

the non-Christian will not be warmed with hope in a future life if the loveless lives of its teachers are all he sees of the Christ who is eaten in love, and eaten away with love.

Hope must not be confined, therefore, to the next life, As we have been at pains to point out, that will be irrelevant to most people today, and the Eucharist is for them as well as for the converted. In what way can we say that the Eucharist is for them? Not by scratching about for episcopal permissions to give communion to non-Catholics. This is despair, not hope. It is also unnecessary. It indicates that non-Catholics need an outward sign of misplaced courtesy when what they need is faith, and this faith is given in different doses. If they believe in Christ's abiding loving presence, in his concern for the hunger of humanity at all levels, then they receive the Eucharist at that level. They are in communion with Christ. To offer them the consecrated species would be both an act of impatience and impertinence. Who are we to say that their level of faith is not enough for them? Or that the time will not come when they will receive the fullness of faith and be able to believe in the Mystical Body with its one visible Head on earth? Even among communicating Catholics there are these different levels. Although objectively there is one Catholic faith, subjectively there are as many degrees of faith as there are Catholics. Watch a Sunday congregation to see this; and they are the ones who are at least physically present. It would also be despair and impertinence to see the Church as an ecclesiastical Oxfam. The Church has to see the hunger that is not satisfied by bread alone. Outside non-conformist churches coloured posters often invite the passer-by to come in and share in the faith. Catholics and Anglicans may smile at the apparent crudeness of this, and at its frequent ineffectiveness. The Catholic, in particular, may preen himself on his full churches; but what about Mass during the week, the Mass with no obligation attached? With a gun at our heads we need no posters.

'Are you lonely?' said one poster. Yes, we are. We feel useless and insignificant. We want to belong. We want everyone to belong to the Body of Christ. Let us try to relate our eucharistic teaching to the whole of Christianity; and transubstantiation can look after itself.

Virginia Woolf and the Corinthians

by Hamish F. G. Swanston

Leonard Woolf, in *Downhill all the Way*, remarked of his wife that 'the idea of a party always excited her', and though it is true that on 11th November, 1918, 'Virginia and I celebrated the end of a

civilization' by 'eating, almost sacramentally, some small bars of chocolate cream', for Virginia Woolf, as for the rest of us, eating was generally a celebration of the continuing value of life, where, as at the restaurant meal of *The Waves*, 'here and now we are together' drawn into 'this communion', and making 'something that will join the innumerable congregations of past time'.

Talk of that kind about eating is an open invitation for those Christians who would engage in 'Theology and Literature', but a man should guard against any quick transition from Virginia Woolf's talk of sacramental chocolate creams and congregations of past time to his peculiar Christian understanding of meal and communion. It should give us pause, for example, that the chocolate creams were eaten at the 'end of a civilization', and that in *The Waves* the meal is created around a hero who, described in Christ-like terms certainly, is finally ineffective.

It was certainly not the disciples of the crucified man who seemed to Virginia Woolf to have a proper appreciation of eating as celebration. Perhaps the crudest device in any of her novels is the naming, in *Mrs Dalloway*, of Miss Kilman, the Christian in the green mackintosh. Miss Kilman's gobbling of the sugared cakes in the Army and Navy Stores, and her eyeing resentfully the pink one at the next table, makes it clear that she has no sense of a meal as anything but a feeding, certainly no sense of it as a communion. Clarissa Dalloway (and here, at least, the character speaks the author's mind) sees Miss Kilman as a predator, callous, destructive, ready to grab at others' happiness and dignity because she has none of her own. Miss Kilman wanted to convert people. To make them as she wanted them to be. She would convert, Clarissa thought, the old lady who lived in the house opposite and whom she could glimpse sometimes as she climbed the stairs to her bedroom, and then coming to the window 'quite unconscious that she was being watched'. The odious Kilman would destroy that solemn privacy.

Miss Kilman does not go to parties. Clarissa's whole energy is given to arranging an elaborate reception. Richard, her husband, thinks it foolish of her to excite her weakened heart, Peter Walsh, a romantic admirer from her youth, suspects that her parties are mere indulgences of snobbery, but Clarissa understands things differently. For here the party is a celebration of life. 'That's what I do it for', she said, speaking aloud to life. Clarissa gathers So-and-so in South Kensington, someone up in Bayswater, and someone else, say, in Mayfair, to create, to make an offering. And at the moment of offering she is forced to ask Shelley's *Question*, 'To whom?'. To whom can she present her garland? She recognizes that her party is not self-justifying. And in the evening it is not quite the gathering she had imagined. The old divisions of Kensington, Bayswater and Mayfair are not broken down. Her celebration of life is then put at total risk by intrusive news of death. A young man has killed himself.

Septimus Warren Smith, the young man who has thrown himself out of his window on to the impaling railings in the area below, had in his madness thought himself called to die for the world, to be the scapegoat, the eternal sufferer, and 'lately taken from life to death', to be 'the Lord who had come to renew society, fulfilling the sign of Jonah: 'I went under the sea, I have been dead, and yet am now alive'. Plenty of Christ echoing there. Septimus is not, of course, a dying and rising god, he is not a god at all. He is another of those 'prophetic Christs' with whom doctors have to deal. He is a failed hero. And he is yet needed.

Clarissa and Septimus, each at moments in the novel shared in Virginia Woolf's own experience—think of the moment when the young Virginia Stephen gripped the water-jug in the excitement of 'Madge is here', and of that other time when in a breakdown she heard the birds singing in Greek and the King swearing among the azaleas—have to be brought into unity. Septimus is needed, to use the language Virginia Woolf adopted from *Little Dorrit*, to 'complete' Clarissa. It is only at her receiving the gossip of his death that they come together in the novel. Clarissa can, at first, make nothing of this death. It is simply destructive. 'The party's splendour fell to the floor.' She cannot bring death and the party together. She retreats into her private room. And there she receives a surprise. Pulling open the curtains of her window the sky is new to her. Not as she last saw it. Not as she supposed it would be. And the old lady is at her window looking straight back at Clarissa for the first time. And in the moment of surprise somehow whatever it is that Septimus means when, just before his suicide, he cries from the window ledge 'I'll give it you', has become a gift transmitted from Septimus to the old man staring across at him in a window opposite, from the old man going down his stairs to the old lady mounting her stairs in Westminster, and from the old lady across to Clarissa at her window. Septimus' death has been meaningfully communicated to Clarissa. She knows at once that she can deal with all conditions of men, including death. The leaden circles of time dissolve in air. The dirge in *Cymbeline* is heard again. And she knows that she must 'assemble'. She comes from the small dark room newborn into the larger world of the party, possessed now of a sense of her own identity and her own purpose in bringing people together. And Peter Walsh responds appropriately:

'What is this terror? what is this ecstasy? he thought to himself.
 What is it that fills me with extraordinary excitement,
 It is Clarissa, he said.
 For there she was.

The sense of Clarissa's new-found integrity at the end of the novel is undeniable, but it is not quite complete. The reader is left with the rankling mystery of the 'somehow' of the giving of Septimus' gift to

Clarissa. The stair and the window is not quite persuasive enough to resolve all suspicions of a contrived symmetry unlike the possibilities of life.

Six years later, in 1931, Virginia Woolf wrote another novel at whose centre was an exploration of the relation of surprise, communion and death. In *The Waves* the unspeaking hero, Percival, brings all three elements together. 'What is startling', says Bernard, 'what is unexpected, what we cannot account for, what turns symmetry to nonsense—that comes suddenly to my mind, thinking of him.' Percival is the centre of the others' experience. His presence enables them to be at harmony with each other for a while. And his death in a riding accident prevents Bernard, Neville and Rhoda from looking at life with any confidence of order. Percival is a man of generous acceptance. He wants simply to do the right thing. As a boy he accepts Lucy's flaxen pigtaileds as the height of female beauty, as a young man he accepts his part in the ordering of Empire, and would have become a conscientious Consul. But he dies ridiculously in a meaningless accident. All that remains for the others at his death is a sense of might-have-been. 'He would have done justice. He would have protected', says Bernard. 'My own infirmities oppress me. There is no longer him to oppose them.' Their shared communion is at an end. 'We saw for a moment laid out among us the body of a complete human being whom we have failed to be.' For them there is no way to be complete. Rhoda had, at the meal they eat with Percival, a vision of savages 'dappled red and yellow in the torchlight' dancing for her destruction, and after Percival's death she sees the savages again, their red and yellow faces closing in upon her at a Spanish inn. She had asked again the Shelley *Question*, had flung her violets to the dead Percival, and committed suicide. At the end of the novel the reader is forced to appreciate Bernard's rhetoric of the pure knight, the joust and the couched spear as mere nonsense. It is of no use for Percival or any other to ride against Death. It is evident that Virginia Woolf is saying something here quite different from that hopeful ending of *Mrs Dalloway*. There the rare symmetry of events had effected the surprise. In *The Waves* the surprise is a further upturning of symmetry. There is no sense in the hope of order, and no comfort in understanding what is going on.

Virginia Woolf knows, of course, that Christians have claimed to see a meaning in it all. She confronts such a claim. Percival, at first 'remote from us all in a pagan universe', then the centre of the communion meal, then recognized 'as if he were—what indeed he is—a God', is set in deliberate juxtaposition with Christ. Neville, a schoolboy in search of a hero, shifts his view in chapel from the crucifix which is 'the mark of the devil' with its religion of 'the stricken figure of Christ in a glass case' revered by superstitious Italians, to Percival 'upright among the smaller fry.' Even the ultimately ineffective Percival is a more admirable hero than such a

Christ as Christians offer. At the end of the novel we have a sense that Virginia Woolf has concluded that there is no way possible of integrity for oneself or with others. For her the necessary coming together of surprise, communion and a meaningful death has not been given. But it is not necessarily every reader's reaction that Christ is properly dismissed as offering no way to such a coming together of necessary elements.

After a reading of these novels a Christian may find himself better prepared to appreciate the tradition Paul invokes at 1 Cor. 11, 23ff. The eating and drinking in celebration of the death of the Lord, proclaimed there as the way of showing that life has purpose 'until he come', is possible, Paul knows, only because there has been a surprise. In the opening section of the letter he has insisted that human wisdom could not have led men to expect the experience given in Christ. The inrush of divine revelation has upturned the categories, there is now neither symmetry nor nonsense but only the folly of God (1 Cor. 1, 25). The Christian is one who has been shaken up by the divine surprise in the event of Jesus. In this divine folly Jew and Greek are united across the barriers that their wisdoms had erected (1 Cor. 1, 24). It is therefore sheer perversity in the Corinthians to separate themselves into gangs and sects (1 Cor. 1, 10). The human longing, expressed in the figure of Clarissa, for the breaking down of the walls of division has been fulfilled. And almost at once it has been frustrated. The meal of Kensington, Bayswater and Mayfair is certainly no more divided than the meal of the hungry and the drunkard (1 Cor. 11, 21). And only through the surprising action of God can the Corinthian divisions be turned into a communion. The eucharist was for Paul in part an affirmation that only through some unaccountable breaking-in of the divine could the fragile loves of men be sustained. The sustaining order within the context of surprise is seen at the crucifixion. If Jesus could be properly described by the first members of the community in terms of Adam, or Moses, or Jehu, and by later members in terms of Hercules, or Perseus, or Arthur he is yet totally singular in his defeat of death. It is precisely the word of the cross that is both folly and power (1 Cor. 1, 18). Paul has discovered, after the catastrophe of Athens (Acts 17, 32), that he must speak only of 'him crucified' (1 Cor. 2, 2). At their meal the Corinthians must realize that communion derives from the vitality of the cross (1 Cor. 11, 26). Their eating is not to be a gobbling of sugar cakes but a sharing in the proclamation of the Lord's death. Meal and communion and death are come together, and none is meaningful apart from the others. The elements Virginia Woolf so properly and rigorously demanded if life were to be meaningful are found in significant relation at the eucharist.

And from this significant relation Paul can suggest ways of integrity. Clarissa's offering was in order that she might combine in harmony with others, and her recompense at the last was to be a

recognizable adult identity. That neither was quite achieved does not lessen the nobility of the desires. Percival's death had led his friends to see themselves as making between them but a dead body, and each came to know himself and herself unfulfilled. From the eucharist Paul can go on to speak of the Christians as one body enlivened by the Spirit, and of the individual as coming to maturity. They are 'the body of Christ', operative in the world, the community of love. And in this community each realizes that he has put away the things of a child and become his adult self.

Just as the reading of *Mrs Dalloway* makes it possible to appreciate more fully the tradition preserved in 1 Corinthians, so that tradition offers critical instruments for the reading of *The Waves*. The confidence with which the elements of surprise, communion, and death are spoken of in the Pauline account of the eucharist persuades the reader that he take another look at the suggestion made in the novel that our every enterprise towards harmony must come to nothing. The interpretation Paul offers of the cross of Jesus makes an impressive alternative to talk of hope leading only to frustration. Both Paul and Virginia Woolf are honest enough about the facts around them. They do not attempt to disguise either the reality of death or the strength of our desire for communion. They simply interpret things differently. Paul's preaching does not render Virginia Woolf's account of our experience any the less intelligent or sensitive. Rather it demands that we recognize the complexity of our situation, and the variousness of ways of talking about it, and consider these designations of what is ultimately convincing. We have to make some decision in our coming to faith or disbelief. The cross, while appearing to confirm Virginia Woolf's discernment, becomes in Paul's account an assurance that not every ride against death need end in a ridiculous accident. From an acknowledgement of that honest designation of the true oppressiveness of the ordinary made in *The Waves*, Paul would lead us to a larger gratitude for the wonder that has broken in upon us.

Catholics and Politics at the time of Emancipation

by J. Derek Holmes

It has almost become platitudinous to state that the controversial literature at the time of Catholic Emancipation illustrates the fact that the expression of radical political opinion had been muted as a result of the events of the French Revolution. On the whole, it is argued, the controversy tended to be theological or apologetic rather