

Engaging the liberal state: Cardinal Manning and Irish home rule

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In the course of his long career (1865–1892) as Archbishop of Westminster and head of England’s Catholic Church, Henry Edward Manning articulated a position on the engagement of voluntary religious organizations like the Church with the liberal state, now understood, at least in the British context, as religiously neutral and responsive to public opinion through increasingly democratic forms of government and mediated through political parties. The greatest test and illustration of this position was his involvement in Irish Home Rule, where he deferred to the Irish hierarchy in their support of Charles Stuart Parnell’s Irish Parliamentary Party against his own inclinations and the immediate interests of the Catholic population in England. Manning’s position was in sharp contrast to that of Pope Leo XIII, who negotiated directly with Otto von Bismarck, and over the heads of the hierarchy and Germany’s Catholic Centre Party, to end the Kulturkampf. Thus Manning worked out a *modus vivendi* for the Church in relation to the liberal, democratic state that anticipates in many ways the practice of the Church in politics today.

Keywords: Cardinal Manning, Irish Home Rule, Charles Stuart Parnell, Catholic Church in Ireland, Catholic Church in England

1885

The year 1885 was an important one for Cardinal Henry Edward Manning.¹ It was in this year that his campaign for a Royal

* This article was originally a lecture given by the author whilst holding the Thomas I. Gasson, S.J. Chair at Boston College, in 2018. The author would like to thank the Jesuit Institute and the Jesuit Community at Boston College for their support of the Thomas I. Gasson, S.J. Chair.

¹ Henry Edward Manning (1808–1892), Archbishop of Westminster from 1865–1892, created cardinal, 1875. Cardinal Manning was ill served by his first biographer, Edmund Sheridan Purcell (1923–1899), in his *Life of Cardinal Manning: Archbishop of Westminster*, 2 vols (London: MacMillan & Co., 1895). See Sheridan Gilley, ‘New Light on an Old Scandal: Purcell’s Life of Cardinal Manning’ in Aidan Bellenger, ed., *Opening the Scrolls: Essays in Catholic History in Honour of Godfrey Anstruther* (Bath: Downside Abbey, 1987), 166–198. Shane Leslie came to Manning’s defense in his *Henry Edward Manning: His Life and Labours* (New York: P.J. Kennedy, 1921). The work of Vincent Alan McClelland, especially *Cardinal Manning, his Public Life and Influence, 1865-1892* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962) led to a renaissance in Manning studies. Robert Gray’s *Cardinal Manning: A Biography* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1985) is a sympathetic modern treatment. More recent contributions on Manning include David Newsome, *The Convert Cardinals: John Henry Newman and Henry Edward Manning* (London: John Murray, 1993), James Pereiro, *Cardinal Manning: An Intellectual Biography* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998), Nicholas Schofield and Gerard Skinner, eds. *The English Cardinals* (Oxford: Family Publications,

Commission to consider the operation of the 1870 Education Act bore fruit when Lord Salisbury, the prime minister,² appointed a Royal Commission on Elementary Education, also known as the Cross Commission (1886–1888).³ It was significant for Manning for a number of other reasons. This was the year in which the policy of the English government to influence events in Ireland through intervention in Rome reached its height in the Errington mission,⁴ but also experienced its most serious defeat when William Walsh⁵ was appointed Archbishop of Dublin. Manning, as we shall see, was deeply involved in both these affairs. 1885 was, moreover, a critical year as far as Ireland was concerned more generally. With the conclusion of the clerical-nationalist alliance during the previous year,⁶ 1885 saw the final consolidation of Charles Stewart Parnell's⁷ power over the nationalist movement, and was marked by a complex series of manoeuvrings between Parnell and political leaders of both the major parties. It was a year that saw Parnell issue the manifesto instructing Irish voters in England to vote against Liberals and Radicals in the parliamentary election, setting the stage for temporary Conservative-Nationalist cooperation and the eventual conversion, just at the year's

2007), 151–157 and also Fr. Schofield's talk at the Farm Street Church, March 5, 2018 at the opening of the exhibition on the life and legacy of Cardinal Manning: <https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/34484>. See also Jacqueline Clais-Girard, *Le Cardinal des Pauvres: Henry Edward Manning (1808-1892)* (Paris: Saint-Léger Éditions, 2016).

² Robert Gascoyne-Cecil, 3rd Marquess of Salisbury (1830–1903), three times prime minister of the United Kingdom, 1885–1886, 1886–1892, 1895–1902.

³ Cardinal Manning believed that the Education Act of 1870, in whose passage he had been intimately involved, had intended to establish a dual system of education as between the School Board system of nondenominational schools and the Voluntary system of religiously sponsored schools. He had become convinced that the policy of the Education Department had been to depress the Voluntary schools and promote the Board schools and desired a Royal Commission to address this issue. See Jeffrey von Arx, 'Cardinal Manning and his Political Persona: The Education act of 1870' in Sheridan Gilley, ed. *Victorian Churches and Churchmen* (Catholic Record Society: 2005), 1–11, also Vincent Alan McClelland, 'The 'Free Schools' Issue and the General Election of 1885: A Denominational Response,' *History of Education* 5:2 (1976): 141–154.

⁴ George Errington (1839–1920) was an Irish Catholic Liberal MP for Longford. He was used by the Liberal government in Gladstone's second administration (1880–1885), at the behest of the Foreign Secretary, Lord Clarendon, as an informal emissary to represent the views of the government to the Holy See, a function which he fulfilled on several occasions between 1880 and 1885. See below 9ff.

⁵ William Walsh (1841–1921), Roman Catholic Archbishop of Dublin from 1885 to 1921. Walsh had been the president of St. Patrick's College, Maynooth, the government supported national seminary in Ireland, and had earned a reputation from the Irish administration as a nationalist.

⁶ The clerical-nationalist alliance resulted from a decision in 1884 on the part of the Roman Catholic bishops in Ireland to entrust to the Irish Parliamentary Party the cause of denominational education in Ireland. In exchange, the bishops undertook to support, or at least not oppose, the nationalist agenda of the Party in favour of Irish Home Rule. See Emmett Larkin, *The Roman Catholic Church and the Creation of the Modern Irish State, 1878-1886* (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1975), 82–85

⁷ Charles Stuart Parnell, (1846–1891), leader of the Irish Parliamentary (Home Rule) Party from 1882–1891.

closing, of William Gladstone⁸ to Home Rule. Manning was a key player at certain stages of this process, especially in negotiations between Joseph Chamberlain⁹ and Parnell over the Irish ‘Central Board’ scheme.¹⁰ And, of course, Manning issued his own manifesto for the election, instructing Catholic voters to put to their parliamentary candidates two questions about their support for denominational education.

There were important connections between and among issues concerning education, relations with Rome, the Irish Catholic Church, the Irish Parliamentary Party, national politics, Home Rule and local government. Some of these connections are obvious, others will become clearer when viewed from Manning’s distinctive perspective on the intersection of religion and politics. In order to appreciate these connections, we will treat these topics synchronically rather than diachronically. The effort to relate Manning’s involvements in this year to each other will offer the opportunity for a synthetic overview of the mature and developed position of Manning on the relationship between the Church and the liberal state in the last decade of his life.¹¹

⁸ William Ewart Gladstone (1809–1898), four times prime minister of the United Kingdom: 1868–1874, 1880–1885, February–July 1886, 1892–1894.

⁹ Joseph Chamberlain (1836–1914), first a Radical in the Liberal Party then, when he split with the Liberal Party over Irish Home Rule in 1886, a Liberal Unionist. He joined the Conservative party in 1912. The best recent biography is P.T. Marsh, *Joseph Chamberlain: Entrepreneur in Politics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994).

¹⁰ A plan of Chamberlain’s formulated in 1884–1885, to offer local government to Ireland short of Home Rule. See below, 15ff.

¹¹ This article exists within the context of a reconsideration of the political role played by Cardinal Manning during his public life. The first and most influential work in this regard is McClelland, *Cardinal Manning: His Public Life and Influence, 1865–1892*. See also Jeffrey P. von Arx S.J. ‘Manning’s Ultramontanism and the Catholic Church in British Politics,’ *Recusant History* (hereafter *RH*) 19:3 (May, 1989): 332–347, and von Arx, ‘Cardinal Henry Edward Manning’ in von Arx, ed. *Varieties of Ultramontanism* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press, 1998), 85–102, and, for Manning’s place in the larger picture of Catholic involvement in politics in the period after the restoration of the hierarchy, von Arx, ‘Catholics and Politics,’ in V. Alan McClelland and Michael Hodgetts, eds. *From Without the Flaminian Gate* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1999), 245–271, which is in part a response to Dermot Quinn, *Patronage and Piety: The Politics of English Roman Catholicism, 1850–1900* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993). Our understanding of Manning’s early thinking on church and state has been immensely aided by the publication of Peter Erb’s monumental *The Correspondence of Henry Edward Manning and William Gladstone: The Complete Correspondence, 1833–1891*, 4 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011–2013). See especially his extensive introduction, vol I, xiii–cxx, the exhaustive bibliography 4: 395–496 and index, 497–550. For an evaluation of this achievement, see V.A. McClelland’s review, ‘Church and State: The Manning–Gladstone Correspondence, 1833–1891’ in *British Catholic History* 32:3 (2015): 383–412. This correspondence is at its richest during Manning’s Anglican career, when he and Gladstone were both committed to the Church of England. The correspondence largely broke off after Manning’s conversion in 1851, to resume in 1861, but without the same intimacy, and more in the area of public affairs, given the positions that both men came to assume, and their need to deal with each other in these matters. The correspondence broke off again in 1874, over Gladstone’s attacks on the Vatican Council and issues surrounding the Irish Universities Bill, only resuming in 1884 in a somewhat more desultory fashion. Other primary sources for this study include papers in the Archives of the Archdiocese of Westminster, especially Manning’s correspondence with Herbert Vaughan (1832–1903), his protégé and successor as Archbishop of Westminster (from 1892–1903),

The 'World Plan' of Leo XIII

The death of Pius IX¹² and the election of Leo XIII¹³ as pope in 1878 meant for Manning not only the loss of a friend and patron, but, as a consequence, a considerable loss of his influence in Rome.¹⁴ It was, therefore, without the benefit of Manning's advice that the new pope and his advisers began to formulate and carry out what one modern historian of the Church has called the 'world plan' of Leo XIII—a plan in many ways quite different from the policies of Pius IX.¹⁵ The impetus for the new departure in the international politics of the Vatican was initially continuous with the previous papacy: the need to assure the position of the Church, and especially of the papacy, after the loss of the Papal States to the Italian Kingdom. Pius IX, who had suffered the loss of the patrimony of Peter, had attempted to compensate by strengthening the internal cohesion of the Church and ultramontane control over national churches. In this enterprise, ecclesiastics like Manning and his counterpart in Ireland, Cardinal Paul Cullen,¹⁶ had been enthusiastic and effective collaborators.¹⁷

and correspondence between Manning and the Archbishops of Dublin, especially Cardinal Paul Cullen (1803–1878), archbishop from 1852–1878 and William Walsh, archbishop from 1885–1921. There is additional Manning material, including correspondence, in the Pitts Theology Library at Emory University, Atlanta. See Peter Erbs' discussion of sources in his *Correspondence* 1: cxii–cxv. There is an interesting juxtaposition of nearly simultaneous works by Gladstone and Manning, Gladstone's *The State in its Relations with the Church* (London: John Murray, 1839) and Manning's *The Unity of the Church* (London: John Murray, 1842) which illustrate the fundamental commitments of the two men early in their careers: Gladstone to the Establishment, and Manning to the independence and autonomy of the Church. H.C.G. Matthews (co-editor of *The Gladstone Diaries*, 13 volumes [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968–1994]), describes the central point of Gladstone's interest as 'institutional Anglicanism, its relationship to nationality and its compatibility or incompatibility with a plural society' and traces the evolution of Gladstone's thinking on the role of the Anglican Church from being coterminous with nationality to being the centre point of a reunited apostolic Christianity. See H.C.G. Matthew, 'Gladstone, Vaticanism and the Question of the East' in *Studies in Church History* 15 (1978): 417–442; in contrast with Manning's later position on the role of the Church as autonomous in a religiously plural state. See Jeffrey von Arx, 'Interpreting the Council: Archbishop Manning and the Vatican Decrees Controversy,' *RH* 26:1 (2002): 229–241.

¹² Pius IX (born Giovanni Mastai Ferretti, 1792–1878), pope from 1846–1878, convened the First Vatican Council.

¹³ Leo XIII (born Vincenzo Luigi Pecci, 1810–1903), pope from 1878–1903, famous for his social encyclical, *Rerum novarum* (1891) and for the revival of Thomism (*Aeterni Patris*, 1879).

¹⁴ See Purcell, *The Life of Cardinal Manning*, 2:576–577.

¹⁵ See Oskar Kohler, Introduction to Part One of volume IX of H. Jedin and J. Dolan, eds. *The History of the Church* (London: Herder and Herder, 1981), entitled 'The World Plan of Leo XIII: Goals and Methods,' 9:3–25.

¹⁶ Paul Cullen, 1803–1878, Roman Catholic Archbishop first of Armagh (1849) and then of Dublin (1852–1878), created cardinal 1866. Like Manning, a strong supporter of papal infallibility and primacy at the First Vatican Council.

¹⁷ For the role of Cullen in Ireland, see Emmet Larkin, *The Consolidation of the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland, 1860–1870* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), also Emmet Larkin, 'Cardinal Paul Cullen,' in von Arx, ed. *Varieties of Ultramontaniam*, 61–84.

The new departure of Leo XIII's papacy in international relations was to secure its position through a new conceptualization of the Temporal Power. For Leo, the Temporal Power that would secure the position of the papacy now meant not so much the repossession of the territory of the Papal States, but instead the re-establishment of the authority of the papacy as a key player in international affairs: in Europe most importantly, and throughout the world. Here the most representative and from Leo's point of view the most momentous of the very limited successes of this policy was the offer of the German Chancellor, Otto von Bismarck,¹⁸ also in 1885, to have the pope mediate in a dispute between Germany and Spain over possession of the Caroline Islands in the south Pacific. This invitation the pope optimistically but ingenuously took to be an implicit recognition by Bismarck of his temporal sovereignty.¹⁹

For the Leonine papacy's vision of itself as referee or arbiter in international affairs to become a possibility, it was necessary that the papacy should attempt to resolve outstanding disputes and overcome animosities that were a source of discord between it and the great (European) powers, and show itself accommodating, in so far as this was possible, to their concerns. It was for this reason that Leo sought to bring to a close the *Kulturkampf*²⁰ with the German Empire that had followed the Vatican Council and German unification. Bismarck's invitation to the pope to mediate the dispute was a palpable success of papal diplomacy, even if it meant acting over the heads and even against the advice of the Catholic Centre Party and the German episcopate.²¹ Of the same inspiration, but less successful, was the policy to encourage the accommodation of the Catholic Church in France with the Republic that came to be known as the *ralliement*. More questionable were Leo's efforts to come to terms with imperial Russia, which Polish Catholics in the Empire believed to be occurring at their expense.²²

¹⁸ Otto von Bismarck (1815–1898), chancellor of the German Empire, 1871–1890; brought about the unification of the German Empire after the Franco-Prussian War (1870).

¹⁹ Kohler in Jedin and Dolan, eds. *History of the Church*, 9: 20.

²⁰ The *Kulturkampf* was a policy of Bismarck in the 1870s to gain control of the Roman Catholic Church in Germany on behalf of the state and to sever, in so far as possible, its ties to the papacy. This was a reaction to the decree on papal infallibility which was thought to threaten national sovereignty and the civil allegiance of Catholics to the German State. Gladstone and Manning would engage in an extended and somewhat bitter public controversy over the *Kulturkampf*. See von Arx, 'Archbishop Manning and the *Kulturkampf*' *RH* 21:2 (1992): 254–266. For the influences, especially via the liberal Catholic German theologian Ignaz von Döllinger and his disciple Lord Acton, that Gladstone brought to bear on his perception of the *Kulturkampf*, see Peter Erb, 'Gladstone and German Liberal Catholicism' *RH* 23:3 (May, 1977) 450–469.

²¹ Rudolf Lill, 'The Conclusion of the *Kulturkampf* in Prussia and the German Empire,' in Jedin and Dolan, eds. *History of the Church*, 9:55–75.

²² Kohler, in Jedin and Dolan, eds. *History of the Church*, 9:13.

Diplomatic relations were central to Leo's project of having the papacy recognized as a player in international affairs: not only with Catholic powers, but also with non-Catholic powers like Germany, Russia and Great Britain. In the case of Britain, the question of diplomatic relations was far more complex than Roman policy makers realized. English politicians were ambivalent on the question of re-establishing relations with the Holy See, now no longer a European state, in the face of traditional English no-papery. So too, the Irish hierarchy was strongly opposed to the possibility that the affairs of the Irish Church might pass through the hands of a nuncio resident in London or a British ambassador at the Vatican, rather than through direct dealing between Irish bishops and the pope.²³ Meanwhile, Cardinal Manning was opposed to diplomatic relations between England and the Holy See.

Edmund Purcell, in his biography of Cardinal Manning, suggests that Manning's principal reason for opposing the establishment of diplomatic relations was jealousy for his own position, which might be threatened by the presence of a papal representative in London.²⁴ A more accurate reflection of Manning's attitude is probably one of his earliest statements on this question, which is found in a letter which he wrote to Cardinal Cullen in 1878. There Manning stated that a nuncio would

probably produce conflict between us [the bishops of both England and Ireland] and the government, and greatly relax the close intimacy of the Bishops with the Holy See. Such a Nuncio would, I believe, be a centre of intrigue and a source of incorrect information in Rome. In Rome they do not seem to realize that Nuncios belong to the period when Governments and the public laws of Europe were Catholic. At this day, the Governments are powerless to help the Holy See. The real Governments are the people and the true Nuncios are the Bishops.²⁵

In the closing lines of this letter to Cullen, Manning articulates his own distinctive view of the relations between Church and State. It was a mistake for the papacy to rely on official relations with governments to advance the mission of the Church. Such a policy represented a failure of political understanding, because secular governments no longer could or should be expected to enter into special relations with the Roman Catholic Church and confer unique benefits on it. To do so would violate the first principle of the secular character of the state as Manning understood it: that the state should be even-handed among religious groups and not confer special privileges on any of

²³ Larkin, *The Roman Catholic Church*, 82–85.

²⁴ Purcell, *Life*, 2:738–740.

²⁵ Manning to Cullen, 31 July 1878, in Cullen Papers, File IV, No. 27, Archives of the Archdiocese of Dublin.

them. The appropriate way for the churches to interact with the liberal state was at the level of popular or democratic politics. This meant that political leadership in the churches must be local—in the Catholic community, the bishops should assume this role.

The complexity of the situation between the Vatican, Britain and the local hierarchies over diplomatic recognition is well illustrated by the efforts of the Liberal government to find an effective but discreet way of communicating with the Vatican. They held that what they believed to be a break-down of law and order in Ireland during the Land League agitation had been abetted by elements of the Catholic clergy including some bishops who supported the Land League.²⁶ Moreover, this agitation was enabling Charles Stuart Parnell, as president of the League and also head of the Irish Parliamentary Party, to consolidate his control of the Irish electorate, and threatened the extinction of the Liberal and Whig political influence in Ireland. Irish Liberals and some of their English colleagues believed if they could achieve a papal condemnation of the Land League, clerical support would cease.²⁷

Cabinet anxiety over the Land League in 1880 coincided with Vatican concern over the threatened seizure of certain Church property in Rome by the Italian government, and offered additional incentive for the Vatican to show itself ready to receive communications from the British government. It was at this point that George Errington, an Irish Catholic Liberal MP, presented himself as an intermediary between London and Rome. Errington offered his services during an expected trip to Rome to the Foreign Secretary, Lord Granville, who accepted them. During the life of the Liberal ministry, from 1880 until 1885, Errington travelled periodically to Rome, where he was received by the pope and various curial officials and was used as an unofficial agent by the British government.

The degree of cooperation of the papacy in matters of concern to the English government seems to have varied with the prospects of the establishment of official relations. In October 1881, for example, the return of Errington to Rome with a letter of recommendation from Granville was taken by the Curia as a step toward official relations. It was followed by the appointment of the British government's candidate to the vacant bishopric of Kerry in December and by the elevation of Archbishop McCabe of Dublin—*persona grata* to the British government—to the cardinalate in March of 1882.

²⁶ The Irish National Land League was an agrarian agitation among Irish tenant farmers founded in 1879, and headed by Charles Stuart Parnell. It sought to reduce rents and prevent evictions with the ultimate goal of transferring land holdings from landlords to tenants. See Philip Bull, *Land, Politics and Nationalism: A Study of the Irish Land Question* (London: Gill and McMillan, 1996), and from one of the organizers of the Land League, Michael Davitt, *The Fall of Feudalism in Ireland: Or the Story of the Land League Revolution* (London: Harper and Brothers, 1904).

²⁷ Larkin, *The Roman Catholic Church*, 54.

The culmination of the Roman policy of placating the English government in the hopes of diplomatic recognition was the condemnation, in May of 1883, of Archbishop Croke of Cashel's role in the Parnell Testimonial Fund.²⁸ Croke, perhaps the most advanced Nationalist of the Irish hierarchy, had been skating on thin ice for some time in what more cautious Catholics in Ireland and Rome and certainly the British government regarded as encouragement of agitation and tolerance of disorder associated with the Land League. When Croke was foremost in contributing a large sum to a testimonial fund for the rescue of Parnell's heavily mortgaged Avondale estate, Rome reacted with the publication of a letter circulated to the Irish bishops condemning the Parnell Testimonial and admonishing any bishop who 'should take any part whatever in recommending or promoting it.'²⁹

The affair of the Roman Circular provoked a crisis in the papacy's relations with the Irish Church. It was met with silence from the hierarchy, restiveness and resentment among the lower clergy and denunciation from certain quarters of the laity. In the nationalist press, the papacy was accused of having entered an 'unholy alliance with England' against the Irish, who would know how to stand for their rights against both England and Rome.³⁰ The intensity of Irish reaction, coupled with a growing realization that the British government was not seriously interested in diplomatic relations led Roman authorities to recognize the need for a reassessment of their policy. In a few short years, since the death of Cardinal Cullen, Rome had seen its influence in Ireland, once mediated so successfully through that prelate, decline to a place where it was openly challenged.

Manning's rehabilitation in Rome

Rome's need to restructure its power and influence in Ireland after the disaster of the 'Roman Circular' was the occasion of Cardinal Manning's rehabilitation in Rome. Apart from his brief attendance at the conclave that elected Leo in 1878, Manning had not been to Rome since 1876, when, in the declining years of Pius IX, he already found the atmosphere changed. When he went to Rome, therefore, in October of 1883, to pay the regular visit expected of a diocesan bishop, he went, as he recorded

with no anticipations of satisfaction. An absence of four years, and the industrious misrepresentation of many people, had, as I know, created strong prejudices against me. I am told that it was intentional that I was not consulted

²⁸ Thomas Croke (1824–1902), Archbishop of Cashel and Emlý (1875–1902). He was a strong supporter of the Land League. See Mark Tierney, *Croke of Cashel: The Life of Archbishop Thomas William Croke, 1823-1902* (Dublin: Gill and MacMillan, 1976).

²⁹ Larkin, *The Roman Catholic Church*, 185–186.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 190.

about Ireland, or our Government . . . For the last two years I have been silent; and I did not look for what has happened.³¹

What happened was a strong desire on the part of Leo XIII to have Manning's advice, especially on Ireland and the question of diplomatic relations with England: 'He [the pope] desired me to come every Wednesday', Manning later recorded

so that in five weeks I had more than six audiences of more than one hour each. There is no subject on which he did not speak or allow me to speak . . . We spoke . . . on the religious state of England three times; on the relations with Russia, Austria, Berlin, France very fully; on the two notes of his own Pontificate, the intellectual and the diplomatic; and most fully on Ireland and on our Government. I do not think I could have had a more complete admission into the knowledge which for the last two years seemed to be withheld.³²

Moreover, the pope provided Manning with a full account of the Errington mission. Manning had the opportunity to explain to Cardinal Jacobini, the Secretary of the Congregation of Propaganda (the Vatican office in charge of supervising the Church in 'missionary' countries, including England, Ireland and the United States), that while Errington might represent the English government, he did not represent Ireland. He told both Jacobini and the pope that if they wanted to obtain information or take advice about Ireland, they should call the Irish bishops to Rome in groups, as they did with the Americans. The pope indicated his acceptance of this idea.³³

Manning also used the opportunity of his visit to pass on to the pope his own ideas about Irish self-government.³⁴ At this point, Manning was not an advocate of Home Rule, because he took it to mean the establishment of a separate parliament in Dublin, and the withdrawal of the Irish M.P.s from Westminster. This, he feared, would be a prelude to conflict and separation. But short of the establishment of such a parliament, Manning believed that there was no domestic administration (i.e., local government) that Ireland ought not to have. All this he told the pope. The reasons for the evolution of Manning's position to full support of Home Rule (once the, to his mind, critical decision had

³¹ Manning, note of 4 December 1883, quoted in Purcell, *Life*, 2:577.

³² *Ibid.*, 2: 577–78.

³³ *Ibid.*, 2: 578–579.

³⁴ For an excellent treatment of the evolution of Manning's thinking, see Jacqueline Clais-Girard, 'The English Catholics and Irish Nationalism 1865-1890: A Tragedy in Five Acts', *Victorian Literature and Culture* 32 (2004): 177–189. This clearly illustrates Manning's growing sympathy for Irish causes, both land reform and greater autonomy for Ireland within the United Kingdom, and also the resistance he encountered from the 'old Catholics' (i.e., native born English Catholics, who tended to come from gentry and aristocratic backgrounds and to be conservative on land issues and the integrity of the Empire), including his protégé and successor, Herbert Vaughan.

been made to retain Irish M.P.s at Westminster) will be explored later in this article.

Manning's successful visit to Rome in 1883 marked a turning point, not only in his own fortunes and reputation in Leonine Rome, but also in the policy of the papacy, especially toward Ireland. For that policy now began moving along the lines that Manning recommended. Manning himself believed he discerned a much-changed atmosphere in Rome between his visit in 1876 and the present visit. Shortly after leaving Rome (5 December 1883), he wrote the following note:

[In 1876] I had been profoundly impressed by the unprepared state of Rome. It was divided into *miracolisti* who looked for a divine intervention, *conciliatori*, who were for giving way, and a still larger class of good and faithful, but old and inefficient men, who had never been beyond the walls of Rome. It was a time of stagnation, or, as Cardinal Franchi called it, *la politica d'inerzia*. This time I find a new state. The *miracolisti* are gone. The abstentionists are in the ascendant, but they cannot last long; and some of their leaders know as well as we do that the policy is false. . . . Cardinals and prelates speak openly about it. And I find them recognizing a merited chastisement in their present state. They see too that the Past can never come back; that the Temporal Power may come back, but under new conditions; that the old dynastic world is dying out, and a new world of the peoples is coming in; that the Christendom of Europe is widening out into the Christendom of the East and West and South of the world. I found a humbler and a larger mind in many. All this gives me hope and confidence. But I believe that the end is not yet come. Everybody told me that the [Italian] monarchy is weaker. Any shock in France would bring it down, and regionalism or a republic would come up. In the transition, the Church would be persecuted, and probably driven out of Rome as in 1848. But spoiled and cast off, the Church would be purer and stronger. It may be that all this spoliation is a Providential preparation for the advent of the Commune, or of the times of the peoples. A rich Church would fare ill in the face of a Commune; and it would be out of sympathy with the peoples, and unable to win their good-will. I remember saying that at each return to Italy, I find the people more like their former state, less excited, suspicious, and hostile to the Church. I find it so this time more than ever. I do not believe that the people of Italy have in them a Revolution like the people of France in the last century. They have gained what they wished; the Church is poor; and they have no wrongs to avenge. If the French Revolution does not again poison and stir up Italy, I have much hope for it.³⁵

As we have seen, Manning was convinced that in a democratic age, strong bishops were the key to the Church's ability to relate to the people. He had been concerned for several years about the weakness of the Irish episcopacy after the death of Cullen. By trying to deal with governments, instead of with the people through their bishops, Manning believed the papacy had further weakened the Church's position in Ireland. He had written all this to Rome in 1881, while he was still *persona non grata*. 'I have written to

³⁵ Manning to Bishop Herbert Vaughan, quoted in Purcell, *Life*, 2:580.

Propaganda by their request', Manning reported to his protégé Bishop Herbert Vaughan of Salford,³⁶

saying your weakness in Ireland is the state of the bishops. Your struggle will be to unite them to yourself. Your first duty is to do it. By taking any other course, you will put them further from you & increase their natural repulsion. I may add, God created the bishops. Diplomats spring from the times, circumstances & other changing states of the world. When governments governed, diplomatists had a function. Now that people govern themselves, the only power which can deal with them is that which created both peoples and governments, the Episcopate and its Head.³⁷

Manning commanded little attention in Rome at this time: it must have been only shortly after the receipt of the letter referred to that the pope appointed the British government's candidate, recommended to him by Errington, to the vacant see of Kerry.

A year and a half later, in May of 1883, Manning remained concerned about the effects of division and weakness in the Irish hierarchy, not only on Ireland, but on the Catholic cause in the British empire more widely.³⁸ In the light of Land League agitation and shortly after the publication of the Parnell Circular, Vaughan wrote to Manning suggesting a meeting of the English bishops on the Irish question. Manning replied that while he would be willing to call such a meeting, he thought it would be unwise:

my belief is that we cannot move without the Bps of Ireland. Any apparent disunion between the English and Irish episcopates would bring evils of every kind here, in Ireland, in the whole British Empire. If my letter to Prop[agan]da 2 years ago had been acted upon, we would not be where we are now. The greatest cause has been treated in the narrowest way, and the danger is great.³⁹

³⁶ Herbert Vaughan (1832–1903), Bishop of Salford 1872–1892, succeeded Manning as Archbishop of Westminster in 1892, created cardinal in 1893. Vaughan, unlike the convert Manning, was from a recusant 'Old Catholic' family. J.G. Sneed, *The Life of Cardinal Vaughan* (London: Herbert and Daniel, 1910) is the standard biography. See also R. O'Neil, *Cardinal Herbert Vaughan* (Chestnut Ridge, NY: Crossroad, 1995).

³⁷ Manning to Vaughan, 15 December 1881, Vaughan Correspondence, 206, Manning Papers, Archives of the Archdiocese of Westminster.

³⁸ Manning was not without previous experience in dealing with division and conflict among Celtic Catholic clergy. He had been sent as Apostolic Visitor to the Western District of Scotland in 1867 to deal with a split between Scottish and Irish clergy and laity where Irish nationalism and Fenian activity among the newly arrived Irish Catholics figured in the conflict. Manning's recommendation was to remove both the incumbent Scottish vicar apostolic and his Irish coadjutor. This experience no doubt reinforced his abhorrence of a weak or divided hierarchy. See Vincent Alan McClelland, 'The Irish Clergy and Archbishop Manning's Apostolic Visitation of the Western District of Scotland 1867 Part I: The coming of the Irish', *The Catholic Historical Review* 53:1 (April, 1967): 1–27 and McClelland, 'The Irish Clergy and Archbishop Manning's Apostolic Visitation of the Western District of Scotland 1867 Part II: A Final Solution,' *The Catholic Historical Review* 53:2 (July, 1967): 229–250.

³⁹ Manning to Vaughan, 19 May 1883, Vaughan Correspondence, 221.

After Manning's visit in October, 1883, however, things began to change. A number of vacancies in the Irish episcopate were filled against the recommendations of the British government. In March of 1884, the pope fulfilled his promise to Manning and summoned a representative group of Irish bishops to meet with him later in the year in Rome, although the meeting would be postponed to 1885. Buoyed by these indications that Rome was prepared to respect their judgement, the Irish bishops launched a major initiative of their own at their annual general meeting in October 1884. They had long been frustrated by the failure of the British government to address adequately the issue of education in Ireland. They therefore used the occasion of their meeting to call on Parnell's Irish parliamentary party to take up the education question in the British parliament. The bishops' vote of confidence in Parnell's party represented an understood alliance between the Church and the national movement which the bishops had previously held at arm's length, and the final step in Parnell's consolidation of his leadership of nationalist Ireland. Certainly it caused consternation in the government, where the Church had always been regarded as a counterpoise and brake on the national movement. The initiative apparently took the pope by surprise as well, and so offered Errington and the British government an opportunity to recoup their losses if they could once again convince Rome to rein in the Irish Church.⁴⁰

The Dublin appointment

In the midst of these important developments, the Archbishop of Dublin, Cardinal McCabe, died on 11 February 1885.⁴¹ The appointment of McCabe's successor to the key see at the heart of the Irish Church, was recognized by all concerned as of critical importance. McCabe had been well regarded by the British government as a moderating and restraining force on the Irish scene, and with the new alliance between the Irish bishops and the Nationalists, the ministry, and especially the Irish administration in Dublin, was deeply concerned about his replacement. From the beginning, in his correspondence with Granville, Errington had identified William Walsh, President of Maynooth, the national seminary, as the candidate most to be avoided: Walsh was 'a violent and dangerous man', he told Granville, and the British government had 'a right to wish and expect that as important a post as the See of Dublin should be occupied by a man of loyal and moderate views'.⁴²

⁴⁰ Larkin, *The Roman Catholic Church*, 244–249.

⁴¹ Cardinal Edward McCabe (1816–1885), Archbishop of Dublin (1879–1885), created cardinal 1882.

⁴² Larkin, *The Roman Catholic Church*, 254.

The dynamic element of the Irish hierarchy, on the other hand, recognized the need for a strong leader in Dublin, which McCabe had not been. Walsh was the favorite of the nationalists among the bishops: Archbishop Croke commending him to his contacts in Rome as ‘a young, active, zealous, earnest and wonderfully gifted man.’⁴³ It was clear that both sets of influences—that of the government, and that of the activist Irish bishops—would be brought to bear in Rome on the candidacy of Walsh, and so the stage was set for a contest of wills.

Cardinal Manning, as we have seen, had certain predispositions that would operate in this contest prior to any considerations of particular candidates. In the first place, he was opposed to the interference of the British government at Rome, especially if this should lead to formal relations between London and Rome. Again, it must be emphasized, this was not only because this way of conducting relations between Church and state bypassed him, but because he was convinced it was incompatible with the way the Church should function in a democratic political order. Second, he shared with the more advanced nationalists in the Irish hierarchy the opinion that the Irish Church had for some time lacked and now required strong leadership in key positions in the hierarchy. This was not only, however, as the historian of the Irish Church at this period would have it, a matter of ‘his usual emphasis on clerical power’.⁴⁴ Manning believed that strong local leadership in the Church (inevitably conceived at this stage of the Church’s history as clerical) and close union between priests and people, were essential to responsible and effective participation of the Catholic community in national political life.

It is, therefore, not surprising to see that as the contest between the government and the Irish Church developed, and as the candidates for the vacant see of Dublin emerged, Manning became an enthusiastic backer of William Walsh, the candidate of the majority nationalist bloc within the Irish hierarchy and strongly opposed by the British government. Manning had an opportunity to consult with this group of Irish bishops when, in April 1885, Archbishop Croke, their leader, and six of his colleagues met with Manning in London on their way to Rome for their long-delayed visit with the pope.

In this meeting, Manning was anxious to confirm that these bishops shared his approach on the question of Home Rule: that is, to oppose the existence of a separate parliament in Dublin, especially if that meant eliminating the Irish Catholic M.P.s in Westminster, and support of the expansion of local government in Ireland by any other means. On the one hand, it may have been that Manning wanted to be sure of the side he was backing before he weighed in favor of

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 256.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 281.

Walsh. On the other hand, we shall see that Manning's enquiry was also a prelude to an initiative that he would take regarding Home Rule: an approach to Joseph Chamberlain regarding the latter's Central Board scheme as a basis for a solution to the problem of Irish self-government.

In any case, immediately after this meeting with the Irish bishops, Manning wrote to the pope. In his letter, he reassured the pontiff that the nature of the Home Rule preferred by the Irish bishops was what he, too, favored, i.e. local government, but no separate parliament. He emphasized the need for unity among the Irish episcopate, and the importance of their effective and responsible leadership of the Irish people.⁴⁵ Although Walsh was not mentioned in this letter, one has the sense from the themes of unity and leadership that he chose to emphasize that Manning was preparing the way for a campaign on Walsh's behalf.

A second initiative on behalf of Walsh was taken in Manning's approach to Chamberlain. Manning had been friends for some years with Sir Charles Dilke, in the Cabinet as President of the Local Government Board and a political follower of Chamberlain's.⁴⁶ Manning contacted Dilke to open the subject of the Central Board scheme, but he let it be known at the same time that he bitterly resented Errington's visits to Rome.⁴⁷ He reiterated this concern in a letter to Dilke a few days later: 'My first and chief anxiety', he wrote, 'is that the Government shall in no way either officiously through Errington or any other, attempt to influence the election [of the new archbishop of Dublin]'. The effects of such interference, Manning explained, were that anyone appointed under such conditions 'would become "suspect" and his influence for good would be paralysed'. Also, any ability of Rome to work constructively for pacification in Ireland—in the direction, for example, of Chamberlain's local government scheme—would be 'dangerously lessened'. Manning then went on to review for Dilke the candidates for the Dublin appointment, describing Walsh as

beyond compare the ablest He has been tried in governing that vast College [Maynooth] and has been found very able and successful. He has great weight in Ireland, and as the Bishops unanimously assured me, he would unite the whole Episcopate; for they all confide in him. I have the impression that efforts have been made to portray Dr. Walsh as a Nationalist. He is not more so than I am.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Manning's letter was dated April 12, 1885, and is quoted extensively in Larkin, *The Roman Catholic Church*, 280–281.

⁴⁶ Sir Charles Dilke (1843–1911), Liberal member of Parliament 1868–1886, 1892–1911. President of the Local Government Board 1882–1885, a friend and ally of Chamberlain. His promising political career was effectively ended by a divorce scandal in 1885. See R. Jenkins, *Dilke: A Victorian Tragedy* (London: Papermac, 1996). Manning maintained relations with him even after the scandal.

⁴⁷ This was communicated by Dilke to Gladstone, Chamberlain and Earl Spencer, the Irish Viceroy, in a secret memo immediately after an interview with Manning on April 23, 1885. Larkin, *The Roman Catholic Church*, 281.

⁴⁸ Manning to Dilke, 26 April 1885, quoted in Larkin, *The Roman Catholic Church*, 282–283.

Prescinding for the moment from his genuine interest in settling the problem of Irish self-government through the extension of local government,⁴⁹ what Manning was doing in his negotiations with Dilke and Chamberlain is apparent. By holding out to them the prospect of a settlement in Ireland along the lines of Chamberlain's proposals, he hoped to enlist the support of Chamberlain and Dilke in the Cabinet for an end to Errington's mission and the English government's practice of dealing with Rome directly. Dilke and Chamberlain brought the issue to Cabinet, and succeeded only in so far as having instructions issued to Errington (which were not followed) that he should not speak in favor of any candidate, but merely pass on information.

The more promising arena for Manning's campaign to reclaim initiative for the Irish Church in its own affairs was in Rome. He wrote to Croke there, asking for news and offering his assistance. Croke responded that it was imperative to warn the pope of the danger at this point of appointing anyone but Walsh, and begged Manning, as the only person who could offer the pope such advice, to do so.⁵⁰ Manning's resulting letter to Rome, which he subsequently outlined for Croke, emphasised the danger of the pope's seeming to be swayed in his choice by the English government. He stressed the unanimity among the Irish bishops for Walsh; and the worthiness of the Walsh. 'You may confide', Manning assured Croke in conclusion, 'in my leaving nothing undone that I can do'.⁵¹

On 23 June, the pope announced the decision to appoint William Walsh to the vacant see of Dublin. Errington, the English agent in Rome, was deeply disappointed; he recognized, correctly, that the decision 'put an end to any chance of relations with Rome'.⁵² Manning, on receiving the news from Herbert Vaughan in Rome, was happy, but surprised: 'Your letter of the 22nd was a relief to me,' Manning wrote. 'I thought my letter to Leo XIII would have vexed him. We have been on the brink of a great scandal. Rightly or wrongly, the feeling in Ireland about Dublin was full of danger.'⁵³

In his analysis of Leo XIII's decision to appoint Walsh over the objections of the English government, Emmet Larkin sees Manning's influence as crucial. The reasons adduced by Leo for his choice of Walsh in the various interviews he gave after his decision echoed the reasons

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 278–282. In his account of Manning's dealings with Dilke and Chamberlain, Emmet Larkin seems unwilling to view Manning's interest in Chamberlain's plans for local government as more than instrumental: to achieve 'an *entente*' with Chamberlain and Dilke over not blocking Walsh's appointment; perhaps at best a stop-gap against the disliked 'native parliament'. Larkin does not acknowledge that Manning's commitment to local government, as is obvious from the education controversy, was authentic.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 285.

⁵¹ Manning to Croke, 12 June 1885, quoted in *Ibid.*, 289.

⁵² Errington to Fr. Bernard Smith, O.S.B., 25 June 1885, quoted in *Ibid.*, 294.

⁵³ Manning to Vaughan, 28 June 1885, Vaughan Correspondence, 258, Manning Papers.

for the appointment that Manning had offered in his letter to Rome as reported to Archbishop Croke on 12 June: the danger of English influence; the unity of the Irish bishops; and Walsh's qualities.⁵⁴ Of course, much more was at stake than a single papal appointment. At the time, everyone from Manning to Errington recognized that this was also a matter of whether the head of the Catholic Church would make decisions—especially in Ireland—in response to the desires of the English government or on the advice of his own bishops.

For Emmet Larkin, with his focus in Ireland, the appointment of Walsh represents the culmination of a struggle over how the power of the Roman Catholic Church would be exercised in Ireland. Would it, as had been the case in Cardinal Cullen's day, be exercised more or less independently, through the mediation of the bishops, but most especially of a powerful legatine figure like Cullen? Would it, as the moderates among the Irish clergy desired, seek accommodation with the British state, and especially with the Liberal party in order to acquire for the Church the good things the state could provide? Or would it ally itself with the national movement, trusting Parnell's party to advance its interests, but captive in a sense to the party's Home Rule agenda?

Larkin sees the decision of the papacy in 1878 to pursue the will-o'-the-wisp of diplomatic relations with Great Britain, combined with Cullen's nearly simultaneous departure from the scene, as the end of an era and the beginning of decline of Roman power and influence in Ireland. The appointment of Walsh in 1885 over the objections of the British government was the abandonment of a policy which had clearly failed, and an effort to return to the days of Cullen. By that time, however, it was too late; the Irish Church, feeling itself thrown over by the papacy, had concluded a deal with Parnell and the Irish Parliamentary party. The Church would obviously continue to play a significant role in Irish politics, but now it would do so from within the confines of the clerical-nationalist alliance which had consolidated its position, but also placed decisive limitations upon the Church's power.

For Cardinal Manning, however, the significance of the Errington mission and the Walsh appointment, and the explanation for his own role in these affairs is different still. At one level, the point at issue for Manning was the same as it was for the Irish bishops: would the power of the papacy be exercised through bishops and on their advice, or would the British government now have its own access to the pope and an ability to influence papal decisions independent of the hierarchy? For Manning, of course, the notion of divided authority within the Church, especially when the state was behind that division, was anathema. It was, after all, the reason that he had left the Anglican

⁵⁴ Larkin, *The Roman Catholic Church*, 298.

Church in the first place. A Church in which authority was divided was to Manning inconceivable.

Manning saw the end of the Errington mission and the appointment of a strong figure like Walsh as essential not just for the unity, but also for the mission of the Catholic Church in Ireland. If the church were to provide leadership that the people could trust in the complex and potentially dangerous future that Irish Catholics faced, they must be able to look to their Church for guidance, confident that it was not compromised by its relationship with the state. Manning, however, did not view the alliance between the Catholic Church and the Irish Parliamentary party as a falling away of Catholic power. Given Manning's positions first, on the relationship of Church and state—that the Church must in the first instance engage peoples and not governments—and second, on the appropriate level of the Church's encounter with the political order—at the level of democratic politics—there is every reason to believe that Manning approved the Irish hierarchy's decision to enter into a compact with the Irish Parliamentary party, and considered this arrangement not a falling away of Catholic power, but rather its appropriate and responsible exercise. That this is so is evident first from Manning's own dealings with Parnell over the Irish Central Board scheme and second in relation to their dual intervention in the election of 1885.

Manning as intermediary: the Central Board Scheme

Manning's approach to Joseph Chamberlain through Sir Charles Dilke on the matter of the Central Board scheme has often been explained in terms which suggest that he had another intention in making this approach. Chamberlain's biographer, J.L. Garvin, was convinced that Manning approached Chamberlain in order to defeat the Errington mission in Rome—by encouraging the two Radical members of the Cabinet to bring pressure on their colleagues.⁵⁵ Emmet Larkin implies that Manning was enthusiastic for the Central Board scheme precisely because it did not propose that there should be a separate Parliament in Dublin. Conor Cruise O'Brien goes so far as to say that Manning and the Irish bishops favored the scheme because they believed local self-government would 'take Irish education safely—and quickly—out of reach of such irreligious innovators as Joseph Chamberlain.'⁵⁶

There is, of course, some truth in each of these suggestions, but none of them takes seriously the possibility that Manning was genuinely attracted by the proposal. Chamberlain had first broached the matter

⁵⁵ J. L. Garvin, *The Life of Joseph Chamberlain*, 6 vols (London: MacMillan, 1933–1969), 2:596.

⁵⁶ Conor Cruise O'Brien, *Parnell and His Party* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1957), 95.

of greater self-government for Ireland under a local government scheme in speeches on 19 December 1882 and 1 February 1883.⁵⁷ He put his proposals down in writing in a letter to a friend and supporter with Irish sympathies and connections, W.H. Duignan, in December of 1884. Beyond the proposals that had been framed earlier that year in a Bill for county government in England, Chamberlain had this to say about Ireland:

I consider that Ireland has a right to a Local Government more complete, more popular, more thoroughly representative, and more far-reaching than anything that has hitherto been proposed, and I hope that the first session of a reformed Parliament will settle this question, so far at least as what is generally called County Government is concerned. But for myself, I am willing to go even further. I believe that there are questions, not local in any narrow sense, but which require local and exceptional treatment in Ireland and which cannot be dealt with to the satisfaction of the Irish people by an Imperial Parliament. Chief among them are the education question and the land question, and I would not hesitate to transfer their consideration and solution entirely to an Irish Board altogether independent of English Government influence. Such a Board might also deal with railways and other communications, and would, of course, be invested with powers of taxation in Ireland for these strictly Irish purposes.⁵⁸

This was the origin of the idea of an Irish 'Central Board', which while it was not a parliament, was to be a national elective body with legislative and revenue powers in local affairs. Parnell was shown Chamberlain's letter. While it was never the case that Parnell would have been satisfied with such a body as a substitute for a Home Rule parliament, and objected for that reason to its having any pretensions to legislate, he did see it as an improvement on the existing system of local government in Ireland. Parnell gave to an intermediary, the notorious Captain O'Shea, the husband of his mistress Kitty, some proposals of his own for local government to communicate to Chamberlain. He included in his instructions to O'Shea the clear message that the Central Board could never be a substitute for the restitution of an Irish parliament and his opposition to its legislative functions. O'Shea apparently never communicated these reservations to Chamberlain. Chamberlain was left with the clear but incorrect impression that Parnell approved his proposals as a possible long-term settlement of the issue of Irish self-government.⁵⁹

While Chamberlain's ideas on local government did not and never could accord with Parnell's aspirations for the legislative autonomy of the Irish nation, it is surprising and not a little ironic that they should have been so similar to ideas about local government that Manning was developing in the course of his campaign for voluntary education.

⁵⁷ Garvin, *Life of Joseph Chamberlain*, 1: 386–387.

⁵⁸ Chamberlain to W.H. Duignan, December 17, 1884, quoted in *Ibid.*, 1: 579–580.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 1:580–593.

The stimulus for Manning's thinking on the need for localism and decentralization of government was what he believed to be the bad example provided by France. There, the Republican, anti-clerical government was attempting to secularize education and in a series of legislative enactments during the years 1879-81 had expelled the Jesuits and other 'unauthorized' religious teaching orders. Manning, condemning these proceedings in 1883, drew comparisons between the policy of the French government and the pronouncements of Joseph Chamberlain. It was the centralization of the French state, Manning concluded, together with the passivity of French Catholics that had enabled a small minority of anti-clerical politicians to legislate against the interests and the desires of the majority of the Catholic population.⁶⁰

There are, therefore, sufficient grounds for thinking that Manning derived his ideas about decentralization and devolution in local government quite apart from and prior to Chamberlain's Central Board scheme.⁶¹ Neither is there reason to accept Conor Cruise O'Brien's opposite conjecture that 'it may well have been Manning who briefed Chamberlain on the whole self-government idea.'⁶² It is true that Manning had, as early as his 1883 rehabilitation in Rome, suggested to the pope that the solution to the Irish problem was local self-government, not a separate parliament: '*Amministrazione domestica, ma Parlamento no: sarebbe preludio di conflitto e di separazione.*'⁶³ But there is no evidence that Manning and Chamberlain met or were in communication about Irish self-government before 24 April 1885. What is most likely is that when Manning heard from the Irish bishops who visited him in April 1885 on their way to Rome an account of Chamberlain's letter to his Irish friend, he recognized that what Chamberlain was proposing for Ireland was what he himself was working toward as the solution to the difficulty of national education.

For Chamberlain had suggested, we recall, that chief among the questions to be treated by local government in Ireland was education; which together with the land question would be transferred 'to an Irish Board altogether independent of English Government influence'; and

⁶⁰ See Manning's 1885 memorandum to Lord Salisbury, 'Secret, To Amend the Education Act of 1870', cited in D. Selby, *Towards a Common System of National Education* (Leeds: Educational Administration and History: Monograph No.6: 1977), 10. For Manning's fullest statement on the situation of French Catholics in relation to the state, see an interview with Manning conducted on 25 September 1888 and published in J. Lemire, *Le Cardinal Manning et un action sociale* (Paris: Librairie Victor Lecoffre, 1983), 258ff: '*La Révolution a détruit en France l'initiative privée. Ce qui vous manque le plus, c'est la liberté, et surtout la liberté d'association. . . La centralisation, Messieurs, c'est la mort! Unissez-vous, prenez de l'initiative, agissez pour vous-mêmes.*'

⁶¹ Selby, *Toward a Common System*, 11.

⁶² Conor Cruise O'Brien, *Parnell and His Party*, 92, n. 2.

⁶³ Manning's note of December 4, 1883 on his meetings with Leo XIII in October and November. Purcell, *Life*, 2:579.

that such a Board ‘would be invested with powers of taxation in Ireland for these strictly Irish purposes.’ All of this is so close to what Manning would propose in the interests of denominational education in England—localism, devolution, support from the rates—that it is not surprising that the Cardinal was so enthusiastic. And if Chamberlain’s proposals could settle as well the problem of Irish self-government—of which the provision of acceptable Catholic education was so important a part—and this without recourse to the separate parliament that Manning then opposed, then so much the better.

Consequently, several days after his meeting with the bishops, Manning contacted Sir Charles Dilke, who met with him on 23 April. According to Manning, who may have coloured his account somewhat according to his own view of matters, the Irish bishops were frightened of extreme nationalists and would accept the Chamberlain plan in preference to an Irish parliament. With Gladstone’s approval, Chamberlain visited Manning the next day and was given the same message.⁶⁴ Chamberlain drew up a more detailed description of his plan in a memorandum, which he presented to Manning and circulated to the Cabinet. The memorandum, dated 25 April 1885, besides being more detailed, was somewhat different in content from Chamberlain’s December 1884 letter to his Irish friend. It did not, for example, mention land as one of the areas in which the Central Board might legislate, but added public works to education. It explained that the Central Board would take over almost all the administrative functions now being performed by the Irish administration as answerable to the Chief Secretary and the Viceroy, who would be replaced by a secretary of state. But the provisions for local control of education at all its levels were still there, and the Board would both receive grants and guarantees of loans from the central government, and have direct taxation powers of its own.⁶⁵

At this point, as he had told Chamberlain he would, Manning arranged to have an interview with Parnell. He did not, it seems, show Chamberlain’s memorandum to Parnell, but, the evidence suggests that he sounded him out on his attitude toward Chamberlain’s earlier proposals, which Parnell, as we know, had seen before, and to which he had responded, through O’Shea, with similar proposals for local government of his own. Parnell apparently made clear to Manning his view that, while he approved Chamberlain’s scheme as an improvement on existing provisions for local government in Ireland, the

⁶⁴ For a detailed account of these meetings, communications and negotiations see C.H.D. Howard, ‘Joseph Chamberlain, Parnell and the Irish ‘central board’ scheme, 1884-5’, *Irish Historical Studies*, 8:32 (September, 1953), 324–361. Also C.H.D. Howard, ‘Documents relating to the Irish ‘central board’ scheme, 1884-5’, *Irish Historical Studies*, 8:31 (March, 1953), 237–263.

⁶⁵ The memorandum is reprinted in Howard, ‘Documents’, 255–257.

Central Board could never be sufficient or final solution to the problem of Irish self-government. After his meeting with Parnell, Manning advised Dilke on the prompt introduction of Chamberlain's scheme and told Chamberlain that his interview with Parnell had been 'satisfactory'. It does not seem that Manning passed on to Dilke or to Chamberlain Parnell's reservations.⁶⁶ Perhaps he assumed that these must already have been known to Chamberlain—as, indeed, they would have been had O'Shea performed his office. I would argue that Manning was so taken with Chamberlain's proposals in themselves, and so fascinated by the possibilities for solution of the Irish problem that the areas of agreement between Chamberlain and Parnell seemed to offer, that he preferred not to pass on bad news.

The central board scheme as an area for agreement between the unlikely alliance of English Radicals and Irish Roman Catholics was scuttled, however, not by a breakdown of negotiations between Chamberlain and Parnell—although that, no doubt, would have happened sooner or later—but by the refusal on 9 May 1885 of Chamberlain's colleagues in the Cabinet to endorse his proposals.⁶⁷ Chamberlain and Dilke eventually resigned on 20 May over the government's Irish policy, and the ministry itself fell on 9 June. Chamberlain incorporated local government for Ireland into his Radical Programme, which was announced through the summer of 1885, expanded now to include 'national councils' in all the constituent parts of the United Kingdom.

Chamberlain hoped to take the campaign for Irish local government to Ireland itself. However, by the summer of 1885, the moment for the central board scheme as the basis for an agreement between Chamberlain and Irish nationalists had passed, if, indeed, it had ever been. On the expanded franchise of 1885, Parnell expected the Irish Parliamentary party to sweep all but the Ulster Protestant constituencies in Ireland and for the Irish vote to affect the outcome of English contests as well. He would then have been in a position to negotiate with the English parties for far more than local government alone. And, in fact, after the fall of the Liberal government, and with the parliamentary election impending, signs were increasing through the summer of the possibility of a nationalist alliance not with English Radicals but with English Conservatives. In this atmosphere, neither Parnell nor the Irish bishops were interested in seeing Chamberlain

⁶⁶ Manning's letter of 4 May 1885 to Chamberlain is in Howard, 'Documents', 262. A year later, when these negotiations had become an issue of controversy, Chamberlain asked Manning to confirm that in May 1885, Parnell 'approved generally of the plan of national councils.' Manning responded that he 'understood him [Parnell] to accept the scheme, but not as sufficient or final. His acceptance was very guarded, and I did not take it as more than not opposing it'. Manning to Chamberlain, 23 June 1886, quoted in Howard, 'Chamberlain, Parnell and the Irish 'central board' scheme', 346.

⁶⁷ See Howard, 'Chamberlain, Parnell and the Irish 'central board' scheme,' 349.

in Ireland. Nor, as it turns out, was Manning. When Dilke asked for letters of introduction to the Irish bishops for himself and Chamberlain, Manning refused.⁶⁸ His enthusiasm for local government, although authentic, was obviously not the only criterion he used to make choices for the Catholic Church in the complex politics that surrounded the Irish question in 1885.

A Catholic political party?

Manning's relations with Charles Stewart Parnell and the movement he epitomized are more significant and revealing of his position on the role of Church in politics than any other episode in his long career. By 1885, Manning had long since accepted and even embraced the implications for religious bodies of the secularization of the liberal state and the rise of democratic politics. The chief of those implications as far as the political activity of the Church was concerned was the need to relate to the structures of government at the level of popular politics.

However, the turn to popular politics on the part of churches raised a number of important questions. What role should the Church play in the organization of popular politics as it involved Roman Catholics? A related but separate question was how would leadership function within the Catholic community in relation to popular politics when it was a matter of issues like education that were of concern to Catholics? Both of these questions, and, of course, the history of popular politics more generally, raised the issue of mass democratic political parties, and what the Church's attitude toward these bodies would be.

The possibility of a Catholic political party had been raised more than once in the history of the English Catholic community since the restoration of the hierarchy in 1851, and it was raised again in 1885.⁶⁹ In August, in anticipation of the parliamentary election and with the education question very much in mind, the Bishop of Nottingham, Edward Bagshawe, suggested in a letter to the *Tablet* that English Roman Catholics abandon the two major parties and form a party of their own. Bagshawe proposed an alliance between an English and an Irish Catholic party, in which English Catholics would support Home Rule and Catholic education in Ireland, and Irish Catholics

⁶⁸ For Dilke's account of his request and its refusal, see Stephen Gwynn and Gertrude Tuckwell, *The Life of the Rt. Hon. Sir Charles Dilke*, 2 vols (London: John Murray, 1917), 2:149.

⁶⁹ For the history of the idea of a Catholic party in England, see Josef L. Altholz, 'The Political Behavior of the English Catholics, 1850-1867,' *The Journal of British Studies*, 4 (November, 1964): 89-103, at 96. On the possibility of such a party in 1885, see Thomas R. Greene, 'The English Catholic Press and the Home Rule Bill, 1885-86', *Eire-Ireland*, 9 (Spring, 1975), 18-37.

would make common cause with English Catholics in Parliament for causes like denominational education in England.⁷⁰ A possible model for such a party was, of course, the Catholic Centre party in Germany.⁷¹

Manning was, as we have seen, well aware of the Centre party and of its role in standing up for the Church against Bismarck during the *Kulturkampf*.⁷² But it is significant that he manifested no public enthusiasm for Bagshawe's proposals and deprecated it in private.⁷³ In October, Manning issued his own election 'manifesto', entitled his 'How Shall Catholics Vote at the Coming Parliamentary Election?' which was published in the *Dublin Review* and a number of other Catholic journals.⁷⁴ This would have been the occasion, had he wished, to say something in favor of an initiative to form a Catholic party, especially in the face of the threat to Catholic education posed by Chamberlain's recent call for the abolition of board-school fees.⁷⁵ At the beginning of the article, he acknowledged the interest that had been expressed in the possibility of such a party, but it is significant that in the remainder of the article, he did not return to this subject. As we recall, Manning confined himself to advising Catholic voters in England to put two questions to parliamentary candidates. Firstly, would they do their utmost to place voluntary schools on an equal basis with board schools; secondly, would they do their utmost to obtain a Royal Commission to review the present state of education in England and Wales, and especially the operation of the Act of 1870 and its administration by the school boards.⁷⁶ Beyond this, it was rather pointedly stated that Catholics were free to vote as they saw fit. While these instructions favored the Conservatives, more of whom could and did give the required assurances than Liberals, they assumed that Catholics would vote

⁷⁰ Greene, 'The English Catholic Press', 21. Bagshawe's letter appeared in the 1 August 1885 issue of the *Tablet*, 175.

⁷¹ In 1860, August Reichensperger, who went on to become a leader of the German Centre party, had publicly suggested that English Catholics form such a party. 'The Theory of Party,' *Rambler*, new series, 2 [1860], 237–43. See Altholz, 'The Political Behaviour of English Catholics', 96, n. 24.

⁷² Jeffrey von Arx, 'Archbishop Manning and the *Kulturkampf*', 254–266. For a discussion of the literature on the Catholic Centre party in the social, political and religious milieu of the German Empire, see Margaret Lavinia Anderson, 'Piety and Politics: Recent Work on German Catholicism,' *Journal of Modern History*, 63 (December, 1991), 681–716, especially 705ff.

⁷³ For Manning's private opinion of Bagshawe's proposal, see Manning to Vaughan, 26 December 1885: 'We are bound as bishops to be independent of all parties as the Holy See is. Bp of Meath and Bp of Nottingham from impetuosity of character catch at the first apparent help.' Vaughan Correspondence, 278, Manning Papers.

⁷⁴ *Dublin Review*, Third Series, XIV (October 1885), 401–411.

⁷⁵ 'Free schools' was, of course, part of the Radical Programme of 1885. Chamberlain endorsed this plank of the 8 September.

⁷⁶ For the role of Manning and other Catholic bishops in the election, see McClelland, 'The "Free Schools" Issue', especially 147–154. Above, n. 3.

for candidates of existing parties, and gave no indication of support for anything like a separate Catholic party.

The question of the Church's relation to popular politics in the concrete circumstances of 1885, as even Bagshawe in his way had recognized, raised inevitably the issue of the Irish Parliamentary party led by Charles Stewart Parnell. This party, while not confessionally Catholic, was overwhelmingly Catholic in its popular constituency and predominantly Catholic in the members it returned to Parliament: indeed, its members were often the only Catholics in Parliament. And everyone recognized that that party would become even stronger in its parliamentary representation as a result of the recent franchise reform upon which the new Parliament would be elected. How did the existence of this party affect the two questions of the Church's role in the organization of popular politics and leadership within the Catholic community on issues of Catholic concern?

It is important to recognize that as head of the English Roman Catholic hierarchy, Manning could only approach these questions as having been to some extent already determined. The Irish Parliamentary party was a very solid historical given, and the stance of the Roman Catholic Church toward that party was less a matter of Manning's choosing than that of the Irish hierarchy. But Manning was not without choice in his attitude or without influence in his policy toward the givens of the situation that he faced, and the choices he made are revealing. It may be that in his dealings with the Irish party and the Irish Church Manning made a virtue of necessity. But by now it should be obvious that part of what was distinctive and original in Manning's political approach was his belief that, with the turn toward democracy, the Church, at least in England and Ireland, was well-placed to engage, and so could be confident in entering into positive and constructive relations with popular political movements as it found them.

The two most significant givens that Manning faced with regard to the Irish dimension of the Church's engagement with popular politics were firstly, the commitment of Parnell's party to Home Rule for Ireland, and secondly, the decision taken by the Irish bishops in October, 1884 to place their confidence in the Irish Parliamentary party to achieve the goals of the Irish Church in the field of education.

Manning seems to have made no statement, either publicly or to his correspondents, on the clerical-nationalist alliance of 1884. It is probably significant, however, that the *Tablet*, published by his protégé Bishop Herbert Vaughan of Salford, and not otherwise noted for being well-disposed to Irish causes, applauded the new departure, observing that the Irish bishops really had no other course open to them if they wanted to achieve their goals.⁷⁷ On the education question, at least,

⁷⁷ Larkin, *The Roman Catholic Church*, 244–45.

both the English and the Irish Church were so frustrated with existing government, that even the mouthpiece of the English Old Catholics was willing to contemplate new departures in popular politics on the part of their Irish co-religionists.

More significant for Manning's attitude toward the clerical-nationalist alliance, however, was the fact that in 1885, he strongly supported William Walsh for the see of Dublin. Walsh was the candidate of that wing of the Irish Church then led by Archbishop Croke that was supposed to be nationalist and was certainly behind the new opening to the party, as was Walsh himself. Had Manning not approved of the initiatives taken by the Irish Church in placing the cause of Catholic education in the hands of Parnell's party, with all that implied for the mutual relationship of party and Church, he would have had a very effective way of communicating that disapproval, and even bringing the alliance to an end: he could have scuttled Walsh's nomination and ensured the appointment of what the British government would have considered a 'moderate'. The close political relationship that immediately grew up between Manning and Walsh always assumed the Irish Church's commitment to the party.⁷⁸ Not even the Parnell divorce⁷⁹ case led either man to question that political given.

Manning and Home Rule: The Election of 1885

On Home Rule, Manning underwent an education that changed both his position on that particular issue, and through the process of that change, his attitude toward the more general question of how leadership would function within the Catholic community in relation to popular politics.

In 1885, Manning's position on Irish self-government was as follows. He opposed separation between England and Ireland, and so he opposed an Irish parliament, because he believed that the creation of a separate parliament in Dublin with the withdrawal of Ireland's M.P.s from Westminster would lead to separation. His opposition to such a separate parliament was one of the reasons why he favored Chamberlain's 'Central Board' scheme. He attempted to serve as both whip and intermediary to advance its fortunes with the pope,

⁷⁸ See one of Manning's earliest letters to Walsh, 28 December 1885: 'I thank you much for your letter just received and for the confidence it shows towards myself. In truth, I feel, that your Grace's position in Ireland, &, I may say, my own in England make it to be of no light moment that you & I should be open to one another', Walsh Papers, Archives of the Archdiocese of Dublin.

⁷⁹ Parnell was cited in a divorce case in 1889 in relation to Kitty O'Shea, the wife of his erstwhile lieutenant, Captain William O'Shea. When Parnell did not contest the action so he could marry Mrs. O'Shea, he split the Irish Parliamentary party. The Catholic bishops, by and large, turned against him, and their opposition was probably decisive in the loss of support for his leadership of the majority of the IPP. See F.S.L. Lyons, *The Fall of Parnell* (London: Routledge & Keegan Paul, 1960).

the Irish bishops, the Cabinet and Parnell, even though, as we have seen, he should have known that the scheme would not be considered a final settlement by Parnell. Certainly, apart from what might have been Manning's genuine concern for the indissolubility of the United Kingdom, the reason for his opposition to a settlement that would see the Irish M.P.s leave Westminster is not hard to imagine: it would have meant the near complete loss of Catholic members from the House of Commons.

Manning never changed his position on opposing the exclusion of the Irish members at Westminster. Others, of course, did. When Gladstone introduced the first Home Rule Bill in April of 1886, it was with the provision that the Irish members would be excluded from the Imperial Parliament. By the time the Bill reached its second reading in June, the government, responding to widespread criticism on the issue and in order to win support for the Bill, let it be known that they would abandon this point and consider schemes for retention. Parnell, too, after strongly favoring exclusion, eventually came around on the issue, although more slowly, announcing for retention in 1888.⁸⁰ Retention of the Irish M.P.s at Westminster would eliminate Manning's most serious objection to a separate Irish parliament and so facilitate a conversion to Home Rule as Irish nationalists understood it—although one could argue that it was not Manning who converted, but the politicians who came around to his way of seeing things.

It was not, however, Manning's conversion to Home Rule as understood by Irish nationalists that is most significant in terms of his attitude toward Irish popular politics. Indeed, there is a problem, reflected in the historical literature, in saying just when, or even whether, Manning decisively declared for Home Rule understood in this way.⁸¹

⁸⁰ And occasioning a happy exchange between Manning and Walsh at a fairly dark moment: 'Your Eminence, I know, will read with special pleasure Parnell's declaration on the retention of the Irish M.P.s at Westminster . . . Although the Holy Father is now so clear on the Home Rule question, it might be well if your Eminence wrote to him telling him of this important declaration.' (Walsh to Manning, 9 July 1888). 'I will at once write and report about Mr. Parnell's acceptance of the one Imperial Parliament. I am sure that this is the mind of the brains of the party . . . And it will greatly advance what we require.' (Manning to Walsh, 10 July 1888). Walsh Papers. Walsh had only just received the papal condemnation of boycotting in the Plan of Campaign.

⁸¹ It is not clear, for example, that Manning's first biographer, Edmund Purcell, believed that Manning ever declared himself explicitly in favor of Home Rule understood as a separate parliament. This was distinct from sympathy to Irish causes and public support for those like Croke and Walsh who were thorough Home Rulers in the Parnellian sense of the word. Purcell, *Life*, 2: 619ff. C.H.D. Howard argues that Manning's support for Home Rule went only so far as benefitted English Catholic interests and so implies that Manning was not really interested in Home Rule at all. C.H.D. Howard, 'The Parnell Manifesto of 21 November, 1885, and the Schools Question,' *English Historical Review*, 67 (1947): 1–19 at 49. This interpretation is also offered by V. A. McClelland, *Cardinal Manning: His Public Life and Influence, 1865-92* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962), 188–89. Robert Gray does not think Manning was really concerned about the defeat of Home Rule in 1886. Gray, *Cardinal Manning*, 291. In the course of 1886, Manning seems to have moved towards

Such a lack of certainty on the part of the otherwise neither reticent nor ambiguous Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster is both surprising and revealing. The truth is, that while Manning had views of his own about Home Rule, which he was willing to express to private correspondents, when it came to public pronouncements and public policy, Manning determined to follow a lead given to him from Ireland.⁸² This lead came principally from Archbishop Walsh of Dublin, but Manning was astute enough an observer to realize that Walsh's lead, in its turn, grew out of a complex relationship between the Irish Church and the popular political movement which was Parnell's party.

The first indication of willingness to follow the Irish lead is a most important one. We have seen that in October of 1885, Manning had offered advice to Roman Catholic voters in English constituencies on how they should vote in the coming parliamentary elections. They were to pose certain questions to candidates that had to do with their support of denominational education and their willingness to see a Royal Commission summoned to review the operation of the 1870 Act. On 21 November, Parnell had a manifesto issued to the Irish voters of Great Britain on his behalf, calling on them to vote against all Liberals and Radicals, except such as he might name. In most cases, of course, the effect of these dual instructions to Irish Catholic voters in Great Britain would be the same,⁸³ so the question of a conflict between the English Catholic agenda for denominational education and the Irish agenda for Home Rule did not arise.

With the Hawarden Kite, however, betokening Gladstone's conversion to Home Rule, the political situation changed.⁸⁴ Given the

support for some kind of a federal solution, and is best expressed, although scarcely in any detail, in a letter published in the London *Times* on 6 July 1886, after the defeat of Gladstone's Bill and in the middle of the general election. Manning declares that 'England, Ireland and Scotland must, in my belief, all alike have Home Rule affairs that are not Imperial. The growth of Empire and the fullness of time demand it.' Manning's letter was taken in Ireland as a declaration of support at a critical moment for Home Rule, but as Larkin points out, Manning had not committed himself to more than a vague form of federal devolution, and certainly not to the existence of a separate Irish parliament. See Larkin, *The Roman Catholic Church*, 381.

⁸² See, for example, the November 1885 correspondence between Gladstone and Manning. Also his later refusal to let a godson of his, Sir Howard Vincent, make public his views on the Home Rule Bill once it had been introduced. Manning to Vincent, 13 May 1886, quoted in Shane Leslie, *Henry Edward Manning: His Life and Labours* (London: P.J. Kenedy, 1921), 407–408.

⁸³ In the few cases where Parnell ordered the Irish to vote for Liberals who did not support voluntary education, the results were mixed. In the four cases where Liberals not endorsed by Parnell had given the assurances required by Manning, they were elected. See Howard, 'The Parnell Manifesto', 47–48, but also Dermot Quinn, *Patronage and Piety* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), who concludes on the basis of a constituency by constituency analysis that the Irish Catholic vote was over-rated. Cf. his 'Appendix: Constituency Catholicism,' 217–255.

⁸⁴ The Hawarden Kite was an announcement, in December of 1885, made from their home, Hawarden Castle, by Gladstone's son, Herbert, that his father now supported Home Rule for Ireland.

prospect of the Irish party swinging their votes back to the Liberals, who were not to be counted on to support denominational education in England, conflict could and did arise. It was suggested in a number of English Catholic newspapers that the interests of the Irish movement should be subordinated to the interest of English Catholics in the question of education. Walsh wrote to Manning protesting these proposals, as well as attacks that had been made on the Irish bishops for their alliance with the Irish parliamentary party. Manning responded immediately: 'I will say at once that I know of no one who desires to subordinate the Irish movement to any English question.' This was, perhaps, less true than a reflection of the policy Manning himself had determined to follow, on which he proceeded to reassure Walsh: 'And you may rely on me for refusing to subordinate the Irish movement to any English question, as I believe you would refuse to subordinate the Irish movement to your own Education'—a perceptive observation on Manning's part of the constrained position in which the Irish hierarchy now found itself in relation to the Home Rule movement.⁸⁵

Manning would follow the policy of publicly backing the Irish bishops in their arrangements with the Parliamentary party even though, at this point, he remained convinced that a separate Parliament in Dublin was not a good idea. He repeated his opposition to such a parliament to the pope in a letter written several weeks after his correspondence with Walsh. But it is significant that Manning was scrupulous in what he wrote, in order to protect the Irish bishops, even to the point of presenting their position to the pope in such a favorable light that he surely misrepresented it. 'The Irish bishops perceived these dangers [of a separate parliament] last year', he told Leo, referring to the April visit of Croke and his colleagues—whom he had then reported to the pope as opposing a separate Parliament—'but the Irish Members frequently speak of a Parliament. The Bishops themselves are in great difficulties, but they have acted with much prudence and loyalty concerning the wishes of your Holiness. I must especially praise', Manning added, in the interest of one of the most advanced nationalists and advocates of Home Rule in the Irish Hierarchy, 'the conduct of Monsignor Croke'.⁸⁶

Nor was Manning's deference to Walsh and the Irish bishops in the matter of subordinating English education to Irish Home Rule only for their own consumption. When the first Home Rule Bill was defeated and Gladstone's government fell, Manning wrote to Herbert Vaughan,

⁸⁵ See Walsh to Manning, 27 December 1885; Manning to Walsh 28 December 1885, Walsh Papers.

⁸⁶ Manning to Leo XIII, 24 January 1886, quoted in Larkin, *The Roman Catholic Church*, 358–359.

who was probably not eager to receive them, with instructions for the coming election:

The dissolution is on one issue. We cannot evade it, we cannot put Education before it. The Irish vote in England would be lost by doing so. We should seem to oppose Ireland. We should hopelessly divide our own people. The Education Question would not be listened to apart from Ireland. We can speak on both, but not on Education alone . . . Education cannot be helped at this election, nor do I think it will be hindered. This will need much thought and counsel, but it is inevitable.⁸⁷

Engaging the Liberal State

Given the intensity and duration of Manning's campaign for voluntary education in England, his willingness to subordinate this cause to an Irish Home Rule that he did not entirely agree with is most significant. It may well be, as Manning himself indicated, that this subordination was inevitable. But the inevitable is only so on the basis of certain assumptions. In the present case, the operative assumption for Manning was that the Catholic Church in the whole United Kingdom was ineluctably committed to popular politics. And it was committed to popular politics not in the abstract, but to the popular politics of the mass democratic political party with the exigencies that such a commitment brought with it and subject to the dynamics that a close engagement with a political party entailed. More concretely still, the Church, both in England as well as in Ireland, was committed to the Irish Parliamentary party of Charles Stuart Parnell. This was the party to which the majority of Roman Catholics in the United Kingdom gave their allegiance, and if the Roman Catholic Church was to have impact and effect in the country it must work in and through that party.

The decisive and conclusive character of the Church's turn toward democratic politics as it actually existed in England and Ireland was the reason why a Catholic party on the model of the German Centre party never got off the ground. Popular politics, by definition, can be organized from the top down only to a limited extent, and even if the bishops had wished to establish a Catholic party, most Catholics, by 1885 anyway, were already taken up in a political party—Parnell's party.

⁸⁷ Manning to Vaughan, 11 June 1886, Vaughan Correspondence, Manning Papers. Manning also took this opportunity to inform Vaughan that he would himself look for an opportunity to speak out on the Irish question, in favor of 'the integrity of the Imperial Parliament and a legislative power in Ireland for all home matters not Imperial'—a move beyond the 'central board' scheme, but still short of an endorsement of a separate parliament in Dublin. What he proposed for Ireland, he told Vaughan, he also desired for Scotland and Wales. Manning found the opportunity he sought to express his support for this version of Home Rule in the letter published in the *Times* referred to above. Manning's enthusiasm for a federal, devolutionary solution to the problem of Home Rule is not surprising given his growing commitment to decentralization in the interest of authentically liberal government.

This party, while composed almost entirely of Catholics and including most of the Catholics in the United Kingdom, was certainly not, despite the allegations of Protestants and secularists, a Catholic, confessional party even in the sense that the Centre party was Catholic and confessional.

The Church—in the person of its bishops—could influence the party—to reinforce, for example, the party's commitment to non-violence and constitutionalism. It could use the party for its own ends—as, for example, standard-bearer in the Church's fight for denominational education. It could criticize and even attempt to correct the party as it did on the issue of moral leadership in the Parnell divorce scandal. But it certainly could not control or lead the party; its ability to use the party for its own ends was limited; and in some areas - the whole national question, for example—the Church had to follow or acquiesce in the party's lead. Any effort to use the Church to control the national movement, as even the papacy would discover in the condemning the Plan of Campaign, was bound to fail. All of this, the Irish bishops—certainly Walsh—understood, and clearly Manning understood it as well. That understanding was demonstrated not simply in Manning's deference to Walsh's lead, but in his strong support for Walsh's policy in regard to the national movement—in England, in Ireland and in Rome—during the rest of Manning's life.

By 1886, the Catholic Church was committed decisively to popular politics in the United Kingdom with all the complexity and ambiguity that such a commitment entailed. This article has argued that it is not adequate to see this commitment of the Church by leaders like Walsh and Manning as a matter of bowing to the inevitable. The commitment was inevitable only because Church leaders like Manning believed it was necessary.