

THE ITALIAN BAROQUE STYLE AND THE ORATORY IN LONDON

by

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ABSTRACT

The Church of the London Oratory, built in 1884, reflects the nature and role of the Oratory of St. Philip Neri, an Italian religious institute of the counter-reformation period. This institution was brought to England by John Henry Newman, the future Cardinal and most famous convert to Catholicism in Victorian Britain. He, along with Frederick William Faber, the first Superior of the London Oratory community, were drawn to Catholicism in its then contemporary form in which they saw the voice of a living Christian tradition. A consequence of this attitude was that the Gothic style which dominated church architecture throughout much of the nineteenth century was deemed unsuitable for the Oratorians' church. In so far as architecture can reflect an ideology, the Baroque style came to represent, in ecclesiastical terms, the Ultramontane movement--i.e., the movement which supported a high view of papal authority--and contemporary Catholicism as opposed to the mediaeval revivalism of Augustus Welby Pugin, the chief proponent of the Gothic style.

The essentially popular nature of the Italian devotions introduced by Faber in England also played a role in the selection of the Baroque style. For the type of Gothic church favoured by the supporters of a Gothic purism could only, with difficulty, be adapted to the liturgical developments in the Catholic Church since the mediaeval period. These

developments, such as the increased devotion paid to the Holy Eucharist in Catholic worship and the use of popular hymns sung in the vernacular had been fostered by St. Philip Neri in sixteenth-century Rome, and they were adopted by the London Oratorians.

Another aspect of the Baroque style was its popularity with the builders of places of entertainment in the mid-Victorian period. Thus, several London clubs, and many of the new city hotels, were built in the style. These were new institutions in society, as was the Oratory, and were in keeping with the Victorian enthusiasm for progress.

It is within this context of ecclesiastical and secular architectural trends that the design of the Oratorians' church must be considered. Ecclesiastical fashions of mid-Victorian England reflected and were reflected in secular taste as well. This can be illustrated in Newman's observation that the age was one for "external secularism," which is "precisely Oratorianism."

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Introduction

At the opening of the present church of the Oratory in 1884, The Tablet, one of the principal Catholic journals of the day, suggested that the new building would 'bring home visibly to many that thought can find expression in other forms than words.'¹ Because this is so, an architectural style itself can convey a meaning and represent a particular form of thought.

It has sometimes been said that the choice of the Italian Baroque² for the London Oratory reflected merely the taste of the Oratorians or that it was simply another aspect of Victorian romanticism. To a certain extent, this may be true, but there was a deeper motive, and to uncover this motive it is necessary to look into the situation confronting Roman Catholicism³ in nineteenth-century England, the nature of the Oratory of St. Philip Neri and the lives and characters of John Henry Newman and Frederick William Faber, the famous converts who brought the Oratory to England and whose attitudes influenced its development.

Although initially neutral in their approach to architecture--but with perhaps something of a bias in favour of Gothic⁴--Newman and Faber both sought an expression of their faith which would be relevant to their contemporaries and which would reflect developments in Catholic life since the Reformation of the sixteenth century. In choosing the Oratory of St. Philip Neri, an Italian religious institute of the

counter-reformation period as the most suitable vehicle for their apostolic work, they considered also the nature of the Community which worked through example and which had a special tradition of appealing to the physical sense of its adherents as a means of raising them to spiritual things. Thus, it can be suggested that their design, dictated as it was by the desire to establish an organisation that would be essentially modern, brought with it from necessity a certain policy in architecture which led in a different direction from that taken by the majority of English Catholics. It is this architectural policy, and the background to it, which shall be examined in this paper.

NOTES

¹ The Tablet, London, April 26, 1884.

² With regard to the understanding of the term 'Baroque' it was not until 1855 that Swiss historian, Jakob Burckhardt, applied it in what came to be a definitive way to the art and architecture of Post-Renaissance Italy. Throughout this paper, various people will be quoted who use such terms as 'Grecian' or Italian for styles which we should recognise as Baroque, e.g., Newman. When in Italy he spoke of the Jesuit Church in Milan as in the Grecian style. J.H. Newman, The Letters and Diaries of John Henry Newman (C.S. Dessain Ed.), vol. XI (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., 1962).

³ In future throughout the text 'Catholicism' and 'Catholic' will refer to Roman Catholicism unless otherwise specified.

⁴ John Bowden, The Life and Letters of Frederick William Faber (Baltimore: John Murphy and Co., 1869), p. 252.

Chapter 1

Background: The English Catholic Church, 1829-1845

On an evening towards the end of April in the year 1829 the populace of Rome was not a little surprised to read the strange words Emancipazione Cattolica which were spelt out in large lettering upon the façade of the Venerable English College. Cardinal Wiseman, who was later head of the Catholic Church in England, records that "the first of the two words, long and formidable to untutored lips, was no household word in Italy; nor was there any imaginable connection in ordinary persons' minds between it and its adjective, nor between the two and England."¹ But in the latter country, the situation was quite otherwise. Again, to quote Wiseman, "The year 1829 was [to the Catholics of England] what the egress from the catacombs was to the early Christians."²

The English Catholic Church in the year of its emancipation was still largely an institution of the eighteenth century, small--its adherents numbered about one percent of the population³--cautious, somnolent and inward looking. The years of persecution through which the Catholic community had lived had left them with a distrust of outward show and a fear of any external change even when this could be in their favour.⁴ As late as the mid-eighteenth century, a sentence of life imprisonment could be imposed on Catholic bishops, priests and schoolmasters, and it

was only with the Bill of 1829 that Catholics were permitted once again to take a general part in the life of the country.⁵

The Catholics of England were governed directly from Rome as the subjects of a missionary district and fell under the jurisdiction of the famous congregation de Propaganda fide, a creation of the counter-reformation papacy, which, in regard to England, derived its then-current authority from a decree of Pope Benedict XIV in 1753.⁶ The country was divided into four districts, each under a bishop known as a Vicar Apostolic. The bishops were responsible for their respective districts, and each was subject directly to the authority of the Cardinal-Prefect of Propaganda in Rome. The Reverend W.H. Brookfield, an Anglican clergyman, described the bishop of the London district around the year 1840:

I just now saw the R.C. Bishop of London get out of an omnibus in Piccadilly, seize his carpet bag, and trudge straight home with it to Golden Square. He had a blue cloak, but hung below the skirts, and on he went. A very pleasing, venerable, episcopal-looking man, very like any other Bishop, save that none of ours would touch a carpet bag with his little finger.⁷

These bishops were, for the most part, overworked and pious, although not especially learned, nor especially remarkable men. The clergy who worked under them were also of a similar cast. Their training had been either in the colleges on the Continent or, in more recent years, in the restored seminaries on English soil. Except during the celebration of the

Mass itself, all external display was avoided. Priests dressed in simple and plain clothes and would have seemed hardly distinguishable from very conservative and rather old-fashioned laymen. Unless they were members of a religious order, priests were not called 'Father' and the wearing of the cassock, except during Mass, was unknown.⁸

This life of the clergy was mirrored by that of the laity. No Catholic had taken a seat in Parliament for two centuries, and outside of Ireland, no Catholic played a significant role in public life. The number of English Catholics during this period has been variously estimated, but excluding the beginnings of Irish immigration they cannot have exceeded 200,000 and, in fact, were probably somewhat less.⁹ Among this number, converts were few and, excluding Lancashire where a fair percentage of the population had always remained attached to the old religion, the majority were in origin the descendants of families who had lived in the vicinity of the landed estates still in Catholic hands.

In fact, the Catholic community was still largely dominated by a small group of families, most of whom were interrelated. These aristocratic families had come to assume a considerable importance, not only among their fellow laymen, but, somewhat exceptionally, in the spiritual affairs of their church as well; a circumstance occasioned principally by the peculiar status of the English bishops and their lack of normal relations with the government.

From the late eighteenth century until the first years of Queen Victoria's reign the leading Catholic families had been allied with the Whigs in attempts to improve their legal position, and a consequence of this alliance was often their adoption of the vaguely liberal sentiments expressed by the Whig party, something which drew them into conflict with the Vicars Apostolic and which created within the English church something of a Gallican party, always de-emphasizing the prerogatives of the Holy See.¹⁰ Throughout the nineteenth century these tensions remained and they were to become especially dominant during the disputes involving architectural styles, the restoration of the hierarchy in 1850 and finally, during the debates on papal infallibility which preceded the Vatican Council of 1870.

These Catholics, such as the Throckmortons, the Welds and the Petres worshipped in surroundings that were only beginning to become opulent; and it was only in chapels owned by such families, or in the embassies of the Catholic sovereigns in London that their coreligionists of lower social stations could experience something of the ceremonial and the splendour of continental Catholicism.¹¹ The average Catholic church in this period was far from impressive. The surviving structures of the eighteenth century were generally hardly distinguishable from non-conformist chapels in their arrangement and exterior decoration.¹² The basic plans were, as at St. Peter's or St. Michael's, both in Birmingham, those of square or rectangular buildings. The façades were

plain and unecclesiastical in style, whilst the interiors, with their whitewashed walls, galleries, and lack of statuary were in odd contrast to the spirit of the liturgy, for the celebration of which they were intended.¹³

Cardinal Newman in his famous sermon the 'Second Spring' may have exaggerated somewhat when he wrote that the Catholic community had become no more than "a few adherents of the Old Religion, moving silently and sorrowfully about, as memorials of what has been."¹⁴ But it is certainly true that prior to the act of Catholic Emancipation passed by Parliament in 1829 the liabilities under which the Church suffered forced a deeply conformist attitude upon the small Catholic population, a conformism which had a lasting impact upon the approach which the old Catholics, as they were later to be known, were to take in their artistic and architectural endeavours.

In the half-century from 1778 when the possession of the priesthood itself ceased to be a criminal offence to 1829, the chapels built for Catholic worship reflect a desire to remain as unobtrusive as possible. A consequence of this was that in the majority of instances the buildings themselves were constructed in a neo-classical idiom which made them undistinguishable externally from other Georgian buildings. Indeed, even in interior arrangement, they came in so far as a Catholic church could to approximate the Protestant norm.

Typical of such buildings are two chapels on the Isle of Wight. These buildings, described as 'notable' by Bryan Little in his Catholic Churches Since 1623, were built at Newport and West Cowes in 1792 and 1796 respectively.¹⁵ The chapel at Newport is a plain brick structure, enhanced by its projecting Roman Doric portico and pedimented roof line, and has been described as having "little to mark it off from the almost contemporary Methodist Chapel down the street."¹⁶ The interior has the side galleries usually found in the churches of all faiths during this period, an altar in a shallow apse and is almost devoid of interior decoration. The other chapel, at West Cowes, lies parallel to the street and is built of yellow brick. It is slightly more ornate than its predecessor at Newport, and has a fine interior, having been designed by a priest who was trained at the English College at Douai, and who was familiar with Continental neo-classicism. Nonetheless, these churches and others like them, such as St. Benet's, Netherton, in Lancashire or the two churches of St. Peter's and St. Michael's in Birmingham, all of which date from around the same period or slightly later, show an absence of distinctly Catholic detail.

In fact, what is evident is that the English Catholics were choosing for their buildings the architectural styles which were current in the society of their day, even when such a conformism was no longer strictly necessary on legal grounds. Thus, as late as 1827 when the restoration of full legal rights was already becoming inevitable, a church

such as St. Patrick's, Liverpool, could be built, which, like its predecessors, was the plainest of Georgian structures.

The explanation for this can be found not so much in an overt fear of their environment, but rather in the desire of many Catholics to be seen as a part of English Society and to be recognised as Englishmen merely, who happened to adhere to a different religion from that of the Established Church.

The Mass itself, which was celebrated in such severe surroundings was a service largely devoid of any external pomp. High Mass was almost unknown outside of London, and low Mass tended to be a very quiet ceremony with at most the priest assisted by a server. The liturgy was rarely referred to as the Mass by the laity, who spoke instead of going to "Prayers," a title which from their point of view was in some ways accurate, being reared as they had been on such manuals of devotion as Bishop Challoner's famous Garden of the Soul.¹⁷ The decades of persecution had also left their mark in this way, for a generation was still living in the 1830's that could remember the riots which broke out as late as 1780 at the suggestion that Catholics be allowed a greater measure of toleration. On that occasion, which has come to be known as "the Gordon riots" from the name of the principal instigator, the rioting lasted five days. Challoner, then Vicar Apostolic of the London District, was forced to flee to Finchley, and the chapels of the Sardinian and Bavarian Embassies were burnt.¹⁸

Given the possibility of such outbreaks of mob violence, it is not surprising that a future Duke of Norfolk, writing in the same period could say "that religion should never be blended with politics, further than as enjoins a due submission to government, and an attention to the peace and prosperity of society."¹⁹ With typical understatement, Archbishop Mathew in his Catholicism in England comments on this statement that it was "not encouraging from the leader of a persecuted minority."²⁰

And Wilfrid Ward writes:

Eagerness to convince an intensely prejudiced public that Catholics could be as loyal and sensible as their fellows, that they were not Jacobites, nor minions of the Pope, nor Jesuitical equivocations, nor slaves to superstition became their one absorbing desire.²¹

With the 1830's, however, changes were beginning to take place both within England and the English Catholic Church. The revival of interest in Catholic doctrines within the Church of England and the Irish immigration which reached its peak after the potato famine of 1845 both had a lasting impact upon the small Catholic community.

Early in the 1830's a movement had begun among some of the Fellows of the Oxford Colleges which called for a return of the Anglican Church to the teachings of the Ancient and Mediaeval Church to which it was suggested the Established Church still belonged. Begun under the leadership of John Keble, a scholarly and devout clergyman, the

movement soon passed into the control of Edward Bouverie Pusey, and John Henry Newman, the latter of whom was to play a major role in the Catholic Church throughout his life, and was to bring the Oratory of St. Philip Neri to England.

Newman, like Father Faber, the other founder of the English Oratory, had come to his high view of Church dogma and tradition from a background, first Calvinist and later Evangelical.²² In 1833, he met Dr. Wiseman, then rector of the English College in Rome, and the future head of the restored English hierarchy, but he was not at that time at all disposed toward submission to Rome. He held and developed the view, rather, that the Church of England represented a via media; in fact, a third way between modern Roman Catholicism and reformed protestantism. There had always been a High Church tradition within the established church and to the extent to which the Oxford clergymen worked on the same lines they at first created little notice within either the Anglican Church or the Catholic Church in England. When, however, they began to publish their now famous Tracts for the Times--from which their name of Tractarians derives--controversy began to develop. The Anglican Bishops were quick to denote tendencies which they saw as leading inevitably toward a Catholic conception of Christianity and opposition arose accordingly. A long time, however, was still to elapse before this opposition was galvanized into action, and it was only with the publication of Tract XC in 1841, in which Newman, through a series

of intellectual gymnastics, attempts to reconcile the Thirty-Nine Articles of the reformed Church of England with the dogmatic teaching of the Council of Trent, that the 'Tractarians' work fell under formal condemnation.

Yet still in the early 1830's Nicholas Wiseman, to whom Newman had been introduced on his journey through Italy, began to take a keen interest in the new theological movement in England. Wiseman himself had been born in Spain, the son of Irish parents. His schooling, however, took place in England and he was always to consider himself English from first to last, a fact much belied by his temperament and outlook which were always those of a 'Roman of the Romans.'²³ From 1818 until 1840 he was resident at the English College in Rome of which he became the rector in 1828 and from which position he rose to dominance in English affairs. He was a favourite of Gregory XVI then reigning and was in full sympathy with the rising tide of romanticism and Ultramontanism that culminated in the restoration of the English hierarchy and led to the definition of the dogma of Papal Infallibility.²⁴

From around 1830 onwards Wiseman became consumed with the idea of the reconversion of England which he believed to be imminent, and to further this goal he made a visit in 1835-36 and gave a series of lectures. His intention had been to make a tour of the country and then return to Rome, but with the conclusion of his tour he was requested by the Chaplain of the Sardinian Embassy to stay on in London whilst the

latter was in Italy and thus it came about that he was able to give a series of talks to the English public on the Catholic religion, which was still largely unknown in the country.²⁵

That Wiseman had struck a chord with his lectures was almost immediately evident. Newman responded with an article in the British Critic for December 1836 in which he praised the Church of Rome for the "great truths in it which we of this day have almost forgotten."²⁶ It was his view at the time, however, that such talks as Wiseman's, far from leading Anglicans into the Roman Catholic Church, would rather cause them to explore Catholic doctrines within their own communion.

A more representative view of Anglican opinion was that of Dr. Turton, the Dean of Peterborough, who, commenting on Wiseman's lecture on the Eucharist, dismissed him as being "subtle but not sagacious...[and] learned after the manner of the controversialist, not after that of the student."²⁷

In 1836 Wiseman was instrumental in founding the Dublin Review which was intended as a Catholic counterpart to the then influential Edinburgh Review, and which remained the principal Catholic intellectual journal until its demise over a century later.

Because of the changing situation in England in 1840, Rome decided to increase the four Districts of the Vicars Apostolic to eight and at the same time Dr. Wiseman was made the bishop coadjutor of the Central District and President of Oscott College, at the time

probably the most important of the English seminaries. The arrival of the new lay converts in the English church was something in which Wiseman took a great interest and for which he was well suited.

The first group of converts was both unacademic and drawn almost entirely from the ranks of the upper gentry and the aristocracy of the Midlands.²⁸ Chief among them were such men as Ambrose Phillips de Lisle who became a patron of Pugin, the architect, himself a convert in 1834, Sir Charles Wolseley who came from a background in radical politics and John Talbot, the sixteenth Earl of Shrewsbury, who although not a convert, exerted a strong influence throughout this period and whose estate of Alton Towers served as a centre of lay Catholic activity for nearly two decades. Both de Lisle and Shrewsbury were munificent in their benefactions, but their enthusiasm for Gothic and Pugin was to create difficulties for the Oxford converts when these began to enter the Church after the reception of Newman in 1845.²⁹ For Wiseman, however, they seemed the very Catholics he had hoped to find. Shrewsbury, especially, lived the life of a feudal seigneur. A devout Catholic, he lived a life of extreme asceticism conjoined with an outward display of mediaeval splendour.³⁰

At the opposite pole in English life but equally, or perhaps even more important for the future of English Catholicism, were the Irish immigrants then already coming in large numbers. By 1841 the number of Irish-born residents had reached almost 225,000 and in the next

decade, driven by the potato famine, these figures were to increase to nearly 420,000.³¹ This new population was concentrated almost wholly in the cities, and came into a church which was hardly prepared for such an influx. Different alike from the distant and reserved world of the old Catholics and the intellectual milieu of the Tractarian converts, the Irish represented a significant pastoral and organizational problem that made even the revision of the episcopal administration of 1840 obsolete within a decade.

Finally, to those already within the Church must be added the Tractarians themselves who, from the early 1840's, began to enter a church with the life of which they had had little contact. As Newman wrote: "Catholics did not make us Catholics; Oxford made us Catholics;"³² and in his case, at least, this factor was always to cloud relations with the other sectors of the English Church.

At first, the old Catholics welcomed the converts, but their acceptance with time became rather more qualified.³³ Men such as Newman, Faber, and W.G. Ward brought with them a vigorous and energetic approach to their newfound faith; an attitude alien alike to the older clergy, to the gentry families, and to the converts of an earlier generation who found the intellectualism of Newman hard to digest and the Italianate exuberance of Faber and his disciples foreign to their own sensibilities. It was to this setting, one in which the diverse elements of the old Catholics, the gentleman converts, the enthusiastic Tractarians from Oxford, and the poor Irish uneasily coexisted that Newman was to receive Papal permission to found the Oratory of St. Philip Neri in England.

NOTES

¹ Brian Fothergill, Nicholas Wiseman (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), p. 250.

² Edward Norman, The English Catholic Church in the Nineteenth Century (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 9.

³ Fothergill, p. 43.

⁴ J.L. Altholz, The Liberal Catholic Movement in England (London: Burns and Oates, 1962), p. 2.

⁵ J.D. Holmes, More Roman Than Rome: English Catholicism in the Nineteenth Century (London: Burns and Oates, 1978), p. 49.

⁶ Fothergill, p. 43.

⁷ Ibid., p. 44.

⁸ Norman, p. 12.

⁹ P. Hughes, "The English Catholics in 1850," in The English Catholics, 1850-1950, ed. G.A. Beck (London: Burns and Oates, 1950), pp. 164-167.

¹⁰ Fothergill, p. 46.

¹¹ Bryan Little, Catholic Churches Since 1623 (London: Robert Hale, 1966), p. 29.

¹² Ibid., p. 42.

¹³ Ibid., p. 64.

¹⁴ Fothergill, p. 201.

¹⁵ Little, p. 45.

¹⁶ Ibid.

- ¹⁷ Norman, p. 237.
- ¹⁸ David Mathew, Catholicism in England (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1955), p. 147.
- ¹⁹ Ibid., p. 148.
- ²⁰ Ibid.
- ²¹ Norman, p. 49
- ²² John Henry Newman, Apologia Pro Vita Sua (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), pp. 34-63.
- ²³ Mathew, p. 194.
- ²⁴ Ibid.
- ²⁵ Fothergill, p. 74.
- ²⁶ Ibid., p. 77.
- ²⁷ Ibid.
- ²⁸ Mathew, p. 195.
- ²⁹ Norman, p. 241.
- ³⁰ Denis Gwynn, Lord Shrewsbury, Pugin and the Gothic Revival (London: Hollis and Carter, 1946), p. xxxv.
- ³¹ Mathew, p. 185. These figures are estimates and can only be taken as representative but not exact.
- ³² Altholz, pp. 3-4.
- ³³ Ibid., p. 4.

Chapter 2

St. Philip Neri and the Founding of the Oratory

Even among Catholics the Congregation of the Oratory, or the Oratory of St. Philip Neri as it is often called, is the subject of a certain amount of confusion and misunderstanding. It is not, in fact, a religious order as such, yet it has much in common with the latter. Nor do its priests lead the lives of the secular clergy in quite the same way that the priests of a typical diocese would, yet they are, technically speaking, seculars. It is, however, precisely this ambiguity, combined with some other features of the Oratorian rule which recommended the institute to Newman, Faber and their fellow converts.¹

Along with such orders as the Jesuits, the Theatines and the Discalced Carmelites, the Oratory of St. Philip was a foundation of the great counter-reformation Church. Although not intended by its founder as a response to the Protestant revolt, the new institute did serve as a focus for the much needed reform of the Church in Rome and its success there led to the foundation of other congregations elsewhere in Italy and the other Catholic states.

St. Philip Neri was born in Florence in the year 1515. His father was a notary, something which would have given the family a certain standing in the city. He was not, however, a successful one and they remained relatively poor. As a boy, the future saint, who was described

as having a cheerful and outgoing temperament, showed strong enthusiasm for visiting the churches of the city, although he seems not to have had any leanings towards the priesthood.² The Dominican Church of San Marco was a special favourite of his and it was here that he was attracted both to the paintings of Fra Angelico and to the personality of Savonarola whose character was so unlike his own. In fact, throughout his life, Neri was to have a strong devotion to the reformer of Florence, and he may have developed some of his own ideas for reform through a reappraisal of Savonarola's own efforts.³

About Neri's life in Florence we know little, but at about eighteen years of age it was decided that he should live with a cousin possessed of some wealth in a place called San Germano, then in the Kingdom of Naples. It was here that he had some sort of spiritual crisis from which he came resolved to go to Rome and seek God's guidance for the future.⁴

The Rome of the 1530's--Neri arrived there probably in the year 1533--was a quite different place both from that which it was to become and from what it had been. The Rome of the High Renaissance had come to an end with the Sack of 1527 and the Baroque Rome of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had not yet appeared.⁵ Rather, the city was in a period of transition, in some ways not unlike the London of early Victorian days. An era of intense artistic ferment but also of social decay and great moral laxity was giving way to one of greater social and moral stability. The Theatine Order of St. Cajetan

and Pietro Carafa, who would become Pope Paul IV, was already in existence and in 1537, St. Ignatius would found his famous Society of Jesus. These were, however, merely beginnings; the great movement of reform would not become apparent until mid-century.

During his first years in Rome Neri followed studies in Philosophy and Theology, but these he discontinued in 1537, from which time onward he was to lead the life of a hermit, during which he spent much time in the catacombs, sometimes passing whole nights in prayer, below the Church of S. Sebastiano. It was here, probably in 1544, that he had the extraordinary mystical experience which had a permanent effect upon his heart. Throughout the remainder of his life he was to experience intense palpitations, especially when saying Mass, hearing confessions, or when speaking on a subject which he found important. It is recorded that, in addition sometimes to causing the room he was in to shake, these heart palpitations also had a dramatic effect upon his penitents who testified to experiences of tremendous consolation upon being pressed to the Saint's breast.⁶

Four years later, Neri's zeal found a solid direction in that he founded, with his confessor Persiano Rosa, an association in aid of the pilgrims who flocked to Rome, especially in the Jubilee year of 1550.

Persiano Rosa, who was attached to the Church of San Girolamo della Carita, had collected around him a number of devout laymen who met together for prayer and conversations on spiritual subjects and who

received Holy Communion on Sundays and feast days on a regular basis, something which was not usual at the time.⁷ The new association also introduced the new devotion of the Quarant' Ore or 'Forty Hours' during which the Blessed Sacrament was exposed on the altar for a forty-hour period. This devotion was to have a long association with St. Philip's Oratory and it was one of the Italian devotions popularised by the Oratorians in England.

It was Rosa also who persuaded Neri to be ordained a priest, which took place in 1551, and from this time forward the association began to develop, under Neri's direction, which was to become the Congregation of the Oratory. Neri's principal work was from the beginning that of a confessor and hence his interest lay in the development of a lay spirituality rather than in theological study or missionary work as such.⁸ In the mornings he would hear confessions and in the long afternoons, customarily kept in idleness by the citizens of Rome, he invited young men back to his rooms for conversations on spiritual or scriptural subjects. In the evenings he led them to one of the basilicas of the city and finally he would return to San Girolamo with his most advanced disciples for a final period of evening prayer.

The future saint quickly gained a reputation for piety, and by 1554 his rooms had already become too cramped for the number of people who came to the afternoon discourses. The attic or granary over the neighbouring church had to be obtained instead, and it was at this

point that the term 'oratory' was first introduced to describe, first the room and, latterly, the new devotion itself.⁹ Cesare Baronius, the historian and one of the first members of the new Congregation, describes the afternoon Oratory thus:

After some time spent in mental prayer one of the brothers read a spiritual book, and in the middle of the reading the Father who superintended the whole discoursed upon what was read, explaining it with greater accuracy, enlarging upon it and inculcating it into the hearts of the hearers. Sometimes he desired one of the brothers to give his opinion on the subject, and then the discourse proceeded in the form of a dialogue; and this exercise lasted an hour, to the great consolation of the audience. After this one of his own people, at his command, mounted to a seat raised a few steps above the rest, and without any adornment of language discoursed upon some approved lives of the Saints, illustrating what was said by passages of Scripture, or sentences from the Fathers. He was succeeded by another, in the same style, but on a different subject; and lastly came a third, who discoursed upon ecclesiastical history. When all this was finished, to the wonderful contentment as well as profit of the hearers, they sang some spiritual canticle, prayed again for a short time, and so the exercise ended.¹⁰

Music was important from the beginning and Neri was fortunate in having three musicians, including the famous Palestrina, among his followers.¹¹ The first of these was Giovanni Animuccia. Both he and his wife had become regular penitents, and he became an attender of the Oratory exercises almost from the beginning. In addition to bringing singers from St. Peter's, where he was 'maestro di Cappella,' to sing motets he composed numerous works specially for use at the Oratory.¹²

From 1571, Palestrina also wrote compositions for Neri's gatherings and in 1575 Fr. Francisco de Soto, a Spaniard, joined the congregation. He published two further collections of 'Laudi'--a term which includes both vernacular hymns and Latin motets--including works by Animuccia and Palestrina and remained the Oratory's musician in residence until his death.¹³

As time went on the musical aspect of the Oratory exercises became more elaborate and famous and this development was to have lasting consequences for the further expansion of the institution, especially in England, for Neri's use of music, especially vernacular hymn singing was strongly to recommend him to popular Victorian taste.¹⁴

Another facet of St. Philip's Oratory which made it prominent in the Rome of the sixteenth century was the essentially classless nature of its following. Neri mixed with all conditions of men and brought them to his exercises accordingly.¹⁵ One of his earliest disciples was Francesco Maria Tarugi, a relative of two popes, Julius III and Marcellus II, and later a Cardinal and Archbishop of Avignon. He was long considered the most brilliant preacher of the Congregation and through his influence and connections the Oratory gained many noble adherents. At the same time, however, the early records of the Congregation make mention of shoemakers and the like who were drawn by the conversational tone and simplicity of the preaching. For, although clearly suitable for an

educated audience as well as a simple one, the style employed at the exercises avoided the theoretical and the speculative.¹⁶

On Sundays, feast days and throughout the Carnival which was a season of festivities lasting through the months of late winter, the exercises took on a more festive air in an attempt to compete with the secular entertainment. Women and children came, and in summer they met in the open air. There was a pilgrimage to the seven basilicas and a meal was taken in one of the suburban vineyards owned by one of Neri's richer patrons. The success of these mixtures of devotion and entertainment was notable and at one point, at least, it is recorded that a crowd of three to four thousand gathered for the activities.¹⁷

Neri himself refused for a long period to entertain the suggestion that his informal society be transformed into a religious order or be given some juridical status, but, finally, owing to the increase in numbers he consented to establish a rule, and in 1575 Pope Gregory XIII gave the Congregation of the Oratory official recognition and moved it to the Church of Santa Maria in Vallicella where it has remained.¹⁸ In contrast to the Jesuits, Philip Neri did not wish to establish a centrally organised order and insisted on a democratic structure. Each member was consulted when the Constitutions were proposed in 1583 and equality of rank has always remained a principal characteristic of the Congregation.¹⁹ In addition, the fathers were to take no vows of poverty or other vows as to a religious order. They were to

be secular priests but living in common under a rule of life. The government of the Congregation was to be in the hands of a Provost, elected for a three-year term, who was to be assisted by four deputies also elected. The work of the Oratory was to be in a city with the customs and practices of the Roman house taken as indicative but not prescriptive examples for emulation.²⁰

That the Congregation of the Oratory was fulfilling a need is evident from the number of requests which arrived from other cities for additional foundations. To consent to these requests Neri was always most reluctant.²¹ Only the Oratories at San Severino and Naples owe their foundation to members of the Roman house and these experiments were not repeated in future. In fact, the Constitutions in their final form of 1612 make clear that each house was to depend upon its own resources and was to be entirely independent of the others in so far as its governance was concerned. Thus, unlike a religious order strictly so-called, its members were not to move or be moved from one house to another nor were the various houses to be subordinate to any central authority.²²

At Neri's death in 1595 the houses of Naples, San Severino, and Fermo were already in existence and at one point there seem to have been as many as twenty-seven in the Kingdom of Naples alone, of which five still survive. In the North of Italy, the Oratory met with success as

well and the Oratories of Turin and Brescia remain as significant examples of the vigour of the counter-reformation in Italy.

It has been said of another great saint of the sixteenth century, Ignatius of Loyola, that he was "a man of God and a man of the World and a man of the World to win the world for God,"²³ and in a sense, this can be applied to St. Philip Neri as well. For both the Oratorians and the Jesuits were coming to terms with the humanism of the Renaissance and attempting to integrate it within the Catholic Church. Everything about the future saint involved an essential lightness of touch--his most oft-quoted remark is the phrase "When shall we begin to do good?"²⁴--and he was quick to recognise the importance of music and of entertainments in attempting to direct souls in an urban environment.

The effort to harness the new humanism for the reform of the Church was characteristic of the whole Post-reformation Church which even before the reforming work of the Council of Trent was beginning to come to terms with the crisis that confronted Catholicism.²⁵ In St. Philip Neri's efforts at reform the change of mentality from the mediaeval to the essentially modern is evident. His emphasis in the exercises of the Oratory on preaching and on the commentaries on biblical and theological texts reflects an awareness of the humanistic developments in Renaissance culture. The need to adapt to changed circumstances and to appeal to the intellect of the laity, a need created by the increasing

interest in education at least among the upper classes and by the increasing availability of information at all levels of an urban society, could only be met through the employment of what were essentially literary and academic skills. When Neri ordered Cesare Baronius to study Church history and to lecture on it to his disciples he was aware that this was a topic that would appeal to his listeners and from which they would derive benefit.²⁶

By the same token, the interest which the Oratorians took in Church music and in the spreading of new liturgical devotions such as the Forty Hours exposition of the Blessed Sacrament demonstrated a sympathy with the tenor of the new Baroque age. Indeed, the whole latter half of the sixteenth century, at least in Rome and the principal Italian cities, was dominated by the changing attitudes to the religious and cultural patterns of an earlier period. The importance of festivals and movement showed a marked increase and this was met in the Church through the development of elaborate extra-liturgical ceremonies like the procession of the Blessed Sacrament and popular pilgrimages to local shrines and in the lengthy hymn-filled diversions for the Carnival Season. The Austrian historian of Catholic liturgy, Josef Jungmann, S.J., describes this period thus:

Here we meet the rich liturgical life of the Baroque period. Public worship is festival, and Baroque culture is primarily a culture of the festival, the assembling of all possible sensuous creation in the service of high ideals.

And so there was in Baroque culture an unmistakable resurgence of festival celebrations, particularly in the town churches.²⁷

This change in emphasis brought about a change in church architecture. The increasing recognition of the importance of Holy Communion and of devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, not to mention the new style of preaching, made the churches of the late Mediaeval and Renaissance periods obsolete unless certain modifications were carried out.²⁸ Many more altars in easily accessible settings were now necessary so that the laity could more readily attend mass and also see the sacred ceremonies more clearly. The high altar, especially, where the Sacrament was reserved, was to be visible from the main body of the church building, and the nave itself was to be made clear of encumbrances so that the people might hear the preachers more conveniently.²⁹

In examining these developments, it is perhaps important to remember that in these, at least, the Congregation of the Oratory was not innovating but was rather caught up in a general trend. The Oratory was a product of the counter-reformation Church and reflected this in its artistic and architectural preferences. Accordingly, Santa Maria in Vallicella, which was built in the years 1575 to 1606, may be said to be fairly representative of the early Baroque type. The initial plan of the church by an obscure architect called Matteo da Castello

closely followed Vignola's designs for the Gesu. Even after the later modifications which extended the nave of the church and raised the number of side chapels from eight to ten the fundamental scheme was what has been called the 'Jesuit style.'³⁰ The building, as completed, has ten side chapels which flank a nave without aisles. To this is added a crossing with two shallow transepts covered by a drumless cupola, and beyond this a fairly large raised Sanctuary ends in an apse surmounted by a half dome.³¹ The interior decoration, which dates largely from after St. Philip's time, is especially rich in what is probably best described as a Late Mannerist style. The church is notable for containing the High Baroque work of Pietro da Cortona and the only remaining works of Rubens in Rome. Nevertheless, it does not seem to have influenced the plans or decoration of either of the Oratories in England. To Newman and Faber both, however, as well as to their successors who built the now existing English Oratory Churches, it was the nature of St. Philip's Oratory which appealed and which they were able to put to use in England rather than any particular enthusiasm for the artistic merits of late sixteenth and seventeenth century architecture. In fact, it was not personal taste as such or the desire to imitate a type which led to the choice of an Italianate style for the English Oratory but rather circumstances which were peculiar to nineteenth-century Catholicism and to the English Catholic community in particular.

NOTES

¹ Placid Murray, Newman, the Oratorian (Leominster: Fowler Wright Books Ltd., 1980), pp. 107-108.

² V.J. Matthews, St. Philip Neri (London: Burns, Oates & Washbourne Ltd., 1934), p. 2.

³ Meriol Trevor, Apostle of Rome: A Life of Philip Neri (London: MacMillan, 1966), p. 130.

⁴ Matthews, p. 4.

⁵ Rudolf Wittkower, Art and Architecture in Italy, 1600-1750 (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1958), pp. 1-2.

⁶ Matthews, pp. 9-10.

⁷ Ibid., p. 13.

⁸ Joseph Connors, Borromini and the Roman Oratory (New York: The Architectural History Foundation and the M.I.T. Press, 1980), p. 5.

⁹ Ibid., p. 6.

¹⁰ Matthews, pp. 30-31.

¹¹ Raleigh Addington, The Idea of the Oratory (London: Burns and Oates, 1967), p. 11.

¹² Matthews, pp. 33-34.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Sheridan Gilley, "Vulgar Piety and the Brompton Oratory," The Durham University Journal, vol. 74, December 1981, pp. 15-21.

¹⁵ Addington, p. 8.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 9.

- 17 Ibid., p. 10.
- 18 Connors, p. 7.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Addington, pp. 18-26.
- 21 Ibid., p. 21.
- 22 Ibid., p. 35.
- 23 E.I. Watkin, Catholic Art and Culture (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1944), p. 147.
- 24 Addington, p. 3.
- 25 H. Daniel-Rops, The Catholic Reformation (London: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1962), p. 3.
- 26 For a discussion of the changes in mentality from the Mediaeval Church to the Church in the Renaissance and Baroque periods, see Ibid., passim.
- 27 Josef Jungmann, S.J., Pastoral Liturgy (New York: Herder and Herder, 1962), p. 81.
- 28 J.S. Ackermann, "The Gesu in the Light of Contemporary Church Design," in Baroque Art: The Jesuit Contribution, eds. Rudolf Wittkower and I.B. Jaffe (New York: Fordham University Press, 1972), p. 19.
- 29 Ibid.
- 30 The accuracy of this term has often been disputed but for the general purpose of supplying a readily comprehended description it seems useful. For the debate, see Ibid.

³¹ Roloff Beny and Peter Gunn, The Churches of Rome (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1981), p. 166.

Chapter 3

Newman, Faber and the Oratory

Newman's remark, quoted earlier, that "Catholics did not make us Catholics; Oxford made us Catholics" is illustrative of the outlook and culture both of the Oxford converts themselves and of their attitude towards the English Church. In common with probably all converts, their immediate desire was the propagation and exposition of their new-found faith, and, thus, their immediate concern would be to find the most suitable means and the best medium through which to achieve this end.

First and foremost in Newman's mind, for he rather than Faber was the first to consider the Oratory of St. Philip Neri in an English context, was the need to reach Englishmen of the nineteenth century. There was an almost total lack of knowledge concerning Catholicism at the time, and this Newman recognised. Accordingly, if new converts were to be won for the Church, institutions which could reach them in their own surroundings and through language and imagery that they could comprehend were essential. 'Altogether it seems the age for external secularism'¹ Newman wrote shortly after becoming a Catholic, and he never seems to have considered anything like the monastic ideal when he spoke in terms of the Catholic priesthood. From the beginning his concern was to choose the right order for himself and for the Oxford

men that he brought with him; and the orders which attracted his notice were all, significantly, post-mediaeval foundations. At first he was strongly attracted to the Lazarists--an order dating from the seventeenth century.² The Redemptorists were a more serious consideration. Writing of them in 1848, after his decision to be an Oratorian had been made he had this to say: "[We had the idea] of becoming Redemptorists, seeing that it was a new congregation, allowed of modification (i.e., of being made to take in theology) better than an old one, and was founded by a Saint (St. Alphonsus Liguori) who had more to do than anyone yet in changing the old system of theological teaching...."³ The Jesuits seem never to have been under serious consideration for, although Newman admired them individually, he felt they would be too constraining to one of his intellectual bent and, further, felt that they were "continually making false moves, by not seeing whom they have to deal with"⁴--that is to say, that they had not really come to grips with the intellectual climate of the age in which they were now living.

In 1845, and almost immediately after Newman's conversion, Nicholas Wiseman had raised the possibility of his becoming an Oratorian. Wiseman had known the Oratory from his time in Rome and he had attended the exercises of the Oratory as a Brother--that is, an affiliate of the Congregation.⁵ Thus, it was with some knowledge of the institute that Newman met Father Theiner of the Oratory when he

arrived in Rome in the autumn of 1846. In December of the same year he was writing to John Bernard Dalgairns, another Oxford convert:

We have seen the Chiesa Nuova [i.e., Santa Maria in Vallicella] and the Casa adjoining, with Theiner--who said Mass with and for us and communicated us in the small room where St. Philip had his ecstasies. The Casa is the most beautiful thing of the kind we have seen in Rome--rather too comfortable, i.e., fine galleries for walking in summer, splendid orange trees, etc. etc. If I wished to follow my bent I should join them if I joined any. They have a good library, and handsome sets of rooms apparently. It is like a College with hardly any rule.⁶

The Casa Filippini or house of the Oratorians, as Newman would have seen it, was the work of the seventeenth century, largely designed and executed by Borromini--hence most likely in fact "the most beautiful thing of the kind...in Rome."

The house which Newman saw was a typical, if more architecturally significant example of the sort of building built to house the urban Italian religious communities of the counter-reformation period.⁷ Unlike those in monastic foundations, however, the Oratorians' lives were not so structured or delineated in their day-to-day activities, and accordingly, their surroundings tended to be more spacious and extensive than those of the stricter orders--something which was a necessity in an institution whose members were bound together solely by a bond of charity. Both the Oratorian houses in England also exhibit this basic quality of spaciousness, the inspiration for which would have

come from the Roman house and, perhaps, also the Neapolitan one which was known to Faber. Beyond this point, however, there does not seem to have been any distinct architectural influence exercised on the English foundations by the Italian ones.⁸ This factor may be partially explained by a simple economic reality--the patrons available to a Catholic body of clergy in Seicento Italy simply did not exist in the nineteenth century in England. It may also be explained by the fact that neither Newman nor Faber intended a mere imitation of an existing institution so far as its externals were concerned. Dom Placid Murray in his study, Newman, the Oratorian, writes a propos of this as follows:

In his quest of the 'idea' of the Oratory [Newman] maintains a delicate balance between historical facts, the current practice of the Roman and Naples Oratories and the circumstances of his own group of friends and the religious state of England generally.⁹

Newman never adopted an Italianate style either in community or devotional life and he always spoke of the Oratory as something which he felt was adaptable to England. Writing in January 1847, his own comments were thus:

My reasons [for introducing the Oratory] were such as these: that, whereas the tastes of all of us were very different, the Oratory allowed greater scope for them than any other Institution; again it seemed more adapted than any other for Oxford and Cambridge men.¹⁰

And in his letter to Dalgairns he was to add, "I should wish at any rate the Oratorio to include the functions of a Mechanics' Institute among its duties."¹¹ This statement of Newman's in a private letter is amusing in retrospect in that during the later controversy over architectural styles, Pugin was to exclaim that he would as soon 'build a Mechanics' Institute as an Oratory.'¹²

The other founder of the Oratory in England, Frederick William Faber, with whom we are in fact more concerned than Newman as it was Faber who brought the Oratory to London, held similar views to his on the nature and mission of the Oratory. As with Newman, Faber felt the need for something which would be serviceable in the context of contemporary English society and like Newman, it was this desire to find it which drew him to the Oratory and to the Italian externals surrounding it rather than any mere personal taste or wish to imitate a past glory.

Faber, who was half a generation Newman's junior, had been received into the church in 1845 principally in response to Newman's conversion. Faber had been spiritually a Catholic for several years beforehand and had been held back from taking the final step more or less solely because of his confidence in Newman as mentor. In temperament and manner Faber was naturally adaptable to Italianate ways and he early developed a devotion to St. Philip Neri even whilst remaining an Anglican. His biographer and fellow Oratorian writes of

his first journey to Rome in 1843: "It was at this time he acquired his first devotion to St. Philip Neri, his future Father."¹³ And upon his return to England, where he held a living as rector of the parish of Elton, he was to reform the parish "in the spirit of St. Philip and St. Alphonsus," something of which a twentieth-century Oratorian has commented rather wryly that it was "surely one of the most remarkable pastoral achievements in England since the Reformation."¹⁴ Indeed, by the time of his conversion Faber had transformed the parish into a Catholic enclave of sorts, and it is not surprising to read that upon his reception into the Church he brought eleven of his 'young men' with him. This was already the nucleus for a religious order and that was, in fact, precisely what Faber had in mind.

By Christmas, 1845 he had moved with eight of his flock to rented accommodation in Birmingham and was talking of a new order to be called the 'Wilfridians' or 'Brothers of the Will of God.' St. Wilfrid had long been a figure of attraction to Faber and it is significant that in addition to his patronage of art and architecture the Anglo-Saxon saint had been a champion of Roman usages against those of the Celtic Church. When still an Anglican Faber had written of St. Wilfrid:

He saw that the one thing to do was to go to Rome, and learn under the shadow of St. Peter's chair the more perfect way. To look Romeward is a Catholic instinct seemingly implanted in us for the safety of the faith.¹⁵

And he added,

He materially aided the blessed work of riveting more tightly the happy chains which held England to St. Peter's chair--chains never snapped as sad experience tells us, without the loss of many precious Christian things.¹⁶

From the first, Faber's new community was modeled after what he knew of the Oratory. Father Bowden, who was later with Faber at the London Oratory, describes it thus:

The object of the Institute...was to provide a body of priests who should be ready to undertake the charge of any good works which might be entrusted to them by the bishop and the parochial clergy. It was also to afford the advantage of confessionals open at all times to any one who might come, thus exhibiting one of the peculiar characteristics of the Oratory.¹⁷

...In the evening they used to allow a number of poor Catholic boys to come...[and i]f the community had remained long in Birmingham, this would have received further development, and have led to the establishment of some sort of Little Oratory or confraternity.¹⁸

In dress, the Wilfridians wore a modern Roman habit and avoided anything like the mediaeval monastic communities in style, and they soon appear to have surrounded themselves with controversy. The protestants of Birmingham, and these included energetic Methodists and other NonConformists, were naturally alarmed to see the arrival of propagandizing 'Papists' in their midst and they rose to the occasion accordingly. Faber himself was endowed with a strong taste for the

theatrical--he has been called "enthusiastic, even flamboyant"¹⁹--and he thus entered the fray: "We have much fighting and squabbling" he wrote "with parsons and Methodists, and I preach in the streets in habit and with crucifix."²⁰ At the same time the new community adopted many of the Italian customs and devotions that Faber had seen in Italy both during his journey of 1843 and in a more recent one made in the spring of 1846. Father Hutchison of the Oratory who was with Faber at this time describes one of their customs: "On the Vigil of the Assumption the chapel was adorned with an abundance of candles and fir trees, which was our great idea of decoration in those days."²¹ It was also their habit to burn a candle before a picture of the Madonna in the library, something which once enabled a visitor from Rome to find their house as the image and light were visible from the street. It must be recalled at this time that even in Catholic churches in England the devotional practices of the Continent were all but unknown and for such recent converts Faber and his new institute were bringing considerable notice to themselves.

Among those who had taken notice of Faber and his community was Lord Shrewsbury, the most prominent Catholic of his day.²² Shrewsbury was a friend of Augustus Welby Pugin, the champion of the Gothic revival, and was a keen supporter of the clergy for whom he provided the capital needed to construct the churches Pugin designed. In 1843, Shrewsbury had bought a large house called Cotton Hall,

which adjoined his own estate of Alton Towers. The house had been intended for his nephew and heir, but as this had proved impracticable, he decided to put it to some ecclesiastical use. The Church of St. Giles, Cheadle, which was also nearby was nearing completion under Pugin's direction and these two properties together seemed to the 'Good Earl' ideally suited to the needs of Faber's 'Wilfridians.'²³ In fact, the buildings, being outside of Birmingham and in rural surroundings, were not really in accord with the new order's needs but after some earnest entreating Faber was prevailed upon to take them over in the autumn of 1846. He seems from the first to have considered the house as merely 'the *maison de campagne* for the order'²⁴ and thus still to see the principal sphere of activity for his priests as urban. There were other problems, too, occasioned by Pugin's construction of the church in the Gothic style. As Denis Gwynn writes in Lord Shrewsbury, Pugin and the Catholic Revival, "the whole tendency of the Brotherhood was essentially Roman." Nonetheless, they were enthusiastic about church architecture in general and were happy with Pugin's plans, a fact which led to great misunderstanding later when the community had become Oratorians.

In the meantime, Newman had been in Rome and was examining the possibility of becoming an Oratorian. Wiseman, who was about to be made a Cardinal and the head of the restored English hierarchy, had himself suggested this, and he was also becoming anxious that Faber's

new order be regularised with a formal canonical status. Newman's decision had a profound effect upon Faber who, by December of 1847, was writing to the former and offering his community as "so much raw material for Oratorianism."²⁵

In his brief establishing the Oratory in England in 1848, Pope Pius IX had specified, among other things, that the first house of the institute was to be placed near Birmingham at Maryvale, a group of buildings which Newman had taken over for himself and some of his fellows. A second was to be erected in the city itself. Of both of these Newman was to be the superior and he was granted permission also to found other houses of the Oratory in the larger cities throughout the country. At the same time, it was the Pope's wish that the Oratorians concern themselves especially with the promotion of religion among the upper and more educated classes. It was this last consideration which soon took them to London.²⁶

With the reception of Faber and the Wilfridians into the new English Oratory Newman now had two pieces of property, the establishment at Maryvale and the house at Cotton, both of which soon had to be relinquished as unsuitable for their needs. The community, which for a brief period numbered as many as forty, with the Wilfridians and Newman's own followers combined, had divided up by the spring of 1849. The Alcester Street property where the Birmingham Oratorians

were to live until their move to Edgebaston had been purchased, and at the same period Faber went to London to establish a community there.

Throughout much of the preceding year Faber had been active, in addition to his other duties, as editor of a series of lives of the Saints, and before turning to the controversy which was to develop in the sphere of art and architecture, it is perhaps important to examine Faber's attitude towards the presentation of the Catholic faith, as revealed in his introduction to the Lives. As is apparent from his practices, both as the rector of Elton and afterwards, Faber felt that one of the most successful means of presenting Catholicism was to practise it as though in a Catholic country. In the introduction to the lives of St. Rose of Lima and others he writes:

The *habit* of always thinking first how any tenet, or practice, or fact, is most conveniently presented to an adversary, may soon, and almost imperceptibly, lead to profaneness by introducing the spirit of rationalism into matters of faith; and to judge from the works of our greatest Catholic divines, it would appear that the deeper theologian a man is the less does he give way to this studious desire of making difficulties easy at any cost short of denying what is positively *de fide*...[t]he question is, not 'what will men say of this? How will this sound in Controversy? Will not this be objected to by heretics?' but 'Is this true? Is this the kind of thing approved by the Church?'²⁷

The response to this approach, like that to the 'Wilfridians' in Birmingham was not long in coming, although this time it came from within the Catholic fold and underscored that difference of opinion

between the old Catholics and the converts which seemed at the best of times to have been only just below the surface. In November of 1848 Faber was writing to a bishop as follows:

How little did we,...then dream that the Catholics of England should be so frightened, ashamed, unsympathetic, whichever it may be, as to refuse to tolerate Catholic lives of their own Saints...and that we, for whom it might have been feared that we should not become Catholic enough, should be authoritatively silenced for overmuch sympathy with the Catholics of other lands. Alas! if we could but make our fellow Catholics feel how this policy lowers the Church in the eyes of our Protestant countrymen!

And he adds,

Converts may surely claim to know best what will convert others.²⁸

This attitude which, to a somewhat lesser extent was Newman's also,²⁹ was to remain Faber's until the end and it was to influence everything that he did subsequently in his efforts to establish the Oratory in London, where in the person of Wiseman, he was to have an enthusiastic supporter.

It is illustrative also of the tensions which were to come that the principal protagonist in the opposition to the Lives was the American convert chaplain to Lord Shrewsbury, Pierce Connolly. He was what a later age would term a modernist in theology and was a priest for only a time.³⁰ Nonetheless that he was tolerated by Shrewsbury is indicative

of the general mentality among his set. Ambrose Phillips de Lisle also, despite his love of Gothic architecture, tended toward liberal Catholic views, views which were the antithesis of the Ultramontanism of Faber.

NOTES

¹ Addington, p. 104.

² Murray, p. 81.

³ Murray, p. 435.

⁴ Murray, p. 80.

⁵ Addington, p. 99 and Fothergill, p. 129.

⁶ Addington, p. 103.

⁷ Connors, p. 2.

⁸ The placement of the Library above the Oratory, common both to the Roman and London houses, would seem to show the influence of the former on the latter, but there is a complete dearth of documentary evidence on this point in the archives of the London house and in the published material.

⁹ Murray, p. 92.

¹⁰ Murray, p. 437.

¹¹ Addington, p. 105.

¹² Little, p. 86.

¹³ John Bourden, The Life and Letters of Frederick William Faber (Baltimore: John Murphy and Co., 1869), pp. 185-186.

¹⁴ Addington, p. 143.

¹⁵ Ronald Chapman, Father Faber (London: Burns and Oates, 1961), p. 103.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Bowden, p. 284.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 288.

¹⁹ Addington, p. 141.

²⁰ Bowden, p. 311.

²¹ Ibid., p. 289.

²² Gwynn, "Introduction."

²³ Shrewsbury's munificence earned him the title the 'Good Earl' by which he was long known.

²⁴ Gwynn, p. 106.

²⁵ Chapman, p. 172.

²⁶ Murray, p. 427.

²⁷ Bowden, p. 327.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 333.

²⁹ Newman was, in general, more cautious than Faber and also made a greater effort to establish good relations with the old Catholics. cf. Altholz.

³⁰ Chapman, p. 199. Connolly's view of the Church's teaching authority seems to have been rather low and he later attempted to reclaim his wife, who had become a nun.

Chapter 4

The Architectural Controversy

When in 1829 Father Augustine Birdsall spoke in defence of the English Benedictines as being

[the] descendants of that body of men to whom the Inhabitants of this Island and all lovers of learning and research are particularly indebted both for valuable records of love, and the magnificent Buildings which even in ruins yet ornament the land and astonish the beholder,¹

he was making an appeal to the romantic sentiment of his hearers. But this sentiment, the one which fired such men as Pugin and Ambrose Phillips de Lisle was a different sort from that which attracted Wiseman and Faber. The attitude of mind to which the Benedictine was appealing was one which saw the glory of the Catholic Church in its mediaeval past and which was striving to restore it in the England of the industrial age.²

The apostle, and that is probably not too strong a term, of this movement which had such an effect both on the Established Church and the English Catholics was, of course, A.W. Pugin. The latter was a convert to Catholicism, principally for architectural reasons. To say this is not to convict him of insincerity for his enthusiasm for his new religion was apparently genuine, but it is significant that he came to it through an artistic and not a theological medium.³ Catholicism to Pugin and

equally to Phillips de Lisle and Shrewsbury was intimately bound up with the art and architecture of the High Middle Ages--a time, they would have argued, when Christendom was undivided and Catholicism infused the life and actions of the people.⁴

The problems they created for the new Oratorians began almost at once. The old Catholics strongly disapproved of the Italian devotions which Faber was popularizing, but to Pugin and Phillips de Lisle the issue was one of theological significance. Whilst Faber was still at Cotton Hall, which he had renamed St. Wilfrid's, the controversy began. In a letter to Newman of 12 May, 1848, Faber writes: "Ambrose Phillips was most pleasant today: screens were not the subject of our converse."⁵ He writes again shortly afterwards:

Mr. Gubbins tells me that for a long while A. Phillips has, at his own table, spoken against the Oratory. He has invited himself to spend a morning here shortly so I must be very pacific.⁶

In the event, Phillips de Lisle arrived with Pugin and the visit was far from pacific. The chief subject of the controversy at this point was the question of rood screens such as existed in mediaeval churches and which, more or less, blocked the view of the laity into the Sanctuary.⁷ For the Oratorians who practised the Continental devotion of Exposition and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, the construction of rood screens was impossible. In fact, they had ceased to

exist in postmediaeval Continental churches as well, something, however, which led only to Pugin's disapproval of Catholicism as he found it on the Continent.⁸

Faber describes his encounter with the two 'Goths' as follows:

Ambrose has got his view, and outed with it: *poverello* me! What have I done to the Oratory? Caused it to be cursed!...

Ambrose. Why is there no screen?

Fr. Wilf[rid][Faber's name in religion]. Why we are great people for Exposition, and besides Father Superior [Newman] wished us not to have a screen: he prefers it without.

Pugin. My dear Sir, my dear Sir, I hope he will be served out.

Fr. Wilf. Why Pugin, you might as well treat the Blessed Sacrament as Henry VIII's people did, as do what you do at a Benediction at Cheadle.⁹

The passage is a long one, but a few other excerpts give its flavour:

Pugin. A function, my dear Sir, never should be seen.

Amb. You are copying a wretched people (Italians) who are now throwing off the faith....I tell you, you are setting yourselves up against bishops and old Catholics and introducing new usages.

Fr. Wilf. Mr. Phillips, you have no right to speak to me in this way; this is not amicable criticism on art....

Amb. (opposite Mamma's image). Father Faber, God for your pride destroyed and brought to nought your first effort. (Stamp, fist to heaven). He will curse and destroy your order, and it will perish if you go on thus.¹⁰

The real crux of the matter as can be seen from Faber's comments about art criticism was the dogmatic approach the Mediaevalists

were taking with regard to an artistic question. Newman was quick to see this and he wrote to Phillips de Lisle accordingly:

I could say much about the grief I feel at the neglect I see of that good maxim, *In necessariis unitas, in dubiis libertas*. How is it, my dear Mr. Phillips, that you understand this so clearly in doctrinal questions, yet are so slow to admit it in ritual?¹¹

There were, however, doctrinal issues involved under the surface of the debate and Newman pointed this out when he added:

I do not say you, but are there not persons, who would be more distressed at a man's disliking a chancel skreen than at his being a Gallican....If Mr. Pugin persists, as I cannot hope he will not, in loading with bad names the admirers of Italian architecture, he is going the very way to increase their number. He will not be *put down* without authority which is infallible. And if we go to authority, I suppose Popes have given a greater sanction to Italian than to Gothic.¹²

Phillips de Lisle for his part had developed views on the necessity for a return to Gothic architecture, and he held these as matters of principle. His views are well represented by a letter which he wrote to Lord Shrewsbury in May of 1840, eight years before the dispute with the Oratorians:

The great argument in favour of *Gothick* architecture ...has always appeared to me to be that, which is derived from the circumstances of its *Xtian origin, meaning, and destination*. No man of taste, however great his predilection for the Gothick or pointed style on Xtian grounds, will for a moment deny the beauty of the Grecian or Roman architecture, but...he cannot deny their *pagan origin*, and

meaning or the fact that...their sole and universal destination was *Pagan*.¹³

And having gone thus far he comes to the point of his argument:

Thence the preference for the Xtian pointed style over the Pagan or classical is much less a question of *taste* than one of *principle*...as a question of *principle* it becomes invincible, and I have no more doubt of its ultimate and universal triumph, than I have of that of Xtianity itself.¹⁴

And from here he raises it to the level of a theological assertion by adding:

Xtianity cannot obtain a perfect triumph, until every result of its teaching, every development of its principle has obtained an universal recognition from the whole human race.¹⁵

By thus linking the triumph of Christianity with the universal application of the Gothic style Phillips, as he was then--the 'de Lisle' was added later--raised tremendous difficulties of a theological nature. Newman, for one, was quick to see them and in response to a letter from Phillips he explained them. In a letter in which Phillips had spoken for the old Catholics in enquiring if Newman were aware of "all that is said by a large number of Catholicks both of Fr. Faber's books, and of his whole way of going on"¹⁶ he had suggested that Pugin had "been so evidently raised up by Almighty God to rebuild the material

Fabrick of his temple in this Land,"¹⁷ and this provoked Newman's response. He writes:

Now something might be said in defence of this extreme view of the subject, had Gothic Architecture prevailed over the *whole* face of the Church, so that never had a rite been introduced, never a doctrine promulgated, but it came out in Gothic shape...but this is notoriously not so.-- Nevertheless Mr. Pugin with only half Christendom on his side, to say nothing of the Greek and Oriental bodies, rules that the other half is, what he reproachfully calls *pagan*. But more than this...[t]he See of St. Peter itself...is pronounced by him to be *pagan*, pronounced not historically, but contumeliously--or, to use the best word dogmatically, as if though infallibility in doctrine is found at Rome, a parallel authority in architecture was to be found in this century in England.¹⁸

Unlike Newman and Faber, Phillips de Lisle had converted to Catholicism before the Anglo-Catholic Tractarian movement had come into being. He had in fact begun investigating the claims of the Church of Rome when still an adolescent and was received into that Church at the age of fifteen in 1825.¹⁹ Pugin also had come into the Church independently of the Tractarians. In his case, Lord Shrewsbury's influence seems to have been paramount.²⁰ These men then, were rather less conscious of the dangers of espousing the claims of a National Church. To them, Gothic represented the universality of the mediaeval culture to which they appealed. To Newman and Faber, however, who had seen the appeal to antiquity fail at a doctrinal level, it was the contemporary Catholic Church which held their allegiance.

The Anglican reaction to Tract XC had been a blow to Newman, but even more so was Dr. Wiseman's article in the Dublin Review on the Donatist controversy.²¹ The Donatists were a sect of Christians in fourth-century North Africa who had separated themselves from the rest of the Church and yet claimed to possess all the Church's characteristics. St. Augustine had responded to their claims with the formula: "Quapropter securus judicat orbis terrarum bonos non esse qui se dividunt ab orbe terrarum in quacumque parte orbis terrarum."²² Which is to say that the whole world judges those who separate themselves from it as evil. Upon reading this phrase which had been cited by Wiseman, Newman saw the obvious parallels to the Anglican Church and responded: "The Church of Rome will be found right after all."²³ It only remained for Newman to work out for himself a theory of development which would account for apparent changes in the practice of the Roman Church from ancient to modern times and upon doing this to his satisfaction he became a Catholic. Hence, to Newman, the Catholic Church represented the living voice of Christian tradition and this voice was embodied in the person of the Roman Pontiff. Indeed, this is evident in his letters thus far quoted in which he contrasts the infallibility of the Roman See with the pretended claim to infallibility in matters of architecture of Pugin and Phillips de Lisle. Referring to his error in attempting to defend the position of the Anglican Church, Newman writes that his views depended upon "taking *Antiquity*, not the

existing Church as the oracle of truth."²⁴ Accordingly, he turns this accusation against the Gothicisers.

Mr. Pugin is notoriously engaged in a revival [he wrote to Phillips de Lisle]...[b]ut...we know that the Church, while one and the same in doctrine ever, is ever modifying, adapting, varying her discipline and ritual according to the times. In these respects the Middle Age was not what the First Centuries were, nor is the Age Present the Middle Age.²⁵

Newman considered that the style of architecture for "the living ritual of the 19th century...should be the living architecture of the 19th century" and this architecture, at least in an ecclesiastical sense, he considered to be classical in inspiration. In 1847, at a time when he still considered Gothic at least as a possibility,²⁶ Newman was already writing to Wiseman in this vein:

As to the Oratory itself, its structure must be different from anything ecclesiastical hitherto built in England.... It must be a building for preaching and music not an open roof [i.e., vaulted] certainly, no skreen. I am afraid I shall shock Pugin.²⁷

Shock Pugin, of course, he had done, but by the autumn of 1848 even Bishop Ullathorne, who had succeeded Wiseman in the Midland District, had been brought into the fray. Both the question of the Italianate Lives of the Modern Saints that Faber had been editing and of the dispute involving the merits of Gothic and Renaissance architecture had been dividing English Catholics in a way that was

becoming both public knowledge and disedifying and both sides were appealing to the bishops. Ullathorne, who was not a convert and was very much a man for the old Catholics from whose stock he was sprung, was probably not much in sympathy with the Italian movement that Faber was leading, both in word and deed. The extravagance of Phillips de Lisle and Pugin would not have appeared attractive to him either, although he was a Benedictine and in personal taste he seems to have preferred the Gothic style.²⁸ In an interview with Newman he enquired if Faber were not opposed to Gothic architecture as he had been informed--it would seem by Shrewsbury. Newman wrote of the visit, "I said we all disliked *exclusiveness* but nothing more--and I thought Gothic was extremely superior to Grecian as a matter of art, but that we wished to keep the Rubrics."²⁹

Newman's mention of the rubrics, meaning the regulations for the proper celebration of Mass and the other sacred ceremonies, raised another ground upon which the Oratorians defended themselves against their opponents. Newman described the new Catholic Church in Fulham as having 'the faults of Pugin':

In details Pugin is perfect but his altars are so small you can't have a Pontifical High Mass,...his tabernacles so low that you can scarce have Exposition, his East windows so large that everything else is hidden in the glare, and his skreens so heavy that you might as well have the function in the Sacristy, for the seeing it by the Congregation.³⁰

Bishop Ullathorne somewhat surprisingly, seemed unimpressed by the rubrical question and suggested that the rubrics could be dispensed in Gothic churches. He was also unwilling to find Pugin and Phillips de Lisle at fault and seems to have felt that both sides were about equally to blame.³¹

A by-product of this controversy, however, which was by no means ended, was the subtle change that came to be made in most Gothic-style churches in the future.³² Unlike Pugin, other architects such as John James Scoles or Charles Hansom were quite willing to employ the Gothic style whilst at the same time modifying their designs to suit changed circumstances. Thus, for example, the Jesuit Church on Farm Street in Mayfair, designed by Scoles, contains a short and broad chancel instead of one of Pugin's long and narrow ones, has no rood screen, and in general the nave is broad enough to enable the congregation to watch the Mass or other ceremony at the High Altar.³³ But this was not a compromise Pugin would make, nor would he and his friends relent in their attack on the Oratorians, save for short periods when Phillips de Lisle and Faber made up to one another.

By November of 1848 Newman, whose temperament did not allow for mercurial shifts, felt that he had received no satisfaction even from Bishop Ullathorne, who he must understandably have thought would take the side of the clergy in this matter. Consequently, he wrote to Rome. The letter in Latin which was sent never reached the eyes of

Pius IX as it was meant to do, but it represents not only a quite apt summing up in the case, but also is something of a *tour de force* and deserves quoting: After beginning with a description of the question Newman discusses the mentality of the Gothicisers and the dangers of which their movement is the occasion. He speaks of those "who bring in a spirit of Nationalism under the pretext of Gothic Art"³⁴ "for whom the measure and rule of Catholic discipline is not Rome as she now is, but England as once she was." And he ends with a splendid Latin flourish. "--peracta res est; Gothi de Italia triumpharunt"³⁵ and adds: "We are in one accord, that, except our Oratorian house be held up upon the immovable rock of the Supreme Fisherman it is unavoidable that the great wave of barbarians shall carry off, bear away, seize and absorb us. The sons of Philip do not bear arms for themselves, for that is not our tradition, the arms of Peter being ever to the Oratory both sword and shield."³⁶

Nonetheless, at the end of the year there was a lull in the storm and when it began again, it was centred not so much in the Midlands with Newman but had moved south along with Faber to London.

NOTES

- ¹ Norman, pp. 67-68.
- ² Kenneth Clark, The Gothic Revival (London: Constable, 1950), pp. 196-197.
- ³ Ibid., p. 169.
- ⁴ Gwynn, p. 48.
- ⁵ Chapman, p. 182.
- ⁶ Ibid., p. 183.
- ⁷ Little, p. 84.
- ⁸ Gwynn, p. 119.
- ⁹ Chapman, p. 183.
- ¹⁰ Ibid., p. 184.
- ¹¹ Newman, The Letters and Diaries of John Henry Newman, vol. XII, p. 212.
- ¹² Ibid., p. 219.
- ¹³ E.S. Purcell, Life and Letters of Ambrose Phillips de Lisle (London: Macmillan and Co., 1900), vol. II, p. 209.
- ¹⁴ Ibid.
- ¹⁵ Ibid., p. 210.
- ¹⁶ Newman, p. 220.
- ¹⁷ Ibid.
- ¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Purcell, p. 13.

²⁰ Gwynn, p. 11.

²¹ Fothergill, p. 98.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ J. Patrick, "Newman, Pugin and Gothic," in Victorian Studies, Winter 1987.

²⁵ Newman, p. 221.

²⁶ When in Rome Newman had tried to persuade Pugin to visit Borromini's Oratory and had suggested that an Oratory could be built in Gothic, but Pugin refused to entertain the idea. cf. Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 52.

²⁸ In his own projects he employed Gothic. cf. Little, p. 113.

²⁹ Newman, p. 304.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 215.

³¹ Ibid., p. 304.

³² Little, p. 91.

³³ Ibid., p. 92.

³⁴ Newman, p. 326.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 327. Trans: "The thing is done, the Goths have triumphed over Italy."

³⁶ Ibid. "...eo sumus in statu, ut, nisi super immobili Summi Piscatoris saxo domum nostram Oratorianam extri detur, ingens barbarorum fluctus nos auferat, extollat, praecepitet, absorbeat necesse sit. Arcua secum non portant Philippi filii non est ea traditio nostra; Petri brachium semper fuit Philippinis et gladius et scutum."

Chapter 5

Faber and the London Oratory

In April of 1849 when Faber, and those members of the Community at St. Wilfrid's, Cotton deputed to go with him, arrived in London accommodation had already been found for them, although some difficulties were to ensue before it was purchased. Both the location of the new buildings and their function were indicative of the essentially popular nature of the new Oratory.

Two lay converts and Lord Arundel, the future Duke of Norfolk, had exercised themselves on Faber's behalf and had found what seemed to be suitable premises in King William Street (now William IV Street), Strand. "The chapel is smaller than I expected," Faber writes, "about 60 ft. by 25. It is a gin shop; there are twelve good bedrooms, besides four or five community rooms."¹ The agent for the owner of the premises complained that a Catholic chapel would crowd the street with the lower classes and destroy the value of the surrounding property. He also suggested that the community would attract beggars as they might give alms. "The place remember was *worse* than a brothel before," Faber wrote to Newman.² At last, however, the lease was signed, and Faber set the date for opening at the end of May.

J.J. Scoles, the architect, was called in and with the funds available the 'Lowther Rooms,' as they were known, were transformed into a functional habitation for the new religious community.

For the first time, the Oratorians had a chapel in what was more or less a Baroque style to complement their Italianate devotions. Surviving illustrations depict a long, narrow room with an altar at the end and a side chapel also with altar to the right. The ceiling and upper walls were painted a cream white and the walls were articulated with shallow pilasters. At the lower level, the walls were covered in what appears to be red velvet-like cloth and this material was hung behind the altars as well. The room was sparsely decorated, owing to the limited funds of the Congregation, and what decoration there was consisted of Italian paintings of St. Philip Neri, the Madonna and other saints. There was a near life-size crucifix on a wall in the side chapel and the altar in the latter had above it a large statue of the Virgin and Child. The high altar itself was in the Italian fashion with gradines and a throne for Exposition that resembled a Greek temple. Pugin was horrified, and wrote to Lord Shrewsbury:

Has your Lordship heard that the Oratorians have opened the Lowther Rooms as a chapel!!--a place for the vilest debauchery, masquerades etc. One night a masqued ball, next Benediction. This appears to me perfectly monstrous and I give the whole order up for ever. What a degradation for religion! Why, it is worse than the Socialists....Well may they cry out against screens or anything else. I always said they wanted rooms, not churches, and now they have got them. Sad times! I cannot imagine what the world will come to if it goes on much longer.³

Faber, however, despite his romantic temperament, was always something of a pragmatist and he was pleased with the result, as was

Wiseman, who as the new Vicar Apostolic of the London District, came to preach at the opening.

It is significant of the role played by the Oratory at this time that it was the only religious community then readily apparent to the public in central London.⁴ Preceding Vicars Apostolic had not allowed any religious community to open a church in their city, and this policy was only changed by Wiseman. The Passionists had just opened a house in Hampstead and the Redemptorists at Clapham, but neither had, as yet, opened a public church, and the Jesuit Church at Farm Street was not yet finished. Thus, the Oratorians became the first Catholic priests of a religious institution to appear on London streets since the arrival of the *emigre* clergy at the French Revolution, and unlike the latter, the Oratorians were both English and determined to draw attention to themselves. The situation which had developed in Birmingham when Faber had been there with his Wilfridians now repeated itself in London. However, this time opposition came not only from Protestants but from within the Catholic community as well. The introduction of the new Italian devotions, the popular hymn singing and the evangelical atmosphere which pervaded Oratorian services were disturbing to the existing clergy, and the wearing of the Oratorian habit, which consisted of a long, black cassock, over which was worn, when on the street, a cloak and broad-brimmed hat, was considered indiscreet.⁵ Faber's biographer and a contemporary observer, Father John Bowden, writes

that Wiseman was requested to suppress the new services "on the ground that they were conducted in a Methodistical rather than a Catholic style."⁶

The Oratorian custom of wearing the habit on the street soon attracted the notice of the press and for several years, the community became something of a *cause celebre*, especially around the time of the restoration of the Catholic hierarchy. Indeed, the activities of the Oratorians, combined with Wiseman's colourful letter announcing the restored hierarchy, were the cause of probably the last major 'No Popery' scare in the history of English Catholicism.

The actual change in the position of the Catholic bishops was an administrative one, the English government was known to have no major objection to it, and, indeed, there appeared no major obstacles when public opinion, and more specifically the opinion of the press suddenly shifted.⁷ The publication of the news had caused The Times to respond:

The Pope and his advisers have mistaken our complete tolerance for indifference to their designs; they have mistaken the renovated zeal of the Church in this country for a return towards Roman bondage; but we are not sorry their indiscretion has led them to show the power which Rome would exercise if she could, by an act which the laws of this country will never recognise, and which the public opinion of this country will deride and disavow, whenever His Grace, the titular Archbishop of Westminster thinks fit to enter his diocese.⁸

This would have been bad enough, but there was much worse to follow when Wiseman, now a Cardinal, published his first pastoral letter, "Given out of the Flaminian Gate of Rome...."⁹

The letter, which in its style is the verbal expression of the ideas the Oratorians were trying to convey through the externals of dress, ceremony, and architecture, begins as follows:

Nicholas, by the Divine mercy, of the Holy Roman Church by the title of St. Pudentiana Cardinal Priest, Archbishop of Westminster and Administrator Apostolic of the Diocese of Southwark: To our dearly beloved in Christ.¹⁰

And after some introductory remarks goes on to the paragraph that caused so much outcry:

...at present and till such time as the Holy See shall think fit other wise to provide, we govern, and shall continue to govern, the counties of Middlesex, Hertford, and Essex as ordinary thereof, and those of Surrey, Sussex, Kent, Berkshire and Hampshire with the islands annexed, as administrator with ordinary jurisdiction....

The great work, then, is complete; what you have long desired and prayed for is granted. Your beloved country has received a place among the fair churches, which, normally constituted, form the splendid aggregate of the Catholic Communion; Catholic England has been restored to its orbit in the ecclesiastical firmament, from which its light had long vanished, and begins now anew its course of regularly adjusted action round the centre of unity, the source of jurisdiction, of light, and of vigour.¹¹

It is said that upon reading this Queen Victoria enquired "Am I Queen of England or am I not?"¹² The editor of The Times had

Wiseman's letter published in full and wrote an entire article on the subject, declaring *inter alia* that he was "not aware that the misuse of language ever reached a more frightful perversion."¹³

Wiseman himself was shocked at the public reaction and immediately wrote an "Appeal to the Reason and Good Feeling of the English People" in which he explained the real nature of the new Catholic hierarchy and in which he appealed to the good sense of the nation by which he set great store. This did some good and the situation grew less tense as the months passed, although it was not for several years that better relations with the government or the press were restored.

During the crisis, quickly dubbed from an article in The Times 'Papal Aggression,' the Oratory was unsurprisingly at the centre of events. Punch picked up the debate with enthusiasm and published a cartoon of Father Bowden being mistaken for a bogey because of the Oratorian habit.¹⁴ Thackeray wrote a satire called 'A Dream of Whitefriars' in which he referred to "the Oratorian young gentlemen with the black cloaks and broad brims who parade our city," and Faber's Life of St. Rose of Lima was made fun of.¹⁵

Once again, as in the controversy with Pugin, it was the Italianate nature of the Oratorians which drew the most notice. About this time John Lingard, the Catholic historian and a fitting representative of the old school, suggested as a topic for conversation at

Wiseman's soirees "How to send away those swarms of Italian congregationists who introduce their own customs here and by making religion *ridiculous* in the eyes of protestants *prevent it spreading here*."¹⁶

The "Papal Aggression" affair had coincided with Guy Fawkes Day, a traditional festival of anti-popery, and tempers ran high. Nonetheless, as one of his biographers writes, "Faber was really enjoying himself,"¹⁷ as this was just the sort of row he found most stimulating. On the 10th of November 1850, he wrote to Newman:

The excitement increases here, and is laying hold of the lower orders....Things seem pointing more to us:- 'Beware of the Oratorians' 'Down with the Oratorians, Banishment to the Oratorians, Don't go to the Oratory'--are now all over the town. In Leicester Square is a gigantic placard, 'No Popery, Down with the Oratorians, No religion at all.'¹⁸

Despite the threats, however, there were no attacks on the Oratorians' premises, although one man did break in looking for Cardinal Wiseman.

As things settled down Faber and the community began to turn more to the work they had intended. The "tinsel glory of their bespangled and bedizened church"¹⁹ attracted the poor Irish and the poor in general in large numbers, as did the style of preaching and hymn singing.

Faber was an enthusiastic writer of hymns, some of which like "Faith of Our Fathers" have stood the test of time, although many, as he was the first to admit, were appallingly bad. They were often set to

popular tunes of the day such as "The Harp That Once Through Tara's Halls" or "The Girl I Left Behind Me" and were sung with gusto by the crowds who attended the evening services.²⁰ Also in the year 1850, Faber gave three lectures on St. Philip Neri and these are significant in that they throw light on his understanding of the Oratory and underscore his attitudes toward the role of this institution and the position of the Church in the nineteenth century.

Unlike the Jesuits who rely on a rule and a system, Faber suggests that the Oratorian method is to look "more to St. Philip's manners and sayings than to a rule,"²¹ and he sees history and the lives of the saints rather than dogma and polemics as the means through which the Oratorians often work. Faber was also, as has been said, a keen supporter of Ultramontanism, that movement which expounded the rights and authority of the Papacy. In his second lecture "St. Philip the Representative Saint of Modern Times," he speaks of the railways "as the handmaids of the Modern Papacy" and says that "Ultramontanism is the magnanimous element of Modern Times."²² In consequence, it was the duty of the Oratory to support in every way the Ultramontane movement which was at once international, Roman, and modern.

Speaking on St. Philip's Day in 1851, Cardinal Wiseman emphasised the modern nature of St. Philip and his institute and he linked this to devotions and architecture as well. Faber described the sermon to Newman thus:

We, he said, represented the modern church, and St. Philip is the type of modern times and modern charity; no carved pinnacles should interrupt our view of Philip's love, Jesus in the Eucharist, no longer could we pray in dark corners of churches intercepted with pillars; we in England have been in chaos, now that we are emerging we must look to Rome to see what the Bridegroom has been whispering to the Bride these 300 years.²³

In his sermon, then, it appears that Wiseman encapsulated the principal significance of the Italian Baroque style for the Oratorians. If St. Philip could be taken as "the type of modern times" and if his devotional practices were to be taken as appropriate for the age, then it would only be fitting for the Oratorians, especially in England which had been separated from Rome for so long, to adopt that style of architecture which still, in 1850, was looked upon as the modern Roman type.

The Baroque style is not one that has ever been entirely accepted within the tradition of English Church architecture. Its early association with counter-reformation Catholicism precluded an easy adoption as a suitable style for churches in Protestant England.²⁴ Coupled with this, too, was the close association of the Baroque with the absolutism of Continental monarchs and with the attempt to import this into England in the reigns of the early Stuarts. Indeed, such Baroque churches as existed before the nineteenth century, St. Paul's Cathedral, for example, reflect the tension between an architect trained in the Baroque vocabulary and patrons, in this case the Church of England, who

resisted designs they felt were too similar to Catholic churches in Rome.²⁵ Later, in the eighteenth century, James Gibbs, who was a Catholic for at least part of his life, built the church of St. Mary-le-Strand in a Baroque style that mirrors the façade of Pietro da Cortona's Santa Maria della Pace, but he did so "in defiance of fashion and the age."²⁶

In fact, to find the Baroque style in England it is necessary to look to private patronage and the architecture of country houses. Vanbrugh's Castle Howard, Blenheim Palace and the now-ruined Seaton Delaval, as well as a number of lesser structures, represent the Baroque in something of the Continental manner. It is interesting, too, that Vanbrugh was a playwright and came to architecture through the medium of the theatre.²⁷ It is perhaps for this reason that he "almost succeeded in giving English Baroque the emotional feeling and warmth that it lacked."²⁸

Nonetheless, it was not until the nineteenth century when the rising commercialism saw in Italian architecture a message of grandeur that would appeal to the new professional classes was there a broader acceptance of the style which, in the popular imagination, had previously been bound up with the fortunes of the Roman Church. But, once again, Baroque was not employed in buildings intended for ecclesiastical use.

It is not surprising that Pugin, who reacted so strongly against the nineteenth century, should complain that the Oratorians wanted 'rooms not churches.' For, although the Italian Renaissance style and its offspring, the Baroque, found little favour in ecclesiastical circles, in the developing sphere of commercial architecture it held pride of place.²⁹

Newman had seen in the Oratory an institution which was suited to 'an age for external secularism,' and this factor is significant when the architectural policy of Faber and the London community is considered.

The newest social institutions in nineteenth-century society, clubs, and hotels were beginning to appear in London during the period that Faber started to work there, and as H.S. Goodhart-Rendel writes, "In urban architecture other than...scholastic or ecclesiastical, neo-Italian of one sort or another met no serious challenge."³⁰ Sir Charles Barry's Travellers' Club, together with his more architecturally significant, Reform Club, both built in the 1830's, are good representatives of the type. These, along with such buildings as the Great Western Hotel, Paddington (1851) and the Oxford Music Hall in St. Giles Circus (1857), were conceived primarily as places of entertainment for their patrons.³¹

To Pugin and the Mediaevalists, it was naturally unacceptable to have churches resemble places of entertainment. But to Faber and the other convert priests, imbued with the Baroque spirit of St. Philip Neri, who, it must be recalled, arranged his Oratories as entertainments to

compete with the secular divertissements of the day, this was seen as an advantage rather than as a difficulty.

If the Oratorians were to achieve their ends, mostly through persuasion, they required an architecture which would raise their congregations' expectations and place them in the proper attitude to appreciate the music and preaching. In short, they needed an architecture which would appeal to the emotions of a wide range of people in an immediate way that Pugin's architecturally and historically correct Gothic buildings could not do.

In his book A Treatise on Chancel Screens and Rood Lofts, which appearing as it did in 1851 was intended as an attack on the Oratorians, Pugin writes that "if religious ceremonies are to be regarded as spectacles they should be celebrated in regular theatres"³². He goes on to ridicule the Oratory in King William Street directly:

Bad as was the Paganism of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries [in Italy], it was dressed out in much external majesty and richness; but now nothing is left but the tag end of this system; bronze and marble are replaced by calico and trimmings; the works of the sculptor and the goldsmith are succeeded by the milliner and the toyshop; and the rottenness of the Pagan Movement is thinly concealed by gilt paper and ribands....³³

In fairness to Pugin, the Oratorians were engaged in a revival of popular religion and, in the early 1850's at any rate, the quality of their furnishings was no doubt a justifiable subject for attack. Ignoring, however, the ferociousness of the criticism, Pugin does leave us with an

interesting and detailed impression of what the Oratorians' chapel must have resembled:

Cheap magnificence, meretricious show, is the order of the day; something pretty, something novel, calico hangings, sparkling lustres, wax dolls, flounces and furbelows, glass cases, ribands and lace, are the ornaments and materials usually employed to decorate, or rather disfigure, the altar of sacrifice and the holy place....³⁴

Yet, it is precisely this decorative aspect which must have appealed to the popular Victorian taste at the time. The same people who were beginning to frequent the new railway hotels like the Great Western at Paddington or the later Grosvenor at Victoria Station (then known as the Brighton Company's) with their pseudo-palazzo Baroque interiors would have felt at home in the Oratorians' church. In both instances, their expectations would be raised by their surroundings, and they would feel themselves part of, for lack of a better word, a more glamorous world. For it was not to the aristocracy alone or to the poor Irish but to the rising professional classes that the Oratorians had especially directed their mission, and these were the very people most attracted to the new hotels, clubs and theatres of mid-Victorian London.

With the move to Brompton in 1853, this apostolate would continue, but in more salubrious surroundings and with the growing patronage of aristocratic converts the Oratorians could gradually turn to a more exalted expression of the Italian style.

NOTES

¹ Chapman, p. 215.

² Ibid., p. 216.

³ Ibid., p. 230.

⁴ Bowden, p. 347.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid., p. 348.

⁷ Fothergill, pp. 159-160.

⁸ Ibid., p. 158.

⁹ It is indicative of Wiseman's romanticism that in the nineteenth century he should adopt such a self-consciously mediaeval style.

¹⁰ Fothergill, pp. 161-162.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid., p. 161.

¹³ Ibid., p. 163.

¹⁴ Chapman, p. 237.

¹⁵ Punch, November 1850.

¹⁶ Mathew, p. 200.

¹⁷ Chapman, p. 238.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Sheridan Gilley, "Vulgar Piety and the Brompton Oratory," Durham University Journal, vol. 74, Dec. 1981, p. 18.

²⁰ Ralph Kerr, "The Oratory in London" in The Oratory Parish Magazine, Dec. 1924, p. 660.

²¹ Addington, p. 165.

²² Ibid.

²³ Kerr, Oratory Parish Magazine, Oct. 1923, p. 375.

²⁴ V.L. Tapie, The Age of Grandeur (New York: The Grove Press Inc., 1960), p. 169.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 173.

²⁶ Ibid., plate 17.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 183.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ H.S. Goodhart-Rendel, English Architecture Since the Regency (London: Constable, 1933), p. 113.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Roger Dixon and Stefan Muthesius, Victorian Architecture (London: Thames and Hudson, 1978), pp. 74-88.

³² Peter F. Anson, Fashions in Church Furnishings (London: Faith Press, 1960), p. 41.

³³ Ibid., p. 42.

³⁴ Ibid.

Chapter 6

Conclusion: The Oratory at Brompton

The first church at Brompton, which stood for thirty years, was, despite the duration of its survival, intended merely as temporary. Newman had advised shrewdly that a 'house will build a church' but that a church would not supply the community with a house.¹ Accordingly, when construction began on the Brompton site, the Oratory house was built first in an Italian Renaissance style, whilst the church, dedicated to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, another of Faber's modern devotions, was constructed in the plainest of styles, being really no more than a warehouse-like structure built of yellow brick. The interior was, however, more elaborate, especially after the remodelling done in 1871-72 by J. Hungerford Pollen, then connected with the Science and Art Department of the South Kensington Museum. The surviving illustrations and photographs, which, considering the time the structure existed, are surprisingly few, depict a long rectangular nave which terminated in a raised sanctuary that was otherwise a mere continuation of the main body of the church.² Pilasters in *faux marbre* lined the walls and in the Sanctuary, there were two large columns between which stood the altar. The order employed was Corinthian and the ceiling was flat and coffered above a cornice, whilst light was provided by a series of high windows filled with plain glass which ran down the sides of the building. When not examined too closely, the effect was that

of a pastiche of one of the Roman basilicas, such as San Giovanni in Laterano or Santa Maria Maggiore, that had been done over in the Baroque style.

Indeed, the effect for its success seemed to rely less on the architecture than on the services held within. Father Sebastian Bowden describes these in 1869, several years after Faber's death. He contrasts:

the dull and dismal streets of our great city and its begrimed, driven and melancholy population, with nothing to raise their spirits but a *bank holiday*, with a feast day inside the church: Processions with banners and images, confraternities in their habits, festoons and lights innumerable, orchestral and popular music--all that makes a Catholic Feast...as completely and simply[?] as in a Catholic country.³

The change of neighbourhood from the Strand to Knightsbridge did have an effect on the clientele as well. The church was soon, along with the Jesuit Church which opened in Farm Street, to become a centre for fashionable converts, and as this role developed and the financial wherewithal grew, plans were set in motion for a really suitable monument to Faber's Italianising traditions.

The plan to go ahead with the new church was announced in 1874, and the Fathers of the London Oratory seem already to have had their architect in mind. His name was Herbert Gribble. An assistant to the well-known Catholic architect, Joseph Hoysins Hansom, Gribble was also an Oratorian convert. In March of 1876, he published a design, substantially the same as that which was finally adopted, in the

Building News.⁴ But, in 1878, the Oratorians announced a competition from which a winning design would be chosen. Clearly, there was some division of opinion in the community over Gribble's work, and in an institution as democratically constituted as the Oratory, the only easy solution was to hold a competition that would, at least, help the Fathers to place Gribble's work in context.⁵

The instructions for the competition stated that the style was to be 'Renaissance Italian,' that the building was to cover the whole of the space available, that the Sanctuary was "to be made the most important part of the church,"⁶ and that nothing "must be allowed to interfere with its dignity and repose, especially the altar and the tabernacle should stand out as visibly the great object of the whole church."⁷ No materials for the construction were prescribed, nor was a limit placed on the cost, although an estimate was requested in this regard.

By the end of May, 1878 thirty sets of drawings had been received, and these were placed on display without, however, the names of their architects being revealed. Regrettably, these designs remained the property of the architects and thus, with the exception of the winning design and one or two others, they have all perished.⁸

Many of the plans seem to have called for an Early Renaissance style.⁹ This is a fact which is not surprising, given that the terms of the competition rather vaguely called for 'Renaissance Italian.' Some, however, were what would now be called Mannerist, e.g., that of Henry

Clutton, a well-known architect who, in fact, probably expected to win, and who did achieve second place after Gribble.

The winning design was essentially a modification of Vignola's church of Il Gesu in Rome and, hence, represented an early Baroque style.¹⁰ The plan was axial and in the form of a Latin cross. The Sanctuary is the same width as the nave and the aisles are filled in with side chapels, three to each side. There are chapels also in the transepts at right angles to the Sanctuary, and to the right of the latter and parallel to it is another chapel distinct from the main body of the interior. The elevation of the nave depends on a giant order in the form of marble pilasters, unfluted, with Corinthian capitals and attached to piers with a small order of columns supporting the arcuated portals in between.

Gribble, however, did not follow the Italian design slavishly. One difference was necessitated by the lack of light in a northern country. Instead of the more usual tunnel vault found in Il Gesu or the Oratorian church of Santa Maria in Vallicella, Gribble broke up the ceiling of the nave into separate vaults, one over each bay and each with a small cupola to let in the light.¹¹ There are four of these in addition to the large dome over the crossing, and down the sides of the nave is a series of large clerestory windows, the efficiency of which has been only partially affected by the later introduction of stained glass. The vaults between the cupolas are coffered and form a rhythmic unity with

the large pilasters, while the interior dome itself is in the form of a hemisphere with eight small circular windows or *oculi* between the ribs and a central lantern above.¹²

The original plan for the façade, with two *campanili* taken from Sant' Agnese on the Piazza Navona in Rome, called for an arched pediment recessed between the two *campanili*, which, themselves, flanked a large porch.¹³ The porch was another concession to a northern climate, but the bell towers were beyond the means of the congregation and have never been completed. Also never attempted was the large *baldacchino* which was to have been placed above the High Altar. Economics may also have been a factor here, but equally important probably was the Oratorians' wish to prevent the altar from being overshadowed by any other construction.

The Fathers' wish that "the altar and tabernacle should stand out as visibly the great object of the whole church" has been entirely fulfilled. This is especially evident during major ceremonies in the church such as High Mass or Benediction, when a number of priests are present in the Sanctuary. The Sanctuary itself is raised about three feet above the floor of the nave with the altar steps extending about another three feet beyond that. This height, combined with the wide and uncluttered aspect of the Sanctuary, reduces the feeling of distance which might otherwise be felt in such a large church, and heightens

visibility as well, which was, of course, essential to the devotions the Oratorians were popularising.

The ceremony of Benediction, which has been mentioned previously, is illustrative of the Baroque spirit of worship as contrasted to the Mediaeval. The custom of singing hymns in the vernacular seems to have begun in Italy in the Late Middle Ages and was often bound up with devotion to Our Lady, something which explains the inclusion of the Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary, in the service. Herbert Thurston, the Jesuit liturgical scholar, writes:

Confraternities were formed for the express purpose of singing,...and their members were called *laudesi*[and] although the *laude* hardly flourished outside Italy where both the language and character of the people lent themselves readily to the composition of innumerable canticles, the idea of an evening service of a popular character sung before the statue of Our Lady spread throughout Europe.¹⁴

At the same time, popular devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, that is, the Host reserved on the altar of a church, increased and processions were held to enable the people to see the Sacrament. From this developed the rite of Exposition in which the Host came to be placed on an altar in a glass vessel called a monstrance, so that the people might venerate it for a protracted period of time.¹⁵

By the mid-sixteenth century in Italy, the two services had come together, and it became customary to sing hymns before the Blessed

Sacrament Exposed. From this, the service of Benediction, as it was introduced by the Oratorians in England, developed.

The ceremony generally begins with the entrance of the priest and his assistants. The Sacrament is removed from the tabernacle, where it is usually reserved and placed above the altar on a raised platform called the throne of Exposition. Various hymns or prayers may then be recited, especially the Litany of Our Lady. The ceremony includes the incensing of the Sacrament and concludes when the priest lifts the Monstrance and makes the sign of the cross over the congregation with it. It is from this action that the name Benediction comes.¹⁶ The ceremony is made impressive by the number of candles, the music, the incense and the ringing of bells, and makes a strong appeal to the senses accordingly.

As a consequence of the Protestant Reformation and the rejection of Catholic teaching on the Presence of Christ in the Host, devotion to the latter was greatly heightened during the seventeenth century and became everywhere in Continental Catholicism the norm.¹⁷ In England, however, the restrictions under which the Catholic Church acted prevented the acclimatisation of the ceremony, which for its effect requires a large building and suitable music. The ability of the congregation to see the service is also a prerequisite and it was this point which determined much post-reformation Catholic Church architecture.

This visual aspect, which for want of a better term may be called the 'Church as theatre,' was integral in Gribble's design for the Oratory Church. From April, 1884 when the main body of the building was complete until the opening of Westminster Cathedral in 1903, the new church was the scene of the major ceremonies of English Catholicism. Wiseman had died in 1867, but Cardinal Manning, a convert and enthusiastic Ultramontane who succeeded him, was to continue the close association of the Oratory with the Archdiocese. Roderick O'Donnell in his discussion of the church comments on this period: "The themes of the various Liturgies and their properly triumphalist tone are illustrative of many important aims and ideals in late Victorian Catholicism...."¹⁸

The ceremony of the reception of the *pallium* in 1893 is an example of the attitude of the time and reflects a happy union of the Romanness or 'Romanita' of the building with the Ultramontanist emphasis dominant in the Catholic community. The event which was described as "frankly controversial"¹⁹ involved an episcopal stole, called the Pallium, which gave jurisdiction upon its recipient and was usually conferred in Rome. When Cardinal Vaughn succeeded Manning, the former decided to have the investiture in London, saying it was "too good a trump-card against the Anglicans to throw away."²⁰ All the English bishops were present plus four hundred priests, and six thousand of the faithful. A ceremony of this kind was deliberately

propagandistic, as was the solemn dedication of England and Wales to Our Lady and St. Peter, which took place on June 29, 1893. O'Donnell comments again: "Though a self-conscious re-enactment of England's mediaeval title of 'Our Lady's Dowry' and of its attachment to the Holy See, the ceremony, like the investiture, was enacted in distinctly modern and Ultramontane Roman dress."²¹

The most splendid ceremony of this period was also a very 'Roman' one, the celebration of the Tercentenary of St. Philip Neri in 1895. The Church was decorated with forty-six chandeliers and over one thousand candles. Elaborate hangings were arranged above the High Altar and that of St. Philip, and four Pontifical High Masses were celebrated.²² Surviving photographs of the decorations seem to justify Gribble's assertion that "those who had no opportunity of going to Italy to see an Italian church had only to come [to his Oratory] to see the model of one."²³ Gribble died before his building was finished, but both his revised façade and the dome, which was the work of George Shernin, were completed for the tercentenary festivities.

The immediate consequence of the completion of the new church was the change it effected in ecclesiastical styles in both the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of England. The classical idiom which for over half a century had been neglected was, once again, looked upon with favour, and the Baroque style itself was brought into vogue, and, indeed, remained popular, especially among Anglo-Catholics in the

Established Church until the Second World War. This popularity among the latter is particularly significant, because it was the modern Catholic nature of the Baroque that they saw in a church such as the Oratory, which attracted them to it. Their desire was to Catholicise the Anglican Church, and those of the most advanced party wanted this done in what they saw as the most modern way possible.

The Church of the Holy Redeemer, Clerkenwell, was the first Anglican church built in the new style, and it followed the Oratory almost immediately, being begun in 1887. Its association with the Oratory is, in fact, even stronger in that the design employed by J.D. Sedding was essentially that which he had submitted for the competition of 1878. Another Holy Redeemer, this one Catholic and in Chelsea, was also patterned after an Oratory competition design and was built in 1894.

The fashion for the Baroque continued, but after the turn of the century, factors other than ecclesiastical policy seem to have played a role. The Beaux-Arts movement, which produced the London Ritz, to give just one example, owed nothing to the tradition of church design, and the latter movement for the Baroque seems, as Peter Anson suggests, to have been heavily bound up with secular fashions. 'Curzon Street Baroque' was really a movement in interior decoration, whilst the Baroque tastes of the 'twenties were largely set by the Sitwells and other members of fashionable society.²⁴ Hence, although such tastes may

have influenced Anglo-Catholicism, they are beyond the scope of the subject matter discussed here.

In fact, the Church of the Oratory, in addition to representing modern Catholicism, was also intended as something "sensibly and perceptively Roman"²⁵ and went against the fashions of its day in church architecture; and, indeed, the lasting contribution of the Oratorian policy must be this, that, although no longer representative of something modern, the existing church remains a successful example of the theological and pastoral priorities of its patrons and fulfils Faber's wish to avoid "another dose of Anglicanism with Tridentine doctrine."

NOTES

- ¹ Kerr, The Oratory Parish Magazine, November 1925.
- ² Surviving photographs are in the London Oratory Archives.
- ³ Roderick O'Donnell, "The Architecture of the London Oratory," in The London Oratory Centenary (London: Trefoil Books, 1984), p. 26.
- ⁴ Ibid., p. 32.
- ⁵ Ibid.
- ⁶ Kerr, Oratory Parish Magazine, February 1927, p. 24.
- ⁷ Ibid.
- ⁸ Ibid., p. 25.
- ⁹ Ibid.
- ¹⁰ O'Donnell, p. 32.
- ¹¹ Ibid., p. 33.
- ¹² Ibid.
- ¹³ The design, including the *campanili*, may also owe something to Wren's façade for St. Paul's Cathedral where a porch was also provided.
- ¹⁴ Herbert Thurston, "Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament," The Catholic Encyclopedia (New York: Robert Appleton, 1907), vol. II, p. 466.
- ¹⁵ Ibid.
- ¹⁶ Ibid.
- ¹⁷ Jungmann, pp. 82-85.

¹⁸ O'Donnell, pp. 40-41.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 41.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid., p. 43.

²² Ibid., p. 44.

²³ Ibid., p. 21.

²⁴ Anson, p. 319.

²⁵ Holmes, p. 117.

PLATES



Plate 1



Plate 2



Plate 3



Plate 4



IV. The singing of Vespers in the King William Street Chapel c.1850. The statue of Our Lady of Victories is that on the Lady Alex in the present Church. (The London Gallery).

Plate 5



Reproduced
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Orator. "In vasa Mactan vtrius, et mact!"
Maid of All Work. "Oh, mact! mact! mact! a Good, Mact!"
Maid of All Work. "Oh, mact! mact! mact! a Good, Mact!"

Plate 6



Plate 7



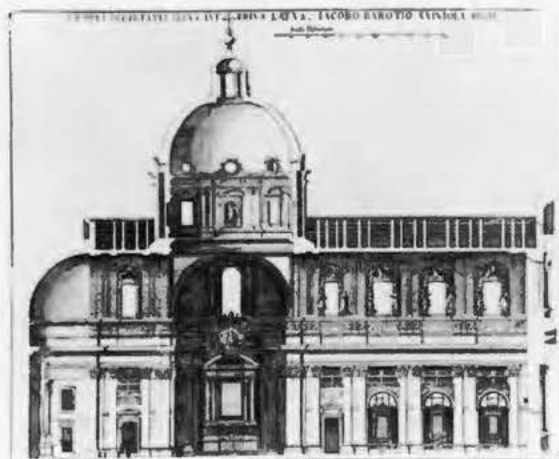
Plate 8



Plate 9



Plate 10



18. Longitudinal section after de Bion, Goud, Rome, 1864

Plate 11

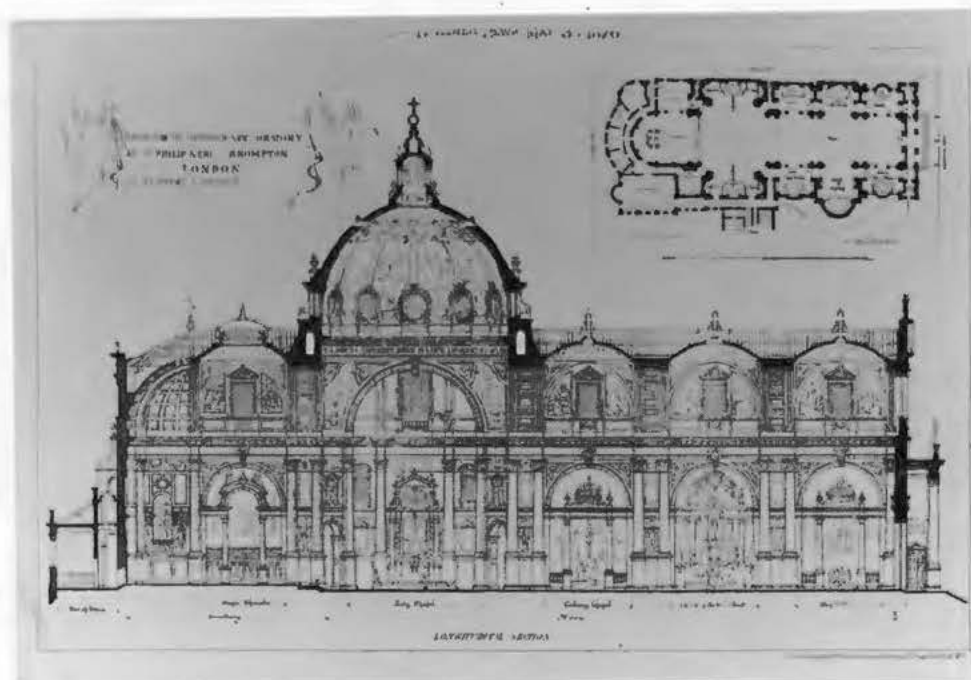


Plate 12



Plate 13



Plate 14



Plate 15



VI Interior of the church after the 1984 restoration

Plate 16



VII The sanctuary after the 1984 restoration.

Plate 17



Plate 18

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