

together the path that Donald had been walking alone these past few months. As we passed by the side of the house on one of our turns, Donald paused and motioned with his arms outstretched toward the sun, the trees and the fields beyond. As if to say, "Look! look! Isn't it magnificent?" As if "threads from all those innumerable worlds of God" were all coming together in his soul, and "it was trembling all over, 'touching other worlds.'" We continued walking and he motioned again and again, now toward the birds, now toward the garden, bursting with daffodils, crocus, tulips, now toward me. His face was radiant with joy.

- 1 Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*. Trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1990). This and subsequent citations are from pp. 361–363.
- 2 Cited in Donald Nicholl, *Triumphs of the Spirit in Russia* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1997), p. 190.
- 3 Donald Nicholl, *Holiness* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1981), p. 129.
- 4 See discussion in *Holiness*, pp. 130–132.

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The Power and the Glory Authority, Freedom and Literature: Part 2

Kevin L. Morris

English Catholics have been a recognisable body; yet they have also been individuals engaged in a disorderly, energetic, personal and doubt-filled struggle to create, experience, explore and affirm. Catholic literature has been grounded in the tension between liberal and conservative: categories which are a function not only of how an individual relates to doctrine, but also of personality, for Catholics, like everyone else, believe as they must, as their personalities dictate. Cardinal Manning—together with his associates Herbert Vaughan, W. G. Ward and Mgr. George Talbot—may be taken as the archetype of the conservative mentality (Manning the presiding spirit of Vatican I), while Newman may be taken as the

archetype of the liberal (the presiding spirit of Vatican II)—even though he was at least as doctrinally meticulous as Manning: temperaments—rather than theological or political stances—which constituted the warp and woof of English Catholic literature.

Manning sought an infallible authority, and identified himself with it, so that he aspired to be, as he said, 'more Roman than Rome', and proceeded to make English Catholicism like himself. He had no sympathy, he said, for 'the watered, literary, worldly Catholicism of certain Englishmen', and wished to keep Catholics untainted by English intellectual culture. In 1876 he told a gathering of Catholic intellectuals:

when any man comes and talks to you about scientific history, I advise you as soon as possible to change the subject . . . when the Church has decided, [he is speaking of the Vatican Council] defined, or decreed, any man who appeals from that decision to any human history whatsoever is guilty of rejecting a Divine Teacher, and of the sin of unbelief . . . Whosoever appeals from [the decrees of the Council] to human history commits heresy . . .²⁰

In 1865 Vaughan warned of 'the disloyal Catholic intellect, which seems to be growing with a luxuriance and the strength of a weed.'²¹ In 1868 he began editing the *Tablet*, which he determined would be an organ of papal propaganda devoted to the cause of maximising papal power. Ward, who in 1863 took the editorship of the *Dublin Review*, and ensured that its intellectual vision was even narrower than it had been under Cardinal Wiseman's control, and basically thought literature was dangerous, certainly helped Manning to dominate the temper of English Catholicism. Talbot, who was Manning's go-between with Pius IX, and had condemned the liberal *Rambler* as heretical, wrote to Manning condemning the whole school of mild-mannered Catholic intellectuals, including 'the *Home and Foreign Review* and the old school of Catholics', Lingard, the distinguished historian Daniel Rock and Newman, as opposed to Manning and Rome. He told Manning to 'stand firm . . . you will have the Holy See on your side . . . You will have battles to fight, because every Englishman is naturally anti-Roman. . . . Dr. Newman is more English than the English. His spirit must be crushed.'²²

Newman was more tolerant and understanding, more apt to discuss than to rule, and hence friendlier to literary endeavour. He shied from power: he thought that a man who denied papal infallibility—that totem of Catholic power—might be as good a Catholic as one who held it, and called those who promoted the power of Rome 'an aggressive insolent faction'. Though he was obedient, he felt the restrictions of ecclesiastical authority: 'How can I fight with such a chain on my arm?', he exclaimed

in 1863: there is 'no freedom'. In 1864 he said that Catholicism was increasingly alive, that people would not remain inert under 'the dull tyranny of Manning and Ward', who he thought of as a clique, who were damaging Catholic unity with their aggressive exclusivism; but in 1876 he observed that 'those who would not allow Galileo to reason 300 years ago, will not allow any one else now'; and he spoke of 'the endemic perennial fidget which possesses us about giving scandal; facts are omitted in great histories, or glosses are put upon memorable acts, because they are thought not edifying, whereas of all scandals such omissions, such glosses, are the greatest.'

Newman's prose style was unsurpassed, his intellect of the first quality, his personality and mind fascinating to the intelligentsia; he projected a moderate version of Catholicism, believing that the aggressive brand was alienating Protestant and Catholic alike. Edmund Purcell suggested that his *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* (1864) 'by its effects on the public mind, was the inauguration of Catholic literature in England', and observed that it increased Manning's 'dread of Newman's influence'. There was indeed resentment that Newman held the pass for an open-minded and open-hearted Catholicism, so that Döllinger thought it mere chance that several of Newman's books were not placed on the Index.

The effects of the reigning mentality were evident in the world of the Press. The principle Catholic periodicals were the *Dublin Review* and the *Tablet*: the first was ecclesiastically-dominated, and Lord Acton judged it to be 'a dead loss'; and Manning judged the *Tablet* to be 'of little use and circulation except for Catholics', until, having dared to criticise his party, it passed into his hands in 1868: he recognised the importance of the Catholic press for moulding opinion, and so controlled as much of it as he could. In 1848 liberal Catholic intellectuals founded the *Rambler*, which became the best of the Catholic periodicals; but conservatives opposed it because they thought they detected in its pages a spirit of compromise with the modern world. Newman's connection with it led to his being delated to Rome, and he remained under suspicion for most of the rest of his life. With Lord Acton in the editor's seat, it was cancelled, but replaced in 1862 by the *Home and Foreign Review*, also under Acton, who found the task of defence so onerous that it too was swiftly terminated. Newman said, 'as to the Home and Foreign, I detest the persecuting spirit which has pursued it.'

Acton was the leading English Catholic historian of the second half of the century; but as a liberal he was under suspicion. His early attempts to depict a progressive and scholarly Catholicism suffered by the Syllabus of Errors and the 1870 declaration of papal infallibility, which inaugurated the end of his work as a Catholic apologist. He called the Romanists

'lovers of authority, fearing knowledge much, progress more, freedom most, and essentially unhistoric and unscientific. 'He was aghast at Manning's reported remark that, in the light of Vatican I, dogma had vanquished history. Acton was involved with another episode which boded ill for the relationship between the Church and writers. In 1861 the 'Academia of the Catholic Religion' was founded as a talking-shop for Catholic intellectuals; but liberals were immediately suspicious, because it early promised to be dominated by Ward and Manning, with their agenda of anti-liberalism, condemnation of the uncontrolled intellect, opposition to democracy and support for the temporal power of the Pope. Its parameters were indeed fixed to limit discussion. Talbot's policy of 'crushing' was an ill-judged strategy in the hoped-for conversion of England, because it was on the liberal writers at whom it was aimed that Catholicism's reputation largely hung.

To picture Manning and his friends as self-effacing Roman conformists would be mistaken, for they were as individualistic as any liberal. For example, Frederick Faber (1814-63) made a fetish of Italian ecclesiastical culture, while his poetry and spirituality writings were effete in their sentimentality and emotiveness. In becoming an intrinsic part of English Catholic culture he branded it as an alien thing. And though the Irish Aubrey de Vere (1814-1902) was a friend and ally of Manning, he was his own man, in that he was a medievalist, yet wanted to see the Church reconciled with the positive aspects of modern culture, and so tried in his prose and poetry to controvert the popular image of Catholicism as inhuman, un-English and opposed to civilisation. Yet, like Manning, he was anti-democratic, and was concerned to avert chaos by the strengthening of social bonds, ideally in a marriage between his own authoritarian, hierarchical Church and the English aristocracy. But, like so many Catholic writers, he was unheeded: as his friend the critic R. H. Hutton advised him, 'especially writing as you do on religious subjects and in a Catholic sense, you can hardly expect a large public.'

The journalist and man of letters Wilfrid Meynell (1852-1948), who by the turn of the century was a significant presence on the Catholic literary scene -in 1890 Francis Thompson declared he had 'done more than any man in these latter days to educate Catholic literary opinion', which was a 'dense sea of . . . ignorance'—was a friend and admirer of Manning; but he appreciated him precisely because, in the context of British society, he was a rebellious individualist who, as Meynell said, 'fluttered a red robe in the face of John Bull'. His daughter Viola described Meynell as a Catholic who 'was for lost causes, lame dogs and forlorn friends, and for individual interpretation of dogmas, and generous adjustments of errancies in others. 'He edited his monthly *Merry England*

(1883-95) and Manning's *Weekly Register*, while his wife Alice (1847-1922) produced some of the finest Catholic poetry.

The writers attracted to the Meynell circle were liberal and individualistic to a fault. Coventry Patmore (1823-96) produced verse mysticism which was well-regarded, then as now. Though he wrote against the rationalist tradition of his day, he detested Manning, and used to say, 'I never meet a priest but I ask myself: can the Church last another year' (although he would add that meeting unbelievers made him go down on his knees thanking God he was a Catholic). Some of his ideas were derived from Swedenborg; although the analogy between erotic and divine love, which was central to his thinking, had an honourable ancestry within Catholicism. His love of sex led him to criticise the Church: in 'Magna Moralia' he says that the Church 'has been nearly killed by the infection of the puritanism of the Reformation', which identifies sex with impurity, failing thereby to understand 'the greatest of all graces and means of grace.' But even he was subject to pressure, and, at Aubrey de Vere's urging, suppressed some of his poetry which appeared to be unorthodox; and he even destroyed some of his prose for this reason—which act Hopkins endorsed.

Another, Francis Thompson (1859-1907), was respected and popular for a generation; but his image as 'the ideal Catholic poet' was manipulated, for, though he was very much a Franciscan spirit, and criticised the laissez-faire aspect of British society, he was partly pagan, in that he loved the world and beauty for their own sake, and thought Catholicism, with its overlay of Augustinian puritanism, was rather philistine, particularly in its failure to comprehend the poetic sensibility, and in its failure to generate a supremely moralising literature. He thought the Catholic social conscience a poorly developed thing, and wanted to marry poetic feeling, or subjective perception, with objective religion.

This circle also included the poet and political and travel writer Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, who only returned to the Church on his death-bed; the outstanding Jesuit theologian and 'spirituality writer' George Tyrrell, who was excommunicated for Modernism; and St George Mivart (1827-1900), the prominent scientist, who, after a quarter of a century writing on behalf of Catholicism, and having been placed on the Index in 1893 for being too liberal, as a sick old man was, shortly before his death, excommunicated by Cardinal Vaughan. This was how Vaughan responded, with Rome's encouragement, to what he called the 'venom' of liberal Catholicism, which he feared might attract the English public. 'My whole object,' Mivart had said, 'is to keep liberal and intellectual men inside the Church.'

A number of the Aesthetes became Catholics. They preferred

Catholicism to Protestantism because they thought it was more sympathetic to beauty: as the poet Ernest Dowson declared: 'I've become a Catholic, as every artist must.' The poet Lionel Johnson (1867-1902) was typical in that, feeling exiled in an unlovely world, he was attracted in the same spiritual motion to beauty and Catholicism—despite the Church's philistinism. As misfits—mostly homosexual—they appropriately gravitated to a faith which was itself a misfit in modern England.

Even the work of writer-priests did not comfortably fit the mould of orthodoxy. As a poet Gerard Manley Hopkins was very isolated, partly because his style was so personal. Feeling that the religious and artistic vocations were incompatible, on deciding to become a religious he burned his poems. It would be difficult to maintain that his position within the Church was conducive to his art, if only because, as he observed, 'bad taste is always meeting one in the accessories of Catholicism'. Also, there was something profoundly at odds with the contemporary Church in his reverence for the particular qualities of things and people, which would imply deep respect for the individuality of individuals. And Robert Hugh Benson illustrates how even a right-wing priest, who wrote successful historical novels designed as counterblasts to the anti-Catholic novelistic tradition, could be an individualist. In *Lord of the World* (1907) and *The Dawn of All* (1911) he revealed his ideal of an authoritarian Rome, pitched against democracy, private judgment, socialism and analytical biblical criticism, but aligned with monarchism, capital punishment, nationalism and spiritual and intellectual absolutism. Curiously in a rightist, his novels do not always represent priests in a flattering light. As Maisie Ward testified, he was an eccentric, even weird, figure; and she estimated that, 'had Benson been writing at a time of more general Catholic mental activity his books would have better found their place. We were all then too much afraid of a very individual point of view, and his was certainly that.'²³

Lord of the World was influenced by *Hadrian the Seventh* (1904), by his friend the priest *manqué* Frederick Rolfe, another homosexual, highly idiosyncratic, authoritarian writer. D.H.Lawrence said Rolfe was an essential Protestant, the intensity of his protest driving him, 'like a crazy serpent, into the bosom of the Roman Catholic Church', his persona in this novel, Rose, being 'like most modern men . . . through and through a Protestant. Which means, his life is a changeless fervour of protest. '(Some of this irony sticks to many English Catholic writers, including conservatives.) Rolfe certainly sought to assault what he saw as straight-laced, puritanical, philistine English Catholicism.

James Joyce was the quintessential 'protestant Catholic writer', a symbol of the rebellious individualism within most Catholic writers,

whose sense of self and of Catholicism as negation of self—especially of sexuality—was so intense that he publicly rejected Catholicism as the oppressor of and competitor with his creative spirit. In *Dubliners* (1914) and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1914–15) he rejects a religion of power, fear, humiliation, guilt and sin, in favour of a cultural quasi-religion of liberation, charity, fulfilment, grace and creativity; and his bitterness suggests a sense of betrayal, of being cheated out of his religion by a moribund Church, more interested in power, rules and forms than real experience and spirituality.

Even Chesterton, Belloc and Knox do not fit squarely into the Roman edifice. Chesterton, reminiscent of Newman, adored God; but Belloc was Manningite, and looked as if he idolised the Church. In their radical politics, their originality, their florid vivacity they departed from the tenor of the contemporary Church. Chesterton's preoccupation with freedom may be responsible for his fourteen-year delay in becoming a Catholic; and Belloc remarked that his conversion was surprising: 'the whole of his mind was occupied in expressing his liking for and attraction towards a certain mood, not at all towards the acceptance of a certain Institution. 'Nor was Chesterton an avid practitioner of the faith; and in all his ideological discussion, it is striking how little he is concerned with the doctrinal, legal and cultic details which so dominated the Church's vision. His concentration on the essence of Catholicism might almost relegate him to the ranks of the 'minimisers' so feared by Manning.

As with Manning, whom he so admired, Belloc's devotion to the Church was personality-driven: for him the Church was a firm foundation on which to fight the world from which he felt so exiled; a selection designed to shock a society so deeply alienated from Catholicism. His credentials as a conformist are suspect: having little interest in theology, he said: 'I have no piety, that is, I have no attachment to the Church's practices.' 'I am,' he confessed, 'by all my nature of mind sceptical, by all my nature of body exceedingly sensual'; and he admitted his anti-clericalism when he asserted that one proof of the Church's divinity was that 'no merely human institution conducted with such knavish imbecility would have lasted a fortnight.' And from his anti-Jewish feeling there issued a certain disrespect for the more Jewish parts of the Bible. In 1970 his biographer and friend Robert Speaight reflected that his presentation of Catholicism would now be 'hardly recognisable', and wondered if his conceiving his duty as being 'to face the public as a "Defender of the Faith"' did not repel far more than it attracted.

Knox was relied upon for generations as a conventional exponent of orthodoxy. His shy, self-effacing nature—probably attendant upon his virtually certain homosexuality—colluded with his aspiration to orthodoxy

to make him seem the Church's perfect propagandist. Yet he had his conservative critics, and was very English, and not the man to go persecuting anyone who disagreed with him: 'every Catholic knows,' he liked to think, 'that his Church is a splendidly happy-go-lucky affair -often haphazard, with sometimes internal quarrels- and that it would not hold together for ten years if there were not supernatural life and unity in this Divine Church.' Privately he observed: 'He who travels in the barque of St Peter had better not look too closely into the engine-room.' The critical note emerges at the end of *Enthusiasm* (1950), when he witnesses that 'more than all the other Christianities, the Catholic Church is institutional . . . there is danger in her position . . . where [religious] wealth abounds, it is easy to mistake shadow for substance; the fires of spirituality may burn low, and we go on unconscious, dazzled by the glare of tinsel suns.' Even he seems to have sensed by the end of the 1940s that change was in the air, and acknowledged that the time was ripe.

Knox was reincarnated in Waugh's biography (1959) of his hero as a choice fellow spirit, an Edwardian, aristocratic soul, at odds with the modern Catholic hierarchy and the contemporary world; but in his boorishness, cultivated eccentricity and aggressive Catholicism Waugh was chalk to Knox's cheese. He himself seemed to be at odds with present-day Catholicism. His novel *Black Mischief* (1932) was condemned by Cardinal Bourne, who had been deploring sex in literature since his Lenten Pastoral of 1901: a condemnation echoed by his chorus Ernest Oldmeadow (who was editor of the *Tablet* 1923–36, and denounced by Christopher Sykes as 'long . . . a stifling element upon the younger Catholic intellectuals'). Waugh asserted that at Vatican II the Church had been turned from 'serene supremacy to sharp controversy' by 'traitors from within', against whom conservatives were rightly battling; and he said he would like to see Hans Küng burned at the stake and Paul VI assassinated. His own vision of Catholicism was not unimpaired. In the 1964 preface to his *Sword of Honour* trilogy he describes it as an obituary for a dead Catholicism: 'It never occurred to me, writing *Sword of Honour*, that the Church was susceptible to change.' Marie Belloc Lowndes commented of *Brideshead Revisited* (1945): 'I thought the Catholics in the book quite unrealistic, like cats with 2 heads.' One commentator suggested that the post-War Waugh's 'clear sympathy with [Catholic] cut-and-dried legalistic formulations when Greene, like almost every other Catholic novelist then writing, sought to transcend them' was due to his 'acute sensitivity to logical flaws in the Christian case, his educated-Englishman's distaste for the unliterary harshness of Roman Catholic theological discussion, his awareness of the disparity between the moralists' pronouncements and what people actually did, . . . and his

constant temptation to fall into a state of apathy or despair . . .²⁴

Graham Greene was an anarchistic rebel, who made virtues out of disloyalty and doubt, whose consistency lay in always hating the powerful, which accounts for his anti-Vatican feeling. Just as Waugh had denied that *Sword of Honour* was a particularly religious book, Greene denied that his themes were specifically Catholic: 'One gets so tired of people saying that my novels are about the opposition of Good and Evil. They are . . . about human beings.'²⁵ But his novels involving Catholics did erect a sign proclaiming one did not have to be a narrow-minded, conformist prig in order to be a Catholic; and he did what a novelist should do: he doubted, questioned and explored by inventing deep, complex, strange possibilities. Of *The Heart of the Matter* (1948) Waugh remarked that 'there are loyal Catholics . . . who think it the function of the Catholic writer to produce only advertising brochures setting out in attractive terms the advantages of Church membership. To them this profoundly reverent book will seem a scandal. For it not only portrays Catholics as unlikeable human beings but shows them as tortured by their Faith.' It was banned in Ireland, and Bishop Brown, Auxiliary of Southwark, criticised it for suggesting that it was acceptable to transgress the Church's sexual rules. In 1953 *The Power and the Glory* (1940), which depicts the Church cauterized of power and position, was denounced by French bishops to Cardinal Pizzardo, the Secretary of the Holy Office, who told the Archbishop of Westminster that he must ensure that Greene suppress the novel or make necessary emendations. Cardinal Griffin told Greene the Holy Office should have condemned *The End of the Affair* (1951) for its erotic passages, and then wrote a pastoral letter for his diocese condemning these three novels, adding:

It is sadly true that a number of Catholic writers appear to have fallen into this error [i.e. sin against the sixth commandment in thought and word]. Indeed, novels which purport to be the vehicle for Catholic doctrine frequently contain passages which by their unrestrained portrayal of immoral conduct prove a source of temptation to many of their readers . . . the presentation of the Catholic way of life within the framework of fiction may be an admirable object but it can never justify as a means to that end the inclusion of indecent and harmful material.

Waugh then told Greene: 'Since you showed me the Grand Inquisitor's letter my indignation has waxed. It was as fatuous as unjust—a vile misreading of a noble book.' Greene told Paul VI how his writing had been condemned, and he replied: 'Mr Greene, some parts of your books are certain to offend some Catholics, but you should pay no attention to that.'²⁶ Even after these criticisms, Greene liked to think that

Catholics combined 'an authoritarian Church with freedom of speech and freedom of criticism'; and, perhaps, he helped others to see it that way.

(Alfred Noyes was also caught by the watchdogs of orthodoxy. His 1936 biography of Voltaire came to the attention of the Holy Office, which peremptorily ordered its republication to be suspended, pending some sort of assurance as to Noyes's orthodox intentions. The second edition appeared with a preface in which he defended 'questionable' passages.)

When the energising catalyst of Vatican II came, Cardinal Heenan's response was to say that the intellectuals were all against him, and that the Council led to chaos. He preferred pre-Conciliar English Catholicism, because it had been constituted, he claimed, of 'the most dutiful Catholics in the world . . . devoted to the Pope and deferential to the authority of the Holy See . . . the Catholics most scrupulously observant of the minutiae of curial regulations . . .' Such a vision of ideal Catholicism was ill-calculated to fire creative spirits; and, anyway, as writers knew, it was untrue: everything had not been perfect in pre-Vatican II English Catholicism. In *How Far Can You Go?* (1980) David Lodge characterised it as a frightening game of Snakes and Ladders, with each confused sinner constantly subject to a complex 'spiritual accounting'. And in 1950 Christopher Dawson (whose advice to Edward Watkin was not to get involved with ecclesiastics—'As a rule if you leave them alone they will leave you alone') noted the persistent gap between the intelligentsia and ordinary Catholics:

there is still no common Catholic culture which is the birthright of every member of the Church. It is the business of the Catholic schools, the Catholic press and the Catholic writers to meet this need, but they are all handicapped by the lack of economic resources which has always hampered the development of English Catholicism.²⁷

The post-Vatican II divisions were vivid in the Press. Waugh launched a journalistic onslaught on liberalism, and the *Universe*, still the creature of the bishops, also took a reactionary line; while the *Tablet* backed the new world, especially under the editorship of Tom Burns, who offended the Hierarchy by his lack of sympathy with *Humanae Vitae*—even in the 1930s he had been described by Cardinal Bourne as 'a very dangerous young man'. On the *Catholic Herald* Michael de la Bedoyère proved too liberal for the clergy, so was replaced by Desmond Fisher, whose progressive aspect agitated the Board; so he was replaced by the conservative Desmond Albrow. In 1967 Herbert McCabe was dismissed as editor of *New Blackfriars* for speaking boldly; but was reinstated upon protests -including lay ones- being made. *Slant* (1964–70) was a platform for leftist intellectuals to express their sense of alienation from a Church

that was likely not to follow through on the radicalism implicit within the Council. *Objections to Roman Catholicism* (1964) disturbed many by boldly advertising the liberal temperament. One of its contributors, the Jesuit Archbishop Thomas Roberts, was forbidden to attend the book's launch; and Waugh said he would like to see its contributors incinerated. In more recent times, the journalist and historian Paul Johnson swung from Left to Right, but remained bullishly individualistic; while Peter Stanford tried to uphold the banner of liberal toleration. Though an anti-modernist Catholic of the 'Augustinian Right', Malcolm Muggeridge was an individualist: 'only dead fish swim with the stream', he used to say. His biographer Gregory Wolfe claimed that soon after the publication of his *Jesus Rediscovered* (1969) it 'became clear that Malcolm had become the most popular Christian apologist since the death of C.S.Lewis in 1963.' Becoming a Catholic in 1982, he had balked for so long at joining any Christian institution because he believed that writers had to be detached individualists; and he was influenced in his sweeping critique of society by several literary Catholic individualists. His conversion puzzled some who knew him, because he was not keen on Catholic devotions, did not especially think of Christianity as historically true, had little interest in theology or doctrine, and thought Catholicism had been undermined by liberalism since Vatican II. Yet he did great service to Catholicism in helping to publicise Mother Teresa of Calcutta.

The divide was also evident amongst novelists. Tolkien thought Vatican II had reduced the Church to 'just another arena of strife and change', though experience had shown him that 'love may be chilled . . . by . . . the shortcomings, folly, and even sins of the Church and its ministers.' The nostalgia for a mythical community of unchangingness, security, order and clarity also emerges in Alice Thomas Ellis, whose novel *The Sin Eater* (1977) touches on her hatred of the post-Vatican II Church; while her *Serpent on the Rock* (1994) vandalizes the Vatican II spirit—'a tide of sewage'. The rhetoric of Piers Paul Read's novel *On the Third Day* (1990) suggests that the Council was as damaging to the Church as if Christ was not risen. Read had scorned his Church for changing in *Monk Dawson* (1969). These last two writers shared a deep suspicion of sex, which was a common touchstone of the differences between conservative and liberal, even before Vatican II. In 1941 the novelist Antonia White wrote that 'the ecclesiastics have cheapened [sex] . . . by throwing so much dirt at it': there was 'so much more in sex than "bestial appetite" and surely people should be taught to accept their human nature, . . . rather than to treat it as a hideous phenomenon.'

Liberal Catholics were marked by tolerance, which showed in their attitude to sexual behaviour. Anthony Burgess was as suspicious of

humanity as Alice Thomas Ellis, and as much a rebel; but his tone and spirit were quite different. His autobiography makes it clear that he rejected a guilt-inducing, life-denying, repressive Church which had little sense of proportion, power of understanding or compassion: 'the Church,' he declared, 'has let its children down too often to be regarded as a good mother, but it is the only mother we have.' So though he was Augustinian, he was free-thinking, and this issues in his understanding attitude to sex. Much the same was true of Wendy Perriam, who was also alarmed by the Church's narrowness, especially on sexual matters. She admitted that Catholicism influenced her novels, in the sense that her characters were often interactive with the Catholic world-view: either rebelling against it, or lamenting the fatuities of a secular world.²⁸ Similarly, David Lodge, who described himself as 'a kind of agnostic Catholic . . . albeit a practising one', humorously satirised in his novels the follies of Catholic culture, especially the sexual ones, while also expressing dismay at secular culture. Such liberals could be nostalgic for the 'old -style' Catholicism from which they were emancipated, but they rejected it as an absolute, imperative model of reality.

In common-sense terms, there has been and still is an English Catholic literature: it is simply literature written by Catholics, whose Catholicism, if it means anything, will colour their work, no matter how imperceptibly. Generally, however, it was not, and could not have been, a direct reflection of the requirements of the institutional Church. It failed to convert the nation—to which the Church had originally aspired; it eventually failed to convince many Catholics of the worth of their religion; it failed to confirm the Church's image of itself as undefiled, monumental, united, uniform, and so forth. Most of it was quickly forgotten, or left unread, by Catholic and non-Catholic alike. As Thomas Merton remarked in 1948, 'While I admired Catholic *culture*, I had always been afraid of the Catholic Church. That is a common position in the world today.' Yet its successes were greater than its failures. Though basically not taken as proof of Catholicism's excellence, Catholic writers produced a rich sub-culture, which made a valuable contribution to the mainstream; which, to an extent, did defend and promote Catholicism, showing that it was tolerable and safe enough to elicit indifference; that it had a case—even great quality—character and diversity; that it was not monopolised by rather frightening ideologues. When Catholicism seemed inhuman, literature warmed the heart and built bridges. 'I think,' wrote Knox in 1956, 'that our Catholic apologetic . . . strikes the modern reader as inhuman. . . . it afflicts our contemporaries with a sense of *malaise*.' Catholic literature did not lose its savour, but embodied a challenge, a living perspective, an inspiration: emblematically, in Anthony Burgess's

Earthly Powers one character (who becomes pope) declares: 'Religion is the most dangerous thing in the world.' Catholic literature was often dangerous to individuals' habits and society's complacencies.

It also seemed dangerous to some Catholics, given the ideological and temperamental divide between them. 'Traditional' Catholics insisted on a uniformity which conflicted with the diversity so characteristic of literature. J.C.H. Aveling judged that 'the orderly English Catholicism of 1850-1950 was itself a period-piece about which there was little intrinsic permanency.' If literature is indicative, even that orderliness was illusory, with even the rightists being individualists: all Catholics are *à la carte* Catholics'. It was extraordinary, given the hostility which emanated from Rome circa 1850-1950 to independent lay religious endeavour of any sort, that there was a lay Catholic literature at all, let alone such a vivid, vital and varied one. The conservative Catholic establishment was philistine and restrictive: the fact that so many distinguished Catholic writers were converts suggests that there was something inhibiting about Catholic upbringing. In his essay 'Inside the Whale' (1940), George Orwell said: 'literature . . . is an individual thing, demanding mental honesty and a minimum of censorship. . . . The atmosphere of orthodoxy is always damaging to prose . . . The novel is . . . a product of the free mind, of the autonomous individual.' Newman thought there was discouragement for writers consequent upon Catholic authority being 'supported by a violent ultra party, which exalts opinions into dogmas, and has it principally at heart to destroy every school of thought but its own.' It being difficult to distinguish between such extreme conservatives and an inherently conservative Church, liberals feel always at risk. Given unfettered power, what would conservatives have done with a Compton Mackenzie, who called himself a Bolshevik Catholic, or with a Graham Greene, who called himself a Catholic agnostic, or an Anthony Burgess, who called himself an apostate Catholic; what would Manning, with his strange need to believe in the total infallibility of the pope, have done with fallible Newman; or Waugh with Dorothy Day, for whom he had such contempt; or Alice Thomas Ellis with Teilhard de Chardin, who she thought a pagan in fairyland?

It has been said that Newman was a presiding spirit of Vatican II, and it was his faith that Catholicism could be tolerant, even nurturing, of the individual. It is this possibility that alarms conservatives about the Council, which, perhaps partly moulded by a liberal literature, created an ambience friendly to literary creativity. (It created an ironic balance with Vatican I, which, Manning rejoiced, had put the "men of culture," the "scientific historians" in their place, and had been 'fatal' to the 'vanity' of the intellectuals and literati.) For liberals this ambience was one of

honesty, a sense of reality, respect, understanding and compassion; for conservatives it spoke of self-centred individualism and chaotic relativism. Conservatives maintain that post-Vatican II Catholicism, in losing earlier Catholicism's integratedness and distinctiveness, became unable to criticize society; but writers always criticized society as individuals, even conservatives making an individualistic decision to conform to the Vatican establishment, while remaining prepared to criticise the Church whenever it offended their pet vision of Catholicity. (The conservatives' implicit claim to greater distinctiveness is suspect because they resembled non-Catholic rightists in their view that, though humanity is irremediably corrupt, religion should not touch politics, with the net result that power is left unchallenged: liberals, rather than the age's evil-doers, seeming to be their real target.) By the same token, the outsider's notion of Catholics as engaged in a sort of intellectual and personality suicide by virtue of their subjection to Rome was, to judge by writers, usually false. Writers are individualists, personalities rather than bodies of ideas, who express themselves individually, whether writing before or after Vatican II, so producing a tension between personal truth and communal truth, with which liberals are at ease, but conservatives are not. The Council eased this tension by allowing more for realities. Its humility and humanity matched literature's concern to understand and empathize. Perhaps it shifted the focus from what we must believe—the nineteenth-century question—to the matter of who we are; in the process eroding not respect for authority but fear of it; and, in a spirit of honesty, devolving the question of faith to the personal level, away from a notional religion towards an actualised, experienced religion; and literature—noticeably devotional literature—contributed to the exploration of this personal level in pursuit of truth. The drive for such self-exploration, for wider experience, which so characterised post-War society, was the product partly of increased communication, in which a free-thinking literature—including Catholic literature—had played its part.

Conservatives say such freedom is destructive of Catholicism; liberals say that the pursuit of truth through the stating of personal realities facilitates dialogue between Catholicisms, and between the Church and society. Conservatives say a literature of freedom and individualism destroys structures; liberals reply that if Catholic literature helps to indicate a shift from a Church-oriented spirituality to a more individually-oriented one, this does not mean a descent into solipsism, since the aspiration of modern Catholic spirituality is that the individual discovers personal truth to better serve the community: it was the conservative Cardinal Heenan who complained of all the modern Catholic talk of community, the conservative Alice Thomas Ellis who bemoaned the new

'meaningless talk of . . . "sharing" and "caring"', the actual practice of the Latin Mass which had encouraged a solipsistic spirituality. Literary history indicates that under neither conservative nor liberal influence were Catholics ever united, except, perhaps, in their sense of exile: Catholics were characteristically ill-at-ease in England. In a sense, the conservatives were right to fancy themselves as confrontational with society: usually it was a lie, hardly ever Christian; but most writers were liberals because they had an innate humility about relating to the host society: they wanted to communicate and charm, rather than conform and chide.

The writings of English Catholics expressed personal vision, style, understanding and experience, which orbited pretty freely, in complex harmonies, around a gravitational core—a handful of concepts which they respected—and about a community and its practice which they loved; and, since God created individuals, it is presumably wiser to accept than castigate the mysterious paradox of the various distinctive stars which have constituted the constellation of literary Catholicism. Speaking of literature, Newman, for whom differences between Catholics were, like change, a sign of spiritual and intellectual life, asserted that the Church 'represses no element of our nature, but cultivates the whole': the spirit of literature would surely concur that community exists not to destroy individuality but to complete it.

- 20 Henry E.Manning *Miscellanies* 2nd. ser. (Burns & Oates, 1909) pp.243–4.
 21 J.G. Snead-Cox *The Life of Cardinal Vaughan* vol.I (Burns & Oates, 1910) p.142.
 22 Edmund S.Purcell *Life of Cardinal Manning* vol.II (Macmillan, 1896) pp.322–33.
 23 Ward *The Wilfrid Wards and the Transition: II* (Sheed & Ward, 1937) p.153.
 24 Donat Gallagher *The Essays, Articles and Reviews* of Evelyn Waugh (Methuen, 1983) p. 296.
 25 Gene D. Phillips 'Graham Greene Interviewed' *The Month* vol.CCXXIX No.1234 (June 1970) pp.366–7.
 26 Norman Sherry *The Life of Graham Greene vol.2: 1939-1955* (Jonathan Cape, 1994) pp.42–3.
 27 *Dublin Review*, 4th. quarter 1950, pp.10–11. Cf. Desmond Fennell 'The Writer and the Church' *Dublin Review*, summer 1968, pp.99–105.
 28 *Catholic Herald* 14.7.1995.
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