly of great utility,

But one might want to make a more

Dazzling entrance unto God.

The aesthetics of a summer’s day,

Pure *monochronos hêdonê*,

Give the tang to the angels’ Laud.

[](http://inmemoriamc33.com/palestrina.mp3)***His Grace and I***

♫

****** ***More Chats***

***with Cardinal Newman***

1.

[Thus far we two have had a very

Pleasant discussion touching on

Substantiation, trans- and con-,

And over a fine glass of sherry

Compared notes on the Real Presence

In the Eucharist, the wafer-thin

Line ‘twixt obedience and sin,

The bitter sweetness of His Essence. ]

2.

*Substance is, like a pure Idea,*

*Known only through its accidents.*

*These only we experience.*

*The Lord’s ungraspable* ουσία

*Makes itself actual for us*

*In accidents of bread and wine.*

*This daily miracle we define*

*As Transubstantiation. Thus*

*Divine Grace is embodied in*

*A sensuous form. The nourishment*

*Of this essential Sacrament*

*Renews us, cleanses us of sin.*

But sin is, as it was, also

A mode of self-discovery.

A vice may save our lives to be

The good souls that to Heaven go.

*At Lesbos, Aristotle says,*

*The mason’s rule is made of lead,*

*Adjustable to help him read*

*The stones’ uneven surfaces.*

One bends the rule for the exception,

As everyone is, or should be.

*But fallen is Humanity,*

*That crooked timber. The deception*

*Built into language by its own*

*Bias and ambiguity*

*Distributes its perversity*

*Between the measurer and the stone.*

*Reason, the universal caustic,*

*Devours itself. God’s rule is straight.*

*And He does not discriminate*

*Between atheist and agnostic.*

*Like you, I sought the Idea in*

*The Image. But, being pagan, you*

*Worshipped the image, not the true*

*Substance,* ουσία*. That is sin.*

*You loved the thing created more*

*Than its Creator, you pursued*

*Idol and fetish, which illude*

*The soul.* Then is my soul a whore?

Each of us worshipped Mystery

Almost for its own sake, and saw,

Appalled, how mystery and awe

Were being murdered rationally.

But Art was my religion, my

Mystery, a Mystery we should deepen,

Nor let the grubs of mere Fact creep in.

It was, it’s true, idolatry.

But you, too, had an aesthete’s eye

For images. These Rome could give

In plenty, here your eye could thrive

On icons of authority.

3. *The Biography of a Conscience*

In England ruled the great god Mammon,

Whom Liberalism served a feast.

In Ireland, meanwhile, raged the beast

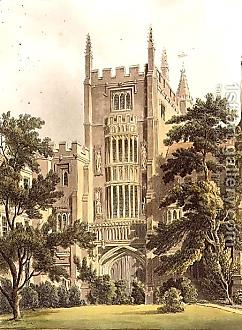
*An Gorta Mór*, the Great Famine.

But it was consecrated bread

You hungered for. Anglican fare

Seemed made with insufficient care

And left you feeling underfed.

[](http://inmemoriamc33.com/hildegard_kyrie.mp3)The soul of the High Church was in

Sore disrepair. Crucial improvements

Were needed, and your Oxford Movement’s

♫

Goal was to save it from the sin

Of worldliness (‘economy’)

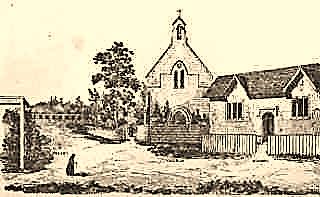
And schism. Evangelicism

Was one threat; worse, though, Liberalism

Was a great thriving blasphemy

Against the eternal principles

Of the true Faith: its sublime Vision,

 Its rituals and its saving mission

Were ciphers to the Liberals.

Then, in the mirror of your soul,

You saw, one day, to your great terror,

An image of doctrinal error

So twisted out of shape, so foul,  *Littlemore.*

It looked as hideous a fright,

In its own intellectual way,

As the picture of Dorian Gray.

What was it? *A Monophysite! What Gothic horror was this!*

But when, at Littlemore, you came

To dinner in grey trousers (stood

Modeling a Change of Attitude

You were too subtle a man to name),

The old haeresiarch was gone,

Your gesture said. Henceforth your stance

No longer was an Anglican’s,

But the profession of the one

True Apostolical universal

Catholic Church, with comprecation

Of Saints, Purgatory, veneration

Of Mary: yes, this Great Reversal

You mimed in inter-sacerdotal

Mufti—a *coup de théâtre*, as ‘twere.

And through the angry public stir

Your new faith stayed entire and total,

Your soul unerring in devotion.

The stations of your crossing home

From Low to Broad to High to Rome

Lead through grave doubts, and much commotion

You have to pass on lands and seas

Polemical and introspective

(For human logic is defective),

Until at last, your soul finds peace.

Behold! At length the stage is set

For Rome to take John Henry Newman,

A most distinguished catechumen,

Into Saint Peter’s waiting net.

A Passionist baptises you.

Old Adam is at last a new man

And, gainsay all they may, a true man,

Who by his lights, although they grew

Dim sometimes in a gathering doubt,

Ne’er did but what he thought was right

And found his version of the Light

By honest ways, though roundabout.

4.

*I was, some made bold to suspect,*

*A dandy with accoutrement*

*Of halo, perfumed with the scent*

*Of sanctity. I and my ‘sect’*

*Were even accused of ‘foppery’,*

*And seemed suspiciously ‘refined’*

*To Christians of the muscular kind.*

*That ‘die-away effeminacy’*

*Kingsley ascribed to me was nothing*

*Compared with the dishonesty*

*He charged me with, implicitly.*

*For all my modesty and loathing*

*Of self-advertisement, I had*

*To answer such an accusation.*

*This challenge, then, was the occasion*

*Of the* Apologia*. From young lad*

*To ageing man I traced the curious*

*Autobiography of my*

*Opinions, trudging, with a sigh,*

*Through old pamphlets.*—Reliving furious

Controversies that to some seem

Much erudite ado, and little

More?—*Pondering the ancient riddle*

*Of Antiquity made me dream*

*Of a Truth pristine, primitive,*

*Enshrined in doctrine, ritual, and*

*Tradition, passed from hand to hand*

*Down the millennia, still alive*

*In Rome—alas, somewhat corrupt,*

*But living. What was Protestantism?*

*A theory, a bookish ‘ism’.*

*But he who with Christ Jesus supped,*

*The fisherman Apostle, passed*

*By firm succession, Pope to Pope,*

*Power and universal scope*

*Over the One Church. Thick and fast*

*Heresies come and have their day.*

*But Scripture proves that only Rome*

*Is the Tradition’s lasting home.*

*The English Church will pass away.*

She lured your soul, the sweet, demure

Holy Mother, across the Channel.

‘Twas Milton’s pipes now sounded ‘scrannel’.

She lured you, and you yielded to her.

For, as I’ve said, the only way

To rid oneself of a temptation

Is to yield to it. To the Nation

A traitor, some presumed to say,

(They cursed the Popish harlotry

Of images you venerated

Of martyr and saint, they execrated

Your shameless Mariolatry)

To your own wayward yet steadfast,

Tentative, cautious and yet pure

Nature you kept faith, were most sure

When unsure that your faith would last.

By what a curious, tortuous way

You reached your spiritual home in

The only Catholic church, the Roman!

But there you stayed, and there you stay.

5.

*I* never saw the Holy Ghost,

The Spirit who descends to save us.

I never saw that *rara avis*

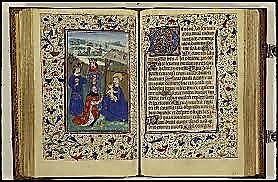
Of Baptism and Pentecost.

*What other prophylactic moly,*

*Of symbol and higher Mystery*

*Compounded, could have kept you free*

*From the Circèan spell unholy*

*Of panther feasts on offer in*

*The private rooms of your desire,*

*The marketplace and barnyard mire*

*Of heedless hedonistic sin?*

*Ah, not the herb that Hermes gave you*

*(Itself a spell)! Only the love*

*Of the invisible Power above.*

*But what you don’t believe can’t save you.*

6.

At last, at least, *your* changing soul

***From my Notebook***

*Kingsley, muscular Christian, can*

*Weight-lift two hundred pounds of sin.*

*Wrestle the Devil, and who can win?*

*Good Works’ top athlete, Christ’s he-man!*

Came out in an authoritative

Edition, and fulfilled its native

Urge to submit to God’s control.

From sacrament to sacrament

In the incense of the Illative

You found a way to think and live

An unconditional Assent.

Your story has an austere glamour

Consonant with your mind’s precision,

Though your abstract, scholastic vision

Repels me with its frigid grammar.

Where the child Blake saw angels perched

In trees, your mind received ‘impressions

Of dogma’ at fifteen, a prescience

Of all the Tracts to come, researched

With minute and exhaustive reading

Of the Church Fathers, building thesis

On thesis, founded on *φρονησις*,

To justify Faith’s special pleading.

The cause for which you fought was doomed

To fail, the tide of Liberalism

Could not be stemmed; Rationalism

Made all the assumptions once assumed,

Including the Assumption, either

Questionable or wholly moot.

The tree was severed at the root.

How could you glue it back together?

‘Twas doomed to fail, your Restoration.

How could a Tory renegade,

Perversely, grandly retrograde,

Undo the history of the Nation?

For history has leached the colour

Element from the English Church.

Good deeds and scholarly research

Can’t keep it from becoming duller

And duller as the years advance.

No purple dyes of tender awe

Can make us see what Peter saw,

The living Radiance in the glance

Of God made Man and Holy Ghost.

The once-fresh Apostolic Creed,

A mystic rose that’s gone to seed,

Mixed with the general compost

Of Western myth, cannot be prayed

Back from the dead, except in art,

The temple of the modern heart.

The Institutional must fade.

***The Athanasian Creed***

*Anathematical, schematic,*

*The Athanasian Creed turns sword-*

*Point Trinitarianism toward*

*Arius, the dangerous schismatic.*

7. *The Idea of a University*

But let my portrait be well-rounded.

You *did* defend the Catholics,

The poor of Ireland; candle-wicks

You lighted for them when you founded

The Catholic University, *Now University College Dublin.*

(A place that served to incubate

The intellect of the first great

*Catholic* Irish writer, he

Who boldly cried, *Non serviam*,

And fled the fold of Church and Nation

But never lost his admiration

For your prose style. Would you still damn

James Joyce to Hell as reprobate?

He is your truest ‘fan’: these days

There aren’t that many left, your Grace.

Might you shed some on him? A great

*Phronesis* would it be, and prudence.

The herd of independent minds

Read Marx, of late. One can’t pick *kinds*,

One has to welcome any students.

\*

O radical who found no root,

You are history. The Via Media’s

A relic of the encyclopaedias,

And you begged questions long since moot.

[](http://inmemoriamc33.com/debussy_cathedral.mp3)***Musical Program***

[♫](http://inmemoriamc33.com/debussy_cathedral.mp3)

**Page 3**

Britten, *Ceremony of Carols.* I: Procession. Boys’ choir unnamed.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Hodie Christus natus est: hodie Salvator apparuit: hodie in terra canunt angeli: laetantur archangeli: hodie exsultant justi dicentes: Gloria in excelsis Deo. Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! | Today Christ is born:  today the Saviour appears:  today on earth the angels sing:  the archangels announce:  today be exultant and say together:  Glory to God in the highest.  Halleluia! Halleluia! Halleluia! |

**Page 6**

Palestrina, *Missa Brevis*. II: Gloria. The Tallis Scholars, directed by Peter Phillips.

Gloria in excelsis Deo  
Et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis.  
Laudamus Te, benedicimus Te, adoramus Te, glorificamus Te,  
Gratias agimus tibi propter magnam gloriam tuam,  
Domine Deus, Rex coelestis, Deus Pater omnipotens.  
Domine Fili Unigenite, Jesu Christe,  
Domine Deus, Agnus Dei, Filius Patris:  
Qui tollis peccata mundi miserere nobis;  
Qui tollis peccata mundi suscipe deprecationem nostram,  
Qui sedes ad dexteram Patris miserere nobis.  
Quoniam Tu solus Sanctus, Tu solus Dominus,

Tu solus Altissimus, Jesu Christe,  
Cum Sancto Spiritu in gloria Dei Patris. Amen

Glory in the highest to God. And on earth peace

to men of good will. We praise thee. We bless thee.

We worship thee. We glorify thee. Thanks we give to thee

because of great glory thy. Lord God, King of heaven,

God Father almighty. Lord Son only begotten, Jesus Christ.

Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of Father.

Who take away sins of world, have mercy on us.

Who take away sins of world, receive supplication our.

Who sit at right hand of Father, have mercy on us.

For thou alone holy. Thou alone Lord.

Thou alone most high, Jesus Christ.

With Holy Spirit in glory of God Father. Amen.

Trans. Aaron Green

**Page 14**

Debussy, *Préludes*, Book I, No. 10: *La cathédrale engloutie* (*The Sunken Cathedral*).Nelson Freire, piano.

“This piece is based on an ancient Breton myth in which a cathedral, submerged underwater, rises up from the sea on clear mornings when the water is transparent. Sounds can be heard of priests chanting, bells chiming, and the organ playing, from across the sea. By the end of the piece, the cathedral sinks back down into the ocean and the organ is heard once more, but from underwater, with a murky, muffled sound. Finally, the cathedral is gone from sight, and only the bells are heard, at a distant *pianissimo*.” Wikipedia article on this prelude, based on Mark DeVoto, "The Debussy Sound: colour, texture, gesture." *The Cambridge Companion to Debussy*, ed. Simon Trezise (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).