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## CONTENTS

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## Editorial Notes

The 'Rediscovery' of the Catacombs	J.F. CHAMP	3
Terence Albert O'Brien's Speech From The Scaffold	E. WALSH	24
The Archives of the Sisters of Charity	M.B. O'LEARY, RSC	28
Mercy Memory	M.E. DOONA	32
On Mounting an Archival Exhibition: The Servite Sisters of London Celebrate 150 Years	A. HYPHER, OSM	42
Alice Meynell and the Meynell Collection at Boston College	R.D. PATKUS	48
The Memory of Those in Need: The Archives of CAFOD	B. BARRETT	62
Book Reviews		66
The Catholic Archives Society Conference, 1996		68

*Illustrations*

Pope Pius IX		16
Terence Albert O'Brien OP		26
The author at work in the Archives		47
Memorabilia of Mother Philomena		47
Alice Meynell		61

## EDITORIAL NOTES

*The visit of the Catholic Archives Society to Rome in October 1995 will certainly be remembered by those who took part as an 'archival experience' never to be forgotten. The interest with which the party was received and the warmth of welcome from fellow archivists is still commented on by the participants. The first article in the present edition of the journal is Dr Judith Champ's paper delivered to the Roman visitors - a masterly survey of the revival of interest in Roman ecclesiastical archaeology with regard to the restoration of Catholic fortunes in nineteenth-century England.*

*One of the omissions from last year's journal was the presence of an article of Irish archival interest. This year, however, owing to the generosity of our contributors (and even a little 'persuasion' on the part of the Editor), Ireland is very well represented via Edward Walsh's interesting piece on Bishop O'Brien's speech from the scaffold, a survey of the Archives of the Religious Sisters of Charity, and Mary Ellen Doona's tribute to the Sisters of Mercy and their archival heritage. Indeed, this last contribution follows on well from Maria McClelland's article in Catholic Archives 16.*

*Sister Agnes Hypher, a past contributor to the journal, offers a highly practical account of how an archival exhibition assisted the Servite Sisters in their 150th anniversary celebrations, while Ronald Patkus, reminding us of another milestone - that of the 150th anniversary of the birth of Alice Meynell in 1847 - presents a detailed survey of the collection at Boston College devoted to this important English Catholic writer.*

*Finally, should it be thought that the work and interests of archivists lie in the remote past only, Bernard Barrett offers a glimpse of the archival holdings of a more recently-established body, namely CAFOD, the aid agency of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales.*

*Once again it is the sincere hope of the Editor, on behalf of the Editorial Board, that Catholic Archives 17 will continue to stimulate interest in the work of the Catholic Archives Society, and will recommend to a wider audience both within and beyond the Catholic Church the importance of a careful preservation of her archival treasures.*

Father Stewart Foster

## THE 'REDISCOVERY' OF THE CATACOMBS

JUDITH F. CHAMP

The Roman Catacombs - a name consecrated by long usage, but having no etymological meaning, and not a very determinate geographical one - are a vast labyrinth of galleries excavated in the bowels of the earth in the hills around the eternal city; not in the hills on which the city itself was built, but those beyond the walls. Their extent is enormous; not as to the amount of superficial soil which they underlie, for they rarely, if ever, pass beyond the third milestone from the city, but in the actual length of their galleries; for these are often excavated on various levels, three, four or even five - one above the other; and they cross and recross one another, sometimes at short intervals; so that, on the whole, there are certainly not less than 350 miles of them; that is to say, if stretched out in one continuous line, they would extend the whole length of Italy itself.

Northcote and Brownlow, *Roma Sotteranea*. This work, published in 1869 remains the authoritative English work on the catacombs and reflects a passionate interest in the mid-nineteenth century Church in rediscovering the history of the catacombs. This was pursued with rigour, for emotional and spiritual reasons as much as scholarly ones and reflected a particularly nineteenth-century understanding of the Church. It was an understanding which emphasised continuity and historicity and the centrality of the Roman claim to authority.

It was linked to a tradition of pilgrimage to Rome which had grown up from as early as the fourth century. From the time of Constantine, the three great shrines of the burial place of St Peter and of St Paul and the Constantinian basilica of St John Lateran had become established as pilgrim shrines, but the other main attractions were the catacombs, the burial places of early martyrs. A list dating from 354 gave the names of 32 martyrs revered by the Christians in Rome and a revised list of the early seventh century had added a further 70 names.<sup>1</sup> There were 25 or 26 'parish' catacombs, corresponding to the areas of Rome and at least as many private ones in addition. Many of the names which survive were those of the owners - Priscilla, Domitilla etc. Others, like S Callistus, are named after those who had them constructed. Pope Damasus (366-84), one of the most powerful advocates of Roman primacy among the early Popes, restored the catacombs to

demonstrate clearly that Rome's glory was Christian not pagan. He was also the founder of the church of S Lorenzo in Damaso, where he is buried.<sup>2</sup>

Successive sieges wrecked and pillaged the catacombs and liturgical life in Rome gradually transferred to the great basilicas, as it became desirable to translate the martyrs' remains to the city. By the fourth century churches were springing up all over Rome and the catacombs were falling into disrepair. According to Northcote, the catacombs ceased to be used for burial after the capture of Rome by Alaric in 410. At the beginning of the seventh century, 28 wagon loads of relics were translated to the Pantheon, newly renamed S Maria ad Martyres.<sup>3</sup> This process was accelerated after the Lombard destruction of 756 and by the ninth century there were scarcely any significant saints left in the catacombs.<sup>4</sup> In some cases even the location of the catacombs were forgotten.

Pilgrimage was associated primarily with honouring the martyrs of primitive Christianity, so it too shifted into the city, to become entangled with an exercise of power and Roman authority, which was not necessarily always spiritual. Thus the counter-attractions of the city and its basilicas drew the attention of those seeking spiritual aid and ecclesiastical sanction. Pilgrimage became formalised in the circuit of shrines to be visited and in the ritual of departure. The parish gathered at the local church for the celebration of the Eucharist and for the blessing of the departing pilgrims with the recitation of psalms and sprinkling of holy water. Guilds would often accompany their pilgrim members out of town and provide alms for the journey.<sup>5</sup> The familiar pattern of devotions which developed during the mediaeval period was built around the seven principal churches and their relics - S Pietro (the tomb of Peter and the Veronica), S Maria Maggiore (the crib), S Giovanni Laterani (the Scala Santa), S Paolo fuori le Muri (the tomb and chair of S Paul), S Lorenzo (the gridiron), S Sebastiano (the catacombs), and Santa Croce (the Passion relics). These seven seem to have been a well-established circuit from earliest times, based on the huge importance of relics, but interestingly, only S Sebastiano is a catacomb church. Mediaeval piety was dominated by relics and, 'the richness of Rome as reliquary made it a constant festa.'<sup>6</sup> A book on the Seven Churches published in 1694 describes it as 'a pilgrimage peradventure the most celebrated after Calvary and the Sepulchre of Christ.'<sup>7</sup>

By the early thirteenth century the system of indulgences had become established, by which the Church administered the 'store' of merit gained by Christ and the saints for the benefit of the penitent. Indulgences became available to those who went on pilgrimage and visited shrines and could become a source of competition and rivalry between Popes, religious orders and sodalities. The system had begun under Gregory the Great and by the mid-twelfth century indulgences could be obtained at all forty of the Roman Lent 'Station Churches'. Gerald of Wales gained all the station indulgences on his visit in 1195.<sup>8</sup> He maintained that, of all pilgrimages, the Welsh preferred to go to Rome and that having reached St Peter's they prayed most devoutly.<sup>9</sup> Plenary indulgences (remission of full temporal punishment obtained by a sinner) could be gained by pilgrims visiting the Roman basilicas in a Holy Year. It was the indulgence system which first gave rise to the publication of guide books to Christian Rome. There already existed, for the benefit of travellers, accounts of the remains of ancient Rome under various forms known as the *Mirabilia Urbis Romae* (The Wonders of Rome). This ran into numerous editions and one of its more sophisticated readers was an Englishman, Master Gregory, who visited Rome at the beginning of the thirteenth century and wrote his own account, *De Mirabilibus Romae*. He was impressed by the classical buildings and the remains of the Roman water system, but did not swallow all that the guidebooks contained and was contemptuous of the unlettered pilgrims who did.<sup>10</sup>

As a result of the shrinking population and extent of Rome and removal of the relics to city churches, the catacombs became neglected and abandoned. The catacombs of S Sebastian were one of the few remaining open and accessible to visitors during the late mediaeval period and they were mentioned by the fifteenth-century English Augustinian writer on Rome, John Capgrave. However, only from the late sixteenth century were the catacombs 'rediscovered' and a famous story is told of the workmen in a vineyard off Via Salaria, in 1578, suddenly losing their spades into a cavity beneath their feet, which opened up into a network of galleries.<sup>11</sup> This was enshrined (somewhat misleadingly) as the 'rediscovery of the catacombs'. It was taken up with enthusiasm as a valuable piece of Counter Reformation propaganda and a number of scholars began work on the excavations and clumsy reproductions of the frescoes were made. The first real systematic scholar of the catacombs was Antonio Bosio, who worked on them from

1593 (aged 18) until his death in 1629. He bequeathed his papers to the Knights of Malta who secured their publication in 1634 under the patronage of Cardinal Barberini. Bosio was really the founder of modern Christian archeology - i.e. archeology with the purpose of revealing Christian continuity and ultimately, truth. The growing interest which resulted, led to the catacombs being pillaged all over again - this time by tourists as well as scholars. The mining of the catacombs for relics and artifacts led to a decline in interest in the sites themselves. Much of the archeology was done in museums and libraries. Neglect and apathy characterised the eighteenth century and when Benedict XIV opened a museum of Christian Antiquity, while it stimulated interest, it also made it possible to satisfy that interest in more leisurely and pleasant surroundings. The underground galleries still lay largely unexplored and only partially understood.

From the early nineteenth century Rome figured more vividly in the European and English Catholic spiritual landscape. The French Revolutionary imprisonment and exile of Pius VI and then of Pius VII at the hands of Napoleon wrought considerable sympathy in Catholic hearts for the person of the Pope. The persecution of the papacy and the final reinstatement of the Papal States in 1815 also contributed to a growing enthusiasm for papal authority and for the vision of Rome at the centre of European peace, maintaining the balance of power and true order. England in the eighteenth century had developed a passion for Rome, which was frustrated by the wartime embargo on continental travel. The image of Rome was kept alive for the English in the published travel accounts and after the end of the war a stream of English visitors from an increasingly wide spectrum of society headed for Rome along the Napoleonic military roads which enabled quicker and more comfortable travel. The neo-classical sculptor Antonio Canova spent the winter of 1815 in London restoring his contacts in the world of fashionable artistic patronage and on his return was able to obtain commissions for young artists in Rome and did much to rebuild the artistic colony in the city. One of his patrons was the Catholic Henry Blundell of Ince Blundell, Lancashire. He was an indefatigable art collector who spent considerable time abroad forming a collection of paintings and sculpture.

Cardinal Consalvi, protégé of the Cardinal Duke of York, convinced anglophile and Papal Secretary of State became (in 1814) the first Roman Cardinal to set foot in England since the Reformation. He was

also Cardinal Protector of the English College from 1818 until his death in 1824. He became great friends with the Prince Regent and his portrait by Sir Thomas Lawrence hangs in Windsor Castle. Part of the achievement of his diplomatic mission to England was that the British government paid the costs of Canova's operation to reclaim the art treasures of Rome removed to Paris during the occupation. The Pope's letter of thanks and the Prince Regent's cordial reply were the first exchange of royal and papal letters in centuries. Meanwhile, English Catholics were joining the increased numbers of post-war visitors. Consalvi was also to play an important part in the recovery of Rome's archeology and history and to begin to rebuild the ideological continuity so predominant in the nineteenth century.

Before the mid-and late-nineteenth century achievement of English Ultramontaniam brought papal and Roman devotion into the heart of English Catholic life, there were many English Catholic families who visited Rome, often for extended spells. These visits were stimulated by a combination of poverty, devotion and artistic interest, and they joined large numbers of their countrymen and women. The *Gentleman's Magazine* of 1817 reported 1,700 English families living in Italy. Two years later the Travellers' Club was founded in London, the criterion for membership being that the applicant had stood on the heights of the Capitol in Rome.<sup>12</sup> In the winter of 1818 it was estimated that over 2,000 English were in residence - one seventeenth of the total population of the city.<sup>13</sup> The imagination was stirred by the completion in 1818 of Byron's enormously successful romance, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, which may well have played an important part in the popular reclamation of the word 'pilgrimage'. Childe Harold ends his pilgrimage in Rome and much of the fourth canto celebrates the city. Rome for Byron was the climax of all civilisations, embracing Classical and Christian and he mourns the loss of her glory.

O Rome! my country! city of the soul!  
The orphans of the heart must turn to thee,  
Lone mother of dead empires<sup>14</sup>

Although Byron was partly responsible for their enthusiasm, the post-war travellers drove him to distraction, as he wrote in 1817,

I have not the least idea where I am going, nor what I am to do.  
I wished to have gone to Rome; but at present it is pestilent with  
English - a parcel of staring boobies, who go about gaping and



wishing to be at once cheap and magnificent. A man is a fool who travels now in France or Italy, till this tribe of wretches is swept home again. In two or three years the first rush will be over and the Continent will be roomy and agreeable.<sup>15</sup>

He was wrong. By 1820 the tide of British tourists to Rome had reached a peak and over the next ten years the literary market was awash with books on Italian travel.<sup>16</sup> Rome, like most other Italian cities had pensione and alberghi named 'di Londra' or 'd'Inghilterra' and the Caffè Inglese near the Spanish Steps was more popular than the famous Caffè Greco, despite the fact that the latter reserved a room for the English and served tea.<sup>17</sup> The area around the Piazza di Spagna had already begun to be colonised by the English in large numbers.

Among the most powerful attractions in Rome for this generation was the appearance of its ancient treasury, pagan and Christian, as never seen before. Classical Rome was revealed in greater glory due to excavations carried out by the French and continued with great determination by Pius VII and Cardinal Consalvi. The Colosseum was cleaned and strengthened and it was freed from the mounds of earth and rubbish that had built up over centuries. The temples of the Forum were dug out to their bases and later buildings surrounding them were demolished. The views of Rome familiar from the Piranesi prints was beginning to disappear.<sup>18</sup> Canova, on behalf of Consalvi, was dispatched to Paris with British support to reclaim the art treasures and the antique sculpture removed from Rome by the French. The British Navy dealt with the transportation and paid the removal bill. A new Vatican Gallery was created to house the returned antique sculpture. Between February 1810 and February 1811, 3,239 chests of Vatican Archives had also crossed the Alps, containing an estimated 102,435 registers, volumes or bundles. These too had to be returned and late in 1817 the first wagon train of 174 chests arrived by sea from Marseilles. Other consignments followed but an estimated one third never made it, and it was possible to buy Vatican documents in the flea markets of Paris until late in the nineteenth century.<sup>19</sup>

However, the Christian past was being rediscovered in the form of the catacombs, which after centuries of neglect and misunderstanding, began to be excavated and interpreted for the first time by serious archeologists. They were to play a vital part in the recovery of Christian pilgrimage in the nineteenth century, in the creation of a powerful sense of *Roman* Catholic identity and in the emergence of Rome in the

Protestant Christian imagination.<sup>20</sup> In 1802 the relics 'identified' as those of a Roman maiden Filumena were excavated from the catacomb of S Priscilla. The relics wrought a miraculous cure of a fever in a parish priest from Mugnano who had sought them for his church. After his recovery, he told his travelling companion, the local bishop, of the circumstances and the bishop vowed that the relics should be translated back to Mugnano on the front of the carriage. When the relic box was inadvertently placed under the bishop's seat, he received a severe kicking on the back of the legs, which only ceased when the box was placed at the front of the carriage. Filumena was taken up with great enthusiasm and the parish priest managed to construct a pious biography of her based on the symbols in the tomb inscription. She was taken up by, among others, the Curé D'Ars, Gladstone's sister, Wiseman and Gregory XIV and symbolises the direction which catacomb archeology was to take in the nineteenth century and the use to which it could be put. The personal link with an individual martyr gave a powerful emotional fillip to faith.

For the generation of English Catholics who were beginning to emerge from the constraints of penal times and to assert their identity, the trend in the European Church of restored confidence and renewal centred on Papal authority was encouraging. Symbolic of the desire to restore Roman links with England after the defeat of Napoleon was the determination to reopen the English College, despite the logic that seminaries were now flourishing on English soil by the end of the Napoleonic wars. Significantly, the English bishops were determined to have the college controlled by English superiors.<sup>21</sup> It took until 1818 to bring about the restoration under Gradwell's rectorship. One of the first students was Nicholas Wiseman, author of a devoted and very personal volume of *Recollections of the Last Four Popes* (1858) recalling the period of his early familiarity with Rome.

He was at the centre of the circle of English Catholics who entered Rome as pilgrims or visitors of longer duration and had considerable influence on them and the ideal of the Church which was formative in England. In the early 1830s he was described by one English observer as '... a young man, rapidly gaining a great reputation at the church Degli Incurabili on the Corso. He was a tall slim man of ascetic appearance, and not promising to be the very corpulent man he was in after years.'<sup>22</sup> The reputation he was gaining was as a preacher of English language sermons for the Catholics (and anyone else interested) in Rome.

Wiseman was sensitive to the new mood in Rome and in England and was anxious to see Catholic travel guides to Rome which would counterbalance those already flooding the market and 'resonate with proper spiritual and devotional tone'.<sup>23</sup> He wrote powerfully of this need in the *Dublin Review*.

If we enter the precincts of the Eternal City, the power of religion, associated as she ever should be with the beautiful and the amiable, lays hold of our mind and heart and encompasses us with an inspiring influence which denotes the presence of the spirit of the place. A marvellous combination of splendid natural scenery, with grey and broken masses of ruins - the emblems of the enduring and of the perishable, of the works of God and of man - encircles and adorns those sacred temples, which seem to partake of the properties of both - erected of the frail materials composing the latter, yet apparently endowed with the immortal and unfading newness which is the prerogative of the former.<sup>24</sup>

Wiseman's desires to inspire people with the spirit of the place were fulfilled by W.J. A. Sheehy in 1838 (*Reminiscences of Rome: a religious, moral and literary view of the Eternal City*) and in 1842 by Jeremiah Donovan, (*Rome, Ancient and Modern and its Environs*). Works like these reflected and stimulated the growing confidence among English Catholics that the devotional and historical fabric of Rome clearly expressed its apostolic heritage, which was also theirs to reclaim.

During the middle and later years of the nineteenth century, attitudes to Catholicism in England changed. The tolerant indifference of the eighteenth century and the often open co-operation of the early nineteenth century disappeared in a more hostile atmosphere. Catholicism for its part became more self-assured, more assertive, more distinctive - more Roman. This encouraged a desire among English Catholics, especially perhaps among the new converts of the nineteenth century, who sought the assurance of papal authority, to forge even more concrete links between England and Rome. The Oxford Movement in the Church of England, dedicated to restoring the Established Church to its pre-Reformation Catholic roots, was a source of division within English Protestantism. To its advocates it led naturally to a positive reappraisal of the relationship between the Church of England and Rome and in many cases led individuals to seek membership of the Catholic Church. However, to the vast majority of Church of England

members, supported by the Protestant Nonconformists, the Oxford Movement was a source of danger, undermining Protestantism from within and threatening the overthrow of English Christianity by papal authority. It did not take long for the latent anti-Popery in the English mentality to resurface. The reassertion of the 'Romanness' of Catholicism and the increased focus on the person and office of the Pope did not help and the furore over Wiseman's *Letter from the Flaminian Gate* was a prime case of how easily such fury was stirred.<sup>25</sup>

On his appointment as Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster in 1850, Wiseman was given the titular church of S Pudentiana, reputed (though along with other claimants) to be the oldest Christian foundation in Rome. It was said to have been built in 154 on or near the site of the house of a Roman senator whose daughters Praxede and Pudentiana had a particular devotion to the Christian martyrs and tradition had it that Caractacus, a British chieftain, was imprisoned there, became a Christian and carried out missionary journeys to his native land. As H.V. Morton evocatively, if a little romantically, wrote, 'In this church Christian tradition goes back to the time of Pius I and the year 154 when old people were still living who had received first hand accounts of the apostles from those who had known them 78 years previously. St Paul is said to have lived here too and it is claimed the St Mark may have written his gospel here'.<sup>26</sup> To the left of the apse is a chapel containing a portion of a table believed to have been used by St Peter (the rest being in S John Lateran). The growing interest in relics caught Wiseman's imagination and when he was titular Cardinal he became interested in this tradition and had it compared scientifically with the wood in St John Lateran. It was concluded that both sections came from the same table, which was almost certainly of first century date. Following the examination, Wiseman had the wood enclosed behind glass, where it is now preserved. S Pudentiana was also the titular church of one of Wiseman's successors at Westminster, Cardinal Francis Bourne.

Later, as Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster he presided over the 'Romanising' of English Catholicism and the flowering of passionate Papal devotion. Better known to most English Catholics of a certain age than his *Recollections*, is Wiseman's hymn 'Full in the Panting Heart of Rome'. He was a key figure in forging the connection between the rebirth of English Catholicism and the assertion of Roman spiritual authority. 'Not since Gregory Martin wrote of Rome in 1581 had an English Catholic been so sensitive to the historical and devotional value

of the Christian monuments of Rome. Like Martin, Wiseman saw Rome as the heavenly Jerusalem, 'the capital of spiritual Christianity'<sup>27</sup>

The rediscovery of the catacombs and the attention which this brought upon the history of early Christianity played an important propaganda role. The history of the early Christian community in Rome, the 'Church of the Catacombs' was increasingly explained in polemical terms, by Catholics asserting the historic continuity, and by Protestants arguing that theirs was the true heritage of the Early Church.<sup>28</sup> In the face of Protestant writers trying to proclaim the essentially Protestant simplicity of the Church of the Catacombs, cleansed of all the accretions of later centuries, Catholic scholarship (supported by the Tractarians) fought back fiercely and successfully. Wiseman was an important figure in this campaign to reclaim the catacombs. He had been fascinated by them since his early years in Rome and used the evidence of them in his well publicised lectures given in England in 1836. He wanted to capture and communicate the blend of history and devotion available in the archeology of the catacombs and so turned to the most popular literary form in Victorian England - the novel. He published *Fabiola* in 1858 to immediate success. The first run of 4,000 sold rapidly. The novel contains a great deal of Church History and drew upon a wealth of archeological evidence as well as imagination. A number of real historical figures are woven into the story and Wiseman used a number of individual and composite portraits to demonstrate forcefully the continuity between the Church of the Catacombs and the English Catholic Church of nineteenth century.<sup>29</sup> Its success spread beyond England and it was translated into seven Italian editions as well as French, Spanish, Portuguese, Hungarian, German, Danish, Polish, Slavonic and Dutch. In England it ran through numerous editions and had widespread and lasting popularity.<sup>30</sup>

Wiseman saw the roots of nineteenth-century Catholicism in the catacombs, but the catacombs in the contemporary history of English Catholicism. What else had the Recusant communities done within living memory, but emerge anew from the catacombs? *Fabiola* marked the peak of Catholic presentation of the catacombs, provided Catholic apologists with a powerful tool and ensured enduring interest in the catacombs among pilgrims. However, even before the publication of *Fabiola*, the catacombs wrought a fierce emotional effect on at least one English pilgrim, Pauline de la Ferronays, the 20-year-old daughter

of a French émigré Count who became British Ambassador in Rome in 1829:

We left the catacombs by the stair that had been used by the Christians. When I was on its steps, the different impressions I had received in succession broke upon me in their fullness. The steps were the same as the martyrs trod on their way to death. I longed to cast myself on the ground and kiss their footprints. I longed to stay and weep without stint. I felt there I could have given utterance to the feelings with which my heart was full. Then I thought that the young girls who went up those slopes to die heroically saw me from their height in heaven and prayed for me who was so little like them. . . I could not resist the satisfaction of kissing those sacred stones before I returned to the church. When again in it, I knelt down and longed to remain there. I had felt emotions never before experienced by me. I owed to them the religion in which, happily, I was born. I felt the need of thanksgiving and of prayer to God that all my life should be an expression of my gratitude and of my love towards Him.<sup>31</sup>

This overheated emotionalism was to become a feature in Catholic piety in the nineteenth century and to play a part in the reclaiming of a direct, immediate and personal relationship between the present day Catholic and the saints and martyrs of the past.

The archeological work on the catacombs was in part done by Englishmen, influenced by both Wiseman and the Tractarian search for Christian history and continuity. James Spencer Northcote was educated at Corpus Christi, Oxford, where he formed a lifelong friendship with Newman and eventually became a highly successful Rector of Oscott. After graduation in 1841 he married and was ordained in the Church of England. He worked as a curate in Ilfracombe, Devon, where he became close friends with the other leading Tractarian, Edward Pusey. In 1845 his wife and three sisters converted to Catholicism and he was not long in following. After a brief period as a teacher, he moved to Rome in 1847 and spent three years there, during which time he wrote a series of articles for *The Rambler*. In the first article he wrote of the attractions of Rome and criticised English visitors who never set foot in the catacombs:

The history of the Church may record its triumphs; antiquaries and tourist may enumerate its treasures; all its churches and

palaces, museums and galleries, may be traversed by the hurrying foot, and scanned by the curious eye; but not all these taken together will suffice to give an adequate idea of the indescribable charm of a residence within its walls, nor even a faithful representation of what it really is. Rome is pre-eminently a place to be lived in, not learnt from books; and in which the longer you live the more you learn, and the more you learn, the longer you will desire to live in it; I might add too, if you would not think me too enthusiastic and too tiresome, that the more you learn, the more you will find is yet to be learnt; for when you have exhausted your studies of that Rome which is before your eyes, you have yet an equal task remaining in that Rome which is beneath your feet. Roma Sotteranea is hardly less extensive, and certainly not a whit less interesting, than the Rome in which we live; and if it be true that time and labour are necessary for the understanding of the latter, still more are they required for the understanding of the former. . . Yet many of our countrymen - some too who spend a considerable time in Rome, and devote themselves most assiduously to the task of lionising - have been known to go away without having paid even a single visit to these most interesting Christian antiquities; and many more, after a rapid walk through some of the subterranean galleries and an impatient peep into two or three of the principal chapels, having too (it may be) a very imperfect comprehension of the *lingo* spoken by their guide, come away with a satisfactory conviction that they have *done* the catacombs, and that after all there is not so very much in them.

Northcote's ambition was to write a straightforward but thorough account of the catacombs and to this end he accompanied the leading archeologist John Baptist de Rossi day after day into the catacombs. De Rossi (1822-94) had trained in both Philosophy and Jurisprudence, but in 1841, working as a scriptor in the Vatican Library, he met the archeologist and Custode of the Sacred Cemeteries, Joseph Marchi SJ. He fired De Rossi's lifelong interest in the catacombs. The younger scholar, trained to handle documentary evidence, was the first to recognise the importance of using literary sources to augment the archeological evidence. He widened the scope of the investigations by searching later material as well as the galleries themselves and making use of topographical evidence of Patristic and Mediaeval Rome.<sup>32</sup>

Throughout the 1860s and 1870s he published a vast corpus of works.<sup>33</sup> Rossi and Marchi were both, from 1851, members of Pius IX's newly formed Commissione di Archeologia Sacra. The Commission both funded and supervised all future work on the catacomb sites. Its existence is indicative of the growing interest in the origins of the Church in Rome by the Pope who was fighting a rear guard action to hold on to Rome for the Church.

Northcote's extensive first hand knowledge enabled him to write creatively an appealing image of the life and worship of the early Christians. His were among the most popular and successful items in the early editions of the *Rambler* and kept the catacombs in the forefront of English attention for two years. His was the first treatment to take full account of the scientific and scholarly breakthroughs. He created a popular image of the catacombs which would enkindle a devotional response, demonstrating the Catholic character of the evidence and portraying the Early Church as the progenitor of modern Catholic faith. In 1854, in response to demand from the English for tours of the catacombs, Northcote published his *Roman Catacombs*, revised in 1859. This was reworked in collaboration with Brownlow a decade later, and remains the most detailed and scholarly account of the catacombs to have appeared in English.

The Catacombs of S Callisto underwent considerable excavation by Marchi and De Rossi. As late as 1844, Marchi discovered the entrance to S Callisto and determined once and for all that it was a separate complex, not part of the catacomb of S Sebastiano. Among other important finds in S Callisto were the tomb of St Cornelius, identified by Rossi in 1849 and uncovered in 1852, and the Crypt of the Popes, excavated and identified by De Rossi in 1854 and to which he brought Pius IX. This visit reflected the Ultramontane desire to emphasise continuity and historicity in Roman and papal authority. De Rossi was also able, using his variety of skills and techniques, (i.e. using seventh-century copies) to reassemble the moving inscription to the early popes, written by Pope Damasus himself:

Learn that here lies here a whole group of saints. The revered tombs enclose their bodies while the Kingdom of Heaven has carried off their chosen souls: here Sixtus' companions triumphing over their persecutors. Here the band of prelates who guard the altars of Christ. Here the bishop whose long life was a time of peace. Here the holy confessors sent by Greece. Here young





POPE PIUS IX ('PIO NONO')

men and boys; here aged fathers and their offspring who chose to preserve their virginity. Here too, I Damasus, I admit it, would like to have been laid, were it not for fear of disturbing the ashes of these saints.

Not only the martyrs of the catacombs, but inevitably, the relics of martyrs underwent a resurgence in interest in the nineteenth century. The Ultramontane Church emphasised the direct relationship which the Catholic Christian could have with the divine, particularly through devotion to saints. Rediscovered patristic saints like Filumena were immensely popular, but contemporary holy men and women such as Bernadette Soubirous and John Vianney were quickly canonised and visionaries and mystics were popular devotional figures. As part of the Ultramontane development of the Church, the authority of Rome in the discernment and authentication of saints and their relics became increasingly important. Roman approbation of holy people, sites and objects was a vital part of the centralisation which characterised the Ultramontane vision of the Church. One particular controversy over relics reflected the English determination to become part of this vision. The controversy emerged in the early 1860s over the supposed phials of blood which were found at the tombs in the catacombs and were taken as an authentic sign of the martyrdom of the dead person. Thus they were venerated as important relics. When questions were raised over whether this was in fact the case, Wiseman was horrified and Northcote (while sharing some of the scholarly reservations) was concerned about the effect of the controversy on devotional life. The phials represented the cult of martyrs and the validity and necessity of the use of relics in English devotional life. What would be the effect if the faithful thought that they had been venerating relics improperly identified? More worryingly, what would be the effect on Roman authority in relation to the relics which it authenticated and distributed worldwide and on its control of devotional practice? The phial controversy illustrates the growing intransigence and assertion of Roman rule in the face of intellectual advance, and the hostile use to which intellectual advance could be put by opponents of Roman authority, in an effort to undermine it.<sup>34</sup> The anxiety for the faithful may have been unfounded, as one pilgrim expressed a healthily pragmatic but nonetheless religious attitude to relics, in the light of the controversy:

We are also eager to venerate relics, as were the early Christians, even though we may mistake the identity of the relic which we

think we possess. After all, what does it matter in God's sight what we venerate, if we sincerely believe the authenticity of what is under our eyes? Be there error in that or not, still our homage is offered to the true object, whatever it may be?<sup>35</sup>

Nevertheless, the defensive attitude taken up by proponents of the Ultramontane Catholic view had become the norm. English pilgrims were encouraged to see present day Rome, not only as the heir of the early Christians, but as embattled by hostile forces of liberal politics, Protestant polemic and scientific rationalism. Hence the tone of one typical Catholic guide book published in 1858:

The circumstances of the present times render it more necessary than ever, that the journey to Rome should now bear the character of a pious pilgrimage, when the anti-Christian spirit of the writers and so-called foreign correspondents of too many journals, seek to fill their letters with all that is calculated to throw ridicule on the manners, customs and social regulations of the Eternal City. More than ever should she be surrounded with love and respect, for she has more than ever become the stronghold of faith and liberty and the centre of civilisation. The railroads and steamers, and the desire to travel, which seems to be the grand characteristic of the times, have made the pilgrimage to Rome easier and more frequent than in days gone by. A work which will embrace both a religious and a scientific view of the Eternal City, must be calculated to assist the pious pilgrim in his accomplishing his longed for object, and will aid him in his walks through this sacred city.<sup>36</sup>

Such defensiveness was fuelled by the often hostile attitudes of English Protestantism. English travellers to Rome throughout the century shared something of Newman's ambivalence on his first visit as a member of the Church of England, but without his theological sophistication. As one author has expressed it, 'Nothing in the Mediterranean was so enticing, nor yet so repulsive as the religion of Papal Rome'.<sup>37</sup> Fascination with the exotic 'foreignness' of Catholic ceremonial drew visitors to St Peter's and the other great churches as to some curious ritual of an alien race. Their behaviour at times embarrassed even their own countrymen who commented on the crassness of English reaction to Catholic services. Protestant authors, however, delighted in telling their correspondents and readers of the horrors of Popery encountered in Roman churches, which in their eyes took on

something of the mesmerising horror of Madame Tussaud's. The theatrical style of liturgical devotions and the overtly pious behaviour of the local population both produced distaste. Worst of all was the appearance of English Catholicism in all its enthusiastic Ultramontanist in Rome. One Presbyterian visitor refused to visit the English College, fearing that the Rector would bestow on him 'the same help the wolf gives to the lamb.'<sup>38</sup>

The desire to enshrine the Church of the catacombs afresh and to build a consciousness of it in the popular mind can be seen in the story of the chapel of the English Convent of Mater Dei. The Poor Servants of the Mother of God, founded in 1870 by Frances Taylor to work among the poor of London, founded their Roman house in 1887. The desire to have a house in Rome was apparent in many orders and congregations and emphasised the enhanced consciousness of Rome, especially among the English. Frances Taylor published an account of her experiences in the Crimea and also *Tyburn and Those Who Went Thither* - the first attempt at a systematic account of the Elizabethan Catholic martyrs. This brought Frances to the attention of Lady Georgiana Fullerton, herself an accomplished writer and published novelist. She was a member of the Cavendish family and married a Guards officer with lands in Ireland. To the astonishment of Georgiana and her family, he became a Catholic in 1843. She followed suit in 1846. Alongside charitable work and her other writings, she collected material on the English Catholic martyrs to aid their recognition and if possible advance the cause of their beatification - hence her interest in Fanny Taylor's book.

The two women met and became firm friends and allies. By 1868 they had begun to evolve plans for a religious institute of women, taking the model of a Polish congregation of Little Servants of the Mother of God. The little community began in London in 1870 in a cottage near Farm Street, where the women took in sewing and laundry to maintain themselves and their work. By 1872 the order had a distinct identity from the Polish root, as the Poor Servants of the Mother of God. The idea of a house in Rome did not emerge till the 1880s, when a chance conversation of Fanny Taylor (now M Magdalen) while in Rome in 1885 sowed the seed. Things moved quickly. A flat in a house in Via San Sebastianello was rented, but Mr Fullerton quickly took steps to purchase the entire property for the sisters. His wife had died in January 1885 but he continued to support the sisters and the Rome convent was in part a memorial to his wife.

M Magdalen and two companions moved into the house in January 1886, beginning with laundry and charitable activity among the poor. Soon after, the sisters began an English speaking school, which at its peak had 600 pupils and lasted for over a century till 1992. The chapel of St George and the English Saints was built as a memorial to his wife by Mr Fullerton and was opened on the anniversary of her death in January 1887. It contains a replica of the earliest known fresco of Our Lady and the Holy Child in the Catacombs of S Priscilla. This picture, given the title of Our Lady, Queen of Prophets, was solemnly enshrined in the chapel on 14 December 1895, since when it has been the focus of particular prayer for unity between Anglicans and Catholics.

Writing in 1863, the distinguished archeologist of the catacombs, John Baptist de Rossi assessed it thus:

Everyone can see that the scene depicted in the catacomb of Priscilla is quite in the classical style and is a work of the best period of art. The form of the clothing points to remote antiquity; the cloak thrown over the nude, the figure of the prophet with the right shoulder bare, and still more the tunic with short sleeves worn by the Virgin. The beauty of the composition, the dignity and grace of the features, the freedom and power of the drawing, give to this fresco the impress of an age so cultivated and flourishing as to the fine arts, that when I first beheld it I seemed to see before me one of the oldest specimens of Christian painting which are to be found in our cemeteries.

While the nineteenth-century copy cannot imitate the fragile delicacy of the ancient fresco, it is still possible to see from the painting the source of the archeologist's passionate excitement. For many years, a Jesuit archeologist from the Gregorian University, Fr Bonavena, had wished to see this oldest known fresco of the Mother of God reproduced and honoured publicly. He first voiced this desire in 1893 and action to find the right church for this was triggered by Leo XIII's letter 'Ad Anglos' of April 1895. The Guild of Our Lady of Ransom had been canonically erected in the chapel of St George at Mater Dei in 1890, to pray for the conversion of England. Thus it seemed an appropriate location for a shrine to Our Lady which was both Biblical and Prophetic. Papal approval of the copy made on canvas was obtained and the picture was solemnly enshrined in December 1895. In 1896 Leo XIII instituted the feast of Our Lady Queen of Prophets on 27 January and the 'English Convent' became widely known as a centre of prayer for the reunion of

Rome and Canterbury. These sort of connections with the church of the catacombs naturally have increased the popular awareness of them and reverence for what they represent.

After 1870, the unsettled state of Rome made the work of the archeologists more difficult. The new secular government controlled the excavations and the previous authority and resources of the Sacred Congregation of the Vatican were greatly curtailed. The unsettled mood made the raising of funds for archeology more difficult and even the leading excavator John Baptist de Rossi was forced to rely on donations, Northcote helped by publishing a popular work in 1877 *A Visit to the Roman Catacombs*, but interest in England in the catacombs was fading from its earlier peak. Many of the English abhorred the determined restoration by the government of works of art, buildings and classical ruins. Archeologists were blamed for the ruin of the familiar decay and vegetation around buildings which had appealed to the Victorian taste.<sup>39</sup> A new Rome began to emerge - the secular modern city, in which the pilgrim was perhaps less at home?

English Catholic interest and piety shifted towards the cause of the martyrs of the Reformation and penal times, whose stories became part of the popular reassertion of English Catholicism. The cause for beatification by the Church of the first group of martyrs was opened by Cardinal Manning in June 1874, although as early as 1860 Wiseman had petitioned the Pope (unsuccessfully) to institute a feast in England in honour of the martyrs.

The passionate interest in the life of the early Christians in Rome had contributed to a recovery of the close link between martyrdom and pilgrimage. The stories of Roman martyrs again became familiar to Catholic pilgrims visiting Rome (and the armchair pilgrims, through the written word). Martyrdom and pilgrimage were again interconnected and in the English mind took on a new level of interest. Wiseman was not the only one to idealise English Catholic history as a rewriting of the Early Church and the stories of Catholic martyrdom associated with the life of the 'Recusant Catacombs' began to be told for the first time. In the second half of the nineteenth century, English writers including Georgiana Fullerton, Frances Taylor and Bede Camm began to collect together the evidence of the English Catholic martyrdoms of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and to tell their stories for historical and devotional purposes. The result was in 1886 and 1894 that interest had reached sufficient level to persuade Rome to beatify the

first groups of English martyrs and set them on the road to canonisation. By then, the Pope himself was perceived as the victim of oppression. Martyrdom in defence of faith and in defence of Rome had re-entered the Catholic mind and heart by the late nineteenth century. The persecuted leaders of the Early Church, the heroic seminary priests of the sixteenth century and seventeenth century and the prisoner of the Vatican were all believed to be standing in a great tradition which was the mark of Catholic identity.

#### EDITORIAL NOTE:

This paper was delivered to the Catholic Archives Society in Rome, October 1995.

#### Footnotes

1. J. Sumption, *Pilgrimage: an Image of Mediaeval Religion* (1975), 218.
2. J.D. Kelly, *The Oxford Dictionary of Popes* (1986), 32-3.
3. Meyer, 2.
4. Sumption, 218.
5. Finucane, 41-2.
6. Brentano, 85.
7. R. Delaney, 'The Seven Churches' *Venerabile* 1932, 379.
8. Sumption, 230.
9. G Williams, 'Poets and Pilgrims in 15th - 16th century Wales' *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymrodorion* (1992-3), 80.
10. Sumption 225.
11. Pastor, *History of Popes* vol XIX, 262 note 2 and 267 note 3.
12. Meyer, 107.
13. J.C. Hale (ed), *The Italian Journal of Samuel Rogers* (1955), 60.
14. Canto IV, verse LXXVIII.
15. Hale, 60.
16. Meyer, 119.
17. Hale 87.
18. Hale, 65.
19. Chadwick, Vatican Archives, 14-18.
20. Much of the material on the catacombs comes from the unpublished thesis of Dr W.W. Meyer, 'The Church of the Catacombs: British Responses to the Evidence of the Roman Catacombs 1578-1900' (Cambridge Ph D 1985) I am grateful to his supervisor, Dr E. Duffy, for drawing it to my attention.

21. Williams, 75,
22. ed S.J. Reid, *Memoirs of Sir Edward Blount* (1902), 35.
23. Meyer 151.
24. N. Wiseman, 'Religion in Italy', *Dublin Review* (1836), 468.
25. Schiefen.
26. Morton, 173.
27. Meyer, 143.
28. W. W. Meyer, 'The Phial of Blood Controversy and the Decline of the Liberal Catholic Movement' *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 46 (1995) 75-94.
29. Meyer, 269-71.
30. Meyer, 279.
31. Mary Catherine Bishop, *A Memorial of Mrs Augustus Craven* (Pauline de la Ferronays) (1895), 16-17.
32. Meyer, 95.
33. *Dictionary of Christian Church*.
34. Meyer, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* op.cit.
35. Mary Catherine Bishop, 199.
36. Rev W.H. Nelligan, 9.
37. John Pemble, *The Mediterranean Passion* (1987), 212.
38. J. Lethbridge, 'Sheep among the Wolves' *Venerabile* (1960), 343.
39. Pemble, 178.



## TERENCE ALBERT O'BRIEN'S SPEECH FROM THE SCAFFOLD

Edward Walsh

When the Irish Dominican historian and prolific writer,<sup>1</sup> Hugh Fenning asked me to check a reference at the British Library I could scarcely have imagined where it would lead.

So while noting the entry details of Tady O'Brien's 1745 *Truth Triumphant*<sup>2</sup> in one of the well known quarto sized catalogue tomes under the great central dome of the famous Bloomsbury circular reading room, my eye spied another but unrelated O'Brien entry under shelf mark E.647.(2). 'O'Brien (Terence) *Speech and Confession of the Bishop of Clonwel at the place of execution at Limerick*' 1651. Terence Albert O'Brien O.P. born 1601, was the martyred Bishop of Emly 1647-1651 and not Clonwel [sic] which is of course Clonmel, County Tipperary. That was the detail that caught my attention.

Further investigation revealed that there was another and complete title listing for the same pamphlet under the same shelf mark but with a different author; this time one James Hind. *The Humble Petition of James Hind (Close Prisoner in New-gate) To the Right Honourable the Councill of State; And their proceedings there upon together with the Speech and Confession of the Bishop of Clonwel at the place of Execution at Limerick in Ireland on the 9 of this instant November 1651, As also his prayer immediately before he was turned off the Ladder; And his declaration to the people, concerning the King of Scots; and the grounds of his Engagement against the Parliament. Likewise the manner of the Deportment of General Oneal, and 29 Colonels and other officers, who were all hanged at the same time. London, Printed for G. Horton, 1651.* This writer had no recollection of ever seeing any mention or reference to this document and was both intrigued and amazed to discover that it had not been used by Augustine Valkenburg O.P.<sup>3</sup> in the position papers for Terence Albert's beatification in 1992.<sup>4</sup> Obviously Valkenburg was unaware of the existence of this document, but then he was not alone in this respect.<sup>5</sup>

This is a six page pamphlet of which one page is given over to James Hind (a famous and colourful highwayman) and the bishop gets the other five. In 1615 there would have been no difference between the calendars used at Limerick and London, so how did Horton the printer get the date of Terence's death wrong by ten days? If in fact he got it right, then Bl Terence has been given the wrong feastday (29th October).

Little is known about pamphleteer Horton other than that between 1647-1660 he was 'publisher of political pamphlets and news-sheets' in London at (1) Royal Exchange in Cornhill, (2) near the Three Crowns in Barbican, (3) Figg-Tree Court in Barbican, and (4) the lower end of Red Cross Street over against St Giles Church near Cripplegate.<sup>6</sup>

By any standard Terence's was an impressive speech to have made from a scaffold, but the date of death is out by almost two weeks and one can only wonder how it could all have been so fully reported. The archivist at the Royal Historical Manuscripts Commission at the quaintly titled Quality House, Quality Court, Chancery Lane, confirmed that shorthand was in use at that time. Leading recusant historian, the Jesuit, Francis Edwards observed that this sort of document was 'not that rare'. The document is to be found in the *Thomason Tract Collection*, that unique compilation of books, pamphlets and newspapers collected contemporaneously by George Thomason (d.1666).<sup>7</sup> The collection is comprised of 23,926 tracts in 2,142 volumes and was bought by George III in 1761 for £300 and presented to the British Museum a year later.

There are differences in the BL catalogue listings for this opus; under O'Brien<sup>8</sup> the entry states Clonwel, while under Hind<sup>9</sup> it is Clonmel and similarly in the catalogue of the Thomason Tracts.<sup>10</sup> What the document does confirm however is the long held tradition as to where the execution actually took place, the main square in Limerick. All the principal dramatis personae appear in the DNB.<sup>11</sup>

The document has been examined, scrutinised and subjected to critical analysis by Hugh Fenning for publication in *Collectanea Hibernica*. But I have to admit to a thrill and frisson of excitement on making this discovery, especially as when it happened in May 1994, Canadian academic Dr Jeanne Shami had just discovered an unknown manuscript of a politically sensitive sermon by the 17th century poet John Donne in the Public Record Office, Chancery Lane. The sermon dated 1622 delivered by Donne (who was then Dean of St Paul's) at the cathedral on the anniversary of the Gunpowder Plot has rightly been regarded as a major discovery and caused not a little excitement in literary and historical circles.<sup>12</sup>



TERENCE ALBERT O'BRIEN OP  
BISHOP OF EMLY (1647-51)

## Footnotes

1. H. Fenning OP, *The Undoing Of The Friars Of Ireland; A Study Of The Novitiate Question In The Eighteenth Century* (Louvain, 1972).  
*The Irish Dominican Province 1698-1797*, (Dublin, 1990).  
Hugh Fenning has been a regular contributor to *Archivium Ordinis Praedicatorum, Archivium Hibernicum, Collectanea Hibernica, Riocht na Midhe* and *The Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society*.
2. H. Fenning OP, 'Cork Imprints of Catholic Interest 1723-1804: a Provisional Check-List', *Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society*, Vol.100, 1995, pp. 129-148 and *1805-1830 (Part 2)*, Vol. 101, 1996, pp. 115-142.
3. A. Valkenburg OP (1918-1990). Valkie, as he was affectionately know to generations of schoolboys was a much loved, widely admired and highly respected priest. He joined the Dominican Order in 1937 and was ordained in 1944. A shy, gentle individual, with a very droll sense of humour, this polymath friar was a brilliant linguist and educationalist—twenty four years teaching including four as Headmaster at Newbridge College, Newbridge, County Kildare. Poet, historian, philatelist, broadcaster, writer and preacher. Missionary in Iran from 1974 until expelled after the revolution and his passport stamped "to leave Iran before before 23rd August 1980." On returning to Ireland appointed as an auxiliary member of Archbishop Dermot Ryan's commission on the causes of the Irish martyrs. He fostered a great love of the Irish language in many of his charges and features as one of the protagonists in *The Agent From Buenos Aires* by this writer in *The Cork Hollybough*, 1992, pp. 27 and 30.
4. A. Valkenburg OP, with H. Fenning OP, *Two Dominican Martyrs of Ireland*, (Dublin, 1992).
5. R. Walsh OP, series of articles on Irish Dominican martyrs and the penal times in the IER, 1893, 1894, 1906, 1907, 1909, 1910, 1911.
6. *Dictionaries Of The Printers And Booksellers Who Were At Work In England, Scotland And Ireland 1557-1775* by H.R.Plomer and others reprinted in compact form in one volume: The Biographical Society, Grove Press, Ilkley, Yorkshire, 1977, p.101.
7. Thomason, George : DNB, Vol.XIX, pp.681-682.
8. O'Brien, BLC entry Vol. 3, OBRIE/OCHN, p.215.
9. Hind, BLC entry Vol. 57, HILN/HINTRN, p.76.
10. *British Museum Catalogue of Thomason Tracts 1640-52: Catalogue of the pamphlets, books, newspapers and manuscripts relating to the Civil War, the Commonwealth, and Restoration, collected by George Thomason 1640-1661*, (London, 1908) Vol. 1, p.852.
11. Hind, James : DNB, Vol.IX, p.893; \*  
Ireton, Henry: DNB, Vol. XIV, pp.773-774;  
O'Brien, Terence Albert: DNB, Vol. XIV, pp.773-774  
\* There are other entries for Hind in the BL 'Wing' catalogue pp.302-303.
12. O. Bowcott, 'First Draft Of Donne Sermon Kow-Tows To Divine Monarch', *The Guardian*, May 26, 1994.

## THE ARCHIVES OF THE RELIGIOUS SISTERS OF CHARITY

Sister Marie Bernadette O'Leary RSC

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Before attempting to write about the archives of the Religious Sisters of Charity, it seems reasonable to provide a little background history.

Born in Cork on 19 January 1787, Mary Aikenhead was the eldest child of an Irish Catholic mother, Mary Stackpole, and a Protestant father of Scottish descent, David Aikenhead. Baptised a Protestant, she was received into the Catholic Church on 6 June 1802, her father having been converted to Catholicism before his death in the previous year.

Although Mary belonged to the socially and economically privileged class of her day, she was not unaware of the appalling conditions in which the poor were living, and from her earliest years she was filled with compassion and a desire to do what she could to alleviate their misery. As a young girl she paid daily visits to the poorest quarters of Cork city, accompanied by a friend of like disposition, bringing food and medicine to the sick and under-nourished inhabitants.

When, at the age of seventeen, Mary experienced a call to the religious life, she looked for a congregation where she might serve God in the poor, and especially those who were sick. She had heard of the work being done in France and elsewhere by the Daughters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul, but no such congregation had as yet been introduced into Ireland. Eventually Providence led her to Father Daniel Murray, later Archbishop of Dublin. He was most desirous to establish a congregation of Sisters of Charity in Ireland, and upon hearing of Mary Aikenhead's aspirations he enquired how she would feel about committing herself to the new venture he had in mind. She replied that if an efficient superior and two or three others could be found to begin the work, she would be happy to join them. Little did she think that she would be the efficient superior! However, this was God's plan for her, and on 6 June 1812 she and another young woman, Alicia Walsh, arrived at the Bar Convent, York, to begin a novitiate which was to last three years and which was to be a preparation for their life's work as Sisters of Charity.

Having returned to Ireland in August 1815, the two sisters went to live at North William Street, Dublin, where they were given charge of a group of orphans. Before long they were joined by other young women, and so began the congregation of the Religious Sisters of Charity. The sisters visited the sick poor in their homes and did all they could to alleviate their sufferings.

#### EXPANSION

Other foundations followed, notably the establishment in 1834 of St Vincent's Hospital, which marked the realisation of Mother Mary Aikenhead's dream to provide professional medical and nursing care for the poor. In 1838, at the request of Bishop Polding, Mother Aikenhead sent five sisters to Australia to work with women prisoners in Parramatta penal settlement. They were the first religious sisters to set foot on Australian soil. The first foundation in England was made at Preston, Lancashire, in 1840. Unfortunately, circumstances necessitated the withdrawal of these sisters in 1848, although a total of sixteen foundations were made in England in later years and three houses were opened in Scotland. The congregation is now international, comprising sisters of at least seven nationalities and supporting communities in Ireland, England, Scotland, Zambia, Nigeria, California and Venezuela. The sisters in Australia form a separate congregation, but there is a strong bond between them and the Religious Sisters of Charity, and members from both groups are working together in Zambia, Nigeria and Ireland.

#### THE ARCHIVES

Until September 1995 the archives of the congregation were housed at Mount St Anne's, Milltown, Dublin, which had been the mother house of the Religious Sisters of Charity since 1879. In recent years, in view of the declining number of sisters, it was deemed impractical to continue to maintain such a large building, and thus in 1995 Mount St Anne's was sold and the generalate transferred to a smaller house built in the grounds of Lakelands Convent, Sandymount, Dublin. The new generalate was named 'Caritas' and consists of a residential block housing a community of six, an administration centre and an archival unit. The latter comprises an office, reference room, storeroom and a strongroom. The strongroom is fitted with air conditioning and moisture control apparatus, as well as strip lighting and a burglar alarm. It is equipped with steel shelving and cupboards and a cabinet for outsize material.

The first section of the archival collection contains material relating to Mother Mary Aikenhead, beginning with her correspondence. Mother Aikenhead was an invalid for the last twenty-seven years of her life and she directed her young congregation chiefly by means of the pen. There are 1,277 of her letters extant, the greater number of which were written to superiors of local communities. There are also letters to Mary Aikenhead from Archbishop Murray and other ecclesiastical figures, as well as business correspondence. Material concerning the early years of the congregation includes the Annals, Mary Aikenhead's accounts, and a diary (1815-25) kept by her first companion, Mother Catherine (Alicia) Walsh. Various printed books used in the early years are included in this section, together with manuscript notebooks of meditations, spiritual exhortations etc. One very precious treasure is the manuscript copy of the Constitutions in Mary Aikenhead's hand, with an appendix signed and sealed by Archbishop Murray. This document was sent to Rome for approval in 1823.

Legal records among Mother Mary Aikenhead's papers cover a wide range of material concerning the management of finances in the early years of the congregation and the acquisition of property for new charitable projects. They include leases from 1760, rentals, wills, title deeds, legal opinions and related correspondence.

The cause of beatification of Mary Aikenhead furnishes a considerable volume of material, including records of the Informative Process (1911) and the Apostolic Process (1922), as well as correspondence with those appointed by the Holy See to deal with the cause. There have been many books, articles and plays written about Mary Aikenhead and copies of these are also kept. Since 1910 there has been a stream of letters coming to the sisters working on the cause, either seeking the intercession of Mary Aikenhead or returning thanks for favours received. These too are stored in the archives.

In addition to material relating to the foundress there are other documents concerning the Constitutions, General Chapters, and Superiors General, as well as records of personnel and copies of books and papers written by members of the congregation. There are also holdings connected with the different Provinces and Regions of the congregation (arranged in order of foundation). There is quite a large collection of spiritual books which have contributed to the sisters' religious formation through the years, as well as manuscript copies of retreats and triduum - the perfection of the copperplate writing fills the present writer with envious admiration!

Among the most valuable records in the archives are the Annals. The first six volumes were written between 1858 and 1878 by two contemporaries and close associates of Mother Mary Aikenhead. Subsequent volumes comprise reports from individual houses of the congregation submitted to the General Chapter every six years.

Press cuttings dating back to 1858 (following the death of the foundress) form yet another section of the archives, and there is also a large collection of photographs. There are relics of saints with certificates of authenticity and some second-class relics of the foundress herself. Artefacts include a few polished wooden writing desks and also weighing scales and seals. From more recent years there are tapes, audio and audio-visual material, and a film entitled 'Waters of Providence', being a documentary on the Providence Woollen Mills, Foxford, initiated by Mother M. Arsenius Morrogh-Bernard in 1891 to provide employment for the poor of the district.

#### CONCLUSION

The foregoing description of the contents of the archival holdings is by no means exhaustive, but it gives some idea of what is to be found in the archives of the Religious Sisters of Charity. There is indeed a wealth of material with which the present writer is as yet unfamiliar, having worked in the archives only since 1994, and I am still discovering hidden treasures. The bulk of the work of identifying and arranging documents was undertaken by a highly-skilled professional archivist, Miss Marianne Cosgrave, and I shall always be deeply indebted to her for having got me off to a good start.

One aspect of the work of an archivist that has fascinated me throughout my brief experience as custodian of our congregational records is the variety of topics of interest to researchers. These include lace-making, nineteenth-century education, the cholera epidemics of the 1830s, sodalities, and the Hospice movement, to mention but a few. It gives me great satisfaction to be able to furnish a piece or two of the jigsaw being assembled by the researcher, and for the most part I have found them very pleasant to deal with and appreciative of whatever help I have been able to offer.

#### EDITORIAL NOTE

Visitors are most welcome to the Archives of the Religious Sisters of Charity but should write or telephone the Archivist at: Caritas, 15 Gilford Road, Sandymount, Dublin 4, Republic of Ireland. Telephone 269 7833 or Fax 260 3085.



## MERCY MEMORY

Mary Ellen Doona

Any consideration of Mercy Archives must begin with the condition of the Irish people in 1996. Today Irish women and men own their own country, conduct their own affairs and educate their own people. That Irish politicians, business people and educators are able to do these things in 1996 is due in some measure to the decision Catherine McAuley made in 1827 and the work done, from then till now, by her associates and followers.

This work is not commemorated in statues and stone, though in the lives of its recipients, it is much more significant than the wars and heroes so celebrated. Only recently feminists in search of a usable past have begun to uncover the nineteenth century's female-led humanitarian movement. 'The first specifically religious mission to the sick poor in Britain was a Catholic initiative,' writes military historian Anne Summers. 'Between 1827 and 1831 Catherine McAuley founded an institution dedicated to the "service of the poor, sick and ignorant" in Dublin.'<sup>1</sup> Given the growing interest in women's history in particular, and social history in general, it is safe to predict the numbers of scholars researching women's history in the nineteenth century will increase. Because Sisters of Mercy made much of that history, scholars will want to search documents preserved in Mercy archives.

### ARCHIVES AS RESERVOIRS OF MERCY MEMORY

Mercy Archives throughout the world preserve the memory of Catherine McAuley's choice and all the choices that have proceeded from it. In those archives - some in sophisticated state-of-the-art settings, such as at Mercy International in Dublin and Bermondsey Convent in London; others, the labours of love of retired Sisters of Mercy - Mercy Memory is stored. Scattered in convents throughout the world, these archives preserve the primary sources in which Mercy Memory resides. But these archives are not mere reliquaries of the past. They are places, to be sure, but they are also states of mind where the future is chosen. Sisters of Mercy may reminisce about the future. But unless each Sister of Mercy dips into the past preserved in archival documents, her choice for the future will be more superficial than profound.

Choice depends on memory. Consider for a moment persons with amnesia. They can function rather well, but without memory, they are doomed to learn the same lesson anew each day. Consider, as well, persons suffering from Alzheimer's disease. The physical destruction of the brain severely impairs cognitive function, and eventually erases memory. Persons with amnesia or Alzheimer's disease are locked in a permanent now with their ability to make appropriate judgments severely impaired. As a healthy mind and brain are essential to the functioning of the individual, so, too, is an intact institutional memory necessary to an organization. Mercy Memory links each Sister of Mercy with the other and with the choices her predecessors made throughout the history of her congregation even as she is making the choices that will decide the future directions. Mercy Memory is not merely a shrine of past accomplishments, though these accomplishments should be honored. Nor can Mercy Memory be only the province of the archivist or annalist. Mercy Memory is a necessary part of the daily functioning of each Sister of Mercy. The Sisters of Mercy have been fortunate in their predecessors who preserved many historical documents. Among these in each convent are the Annals of the house. These Annals are often the duty of a retired sister, suggesting that age and wisdom are partners. Care must be taken to insure that recording the history of the house is also a partner to the urgent and present activities of the house. Writing Annals and reverencing the past are coequals with action and making choices for the future. Thus Mercy Memory represents a temporal synthesis of past, present and future.

#### MERCY ARCHIVES FROM A RESEARCHER'S PERSPECTIVE

What follows are some reflections from the vantage point of research being done on the Sisters of Mercy and their nursing during the Crimean War (1854-56). Though these few years are only a minute in the long years of the Mercy crusade for the poor, sick and ignorant, they do provide a glimpse of how important the past is as the Sisters of Mercy *choose the future*. This research has been going on for almost a decade. During this time, the archives of the Sisters of Mercy have become increasingly more open to scholars. Initially requests for access to Crimean War papers were denied. A very helpful nun who was unaware of the requirements of historical research advised consulting a secondary source then thirty years old. That history was richly grounded in primary sources unavailable to others, but answered very different research questions.<sup>2</sup> It was a rich history indeed, but only one of many

that reside in these primary sources. A few examples will suggest the rest: racial and religious prejudice in the nineteenth century, women's status in a patriarchal society, the growth of the sisterhoods, the evolution of workhouse and hospital care, emigration from Ireland, the economic conditions of the nineteenth century, child care, the emergence of women as a political force, and more.

More recently this researcher has been granted unrestricted access to the primary documents related to nursing during the Crimean War. That access has been facilitated or impeded by the status of individual archives. For example, the primary sources in the Charleville Convent were painstakingly organized by the late Sister M. Albeus Russell as part of her convent's celebration of its sesquicentennial in 1986. Precious documents, original correspondence and copies of Catherine McAuley's letters to the Charleville foundress Angela Dunne were placed with a sheet of paper separating them in plastic sleeves in a ringed binder. The same was done with later correspondence. Each binder began with an inventory of what it contained.

This had been a labour of love of the retired Sister Albeus Russell and because of her careful mind, it was carefully done. Perhaps only Albeus and the researchers using the collection appreciated just how labour intensive this task had been. She and her associates, Sisters Dymphna, Perpetua, Brigid and Ena, also established the Catherine McAuley Museum/Archive. They created posters and a video incorporating the history of the Charleville Convent thus making their history vividly available to the townspeople. During this time artifacts of the convent from its founding in 1836 to the present were organized and carefully displayed in a glassed door cabinet. Among this collection were found Mother Joseph Croke's diary<sup>3</sup> and poem<sup>4</sup> about her Crimean War nursing experience under the leadership of Mother M. Francis Bridgeman of Kinsale, County Cork. The Annals and Register of the convent were shelved nearby. Secondary sources and other relevant data were nearby on book shelves.

#### ARCHIVES IN MERCY CONVENTS

If this and the services provided by Sister Albeus and her colleagues were a treasure to the researcher, there was still a worrisome concern for the primary documents. Were the plastic sleeves that held the letters of archival quality? Was the paper that separated the letters acid free? Should not the diary and poem be stored flat in acid free boxes?

Was the moist climate of Ireland and the convent harmful to the papers? Should there not be an inventory of the entire collection: letters, papers, Annals, Register, albums, books and ephemera? Perhaps these questions could also be asked of all the other small archives in convents.

At the Convent of Mercy in Bermondsey, London, these questions were largely unnecessary. There the archives is state of the art. Precious documents are in archival quality plastic sleeves and acid free boxes stored in climate-and-temperature-controlled conditions. All are secured in a vault. Here, as in Dublin and Charleville, the supporting collection of books is first rate. The guardians of the collection, Sisters Imelda and Teresa, from an inventory kept in their heads, make available the documents of the Sisters of Mercy and the Crimean War. What is more, they are well versed in the traditional lore and the nineteenth-century context of the mission in Bermondsey.

In addition, the archives at Bermondsey has a collection policy. Sister Imelda had visited convents in England and educated Sisters of Mercy about their primary sources. As some of these Convents closed, they were invited to place their precious papers at Bermondsey. This researcher wonders if these convents have been as thoughtful about their collections of books as they have been of their documents. More than likely every convent has copies of the *Leaves from the Annals*<sup>5</sup> and they may be ignored as commonplace. But these volumes will become increasingly rare as the years pass by. Great care should be taken to preserve these volumes and others of their ilk in convent libraries.

Because the Bermondsey Convent Archives had been successful in this undertaking the manuscript of the Croke poem originally in the collection at the Derby Convent is now preserved in Bermondsey. More than likely Croke gave Mother Francis Bridgeman this copy on their return to London from the Crimean War in 1856 as Croke left for Ireland and Bridgeman for Derby, the convent she founded from Kinsale. This fragile manuscript should be compared with the (later?) copy of the poem preserved at Charleville. Still another thing to be done is to search for a copy of Croke's Crimean diary among the papers at Bermondsey, for if the manuscript of the poem is there, perhaps a copy of the diary is there as well. The hope behind such a wish is that the Bermondsey copy would be free of the censorship found in the Charleville copy.

If the archives at Bermondsey is state of the art, so too is that at Mercy International. There is no worry about the preservation of

documents. They are carefully preserved in climate-and-temperature - controlled conditions even as they await processing. Although they are safe from the further ravages of time, much work needs to be done to organize them and make them more accessible to scholars.

The vital statistics of Sisters of Mercy from 1827 to the present at Mercy International are in a more complete state. Bound in volumes according to the convent and country where each sister entered, these data are readily available to the researcher. What is more, these data currently are being entered into an interactive computer. The individual 'Catherine' is emerging from the anonymity of her community identity, testifying that the individual and her judgment were important to the congregation of Catherine's. This collection is already necessary for the scholar and will become increasingly more precious as time goes by. Hopefully, Mercy International will create an inventory of all the documents throughout the world pulling together in a tight network all the pieces of Mercy Memory. Mercy Memory will be more useful for making choices when it is coherent and complete.

#### THE WORK OF THE ARCHIVIST

Sister Mercedes McCarthy the archivist at Mercy International (with part time help she is training) is steadfastly organizing the Archive according to a more rational format. At the same time she is providing services to researchers. Each of these three tasks: organizing the collection, training technicians and servicing scholars is a full time task. Yet the archivist has other tasks as urgent and as time-consuming. To list the most outstanding, the archivist must develop a collection policy, process the papers already collected, create an inventory for each collection in the archive, and develop a system of collecting oral histories. Can one person do all this? Not likely.

In addition there is much beginning and catch-up work to be done in collecting oral histories (via audio and/or video taping) of individual sisters and the life of the convents. Senior members should be recorded as quickly as possible before they take, as Sister Albeus did, the archive they hold in their minds with them to the grave. Much of Mercy Memory has already been lost in this way. At the same time, the present is passing into history, and this too must be collected. Sisters other than the archivist might take on this task. For instance, younger sisters might record the memories of their elders, at the one time collecting these precious data and learning about the history the

particular sister made. Two individuals for oral histories come immediately to mind: Sister Thomas More, the oldest sister at Bermondsey, and an old priest under Mercy care who survived the World War II bombing of the Bermondsey convent in 1945. A Charleville sister pointed out among the nursing home residents a man who was a participant in Ireland's revolution - still another rich source of the past.

A collection policy would guide the development of the archives and the search for the documents needed to complete a collection. One wonders who is collecting the research papers of Sister M. Muldrey the biographer of Sister Austin Carroll, the author of *Leaves from the Annals*?<sup>6</sup> If Mercy International wins the competition for these papers, then it has the additional task of arranging a reception to recognize the significance of the papers and their author. Publicity resulting from the reception of these papers would garner attention for the archives at Mercy International, and thereby alert scholars to these rich resources.

In line with this increased visibility the archivist will naturally become the consultant for associates wondering what to collect and what to discard. At the same time that the archivist monitors the archives and consults with colleagues, she must know what is in each of the collections as well as its historical significance. Such consultation and scholarship requires freedom of mind as well as focus, neither of which is possible if the archivist is expected to do all the tasks related to the archives. In addition, the archivist must authenticate the artifacts in the collection. For example, is the lamp displayed in the Crimean War exhibit at Mercy International one that was *really* used by a Sister during the Crimean War or is it a nineteenth-century lamp in use at that time in Dublin? Finding the answers to such questions eats up considerable time and takes a great deal of effort.

The archivist must also know collections associated with those at Mercy International. Using the Crimean War as an example, the archivist not only has to know in great detail the significance of her own archival holdings. She must also know where related documents are held. According to hearsay, the correspondence between the English Sisters of Mercy and Florence Nightingale, for example, is scattered among English convents. This needs to be found out for certain. Furthermore, there should be a search among the collections of Nightingalia for letters from Sisters of Mercy. Regimental histories are an untapped source for data about the Mercy mission during the Crimean War.

Once the Archivist has organized the collections and created inventories for each collection, these inventories have to be arranged in publishable form. If catalogues of the collections are important for making the archives known, more important is the archivist's own research. That research should be published and her knowledge of the collections shared in professional journals. Such scholarship makes the collections more visible, as well as makes others more aware of the Mercy mission. In essence it is not enough to organize the collection. The archivist must be articulate about what is in the collections and their historical significance, especially within the context of the Mercy crusade for social justice.

The archivist could also join as a partner with other scholars. For example, Sr Teresa Green of the Bermondsey Convent Archives and Sr Mary Sullivan of New York are preparing for publication the Florence Nightingale letters preserved in the Bermondsey convent. This book will make these letters available to many more scholars than can visit the Bermondsey Convent Archives. Other documents relative to Crimean War nursing should also be published. The sesquicentennial of the Crimean War will begin in 2004. Unless these documents are available, used and published, the hoary myths of Florence Nightingale single-handedly caring for thousands of soldiers will be trotted out. And once again the contributions of the Sisters of Mercy to the emergence of modern nursing will be relegated to oblivion.

Crimean War nursing is only one of many stories. To repeat what has already been said, there are many other stories waiting to be set free from the archives. When the archives is an essential part of the present, there is a great deal of work, but none is more pressing if the Sisters of Mercy are to step with confidence over the threshold into the twenty-first century. Accordingly, the archivist must be free to attend professional meetings with other archivists, first for professional nourishment, and then to make her archives known. At these meetings she will be a spokeswoman for her sisters and their Mission. At the same time she must alert her own sisters to what is important to collect. Just as the Mercy apostolate of education freed her gender from ignorance and helped to raise the Irish people, this commitment to Mercy Memory will yield insights for choosing paths into the future.

The archivist's position is lonely and one that is not often understood by others. The extensiveness of the work and the drudgery associated with it are often invisible to others. It would be unfortunate

if the women of Mercy do to their archivists what the world has done too long to women's work - not seen it, or if seen, not valued its worth. It would be terrible indeed if Sisters of Mercy do not see the full significance of archival work, or worse, once seeing it, devalue it. The work of safeguarding Mercy Memory is tedious, time-consuming and exhausting. The work is made more difficult when others do not realize *how* tedious, *how* time-consuming and *how* exhausting it is. One way to help the archivist until more professional help is forthcoming is to create Archives Associates made up of senior and junior members of the Sisters of Mercy. These women might provide the archivist with their wisdom, advice, and most of all, their support. At the same time, the Archives Associates could become good-will ambassadors about the nature of archives and their importance to the future.

#### KNOWING THE PAST AN ESSENTIAL PART OF CHOOSING THE FUTURE

Sisters of Mercy are so busy that often the urgent can overwhelm the important. Because papers are inert, some believe, erroneously, that papers can wait. But those papers are the rich source for making judgments about the future. As soon as these judgments are made, others must be made. Such is the dynamic nature of human reasoning. Remembering the past and making judgments for the future are of the present tense. Both require accuracy and precision if decisions are to be rich in insights, as well as calls to action. Neither the papers nor the judgments on which these decisions depend can wait.

Consider Catriona Clear's<sup>7</sup> research of nuns and their convent careers in the nineteenth century. These nuns, more than anyone else in the nineteenth century, had the raw data of Ireland's social state. What might have happened if these nuns had carefully collected and analyzed the data as they cared for the poor, sick and ignorant? Might the twentieth century in Ireland have been different because of judgments made in the light of such analysis? Might poverty, ignorance and sickness have been eradicated, or at least lessened, if these nuns had cared for others on the basis of analyzed data? Compassion is no less significant when sharpened by the mind, as well as provided from the heart.

Consider, too, the verbal snapshot of Catherine McAuley in 1829 given by Sr Clare Augustine Moore. What if those words had not been preserved by the Sisters of Mercy? Sr Mary Sullivan would not have been able to use them on page seven of her recent book on Catherine



McAuley.<sup>8</sup> More important, Mother Clare Augustine Moore's verbal and detailed portrait of Catherine McAuley provides data nowhere else available and corrects the portraits drawn from imagination after her death. What if Mr Clark had not asked Elizabeth Moore about the origins of the Sisters of Mercy? And what if Catherine McAuley had not replied though her fingers were 'stiff' and her penmanship a 'scribble'? And what if Neumann had not published Catherine McAuley's letter?<sup>9</sup> But Elizabeth Moore *did* ask Catherine. Catherine *did* reply. Neumann *did* publish the letter.

Still another consideration is Mother Clare Moore's directive to the Sisters from Bermondsey to collect souvenirs from the battlefields of the Crimea. Dried flowers have survived one hundred and fifty years in the Bermondsey convent archives though the pages they are glued to are turning to dust. The vicwer can almost see these women gathering the flowers and imagine how they were fertilized by the blood men shed unnecessarily in this most unnecessary of wars. What lessons emerge from reflecting on these relics of the past? How can these lessons help Sisters of Mercy now shaping the future with the judgments they make to-day?

And finally, consider the four black heavy lines drawn through a section of the Croke Diary in Charleville. Perhaps the censor was trying to prevent a scandal. It is hard to see from the vantage point of 1996 what could have been more scandalous than sending men to an almost certain death when they signed on for service during the Crimean War. Scandalous, too, is the unknown hand that censored Croke's report and the truth that lay within. Hopefully, today's superiors and archivists know that closing a collection for a certain period of time serves to protect living people, while at the same time, safeguards the integrity of original sources.

Fortunate to be living in a more open time, and taking advantage of this privilege, the Sisters of Mercy in Limerick have put their Annals in typescript form making available the story of Crimean War nursing to researchers at Mercy International in Dublin. In making their Annals available the good sisters in Limerick have provided a model for other convents to imitate. This copy will help scholars during the relocation of the Sisters of Mercy and until they will be able to read the original source.

The mission of the Sisters of Mercy continues to focus on those in need. The world is in need of the Mercy story if the need for mercy in this world is ever to become extinct. Making visible women's work in this world and making what women do each day valuable is dependent on knowing the story thus far and sharing that story with others. That story depends on the integrity of Mercy Memory and the archivists who protect it and then make it available to others.

#### Footnotes

1. Anne Summers, *Angels and Citizens: British Military Nurses, 1854-1914*, (London, 1988).
2. Angela Bolster, *The Sisters of Mercy in the Crimean War*, (Cork: The Mercier Press, 1964).
3. Sister M. Joseph Croke. *Diary of Sister M. Joseph Croke*, Catherine McAuley Archives-Museum, Sisters of Mercy Convent, Charleville, County Cork.
4. Sister M. Joseph Croke. *Lines on the Eastern Mission of the Sisters of Mercy from October 1854 to 1856*, Catherine McAuley Archives-Museum, Sisters of Mercy Convent, Charleville, County Cork.
5. Sr Teresa Austin Carroll, *Leaves from the Annals of the Sisters of Mercy*, (New York, 1881).
6. Sr. M. Hermenia Muldrey, *Abounding in Mercy - Mother Austin Carroll*, (Habsersham, New Orleans: Sisters of Mercy Province of St Louis, 1988).
7. Caitriona Clear, *Nuns in Nineteenth Century Ireland*, (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1978).
8. Sr Mary Sullivan, *Catherine McAuley and the Tradition of Mercy*, (IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995).
9. Sr M. Ignatia Neumann, *Letters of Catherine McAuley*, (1969).

## ON MOUNTING AN ARCHIVAL EXHIBITION: THE SERVITE SISTERS OF LONDON CELEBRATE 150 YEARS

Sister Agnes Hypher OSM

The pilgrimage 'Celebrating Our Servite Journey' took place during the hot July and August of 1995. The booklet recording this event is suitably subtitled 'Returning to the Sources'. Not only did the international group visit the village of Cuves in France, through Chaumont, Langres and Le Raincy, before crossing the Channel for England, but also spent four days studying the archives of the Congregation in the Generalate at Solihull. This activity was offered in response to the request of the Sisters themselves. It seemed an ideal opportunity to mount an exhibition of historic photographs and artefacts alongside the work with books, letters and papers.

### SCHOOL INVOLVEMENT

Involving the primary school attached to the convent in Solihull brought its own benefits, not least the use of the school hall. Seeing the area to be utilised it came as a relief to have the children's work, bringing as it did originality, life and colour to what might have been a very factual exhibition. The headmaster, having requested school participation, suggested a meeting with the staff in order to introduce the historical topics and the occasion marked by the international pilgrimage.

The theme of the French Sisters arriving in England to learn English and work among the poor of London did not fit too well into the National Curriculum, which by this stage in the academic year was well advanced. Nevertheless, topics were selected which were suited to the various classes throughout the school. To name but a few, to mark the Servite Sisters' link with the Dukes of Norfolk via their nineteenth-century foundation at Arundel there was the Carpet of Flowers in Arundel Cathedral worked in collage, together with the cathedral windows, as well as maps and essays related to the Sisters' journey from France to London, and a frieze of the Pilgrims' Way, the latter being one of the claims to fame of the town of Dorking where there is to this day a community of Servite Sisters. Many people assisted in the construction of a centre-piece stage scene of the Sisters in Victorian London. British Home Stores in Birmingham kindly loaned life-size models, which were duly dressed by the parents of the schoolchildren. The background to the scene of Victorian London was taken from the

previous year's school pantomime and was re-erected by some men from the local parish. It had been planned to make a tape recording of some of the younger children singing nursery rhymes of London, but since this did not materialise the 'Bells of London' were played instead.

#### DISPLAYS AND EQUIPMENT

The scope of the topics to be exhibited required not only a year to prepare, but also at least ten display boards. To find anyone who could loan this number of boards, and so far in advance of the exhibition, proved to be impossible. There was also the problem of ensuring that the display equipment was returned. The Heath Robinson approach thus proved to be the remedy, using large pieces of display board and free-standing wooden screens of the type once used in hospitals and clinics. The screens, without their curtains and now supporting sheets of coloured card, fulfilled the purpose adequately, apart from being a more interesting shape. A staplegun proved invaluable since one can then rely on the display remaining in position without the whole effect sagging and looking weary before the end of the week.

The shape of the hall and the arrangement of the stands makes or mars the overall interest of the exhibition. As in my own case, one may still finish the day with a large empty space in the middle of the display, yet this proved to be the answer to the problem of where to seat researchers as they pursued their studies - all thirty-five of them. Once they had departed and as other Sisters and friends arrived to view the exhibition, the tables were removed and the chairs were left for exhausted visitors to use while reminiscing with their friends.

One cannot exaggerate the importance of labels in an exhibition, especially with regard to their size and legibility from a reasonable distance. The height should be as near as possible to eye level. People wearing bifocal glasses, or those who are short-sighted, can find the exercise of reading labels both back-breaking and headache-inducing. One can see this phenomenon in museums and art galleries where groups of visitors strain to read the same small brass plates or typed labels. Handwritten calligraphy notices can be most attractive. The titles of the various stands also require to be written in large bold print so that the visitor with a special interest in a particular topic, but with limited time to spend at the exhibition, can begin at the point of greatest interest.

The advantage of having to place display boards on tables means that each has an area where relevant artefacts can be exhibited in plastic boxes or protected in large wooden bread trays covered with acetate sheets. These should not be attached over the top, but should be tucked in over the objects at the edges. This will minimise the risk of the covering being leant upon or perforated. Covering the display tables and making use of plants and flowers add a variety of texture and colour to the exhibition.

#### ADVERTISING AND VISITORS

It soon became apparent that the exhibition would be of interest to more people than those for whom it was originally intended. Potential visitors would include Servites of the English Province, children, parents and staff of the school, parishioners and neighbours. Each of these groups were to be invited once the serious study had been completed. By this stage the schoolchildren and their parents were on holiday, and consequently they were disappointed not to have seen the work completed. The hall had to be left in readiness for the new term and everything cleared away so that there was no prospect of leaving any displays for them to see, despite the fact that this was a golden opportunity to devote plenty of space to the history and archival material of the school itself. Past pupils returned time and again to pour over the school magazine, *The Oltonian* (1912-72). Because we hold two sets of the magazine there was no hesitation in leaving copies to be handled. Since there was constant supervision it was possible to display vestments, embroidery and trophies. Illuminated manuscripts and other more fragile objects were housed in a large cabinet loaned by the school.

The fact that there is so much archival history associated with Our Lady of Compassion Primary School dating back to the turn of the present century is because the school was once a convent boarding school. The Sisters of Our Lady of Compassion of St Denis took refuge in England at the time of the anti-religious laws enacted in France in 1903. They came to Olton, near Solihull, at the invitation of Bishop Illsley and established a flourishing boarding school. However, by 1967 falling numbers of vocations meant that both the convent and the school were threatened with closure. The Sisters of Our Lady of Compassion shared a spirituality and devotional life similar to that of the Servite Sisters of London, and thus, an amalgamation between the two groups was effected, and the two communities worked side by side,

although by this time the boarding school at Olton no longer existed. The school was in due course supported by the local parish, but the archives remain in the convent. On the arrival of the present writer at Olton in 1988 the priority was to search every corner of the convent and to gather together all archival material. In this way I soon learnt the history of the Sisters of Our Lady of Compassion.

Enthusiastic friends were keen that I should give the exhibition as much publicity as possible, especially through the local newspapers. My preference was to distribute leaflets to the different churches in the area and to our neighbours and friends. In this way security would not be so great a problem, and those who visited the exhibition would not be casual callers looking for something to do on a hot weekend in mid-August.

#### PLANNING AND REPORTING PROJECTS

Presenting project work for the international group proved to be difficult. Some of the Sisters were known to me, but not all of them - particularly a new community from Jolimont in Belgium recently aggregated to the London Congregation. Having requested this study of archival material it was of the utmost importance that the exercise should not end in disappointment. During the pilgrimage itself the early history of the Congregation had been well covered through first-hand experience, talks and the liturgy. The element of surprise and something new was required, and this task fell into three categories, viz. the pioneer convents of Belgium, Gratzen (Austria), Jamaica and America; houses in wartime (1914-18 and 1939-45) England, Belgium and France; and the letters (in French and English) of Mother Philomena Morel, the first General of the Congregation. These letters proved a particularly good introduction for the Jolimont Sisters. Should my own choice of subject not have been suitable, a project could have been assembled from any aspect of the exhibition. Thankfully, however, no one chose this option. Working in pairs proved to be a good idea, and thus folders were prepared with the study material placed inside. Because time was limited this saved the necessity of choosing a partner to work with and then having to decide which topic to select.

Among the projects undertaken were those concerned with wartime diaries, photograph albums, chronicles, letters and house diaries. According to the timetable one afternoon and one morning were set aside for project work, and each report was to take a maximum of

eight minutes to deliver. This part of the timetable had to be extended since many reports lasted twenty minutes or more. The presentations took various forms from songs to poems, verbal presentations to 'Mastermind', and others made use of large charts and sketches. When it was all over I hoped to have a few projects for the archives, only to find that most of them had been packed into suitcases ready for home.

An introductory half-hour had been allotted for my archival observations which were deliberately kept to a minimum, while just pointing out that the historical talks given during the pilgrimage were authenticated by the archives, the official memory of the Congregation. My plea and great concern was the preservation of the present, making the observation that if this had not been done in the past there would have been no exhibition or projects. Before beginning the work a timely word was given with regard to the use of white cotton gloves, beanbag cushions, pencils, curtain weights for holding down pages, and replacing material in folders when not in use.

#### OUTREACH

There was no fear of an anti-climax when the pilgrims returned home. Various people working in adult education with embroidery and design, calligraphy and art, as well as floral arranging and festivals, kept in touch. Past pupils and those working on their family tree also made contact. For some years the school has benefited from the archives and (limited) guided tours have been arranged in the convent and grounds in connection with local history studies. The parents and grandparents of some of the children had attended the convent school when it was housed in the convent itself. The outreach continues to extend, although the Heath Robinson equipment is stored away.



THE AUTHOR AT WORK IN THE ARCHIVES



MEMORABILA OF MOTHER PHILOMENA



## ALICE MEYNELL AND THE MEYNELL COLLECTION AT BOSTON COLLEGE

Ronald D. Patkus

### INTRODUCTION

Boston College was founded in 1863 by members of the Society of Jesus. Today it is a large university with many programmes and a student body of approximately 15,000. The library system at Boston College includes the Thomas P. O'Neill, Jr. Library (the central facility on campus) as well as a number of other libraries with special fields of focus.

One centre for many of the university's unique and valuable research sources is the John J. Burns Library of Rare Books and Special Collections. Though dedicated little more than a decade ago (1986), the library continues a strong tradition in the university of collecting rare books, periodicals, manuscripts, archives, works of art, photographs, maps, ephemera, and other materials. At present there are several areas of special interest, including Boston Studies, Massachusetts politics, Irish culture and history, the book arts, Jesuitana, Nursing, Catholic Liturgy and Life, Detective Fiction, Balkan Studies, Africa and the Caribbean, and British Catholic authors.

The British Catholic Authors Collection seeks to document the experience of Catholics in Britain since Emancipation in 1829. Of particular note are holdings which relate to English literary figures. The collection centres on the lives and works of four authors: Francis Thompson (1859-1907); Coventry Patmore (1823-1896); Wilfrid Meynell (1852-1948); and Alice Meynell (1847-1922).

1997 therefore marks the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Alice Meynell. In order to mark this occasion the library plans to offer a number of programmes during the year. The article which follows will provide some background information on Meynell and her work, offer a brief overview of Alice Meynell studies, and discuss collections relating to Meynell in the Burns Library.

### BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Alice Meynell was born on 22 September 1847, the second daughter of Thomas James Thompson and Christiana Weller. The first daughter, Elizabeth, had been born one year earlier. Thompson pursued no career of his own in accordance with the terms of his grandfather's

will. He and his wife were friends of Charles Dickens, who had actually taken a strong interest in Christiana prior to her marriage to Thompson. Mrs Thompson was known especially for her musical and artistic gifts.

The Thompson daughters learned to read and write largely under the guidance of their father. Their outlook on life was also shaped by the experience of living and travelling abroad. The family spent a great deal of time in various parts of England, France, and especially Italy. Before long, in fact, the two young girls were able to speak the Genoese dialect with great facility. One must also note that by the 1860s Mrs Thompson had become attracted to the Church of Rome. Her interest became so great, that eventually she could do nothing other than convert. Some time later Alice too decided to embrace Catholicism; she was received into the Church in July 1868.

As they grew older both Elizabeth and Alice began to display particular gifts. While Elizabeth pursued an interest in painting (the family eventually settled in South Kensington so she could attend the School of Art there), Alice began to devote herself to the development of her skills as a writer. By 1875 she had published her first book of poems.

About this time the young poet came into contact with Wilfrid Meynell, a London journalist who like Alice had converted to Catholicism. They decided to marry in 1877. Rev William Lockhart, a friend of both Meynell and the Thompson family, wrote to Alice saying that she had determined to link her lot with someone who was 'chivalrous in honour' and 'tender in piety and love'. He also wrote that 'For him you have been willing to forgo a more brilliant but not, as I believe, a happier lot'. In time eight children were born to the Meynells, and seven grew to adulthood: Sebastian, Monica, Madeline, Everard, Viola, Olivia, and Francis.

For many years the Meynells resided at Palace Court in London. In addition to raising a large and growing family, they both very quickly settled into a literary life. This life consisted of several activities: reading and writing books, editing journals, submitting articles to various periodicals of the day, maintaining correspondence, and attending and hosting social gatherings. Alice became known especially as an essayist, and many of her works were eventually gathered together and made available in book form. While London served as the base for most of her work, she was also able to visit the United States from 1901-1902,

and during this time she presented a number of lectures on literary topics to audiences in various American cities.

Alice Meynell maintained friendships with many of the important literary figures of the late Victorian era, including Coventry Patmore and George Meredith. She also corresponded with or visited some of the most famous artists and musicians of her generation, including the sculptor Medardo Rosso, the painter John Sargent, and the composer Edward Elgar. Gatherings at Palace Court were attended by many interesting people, and one may even go so far as to say that in some ways it served as a veritable centre for some of the most important representatives of English society in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Of special note in this regard is the presence of the poet Francis Thompson. Thompson (no relation to Alice Meynell's father) had first come into contact with the Meynells in their capacity as editors of *Merry England*. Before long he had come to rely on the Meynells as his close friends and literary supporters. With Alice he felt a special spiritual bond.

Apart from literature, Alice Meynell also exhibited concern for social issues. During the early 1900s, for instance, she became active in the movement to secure the vote for women in England. She led suffrage societies, wrote articles for suffrage publications, and marched in mass processions. She was also affected by the spectre of armed conflict in Europe. The theme of war became common in much of the verse she produced after 1914.

Before the war Wilfrid Meynell purchased Greatham, a house in Sussex which would serve as a more rural retreat for his family. In the last years of Alice Meynell's life the family was often divided between the residence in London and Greatham. The strain of old age began to make itself known, but she continued to work at writing, especially poetry. In 1922 she fell seriously ill, and died while asleep in the early morning of 27 November.

We may gain some sense of Alice Meynell's personality and the impression she made on others by examining part of a passage written by Richard Le Gallienne in *The Romantic 90s*:

Never surely was a lady who carried her learning and wore the flower of her gentle humane sanctity with such quiet grace, with so gentle and understanding a smile. The touch of exquisite

asceticism about her seemed but to accent the sensitive sympathy of her manner, the manner of one quite humanly and simply in this world with all its varied interests, and yet not of it.

#### LITERARY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Alice Meynell was twenty-eight when her first book of poems, *Preludes*, appeared in 1875. The thin volume contained verse which she had composed since the age of eighteen. In 1893 another volume appeared, entitled simply *Poems*. *Poems* included much of what had first been published in *Preludes*, with the addition of several new poems. In style and content these first volumes are very similar. A frequent theme in each is sorrow, though this is not to say that sadness is the ultimate feeling generated by a reading of the poems. Many of Alice Meynell's most famous works, including 'Renouncement' and 'My Heart Shall Be Thy Garden' actually date from this early period. This is also true of 'Neophyte', a sonnet written at the time of the poet's conversion to Catholicism.

The poems of the middle years appeared from about 1895 to 1916 in volumes of various titles, most notably, however, in *Later Poems*. In 1923 Bums, Oates and Washbourne published both *The Last Poems of Alice Meynell* and *The Poems of Alice Meynell*. The later and last poems, as might be expected, bear a certain resemblance to the verse of earlier years; like them, they often look inward. It is characteristic of Alice Meynell's poetry to dwell not so much on emotional feelings as on the contemplation of things sublime.

Poetry did not serve as the only outlet for the young writer's creativity. She also became active in journal editing. She assisted her husband in the publication of *The Pen, a Journal of Literature* (which survived through just seven issues) and the *Weekly Register*, a periodical devoted more strictly to Church matters. Alice Meynell contributed most, however, to the publication of another journal called *Merry England*, which was published from 1883-1895. Like the *Weekly Register*, *Merry England* was Catholic in nature, but it had a broader focus, and was concerned primarily with literature and the arts.

Though the production of these journals demanded a great amount of effort, Alice Meynell also found time to submit essays to other journals. In fact, her by-line eventually appeared in nearly all of the major periodicals of the day. Often the essays presented brief studies of various aspects of life in general. Alice Meynell developed a particular

style of essay-writing. More than anything else she emphasized the selection of the right word to convey her thoughts to the reader. Precise phrasing was the key to a good essay, she felt.

Many of Alice Meynell's most famous essays appeared in either the *Pall Mall Gazette* or the *National Observer*. With regard to the former, she was responsible from 1893 to 1898 for a weekly submission to the 'Wares of Autolykus' column. The column was written by women and mainly treated topics of concern to other women. Alice Meynell continued to write for the *Gazette* until 1905. The *National Observer* was another common arena for the author's work. Essays such as 'Rejection' and 'The Rhythm of Life' appeared there, as did other pieces, such as poems and book reviews.

Alice Meynell's art criticism also deserves some attention of its own. Her family's deep interest in art and her own personal talents had prepared her well for such work. Essays about art and artists appeared in such periodicals as the *Magazine of Art* and *Art Journal*. She also served as art critic for *The Tablet* from 1888 to 1897, and for the *Pall Mall Gazette* from 1902 to 1905.

The journalistic endeavour of Alice Meynell was thus quite considerable. Because of the popularity of the essays it was almost inevitable that many of them would be gathered together and published again, in book form. Well-known titles include *The Rhythm of Life*, *The Colour of Life*, *The Children*, *The Spirit of Place*, *Ceres' Runaway*, *Hearts of Controversy*, and *The Second Person Singular*. Other essays appeared in books as prefaces to the works of some of the greatest names in modern English letters, such as Matthew Arnold, William Blake, Robert and Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, William Cowper, John Keats, Christina Georgina Rossetti, William Shakespeare, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Alfred Lord Tennyson, and William Wordsworth.

Some of the prefaces appeared in anthologies which Alice Meynell herself had produced. These include *The Flower of the Mind*, an anthology of poems from Chaucer to Wordsworth, and *The School of Poetry*, a selection of verse for children, published in 1897 and 1923 respectively. In addition Alice Meynell compiled anthologies which did not happen to include critical introductions, such as those on the seventeenth-century religious poets, Samuel Johnson, and John B.

Tabb.

Occasionally Alice Meynell put her strong linguistic skills to work by producing translations of various works into English from either French or Italian. She translated Rene Bazin's *The Nun*, a book about Lourdes, Adolfo Venturi's *The Madonna*, and several ecclesiastical treatises, including a pastoral letter of the Primate of Belgium, Cardinal Mercier.

Alice Meynell's literary production was thus vast and varied. As poet, journalist, critic, essayist, editor, and translator she made her mark on the world of letters in both Victorian and Edwardian England. One may wonder, however, just exactly what the ultimate significance of Alice Meynell's work was. We can begin to approach this question by reviewing some of the literary criticism which has been published during the course of the past hundred years and more.

#### ALICE MEYNELL STUDIES

In a certain sense studies of the life and work of Alice Meynell began during her own lifetime. As her poetry and prose was published, contemporary critics responded with reviews of the work in various periodicals. Much of the criticism produced at this time was positive in nature. For example, the early poems received considerable praise from literary figures and critics such as John Ruskin, Alfred Lord Tennyson, and Aubrey de Vere. Ruskin believed that certain passages of poems from *Preludes* were actually some of the finest things he had read in modern verse. Coventry Patmore was similarly impressed; in 1895, after *Poems* had appeared in print, he wrote an article for *The Tablet* arguing that Alice Meynell should be the one to succeed Tennyson as poet laureate of England.

As with her poetry, contemporary critics were quick to see the quality of Alice Meynell's prose. In a *National Review* article, fellow friend and writer George Meredith gave a very telling assessment: 'A woman who thinks and can write, who does not disdain the school of journalism, and who brings novelty and poetic beauty, the devout but open mind, to her practice of it, bears promise that she will some day rank as one of the great English-women of letters.'

This is not to say, of course, that all reviews of Alice Meynell's work were uniformly praiseworthy. Critical comments were made about certain aspects of both the poetry and prose. In general, however,

this did not change the overall reception she received from her peers. Even Max Beerbohm, a fellow English writer who felt that admiration for Alice Meynell's style had gone too far, could not but admit her literary talents.

At the time of her death in 1922 there appeared naturally a number of obituaries and other articles describing Alice Meynell's life and work. In addition, one of the first major critical works appeared at this time, namely *Mrs Meynell and Her Literary Generation*, by Anne Kimball Tuell. Tuell, a professor at Wellesley College in Massachusetts, had actually begun to work on this book during the author's lifetime. The study was not published, however, until 1925. Though dated, Tuell's book still stands as a useful introduction to the full range of Alice Meynell's literary opus. It gives attention to both the poetry and prose, and considers special topics, such as Alice Meynell as a writer for women, and as a religious poet.

Tuell's literary study of Alice Meynell was followed in 1929 by *Alice Meynell: A Memoir*, by Viola Meynell. The subtitle of this book indicates that it was not meant to be a scholarly dissertation, and it should not be judged as such. Instead, it primarily provides a recollection of a life lived, told by one close to the subject. Because of this unique perspective, *A Memoir* still holds value for readers today.

A number of other works were published which discussed Alice Meynell's work as it related to other broad themes. Writing in 1940, Alfred Noyes summed up what many readers of Alice Meynell's poetry have felt. In *Pageant of Letters* he wrote, 'By those whose love of poetry claims them wholly – making demands on the intellect as well as on the heart, on their spiritual being as well as on the senses – it has long been recognized that Alice Meynell, with her hundred poems, is among the imperishable names.'

1947 marked the centenary of Alice Meynell's birth, and the occasion was observed in several ways both in England and America. In London, for instance, there was a special exhibition of books and other material, mounted with the assistance of Sir Francis Meynell and other members of the family. In Boston, the Thompson Associates of Boston College sponsored a Centenary Symposium which featured presentations by Anne Kimball Tuell, Rev. Terence L. Connolly, SJ, and others. The symposium opened a special exhibition of Alice Meynell items in the Great Hall and Reception Room of Boston College Library. Subse-

quently a printed memorial of the symposium, including a short-title list of works, was published. In addition to these special events a number of literary journals, such as the *Irish Monthly*, the *Poetry Review*, and *The Tablet*, allocated space to articles which recalled the work of Alice Meynell.

A number of studies have appeared in more recent times. One of the most substantial of these is June Badeni's *The Slender Tree: A Life of Alice Meynell*, a full-length biography published in 1981. It presents a survey of the author's life in chronological order, relying on both published and unpublished sources. This biography is useful in bringing a more objective perspective to Alice Meynell's life than was possible in the book written by Viola Meynell.

Other contributions to Alice Meynell studies include theses, dissertations, and articles which have appeared in a number of scholarly and literary journals. These works discuss specific aspects of the author's work, or how the work relates to a particular subject. There have been studies of Alice Meynell as a journalistic essayist, as a translator, and as a poet. Works have also been published which consider her connection with George Meredith, and the question of what place she takes as part of a 'world poet' tradition.

Some of the most interesting studies of Alice Meynell in recent years have made use of the new approaches to writing history. Especially noteworthy in this regard are articles written from the perspective of feminism and women's studies. Sharon Smulders has published 'Feminism, Pacifism and the Ethics of War: The Politics and Poetics of Alice Meynell's War Verse,' in *English Literature in Translation* and Beverly Ann Schlack has written 'The "Poetess of Poets": Alice Meynell Rediscovered' in *Women's Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal*.

Interest in Alice Meynell as both a person and a literary figure has continued unabated since the publication of her first book of poems in 1875. Critical studies of her work have been produced by authors and scholars from various backgrounds. In recent years Alice Meynell has been 're-discovered' by some working in the field of English literature. Nevertheless it would appear that the study of this author has not been exhausted. New topics of interest may be supported by primary and secondary source materials now housed in the Burns Library at Boston



College. The call to document Alice Meynell's life and work, as well as the circle in which she moved, has been strong indeed.

#### ALICE MEYNELL COLLECTION

The history of the Meynell Collection at Boston College can be traced back to the efforts of Rev. Terence L. Connolly, SJ. Father Connolly first came to the university in 1929. For many years he held a position on the faculty of the English Department, and specialized in the writings of English Catholics. He was especially interested in Francis Thompson, the subject of his doctoral dissertation. With Father Connolly's assistance Boston College acquired the Seymour Adelman Collection of Francis Thompson in 1937; this led to the acquisition of other Thompson items in succeeding years, particularly from the family of Wilfrid Meynell.

From 1945 until his death in 1961 Father Connolly served as Librarian at Boston College. During this time he made great advances in collecting not only Thompsoniana but also materials of other poets and literary figures of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century England. The Meynell Collection originated from this activity. Building on this foundation, the library has continued to receive new items. Today the collection forms part of a mosaic of holdings in the Burns Library relating to British Catholic Authors.

Items for the Meynell Collection have been acquired from a number of sources. The greatest portion of material has come from members of the family itself, especially Viola Meynell Dallyn, Olivia Meynell Sowerby, Francis Meynell, and Wilfrid Meynell. (After Alice Meynell's death, Mrs Sowerby served as curator of her mother's papers). Many other friends of Boston College Libraries have made possible the acquisition of specific items. Of special note in this regard are donors such as Frank S. Kysela, Sara Logue, John F. Power, Richard Montgomery Tobin, Mrs. Edward C. Donnelly, and others. Because of the broad base of donor support it is no exaggeration to say that in some ways the collection is the result of the interest of the entire Boston College community.

A description of the collection may justly begin with the books. Some of the most important of these, of course, are Alice Meynell's own books, including volumes of her poetry, prose, translations, and anthologies. The collection contains numerous first editions, many of which were actually inscribed by the author. A copy of the 1893 issue

of *Poems*, for instance, features the note, 'To my dearest mother', with an autograph of the author. A 1913 edition of *Poems* includes an inscription to John Drinkwater from Alice Meynell, 'his admiring and delighted reader'. There is also a copy of a limited edition printing of *The Rhythm of Life* inscribed by Coventry Patmore to St Clair Baddely.

The collection includes books which were not solely the work of Alice Meynell, but to which she made one or more significant contributions. The publications in this section comprise mainly books for which she wrote prefaces, and books in which examples of her work, usually chosen from the poetry, are included.

One of the largest parts of the collection is composed of books and other publications *about* Alice Meynell. This includes full-length monographs as well as original copies of periodicals and other publications featuring material on the author. Of special importance are publications which appeared during Alice Meynell's lifetime and at the time of her death. These include such items as an original copy of the Coventry Patmore article in the 2 November 1895 issue of *The Tablet* which recommended Alice Meynell for the poet laureateship, and a 1923 essay of G.K. Chesterton from the *Dublin Review*.

The collection includes Alice Meynell manuscripts of some of her most significant works. A good number of these are poems. Some are typed, but most are hand-written, usually one or two pages in length. Often they include the autograph of the author. Among the holdings are manuscripts of 'Renouncement' 'The Shepherdess' and 'Summer in England, 1914'. Other examples include 'The Poet to the Birds' 'Christ in Portugal', and 'The Watershed'.

The library also possesses a small but nevertheless useful collection of autographed letters signed by Alice Meynell. Significant correspondents include family, friends, and business contacts. There is correspondence to Wilfrid Meynell, Coventry Patmore, F. Holland Day, Sidney Cockerell, and others. A number of letters in the collection were sent by Alice Meynell to her publisher, John Lane.

One unique part of the Alice Meynell holdings is a collection of music. This collection consists of songs, mainly poems of the author, set to music by various composers. Such music was published both during and after Alice Meynell's lifetime. The poem entitled 'The Shepherdess' was actually set to music by a number of composers, including J.F. Whitelaw, Rhoma Rodway, Dermot Macmurrough, Hugh S. Roberton,

S. Anna Goulef, Hermann Lohr, and Edward Horsman. Other works of Alice Meynell which were put to music include the sonnets 'My Heart Shall Be Thy Garden', 'The Neophyte', and 'Renouncement'.

Finally one must mention some of the miscellaneous items which make up part of the collection. These include such things as phonograph records of readings of Alice Meynell's poetry, a large leather-bound scrapbook featuring newspaper clippings relating to the author, and a Christmas card of the Meynell family. In addition there are some representative pictures and photographs. Among the images are a picture of Alice Meynell with her friend Agnes Tobin, a facsimile of the John Sargent drawing of Alice Meynell, as well as a painting of her by Neville Lytton.

#### RELATED HOLDINGS

The collection of items in the Burns Library relating directly to Alice Meynell is complemented by other materials. In the effort to document the experience of British Catholic authors since 1829 the library has acquired several collections which provide additional insight into the world in which Alice Meynell lived and wrote.

Among the most important of these are holdings relating to Wilfrid Meynell. These include copies of his books, periodicals in which his articles appeared, and also personal papers. The papers include a collection of Wilfrid Meynell's correspondence, dating from the early 1880s to 1947. These letters help to document certain aspects of the journalist's life. There is correspondence with the editor John Lane, Wilfrid Scawen Blunt (a friend and neighbour of Wilfrid Meynell) and Aubrey de Vere. A great many letters also exist from Wilfrid Meynell to Rev. Terence L. Connolly, SJ, of the Boston College Library.

A separate but related collection is the William Randolph Sasnett-Wilfrid Meynell Collection. It consists largely of correspondence between Wilfrid Meynell and Sasnett, thus the title of the collection. There are other valuable items, however, including letters of Viola Meynell and material about Charles Dickens, the friend of Alice Meynell's father. One may also find several photographs, including one taken at Greatham in 1936.

The library holds material relating to the children of Alice and Wilfrid Meynell, especially Francis, Everard, and Viola. The material includes many books of Viola and Francis. The books relating to Francis

document his career as a typographer, printer, and publisher. There are also some letters from the Meynell children written on various occasions and at different times in their lives.

The Coventry Patmore Collection is of interest from several vantage points. Not only was Patmore a friend of Alice Meynell (though they did have a sort of falling out in later years) but his poetry was held in very high regard by her throughout her life. Some have even wondered to what extent Patmore's verse influenced the work of his fellow poet. The collection contains both printed and unpublished material of, or relating to, Patmore. Certain items concern Alice Meynell directly, such as published reviews of her work written by Patmore for various periodicals. There is a small collection of autographed letters signed by various nineteenth century writers which was actually presented to Alice Meynell by Patmore. In the Patmore Collection one will also come across one of the fifty privately printed copies of *Seven Unpublished Poems by Coventry Patmore to Alice Meynell*.

As has already been mentioned, Francis Thompson maintained a close relationship with the Meynell family in both his personal life and his work. The Thompson Collection at Boston College, which is the largest of its kind, sheds light not only on the poet himself but also on others in his literary circle. Like the Alice Meynell Collection, it includes a wide variety of materials, from books and manuscripts to correspondence and ephemera. Several of the manuscripts and letters in the Thompson Collection concern Alice Meynell, as do various books which have been placed there.

The Burns Library is fortunate to possess full runs of several important periodicals relating to the Meynells. There is a complete set of *The Pen*, *A Journal of Literature*, as well as of *Merry England*. It is worth noting that the *Merry England* set is believed to be one of only two complete collections, the other being in the British Museum. In addition, there are microfilm copies of the *Weekly Register*. Bound copies of other periodicals to which the Meynells contributed, such as *Art Journal* and the *Magazine of Art*, are also available.

The papers of Rev. Terence L. Connolly, SJ, may also be consulted. During his lifetime Father Connolly taught and lectured on British Catholic authors, and among his papers are to be found notes and research material relating to the Meynells, Coventry Patmore, and Francis Thompson. His administrative correspondence as Librarian at

Boston College dates from the period after Alice Meynell's death, but it does include letters with other members of the Meynell family concerning a variety of matters.

Finally one may mention in a general way the full variety of reference materials, books, manuscripts, and other materials available to researchers at the Burns Library. Though too extensive to be described here, many other items help to provide information in various ways to those wanting to extend their knowledge and understanding of the literary world of Alice Meynell and her circle.

#### SUMMARY

The 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Alice Meynell provides an occasion to re-examine her life and work. Though in some ways quiet, her life was filled with activity. Her literary production was considerable, and was roundly praised by many of her contemporaries. Scholars and other writers of more recent times have also found reason to study the significance of Alice Meynell and her contributions to English literature. The John J. Burns Library of Rare Books and Special Collections at Boston College maintains a number of collections which support research concerning Alice Meynell and her literary circle. It is hoped that the collections will be useful to future researchers seeking to understand the author and her work.

#### EDITORIAL NOTE

Mr Patkus serves as Head, Archives & Manuscripts, in the Burns Library, Boston College, Massachusetts.



ALICE MEYNELL  
FROM A DRAWING BY SARGENT

## THE MEMORY OF THOSE IN NEED: THE ARCHIVES OF CAFOD

Bernard Barrett

### MISSION OF NEED

I was appointed as the First professionally-qualified Librarian and Information Scientist for CAFOD (Catholic Fund for Overseas Development) just over three years ago. An essential part of the job was to be Archivist as well as Librarian. CAFOD plays a unique role in the Catholic Church in England and Wales, in that it forms a bridge between the people of comparatively rich northern countries and those of the decidedly poor south. CAFOD's motto and logo is that it is on the side of people in need, and its archive is the record of how it has become that. More importantly, CAFOD is and continually hopes to become, the authentic voice of those who are in need.

### QUESTIONS OF DEFINITION

The first step was to be clear about what material should be admitted to the archive, in order to achieve the aforementioned aim. The following decisions were taken:

(a) *Periodicals*: the Library receives well in excess of 600 periodical titles per year. Some of these are well-established substantial titles to which CAFOD subscribes. However, the vast majority are free and have their origin in the countries of the south. Many are from partners with whom CAFOD has a close connection, some are from those who seek CAFOD's support, while others, depending on their geographical point of origin, are for private circulation only. What is common to all is that they form an independent voice and an important source of information on the countries where CAFOD works.

(b) *Newspapers*: in the context of CAFOD the heading 'periodicals' tends to be an all-embracing one. Many publications issued in the format of a newspaper would be stored with the periodicals. In addition to these the Library also holds back copies of the quality daily and weekend papers. These are kept for three months, whereafter access to news stories can be had through a press cutting bulletin, the *Financial Times* on CD-ROM and the *Daily Telegraph* on the Internet. We also keep an archive of the religious press, including well known titles such as *The Universe*, *Catholic Herald*, and *Catholic Times*, together with the *National Catholic Reporter* from the United States and the religious press of other Christian traditions such as the *Methodist Recorder*,

*Baptist Times* and *Church Times*. Space permitting, we intend to keep these.

(c) *The CAFOD Campaign*: CAFOD has been working for justice on behalf of its partners, through the medium of an educational campaign, for the past fifteen years or so. Many of these campaigns have been both popular and inventive, and have involved a great many people from groups in parishes to young people and politicians. An essential part of these campaigns has been the material produced by CAFOD to encourage greater awareness among people, e.g. study guides, video recordings, posters and resources for both reflection and discussion. The latter include quotations and testimonies from partners in the south and CAFOD's popular Advent and Lenten reflections which place the southern point of view into a liturgical context.

(d) *The WIP Archive*: WIP is a CAFOD acronym for 'Working in Partnership'. The WIP scheme attempts to link parishes in England and Wales with parishes in the countries where CAFOD works. Underpinning the scheme is the understanding that the only way to change for the better is by means of coming to a greater knowledge of the cause and effect relationship behind the way in which we live. The WIP material is formed from sets of 'updates' on each country, which not only provide a snapshot of local conditions at a given time, but also introduce real people and situations and suggest ways in which we can both help and learn.

(e) *The CAFOD Fast*: In recent years it has become fashionable to join CAFOD's twenty-four-hour fast at both Lent and Harvest-time. This fast is an act of solidarity: act and think. Those who take part have the chance to become involved, and the archive collection of Fast Day packs illustrates this well at both parish and school levels.

(f) *Press Releases*: copies are retained of most of CAFOD's press releases from the past six years. CAFOD now has its own Media Relations Section which aims to ensure that the voice of its partners is heard on television and radio and in the newspapers as frequently as possible. The press releases form a record of CAFOD's involvement and indicate the options it has made for the poor over the years.

(g) *Project Field Trip Reports*: CAFOD is one of a handful of agencies which do not have field offices abroad. Instead it seeks to identify and work with trusted partners, empowering them to bring about change in their own lives. Project Officers visit partners to build a relationship



with them and to ensure that the aid given is both appropriate and effective. The Project Field Trip Reports are records of those visits and of what was learnt. For this reason they attract a fairly high degree of confidentiality.

(h) *CAFOD Publications*: Because CAFOD is a publisher in its own right, the archive receives on deposit two copies of everything that is produced. Such publications range from the campaign materials and Advent/Lent reflections mentioned above to the text of CAFOD's annual Pope Paul VI Memorial Lectures, its magazine and its Annual Reports and Reviews.

(i) *Special Collections Held In Trust*: notable among the two collections held is the Whitfield Archive. Teresa Whitfield was the author of *Paying The Price: Ignacio Ellacuria and the Murdered Jesuits of El Salvador*. She has deposited with the CAFOD archive the material she collected while researching her book in El Salvador.

#### LOCATION AND ACCESS

Both the Library and Archive are currently housed in separate rooms in two separate buildings, but this situation is set to change in the near future when, as part of a major reorganization of CAFOD's office accomodation, both will be amalgamated to form a single unit. This will make it much easier to pass from past to present material and will improve the level of access that can be offered.

The task of sorting, arranging and describing much of the material held is still in process, and for this reason access has been primarily to CAFOD staff. Use is being made of the subject specializations of highly qualified volunteers, who with technical and managerial guidance are helping the Librarian/Archivist to make information more readily retrievable. Although both time and staffing can be a problem, we will always endeavour to find time to welcome external enquirers as well.

Both Library and Archive use a computerised information management system called ALICE. This system possesses a very user-friendly OPAC which enables one to search by Subject, Keyword, Title, Series, Author, Location, Classification and by material type. Moreover, it is possible to search by using combinations of these. An example of how flexible this can be is seen in the recent addition of the CAFOD campaign materials to the ALICE system.

Material can be searched for on two levels: the first enables one to gain a broad appreciation of what each campaign is about. By entering 'CAFOD Campaign' at the search prompt it is first possible to see a list of the campaigns year by year with their title. The next stage is to select the campaign of your choice and expand the title to a full entry. This gives details of who within CAFOD was responsible for the production of the campaign and breaks the campaign itself into its constituent parts. From here, utilizing a link option, it is then possible to view all the publications produced as part of the campaign (i.e. parish guides, youth guides etc.).

The second level enables one to 'go inside' each campaign in order to view the type of material that has been used. It then becomes possible to search for quotations relating specifically to debt, used as part of a campaign, or to see whether any role-plays exist to illustrate the plight of living in a Brazilian shanty town. It is intended to develop this approach with regard to the WIP archive next, and then the twenty-four-hour fast materials.

Visitors wishing to consult the archive are welcome to do so, but by appointment only. This is to ensure that there is time available to help them and to make the necessary material ready. It should also be borne in mind that some of the above-mentioned categories are in the process of being worked upon and thus they may not be readily accessible. It is hoped that access to and use of these materials can play an important part both in raising awareness of the issues that CAFOD seeks to confront and in creating support for the work it undertakes.

#### EDITORIAL NOTE

The CAFOD Archive is open to consultation by researchers by appointment. Enquiries should be addressed to: The Librarian/Archivist, CAFOD, Romero Close, Stockwell Road, London SW9 9TY.

## BOOK REVIEWS

*The Cross on the Sword: Catholic Chaplains in the Forces* by Tom Johnstone & James Hagerty [Geoffrey Chapman, 1996, pp.338; hbk £40, pbk £19.99].

This is the first comprehensive study of the history of Catholic chaplains in the three services. Much space is given to the long process of official recognition, from the first commissioning of a chaplain in 1794 to the recent ecclesiastical appointment of Bishop Francis Walmsley in 1987 as the first Military Ordinary, with a quasi diocese of the Forces. However, what will possibly interest the general reader more, particularly as the dreadful events and tragic consequences of the two world wars of this century still remain in the memory of older generations and, strangely, as the years pass seem to have become increasingly part of the national consciousness, will be the many intimate accounts of the courage of Catholic chaplains ministering the sacraments to Catholic soldiers in battle and in the front line, while the devotion of Catholic soldiers to the Faith is both poignant and inspiring.

The authors have clearly researched the subject very thoroughly and cast their net of enquiries widely, which is evident from the long list of acknowledgements, the extensive references at the end of each chapter, and the catalogue of published and unpublished sources. The wealth of material is well presented in clearly-defined chapters in logical sequence, each with appropriate sub-sections making for easier general or selective reading, and there is a useful index. The book will surely satisfy a variety of readers who approach it with differing interests and will undoubtedly stimulate further research in the published and documentary sources, thus enlarging our knowledge of this most heroic of priestly ministries. While the study concentrates on the role of Catholic chaplains, it also contains much information on the similarly valued work of Anglican, Church of Scotland and Free Church chaplains. Indeed, Bishop Walmsley, who himself is an authority on the subject and who collects information on individual chaplains, in an admirable Foreword commends the book to a universal readership on the bicentenary of the Royal Army Chaplains Department. The book is dedicated to the sixty-nine priests of Great Britain, Ireland and the Commonwealth who died in the Crimea, India and the two world wars, and whose names are given in a roll of honour. The authors are to be congratulated on producing what will surely become the standard work on the history of Catholic chaplains.

Robin Gard

*The Letters of John Peniston, Salisbury Architect, Catholic, and Yeomanry Officer, 1823-30* edited by Michael Cowan (Wiltshire Record Society, vol.50, March 1996, pp xx + 270; £20): available from Michael Lansdown, 53 Clarendon Road, Trowbridge, Wilts BA14 7BS.

John Peniston, founder of a dynasty of architects in Salisbury, was a prolific correspondent, and the present volume contains nearly 1,700 letters written over a period of seven years. From a Catholic viewpoint the letters of 1826 are especially important, written as they were in the period immediately before Emancipation and being concerned with negotiations over the appointment of a priest to the Salisbury mission after the death of its long-serving French émigré pastor. Other letters highlight Peniston's links with the Jesuits at Wardour - Peniston's second son entered the Society of Jesus in 1838. The Peniston letter-books were once part of the Salisbury Diocesan Registry collection but are now deposited in the Wiltshire Record Office. This edition is well produced and boasts detailed indices. From an archival perspective it stands as a good example of making available to a wider scholarly public what might otherwise remain an obscure collection of early nineteenth-century letters.

Stewart Foster

THE CATHOLIC ARCHIVES SOCIETY CONFERENCE, 1996

The seventeenth annual conference of the Society was held at All Saints Pastoral Centre, London Colney, from 28 to 30 May.

The first paper on the Tuesday afternoon was given by Miss Marianne Cosgrave, Secretary of the Association of Church Archivists of Ireland. Her well-illustrated and interesting talk concerned the use of computer databasing in archival work, both the advantages and the problems encountered. The evening session was devoted to a lively slide presentation of the Catholic Archives Society's visit to Rome in October 1995. One of the outstanding features of this trip was the very warm welcome given to our members by the custodians of the different archival repositories visited and by Archbishop Marchisano, President of the Pontifical Commission for the Cultural Heritage of the Church.

The Wednesday morning talks were both very useful to what is primarily a gathering of part-time archivists, many of whom are only just beginning to come to grips with the task entrusted to them. It was the conference's honour, therefore, to be addressed by Dr Kate Thompson, Chairman of the Society of Archivists and County Archivist of Hertfordshire. Her paper was entitled 'Archives and Archivists' and offered much encouragement to our members. Likewise the next speaker, Mr Topping, Senior Curator at Lambeth Palace Library. His talk was much appreciated for its straightforward approach to the art of conservation.

The Wednesday afternoon visits to the Hertfordshire County Record Office at Hertford (for a group of twenty), and to St Edmund's College, Ware (for the remainder of the participants), were once again very successful. The first group was given a comprehensive tour of a major county repository, while the second enjoyed making the acquaintance of one of the chief sites of post-Reformation Catholic interest in Southern England, including as it did visits to the Pugin chapel and to the college museum.

The remainder of the conference was taken up with a discussion on 'Archives and Education' (Wednesday evening) and the by now customary Open Forum on the last morning of the gathering, followed by the Society's Annual General Meeting. The 1997 conference will take place at Upholland Conference Centre, Wigan, from 26 to 28 May.