

# SCHOOL OR CLOISTER ? AN EDUCATIONAL DILEMMA 1794-1880

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**I**N 1850 ENGLISH ROMAN CATHOLICS numbered about 3.5% of the religious population in England and Wales, approximately that is, 600,000 persons. Of this total, about 25,000 belonged to the group we term Old Catholics, those who were descended from the survivors of penal days and who had, with occasional lapses, preserved the pre-Reformation allegiance intact. The rest, apart from a handful of English converts, were Irish.<sup>1</sup> It is understandable, therefore, that the ‘old Catholic’ families in the first half of the nineteenth century should have seemed ‘slow to be assimilated into the mainstream of English life’ and that they should have shared ‘the national prejudice against the Irish’ and ‘the prejudice of their class against advanced Liberalism’.<sup>2</sup> They were fighting to retain their identity as a tightly-knit influential social unit within English Catholicism and were determined not to have their interests brushed aside by those of the waves of pauperised immigrant Irish sweeping into the country after the great famine years from 1845 to 1849.

A defensive action had been started in the 1830s by Lord Shrewsbury who had earlier been a keen advocate of the Cisalpine view that the Pope ‘has no right to confer bishoprics, or other spiritual benefices of any kind, the patronage of which by common right, prescription, concordat, or any other general rule of the Church is vested in another’,<sup>3</sup> a view calculated to ensure the ascendancy in England of ‘old Catholic’ family interests.<sup>4</sup> Following an exchange of letters with the future episcopal fire-brand, John MacHale, Shrewsbury attacked the Irish clergy in particular accusing them of being an evil, ignorant, seditious body of men.<sup>5</sup> Early in 1842, Lord Clifford of

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1 Joseph L. Altholz. ‘The Political Behaviour of the English Catholics, 1850-1867’ in *Journal of British Studies* (Trinity College Hartford, Connecticut, USA), Nov. 1964, pp89-103. The essence of this paper has been published in *Paedagogica Historica* 20, pp108-128

2 *Ibid.* pp.89,91.

3 M.D.Petre, *The Ninth Lord Petre* (London, 1928), p.302.

4 During the years 1766—1790 two of the four Vicars Apostolic were members of Shrewsbury’s family and these occupied the two most influential Districts. They were brothers of George, fourteenth Earl of Shrewsbury, James Talbot being in charge of the London District from 1759 until 1790, and Thomas Talbot being in charge of the Midland District from 1766 until 1795. There was, obviously, distinct family advantage in restricting the power of Papal preferment.

5 For the earlier exchanges, see B.O’Reilly, *Life of John MacHale*, Archbishop of Tuam (New York and Cincinnati, 1890), vol.1, pp.214—215, and also Claude Leetham ‘Gentili’s Reports to Rome’ in the *Wiseman Review*, Winter 1963-4, p.411.

Chudleigh also initiated a series of virulent attacks in the public press against MacHale. The Old Catholics had an ally at the Papal Court itself, in the person of Thomas, Cardinal Weld, the wealthy Dorsetshire squire whose wife had died in 1815 and whose daughter was married to Clifford himself. Weld lived in the Odeschalchi Palace in Rome, where he received ‘all that was illustrious in Roman Society’.<sup>6</sup> After Weld’s death in 1837, the Old Catholics were able to transfer their confidence to Januarius, Cardinal Acton, who for the next ten years was the secret repository of all their hopes and schemes.

Acton was the son of Sir John Francis Acton of traditional Catholic stock, and was educated at Magdalene College, Cambridge, and the Academy of Noble Ecclesiastics in Rome. It was largely owing to Acton’s lack of sympathy concerning the establishment of an English hierarchy that the event was postponed until after his death in 1847. He thought that ‘the English throughout their history had been factious, and opposed to authority, and were not to be entrusted with more and more independent power’.<sup>7</sup> The Cardinal’s nephew was, of course, the first Lord Acton, friend of Gladstone, Professor of Modern History at Cambridge, opponent of Papal Infallibility, and bitter critic at times of both Manning and Newman. It was not until 1877 that the Old Catholics succeeded in lodging another of their group in a Roman Palace in the person of Edward Henry Howard, eldest son of Gyles Howard, himself a grandson of the twelfth Duke of Norfolk. Howard was created Cardinal in 1877 and succeeded Mgr. George Talbot de Malahide as confidential English advisor to Pius IX. For many years, too, Lord Camoys had an uncle resident at the Papal Court, Archbishop Stonor, who was ‘a familiar John Bull in Rome’ and well-known for his anti-Irish pronouncements.<sup>8</sup>

When in 1844 the Irish Bishops were urging Daniel O’Connell to declare open war upon the Charitable Bequests Bill, then before Parliament, the chief opposition to O’Connell was provided by the English Catholics in Parliament and especially by Lord Beaumont and Lord Camoys, two peers who were six years later to congratulate Lord John Russell on his Ecclesiastical Titles Bill and to hail him as ‘a true friend of the British Constitution’.<sup>9</sup> In the same year, 1844, the British Government was employing a member of the Petre Family to intrigue at Rome against the Irish

6 Charles S. Isaacson, *The Story of the English Cardinals* (London, 1907), pp.234-238.

7 Bernard Ward, *The Sequel to Catholic Emancipation* (London, 1915), vol.1, p.158.

8 Shane Leslie (ed), *Letters of Herbert Cardinal Vaughan to Lady Herbert of Lea 1867-1903* (London 1942), p.249, & note.

9 Wilfrid Ward, *The Life and Times of Cardinal Wiseman* (ed.1912), vol.2, p.15 Lord Beaumont declared, ‘The late bold and clearly expressed edict of the Court of Rome cannot be received or accepted by English Roman Catholics without a violation of their duties as citizens’, and the fourteenth Duke of Norfolk, who ceased to be a Roman Catholic and joined the Church of England on account of the restoration of the hierarchy, told Beaumont that ‘ultramontane opinions are totally incompatible with allegiance to our Sovereign and with our Constitution’. See Denis Gwynn, *Lord Shrewsbury, Pugin and the Catholic Revival* (London 1946) pp.130—131)..

bishops and work ‘unofficially’ for a concordat between England and Rome, a prospect which alarmed Archbishop Cullen considerably.<sup>10</sup>

The attitude of the leading English Catholics towards the Irish clergy and bishops in the early post-Emancipation period was not accompanied by sweeter feelings towards their own Vicars Apostolic in England. Fr. Luigi Gentili (1801—1848), in 1839, was writing to Rome in alarm ‘because ‘the aristocracy wage war against the bishops’<sup>11</sup> and urging that it was not expedient to restore the hierarchy while this situation endured. The aristocracy, he felt, were patronizing to the Vicars and the latter were afraid of their power, their wealth, and their influence at Rome. Some of the Vicars, who were not themselves allied to the greater families by way of birth, were accustomed to adopting a sycophantic stance in their dealings with the aristocracy, an attitude exemplified in a letter of John Murdoch, Coadjutor-Bishop to the Vicar Apostolic of the Western District of Scotland since 1833, which he wrote to the tenth Lord Herries in 1840. He declared that on a recent visit to Everingham Hall he had thought himself ‘carried back to the days of King Alfred’ after contemplating the ‘magnificence of the newly erected Temple’, ‘the grandeur of the armorial’, and not least by ‘the view of the five Maxwells standing up at the table’. The appearance of the young nobles ‘coupled with their youth, their rank in society, and their well-known not merely speculative but practical attachment to their religion,’ had completely overawed him.<sup>12</sup>

Henry Edward Manning, on his conversion to Catholicism in 1851, complained of the ‘old worldly family English tradition’ which he found awaiting him. He did, however, divine the remedy: ‘the presence of the million Irish in England (is) the thing which (will) save us’. Manning compared the Roman Catholic Church in England at this time to ‘an aristocratic close borough’.<sup>13</sup> The rapidity with which the Irish were demanding the care and attention of the ecclesiastical authorities in England can be seen if we compare statistics which refer to the year of Emancipation with those listed in the Catholic Directory for 1862. In 1829, there were 410 Catholic Churches and chapels in England and Wales: by 1862 these had more than doubled to 824. In 1840 there were 542 priests listed; twenty years later there were 1,215. By 1850, the old Vicariate of London alone had nineteen religious houses of men and women. John Denvir, taking his figures from the Census of 1841, five years before the great Famine period, estimated there were over 289,000 Irish-born Catholics domiciled in that year in England and Wales. This figure did not include the children born in England and Wales of Irish parents.<sup>14</sup>

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10 Peadar MacSuibhne, *Paul Cullen and his Contemporaries with their Letters from 1820-1902*, (Naas, Kildare, 1961), vol.1, p.257.

11 Lord Shrewsbury, for his part, considered Gentili ‘not suited for England’, for ‘we must have a new race of zealous English missionaries, such as are now bringing up at Oscott’. Gwynn, *op.cit.*, p.67.

12 John Murdoch to Marmaduke Maxwell, tenth Baron Herries, 11.3.1840. Beverley Record Office.

13 Manning Papers, Bayswater. Letter of Manning to Talbot (Mgr. George) dated 26 Feb 1865.

14 John Denvir, *The Irish in Great Britain* (London, 1892), p.99.

The ‘old Catholic’ families were ill-equipped, both socially and politically, to deal with this rapid transformation in their world. Their sons were brought up with a great reverence for family traditions that were closely linked to the history of their Church in the pre-Emancipation persecution years. Their characteristics had for long been ones of withdrawal and seclusion, and constant intermarriage had given support to outdated attitudes and ways. Percy Fitzgerald relates how ‘during the season Catholics entertained each other in drawing rooms where only Catholic youths met and danced with Catholic girls’ and where ‘a hostess would go round telling, in a low mysterious voice, as a piquant incident, that there was actually one Protestant in the room.’<sup>15</sup> Mr. Serjeant Bellasis, along with many others of the Oxford converts at first, was particularly enraptured by the old-world charm of such families as those of Mr George Weld of Leagram, or Lord Arundell & Surrey. His wife wrote that they were ‘truly patriarchal’ and Bellasis gives two examples of what impressed him about these old families: ‘Whilst we were staying at Everingham’, he wrote, ‘the hounds were on the lawn, and the horses of the guests parading in front, and groups of gentry preparing to start. When I went into the chapel; there was no one there but Mr. William Maxwell (afterwards Lord Herries), and he was on his knees making his morning meditation in a scarlet coat and top boots’. The other example refers to his stay at Broughton Hall, near Skipton, where Bellasis saw nothing in Sir Charles Tempest ‘but a cheerful, courteous, good-humoured country gentleman, with strong political feelings. He was not at all the man whom I should have expected to find at early morning alone, in his chapel, and staying there during two Masses with unmistakable devotion.’<sup>16</sup> The Catholic families had their moments of glory too: Robert Edward, the ninth Lord Petre, had been the first Catholic nobleman to entertain the King under his roof since the Reformation, when in 1778, George III paid a visit to Thorndon Hall.<sup>17</sup> Both the Duke of Gloucester and the Duke of Sussex, brothers of George IV, stayed with the Staffords at Costessey Hall, Norwich, and we are told in the biography of Laura Stafford-Jerningham that the owners of Costessey Hall ‘cultivated this acquaintance with the utmost assiduity for the sake of both the future of their children and the interests of their religion’.<sup>18</sup>

The *Rambler*, however, looking back in 1855 upon the last thirty years of Catholic politics found itself at a loss to point out ‘one simple advantage that has accrued to (Catholics), of the little that has really accrued to (them), which is traceable to the parliamentary influence of Catholic peers and representatives’, and it speculated whether this was because ‘they have mistaken their line, or been deficient in capacity or sincerity, or that they have continued by their

15 Percy Fitzgerald, *Fifty Years of Catholic Life and Social Progress* (London 1901), vol.1, p.11, note.

16 Edward Bellasis, *Memorials of Mr Serjeant Bellasis 1800-1873* (London 1893), pp.107-108.

17 A.M.Clarke, *Life of the Hon.Mrs. Edward Petre (Laura Stafford Jerningham.)*, London 1899, p.75.

18 *ibid*, p.64. On 17 June 1824, through the kind offices of Lord Liverpool, Sir George and Lady Jerningham had been permitted to reassume the family title of Stafford. The 1678 condemnation of William Stafford Howard was referred to by Liverpool as a ‘blot upon the pages of English history’ (Clarke, p.63).

divisions and manoeuvring to neutralise whatever power they might have wielded'.<sup>19</sup> In referring to possible intellectual inferiority the *Rambler* had touched upon a sensitive issue.

It is true that the social and political isolation which so many of the traditional Catholic families were finding irksome now that they were no longer subject to the penal statutes, was emphasised by their intellectual inferiority when they compared themselves with their non-Catholic counterparts in the social milieu to which they by birth and by wealth belonged. 'What then, is our literary and intellectual condition at the present moment?' asked the *Rambler* in 1849<sup>20</sup>, eight years after the publication of Tract XC which had opened the floodgates to admit the Oxford converts with their University training behind them and their sharp and incisive skill in dialectic. 'Can we claim a high place in English Literature? Can we claim any place at all?' the journal demanded, 'Is there such a thing as a Catholic English Literature in existence, from the profoundest theology to the most trifling school-books? When foreign Catholics come among us, and knowing what is done in France, in Germany, and in Italy, ask us to point out the works of English Catholic theologians, historians, poets, essayists, metaphysicians, mathematicians, men of science, orators, or writers on the great political and social questions of the day, bidding us, at the same time, deduct from our list all that has been done by persons educated at Rome, Maynooth, Douay, or any other foreign or non-Catholic seminary, what can we say?'<sup>21</sup> 'Ideal' Ward in 1849 pointed out that 'there is no recognised system whatever among us which so much as professes to train the noble or the wealthy for their high and responsible positions; there is no recognised system whatever which so much as professes to train lay students disposed and qualified to engage in intellectual pursuits; there is no recognised system whatever which so much as professes to train up persons who may be really fitted to teach the secular branches of education in our colleges.'<sup>22</sup> Ward did not hesitate to apportion blame for these shortcomings. It was still too widely believed, he held, that if 'anyone in the shape of a monk or nun can be converted into a teacher, then all is supposed perfect; and the boys and girls thus instructed are expected to grow up with scarcely a trace of human infirmity recognisable in their faultless perfection', and it had to be admitted that among Catholics there were too many instances of the man 'whose wits and means are insufficient to enable him to gain a livelihood by any other more profitable occupation [and who] straightway sets up a school, and enlightens the minds of the young on all the various branches of human knowledge.'<sup>23</sup> In his Inaugural Address to the Academia in 1866, Archbishop Manning, reflecting on the condition of the Church of his adoption at the time of his conversion, found it necessary to accept W.G. Ward's analysis. 'It was neither visible nor audible', he declared, 'it had no literature, no influence on public opinion, no

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19 *The Rambler*, June 1855, p.425.

20 *ibid.* January 1849, p.326

21 *ibid.*

22 Letter of W.G. Ward in the *Rambler*, Feb.1849, p.449.

23 *Rambler*, Aug.1850, pp.91 et seq.

hold upon the legislature, no recognition in the country. It was tolerated only because it was despised.’<sup>24</sup> In the *Contemporary Review* thirteen years after Manning’s *Address*, Ignatius Ryder, one of Newman’s small band of devoted disciples at the Oratory, found himself having to agree reluctantly with his literary opponent Dr. Littledale, that the Roman Catholic laity were ‘distinctly more narrow, apathetic, negative, more incapable of interest in higher thought, even on religious topics, less earnest and willing ... to work in and for their Church’ than their Protestant counterparts.<sup>25</sup> And even the convert-optimist T.W. Allies was to assert that he had never met with an individual Catholic priest or layman ‘who did not think and feel that the English Catholics in the matter of education were far inferior to their Protestant fellow-countrymen’.<sup>26</sup>

Criticisms, coming as they frequently did from the mouths of the Oxford converts, had early evoked a stinging response from the then newly-appointed Vicar Apostolic of the Central District, William Bernard Ullathorne.<sup>27</sup> The bishop, described by Maisie Ward as belonging to a type that is getting rarer, a type which unites in one person the ‘matter of fact, practical British character’ with an ‘enthusiasm for ideals and principles’<sup>28</sup> was born of traditional Catholic stock. Identifying himself with the susceptibilities of the old Catholics, Ullathorne took the converts to task, declaring ‘we have seen a day when those who are but as children amongst us, forgetting their pupillage, have undertaken to rebuke, censure, and condemn the acts of the English Church, and the sentiments of her members, which they are unwilling to understand ... We have seen ourselves set forth as the worst taught, worst trained, and most ignorant men of our class in all England’.<sup>29</sup> He accused the converts of brawling in public and told them to keep their place, for ‘the body of English superiors, with their clergy, know much better than their new instructors what are the wants, and what the difficulties, and what the abuses with which they have to contend, and what the season for correction’. W.G.Ward replied to this attack by asserting that Ullathorne was giving currency to the view that ‘converts are criticizing old Catholic institutions from a sort of external position, as though not feeling ourselves bound up with those institutions’ and, he added, ‘it is, on

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24 H.E.Manning, *Miscellanies* (London, 1877), vol.1, p.180.

25 Rev. H.I.D. Ryder: ‘Ritualism, Roman Catholicism, and Converts’, reprinted from the *Contemporary Review* of February 1879 in *Essays* (London 1911), pp.188-189.

26 Mary H.Allies, *Thomas William Allies* (London 1907), p.103.

27 Ullathorne was consecrated titular Bishop of Hetalonia on 21 June 1846, and appointed Vicar Apostolic of the Western District where he exhibited unwarranted severity towards Prior Park College and earned a reputation for ruthlessness. For an account of this see J.S. Roche, *A History of Prior Park College and its Founder, Bishop Baines* (London 1931) *passim*. Ullathorne mellowed after his transfer to the Central District on 28 July 1848, and became first Bishop of Birmingham in the restored hierarchy in 1850. He ruled the see until 1888, died in the March of the following year as titular Archbishop of Cabasa.

28 Maisie Ward: ‘The Indicating Number’ in the *Clergy Review*, March 1963, p.144. See also my article ‘Archbishop Ullathorne and Religious Education’, *Pax*, vol. 54, no.310, pp.124—130.

29 Letter of Ullathorne in the *Tablet*, 9 December 1848.

the contrary, precisely because we feel ourselves as fully part and parcel of the existing system as are the older Catholics themselves ... that we are so constrained to speak.<sup>30</sup>

Undoubtedly there had for long been cause for concern about the quality of the educational provision available to Catholics, and it was with this problem in the forefront of their minds that representatives of the leading 'old Catholic' families attended a meeting of the Cisalpine Club in 1793.<sup>31</sup> At this meeting, the second to be held in that year, the Catholic gentry decided upon a plan of action. Their continuing distrust and dislike of the bishops is manifested by the fact that not one of the bishops was invited to the momentous meeting at which a committee was formed upon the motion of Lord Petre 'to enquire into the present state of the Catholic youth of this kingdom' and 'to point out such a plan as may seem to them most eligible for the establishment of a school for the education of the Catholic laity of this kingdom.' It was time that the sons of the gentry be educated upon English soil and in a manner as like to that of their Protestant equals as possible, rather than as aliens in continental colleges which smacked too much of the penal exile. 'Lord Petre, Mr. Towneley, Dr. Bellasyse, Mr. Cruise, Sir Henry Charles Englefield, Mr. Errington, Dr. Collins, and Mr. William Throckmorton' were all voted onto the Committee of Inquiry. In less than a month it advanced three propositions:

1 — That a public school solely appropriated to the education of Catholic boys, and totally unconnected with any Protestant school, be established as soon as possible.

2 — That the school be under the direction of a certain number of Roman Catholic noblemen and gentlemen, to be called governors, who shall be originally elected by the subscribers, and that all future governors shall be chosen by the surviving governors.

3 — That the school shall be under the immediate direction and management of two headmasters, to be called the President and Vice-President, who shall be always priests, and be appointed by the governors.

This scheme is interesting in two ways for it illustrates not only the desire of the Catholic aristocracy for an exclusive education for their sons but also their wish to be free of episcopal surveillance. The priest-headmasters were to be appointed by the governors and were to be responsible to them alone. There is no mention of the bishops, and the governing body is to be kept securely closed to all interlopers. It provides a useful key to the understanding of much that was to happen later and especially in the matter of the foundation of the Oratory School in 1859 by a similar social group with whom John Henry Newman had established close and cordial relations, and which was also devised to exclude episcopal oversight.

The school designed by the Cisalpines in 1793 was to be 'under the inspection of fifteen Roman Catholic noblemen and gentlemen, to be called governors'. It was later decided that '£100 paid down, or an annual sum of £20 qualified for a vote in the election of the governors', and the

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30 W.G.Ward. 'The Necessities of Catholic Education' in the *Rambler*, February 1847, pp.446.

31 'The Minute Book of the Cisalpine Club', *Dublin Review*, Jan.1893, pp.110-111.

pension was to be £30 a year. It was further provided that anyone who subscribed £500 or more was to become a governor automatically and, after an initial trial period of five years, he and his heirs 'were to have a right to nominate a boy for every principal sum of £500 so subscribed, who should be admitted into the school, and have his board, lodging, washing and instruction gratis.'

At the very time, however, that the English nobility and gentlemen were organising themselves to establish a school on English soil for the education of their sons, the Vicars Apostolic were becoming anxious to make similar provision for the education of Church students. After all, it would not do for the clergy to be less well educated than the most influential group among the laity. Bishop Thomas Talbot of the Midland District, in particular, was determined to open a small seminary for the education of Church students for his District and he was amicably disposed towards the individuals making up the gentleman's committee on account of his family connection with Lord Shrewsbury. He was also aware of the intentions of the Cisalpines. Through him the remaining three Vicars Apostolic had discovered what the gentry were concocting and Bishop Charles Walmsley especially was girding his loins to do battle. 'If the Cisalpines should force upon us such a school,' he informed the other Vicars, 'we should have a right, I think, to admonish by a short pastoral letter the Catholic gentry that the school had not received our approbation and that therefore we could not recommend it.'<sup>32</sup> John Milner, who was in 1803 to assume control of the Midland District himself, was in 1793 to recommend to Bishop John Douglass of the London District 'the erecting of a good Grammar School, such as would supersede the necessity for a Cisalpine one, and serve at the same time as a preparation for the mission, as well as for Catholics at large'.<sup>33</sup> But it would not do for such a College to be based 'on the singular plan of ours abroad, where everything was taught from figures up to Theology'. 'A different kind of discipline, of education, and of superiors' would be requisite 'for that College, where our young men of family are to be instructed'. In the curriculum 'there must be still more of fiddling, dancing, drawing, spouting, etc. or else the College will not take.' A Cisalpine school, he warned, 'will have the means of doing irreparable mischief'. Twelve months later, Milner was to warn Douglass of the dangers that would befall the secular clergy from the influence in education affairs of 'ex-Jesuits, monks and Benedictines' and he emphasised that the bishops 'ought to have a good classical school, with masters of first-rate talents; and head superiors who are not only capable of conducting, but also of forming a College, and who are themselves masters of the whole circle of literature etc '<sup>34</sup>.

A new complication for the Cisalpines arose when it was learned that Bishop Thomas Talbot had been prevailed upon to select the very man they wished to have as a headmaster of their

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32 Bernard Ward, *The Dawn of the Catholic Revival in England 1781-1803* (London 1909), vol.2, p.56.

33 J.Milner to Bp.Douglass, 27 Oct 1793, quoted in Ward, *ibid*, pp.97-98.

34 Milner to Douglass, 30 Mar 1795, *ibid*, p.106.

College, as the head of his projected seminary, the celebrated Dr John Bew.<sup>35</sup> Talbot's action in selecting Bew looked as though it might precipitate a contest between the bishops and the gentlemen, but Talbot was shrewd enough to see that in doing so he had struck at the laity's scheme in its most vulnerable point. Where were the gentlemen to find another suitably disposed and readily available clerical substitute who possessed good qualifications together with the requisite prestige and influence, and who was at the same time likely to be unconcerned at the thought of episcopal disapproval? In the event it seemed the only way forward was to arrive at a compromise solution in which the Cisalpines would have to swallow objections to a single school catering for both clerical and lay students in the fashion of the exiled English Catholic colleges operating on the Continent and Talbot would have to agree to share control of the new college with the gentry. The bishop had foreseen the outcome and hoped to be able to commit the Club's members to financing his project. The Cisalpines were prevailed upon to agree to accept responsibility for the pecuniary support of certain ecclesiastical students 'the number thus maintained to be five or six.'<sup>36</sup>

Realising that action would have to be taken immediately if his plan were to work, Talbot arranged 'to make a commencement of his seminary at the mission of a small hamlet about six miles from Birmingham, in the parish of Handsworth, called Oscott', and Dr. Dew was at once installed in office.<sup>37</sup> By 1794, a dangerous situation had been averted for the time being and it had been agreed that a mixed clerical/lay school under joint management should be established at Oscott. In February 1794, Bew received his first pupil at Oscott – a clerical student – and in August the first lay student, Charles Browne Mostyn, arrived. By 1 November, the new mixed college had five students. In 1805 it was to produce its first priest, the first Roman Catholic priest to be entirely educated in England since the Reformation. He was the Rev. Francis Martyn and was ordained by Bishop John Milner on 21 December 1805. The compromise which was reached between the gentry and the bishop in the matter of the management of the College was to survive for fourteen years, until Bishop John Milner finally succeeded in gaining exclusive control of the establishment. The lay boys only ceased to be educated at Oscott, however, in 1889, after ninety-five years of the college's existence.

Under the original plan of joint management, the President was appointed by the Bishop of the Midland District but the appointment was subject to the approval of lay governors. All financial matters were to be controlled by the governors, and the President and the Vice-President were to have complete authority over the lay students. The bishop was to confine his attention to clerical students. It was later declared, somewhat pretentiously, that the College was 'founded upon the plan of those venerable abodes of learning at Oxford and Cambridge, which were erected

35 Bew had been President of St. Gregory's, Paris, and after his period at Oscott was to be missionary at Brighton and President of St. Edmund's College at Old Hall Green. (See Bernard Ward, *History of St. Edmund's College, Old Hall* (London 1893), esp. pp.118, 119, 181, 218 seq.

36 M.D.Petre, *op.cit.*, p.309.

37 *Dublin Review*, April 1893, p.117.

by our Catholic ancestors centuries ago' and that 'it unites all the best features of a medieval college with the improvements rendered necessary by modern

requirements'.<sup>38</sup> The first prospectus of the College showed that a system which bore affinity to Jean Baptiste de la Salle's Simultaneous Method figured largely in the internal organisation:

The higher Scholars will be appointed to assist the lower in the Performance of their tasks, as has been practised in other places of Education with singular advantage'.<sup>39</sup>

The aims of the College were to be the inculcation of 'Generosity, Benevolence, Candour, and Good Breeding' and 'to excite Emulation, the Scholars in each Class will, once in the month, contend for Superiority'. An interesting regulation concerning rewards and punishments is worthy of note: 'Diligence and Docility will ever meet with Encouragement, Faults will be corrected as far as possible, by exciting a sense of Shame, and corporal punishment will be inflicted only in cases of extreme Necessity'.<sup>40</sup> It is clear that the last regulation was formed to dispel possible misconceptions that the teaching of the College might follow that in vogue in the former Jesuit colleges abroad. The harshness of Jesuit discipline had alienated many aristocratic families and was to be objected to increasingly as the nineteenth century advanced.<sup>41</sup>

The nobility were loyal to Oscott and if one looks down the list of students who attended the College from its inception until it ceased to cater for lay boys in 1889, one is particularly struck by the number of 'old Catholic' names which reappear with constant regularity. Maude Petre refers to Oscott 'with pride and love' as the establishment in which 'our fathers and brothers were educated, and where they learned to be men of religion and honour and charity'<sup>42</sup>, and in the *Life of the Hon. Mrs. Edward Petre* it is related how the sons of the Petre family were immediately sent off to Oscott as soon as they were old enough to benefit from the education it provided.<sup>43</sup>

As the Continental Colleges were to be resettled upon English soil and become better known to Englishmen under the names of Stonyhurst, Ushaw, St.Edmund's, Ampleforth and Downside,

38 The *Oscotian*, 1888, p.22.

39 *ibid.* de la Salle was a Canon of the Cathedral of Rheims and founded the Society of Brethren of the Christian Schools in 1679. By 1785, the Congregation was already teaching over 30,000 children. In the first manual he laid down a plan for the division and subdivision of the school work by means of monitors. By 1862, the *Rambler* was claiming de la Salle as 'in truth the earliest inventor of the mutual system'. (The *Rambler*, Jan.1862, p.174.). See also W.J.Battersby: *De La Salle, A Pioneer of Modern Education* (London 1949), pp.79 et seq.

40 The *Oscotian*, 1883.

41 See my articles, 'John Dune's Description of a Jesuit School', *Pax*, vol.51, no.298, pp.112-115 and 'The Liberal Training of England's Catholic Youth: William Joseph Petre (1847-93) and Educational Reform' in *Victorian Studies*, vol.15 no.3, 1972, pp.257-277.

42 M.D.Petre, *op.cit.*, p.316.

43 A.M.Clarke, *op.cit.*, pp.51, 52.

they did not feel the full benefit of aristocratic affluence until the lay connection with Oscott was eventually broken. One of the reasons why the Society of Jesus, for instance, was later to champion the cause of the magnates for ecclesiastical permission to send their sons to the universities of Oxford and Cambridge was that it feared that a Catholic University would be based upon Oscott and that Religious Orders would thus be deprived for good of the aristocratic connection. Indeed by the 1870s Oscott's name had become very fashionable and its influence was not confined to English students. The nephew of President Garcia Moreno of Ecuador (Pedro Garcia) was a student 'at the College from 1868 to 1870, and from 1870 until 1873 we find that all three sons of the President of Nicaragua – Fruto, Jose, and Joachim Chamorro – were pupils there. Canon William Barry, who was a student at the College in 1868, preparing for his London Matriculation Examination, could comment on the distinction of the many foreign students who had been attracted to study at this thoroughly English foundation. 'Some illustrious names adorned our list,' he wrote, 'for instance, that of Borromeo, who were kinsfolk of St. Charles and still held the family possessions on Lago Maggiore; and the Ghislieri, collaterals of St Pius V. Our Spanish record contained such names as that of Dr Montes de Oca, who was Bishop of Tamaulipas, and afterwards refused the Archbishopric of Mexico. Among our French boys I remember Philippe de Mussy, whose father was physician of Louis Philippe.<sup>44</sup> But for Barry, the most remarkable boy who ever went to Oscott was Alfonso Iturbide, heir presumptive to the Emperor of Mexico.

As the nineteenth century progressed, however, the Catholic aristocracy showed they had never been reconciled at heart to the policy of educating their sons alongside students destined for the clerical state. Their chief objection to the system prevailing in Catholic colleges such as Ushaw, St. Edmund's and Oscott, was fundamentally a social one. Clerical students were chiefly the offspring of parents 'badly endowed with worldly goods'<sup>45</sup> who were enjoying free or subsidised education on the understanding that they would enter the ecclesiastical state. Colonel Raleigh Chichester, writing in 1882, also identified such an admixture of classes in the Colleges staffed by religious communities. Stonyhurst was one of those, he maintained, which admitted if it did not positively encourage 'a wholesome admixture of classes'.<sup>46</sup>

Such social mingling was viewed with a jaundiced eye by many parents. The Oxford convert Mr. Sergeant Bellasis in his *Autobiography* delineated the problem. He considered that 'in existing schools there [is] too great an admixture of classes, many of the scholars coming from homely dwellings, bringing with them provincialisms, not to say vulgarities, which were perhaps, in great measure, got rid of by associating with their school-fellows, but at the cost of leaving a portion of them behind'.<sup>47</sup> Moreover, the masters were mainly divines 'themselves in course of education, and only temporarily occupied as teachers, and, if possessed of any talent, certain to be carried off to more important duties'. He felt it to be desirable 'that a little more attention

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44 A.M. Clarke, *op.cit.*, pp.51, 52.

45 Col.C.Raleigh, *Chichester Schools* (London, 1882), p.104

46 *ibid*, p.105.

47 Edward Bellasis, *Memorials of Mr. Serjeant Bellasis 1800-1873* (London 1893), p.154.

should be paid to the *personnel* of the boys', and in the case of such schools as that run by the Jesuits at Stonyhurst he argued that 'lay-brothers were hardly adequate to the charge of little boys first come from home'.<sup>48</sup> The mid-nineteenth century neglect of Stonyhurst by the greater families cannot be explained away, however, as being solely a dislike for mixed clerical/ lay education. The objection to Stonyhurst rested upon deeper foundations. There was a profound general distrust of Jesuit influence, largely because of the widely-held suspicion that the Society 'undertook the working of colleges in order that a supply of suitable subjects might be attracted to the Society'<sup>49</sup> – and also because it was feared that the Jesuits used their educational foundations for selfish ends, 'in order that our members may be conveniently instructed in knowledge and in all that is profitable to the welfare of souls' (from the Society's *Rules of Rectors and Houses of Study*). Even John Henry Newman imbibed this distrust. 'The Jesuits (if I may use an undignified metaphor) tend to swamp the Church', he wrote, adding that 'with most other thinking men, I dread their unmitigated action on the Church.'<sup>50</sup> The dissatisfaction reached its climax in 1877 with the publication of a series of pamphlets which led to a quarrel breaking loose in the columns of the *Tablet* and *Dublin Review*.<sup>51</sup>

The author of the pamphlets was William Joseph Petre, son of the twelfth Baron Petre of Ingatestone Hall in Essex. He argued against the 'unbending discipline, excessive surveillance, (and) the denial of all leisure' characteristic of the Jesuit ideal, asserting that such attitudes gave rise to 'contracted mental power or a coarseness of character fitted for the reclamation of land in Australia or New Zealand (rather) than for competition with the cultivation, refinement, knowledge and mental grasp, the scholarship of which our Protestant fellow-subjects offer so many bright examples'.<sup>52</sup> He contrasted the life of 'individuality and of freedom' characteristic of an English Protestant Public School with the 'over-strict and prison-like discipline' of certain Catholic colleges. He objected strongly to the system whereby the Society of Jesus, in particular, 'insists on making every scholastic teach, whether he is fit for the work or not, and whether he likes the work or not', an haphazard approach to teaching not confined at that time to the Jesuits.<sup>53</sup> In 1872, Thomas W. Allies, Secretary of the Catholic Poor School Committee, inveighed against the practice operative in other Colleges 'of employing priests as teachers for a short period before they enter on the work of the active ministry, so that their occupation as teachers does not appear as the great work of their life, and as soon as practice has given them a certain value they

48 *ibid.*

49 E.Boyd Barrett, *The Jesuit Enigma* (London 1927), p.170.

50 Oratory Archives, Birmingham, Letter of Newman to Coleridge, 29 Apr 1869. Not sent.

51 See especially, *Remarks on the Present Condition of Catholic Liberal Education* (London, 1877), and *The Problem of Catholic Liberal Education* (London, 1877) by the Hon.& Rev.William Petre.

52 *The Problem of Catholic Liberal Education*, passim.

53 Boyd Barrett, *op.cit.*, pp.178-179.

are taken away, and give place to the like successors'.<sup>54</sup> This dispute was still to divide Catholics even at the end of the nineteenth century.

Bishop John Cuthbert Hedley OSB, Auxiliary Bishop of Newport & Menevia, argued in 1877<sup>55</sup> that if the aristocracy were not enamoured of the style of education pursued in colleges run by either the Jesuits or the secular clergy they ought to look with considerable favour upon the monastic foundations of Downside, and Ampleforth. He encapsulated the Benedictine philosophy by declaring that in the monastic approach 'to educate is to cultivate, develop, and polish all the faculties – physical, intellectual, moral and religious – and to give to a boy's whole nature its completeness and perfection, so that he may be what he ought to be and do what he should do, to form him as a man, and to prepare him to do his duty in life to those about him, to his country, to himself; and so, by perfecting his present life, to prepare him for the life to come...'<sup>56</sup> This programme was to be attained best in a Benedictine establishment, he argued, because 'a monastery is a family: and in a family interests are common, the members play into each other's hands, and every one works for the good of the whole'. 'It is one of the marked features of the Benedictine tradition,' he pointed out, 'founded on a well-known passage of the Rule, that even the youngest members of a community house have some kind of voice in the concerns of the whole house'<sup>57</sup>. It was most essential for education, he maintained, 'that each boy in a school should be treated, not as a mere unit, but as a definite individual, with special strong points and special weaknesses' and the theory in Benedictine houses was 'that education means growing, coming out, developing; and not repression or keeping down'. He agreed with Petre and other critics that 'nothing can grow without warmth and geniality' for 'if boys be kept at a distance, or chilled by severity, or subjected to a too unvarying drill, you may make them hide some of their vices, and faults, but neither their minds nor their hearts will grow.' The entire atmosphere in a Benedictine house, he asserted was one of 'sweetness and light' and 'the problem of how to make boys love religion is grappled with and fairly solved'. There was no artificial forcing in this or the imposing of excessive surveillance, harsh discipline and nagging regulation, for the influence of the monastic choir itself 'resounding at all hours with the Divine praise, and slow and solemn vesper', and 'the festivals of dim and far-off saints who lived simple lives and ruled men in their day' were 'fitted to attract young hearts.'<sup>58</sup>

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54 Mary H. Allies, *op.cit.*, pp.98-99.

55 John Cuthbert Hedley, OSB (Ampleforth), was consecrated as Auxiliary Bishop of the Diocese of Newport and Menevia on 29 September 1873, when he was thirty-six years old and was translated to the see itself in 1881, ten months after the death of Bishop Thomas Joseph Brown OSB (Downside), who was the first occupant of the see in the restored hierarchy.

56 Bishop Hedley's *Address on School-Work*, delivered at Ampleforth College on the re-opening of Studies, 28 August 1877. (Ampleforth Archives).

57 *ibid.*

58 *ibid.*

It is true that the Benedictines of Ampleforth and Downside in the organisation and conduct of their schools did go far to remove the objections of the Catholic county families concerning discipline and both gentry and converts recognised the attempts to make the monastic schools as like as possible to the Protestant Public Schools of the day. Yet the very fact which Hedley was holding up as an advantage to be found in monastic schools – the close association with the cloister – was that which worried Old Catholics and converts alike. The views expressed in the *Rambler* some thirty years before Hedley's speech was uttered still presented unanswerable objections: 'The past circumstances of Catholicism in this country, among other disastrous effects upon our system of education, have tended to a practical jumble of the secular and ecclesiastical systems, from which we are most grievously suffering, and which we humbly conceive to be the first thing that demands eradication, in order to the establishment of sound and successful educational institutions for our middle and upper classes'<sup>59</sup> The journal complained that Catholics had found the middle of the nineteenth century arrive 'without the establishment of a single purely ecclesiastical, or purely secular, seminary in Great Britain' and it described as lamentable 'the confusion of the ecclesiastic and the lay student in one discriminate body, and the absence of a class of competent and properly remunerated instructors in the various departments of ecclesiastical and secular study'.<sup>60</sup> Because of this deficiency it was alleged, 'the young Catholic laity, both (*sic*) of the nobility, gentry, and commercial classes, go forth into the world worse educated than any corresponding class in any one of the countless sects of Protestantism'.<sup>61</sup> In the following year, W.G.Ward was amazed that there should be 'so much as room for doubt that Protestant lay education is superior to ours' for to him it appeared 'a plain, broad, undeniable matter of fact'.<sup>62</sup>

It was, of course, with mixed feelings that the traditional Catholic families read the views of their new critics. They could rejoice in the converts' championing of their needs for new and better educational provision for their sons, but they had also to endure – painfully – the strictures on their present poor intellectual attainments. To Bishop Ullathorne, the whole tendency of the *Rambler's* strictures was 'to bring the Catholics of England into contempt, and to drive their children to Protestant schools in search of education'.<sup>63</sup> Ullathorne defended his own school course at Downside:<sup>64</sup> 'The languages taught – I saw actually taught – were Greek, Latin, French, Italian, English. German was not so much in vogue in those days,<sup>65</sup> but a class in that language has since been added... The principal classics were studied downright; and more than once, as boys,

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59 The *Rambler*, Dec.1848, pp.235—241.

60 *ibid.*

61 *ibid.*

62 Letter of W.G.Ward in the *Rambler*, February 1849, p.449.

63 Letter of Ullathorne to the *Tablet*, 9 Dec.1848.

64 *ibid.*

65 *i.e.* 1823.

we were amused at seeing new companions from Protestant schools, who boasted their upper classes, put down to Caesar to learn their rudiments. One of Shakespeare's best plays was well studied and brought out yearly, so that in the duration of the course five or six of the great poet's productions were thoroughly comprehended. A course of ancient and modern geography was given with care... History was a favourite study in the college; a system of mnemonics for the chronology gave it both zest and consistency. There was a separate course of ancient, Roman, Modern and Church history. Many of the students read the larger works copiously in private... After our arithmetic was completed, we followed up our mathematics into conic sections, and acquired the elements of algebra.' But Ullathorne's account of his experiences was not particularly successful in appeasing critics for he was himself seventeen years of age when he arrived at Downside in 1823 and he had entered the school as a Church student destined to join the Monastic Choir.<sup>66</sup>

The system of educating clerical and lay students together did not only encounter criticism from the laymen. In 1863, the future Cardinal Manning saw the break-up of this system as one of 'the wants' of the Church in England.<sup>67</sup> The gentry, however, made two bold attempts in the second half of the nineteenth century to disrupt the pattern of 'mixed', clerical / lay education. One of these resulted in the foundation of the Oratory School under John Henry Newman's direction in May 1859 and the other was the establishment of a school at Woburn by the eccentric William Petre in August 1877. Both these attempts at self-help were based upon the belief that there existed insufficient youths of the right family background to give a desirable social *éclat* at one and the same time to Downside, Ampleforth, Stonyhurst, St.Edmund's, Oscott, Prior Park, Ushaw and (shortly) Ratcliffe. The sons of the well-to-do ought not to be spread thinly among so many establishments.<sup>68</sup> It was maintained that one new college was essential to enable such youths to be educated together to the exclusion of social inferiors and to offset undue clerical influence and harsh discipline.

The Oratory School was the outcome of an attempt by the Duke of Norfolk, Viscount Campden, Lord Fielding, Lord Charles Thynne, Lord Henry Kerr, Sir John Acton, Sir Richard Throckmorton, Sir John Simeon and others to enlist the support and sympathy of Newman in favour of their cause. That the school ultimately failed to fulfil required needs and expectations, however, was very largely a consequence of Newman's hyper-sensitive personality and his inability to work in harmony with the first headmaster of the school, Fr. Nicholas Darnell of the Oratory. By 1860 not only had the headmaster resigned but the entire staff of masters had followed suit thus ensuring that the school would never fully recover from such an adverse beginning. Mr Serjeant Bellasis tried hard to redeem what appeared to be an almost impossible situation during the Christmas holidays of 1861. Although the school was able to reopen with a new staff in the New Year many aristocratic families eventually deserted it and returned their

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66 Dom Cuthbert Butler OSB, *Life and Times of Bishop Ullathorne 1806—1889*, (London 1926), I, p15.

67 *Dublin Review* 1 (1863) 149.

68 Claude Leetham, *Luigi Gentili: A Sower for the Second Spring* (London 1965) p.78.

sons to more firmly established and stable foundations. The Oratory School was never destined to become a major force in the provision of an elitist education for English Roman Catholics.

Lord Petre's private venture, on the other hand, might have been much more successful if he had been able to overcome his financial impracticality and his reluctance to appeal for increased financial support for the school. He gained the approval of the aristocracy by insisting that if the Catholic body was to cater adequately for the education of its future leaders 'its system of education must be based on a more generous and a more fearless view than at present of the intellectual opportunities proper for youth'.<sup>69</sup> For Petre this concept implied two developments: 'we must not mix our classes' and 'we must close the doors of our schools to half-taught and undisciplined foreigners.'<sup>70</sup> Schools for the laity, he argued, ought not to be conducted as if they were Tridentine seminaries for the clergy. Boys at Woburn School were to be provided with a generous prescription of self-government and a supply of the material luxuries appropriate to their rank in society. That the school succeeded in making an effective social appeal is illustrated by the fact that in its five-year period of existence the school increased its numbers from an initial eight to a full complement of nearly a hundred boys. One old boy of the school, G.F.Stafford, at Balliol College in 1883, claimed 'It is no empty boast when we say that there are few if any schools in England where the members of the school enjoy so much freedom and independence, where authority is so highly respected and revered, and punishment reduced to such a minimum as it is at Woburn School.'<sup>71</sup> The school collapsed because in 1884 Petre's father refused to allow his son to squander more of the family's assets upon the foundation; had this decision been deferred for only a year Petre would have succeeded to the family estates and the barony and the school might well have survived.

There were Catholics, of course, who viewed the return of the sons of the aristocracy to the old collegiate schools with equanimity and satisfaction. Shortly before the collapse of Woburn, Colonel Raleigh Chichester welcomed the 'wholesome admixture of classes' which existed in the older colleges declaring that 'our rich men cannot do a better thing for the sake of their own sons than to create foundations as quickly and as numerous as they can, in existing schools of their choice, so as to bring back the old Catholic spirit of holding all men equal in the temple of science as before the law'. He considered it regrettable that 'the one great weakness of our Catholic schools is precisely this, that they are already too much class institutions', a condition 'contrary to the spirit of the Church, contrary to what has been the national habit'.<sup>72</sup> Ten years later the future Cardinal Vaughan was bemoaning the fact that 'one of the weaknesses of the Church in this country is the febleness of the social tie by which Catholics are held together'.<sup>73</sup>

<sup>69</sup> Petre, 'Remarks on The Present Condition of Catholic Liberal Education', *op .cit.*

<sup>70</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> Letter of G.F.Stafford, 6 Nov 1883, printed in *The Amoeba*, 30 November 1883, pp.2-3. For a full account of the school, and especially its self-governing parliament see my article in *Victorian Studies* 15:3 (1972) 257

<sup>72</sup> Chichester, *op.cit.*, pp.104 *sqq.*

<sup>73</sup> *Dublin Review*, vol.239, no.506, 1965-66, p.327.