

STUDIA

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THE CONVERSION OF EDWARD DOUGLAS C.S.S.R.

Father Edward Douglas was in his time quite an important personage. He was associated with matters of weight among the Redemptorists throughout the latter half of last century and he was held in veneration for so long a time in his institute that it is surprising that little has ever been written about him¹. His career suggests a number of considerations which justify one's disturbing the long obscurity that has hidden him, more acceptable though that may have been to his simple humility.

His long life was quite extraordinary in many respects. Born into a wealthy and aristocratic Scottish family², he shocked his relatives by becoming a Catholic. He was received into the Church early in 1842, numbered by a contemporary chronicler among the earliest fruits of the Oxford Movement³. Though he had been a student of Christ Church until 1841, he does not seem to have had much contact with Newman's friends, let alone been of his circle, so that his conversion was without the personal influence of the great man, which is the more common image one has of the Oxford converts.

After his ordination in 1848 Edward Douglas was accepted by the Redemptorists, taking his religious vows at the end of the following year. Four years later his superiors summoned him to Rome to help in the

¹ The only biography is in Latin. Fridericus Kuntz C.S.S.R., *De vita Eduardi Douglas, presbyteri Congregationis SS. Redemptoris breve commentarium*, Rome, 1909. Cf. also Maurice de Meulemeester C.S.S.R., *Bibliographie générale des écrivains rédemptoristes*, II, Louvain, 1935, p. 129. Among the short pieces listed there the most informative is G. Stebbing C.S.S.R., *Father Edward Douglas* (32 pages) London, 1917.

² According to the commonly accepted authority on the British aristocracy, « the race of Douglas is amongst the noblest of all Europe ». Sir Bernard Burke, *A Genealogical and Heraldic Dictionary of the Peerage and Baronetage of the British Empire*, London, 1869, p. 533. Hereafter quoted *Burke's Peerage*.

³ E.G.K. Browne, *Annals of the Tractarian Movement, 1842-1860*, London, 1861, p. 60. Hon. Edward Douglas is listed among the small handful of converts recorded for that year. Browne lists himself as one of the converts of the Oxford Movement. He had been curate of Bawdsley in Suffolk, and he became a Catholic in 1845. *op. cit.*, 116-117.

search for a suitable residence for the Superior General and his council. In the following August, when he was not yet five years professed, he was named superior of the Roman province, an office he retained until 1862.

The General Chapter held in 1855 elected him as one of the consultants of the new Superior General, Nicholas Mauron⁴. When he was relieved of the office of provincial he was appointed superior of the house of Sant'Alfonso on the Esquiline, and he continued in that post until his death, though in the last few years of his long life the title was rather an honorary one, the affairs of the community being in the hands of a vicar.

Apart from a brief visit to England in 1869 Father Douglas remained in Italy from 1853 until his death in 1898. In fact, he rarely even left Rome, so that his name became linked, possibly more than that of any other, with the house of Sant'Alfonso which his patrimony had purchased and enlarged, whose church he planned and built, and over whose community he presided with the unassuming gentleness so many remarked in him⁵.

For a man of whom those who knew him well say that he shunned publicity, he was well known to Church authorities in Rome. A person of his background was bound to attract attention, of course, particularly when there were so many distinguished visitors calling on him, as his correspondence shows⁶. His papers show, too, that he was consulted occasionally by the Holy See. His opinion was sought when the advisability of holding a General Council was being considered, when the restoration of the Scottish hierarchy was being discussed and on some few other occasions⁷.

He was certainly a remarkable character in his day; and interest in him continued for some time after his death, to such an extent in fact that serious thought was given to promoting the cause of his beatification⁸. With the passing of almost a century, however, his figure has become somewhat faded. It seems only right to give him some little recognition even at this late hour, and it may well be that the investigation prove useful and instructive.

Of the large mass of Douglas papers by far the greatest part is made up of material that is personal, his correspondence with his relat-

⁴ Nicholas Mauron, born 7 I 1818, made his profession as a Redemptorist in 1837 and was ordained in 1841. Elected Superior General in 1855, he died in 1893. See F. Dumortier, *Le Révérendissime Père Nicholas Mauron*, Paris, 1901.

⁵ Cf. [A. Walter C.S.S.R.], *Villa Caserta*, Rome, 1905, p. 223-232, where there is a resume of Edward Douglas's life as superior of Sant'Alfonso.

⁶ The Douglas papers constitute quite a large collection in the general archives of the Redemptorists in Rome, quoted AGR. For the most part they are in sections XLVI & XLVII.

⁷ See Kuntz, *op. cit.*, 134-137; 144-146; 152-159.

⁸ [C. Benedetti], *Servorum Dei e Congregatione Sanctissimi Redemptoris Album*, Rome, 1903, p. 53-54.

ives and very many friends and with his Redemptorist confrères. Apart from three notebooks of jottings he made during journeys on the Continent and in the Holy Land as a young man, all of the papers date from the time of his ordination, and indeed with very few exceptions from the time of his joining the Redemptorists.

From these papers it has been possible to trace his progress from the Anglican belief he received from his pious mother to his reception into the Catholic Church and his finding his way to the Redemptorists. This reconstruction has been assisted most of all by material collected by Father Thomas Livius with a view to writing a Life of Father Douglas⁹. He was unable to complete his work, but the notebook containing the results of his investigations is in the General Archives of the Redemptorists¹⁰. Father Livius made inquiries among the contemporaries of his subject concerning Father Douglas's early years, copying into his notebook some useful and interesting letters he received in answer to his queries. Some of them are offered as an appendix to this article.

The Douglas papers suggest a number of reflections, all of which would probably be of some interest. For the present this short study may serve to introduce a man who has been too long unknown. We shall look at the family and religious development of Father Edward Douglas.

The Douglas family is descended from the Earls of Douglas and Mar¹¹. William, the second son of the second Earl, became Baron Douglas of Drumlanrig about the end of the fourteenth century. The ninth Baron was raised in 1638 by James VI of Scotland to the title and rank of Earl of Queensberry, becoming Marquess in 1681 and Duke in 1683. Sir William Douglas, second son of the first Earl of Queensberry, was created by James VI Baronet of Kilhead, and this is the family of Father Edward Douglas.

Sir James Sholto Douglas of Kilhead, Father Douglas's great grandfather, spent some time in the West Indies. Sarah, daughter of his second son, Sholto, was to marry John, sixth Marquess of Queensberry, making even closer the ties of blood in the family. His

⁹ Thomas Livius was born 29 XI 1828. In 1851 he gained his B.A. degree at Oxford, where he was a student of Oriel, Newman's old college. Ordained to the priesthood of the Church of England in 1853, he became unsettled in his religion until he was received into the Catholic Church by the Redemptorists in Clapham in 1857. He made his profession with them in the following year and was ordained in 1862. He became one of the distinguished English Redemptorist writers of the latter part of last century. He died in 1903. Cf. Maurice de Meulemeester C.S.S.R., *op. cit.*, II, 252-253; John F. Byrne C.S.S.R., *The Redemptorist Centenaries*, Philadelphia, 1932, p. 576-577.

¹⁰ Father Livius's notebook is with the Douglas papers in AGR XLVI, 1. In this article it is quoted *Livius Notebook*.

¹¹ Information about the more immediate family has been taken from *Burke's Peerage*, 923-924.

youngest son, James Charles Sholto, married Mary, daughter of Rev. Richard Bullock; and his son, Edward Bullock Douglas, in 1811 married Harriet, daughter of another Rev. Richard Bullock. From this marriage Edward Douglas was born in Edinburgh on 1st December 1819. In notes he made towards the end of his life Father Douglas was to comment on the close blood relationship between his parents, blaming it for the weakness that troubled his earliest years¹².

Edward Bullock Douglas was secretary to the last Duke of Queensberry, known to the family as « old Q », and when the latter died unmarried in 1810 at the age of eighty-five, he inherited a very considerable fortune¹³. Father Livius, who had been acquainted with some of the Douglas family from his own time in Oxford, asked the widow of one of them if there had been any resentment at the old Duke's leaving so much of his fortune to such a junior member of the family; and she replied that she had never heard any complaints on that score and « nothing but expressions of esteem and affection » for Edward¹⁴.

The elder Edward Douglas was always plagued by bad health, and he brought his family south in search of a milder climate, settling them in the neighbourhood of Sevenoaks in Kent. Finding that still unsuitable, he betook himself to Nice in his quest for the sun, and there he died in 1830, his son being then in his eleventh year.

Young Edward had been almost exclusively under his mother's care throughout his earliest years, and those who wrote of him in that time spoke of the close attachment of mother and son to each other. Mrs. Douglas was a devout person who took her Anglicanism so earnestly that not only did she have her little boy learn his catechism, but also memorise long passages from the Book of Common Prayer¹⁵. In his later years Father Douglas affectionately recalled the religious training he received from his mother and the long night prayers which included the recitation of what he had learned during the day as well as a diligent examination of conscience, the whole

¹² The incomplete autobiographical notes are to be seen in AGR XLVI, 1.

¹³ *Livius Notebook*, 40. After the death of « Old Q » the title of Duke of Queensberry reverted to the Dukes of Buccleigh, the successor to the deceased Duke, Sir Charles Douglas of Kilhead, becoming the fifth Marquess of Queensberry. Cf. *Burke's Peerage*, 923.

¹⁴ *Livius Notebook*, 42.

¹⁵ Autobiographical notes in AGR, XLVI, 1; Kuntz, *op. cit.*, 8-9.

usually concluding with one of the pious hymns of Bishop Ken sung by mother and son together¹⁶.

It must have been a much more than usually sheltered life that young Edward Douglas knew in those early years near Sevenoaks. In his brief autobiographical notes he described himself as what was called « a poor creature », a phrase which betrays his Gaelic blood. He was too physically weak and awkward, he says, to join in the usual games that delight a growing boy. That is the way he spoke of himself, but the isolation of his childhood could not have lasted very long, since at the age of six he went to a private school¹⁷.

From 1826 he was at Dr. Everard's school for young gentlemen in Brighton. Here he became acquainted with a little boy a year or two older than himself who was to become a lifelong friend. Charles Scott Murray was to be one of the most intimate as well as the oldest of his many friends, following him to the Catholic Church and continuing an affectionate correspondence until his death¹⁸. Mrs. Douglas, on returning to England after her husband's death in 1830, lived for a short time in Brasted, also in the neighbourhood of Sevenoaks. Lather Livius draws attention to one of the not infrequent escapes into fantasy one encounters in Purcell's *Life of Manning* in which the Cardinal is represented as recalling long rides with young Edward Douglas whom he used to visit at Brasted. Livius points out how unlikely to say the least it was that the mature Oxford scholar of twenty-three should go riding with a sickly child of eleven¹⁹. Miss Helen Douglas, when questioned on the matter, told him that her cousin had said it was « a strange mistake », adding her own comment: « The book is full of errors »²⁰. Mrs. Douglas did not remain long in Brasted in any case, because she purchased a home

¹⁶ Thomas Ken, Bishop of Bath and Wells, was one of the most venerated of Anglican spiritual writers. His *Exposition on the Church Catechism* was long popular under its subtitle, *The Practice of Divine Love*. His hymns enjoyed considerable renown. The one recalled by Father Douglas in his autobiographical notes was long a popular favourite, « All Praise to Thee, My God, This Night ». Cf. *Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford, 1917, vol. X, 1287-1292.

¹⁷ Information about the childhood of Edward Douglas has been taken from his own notes in AGR, XLVI, 1 and from a letter of his cousin, Miss Helen Douglas, to Father Livius, *Livius Notebook*, 40.

¹⁸ Charles Robert Scott Murray (1818-1882) was of a wealthy Buckinghamshire family of landowners. Cf. Sir Bernard Burke, *A Genealogical and Heraldic Dictionary of the Landed Gentry of Great Britain and Ireland*, London, 1865, II, 1057. Hereafter quoted *Burke's Landed Gentry*.

¹⁹ *Livius Notebook*, 6. Cf. E. Purcell, *Life of Manning*, London, 1896, I, 14.

²⁰ *Livius Notebook*, 6.

in Bursleden near Southampton, which was to be her home until her son became a Catholic.

In 1832 Edward Douglas joined Scott Murray at Eton, and five years later the two friends were together again in Oxford, both students of Christ Church. There he had as his tutor the amiably eccentric Thomas Meyrick, who was to provide information about his pupil²¹.

The Oxford years were to prove decisive. It is unfortunate that for this time it is necessary to depend mainly on Meyrick's somewhat erratic evidence. When he answered Father Livius's questions towards the end of a long and eventful life, the old tutor's memory was far from reliable. He is clearly quite inaccurate in recalling such things as dates and happenings; but he speaks quite confidently, even categorically when he describes his pupil's character and academic ability.

Douglas and Scott Murray, Meyrick recalls, were not party men, but were held to be High Church²². Evidently they kept aloof from the busy debates aroused by the Tractarians and approaching their crisis at the time the two friends came to Oxford. They and their few associates were quiet, a little exclusive perhaps, but generally respected because they were such « exemplary young gentlemen »²³.

The tutor described his pupil as « an average Eton scholar », which he explained as meaning « without any high grade of classical attainments, but sufficient to pass easily. I did not think he required any assistance to take his degree »²⁴. Even so, Edward Douglas left Oxford without his baccalaureate. He presented himself for his final examination in May of 1840 as an honours candidate. He failed but did not return, as was the usual procedure, to take the alternative pass examination. Meyrick voiced his suspicions of unfair treatment,

²¹ Thomas Meyrick (1817-1903) was a scholar of Corpus Christi, taking a First in classics in 1838, the year after Douglas came to Christ Church. He was for a short time with the group at Littlemore, leaving them to become a Catholic in the course of 1845, having been released by Newman from a promise to postpone the step. He became a Jesuit and left them on two occasions. For a short time he even left the Church. His last years were spent as chaplain to a convent in Rome. He died in Brescia. Cf. Charles Stephen Dessain Cong. Orat. and Vincent Ferrer Blehl S.J., *The Letters and Diaries of John Henry Newman*, vol. XI, London, 1961, p. 346-347. Hereafter quoted *Letters and Diaries*.

²² *Livius Notebook*, 19.

²³ *ibid.*

²⁴ *Livius Notebook*, 25.

which in his opinion hurt Douglas to the extent that he never returned to Oxford even for a visit. « I think the examiners must have been unfit men at the time » is the old man's forthright comment on the incident²⁵.

Meyrick says he was glad to have Douglas as a pupil since he and Scott Murray were generally thought to share his own leanings towards Catholic observances. He recalls that he had occasion once to reassure his pupil whom he found disturbed by his religious uncertainties, telling him: « At least the Catholic religion, as Pusey allows, is a safe one to live and die in. We do not know where we are ». These frank and well-meaning words brought swift retribution.

« I was hauled up by old Pusey as a delinquent. He asked me whether I had said to Douglas that he (Pusey) had said the Catholic religion was a safe one to live and die in.

« I replied: 'Have you not said so'?

« To this he did not answer, but said: 'You are not in Orders'?

« I said: 'No' to which he said: 'Then perhaps what you said was right'. This is all that passed between us. I thought this poor reasoning for a man of such repute »²⁶.

Edward Douglas and his friends, earnest as they were about religion, could hardly have failed to be affected by the ferment that was so profoundly disturbing Oxford in the late thirties. The *Tracts for the Times* had been appearing since 1833 and Newman was still preaching his *via media*. Edward Douglas was fortunate in finding agreeable company to share his interest in the religious issues of the day and join him in the diligent search for the truth. A frequent visitor to Bursleden was Mary Elizabeth, daughter of Lieutenant General à Court. As Lady Herbert of Lea she readily agreed to satisfy Father Livius in his quest for information²⁷.

She was at Bursleden for an extended visit during the summer of 1841, the year after Edward Douglas had left Oxford. *Tract 90*

²⁵ Livius Notebook, 17.

²⁶ Livius Notebook, 20.

²⁷ Lady Herbert, widow of Sir Sidney Herbert of Lea, became a Catholic some time after her husband's death in 1861. She was friendly with Cardinals Manning, Newman and Vaughan, very generously assisting the last mentioned in his establishing the Mill Hill Society. Her husband's family appealed to the law to prevent her children following her to the Catholic Church and they succeeded in having her children declared wards of Chancery. One daughter, however, became a Catholic and married Frederick von Hügel. Cf. Michael de la Bedoyère, *The Life of Baron von Hügel*, London, 1951, p. 7-8.

had recently appeared, and Lady Herbert recalled the intense excitement with which the two young friends pored over « multitudes of pamphlets, newspaper articles and private letters, all tending to the one momentous question of whether we could remain in the Anglican Church or not ». This was what was agitating « the whole Puseyite world », as she put it, as a consequence of Newman's startling final contribution to the *Tracts*²⁸.

The two sat and read together for hours on end in the little summer house in the garden of Bursleden. « Corporate union was advocated by many of our friends, who deprecated the idea of individual conversions to Rome as likely to deter the masses from joining us. But Edward always stuck to the point of following his conscience, should he at last become convinced that the Church of England was only an offspring of the Reformation »²⁹.

They parted at the end of the summer without having finally decided to adopt the patronisingly patrician solution to the dilemma their friends were advocating. Then shortly afterwards Edward wrote « that he found his position untenable and intolerable, and that he felt that he had no alternative but to join the Church of Rome. He went to Rome towards the end of the year with Scott Murray »³⁰.

It seems useful as well as fitting to stress one point that emerges clearly from Lady Herbert's narrative, namely that Edward Douglas had already practically made up his mind before he went to Rome towards the end of 1841. One suspects that the events connected with the misplaced umbrella related by Kuntz and often repeated have been elevated into a sort of folklore³¹. It would be a pity if its repetition should obscure the personal and conscientious character of Father Douglas's search for religious truth. For what did happen on that visit to Rome Father Livius was able to call on Scott Murray's widow³². She used her husband's meticulously kept diary to aid her memory, so that her short account must be con-

²⁸ *Livius Notebook*, 47-48.

²⁹ *ibid.*

³⁰ *ibid.*

³¹ Kuntz, *op. cit.*, 14-17.

³² Shortly after his conversion Scott Murray had married Amelia Charlotte Fraser, of the traditionally Catholic family of Lord Lovat. Cf. *Burke's Landed Gentry* II, 1057. After her husband's death Mrs. Scott Murray continued to correspond with Father Douglas. Cf. AGR, XLVII.

sidered quite reliable, a refreshing change from Meyrick's rambling and highly questionable gossip³³.

Douglas and Scott Murray remained in Rome over the end of the year, and on 18th January they attended a solemn papal function to celebrate the feast of St. Peter's Chair³⁴. The two had provided themselves with tickets for admission to a section reserved for distinguished guests; and since etiquette of dress did not allow him to carry an umbrella into the enclosure, Scott Murray left his in an empty confessional opposite the large monument of Benedict XIV. When he returned after the function, he found that the confessional had been locked. Scott Murray, who was already Member for Buckinghamshire, had to leave Rome immediately so as to be in time for the opening of Parliament, so he left it to his friend to recover the vagrant umbrella³⁵.

Edward Douglas's inquiries led him to the nearby church and Carmelite monastery of S. Maria in Traspontina³⁶. At that time it was a college of young students whose Director, Padre Simone Spilatros, was the confessor in question. When he heard the story of the lost umbrella, he called one of the young students, Padre Angelo Savini, and asked him to go with the young gentleman and recover his property for him. Conversing on the way, the two became at once so friendly that Douglas spoke freely of his dissatisfaction with the Church of England. Further meetings were easily arranged because of the Director's amiable hospitality and because Savini had charge of the little church of San Giuseppe on the via Lungara not far from Douglas's lodgings.

³³ *Livius Notebook*, 27-31.

³⁴ Following tradition, St. Peter's successive Sees of Antioch and Rome used to have distinct celebrations before liturgical reform limited observance to the single present feast on 22nd February. Father Kuntz draws attention to the fact that it was on the vigil of the second feast of St. Peter's Chair that Edward Douglas was conditionally baptised. *Op. cit.*, 16.

³⁵ *Livius Notebook*, 27. Father Kuntz, *op. cit.*, 15, quoting what he had heard in conversation from Father Douglas, tells the story as having been occasioned by Father Douglas's own umbrella. One would have to prefer Mrs. Scott Murray's narrative, relying as she did on her husband's notes, and regretfully conclude that Father Douglas's memory as an old man was not as entirely reliable as Kuntz and others alleged. Browne also has an account of the incident which there is reason to think was received from Scott Murray himself. E.G.K. Browne, *op. cit.*, 98-99. Cf. also the similar account, possibly by way of Browne, in David August Rosenthal, *Convertitenbilder aus dem neunzehnten Jahrhundert*, III 2, Schaffhausen, 1870, p. 684-685.

³⁶ Kuntz, *loc. cit.* There is a rather fuller account in a letter of the Carmelite, Agostino Diofebi, to Father Mauron, 9 X 1898 in AGR, XLVI, 1. Diofebi had often heard the facts from his superior, Father Douglas's old friend, Padre Angelo Savini.

Things moved quickly, no doubt on account of Douglas's having already reached his decision, as one must gather from Lady Herbert's evidence. Within a few weeks he was formally received into the Church, it could well be the first of those Oxford converts Browne dates from 1842³⁷. A document of the Sacred Penitentiary shows that he solemnly renounced the Anglican religion on 15th February 1842. Conditional baptism followed on the 21st, after which he received Holy Communion from Savini in the church of San Giuseppe. He was confirmed in the Lateran basilica on the 24th with Savini as his sponsor³⁸. The friendship between Douglas and Savini was intimate from the very beginning and continued to be warmly affectionate, as is evidenced by the considerable correspondence that remains³⁹.

The conversion occasioned problems. Soon after his confirmation Douglas went to Naples, and there he received a letter from Savini who wrote to console him on his very great grief⁴⁰. The letter is long and not very clear as to the nature of the sorrow beyond suggesting that it was occasioned by Douglas's change of religion. In his own recollections Padre Diofebi recalled that Savini had told him that Mrs. Douglas in some alarm at reports that had come to her had insisted that her son return to England, declaring that she would disinherit him should he join the papists⁴¹.

In his letter Savini told his friend about the excitement in Rome over the beginning of the English conversions. Three young men had renounced Anglican doctrines after having been prepared by a certain noble gentleman named Esmond, and no fewer than ten more had asked for instruction⁴². Savini expressed his delight that

³⁷ E.G.K. Browne, *op. cit.*, 60. Browne rarely indicates the date of conversion more precisely than the year.

³⁸ The documents of his abjuration and confirmation are in AGR, XLVI, 2. Cf. Kuntz, *op. cit.*, 16.

³⁹ AGR, XLVI, 1.

⁴⁰ Savini to Douglas, 7 IV 1842 in AGR, XLVI, 1.

⁴¹ Diofebi to Mauron, 9 X 1898 in AGR, XLVI, 1.

⁴² The names of the converts are not given, but it appears that even in 1842 they were rather more numerous than the dozen or so listed by Browne for the whole year. The noble Esmond mentioned by Savini must have been the Irish Jesuit, Bartholomew Esmond, whose name was more usually spelled Esmonde (1789-1862). He passed much of his life as a Jesuit in Malta and Rome. He supplied Newman

God should be lavishing His gifts on England, « a nation that will always be dear to me »⁴³.

Savini's letter gives the first indication of how great was the cost to Edward Douglas to change his religion. Writing after his death Mrs. Scott Murray recalled that he « was devotedly attached » to his mother⁴⁴. Others spoke in the same way, some using almost the very same words, so that it is not hard to believe that the mother should have spoken a little wildly when she first heard of the likelihood of her son's abandoning the religion in which she had so lovingly raised him. After the first shock had passed the mother and son must have been reconciled very soon after Edward's return to England. Meyrick remembered a visit to them in their London home⁴⁵, and the little of their correspondence that has survived is uniformly affectionate, though touched with sadness. In her last letter before her death in 1850 Mrs. Douglas wrote:

« I have no great bodily suffering, and for that I must thank God; but if my body is free from pain I cannot say the same of my soul, which is bitterly grieved that we are going our different ways. [...] May God keep you, Edward, my dearest son. May He keep you from all harm and lead you by the right way. This is the prayer of your most loving mother »⁴⁶.

Edward Douglas shocked his many relatives by his conversion. When Father Livius questioned the widow of his old Oxford friend, Stair Douglas, about the family's disappointment over so much of the Queensberry inheritance coming to Edward, she dismissed it with a word, but added at once that his change of religion remained a « sore subject » in the family⁴⁷.

Miss Helen Douglas wrote that after his conversion she had not spoken to Edward until she called on him in Rome in 1880, and after that she corresponded regularly with him until his death. She says she « found him the same affectionate creature of old times [...] He loved to hear all family news and appeared to feel the sev-

with much useful information for use in the notorious Achilli trial. Cf. Newman's *Letters and Diaries*, XIV, 1963, p. 359, 420, 544.

⁴³ Savini to Douglas, 7 IV 1842 in AGR, XLVI, 1.

⁴⁴ Livius Notebook, 29.

⁴⁵ Livius Notebook, 17.

⁴⁶ Kuntz, *op. cit.*, 52-53. Unfortunately, the letter he quotes seems to have been lost.

⁴⁷ Livius Notebook, 42.

erance of old ties very much »⁴⁸. In a letter to the widow of her cousin, Stair, she spoke about her meeting with Edward after a separation of almost forty years. « I am thankful to remember that I have twice been in Rome of late years and seen the dear, good Father, though earlier memories of all the grief his action caused are painfully impressed »⁴⁹.

Writing to Mary Elizabeth à Court, the friend who was probably closest to him, to tell of his decision, he assured her that his only regret « was in the knowledge of the distress it would cause his mother to whom he was tenderly attached; but that he had no doubt whatever of the duty which lay before him, and that to remain in the Church of England would be for him an act of positive dishonesty »⁵⁰. She herself was sternly ordered by her father, the general, « an old fashioned Church of England Protestant », to have nothing more to do with Douglas⁵¹. They did not meet again for twenty years, by which time she had become the widowed Lady Herbert, soon herself finally to embrace Catholicism.

Meyrick's wayward memory, which tended to jump unpredictably from place to place and from one year to another, relates an incident that must have occurred almost immediately after Edward Douglas's reception into the Church. There is a ring of authenticity about the wry humour of the anecdote. Meyrick was himself in Rome at the time. « The reception », he recalls, « caused a sensation. A parson was sent from England to reconvert him, and made us laugh, that he despaired of arguing with Douglas, as he would not touch a bit of meat, it being a Friday in Lent »⁵².

Not all of his old friends avoided him. A couple of years after his conversion he had the happiness of introducing his childhood friend, Scott Murray, to Padre Savini⁵³. The young Member of Parliament was one of the most distinguished of the early Oxford converts, and he was received with some ceremony by Cardinal Fransoni, Prefect of Propaganda, in February 1844. According to Browne, Scott Murray had been « surprised to find his friend from conviction a sincere Catholic, and this led him to examine more fully into Catholic

⁴⁸ *Livius Notebook*, 41.

⁴⁹ *ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Livius Notebook*, 51.

⁵¹ *ibid.*

⁵² *Livius Notebook*, 23.

⁵³ *Livius Notebook*, 31.

doctrine »⁵⁴. Meyrick, too, speaks of a visit he paid to Douglas and his mother in London in 1844, the year before he himself became a Catholic. The two made a pilgrimage to Canterbury, kneeling to kiss the spot where St. Thomas a Beckett was martyred⁵⁵.

Towards the middle of 1842 Edward Douglas returned to England and joined his mother in her London home in Eaton Place. The Carmelite Diofebi mentions that before leaving Italy Douglas had assured Savini, « his good Father », that he would return at once after his mother's death to discuss his vocation⁵⁶.

His life during the few years that followed his conversion seems to have been spent for the most part with his mother, and it was apparently quite uneventful. In any case, as Kuntz remarks, Edward Douglas was always reluctant to talk about himself⁵⁷, so that what knowledge can be gained of his earlier years had to be gathered from his few remaining contemporaries, themselves already quite elderly. However, for a pilgrimage he made to the Holy Land in 1845 it is possible to consult a diary he kept, as had been his practice on other journeys he made as a wealthy young Scottish gentleman⁵⁸.

Perhaps the most revealing thing about the journey to Palestine and Egypt is the company he chose to join him on his pilgrimage. All three of his friends were of the kind that later Oxford converts were to call « the old Catholics ». John Furniss was a zealous young priest who was in Italy for his health. He came from a comfortable Catholic family of Sheffield. He was later to become a Redemptorist and win renown for his extraordinary success as the children's missionary⁵⁹. The other layman of the party was Richard Carrington Smythe of Acton Burnell, whose staunchly traditional Catholic family had achieved some unwelcome notoriety when one of them married the Prince of Wales, later George IV⁶⁰. The fourth

⁵⁴ E.G.K. Browne, *op. cit.*, 98. Browne wrote with evident delight of the twenty-five year old parliamentarian « in the High Tory interest », mentioning that his annual income was 20,000 pounds sterling.

⁵⁵ *Livius Notebook*, 17.

⁵⁶ Diofebi to Mauron, 9 X 1898 in AGR, XLVI, 1.

⁵⁷ Kuntz, *op. cit.*, 27.

⁵⁸ The diaries are in AGR, XLVII, 128, 129, 130.

⁵⁹ John Furniss, born in 1809, was ordained in 1834, taking his vows as a Redemptorist in 1851. He died in 1865. Cf. T. Livius, *Father Furniss and his Work for Children*, London, 1896.

⁶⁰ Cf. *Burke's Peerage*, 1032. For information about the family of Carrington Smythe cf. also Shane Leslie, *Mrs. Fitzherbert*, New York, 1939, p. 3-7.

of the pilgrims was the abbate Hamilton, a vague personage who befriended so many of the Oxford converts, but whom nobody seemed really to know. Newman recorded a number of social encounters with Hamilton, but the editors of the *Letters and Diaries* were not very successful in identifying much more than that his Christian name was James⁶¹. Father Livius had not much more success. Meyrick had some idea that he belonged to the family of the Dukes of Hamilton, in which case he would have been a relative of Douglas. He was at any rate high enough in the esteem of Gregory XVI to be able to get Meyrick an audience⁶². Carrington Smythe's widow knew simply that he was very wealthy and a regular entertainer of the converts, adding: « I am afraid his later life was not satisfactory »⁶³. One is glad of Meyrick's final comment that he « died in Paris, attended by the abbé Rogerson », apparently another mysterious man like Hamilton himself⁶⁴.

The suspicion that Edward Douglas was attracted to old Catholic ways after his conversion is confirmed by papers found after his death, which would indicate also that he was strongly attracted to Rome itself. In 1845, the year of the pilgrimage to the Holy Land, he had himself enrolled in a sodality of the Sacred Heart in Rome⁶⁵. Similar documents show him having himself admitted to the Archconfraternity of the Precious Blood in March of 1847 and to the Sodality of a Good Death in May of the same year⁶⁶. Kuntz speaks of a conversation in which Father Douglas mentioned his having been present at the first Christmas Mass of Pius IX in St. Mary Major's in 1846. He also found a receipt for board in Rome for the months of January and February 1847 together with a papal indult granting a plenary indulgence and dated 29th March of the same year⁶⁷. Besides showing the new convert's remarkable eagerness to gain indulgences these documents would seem to indicate that Father Douglas's mother had so far resigned herself to her son's

⁶¹ Cf. *Letters and Diaries*, XII, 1962, p. 432.

⁶² *Livius Notebook*, 23.

⁶³ *Livius Notebook*, 22.

⁶⁴ *ibid.*

⁶⁵ AGR, XLVI, 2. Cf. Kuntz, *op. cit.*, 29, where the date is given erroneously, it appears, as 1847.

⁶⁶ *ibid.*

⁶⁷ Kuntz, *op. cit.*, 29.

Catholic practices as to allow him freedom to spend a considerable part of the year in Rome.

That is doubtless the reason why, in spite of earlier misgivings, by 1848 he apparently met with no prohibition from his mother when he arranged for his ordination. The certificates attesting his reception of major orders show that he was ordained subdeacon and deacon in June in Forlì⁶⁸. His friend, Savini, had been transferred there at the end of the previous year, and no doubt Douglas had followed him in order to prepare himself under his direction. What that preparation entailed it is not possible to say beyond noting that it surely must have been sketchy in the extreme, as had been the case with others of the Oxford converts. Church authorities, one gathers, presumed a surprising theological preparedness in the scholars who came from the Anglicans during the forties. R.A. Coffin, also to become a Redemptorist, who came to the Catholic Church towards the end of that eventful 1845, was quite disturbed at the lack of training offered himself and his companions in Newman's Oratory. They were, he said, « all young converts brought up at school and College in the same way and with very little more than book knowledge, made priests without any regular training and confessors with as little »⁶⁹.

The Bishop of Forlì who ordained Edward Douglas subdeacon on 18th June and deacon on 22nd was Gaetano Carletti⁷⁰. He was a good friend of the Carmelites of the city, and he became attached to their guest as well: Edward Douglas did seem to have a most remarkable talent for attracting lasting friendships. And now in the *celebret* issued to him the newly ordained was described as a priest of the diocese of Forlì⁷¹. In fact the title of ordination was his patrimony, a sum of money which Douglas had invested, donating the interest each year to his Carmelite friends⁷². When Carletti was later transferred to the See of Rieti he continued a friendly correspondence with Douglas⁷³.

⁶⁸ AGR, XLVI, 1.

⁶⁹ Cf. *Spic. Hist.* 28 (1980) 450.

⁷⁰ The documents are in AGR, XLVI, 1.

⁷¹ *ibid.*

⁷² Letters of Carmelite superiors in Forlì giving a regular accounting of the annual interest are in AGR, XLVI, 1.

⁷³ *ibid.*

The friendly bishop, as a matter of fact, had to leave Forlì in a hurry. Those were troubled times in the Papal States. The disastrous war waged by Piedmont against Austria aroused bitter resentment against Pius IX for not having lent his formidable strength to the common cause of driving the foreigner from Italian soil. A sudden outburst of anticlericalism in Forlì expelled Bishop Carletti, never to return. In those exciting circumstances Edward Douglas had to be ordained to the priesthood on 24th June by the neighbouring Bishop of Bertinoro in the chapel of his episcopal residence⁷⁴.

Father Kuntz speaks of a pilgrimage Father Douglas made to the shrine of St. Alphonsus at Pagani soon after his ordination⁷⁵. For that he cites as evidence conversations with Father Douglas, who spoke also of his companion on the journey, a young friend who later became an Oratorian. The friend in question seems to have been James Rowe⁷⁶. Many of his letters were found among the Douglas papers, and another familiar acquaintance of both, the Duke of Norfolk, wrote with news of Rowe's death⁷⁷. Rowe frequently signed his letters *Giacomino* and often referred to a pleasant holiday the two had enjoyed together in 1847⁷⁸. According to Kuntz's account Father Douglas said Mass at the shrine of St. Alphonsus, gave Communion to his friend and spent most of the time praying for guidance in his vocation, which was the purpose of the pilgrimage⁷⁹.

It appears, in fact, that he lost no time at all in testing his vocation. He made some trial of life with the Franciscans before leaving Italy. Meyrick in his confused and rambling reminiscences had some vague recollection of having visited Douglas in some Franciscan monastery or other in Rome⁸⁰. Mrs. Scott Murray was sure he had spent a little time with the Franciscans, but rather thought it had been somewhere in the north of Italy, obviously confusing the

⁷⁴ *ibid.*

⁷⁵ Kuntz, *op. cit.*, 34.

⁷⁶ James Boone Rowe (1825-1888) of St. John's College, Cambridge, after becoming a Catholic tried his vocation with the Jesuits and the Redemptorists before going to St. Wilfrid's, Cheadle, going on to Faber's London Oratory in 1850. Cf. Newman's *Letters and Diaries*, XIII, 1963, p. 517.

⁷⁷ AGR, XLVII.

⁷⁸ If Rowe was not mistaken, this journey could not have been the pilgrimage to Pagani, even though Kuntz's account seems to indicate Rowe clearly enough as having been Douglas's companion.

⁷⁹ Kuntz, *loc. cit.*

⁸⁰ *Livius Notebook*, 17, 23.

Franciscan interlude with Douglas's stay in Forlì for his ordination⁸¹.

Father Douglas was strongly attracted to the Franciscan life. After he had become a Redemptorist and had offered funds for purchasing a residence in Rome for the Superior General, he explained that he had promised in any case to build a church in honour of St. Francis, whose intercession had obtained him many blessings; and he was sure that St. Francis would be happy to renounce his claim in favour of St. Alphonsus⁸². Father Kuntz relates that he had heard from Douglas of a pilgrimage he had made to Assisi before his ordination⁸³. Whatever the attraction, the experience of Franciscan life must have been very short indeed. According to Kuntz it consisted of about a month spent as a guest in a Roman monastery very soon after Douglas's ordination, that brief acquaintance having convinced the aspirant that the life was too austere for him⁸⁴.

By September the new cleric was in England once more: for that there is evidence in the *celebret* issued to him for the London District⁸⁵. He lost little time in deciding that his future lay with the Redemptorists, since by the end of the year we find him admitted to their novitiate in St. Trond in Belgium. He and his English companion, Francis Weld⁸⁶, were the first vocations to the institute from the British Isles.

His knowledge of the Redemptorists dated from just before his reception into the Church. When he came to Rome with Scott Murray towards the end of 1841 he bought a little book containing short lives of the four saints recently canonised by Gregory XVI, and he was drawn especially to St. Alphonsus, whose life was the first one in the booklet⁸⁷. In 1844 he called on the Redemptorists in

⁸¹ *Livius Notebook*, 29.

⁸² A. Walter, *op. cit.*, 22.

⁸³ Kuntz, *op. cit.*, 29. This could well have been the journey of which J.B. Rowe speaks in his correspondence as having been in 1847.

⁸⁴ *ibid.*

⁸⁵ AGR, XLVI, 1.

⁸⁶ Francis Weld, nephew of Cardinal Weld, belonged to the old Catholic family of the Welds of Lulworth Castle in Dorset. As Mgr. Weld he had been a familiar figure in Rome during the forties of last century. After taking his vows as a Redemptorist in 1849 he was dispensed in 1853. He died in 1898. Cf. Kuntz, *op. cit.*, 42; *Burke's Landed Gentry*, II, 1634.

⁸⁷ Kuntz, *op. cit.*, 22. Among the others included was St. Francis Jerome who had foretold great things for Alphonsus.

Falmouth, where they had established themselves in the previous year, the reason for his visit being in all likelihood to satisfy his thirst for Catholic devotions, since he had himself invested at the meeting with the scapulars in use among the devout. So much Kuntz was able to gather from his conversations with Father Douglas⁸⁸. From the same source he learned that what finally made Father Douglas decide to come to the Redemptorists was his reading in the newspapers of attacks made on them and the Jesuits by orators in the so-called Parliament of Frankfurt. The object of opposition from anticlericals, he decided, must surely be pleasing to God⁸⁹.

He was professed 8th December 1849 and went on to Wittem in Holland, the house of studies for the clerics of the Belgian province, to which the English foundations then belonged. His stay there was very short, scarcely sufficient to supply the lack in his theological formation. Father Livius quotes an unfinished letter to his mother telling her it was likely that he would soon be returning to England⁹⁰. The letter was dated 28th February 1850, and probably the reason for its being left unfinished and unposted must have been that it was just at that time that Father Douglas did come back to England. Certainly, by the middle of March he was already at work in Clapham, where the Redemptorists had founded a house two years earlier.

Mrs. Douglas died in Edinburgh 2nd November 1850⁹¹. She had been ailing for some time, but the end came so unexpectedly that her son was not able to reach her in time. Savini wrote from Forlì as soon as he heard the news: he had known from the time of his friend's conversion how strong had been the ties between mother and son⁹².

One consequence of his mother's death was that Father Douglas now inherited the large estate left by his father, and that was really what gave occasion to his extraordinary later career. When circumstances, and in particular the insistence of the Holy See, had Redemptorist superiors urgently looking for a residence in Rome, they were delighted by the startling announcement that a young

⁸⁸ *ibid.*

⁸⁹ Kuntz, *op. cit.*, 34.

⁹⁰ Livius *Notebook*, 36.

⁹¹ Livius *Notebook*, 2.

⁹² AGR, XLVI, 1.

English Father wished to buy a house for the Congregation. His immensely gratified higher superior at length summoned Father Douglas to Rome where, truth to tell, his heart had probably been all the time since that memorable visit with Scott Murray at the end of 1841⁹³.

It seems a good point on which to leave this introduction to Edward Douglas, his coming back to Rome, where he was to spend the rest of his long life. His journey from his comfortable, aristocratic High Church Anglicanism to the Catholic Church was not quite by the same route travelled by the better known of the Oxford converts. In spite of friends like Scott Murray and Lady Herbert who so warmly shared his religious interests, his decision in the end was a solitary one, made in his own conscience, without the excitement growing from year to year in the circle gathered about Newman. Meyrick remembered that « Douglas was never known as a party man when he was at Oxford »⁹⁴. The most he could recollect was that Douglas and Scott Murray « may have been held High Church ». The two friends with a small circle of others like themselves kept rather to « the quiet Canterbury Quadrangle, Christ Church »⁹⁵, not venturing among the distinguished personages who frequented Littlemore.

That is not to say, of course, that Edward Douglas remained unaffected by the Tractarians. But in the end, after the hours spent in the summer of 1841 with Lady Herbert and their « multitude of pamphlets, newspaper articles and private letters », it all came back to himself and his conscience. There was a clarity, or perhaps it was a simplicity, in his vision that his closest friends lacked: they were much slower in coming to their decision. Scott Murray asked his friend to introduce him to Savini, his « good Father », in 1844, and then only after he had been strengthened in his resolution by the Anglican Vicar of St. Mary Magdalen in Oxford, Rev. R.A. Coffin⁹⁶. And in the case of Lady Herbert it was not to be until twenty years later that she followed her good friend's example.

⁹³ Kuntz, *op. cit.*, 75. From the time of Father Douglas's becoming a Redemptorist Father Kuntz was able to call on documentary evidence and not depend any further on patchy reminiscences gathered in conversations.

⁹⁴ *Livius Notebook*, 19.

⁹⁵ *Livius Notebook*, 15.

⁹⁶ The anonymous author of a manuscript life of Coffin quotes him as explaining

Of the more familiar figures among the Oxford converts the one whom Father Douglas seems most to have resembled was Faber⁹⁷. Faber was a slightly older man and already a notable figure when he became a Catholic, and he had been in some contact with Newman, collaborating in the *Library of the Fathers*, but in his progress towards Rome he followed his own path. A remarkable point of resemblance between himself and Douglas was the strong attraction each experienced to Italian piety. One would have to suspect that had he known him well enough, Cardinal Wiseman would certainly have included Douglas along with Faber in what he used to call the « Sweet Flowers of Devotion School » of spiritual doctrine. In Faber's case it preceded his conversion by some considerable time, while with Douglas it had already become quite marked in the years following his reception. It could well be that Edward Douglas had been somewhat conditioned by his mother's influence to favour instinctively that warm, expressive piety that Faber loved so much and Newman held in such distrust. One is surely compelled to speculate about a possible tradition even in the Church of England not far removed from the practices Douglas and Faber discovered after their conversion. Could it be that good Bishop Ken, stern opponent though he was of the papist James II, was closer than he realised in his religious thought and practice to the abhorred Church of Rome?

Meyrick's wandering memory rather thought that Edward Douglas was so disappointed at his being « plucked » that he never returned even to visit Oxford. Whether or not it was through pique or hurt as Meyrick suggested, it is true that in the very considerable mass of his correspondence there is practically nothing to suggest his association with the university. His conversion, which followed so soon after his leaving Oxford, marked a complete break with past influences. Apart from his family and his friends, whom his warm nature would not let him abandon, he retained very little, if anything at all, of his earlier years. His meeting with his Carmelite friend, Angelo Savini, set him on a new path, and it was to derive much more from an Italian than from an English tradition.

one of the reasons that contributed to his own becoming a Catholic. « When Mr. Scott Murray came to consult me about the doubts that filled his mind, I told him he could not rest in his state of doubt, that he ought to hold to his conviction and go ahead. He took my advice and left me to become a Catholic ». *The Life of Right Rev. R.A. Coffin C.S.S.R.* First Part, 11. The manuscript is in the archives of the London province of the Redemptorists, Clapham. On the conversion of Father Coffin cf. *Spic. Hist.* 27 (1979) 355-374.

⁹⁷ Cf. R. Chapman, *Father Faber*, London, 1961.

Some comment should surely be made on the surprising ease with which the new convert was admitted to ordination. The case of Edward Douglas was by no means an isolated one. Once he had become a Catholic, he was drawn almost instinctively to the priesthood, but he had to wait some five or six years before his mother was reconciled to his change of religion. Then in 1848 he was ordained after a preparation that could hardly have been more than token. One wonders how much theology he had learned. In Oxford he was a student of the classics, not of Divinity. The few months which seem to be the most he could have spent with Savini at Forlì could scarcely have supplied for what must have been an almost total lack of theological formation. Church authorities were obviously inclined to credit the Oxford converts with rather more theology than was justified. It has already been mentioned that this same neglect of preparation had greatly troubled Robert Aston Coffin, ordained shortly before Douglas; and he was, after all, a Divinity student and an ordained priest in the Church of England.

Very soon after his ordination Father Douglas came to the Redemptorists. Professed 8th December 1849, he was at work among the people of Clapham by March of the following year, so that the couple of months he spent in Wittem could not have offered him much opportunity for further study. And very soon he was advanced to positions of authority. His papers show that he had gained the confidence of his own superiors and even of the Holy See. And moreover, one has to conclude that he must have justified the confidence everybody showed in him, because he remained in office almost continually until his death.

What sort of a man was Father Douglas whom those who made his acquaintance describe as a simple, reticent man, but who was able to attract the literally scores who kept up a correspondence with him and was able also to exercise such an influence on Church affairs?

Miss Helen Douglas told Father Livius of her meeting with her cousin after a separation of forty years or so. She « found him the same affectionate creature of old times »⁹⁸. That is the way most of those who wrote to him seemed to think, all of them, one gathers, agreeing with his cousin when she wrote: « Father Edward's goodness and gentleness live in my memory »⁹⁹. The very many letters

⁹⁸ *Livius Notebook*, 41.

⁹⁹ *ibid.*

from the surprisingly large circle of friends reveal a person with a most unusual gift of attracting affection, showing to all the gentleness and kindness his cousin remembered so well.

For his own numerous relatives he retained to the end of his life an affection and an interest in everything that concerned them. His cousin said that « he loved to hear all family news and appeared to feel the severance of old ties very much »¹⁰⁰. In a long letter to Father Douglas herself she speaks of many of their relatives and finishes with the request that he send her more of his questions about the family¹⁰¹. Even though more than once those who spoke of him mention the grief felt in the family over his leaving the Church of England, it does not appear to have occurred to anyone to avoid him. The widow of Mr. Stair Douglas told Father Livius that of Edward she had heard « nothing but expressions of esteem and affection from every member of the family »¹⁰². That is what one would gather from a letter written by Maria Edith, wife of Rev. Stair Douglas, Helen's brother. After describing the serious illness of her husband, who was a Canon of Chichester, she goes on to express the wish that she could « talk it all over with you, dear Edward »¹⁰³.

It was very much the same with his many friends. Very likely he was all his life just as Meyrick described him, a quiet man, avoiding controversy and party spirit. And yet for one so retiring his correspondence reveals a remarkable talent for friendship. Letters of his oldest and most intimate friends, Lady Herbert, Scott Murray and James Rowe, reveal a warmth of affection that remained unaltered from youth to extreme old age. Perhaps that capacity to win the affection of others contributed largely to the great number of converts he attracted. Father Walter in his history of the Villa Caserta, which became the house and church of Sant'Alfonso, says that Father Douglas prepared fifty converts for their being received into the Church¹⁰⁴. In his account of Scott Murray's conversion Browne says that what made him look seriously at Catholic teaching was the example for his friend's sincerity in his new religion¹⁰⁵. Lady Herbert told

¹⁰⁰ *ibid.*

¹⁰¹ Helen Douglas to Edward Douglas, 23 XII 1889 in AGR, XLVI, 16.

¹⁰² *Livius Notebook*, 42.

¹⁰³ M.E. Douglas to Edward Douglas, undated, in AGR, XLVI, 16.

¹⁰⁴ A. Walter, *op. cit.*, 77.

¹⁰⁵ E.G.K. Browne, *op. cit.*, 98.

Father Livius of the « endless number of Protestants received into the Church by Father Douglas »¹⁰⁶.

His success with converts is certainly attested by the records, and for that one must look not only to the friendliness everybody found in him, but to the strength of his convictions. His coming to the Catholic Church contrasted with that of his friends who joined him later, and they, men like Scott Murray and Meyrick, were more typical of the Oxford converts. But for Father Douglas it was a simple issue, as he told Lady Herbert. He would have considered it « an act of positive dishonesty » to have remained in the Church of England¹⁰⁷.

The strength of his religious convictions can best be measured by the sorrow he experienced at his having to grieve his mother. It was a sadness that remained with him all his life. Another convert from Anglicanism and a fellow Redemptorist, Father Thomas Edward Bridgett, spoke once of the « heavy cost of changing one's religion »¹⁰⁸. The conviction Father Douglas brought to his faith was a firmness touched by a profound understanding of how much sorrow could be entailed in leaving the Church of one's fathers. It was that conviction that Scott Murray admired and which Father Douglas was able to share with those who followed him to Rome.

¹⁰⁶ *Livius Notebook*, 55.

¹⁰⁷ *Livius Notebook*, 51.

¹⁰⁸ T.E. Bridgett C.S.S.R., *A Sermon Preached at St. Mary's, Clapham at the Requiem Mass Celebrated on April 16th 1885, the Octave Day of the Funeral of Right Rev. Robert Aston Coffin C.S.S.R., Bishop of Southwark*, Clapham, 1885, p. 8.

DOCUMENTS ¹⁰⁹

1. - Thomas Meyrick's first letter to Father Livius

Sacred Heart Presbytery ¹¹⁰, Bournemouth,
March 27th 1898.

Dear Father Livius,

Douglas was my pupil. He never took his degree. He was plucked. In the winter of 1841-2 he was in Rome with Scott Murray. They lived in the Trastevere. It was Lent time, the day I do not remember ¹¹¹. He left his umbrella for safety in an open confessional of some priest while looking at the church, the name I forget. He inquired where the Father, I think possibly a Redemptorist, lived, went for his umbrella, conversed with him, went to confession, was received, I think, the next day.

He sent for me, maybe a week after ¹¹². He had some passing misgivings. I said to him: « At least the Catholic religion, as Pusey allows, is a safe one to live and die in. We do not know where we are. I wish I saw my way as you do ».

I was received some two years and a half or more after, in the spring of '45. Of course I do not know the time of his ordination.

When I was in Rome in the autumn of '45 he was living with Hamilton in the Palazzo Ruspoli. I do not suppose he was ordained. Being a novice, I believe, he could not have been ¹¹³. Hamilton always spoke of him as St. Edward. I am not sure he did not call on us once.

Yours sincerely,
Thomas Meyrick

¹⁰⁹ The letters and extracts are as copied by Father Livius into his notebook. The originals are no longer extant.

¹¹⁰ Father Livius adds a note saying that he first met Meyrick in the Jesuit presbytery, adding that Meyrick had been at one time a Jesuit. He notes further that this first letter is very confused and contains many errors.

¹¹¹ A note of Father Livius warns that the following story is quite inaccurate. There is a surprising number of errors in a few lines.

¹¹² The incident Meyrick goes on to relate could not have occurred after Douglas's conversion. For one thing he had already left Oxford more than a year before. This is a particularly bad instance of Meyrick's muddled memory, mixing up dates and places.

¹¹³ It is very probable that Douglas was staying with the hospitable abbat Hamilton with whom he went to Palestine in 1845. Needless to say, he could hardly have been a novice at the same time.

2. - Meyrick's second letter to Father Livius

Beaumont, Derby Road, Bournemouth,
April 22nd 1898.

Dear Rev. Father,

It is a pleasure to me to write about Father Douglas. I knew him first as his private coach or tutor. He was then in the quiet Canterbury Quadrangle, Christ Church, very unobtrusive, quiet and I suppose with few companions. Scott Murray was his fellow collegian and friend, and then there was a quiet set of similar characters in Christ Church.

Douglas came to me, then a tutor in Aristotle and Logic for Class men: I did not usually take pupils as Pass men, but Douglas, I think, intended to try for an Honorary Fourth, considered a very good Degree¹¹⁴. He read with me at most two terms, and Sophocles was the Greek book which he took into the Schools. I taught him also some Logic. I had no idea of his being plucked. He was an average Eton scholar, but made blunders which I saw were hardly to be corrected in him, and I did not think he would get a Fourth, but supposed he would take his degree. I was greatly pained as well as surprised at his failure, and I think the Examiners must have been unfit men at the time. It was a great blow to Douglas. I think he returned no more even to visit Oxford.

I think it was a Capuchin who received him at Rome¹¹⁵. He had a great devotion to St. Francis of Assisi and wished to be a Franciscan. I really believe he tried it and that he was as I supposed in his novitiate in some Order of St. Francis at the time I was with Hamilton.

I once when he first became a Catholic was invited by him to stay in London at his mother's house (65 Eaton Place), and we went with Father S...¹¹⁶ of Cadogen Place on a pilgrimage to Canterbury, where we kissed the stone on which the blood of St. Thomas fell. I was not at that time a Catholic, but I think in the following spring I was, 1845.

Douglas was never known as a party man at Oxford. He and Scott Murray may have been held High Church, but I think they were only exemplary young gentlemen. Of course they would be influenced by the questions of the day on religion.

Of course Lady Herbert may have corresponded with Douglas, and I think I heard that he and Scott Murray were disposed to Catholic observances, and I think I more readily took him as a pupil because of this, but I think it was more on account of the irreproachable life which he and Scott Murray led which drew me to him. I was not as a poor

¹¹⁴ Father Livius adds an explanation from his own experience of Oxford. A student might gain his B.A. degree either as a simple pass or with honours, of which there were four classes.

¹¹⁵ No doubt Douglas's Franciscan leanings occasioned the error.

¹¹⁶ The name is illegible.

scholar of Corpus Christi likely to know anything of Lady Herbert or Douglas's aristocratic connections.

If anything else occurs to me I will write again. It was on his account I was hauled up by Old Pusey as a delinquent. He asked me whether I had said to Douglas that he (Pusey) had said the Catholic religion was a safe one to live and die in.

I replied: « Have you not said so »?

To this he did not answer, but said: « You are not in Orders »?

I said: « No », to which he said: « Then perhaps what you said was right ». This is all that passed between us. I thought this poor reasoning for a man of such repute.

Yours most truly,
Thomas Meyrick

3. - Meyrick's third letter to Father Livius

Beaumont, Derby Road, Bournemouth,
May 3rd 1898.

Dear Father Livius,

I was in Rome at the time Father Douglas was received, living in a Palazzo in the Piazza SS. Apostoli with my pupil's family (Henry Danby Seymour)¹¹⁷. The reception caused a sensation. A parson was sent out from England to reconvert him, and made us laugh, that he despaired of arguing with Douglas, as he would not touch a bit of meat, it being a Friday in Lent.

I think my interview with Douglas was in a corridor of a Franciscan convent¹¹⁸.

Abbé Hamilton¹¹⁹ was, I think, of a branch of the Duke of Hamilton¹²⁰ and was ordained Deacon, I think, by Cardinal Fransoni. He was most esteemed by Pope Gregory to whom I was presented by him. He was afterwards priest and died in Paris attended by abbé Rogerson. He was a convert of some standing. He was a friend of Father Grassi, the Assistant of the General of the Jesuits, to whom he and I went to con-

¹¹⁷ Henry Danby Seymour esq. of Knoyle in Wiltshire was soon to become a Member of Parliament. Cf. *Burke's Landed Gentry*, II, 1357.

¹¹⁸ This meeting, previously mentioned in somewhat more muddled fashion, could well have occurred in 1848 after Douglas's ordination.

¹¹⁹ Father Livius notes that he had asked for information about Hamilton.

¹²⁰ It seems unlikely, since it was not possible to find in *Burke's Peerage* a James Hamilton of the family of the Dukes who could have been the elusive *abbate*.

fession¹²¹. He was a man of property and lived in the Palazzo Ruspoli, Piazza SS. Apostoli. He was a noble and generous man.

When I say that Douglas was an average Eton scholar, I do not mean any high grade of classical attainments, but sufficient to pass easily. I did not think he required any assistance to take his degree. He was certainly unfairly treated.

Yours sincerely,
Thomas Meyrick

4. - Part of a letter of Mrs. Carrington Smythe to Father Livius

Stewart's Hotel,
25th April 1898.

The abbate Hamilton was, I believe, the son of the great physician in Edinburgh¹²². He was very well off and used to entertain many of the converts in Rome in 1845. I never heard what became of him, though I am afraid his later life was not satisfactory¹²³.

My husband saw a good deal of Father Douglas in Rome and went with him, Father Furniss and the abbate Hamilton to the Holy Land, but after visiting Jerusalem and the Holy Places Carrington left his companions in order to return and join me at Sorrento.

¹²¹ Giovanni Antonio Grassi S.J. (1775-1848) had seen an extraordinarily varied career. Born in Bergamo, he made his novitiate under the Ven. Giuseppe Pignatelli in the house of Calorno in the Duchy of Parma founded from White Russia during the time of the Society's suppression. He found his way through Russia, Portugal, and England to America, where he became President of Georgetown College. Returning to Europe after 1814, he worked mainly in Turin. He was appointed Rector of the Urban College of Propaganda Fide in 1840 and assistant to his Superior General in 1842.

¹²² The *Dictionary of National Biography* gives more than one eminent physician who could well meet Mrs. Carrington Smythe's identification.

¹²³ Perhaps Meyrick's mention of Hamilton's having been assisted at his death by the mysterious abbé Rogerson is an implicit reference to his «unsatisfactory» later life.

5. - Letter of Mrs. Scott Murray to Father Livius

Bryanstone, Bournemouth,
30th June 1898.

Dear Rev. Father,

Mr. Scott Murray first met Mr. Douglas at Dr. Everard's at Brighton about 1826. Mr. Scott Murray went to Eton in 1832, where he again met his friend, Mr. Douglas. In 1835 Mr. Scott Murray went to Christ Church, Oxford. Mr. Douglas was also there, and their great friendship continued.

In 1841 Mr. Scott Murray and Mr. Douglas travelled together to Rome, where Mr. Scott Murray remained for the feast of St. Peter's Chair, January 18th 1842. As he was Member of Parliament for Bucks he had to return for the opening of Parliament and leave Rome that same night. Mr. Douglas's conversion took place six or seven weeks later and is mainly attributable to the acquaintance made by him with a Carmelite Father, *Padre Angelo Savini*, of the Carmelite convent, S. Maria in Traspontina. This good Father at that time heard confessions in St. Peter's¹²⁴, in the confessional opposite the tomb of Pope Benedict XIV, and in that confessional Mr. Scott Murray had placed his umbrella, having been refused admission to the Papal function on account of it. As Mr. Scott Murray had to leave Rome that night, he requested Mr. Douglas to obtain the umbrella which had been locked up in the confessional during the function. This led to Father Douglas's acquaintance with Padre Savini.

I do not remember who received Father Douglas. I know he joined the Franciscans, somewhere in the north of Italy *I think*, but did not remain long.

He was devotedly attached to his mother. I do not remember when she died. I fancy Lord A. Douglas, his cousin, could tell you many things about him¹²⁵. After this and he had joined the Redemptorists we saw him in Italy at various places.

I wish I could tell you more, but my husband's notes do not mention him except in the above extracts.

Mrs. Carrington Smythe tells me that she has told you all she knows of her husband's journey to Jerusalem with Father Douglas.

¹²⁴ This is not correct, as is clear from Padre Diofebi's letter to Father Mauron, 9 X 1898 in AGR, XLVI, 1.

¹²⁵ Lord Archibald Douglas was born 17 VI 1850, the third son of Lord Archibald, seventh Marquess of Queensberry. He became a Catholic and was ordained priest for a Scottish diocese. In 1906 at the age of fifty-six he entered the Redemptorist novitiate but left in the following year before taking his vows. He was admitted in October 1907 among the Oblates C.S.S.R. One of his sisters, Lady Gertrude Douglas also became a Catholic and entered a convent. Cf. AGR, XL; XLVI, 16; *Burke's Peerage*, 923.

That Padre Savini was the priest who a year later introduced my husband to the Rector of Propaganda¹²⁶, who had him instructed in the Catholic Faith, and at Propaganda he was received by Cardinal Frasoni in February 1844.

I remain yours very truly,
A.C. Scott Murray

6. - Letter of Miss Helen Douglas to Father Livius

52 The Drive, Brighton,
April 23rd 1898.

Dear Father Livius,

You will find Father Edward's residence at Brasted mentioned in Cardinal Manning's Life, though the circumstances mentioned are not correct.

Father Edward's goodness and gentleness live in my memory; but I was then too young to remember details¹²⁷. I saw little of him after 1843, till we visited him in Rome in 1880 and found him the same affectionate creature of old times.

Lady Herbert knew Father Edward in his Oxford days and may probably remember more of those years than I do, as I was not much with my aunt at that time and there was little intercourse with him after his change of religion.

Since 1880 I have written to him generally about twice a year. He loved to hear all family news and seemed to feel the severance of old ties very much.

I hope I may have a copy of the notice you are going to write. I fear I can give no more help towards it; and no other relation who could survives.

Believe me faithfully yours,
H.F. Douglas

7. - Lady Herbert of Lea's Recollections of Father Douglas

My first recollections of Father Douglas were when he was a young Oxford student. His family and mine were on intimate terms and his

¹²⁶ At the time the Rector would have been Hamilton's friend, Grassi.

¹²⁷ Kuntz, *op. cit.*, 11, recalls an anecdote Father Douglas once related of himself. As a very small boy he was once in the garden of his home with a little girl cousin, when they saw a tortoise. After examining the creature closely they decided that a being so ugly could be no other than that dreadful thing they had read about in the Bible and which nobody would explain to them, a fornication.

mother, Mrs. Edward Douglas, had a place in Hampshire called Bursleden where we used to stay. She was then a widow with an only son, Edward, and two nieces named Lateward, one of whom married Mr. Parish, the brother of Sir Woodbine Parish¹²⁸.

It was in 1841 that I went there for a long visit. Edward was at home and keenly interested in the Oxford Movement. Newman's *Tract 90* had appeared that spring and roused the whole Puseyite world. Multitudes of pamphlets, newspaper articles and private letters were circulated amongst us, all tending to the one momentous question of whether we could remain in the Anglican Church or not. It was a matter of absorbing interest to us both, and I can see now the little summer house at Bursleden where Edward and I used to study and discuss one difficulty after another, without being able for a long time to come to any conclusion.

Corporate union was advocated by many of our friends, who deprecated the idea of individual conversions to Rome as likely to deter the masses from joining us. But Edward always stuck to the point of following his conscience, should he at last become convinced that the Church of England was only an offspring of the Reformation. So that summer of 1841 passed away and with it the long vacation, and Edward went back to Oxford¹²⁹.

I cannot remember how soon afterwards he wrote to me that he found his position intolerable and untenable and that he felt he had no alternative but to join the Church of Rome. He went to Rome towards the end of the year with Scott Murray. He was received at Rome in Lent 1842, Cardinal Newman by Father Dominic, the Passionist, on October 8th 1845. He wrote again saying that his only sorrow was in the knowledge of the distress it would cause to his mother to whom he was tenderly attached; but that he had no doubt whatever of the duty which lay before him and that to remain in the Church of England would be for him an act of positive dishonesty.

I had not gone as far as he had done and his announcement was a matter of great distress to me and no little perplexity. I was most anxious to see him again and discuss the matter. But my father, who was an old fashioned Church of England Protestant, had become alarmed at our intimacy and at his Catholic views and absolutely forbade any renewal of intercourse between us. We did not meet again until 1862, when he was already in his monastery.

Another event connected with him occurred in 1865 when I was a Catholic. His cousin, Mrs. Parish, was in Rome with her husband and fell dangerously ill. She had always put off her reception into the Church

¹²⁸ Sir Woodbine Parish (1796-1882) performed distinguished service as a diplomat in South America and in the Kingdom of Naples. Cf. *Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford, 1917, XV, 213-214. His brother, who married Edward Douglas's cousin, was Henry Headly Parish.

¹²⁹ This is probably mistaken, Meyrick's memory this once being preferable, when he says Douglas did not return after his unsuccessful final examination, which was in 1840.

on account of family difficulties, but when she felt the change of her state, she was miserable and sent for me and for Father Douglas. He came as soon as he possibly could, but she was almost unconscious when he arrived and had been crying out repeatedly: « Too late! Too late! ». Father Douglas gave her conditional baptism and did everything he could, but it was a heartbreaking death bed. It brought about, however, the conversion of her son, a young man of thirty or thirty-one, who was received a couple of months later and became a most edifying Catholic, which was a great consolation to Father Douglas. Unfortunately, he died two or three years later¹³⁰.

There was an endless number of Protestants received into the Catholic Church by Father Douglas, but those I remember principally were in the year that Père Hyacinthe (now the unhappy Loyson) preached the Lent sermons at S. Luigi dei Francesi. I had « *des conférences succursales* » at my house where the men and women whose minds had been unsettled by his arguments came to vent their doubts and difficulties, making me « *l'avocat du diable* », as Father Douglas used laughingly to call me, because I spoke French easily and could explain to Père Hyacinthe what their difficulties were. The French Father generally succeeded in convincing and satisfying them, and then I used to take them to Father Douglas for further instruction and finally to Cardinal Reisach for confirmation¹³¹. But there must be a list at the monastery of the names of those who were received by him. Amongst those he received at that time were Lord Beaumont¹³², Lady Agnes Murray (daughter of the Duke of Montrose)¹³³ and many others.

Mary Elizabeth Herbert,
Rome, 1898¹³⁴

¹³⁰ According to a list compiled by Father Kuntz, from the *Libro delle abiure* Henry Parish, aged thirty-four, was absolved from heresy in England by Father Robert Coffin C.S.S.R. on 8th May 1868. He died on 8th April 1869. He is included among those whose conversions are accredited to Father Douglas. The document attesting his absolution does not mention the name of the one delegated by the Holy Office to receive his abjuration. AGR, XLVI, 7.

¹³¹ Two names only are included in Father Kuntz's list for 1869. Baroness von Schoenberg-Roth Schoenberg was absolved from heresy on 15th May 1869 by Cardinal Reisach after instruction by Father Douglas. Mrs. Joan Cowan Cowan of Cumberland was absolved by Father Douglas on 27th April 1869 and confirmed by Cardinal Reisach on 30th of the same month. Cf. AGR, XLVI, 7. Either Lady Herbert has exaggerated or, as seems more likely, the list is incomplete. Cardinal Karl August von Reisach had been Cardinal Bishop of Sabina since 1855.

¹³² Henry Stapleton Baron Beaumont is included in Father Kuntz's list as having been absolved from heresy at the age of nineteen on 23rd April 1868 by his uncle, Rev. Paul Stapleton O.P. with the further note that he died in 1891.

¹³³ Lady Agnes, daughter of the Duke of Montrose, married Lieutenant Colonel John Murray of the Grenadier Guards and squire of Polnaise, co. Stirling. Cf. *Burke's Peerage*, 786. Her name is not included in Father Kuntz's list.

¹³⁴ It would seem that Lady Herbert's recollections were compiled almost immediately after Father Douglas's death. She indicates as much in a letter written from Rome on 1st April to Dom Oswald Hunter Blair of Fort Augustus. This was a little

8. - Letter of Lady Herbert to Father Livius

Switzerland,
10th July 1898.

Dear Father Livius,

As soon as I return to Town in August I shall be only too glad to tell you anything I can of dear Edward Douglas's youth before he became a Catholic, when we were so intimate. He never forgot those days, and neither did I, though in later years he refrained from any personal allusions. I have the little crucifix which he left to me, and which he held in his dying hand to the last.

Yours sincerely,
M.E. Herbert

more than a week after Father Douglas had died. She expected that her recollections would be used by Father Bridgett. Hunter Blair was himself one of Father Douglas's converts and a familiar correspondent. He became renowned as a writer on various Catholic topics after he became a Benedictine. A copy of Lady Herbert's letter was very kindly shown to me by Rev. F. Douglas of Brisbane.