as in the medieval invective composed by partisans of St Peter's denigrating those who believed that the old synagogue could be head of the church. Papal policy, including that of Clement himself, oscillated and there were those who wanted the Vatican area to be a kind of ideal city centred on the person and ceremonial of the pope. Two papal bulls concerning its primacy might be cut in marble and installed in the Lateran, but both in life and in death the popes were increasingly located in St Peter's. The future belonged to it.

ROBERT OMBRES OP

CATHERINE MCAULEY AND THE TRADITION OF MERCY by Mary C. Sullivan, RSM, *Four Courts Press*, **Blackrock, Co. Dublin, 1995, 420pp, £25. (A North American edition is published by the** *University of Notre Dame Press*).

This is an excellent book, elegantly produced. Mary C. Sullivan (a Sister of Mercy in Rochester, New York, and Professor of Language and Literature at Rochester Institute of Technology) has gathered together all the primary manuscripts on which any life of Catherine McAuley, founder of the Sisters of Mercy, must be based. She has prefaced the documents with a clear chronology of Catherine McAuley's life-story and provided a helpful General Introduction to the manuscripts themselves as well as a brief biographical note on each of the women who wrote down her own lively recollections of the founder herself. Many "Lives" of Catherine McAuley have been written since the first two (Harnett, 1864 and Carroll 1866) which appeared just over twenty years after Catherine's death, but this new collection of original documents is far more interesting than any of them. In Mary C. Sullivan's collection, we hear each individual voice speaking direct. No one has picked over the documents to select a favourite paragraph or to emphasize a chosen theme. We are free to come to our own conclusions about Catherine McAuley and to listen in turn to a series of remarkable women speaking about her, quoting her words, recalling their own vivid memories or passing on oral traditions. These early manuscripts were often copied by hand, lent to others, and copied again. Some are now fragile and hard to decipher. Tracing their history, their overlappings, their contradictions, their different points of view, is not unlike the fascinating task of unravelling the three synoptic Gospels.

Catherine McAuley, as one of her early friends insists, "was never a Protestant" but her mind was undoubtedly formed in a Protestant world. Her father had been a devout Catholic and wished to bring his children up in that faith but he died when Catherine was only five years old. From then onwards, she and her younger brother and sister lived with their mother (whose Catholicism wavered) and later with their mother's close relations, many of whom belonged to the Church of Ireland. When Catherine was twenty, her mother died. After five more years with her

mother's relations, she moved to Coolock House, the home in northeast Dublin of a wealthy childless couple, William and Catherine Callaghan. She came first as a companion to Mrs Callaghan but then as a much-loved adopted daughter to them both. William Callaghan belonged to the Church of Ireland and Mrs Callaghan to the Society of Friends, or Quakers. Catherine McAuley lived contentedly with the Callaghans and cared for them until their deaths, Mrs Callaghan's after sixteen years and William Callaghan's after twenty. So although a faithful Catholic herself, going regularly to mass and seeking the advice of priests when she needed it, she had lived almost entirely within the world of the Protestant ascendancy until the age of forty four. She knew almost no Catholics apart from the priests who advised her and the servants at Coolock. On his death in 1822, William Callaghan left Catherine McAuley almost all his wealth — Coolock House itself, its furniture and plate, and an inheritance of £25,000. He was confident that she would do good with it.

Catherine's first intention, when she embarked on building the House of Mercy in Baggot Street, Dublin, was certainly not to found a convent of nuns. She had the idea, possibly influenced by her long acquaintance with the Society of Friends who devoted themselves to helping the poor of Dublin in practical ways, of establishing a house where a group of ladies would live together, teaching poor girls and offering a place of refuge for women in moral danger. Wearing plain dresses and black caps, the ladies would always be free to return to their homes to visit their families and to care for elderly parents or relatives. Catherine herself was nursing her dying sister at the time and was responsible for bringing up several orphaned nieces, nephews, cousins and godchildren, seven of whom she adopted as her own. Even when the Baggot Street building was finished in 1827, she still lived mainly in Coolock House "in what is usually called good style, that is she kept a carriage, dressed well, went into society and sometimes gave parties at her own house" (Derry Large Manuscript), though the rest of her time was spent in teaching poor children. In the middle of 1828, at the age of fifty, she finally moved into the Baggot Street house, taking some of her adopted children with her. Two years later there were twelve members of the community, all of them about thirty years younger than Catherine herself. By this time she had entirely given up her original idea of a group of secular ladies. She wanted to found a religious congregation of "walking nuns" to educate poor girls, to protect young women servants, and to visit the sick in hospital and at home.

Catherine and two of her first associates served a year's novitiate with the Presentation Sisters and came back to Baggot Street in December, 1831, to found the Sisters of Mercy. As we read these early documents of the community, we begin to see how some of her early Quaker notions always persisted in a modified form at the heart of her Catholicism. She never liked formalities, titles or ceremonies in personal relationships, though she valued courtesy. She seems to have loved the English Bible and she quoted from it often. She particularly valued

silence and urged her sisters to listen always for "the Divine voice which silently and constantly whispers to the heart of a religious, telling her how she may please the Heavenly Spouse of her soul" (The Limerick Manuscript). She was astute and business-like in the handling of money.

Catherine McAuley lived only another ten years until her death in 1841 at the age of sixty-three. In those ten years, young women flocked to join her and together they founded another eleven houses in Ireland and England. But at a cost. Not only several of the beloved children from her own family but very many of the equally beloved young Sisters died during those years, generally from TB. Yet, in spite of her personal sorrows, the overwhelming impression of Catherine McAuley that emerges from these documents is of a strong and affectionate woman, cheerful and resourceful, warm and motherly without being suffocating, tireless in her travels from one House of Mercy to the next and full of a happy, confident trust in the very young Sisters that she placed as superiors in these new communities.

Mary Ann (Anna Maria) Doyle (Sullivan gives each sister's baptismal name in brackets) writes of her own strong attraction to the House of Mercy while it was still being built and then of her first meeting with Catherine McAuley — "We were much pleased with each other". She is the one who knows most about Catherine's early life, about the noviceship in the Presentation Convent, which she shared, and about the first days of the community in Baggot Street. As the Superior of the early foundation at Tullamore, she gives a vivid insight into the steady growth of her own self-confidence and of her practical compassion for poor women in the hard fever-years. Mary Clare (Georgiana) Moore was among the first, aged only sixteen, to receive the habit. At twenty-three she became the first superior of the Cork house and, two years later, first superior of the Bermondsey house in London. A natural nurse, she served in the Crimea under Florence Nightingale and became her friend. In letters to her own sister, Mary Clare Augustine (Mary Clare) Moore, who had asked for reminiscences of Catherine McAuley, she protests that she knows little but in fact her memories are sharp and the detail remarkable. She wrote (or was the source for) a *Life of Catherine McAuley* (the Bermondsey Manuscript) with its strong narrative flow, its moving recollections, its sympathy with the founder's joyful spirit.

From Mary Vincent (Anna Maria) Harnett, a gifted teacher, comes the absorbing Limerick Manuscript, source of the fuller life of Catherine McAuley that she was to publish anonymously in 1864. She writes in a plain yet lively style as she unfolds the story in logical order, always aware of telling details about the founder's temperament and wisdom. "Be careful not to make too many laws," she reports Catherine as saying, "for if you draw the string too tight it will break". Harnett preserves one of the merry epistles in verse that Catherine McAuley was so fond of writing to her Sisters of Mercy, a pastime that was popular among Irish Quakers and from whom she may well have taken the practice.

Mary Clare Augustine (Mary Clare) Moore was an artist with a good

eye for visual detail. She gives the clearest portrait of what Catherine McAuley looked like, from her face which was "a short oval" and her eyes ("light blue and remarkably round with the brows and lashes colorless but they spoke") to her figure ("round but not the least heavy"), right down to her hands,("remarkably white but very clumsy, very large with broad square tips to the fingers and short square nails"). Clare Augustine Moore had the good sense to urge those sisters who had known Catherine McAuley in her lifetime to write down their memories before it was too late. Although she was a woman who had rather irritated the founder by her excessive slowness in finishing any piece of calligraphy or illumination she was given to do, Clare Augustine Moore herself seems to be blissfully unaware of Catherine's exasperation. She outlived the founder by almost forty years and wrote a fine account of her that is enlivened by quite original observations and incidents.

Mary Frances Xavier (Frances) Warde was Catherine McAuley's most beloved disciple. Not surprisingly, this closeness and affection sometimes caused resentment among the other Sisters. Catherine's seventy-two letters to Frances Warde (letters already collected and published by Mary Angela Bolster) are in themselves one of the best sources for understanding the founder. Frances was only thirty-one when Catherine McAuley died. By that time she had already helped to found Mercy houses in Carlow, Naas and Wexford. She sailed for North America in 1843 where she established a convent of the Mercy sisters in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and went on to share in the foundation of ten more convents in the States. She lived to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of her profession as the last living member of Catherine McAuley's "first born". In this volume we have no account of Catherine McAuley from the hand of Frances Warde but we do have the Annals of the Sisters of Mercy in Carlow, particularly those from 1837 to 1843. Although not written by Frances herself, they reflect the experience of the Carlow community when she was its superior. Mary C. Sullivan, rightly I think, sees these Annals as an indirect testimony from Frances about Catherine McAuley but it is as the recipient of Catherine's most personal and heart-felt letters that Frances Warde will always be valued.

I think perhaps Mary Vincent (Ellen) Whitty is the one whose writings appeal to me most of all. She was a young Sister of only twenty-two when she attended Catherine McAuley on her death-bed in November, 1841. Day by day, she dashed off a series of fresh, heart-broken and detailed letters about the process of Catherine's dying to the Novice Mistress of the Baggot Street House (Mary Cecilia Marmion), who was temporarily absent in Birmingham, helping to establish the new foundation there. Nothing brings us so close to Catherine as these rushed, breathless, appalled letters, punctuated by dashes, with new paragraphs being added hour by hour. She preserves for us so poignantly the minute changes as death comes nearer ("I have just had an order to make beef tea for her", "I asked her to bless the Mothers with their foundations. She went over every name — saying, oh, I remember

them all — ... may they live in Union and Charity"; "you would be astonished — she is so calm and each of us crying about her"; "she said ...'will you tell the Sisters to get a good cup when I am gone'"; "she is very cold yet may linger till tomorrow"; "you cannot think how calmly and quietly she drew her last breath".)

Mary Elizabeth (Anne) Moore joined the Mercy community in 1832 when cholera was raging through Dublin. She was drawn at once into nursing at the cholera hospital with the other Sisters. Soon she had established an easy relationship with Catherine McAuley, affectionately addressing her with the family name of "Kitty". She too was a witness of Catherine McAuley's death and writes only a few days later to Mary Ann Doyle in Tullamore, passing on the story of how Catherine had bundled up her home-made boots in brown paper and asked one of the Sisters to burn them. She also preserves Catherine's experienced and practical arrangements for her imminent death — "About four she desired the Bed to be moved to the centre of the room, that she would soon want air." After the burial, Elizabeth Moore went back to the Limerick house, taking with her Catherine's cloak, one of her coifs and a prayer book.

The final document in Mary Sullivan's collection is Catherine McAuley's own manuscript of the Rule and Constitutions of the Religious Sisters of Mercy. Based on the Rule of the Presentation Sisters, radically adapted by Catherine McAuley and revised by Archbishop Daniel Murray, the Rule was translated into Italian in Rome, not without changes by the translator, and later, after approval, translated back into English, not always accurately. Mary C. Sullivan picks her way skillfully through this minefield and gives us Catherine's original manuscript, noting what changes the founder made from the Presentation Rule and what amendments were added by Daniel Murray. This careful text will be of particular value to the Mercy Sisters themselves as they try to come closer to Catherine McAuley's spirit. It is a fitting conclusion to Mary C. Sullivan's exciting and scholarly book. I cannot help hoping that she will now go on to write a new biography of Catherine McAuley, drawing judiciously on all these manuscripts and on Catherine's own letters. I think she may well be able to throw new light on the formation of Catherine McAuley's spirituality and practicality if she studies the Quaker community in Dublin in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. She may also find help in placing Catherine McAuley in her social context if she looks at Maria Luddy's recent book from CUP, *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth Century Ireland*. Meanwhile, the Sisters of Mercy throughout the world, Catholic laymen and laywomen, and Christian feminists of every church will all find much to inspire them and much to enjoy in Mary C. Sullivan's admirable collection of manuscripts.

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