Chapter 1

Edward Bouverie Pusey

1.1 Early Life

Edward Bouverie Pusey (1800–1882) was born on the 22 August, 1800 at Pusey House Berkshire¹ about 15 kilometres west of Oxford. He was the second son of the Honourable Philip Bouverie, a landowner, who was in turn the youngest son of Jacob, first Viscount Folkestone and who exchanged the name Bouverie for that of Pusey, since this was required for him to inherit the extensive Pusey estate² near the small village of Pusey.³ Edward Pusey’s aristocratic family connections were enhanced by his mother, formerly Lady Lucy Sherard until her first husband, Sir Thomas Cave, a Baronet, died. Pusey’s mother was the daughter of Robert, the fourth Earl of Harborough.⁴ These aristocratic connections, together with his later status as a professor in the University of Oxford, were seen as important as Pusey assumed leadership of the Oxford Movement after Newman’s conversion to Roman Catholicism in 1845.

Pusey’s parents were very pious and Pusey’s commitment to the catholic expression of Anglicanism began, he believed, with his mother at an early age. He admitted that he received his basic knowledge of the Christian faith and its Anglican formularies, in the form of the Catechism in the Book of Common Prayer on a footstool at his mother’s knee, reflecting that ‘all I know about religious truth I learnt, at least in principle, from my dear mother’ and that this knowledge concerned ‘the Catholic Church’.⁵ Edward Short however disparages Pusey’s reflection and observes that ‘if Pusey had told his Hanoverian mother that the religion he learned at her knee had anything to do with the Catholic Church she would not have known what he was talking about’.⁶ Similarly David Forrester believes that it is highly unlikely that what Pusey believed about the Eucharist in later years, that is, the real objective presence of the Lord in the Eucharist, was what he learnt at his mother’s knee.⁷ In Trench’s

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⁷ Forrester, *Young Doctor Pusey*, p. 197.
book however, *The Story of Dr Pusey’s Life*, this reminiscence of Pusey in later life is also recounted but becomes much more specific, saying: ‘I learnt what I believe of the doctrine of the Holy Eucharist at my mother’s knee.’ While acknowledging that Pusey recounted this memory, it also seems that the influence of his mother was of vital importance to Pusey in later life even if she did not teach him the fuller doctrine as Pusey came to understand it. It may also be that Pusey saw the teaching he received from his mother as prophetic of the Catholic truth he came to know in later life. Pusey came to believe in his later work that sense and feeling in a primitive form was prophetic of later and fuller knowledge.

Whatever is the case it is clear nonetheless that from an early age Pusey was educated at home in the teachings of the Prayer Book by his mother and this was a matter of some importance for Pusey. Late in life in 1879 he admitted that ‘the doctrine of the Real Presence I learnt from my mother’s explanation of the Catechism, which she learned to understand from older clergy.’ Reginald Halse suggests that one of these older clergy could have been the Reverend Lord Harborough (1719–1799), a relative of Pusey’s mother, and if so ‘this would link Dr Pusey’s theology with the “High Church” theology of the reign of Queen Anne’. This is conjecture but the one time Anglo-Catholic Principal of Pusey House, Oxford, Darwell Stone, commented that Pusey may well have read back later belief on the Eucharist to these earlier times.

It may be however, that Pusey’s understanding of what he knew about the Catholic Church and the Eucharist from his mother was a little more subtle than Short, Forrester and Stone suggest. Pusey’s understanding of prophecy, developed in his 1836 *Lectures on Types and Prophecies of the Old Testament*, was a typological understanding based on the work of the early church Fathers and argued that a type or shadow of a future fuller notion and belief involved sensations and feelings that could convey a sense of reality. This may have been what Pusey was talking about in later life. For Pusey there was a belief that the type or shadow, known even at a mother’s knee, could be prophetic of...