

John Henry Newman's National Monument: an Oxford Controversy

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According to the standard narrative, although John Henry Newman was driven away from Oxford in the 1840s by the dominant Protestant consensus, by the end of his life in the 1890s he was back in favour, fêted in Oxford as a Roman Catholic celebrity and as an esteemed alumnus. This article challenges that interpretation by examining the forgotten controversy over Newman's national monument, a significant aspect of his reception history. It shows how Newman's memory and reputation remained hotly contested, provoking resistance by the dons and citizens of late Victorian Oxford, even in this recently secularised and professedly tolerant university city.

John Henry Newman's national monument – a life-size marble statue of the cardinal, erected in 1896 – stands in central London outside the Brompton Oratory, on a plinth beneath a columned canopy, overlooking Kensington High Street and just a few yards from the Victoria and Albert Museum. It is perhaps the world's best-known sculpture of Newman and, like many public statues, had the power to divide opinion and provoke vociferous reactions. It was originally intended not for Brompton but for Oxford's Broad Street, yet the outcry in the university city was so fierce that Newman's memorial committee was forced to retreat and seek a less contested location. The controversy generated considerable local angst and national debate about the place of Roman Catholicism in the public square and about Newman's personal merits. *The Tablet* complained that if it was necessary, before erecting a statue, to be certain 'that the subject of the honour held no views to which any passer-by could possibly

ACA = Arundel Castle Archives; OC = *Oxford Chronicle*; OR = *Oxford Review*; OT = *Oxford Times*

object', then the age of statutory must come to an end. Such a standard of universal inoffensiveness was impossibly high.¹ Yet the level of offence in Oxford reached such fever pitch that the project was abandoned.

This article provides the first analysis of the Newman memorial controversy, an important but forgotten episode in Newman's reception history. It sheds new light on attitudes to the former Anglican and future saint in the years immediately after his death. Newman was heaped with opprobrium in the 1840s and forced to retreat from the University of Oxford, first to his community at Littlemore, and then to Birmingham, driven away by the dominant Protestant consensus. With a hint of defiance, he famously announced in his *Apologia pro vita sua* (1864), 'I have never seen Oxford since, excepting its spires, as they are seen from the railway.'² Yet the standard historiography suggests that by the end of Newman's life the tables had turned, and he was riding high on a new tide of religious toleration, honoured as one of the great Englishmen of his day. His old university was formally secularised by the 1871 Universities Tests Act and progressively broadened beyond its historic Anglican and Protestant hegemony. Newman invested heavily in aborted plans for a new Roman Catholic college at Oxford in the 1860s and lent his weight to the formation of St Aloysius Church, opened in north Oxford in 1875 in care of the Jesuit mission.³ In 1877, two years before his elevation to the cardinalate, he was elected an honorary Fellow of Trinity College, a return to his roots. He dedicated the new 1878 edition of *An essay on the development of Christian doctrine* to the President of Trinity and spoke of his pleasure at the 'recovery of my position' in Oxford.⁴ As the number of Catholic undergraduates multiplied – approximately 150 were matriculated between 1867 and 1894 – they formed the Oxford University Catholic Club in 1878, renamed in 1888 the Newman Society.⁵ By the end of his life Newman was back in Oxford's favour, fêted as a Catholic celebrity and an esteemed alumnus, the received narrative suggests.

This narrative frequently appears in the biographical literature. Wilfrid Ward's *magnum opus*, published in 1912 and running to nearly 1,300 pages, established some early patterns of interpretation. He recounted that numerous guests at the Trinity College gaudy in 1880 were presented in turn to Newman, 'who received them in semi-royal state'.⁶ Louis

¹ *Tablet*, 30 Jan. 1892, 166.

² John Henry Newman, *Apologia pro vita sua*, London 1864, 369.

³ Vincent Alan McClelland, *English Roman Catholics and higher education, 1830–1903*, Oxford 1973.

⁴ John Henry Newman, *An essay on the development of Christian doctrine*, new edn, London 1878, p. v.

⁵ Walter Drumm, *The old palace: a history of the Oxford University Catholic chaplaincy*, Dublin 1991, 35.

⁶ Wilfrid Ward, *The life of John Henry Cardinal Newman, based on his private journals and correspondence*, London 1912, ii. 473.

Bouyer's classic study, originally published in French in 1952, observed that Newman was welcomed back to Trinity 'as the most distinguished of Oxford's living sons'.⁷ The chapter covering those years in Meriol Trevor's two-volume biography, winner of the 1962 James Tait Black memorial prize, is entitled 'Triumphal processions', echoing a phrase used in 1880 by Newman's friend, Frederic Rogers, Lord Blachford. Rogers wrote in celebration to Newman: 'It is really an extraordinary historical event – that a Prince of the Church should go about receiving indiscriminate homage in London and Oxford with the applause of all men.' Although Trevor hinted at the existence of contrary voices, quoting the fierce objections of a local Oxford newspaper to the university's lionising of a Roman cardinal, she did not pursue the question further.⁸ The concluding chapter of Owen Chadwick's 1983 biography (marking the Oxford Movement's sesquicentenary) is likewise entitled 'The acceptance of Newman'. Chadwick asserted that although English anti-Catholicism was still strong in the late Victorian period, the feelings of non-Catholics had changed towards Newman after forty years and they now rejoiced to see him a cardinal.⁹ The flurry of studies published around 1990, the centenary of Newman's death, drove home the point. Ian Ker emphasised that Trinity College's bestowal of a Fellowship on Newman was 'a great honour'.¹⁰ David Newsome, in his analysis of Newman and Oxford, proclaimed with a flourish that the university 'successively reared him, feared him and (in the end) revered him'.¹¹ Newman 'returned in honour to Oxford ... a moment of great happiness', Newsome reiterated.¹² 'After half a lifetime of exile from Oxford', Sheridan Gilley chimed in, 'Newman was once more an acknowledged prophet in his own country.'¹³ Gilley portrayed Newman's return to Oxford as 'a conqueror'.¹⁴

This familiar narrative predominates. However, the memorial controversy reveals a different perspective, demonstrating that anti-Newmanism was still alive and strong in Oxford in the 1890s. Far from being welcomed with open arms, Newman remained even after death a highly oppositional figure with the capacity to provoke fierce reactions as the Protestants of Oxford drove him from their city for a second time.

⁷ Louis Bouyer, *Newman: his life and spirituality*, London 1958, 383.

⁸ Meriol Trevor, *Newman: light in winter*, London 1962, 587.

⁹ Owen Chadwick, *Newman*, Oxford 1983, 77.

¹⁰ Ian Ker, *John Henry Newman: a biography*, Oxford 1988, 712.

¹¹ David Newsome, 'Newman and Oxford', in David Brown (ed.), *Newman: a man for our time*, London 1990, 35.

¹² Idem, *The convert cardinals: John Henry Newman and Henry Edward Manning*, London 1993, 345.

¹³ Sheridan Gilley, *Newman and his age*, London 1990, 391.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* 408.

Catholicism and catholicity

Upon Newman's death on Monday 11 August 1890, there was a widespread outpouring of fulsome tributes from press and pulpit, including from many non-Roman Catholics. *The Standard's* eulogy, published the very next day, was typical of the national mood and prescient even of his subsequent canonisation:

His attainments as a scholar, a theologian, a man of letters, a master of English style, were splendid and conspicuous; but he was revered even more for the elevation of his character than for the range and fertility of his mind. He was eminently *vir pietate gravis*, and it is possible that, in the fulness of time, the man who was once the pride of the English Church will be officially enrolled in the calendar of Roman Saints.¹⁵

Among Anglican Catholics, Newman was likewise lauded. According to *The Guardian*, for example, he was not only eminent for his personal sanctity and command of the English language, but was the source of all that was best in Tractarianism and would be mourned even more deeply in the Church of England than the Church of Rome.¹⁶

Encouraged by this tide of panegyric, the Catholic Union of Great Britain decided to promote a national memorial, welcoming non-Catholic collaboration in the project.¹⁷ The initiative was chaired by England's premier lay Roman Catholic, Henry Fitzalan-Howard, 15th duke of Norfolk, who had previously led the push for Newman to receive a cardinal's hat. He was supported secretarially by William Samuel Lilly (secretary of the Catholic Union), a barrister and convert to Rome who had published a major anthology of Newman's works and was later commissioned to write Newman's entry for the *Dictionary of National Biography*. In a memorial tribute Lilly described Newman as 'my dear and venerated friend', praising his 'rare moral and spiritual excellence' and his 'superb intellectual gifts'.¹⁸

The Tablet argued that, although Catholics were the special guardians of Newman's memory, he belonged to the whole nation.¹⁹ In a letter to fellow Catholic peer and Anglo-Irish politician William Monsell, Baron Emly (a Tractarian convert to Rome in 1850), Norfolk laid out this dilemma. The widespread expressions of popular sympathy following Newman's death were a good opportunity for English Catholics. Yet surrounded by 'general and vague applause', they were in danger of losing sight of the

¹⁵ *Standard*, 12 Aug. 1890, 2.

¹⁶ *Guardian*, 13 Aug. 1890, 1253.

¹⁷ *Tablet*, 20 Sept. 1890, 462.

¹⁸ W. S. Lilly, 'John Henry Newman: in memoriam', *Fortnightly Review* liv (Sept. 1890), 437–8.

¹⁹ 'The memorial to Cardinal Newman', *Tablet*, 11 Oct. 1890, 567–8.

grand lesson of Newman's life – that 'there is one mouthpiece of God upon earth, one guide for men to heaven', the Church of Rome. How could Catholics emphasise that lesson in their memorial tribute, without alienating non-Catholics? It was a difficult tightrope to tread, but Norfolk argued that if their aim was simply to maximise donations they would sacrifice too much. Therefore he would not invite William Gladstone to join the memorial committee – especially in light of the former premier's anti-Catholic tracts *The Vatican decrees* (1874) and *Vaticanism* (1875) – but if Gladstone requested to join he would not be refused. Likewise, Norfolk would not propose a Newman statue in Westminster Abbey, 'a desecrated church' devoid of the Blessed Sacrament. But if non-Catholics strongly wished it to be at Westminster, Norfolk would not object.²⁰ Wrestling with the same dilemma, Lilly privately advised Norfolk, 'it is *Cardinal* Newman whom we desire to honour' – with 'Cardinal' underlined twice – and yet 'if we make it distinctively and exclusively Catholic, we shall be throwing away an opportunity'. Lilly saw that by positioning Newman as a 'great Christian' and a 'great Englishman', the memorial movement had national potential.²¹ These theological tensions in the very origins of the project were its ultimate undoing.

Norfolk's memorial committee, numbering fifty-seven men from national and religious life, was dominated by Catholics.²² Some were from old recusant families, such as Henry Matthews (home secretary and MP for Birmingham East) and Sir Frederick Weld (former prime minister of New Zealand). Yet many, like Newman, were converts to Rome, including aristocrats like the earl of Ashburnham, the marquis of Bute, the earl of Denbigh and the marquis of Ripon (former viceroy of India), and former Tractarian clergymen Henry Manning (cardinal archbishop of Westminster), Thomas William Allies and Henry James Coleridge. Other converts on the committee included the poet Aubrey de Vere, the playwright F. C. Burnard, the natural scientist St George Mivart and Fr William Lockhart (part of Newman's community at Littlemore in 1842–3). They were joined by the sons of prominent deceased Tractarian converts, with close Newman associations, like Wilfrid Ward (son of W. G. Ward) and Fr Bertrand Wilberforce (son of Henry Wilberforce). Despite this Catholic dominance, Norfolk attempted to broaden his committee's appeal by including a few sympathetic Anglicans, like Charles Wood, Viscount Halifax (president of the English Church Union, which sought to propagate Catholic principles within the Church of England), Baron John Coleridge (lord chief justice of England), William Lake

²⁰ Henry Fitzalan-Howard, 15th duke of Norfolk to William Monsell, Baron Emly, 10 Sept. 1890, ACA, CDH/1890/482.

²¹ W. S. Lilly to Norfolk, 16 Sept. 1890, ACA, CDH/1890/506.

²² *Tablet*, 15 Nov. 1890, 776.

(dean of Durham), the heads of Newman's former Oxford colleges (H. G. Woods, president of Trinity, and D. B. Monro, Provost of Oriel) and the poet laureate, Alfred Lord Tennyson. Norfolk also attempted, unsuccessfully, to recruit R. W. Church (Dean of St Paul's) and Edward Talbot (former Warden of Keble College, Oxford, and later bishop of Winchester).²³ Church was identified in the public imagination as one of Newman's closest Anglican allies, having used his proctorial veto in 1842 to overrule Oxford University's censure of *Tract ninety*, as recounted in his posthumous classic, *The Oxford Movement: twelve years, 1833–1845* (1891). However, although Church agreed to subscribe to Newman's statue, he declined to serve on the organising committee, given his official position in the Church of England, for fear that such an active promotion of Newman's legacy 'might give rise to misunderstanding'.²⁴ In the event, he only survived Newman by four months.

The initial purpose of the memorial fund was three-fold – a public Newman statue, an endowment for the Oratory School in Birmingham (founded by Newman in 1859) and an annual prize to promote study of Newman's writings.²⁵ This latter idea was specially advocated by Wilfrid Ward, who hoped that impressionable young Anglicans would be induced to read Newman's Catholic works and thus discover the inconsistency of their position.²⁶ However, this endeavour to promote Newman scholarship failed to stimulate sufficient enthusiasm, and was soon dropped in preference for a fund to build a Newman memorial church at the Birmingham Oratory.²⁷ Subscribers were invited to contribute to any of the three objects, though the statue was designed to appeal especially to non-Catholics who might balk at funding the Birmingham Oratory's educational and religious programme. A statue to honour Newman as a great English writer and celebrity was assumed to be free of doctrinal entanglements, and it was this part of the tripartite project which captured the public imagination. Several sculptors made unsolicited approaches to Norfolk, eager to secure the commission, including prominent figures such as Mario Raggi and Thomas Brock.²⁸

The duke of Norfolk personally bankrolled the scheme, with two large gifts of £1,000, but the early subscriptions list witnessed a breadth of support from smaller donors across Britain and Ireland.²⁹ Alongside numerous Catholics, such as Sir William White (British ambassador at

²³ Norfolk to Charles Wood, Viscount Halifax, 3 Oct. 1890, ACA, CDH/1890/535.

²⁴ Norfolk to Halifax, 9 Oct. 1890, ACA, CDH/1890/546.

²⁵ *Tablet*, 1 Nov. 1890, 709.

²⁶ Wilfrid Ward to Norfolk, 14 Sept. 1890, ACA, CDH/1890/500.

²⁷ *Times*, 26 Dec. 1890, 10.

²⁸ Mario Raggi to Norfolk, 12 Jan. 1892; Thomas Brock to Norfolk, 14 Jan. 1892, ACA, CM12.

²⁹ *Tablet*, 29 Nov., 6, 27 Dec. 1890, 856, 896, 1016; 31 Jan., 21 Mar. 1891, 172, 456.

Constantinople) and Baron Friedrich von Hügel, there were many non-Catholics including the duke of Westminster, the duke of Newcastle-under-Lyme, philanthropist Angela Burdett-Coutts, historian W. E. H. Lecky, former lord chancellor Roundell Palmer, earl of Selborne, and former governor of Madras Sir Mountstuart Grant-Duff. Newman's London publisher, Messrs Longmans, Green and Co., also contributed, perhaps hoping that a statue would boost book sales. From Oxford University, the list included six heads of houses (All Souls, Keble, Magdalen, Oriel, Trinity and Worcester), plus prominent Anglican scholars like Francis Paget (regius professor of pastoral theology, later Dean of Christ Church and bishop of Oxford) and F. T. Palgrave (professor of poetry). The university's Newman Society encouraged local donations, organised by the duke of Norfolk's nephew, James Hope, an undergraduate at Christ Church and later MP for Sheffield and Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons.³⁰ His father, the barrister James Hope-Scott, had been a close friend of Newman and was received into the Church of Rome in 1851 after the Gorham Judgment. Beyond Anglicanism there were also subscriptions from eminent Congregationalist ministers Henry Allon of Islington and R. W. Dale of Birmingham, and Unitarian theologian James Drummond (Principal of Manchester College, Oxford). The memorial committee boasted of this catholicity of support, though it did not draw attention to more eccentric subscribers like theosophist and spiritualist C. C. Massey.

Oxford was quickly identified as the best location for Newman's statue.³¹ Viscount Halifax, a graduate of Christ Church, Oxford, especially advocated for this connection with Newman's *alma mater*.³² Attempting to woo Anglican subscribers, he noted that it would be in close proximity to Keble College (opened in 1870) and Pusey House (opened in 1884), thus reuniting the original Tractarian triumvirate in celebration of the blessings of the Oxford Movement.³³ Indeed, Halifax went further, asserting that Oxford owed Newman 'reparation' for its hostile treatment of him in the 1840s.³⁴ The *Church Times* adopted the same language, arguing that it would be an 'act of reparation' by Anglicans.³⁵ Similar rationale was articulated by other Oxford Movement disciples, like Oriel graduate Piers Claughton (rector of Hutton, Essex). His father, Thomas Legh Claughton, had been Oxford's professor of poetry in the 1850s and the first bishop of St Albans. The younger Claughton praised Newman as

³⁰ James Hope to Norfolk, 15 Oct. 1890, ACA, CDH/1890/554; 'Newman memorial', *OC*, 8 Nov. 1890, 5.

³¹ 'Report of the executive sub-committee of the Cardinal Newman memorial fund', 9 Dec. 1890, ACA, CDH/1890/617. ³² *Times*, 29 Jan. 1892, 6; 2 Feb. 1892, 10.

³³ *Guardian*, 14 Jan. 1891, 69.

³⁴ *Times*, 3 Feb. 1892, 5.

³⁵ 'The Newman statue', *Church Times*, 15 Jan. 1892, 49.

‘the greatest man intellectually, and historically, that Oxford has produced this century ... he did more for the Church of England by raising it out of the Slough of Despond than any man since the Reformation’. Newman was the chief promoter of ‘that Catholic reunion for which every true Churchman ought to pray’, and therefore deserved the most conspicuous place in Oxford, ‘where he won the battle for us, though like all true heroes he sacrificed himself in the cause’.³⁶

In late December 1891, Norfolk approached the mayor of Oxford requesting permission for a statue in the centre of Broad Street, opposite the gates of Trinity College, emphasising that ‘all shades of opinion’ desired to honour Newman as ‘a great Englishman’.³⁷ In the New Year this question was moved at the city council by Councillor Octavius Ogle (chaplain of Warneford Lunatic Asylum and former Fellow of Lincoln College), Newman’s godson, who thus had a filial investment in the project. His father, Professor James Adey Ogle, had been Newman’s private tutor at Trinity College in the 1820s and a lifelong friend. It was delegated to a council subcommittee and seemed like a *fait accompli*.³⁸ In the first flush of enthusiasm, *The Guardian* celebrated the ‘almost universal acceptance’ of the proposal.³⁹ However, the depth of hostility to Newman in Oxford had been underestimated.

Indignation meeting

The Newman controversy burned fiercely for two months, in January and February 1892. The nation had other troubles on its mind, in the grip of a third wave of the influenza pandemic which had first emerged in the Russian Empire in 1889 before spreading rapidly worldwide *via* the European railway network. It caused the deaths of approximately 110,000 people in Britain, including – to national shock – the demise on 14 January 1892 of Prince Albert Victor, duke of Clarence, twenty-eight-year-old grandson of Queen Victoria and second in line to the throne. There was widespread alarm, driven by newspaper sensationalism.⁴⁰ The death rate in Oxford, from all causes, averaged 17 per 1,000 during 1891, but jumped to 59 per 1,000 in mid-January 1892, with influenza accounting for over a third of deaths in the city.⁴¹ Fearing for the health of its student and tutorial body, Oxford University delayed the start of

³⁶ *Guardian*, 3 Feb. 1892, 160.

³⁷ *Times*, 8 Jan. 1892, 8.

³⁸ ‘Oxford City Council’, *Jackson’s Oxford Journal*, 9 Jan. 1892, 6.

³⁹ *Guardian*, 13 Jan. 1892, 33.

⁴⁰ Mark Honigsbaum, *A history of the great influenza pandemics: death, panic and hysteria, 1830–1920*, London 2014.

⁴¹ ‘The influenza epidemic in Oxford’, *OT*, 30 Jan. 1892, 5.

Hilary Term until early February, the first postponement since the Great Plague of the seventeenth century. Therefore, the Newman agitation took place in the absence of many University residents, but none the less filled the Town Hall with crowded meetings and occupied many columns in the local and national press.

Discontent was first sounded in the letter pages of the national dailies, in early January. A correspondent in *The Standard* was amazed at the 'audacity' of the proposal, especially given Broad Street's association with the Reformation martyrs. How would the duke of Norfolk and his collaborators feel if Anglicans erected a monument to John Keble in the centre of Rome?⁴² Another watchdog in *The Times* rebuked the 'sheer impudence' of the Newman memorialists, especially given Oxford's role as one of the great educational centres of the Church of England. Why should Oxford 'pay homage' to the leader among 'the perverts to Rome'?⁴³ But the controversy exploded into life when William Ince (Oxford's regius professor of divinity) entered the lists. He acknowledged Newman's virtues but warned that a statue in Broad Street would 'deeply wound the religious susceptibilities' of many loyal Anglicans since it was only 100 yards from the spot where Cranmer, Latimer and Ridley were burned at the stake. Indeed, the statue would be 'an affront' to the memory of those heroic bishops, who were martyred 'because they refused to accept the usurped supremacy and the corrupt doctrine of the Papal Church'. Newman's secession to Rome in 1845 had inflicted a 'deadly blow' upon the Church of England, Ince continued, and none since the Reformation had done more to persuade 'cultivated Protestants' to defect from their faith. While other locations in Oxford might not be objectionable – perhaps the Trinity College gardens, the Oriel College quadrangle, or the galleries of the Ashmolean Museum – a statue in Broad Street would be a direct 'counterblast' to the Martyrs' Memorial because Newman had done more than anyone in the nineteenth century 'to undo the work of the Reformation'. It was an abuse of the idea of toleration, Ince concluded, to pretend as if all religions were 'equally true and equally false' provided they were sincere.⁴⁴

Professor Ince became the figurehead and spokesman of the Oxford opposition. The agitation was mocked as 'Ince-ane'.⁴⁵ He was inundated with letters from Oxford graduates across the country wishing to record their protest against the Broad Street proposal.⁴⁶ Ince was highly respected in the University, as canon of Christ Church and holder of the premier theological chair, and could not be dismissed as an Evangelical partisan. Canon Alfred Christopher, the septuagenarian Evangelical rector of

⁴² *Standard*, 9 Jan. 1892, 2.

⁴⁴ *Times*, 13 Jan. 1892, 8.

⁴⁶ *Guardian*, 20 Jan. 1892, 86; *Times*, 1 Feb. 1892, 7.

⁴³ *Times*, 12 Jan. 1892, 8.

⁴⁵ *OC*, 6 Feb. 1892, 8.

St Aldate's Church, praised the professor as 'a good specimen of High Churchman of the old school'.⁴⁷ He was joined in the opposition by another senior High Church scholar, Montagu Burrows (Chichele professor of modern history). Meanwhile, behind the scenes, Christopher coordinated the Evangelical troops, supported by a local missionary of the Protestant Reformation Society, Arthur P. Williams (former Royal Navy commander), who worked 'day and night' for the cause.⁴⁸ Christopher was chairman of the Oxford branch of the Church Association, which warred frequently against ritualism in the Church of England, but the Newman threat required the forging of broader alliances. He therefore hosted a cross-party summit at St Aldate's rectory, bringing Ince and Burrows together with local Evangelical and ritualist leaders to plan the resistance.⁴⁹

The most effective way to defeat the memorial scheme was to pressurise the city council, so harnessing the voice of the local citizenry was essential. Despite pandemic anxieties, Oxford Town Hall was packed with over a thousand men on the evening of Tuesday 26 January for an 'indignation meeting'. It was a rallying cry to defend the memory of the Oxford martyrs. At the doors, Christopher and his allies sold copies of a short tract, *The story of the Martyrs' Memorial*, by anti-Catholic polemicist Walter Walsh, later notorious for his *The secret history of the Oxford Movement* (1897). With an engraving of the Martyrs' Memorial on the front cover, the tract celebrated the 'heart-stirring' testimony of the martyred bishops, but warned that Victorian England was rapidly returning 'back to Popish bondage' and that modern Rome still believed that Protestants should be executed.⁵⁰ Among the crowds in the Town Hall, Christopher's adjutants distributed printed copies of the inscription from the Martyrs' Memorial, with its reminder that Cranmer, Latimer and Ridley had given their bodies to be burned 'bearing witness to the sacred truths which they had affirmed and maintained against the errors of the Church of Rome'.⁵¹

The meeting was rowdy and often interrupted by hecklers, including a group of about a dozen Roman Catholics who shouted and banged their sticks.⁵² It was chaired by Conservative councillor Charles Underhill, an Oxford grocer and Baptist lay preacher, who proclaimed that the city council had no mandate for a Newman statue in Broad Street. It would be 'unwise, impolitic, and a grievous mistake', and ought to be erected instead at the Birmingham Oratory. The citizens of Oxford were being

⁴⁷ 'The annual meeting', *Church Intelligencer* ix (June 1892), 95.

⁴⁸ 'Protestant Reformation Society', *Protestant Churchman* cxii (July 1892), 38.

⁴⁹ 'Annual meeting', 95.

⁵⁰ Walter Walsh, *The story of the Martyrs' Memorial*, Oxford 1876, 11.

⁵¹ Arthur Williams, 'Our missionaries' reports: Oxford', *Protestant Churchman* cxi (Apr. 1892), 29.

⁵² *Ibid.* 28.

asked, in effect, 'to put a wreath of glory round the head of a papist', Underhill asserted. Although the Town Hall gathering drew together a crowd from many different political and religious persuasions, he was confident they were united 'in standing up for the old country, for the reformed Church of the land, and for their common Protestantism'. Next, Professor Ince warned of the 'grievous injury' that a Newman statue would inflict upon the city and University of Oxford. He called Newman 'a deserter' who 'went over to the camp of the enemy', drew away many younger members of the university, and spent the rest of his life opposing the Church of England. No patriotic English churchman would therefore wish to see a Newman statue – it was 'utterly distasteful' and a 'grievous affront'. 'He was a Judas', cried one Protestant heckler.⁵³

A succession of similar speeches followed over the next two hours. The famed Oxford lexicographer James Murray, a Congregationalist and chief editor of the *Oxford English Dictionary*, lent his weight to the protests. In a written speech (read *in absentia* due to illness) he repudiated the idea they were 'no popery' fanatics, and complained that the Newman statue would be 'a slap in the face to the Church of England and to English Protestantism'. Of all the distinguished men who had been educated at Oxford, why should Newman be singled out for special honour, he asked. Likewise, Professor Burrows praised the Reformation as 'the greatest event in English history', which it was their 'sacred duty' to defend. He suggested that the offer of a Newman statue in Broad Street was as preposterous as expecting the Roman Catholic authorities in Prague to permit a city-centre memorial to the Czech Reformer Jan Hus (in fact, a Hus memorial was later erected in Prague, on the quincentenary of his martyrdom in 1915). A more conciliatory tone was struck by William Jackson (Rector of Exeter College) who applauded Newman for his holiness and piety, and for following his theological convictions. None the less, Jackson believed the statue would be 'a lasting slur' upon Oxford.⁵⁴

A rousing crescendo to the indignation meeting was provided by Anglican Evangelical voices. Canon Christopher argued that to honour Newman was to 'mock the martyrs'. He warned that just as Newman had led many of Oxford's young people to Rome, dividing happy families, so now his statue might have the same converting effect. Christopher joked that if they must honour a vicar of St Mary the Virgin (Oxford's University Church), it should not be Newman but the current incumbent, Edmund Ffoulkes, because although he had converted to Rome in 1855, in his mid-thirties, he had repented and petitioned in 1870 for readmission to the Church of England. Next, Francis Chavasse (principal of Wycliffe Hall theological college and later bishop of Liverpool) described Broad Street

⁵³ 'The proposed memorial to Cardinal Newman: protest meeting', *Jackson's Oxford Journal*, 30 Jan. 1892, 6.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

as ‘consecrated ground’ where the battle of the English Reformation had been won by the fires of martyrdom which sounded ‘the death knell of Popish supremacy’ in England. A Newman statue would therefore be ‘an outrage and an insult to the English Church and to English Protestantism’, a sentiment greeted with loud applause from the Town Hall crowd. It would be a ‘constant affront’ to the citizens of Oxford and a perpetuation of theological strife, chimed in W. H. Griffith Thomas (Christopher’s curate at St Aldate’s and later prominent in the annals of early American fundamentalism). In a straw poll of the gathered throng, a thousand hands were raised to censure the Newman proposals, with only about twenty in his favour.⁵⁵ Playing on the themes of English patriotism and nationhood, one observer celebrated that at the Town Hall the ‘true sons of freedom’ had unfurled ‘the flag of liberty’ and refused to be ‘enslaved again by a foreign power and its cruel, tyrannical, slavish religion’. He proclaimed that to allow a Newman statue would be to reject the birthrights secured by Magna Carta and the Glorious Revolution, and would be ‘an insult to God, His truth, His people, and to every true Englishman’.⁵⁶

Conspicuous by their absence from the Town Hall platform were the Anglican ritualists. Nevertheless, Ince and Christopher let it be known that the ritualists stood with them. Opposition to the statue came from the full breadth of the Church of England, they insisted, and was not a partisan affair. For example, Montague Noel (vicar of Oxford’s most ‘advanced’ parish, St Barnabas in the Jericho slums) wrote to support the protests.⁵⁷ Edward Dermer (vicar of St Philip and St James’, Oxford) also expressed his objections in an impromptu conversation in Broad Street, which Christopher was eager to publicise.⁵⁸ Likewise the influential Tractarian, T. T. Carter of Clewer (superior-general of the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament and former master of the Society of the Holy Cross), described the Newman memorial as ‘a sad and grievous thing’ because of its implied disparagement of Anglican Catholicism.⁵⁹ At the Town Hall, Ince read another letter, from one of the five Anglican ritualist ‘martyrs’ who had been imprisoned under the Public Worship Regulation Act for his conscientious defiance of the courts. This unidentified ritualist objected to the rearing of statues ‘to those who have deserted the English Church in her time of need’, likening it to the British army honouring a soldier who had fled the flag and turned his weapons upon his former comrades. ‘Toleration is one thing’, the correspondent concluded, ‘and charity, but adulation of traitorous conduct is quite another.’⁶⁰ These ritualist allies were crucial in the campaign of resistance – even if they remained

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *OT*, 6 Feb. 1892, 6.

⁵⁷ *OC*, 30 Jan. 1892, 2.

⁵⁸ ‘Proposed memorial to Cardinal Newman’.

⁵⁹ *Guardian*, 3 Feb. 1892, 160.

⁶⁰ ‘Proposed memorial to Cardinal Newman’.

somewhat at a distance – because they could not be dismissed as ultra-Protestants. Catholicism, not Protestantism, was their currency. As one clergyman wrote in the *Church Times*, Newman by his secession had ‘offered the worst insult in his power to his, and our, mother, the Catholic Church of England’.⁶¹ ‘It is time for English Churchmen to protest against the excessive adulation of Newman and Manning’, Ince proclaimed elsewhere. ‘It is because we wish to retain the primitive Catholic faith that we refuse to be Romanists.’⁶²

Despite these protestations of catholicity, *The Guardian* dismissed the Town Hall affair as a ‘feeble attempt ... to beat the Protestant drum’.⁶³ Professor Palgrave called it a ‘motley convention’.⁶⁴ The *Daily Chronicle* spoke of the Oxford agitators as ‘fire-brands’ and their protest as a ‘farrago of absurdities’.⁶⁵ W. J. Adams (secretary of the Summertown Liberal Association), who braved the Town Hall event ‘on the side of Newman and justice’, rebuked it as ‘a rank no-Popery meeting from beginning to end’ and alleged that Newman’s supporters had been threatened with physical intimidation.⁶⁶ Another attender called the platform party ‘cowardly fanatics’ whose faces lit up with pleasure as rude remarks about Newman were ‘bantered thicker and faster’ by the hecklers. He believed the organisers were motivated by an irrational hatred of all things Roman Catholic and should ‘blush with shame’ for stirring up religious strife.⁶⁷ J. W. Embury, a thirty-five-year-old Oxford printer and convert to Rome, also attended the Town Hall to vote in Newman’s favour. He sent a series of rude letters to the local press, abusing the Oxford martyrs and their modern protagonists. He derided Ince and Christopher as ‘intolerant iconoclasts’ and hoped the city council would not be swayed by ‘the insane froth of the few bigots who still remain in Oxford ... a handful of ignoramuses and dull-heads’.⁶⁸ Embury interpreted the controversy in apocalyptic terms, not merely as a quarrel about Newman’s legacy, but as ‘a phase of the eternal war which must go on between the Church and the world till the Lord comes again’. He was not surprised to see erstwhile enemies joining forces, like ritualist Noel and Evangelical Christopher, just as Pontius Pilate and King Herod had combined to crucify the Christ. During his youthful Anglican phase Embury had attended St Barnabas, but he now mocked the ritualists, ‘who pretend to be Catholics’, for falling into line so easily with Baptists and Methodists.⁶⁹

⁶¹ *Church Times*, 5 Feb. 1892, 116.

⁶² *Guardian*, 3 Feb. 1892, 160.

⁶³ *Ibid.* 27 Jan. 1892, 142.

⁶⁴ *Times*, 30 Jan. 1892, 7.

⁶⁵ *Daily Chronicle*, 23 Jan. 1892, 4. ⁶⁶ *OC*, 30 Jan. 1892, 2. ⁶⁷ *Ibid.* ⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *OC*, 6 Feb. 1892, 7; *OT*, 6 Feb. 1892, 6.

Petitions, protests and precedents

The Town Hall protest meeting was immediately followed by the gathering of signatures. A petition to the city council, decrying the Newman statue as a hit at the Reformation, lay open for Oxford citizens at the premises of four local tradesmen – a bootmaker, draper, grocer and stationer.⁷⁰ Signatures were also drummed up by local Evangelical clergy. Newman had been curate of St Clement's Church in the 1820s, but he was not remembered there fondly. The Evangelical rector Francis Pilcher preached in January 1892 against the 'pernicious doctrines' of Rome and the 'great evil' that Newman's statue would cause especially to Oxford's young people. He urged the congregation to sign the petition in the vestry.⁷¹ Likewise at St Matthew's Church, Grandpont – consecrated in October 1891 as a chapel-of-ease in St Aldate's parish – the curate-in-charge, Howard J. Colclough, spoke from the pulpit against the Newman memorial, and encouraged his congregation to sign the petition and persuade others to do likewise. He was rebuked for turning an Anglican pulpit into a political platform.⁷²

A separate petition, for Oxford academics, was circulated by Professor Ince to senior common rooms. It was a more moderate appeal to the city council, asking them politely to decline the statue because it would be 'distasteful' to many citizens. The university was still on extended vacation, because of the influenza pandemic, so there were only forty-five signatories, but Ince's professed aim was quality not quantity, and he predicted that many more signatures could easily be supplied from residents and non-residents.⁷³ Thirteen were heads of houses, including senior academics James Sewell (octogenarian Warden of New College) and Benjamin Jowett (Master of Balliol College), plus three heads (All Souls, Keble, Oriel) who had personally subscribed to the statue but objected to its proposed location. Sir William Anson (Warden of All Souls College), for example, described the choice of Broad Street as 'a folly' and 'a most wanton stirring up of strife'.⁷⁴ The other university signatories included Edwin Palmer (archdeacon of Oxford), Charles Heurtley (Lady Margaret professor of divinity), William Bright (regius professor of ecclesiastical history), S. R. Driver (Pusey's successor as regius professor of Hebrew), historian and senior proctor W. H. Hutton (later dean of Winchester), Thomas Case (Waynflete professor of moral and metaphysical philosophy, later President of Corpus Christi College), botanists John

⁷⁰ 'Proposed memorial to Cardinal Newman'.

⁷¹ 'The Newman memorial', *OT*, 30 Jan. 1892, 5.

⁷² *OC*, 30 Jan. 1892, 2.

⁷³ 'Oxford City Council: the Newman memorial', *Jackson's Oxford Journal*, 6 Feb. 1892, 6.

⁷⁴ 'The proposed Newman memorial at Oxford', *Times*, 27 Jan. 1892, 7.

Bretland Farmer and Sydney Vines, classicists T. H. Grose and L. R. Farnell (later Rector of Exeter College), bibliographer Falconer Madan (sub-librarian at the Bodleian) and W. R. Inge (later dean of St Paul's Cathedral). Unlike the citizens' petition, this academic resistance to Newman's statue was not driven by Evangelicals. It encompassed all shades of Anglican opinion, including prominent Anglican Catholics. The librarian of Pusey House, liturgist F. E. Brightman, was among the signatories, as was J. O. Johnston, former principal of St Stephen's House, Oxford, later famous as biographer of H. P. Liddon and for bringing Liddon's massive four-volume life of Pusey to completion in 1893–7, followed by an edition of Pusey's 'spiritual letters' in 1898.⁷⁵ Devotees of the Oxford Movement were not necessarily fans of Newman.

A central issue at debate concerned which 'Newman' was to be honoured. The Anglican Newman, or the Catholic Newman? Newman the man of letters, or Newman the theologian? Newman the Englishman, or Newman the Roman cardinal? *Jackson's Oxford Journal* argued that the intended tribute was to Newman as a great intellectual, teacher, sermonizer and hymn-writer, not as a Roman Catholic – 'we are honouring the man and not his creed'.⁷⁶ Likewise liberal Anglican clergyman Carteret J. H. Fletcher (rector of Carfax, in central Oxford) believed they could honour Newman 'not as Cardinal or theologian, but as a man of saintly character and brilliant genius, who breathed new life into the national Church'.⁷⁷ Some pointed to the romantic poet Percy Bysshe Shelley as a parallel. Shelley's grand marble and bronze monument, portraying his drowned body washed up on a Tuscan beach, was accepted in November 1891 by University College as a celebration of his literary genius, while overlooking the atheism for which he was originally expelled from Oxford in 1811.⁷⁸ If Shelley could be lauded for his contribution to English literature, regardless of his religious history, why not Newman also?⁷⁹

However, most commentators saw Newman's fame and religion as inseparable. 'Many of us', wrote one, 'simply see in Newman a man who has used enormous talents and a long life to further a retrograde movement.'⁸⁰ Christopher insisted that it was impossible to glorify a Roman cardinal without also glorifying the Roman Church. He therefore called upon Oxford Protestants 'of all denominations and all political parties' to resist this celebration of a man who 'hated the Reformation, and beguiled many others into doing the same'.⁸¹ Roman Catholicism, he asserted

⁷⁵ 'Oxford City Council: the Newman memorial'.

⁷⁶ *Jackson's Oxford Journal*, 16 Jan. 1892, 5.

⁷⁷ *OC*, 30 Jan. 1892, 2.

⁷⁸ Robin Darwall-Smith, 'The Shelley memorial: or, The monument nobody wanted', *University College Record* xii (2000), 74–87.

⁷⁹ Walter Firminger, *What then did Dr Newman do?*, Oxford 1892, 29.

⁸⁰ *OC*, 6 Feb. 1892, 8.

⁸¹ *Jackson's Oxford Journal*, 23 Jan. 1892, 8.

bluntly, was ‘another gospel’ and therefore to exalt a cardinal before the young people of Oxford was ‘offensive to God’.⁸² F. W. Farrar (archdeacon of Westminster, and later dean of Canterbury) agreed that a Newman statue in Broad Street would signify nothing less than ‘the glorification of the Church of Rome over the Church of England’.⁸³ The leading Anglican Evangelical newspaper, *The Record*, went further and called it a monument ‘to the glory of Ultramontanism’.⁸⁴ It described the scheme as

an attempt to extol the Church of Rome in the very midst of the Church of England ... Build the memorial, and Rome will call the world to witness the turn of the tide in her favour. One generation drove Newman from Oxford; this one welcomes him back; one generation reared its memorial to the Protestant martyrs; this one selects for its honour the pervert to the Church which burned them.⁸⁵

Anti-Catholic rhetoric reached fever pitch. ‘Oh, what contempt for God, for His word and truth!’, wrote an objector from Birkenhead, ‘What awful blindness of mind! What awful infatuation!’⁸⁶ Others worried that the streets of Oxford would be disfigured with ‘abominable graven images of schismatical heretics’,⁸⁷ or that Newman’s statue would become ‘a shrine for future pilgrims to worship at’.⁸⁸ The scheme was blamed upon ‘the astute, unscrupulous conclave of the Romish ecclesiastics’,⁸⁹ part of a wider Vatican agenda to bring England once again ‘beneath the domination, the slavery, the tyranny, and the blinding soul and conscience-destroying power of the Roman obedience’.⁹⁰ The *Methodist Times* likewise derided the proposal as a ‘scandalous conspiracy’ perpetrated by ‘the grovelling sycophants of Romanism’.⁹¹ One mischievous correspondent, signing himself ‘Brother Beelzebub’, recommended that the statue should face the Martyrs’ Memorial, with Newman seated on a chair with his thumb on his nose and his fingers raised in mock salute to the Reformers.⁹² The most fitting memorial, another proclaimed, would be a statue of Newman constructed from wood, unveiled with Roman pomp, saturated with kerosene oil and set alight. The ashes could then be placed in an urn and dispatched to the Vatican.⁹³

Although Newman was portrayed by Norfolk’s committee as an English hero, some decried his loyalty. Canon H. W. Bellairs (rural dean of Atherstone, Warwickshire) declared that England owed nothing at all to

⁸² *OT*, 13 Feb. 1892, 6.

⁸³ F. W. Farrar, ‘The Newman statue’, *Review of the Churches* i (Feb. 1892), 301.

⁸⁴ ‘The Newman statue’, *Record*, 5 Feb. 1892, 158.

⁸⁵ ‘The Newman memorial project’, *Record*, 29 Jan. 1892, 134.

⁸⁶ *OT*, 23 Jan. 1892, 6.

⁸⁷ *OR*, 10 Feb. 1892, 4.

⁸⁸ *OR*, 8 Feb. 1892, 3.

⁸⁹ *OC*, 30 Jan. 1892, 8.

⁹⁰ *OT*, 30 Jan. 1892, 6.

⁹¹ *Methodist Times*, 10 Mar. 1892, 242.

⁹² *OT*, 13 Feb. 1892, 6.

⁹³ *OT*, 20 Feb. 1892, 3.

Newman. Indeed, if the established Church was part of the English constitution, then Newman had done more to undermine the nation's fabric than any Socialist or Home Ruler.⁹⁴ Another objected to the 'sentimental gush' about Newman, who although undoubtedly learned and sincere, was nevertheless 'a renegade'.⁹⁵ Many embraced this image of desertion. A *Church Times* correspondent thought a Newman memorial in Oxford was as ludicrous as proposing a colossal statue to Emperor Napoleon in Trafalgar Square, in honour of his consummate military ability, even though he hated England.⁹⁶ Another suggested it would be as foolish as erecting a monument in front of the War Office or Horse Guards, or even worse at the Sandhurst or Woolwich officer training academies (Oxford parallels), to a British general who had deserted in the midst of battle and attacked his compatriots.⁹⁷ Varying the image, another compared it to offering the Royal College of Physicians a statue of a famous homeopath, herbalist or 'quack'.⁹⁸

A further group of objectors argued not on the grounds of Protestantism, but precedent. Why should Newman be granted this unique honour when many others had better claims? For example, Alfred W. Pollard of the British Museum (later a leading Shakespearean scholar) noted that there was no statue of John Wyclif outside Balliol, nor Richard Hooker outside Corpus Christi, nor Jeremy Taylor outside All Souls, nor William Laud or Edmund Campion outside St John's, nor John Wesley outside Lincoln.⁹⁹ If every illustrious Oxonian was memorialised in the streets, the city would soon be overcrowded.¹⁰⁰ There were also concerns on aesthetic grounds that modern statues would disfigure Oxford's ancient architecture.¹⁰¹ Furthermore, although statues of soldiers and statesmen were a familiar sight in other cities, it was highly unusual to memorialise a contemporary theologian or churchman in this way. The statue of Bishop James Fraser, erected in central Manchester by public subscription in 1887, was a rare exception to the rule. 'Who ever heard of a statue being erected in a public place to a Cardinal?', asked the *Daily Chronicle*. A school, college, church or oratory would be more appropriate and in keeping with Newman's character.¹⁰² William Sanday (Dean Ireland's professor of exegesis, and later Lady Margaret professor of divinity) concurred. He wrote sympathetically of England's debt to Newman, but argued that it was incongruous to place a statue of a famously reserved theologian in

⁹⁴ *OT*, 30 Jan. 1892, 6.

⁹⁶ *Church Times*, 29 Jan. 1892, 94.

⁹⁸ *Record*, 12 Feb. 1892, 187.

¹⁰⁰ *OC*, 30 Jan. 1892, 2.

¹⁰¹ *Guardian*, 3 Feb. 1892, 175; *Times*, 3 Feb. 1892, 5.

¹⁰² *Daily Chronicle*, 28 Jan. 1892, 4.

⁹⁵ *OT*, 23 Jan. 1892, 6.

⁹⁷ *Church Times*, 12 Feb. 1892, 141.

⁹⁹ *Guardian*, 27 Jan. 1892, 123.

the bustle and traffic of Broad Street. He proposed instead a bust in the secluded quiet of the Bodleian Library.¹⁰³

Toleration meeting

Most supporters of the Newman statue argued the case on grounds of toleration. In Westminster Abbey, for example, statues of British politicians who had been fierce enemies throughout their careers stood amiably side by side. Why not in Oxford also, asked *The Tablet*.¹⁰⁴ The University Parks were proposed as an excellent location for multiple statues to Oxford celebrities, regardless of creed.¹⁰⁵ To exclude Newman from the public square was to turn the clock back to the dark days of Test Acts and civil disabilities. Oxford did not belong to the Church of England, insisted *Jackson's Oxford Journal*: 'Oxford is of the nation and for the nation, and the nation includes Roman Catholics even if they happen to have been Anglicans.'¹⁰⁶ Indeed, as one commentator observed, what more fitting place for a demonstration of tolerance than 'Broad Street'.¹⁰⁷

Toleration was the grand theme of the city council's next monthly meeting, on Wednesday 3 February, set to decide the issue. It had to be transferred from the council chamber to the Town Hall, because so many members of the public wanted to witness the proceedings. Oxford city council had recently been reformed and expanded under the 1889 Local Government Act, with four city wards and one University ward, each with nine councillors and three aldermen – sixty people in total, one fifth representing the University. The *Oxford Times* (a Conservative newspaper) prophesied 'a day of reckoning' at the ballot box, at the next municipal elections, if the council pushed ahead with the Newman proposal against the wishes of their constituents.¹⁰⁸ The speeches and votes were therefore carefully scrutinised. It was particularly surprising, observed one, that Liberal councillors were so eager to promote Newman's statue, given Newman's famously excoriating views on liberalism.¹⁰⁹

The debate began with speeches from two opponents. First, J. R. Magrath (Provost of The Queen's College), one of three University heads of houses on the council, presented the University petition. He argued that the council had no mandate to grant the Broad Street site, and indeed it would be 'extremely dangerous' for them to do so. He hinted that a

¹⁰³ William Sanday, *England's debt to Newman*, Oxford 1892, 3.

¹⁰⁴ *Tablet*, 16 Jan. 1892, 88.

¹⁰⁶ *Jackson's Oxford Journal*, 6 Feb. 1892, 5.

¹⁰⁸ 'The Newman meeting at the Town Hall', *OT*, 30 Jan. 1892, 5.

¹⁰⁹ *OC*, 16 Jan. 1892, 2.

¹⁰⁵ *OC*, 23 Jan. 1892, 2.

¹⁰⁷ *Standard*, 11 Jan. 1892, 3.

guard might be necessary to protect the statue from violence (perhaps imagining undergraduate antics or Protestant mistreatment) and maintained that the resistance was not motivated by anti-Catholicism but by concern for 'the well-being of the community'. Next, Councillor Underhill presented the citizens' petition, signed by approximately 2,000 people, alongside another petition from 116 working men in North London who had read about the Oxford controversy in the newspapers and decided to join the protests. The council would be foolish, Underhill warned, to push ahead with the statue 'in the teeth of popular opinion'.¹¹⁰

Defence of the Newman memorial was led by the deputy mayor Alderman Robert Buckell, an auctioneer and former coal merchant who served six times as Oxford mayor during his long decades of public service. The statue, he proclaimed, would 'strike a poniard through and nail to the wall all the bigotry and prejudice and hatred' which had characterised previous generations of Christians. He warned fellow Nonconformists that a statue of John Wesley might be resisted on the same grounds – after all, if Newman led people away from the Church of England by the thousand, Wesley did so by the million. To permit the memorial was thus to uphold religious freedom. Octavius Ogle recalled the atrocities committed in previous centuries between Anglicans and Romans Catholics, but those days of 'brutal butchery' were long past. To welcome the statue would be proof that Oxford citizens were eager 'to let bygones be bygones, to forget and forgive mutual wrongs', and to recognise in Cardinal Newman 'a common brotherhood of all true Christianity'. The Oxford sheriff, William Carver, a prominent freemason, likewise dismissed the opposition as belonging to the sixteenth century, not to the modern age of religious liberty and equality. He warned the council not to allow itself to be dictated to by 'any narrow-minded sect'.¹¹¹

Councillor Richard Bacon rebuked Newman's opponents for raking 'the embers of religious hatred' and fanning 'the flames of sectarian bitterness'. By leaving one communion and joining another, Newman had simply exercised 'freedom of conscience', an essential right. Bacon did not care 'a single straw about what isms Newman professed', only that he was a great Englishman, theologian, historian, philosopher and poet. Councillor Hugh Hall (editor and proprietor of *Jackson's Oxford Journal*, and Merton College graduate) derided the 'religious panic' which was sweeping Oxford in an age of toleration. He observed that Protestants and Roman Catholics in the 1890s often worked hand-in-hand in philanthropic or political agendas supporting education, labour rights, temperance and the alleviation of poverty – so why prevent a statue of a Catholic? Tolerance, ecumenism and religious liberty were the keynotes. Although there were

¹¹⁰ 'Oxford City Council: the Newman memorial'.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

some shorter speeches against the statue, they focused mainly on aesthetics. For example, Councillor Charles Miskin Laing, a barrister and Magdalen College graduate, was glad Oxford had avoided the ‘abortions in stone and bronze’ which disfigured the streets of other Victorian cities. Councillor Henry Daniel, founder of the Daniel Press and later Provost of Worcester College, voted against the statue but said it was a question of taste not toleration. The city council was ultimately split thirty-seven to sixteen in Newman’s favour. They resolved to grant land for the monument, but in an effort to quell the public uproar also conceded that the prime Broad Street site should be excluded from consideration.¹¹²

The council debate brought to the surface underlying tensions running through Oxford civic life. *John Bull* interpreted it as continuation of the long ‘struggle for supremacy’ between ‘Town’ and ‘Gown’, suggesting that the ‘Town’ element of the council (with a four-fifths majority) could not resist the temptation of ‘a snub to its ancient rival’.¹¹³ University dons, like Professor Ince, were annoyed that a statue of one of their graduates was being decided by a body on which the university had only a small representation. Conversely, Oxford’s civic leaders objected to being dictated to by senior common rooms. Others interpreted the clash not as Town versus Gown, but Chapel versus Church. Councillor Laing asserted that Nonconformists only supported the statue because it was as ‘a slap in the eye to the Church of England’.¹¹⁴ Likewise, the *Oxford Times* suggested that Alderman Buckell and the Nonconformists on the council were not motivated by enthusiasm for Newman but by antagonism to the university and the Church of England.¹¹⁵ Another mocked these Nonconformist ‘psalm-singers’ of old puritan stock for ‘changing their tune and singing “God bless the Pope and Cardinal Newman”’. He believed they cared more for politics than religion, and had thrown in their lot with Newman’s memorial ‘out of sheer “cussedness” towards the Church of England’, for the same reason that they supported Charles Bradlaugh’s secularist campaign to enter parliament in the 1880s.¹¹⁶ According to the *Methodist Times*, the ‘false Liberals’ on the city council delighted ‘to honour Ultramontanism and to insult Protestantism. These men evidently care nothing for either civil or religious freedom. They are ready to sell their birthright for a mess of aesthetic pottage’.¹¹⁷ Another commentator jeeringly proposed designing the statue as a group scene, with Newman as the central seated figure, hands extended in benediction, surrounded by Alderman Buckell and other Nonconformist councillors, ‘with bended knee and bowed head’.¹¹⁸

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ ‘The Newman memorial’, *John Bull*, 6 Feb. 1892, 87.

¹¹⁴ ‘Oxford City Council: the Newman memorial’.

¹¹⁵ ‘Wednesday’s debate: by a looker-on’, *OT*, 6 Feb. 1892, 5.

¹¹⁶ *OR*, 9 Feb. 1892, 4.

¹¹⁷ *Methodist Times*, 11 Feb. 1892, 145.

¹¹⁸ *OT*, 27 Feb. 1892, 3.

Although Norfolk's committee had ostensibly won approval from the city council, it was a deflating victory with the veto of their favoured Broad Street site. The controversy rumbled on, but its teeth were drawn. Oxford's undergraduates were last into the field, when Hilary Term finally began, but they had missed the main action. The Oxford Union discussed the Newman memorial, in a crowded meeting, and pronounced against it by 108 votes to 98. The question of tolerance was again to the fore, though one of the leading debaters, Baron George von Zedlitz of Trinity College, quoted from Newman's own writings in an attempt to prove that intolerance was a necessity in religion.¹¹⁹ By the end of February, Norfolk's committee had formally withdrawn their claim, reluctant to accept a second-rate Oxford site and lamenting the 'violent opposition' which had been fomented by leading members of the university.¹²⁰ Just as Newman himself had been forced to retreat from Oxford in the early 1840s, so now his memorialists experienced the same fate half a century later.

After these bruising Oxford battles, four years of hiatus passed before Newman's statue was eventually unveiled by the duke of Norfolk in July 1896 at the Brompton Oratory in central London. Although on public view, overlooking Kensington High Street, the statue was none the less on private Roman Catholic ground. In the bustle of the metropolis, away from the febrile atmosphere of Oxford, it passed without controversy or complaint. Newman was sculptured by French artist Léon-Joseph Chavalliaud in white marble, life-size, robed as a cardinal, holding a biretta in one hand and a volume of Scripture in the other. His features were said to possess the 'dreamy, far away look of the Churchman Poet'.¹²¹ Despite extensive publicity and canvassing, the memorial fund had reached only £5,000 for all three of its objects combined, £2,000 of which was spent on the statue.¹²² The balance was sent to the Birmingham Oratory, divided between its school and a fund towards a new church. The Newman memorial church project was revived in 1901, capitalising on the centenary of his birth, and fully opened by 1909 – but it was an exclusively Roman Catholic initiative for Roman Catholic use on Roman Catholic land, so had none of the explosive potential of the Newman statue.

In Oxford, Newman had been banished. Brasenose College graduate Hartwell Grissell (convert to Rome, papal chamberlain and a senior

¹¹⁹ 'The Union Society: debate on the Newman memorial', *OR*, 13 Feb. 1892, 3; 'Oxford Union Society', *Oxford Magazine* x, 17 Feb. 1892, 175.

¹²⁰ *Times*, 27 Feb. 1892, 12.

¹²¹ 'The Newman memorial: unveiling at Brompton', *Tablet*, 18 July 1896, 93–5.

¹²² *Tablet*, 5 Aug. 1893, 222.

member of the university's Newman Society) hoped for a small Newman memorial chapel or oratory, 'as a thank offering for all that we Oxford men owe to the Cardinal' and as a repository for Grissell's impressive relic collection, but the idea came to nothing.¹²³ It was not until 1912, two decades after the first attempts at memorialisation, that Oxford received Newman's sculptured image, one of twelve statues adorning the new Rhodes Building at Oriel College. However, unlike the statue of Cecil Rhodes (the focus of student anger from 2015 during the 'Rhodes Must Fall' campaign), Newman was not positioned publicly facing the High Street, but on the private aspect of the building, only visible from the Oriel quadrangle.¹²⁴ Trinity College erected a bronze bust of Newman four years later, in May 1916, but again in the privacy of the college gardens. It was unveiled in a quiet ceremony with little public attention.¹²⁵ Newman may indeed have been one of Oxford's greatest sons, but his life and legacy remain unrecorded in the public square, unlike the Reformation martyrs whose Victorian monument survives today as one of the city's most celebrated and conspicuous monuments.

The standard Newman historiography describes his trajectory from an oppositional figure in Oxford in the 1840s, through to growing national sympathy and esteem by the end of his life, and ever onwards towards international twentieth-century adulation and twenty-first-century canonisation. But this forgotten Oxford controversy of the 1890s problematises the early part of that picture. In fact, resistance to Newman's legacy was strongly felt among the dons and citizens of late Victorian Oxford, even in this newly secularised and professedly tolerant university city. Newman's memory and reputation remained highly contested, not just among campaigning Evangelicals but across the whole breadth of the Church of England. Anti-Newmanism, a particularly virulent local strain of anti-Catholicism, had the power in Oxford to draw protestors together from town and gown, tradesmen and tutors. Far from becoming in his latter years 'an acknowledged prophet in his own country', as the received narrative suggests, Newman's Oxford exile was not rescinded but posthumously re-enforced by the very city with which his name is forever associated.

¹²³ Hartwell Grissell to Hope, 21 Sept. 1899, ACA, MD 2130.

¹²⁴ Brian Escott Cox, '100 years of the Rhodes Building: its creation and a re-appraisal', *Oriel College Record* (2011), 49–63.

¹²⁵ 'Bust of Cardinal Newman at Trinity College', *OC*, 5 May 1916, 8.