The 'Old Western Men': A Religious Mode of Response to the Conditions of 'Secular' Modernity, 1900-1970

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Abstract

This thesis forwards the concept of the 'Old Western Men', a phrase borrowed from C. S. Lewis, who used this term to assert the presence of a 'Great Divide' in history. Modernity, he believed, was essentially secular, unlike what had preceded it. In this sense, he was in opposition to it as a Christian. This thesis's unique contribution to the current literature is that it applies Lewis's identification of the Old Western Men to a broader spectrum of intellectuals and artists, previously referred to, more narrowly, as the 'Catholic literary revival'. This Ph.D. locates such a revival within a broader 'religious mode of response' to modernity, which such men of letters as Lewis believed to be fundamentally materialistic; meaning that modernity denied the existence of an objective spiritual reality. Chapter one describes the general concept of the Old Western Men, including how it confronted secular modernity by attempting to reconcile mind with matter as part of an intellectual *via media* (middle way); it will also examine the importance that some intellectuals invested in the concept of imaginative understanding. Chapter two focuses on an Old Western emphasis on the 'More-Than-World' within the world, one that was essentially sacramental, having come to reconcile reason with the imagination. Chapter three forwards the Old Western notion of thinking 'christianly' by cultivating a divine indifference to worldly catastrophe. This also entails examining the concept of self-sanctification, as well as how the Old Western Men responded to the violence of their century by inviting the supernatural into their lives. Chapter four concludes the thesis by examining the spiritual/cultural device of Christendom as a redemptive discourse combatting European nationalism and racialism.

For my grandparents, George and Elizabeth "Betty" Frampton.

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Introduction

Writing in *Exile's Return* (1934), the American literary critic Malcolm Cowley observed how T. S. Eliot's poem *The Waste Land* (1922) 'agreed with all our recipes and prescriptions of what a great modern poem should be'.[1] Here he lauded Eliot's noted literary modernism. However, Cowley also explained how he and his counterparts also 'made private reservations'.[2] What concerned them, he remembered, was 'the idea that the poem set forth'.[3] For it was his notion that Eliot's *The Waste Land* heralded a 'moving toward two extremes […] [and] the first extreme was that of authority and divinely inspired tradition as represented by the Catholic Church; the second was Communism'.[4] In this sense, then, the poem 'made visible a […] division among writers that was not a division between capitalist and proletarian'.[5] In essence, then, there was something evident here that went beyond the typical, identifiably Marxist, division of the oppressor and the oppressed. Perhaps what Cowley perceived in *The Waste Land* was what Eliot stated clearly in 1932, then: that 'the real conflict is not between one set of moral prejudices and another, but between the theistic and the aesthetic faith; and it is all for the best that the division should be sharply drawn'.[6]

Cowley recalled that he was 'forced by Eliot to make a preliminary choice'.[7] And he 'instinctively rejected' Eliot's side of the division, which was the side of theistic faith.[8] My thesis is, in essence, concerned with ascertaining, as well as confirming, the presence of one of those 'extremes' suggested by Cowley in 1934: the side of 'divinely inspired' tradition that Eliot represented. It may be that Cowley's use of 'Catholic' to define Eliot's side of the division was particularly apt too.

My thesis rests on the foundation of four recent works identifying the presence of a Catholic 'revival' in literature in twentieth century British culture. In 2003, Ian Ker, in *The Catholic Revival in English Literature, 1845-1961*, detailed how 'Catholicism informed and

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[1] Malcom Cowley, *Exile's Return* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1934), 124.
[2] Ibid., 125.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid., 128.
[5] Ibid., 127.
[6] Quoted in Barry Spurr, *'Anglo-Catholic in Religion': T. S. Eliot and* Christianity (Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press, 2010), 2.
[7] Cowley, *Exile's Return*, 128.
[8] Ibid.

shaped a considerable and impressive corpus of literature in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries'.[9] Joseph Pearce's *Literary Converts: Spiritual Inspiration in an Age of Unbelief* (2006) also revealed 'a Christian literary revival which, throughout the twentieth century, represented an evocative artistic and intellectual response to the prevailing agnosticism of the age'.[10] In *The Making and Unmaking of the English Catholic Intellectual Community, 1910-1950* (2009), James R. Lothian, too, identified the presence of a group of 'Catholic intellectuals in interwar England [who] were not a disparate collection of individuals but a genuine community united not only by close personal ties but especially by ideology'.[11] Most recently, in *The Third Spring: G. K. Chesterton, Graham Greene, Christopher Dawson & David Jones* (2012), Adam Schwartz wrote similarly, of a 'Roman Catholic rebellion against modern unbelief [...] in twentieth-century British culture'.[12] It is a central tenet of my thesis that this core of Roman Catholic intellectuals, revealed to us by Ker, Pearce, Lothian, and Schwartz, is illustrative of a broader spirit at large in British culture at the time, which Eliot also stood for, but one that was not specifically Roman Catholic, nor even necessarily Christian – but, rather, one formulated around the fundamental discourse on the existence, as well as the continuing relevance, of the concept of the supernatural; in other words, a religious worldview. This inevitably involved a vital rumination on the supposed secularisation of Britain, in particular, in the modern world, which was understood to be synonymous with modernity itself, as entailing a fundamental abolition of the, so far historically universal, conception of a sacred universe.

My thesis raises a point recently delineated by Glenn W. Olsen in his work *The Turn to Transcendence: The Role of Religion in the Twenty-First Century* (2010): that, though there are 'various competing modernities'[13], modernity, at its core, involves 'a muffling of transcendence'.[14] And when we speak of an apparent 'loss of a sense of transcendence',

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[9] Ian Ker, *The Catholic Revival in English Literature, 1845-1961* (2003; Leominster: Gracewing, 2004), 7.

[10] Joseph Pearce, *Literary Converts: Spiritual Inspiration in an Age of Unbelief* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2006), xi.

[11] James R. Lothian, *The Making and Unmaking of the English Catholic Intellectual Community, 1910-1950* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009), xii.

[12] Adam Schwartz, *The Third Spring: G. K. Chesterton, Graham Greene, Christopher Dawson & David Jones* (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2012), 11.

[13] Glenn W. Olsen, *The Turn to Transcendence: The Role of Religion in the Twenty-First Century* (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 114.

[14] Ibid., 176.

we mean 'the loss of a sense that there is a reality beyond the visible'.[15] Olsen 'relates this loss to such things typical of modernity'.[16] In this sense, I will identify intellectuals and artists – whom Olsen, in his work, elects to term 'transcendentals' – whose work appears to 'express the more-than-world discovered within the world'.[17]

Like Olsen, Alan D. Gilbert, in *The Making of Post-Christian Britain: A History of the Secularization of Modern Society* (1980), expressed his view that 'the very notion of a *religionless* culture is so distinctively modern a phenomenon'.[18] This 'notion' quite notably occupied the thought of Peter L. Berger, who, in *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (1967), wrote of a 'crisis of plausibility' at the heart of modernity[19], in which 'the religious legitimations of the world' had 'lost their plausibility not only for a few intellectuals and other marginal individuals but for broad masses of entire societies'.[20] This entailed, or perhaps brought about, secularisation itself, which, as Berger wrote, meant in part 'the process by which sectors of society and culture are removed from the domination of religious institutions and symbols'.[21] However, this thesis is primarily concerned with what Berger termed 'a secularization of consciousness', meaning 'that the modern West has produced an increasing number of individuals who look upon the world and their own lives without the benefit of religious interpretations'.[22] It is important that we note this, since the side of the 'division' that this thesis will establish was very much a response to this apparent shift in 'consciousness'. Although it was not taken in by it, it was, however, obliged to come to terms with it – and, indeed, confront its reality, a reality that they, much like Berger, believed was rooted in a turning away from the 'sacred canopy'. In other words, truths formulated around, and justified by, 'a "right" relationship with the sacred cosmos'[23] were no longer taken as 'self-evident'.[24] Moreover, it appeared to be a specifically Protestant development.

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[15] Ibid., 209.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid., 158.
[18] Alan D. Gilbert, *The Making of Post-Christian Britain: A History of the Secularization of Modern Society* (London: Longman, 1980), xii.
[19] Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (1967; New York: Anchor Books, 1990), 156.
[20] Ibid., 124.
[21] Ibid., 107.
[22] Ibid, 108.
[23] Ibid., 26.
[24] Ibid., 46.

In 1967, Berger described Protestantism 'in terms of an immense shrinkage in the scope of the sacred in reality, as compared with its Catholic adversary'.[25] 'Protestantism', he wrote, divests 'itself as much as possible from the three most ancient and most powerful concomitants of the sacred – mystery, miracle, and magic'.[26] Olsen, too, has noted that 'the Catholic category of mystery, a reality not discernible by the senses, tended to disappear from many forms of Protestantism'.[27] As well as this, but in connection to it, there is the assumption here that, as Berger contends, 'the "fullness" of the Catholic universe' provides a bulwark against modernity itself.[28] For Berger is of the tradition rooted in Max Weber's observations on the proposed link between Protestantism and modernity; Berger maintaining 'that Protestantism served as a historically decisive prelude to secularization'.[29] Here, then, secularisation is seen to be synonymous with the modern world. Therefore, 'if one keeps in mind the Protestant development'[30] – where now it might be said that the Protestant 'no longer lives in a world ongoingly penetrated by sacred things and forces'[31] – 'the profound conservatism' of Roman Catholicism may be relatable, then, to its consistent elevation of the supernatural as a reality in the world of time and place.[32] In this sense, too, Berger goes as far as to credit conservatives within the Roman Catholic Church 'with a good deal of sociological instinct' in placing a very great emphasis on the supernatural as a reality.[33] This may be significant, since many of the persons featured in this thesis were, indeed, Roman Catholic. This returns us to the supposed Catholic 'revival' in the arts in Britain in the twentieth century.

This connection between conservatism and Catholicism has been noted well. Alan D. Gilbert observed in 1980 that Catholicism in Britain had generally 'stood firm against the temptation to compromise with the emerging post-Christian culture'.[34] While in *The Third Spring* (2012), Schwartz wrote of the 'consistent, stalwart rebuttals of modernity's first principles and their perceived religious and cultural consequences from a distinctly Roman Catholic perspective' in the twentieth century; a manner of 'religious protest

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[25] Ibid., 111.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Olsen, *The Turn to Transcendence,* 237.
[28] Berger, *The Sacred Canopy,* 111.
[29] Ibid., 113.
[30] Ibid., 170.
[31] Ibid., 111.
[32] Ibid., 170.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Gilbert, *The Making of Post-Christian Britain,* 138.

against liberal agnosticism and its allegedly secular, progressive, presentist, and utilitarian ramifications'.[35] Pearce, too, claims that 'to many […] twentieth-century literary converts [to Catholicism] an acceptance of God went hand in hand with a rejection of "the world" and its materialism'.[36] Returning to Berger, it seems that conservatism in the early years of the twentieth century was very much allied to a vision of a sacred reality that, it has been argued, was far more suited to a Roman Catholic outlook than a Protestant one. Moreover, the adoption of Catholicism as a 'rejection' of the material world raises the possibility of a significant counterculture at work, one that was formed around an affirmation of the supernatural itself. This, in fact, has been noted to some extent previously.

Lothian has written of 'an articulate counterculture of self-consciously Catholic writers and artists'.[37] Schwartz, too, couched his work on Catholic literary converts in terms of 'the culmination of countercultural convictions'.[38] Humphrey Carpenter concludes, similarly, that 'the ideas and interests of the Inklings' – the notable literary grouping at Oxford formed around C. S. Lewis – 'contrasted sharply with the general intellectual and literary spirit of the nineteen-twenties and thirties'.[39] Pearce and Ker write in much the same manner, of a group of primarily Catholic writers confronting an 'an age of unbelief'. The key word here that repeats itself is 'countercultural'. It has certainly become a byword for many of the writers addressed in this thesis. David Harden has recently expounded his view that G. K. Chesterton, the Catholic writer, and Lewis, in essence, 'write against the modern age', forwarding their 'countercultural values' in the effort to 'confront the increasingly commercial, materialist, utilitarian, ends-justify-the-means culture of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries'.[40] James V. Schall, a self-described 'long-time reader of Chesterton', proclaimed him 'the most countercultural figure in the modern world'.[41] As for J. R. R. Tolkien and the Inklings, *The Oxford Encyclopaedia of British Literature* refers to this grouping in terms of their 'unabashed countercultural

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[35] Schwartz, *The Third Spring,* 375.

[36] Pearce, *Literary Converts,* 324.

[37] Lothian, *The Making and Unmaking*, xi.

[38] Schwartz, *The Third Spring,* 8.

[39] Humphrey Carpenter, *The Inklings: C. S. Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien, Charles Williams and their Friends* (1978; London: HarperCollins Publishers, 2006), ix-x.

[40] David Harden, *Placed People: Rootedness in G. K. Chesterton, C. S. Lewis, and Wendell Berry* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2015), 10.

[41] James V. Schall, *Political Philosophy and Revelation: A Catholic Reading* (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2013), 235.

convictions about the world at large and the world to come'[42] 'The spiritual depth' of Tolkien's work is a 'countercultural response to modernity', writes Michael Tomko.[43] Jerome P. Baggett includes the Catholic convert Christopher Dawson's output as a historian as 'a kind of countercultural epistemology [...] amid the chaotic fray of modern life'.[44] What emerges here is a vital linkage between avowals of spiritual value, opposed to material circumstance, and, in the twentieth century, this being taken to mean an espousal that is fundamentally contrary to a prevailing, identifiably 'modern', ethic. We should note this as we continue.

While I think that this common identification of a Roman Catholic 'counterculture' amongst intellectuals is correct, I also believe that this classification is in danger of reducing the significance of this grouping to a footnote or niche in the historiography of British intellectual history. It is my purpose to affirm, in one sense, the presence, already established, of a spirit that set out consciously to 'offer some little opposition', as Evelyn Waugh put it, and 'stand out against the tenor of the age and not go flopping along'.[45] However, I also seek to show how such a counterculture was much more than 'some little opposition'.

Lewis declared in 1954 that his friend Tolkien's work *The Fellowship of the Ring* – what might be considered to be a countercultural work, I shall argue – published that same year, struck 'like lightning from a clear sky'.[46] Actually, that sky was a considerably stormy one, this thesis will point out. It was not just a bolt of lightning from a primarily Catholic heaven either. For when we broaden our view to encompass the diverse range of writers, artists and composers who, to varying degrees, appeared to reject materialism in favour of a vision that was essentially supernatural or 'spiritual' (the other word that I shall employ), we see that in terms of a pronounced divide in thought, particularly evident between the two world wars, this much vaunted 'counterculture' may well have constituted a majority – fulfilling Waugh's own decree, in 1962, that 'an artist must be a

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[42] David Scott Kastan, ed., *The Oxford Encyclopaedia of British Literature, Volume 1* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 105.

[43] Paul E. Kerry, ed., *The Ring and the Cross: Christianity and The Lord of the Rings* (2011; Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2013), 207.

[44] Jerome P. Baggett, *Sense of the Faithful: How American Catholics Live Their Faith* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 7.

[45] Quoted in Jeffrey Heath, *Picturesque Prison: Evelyn Waugh and His Writing* (1982; Kingston and Montreal: McGill – Queen's University Press, 1983), 38.

[46] Lewis, C. S., 'The Gods Return to Earth', *Time and Tide*, August 14, 1954.

reactionary', meaning offering 'some little opposition'.[47] In recognising this possibility, we might well consider what actually defines a 'counterculture'. Even if it confronts the prevailing 'spirit' of an age, is it still a counterculture if its adherents form one side of an evenly matched divide? It is beyond the scope of this thesis to answer this question. It will, however, forward the prospect of a diverse range of thinkers forwarding *a religious mode of response to the modern world*, therefore representing a 'competing' narrative, perhaps, combatting the 'secularization of consciousness' mentioned before by Berger.

Identifying and describing a particular philosophical ethic requires that we consider a number of works produced by a select number of writers, musicians and artists. Such primary sources will serve to underline this thesis's central point of a 'religious mode of response'. The interdisciplinary nature of this work will, I think, justify dubbing this twentieth century rejoinder a 'mode' or 'ethic'. As mentioned before, I will make use of a solid base of secondary literature on the Catholic revival. However, my thesis will also take a similar approach to that of John Holloway's work *The Victorian Sage: Studies in Argument* (1953), in that there is, indeed, a particular ethic and way of looking at the world that is the basis of the 'sage'. However, where Holloway sought to identify the sage through 'seven separate studies of writers […] pursuing among other things the sage's own distinctive task […] by the essentially individualist methods of the artist', I will wield a different method by forwarding each chapter as a concatenation of individuals pursuing a particular point.[48] Each chapter, then, will be a study of individuals and their work, rather than a single individual. Taken as a whole, this fundamental diversity will affirm the general drive of this thesis: which is to forward an ethic that was, indeed, as pointed as it was diverse.

Elucidating this reality necessitates an admittedly premeditated methodology emphasising broader commonalities rather than localised discords. There are inherent problems with this approach. Schwartz, for example, cautions us against taking a too 'impressionistic approach' toward this subject, meaning that we forward a panoply of biographical examples, which, as a result of prioritising 'breadth over depth', might produce 'insufficiently substantiated' conclusions.[49] The problem of 'failing to treat many

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[47] Quoted in Heath, *Picturesque Prison*, 38.
[48] John Holloway, *The Victorian Sage: Studies in Argument* (London: Macmillan & Co, Ltd, 1953), 290.
[49] Schwartz, *The Third Spring,* 12.

of these thinkers in sufficient depth' is an issue that Lothian raises too.[50] Also, Bradley J. Birzer has criticised, rightly I think, the glossing over of the inner divisions of some of the intellectuals I am concerned with here; 'most Catholic scholars' ignoring, for instance, the possibility of a divide, 'real or contrived […] between the neo-Thomists and Augustinians'.[51] Nevertheless, it is my purpose in this thesis to reveal a fundamental unity that necessitates a focus on unifying factors, coalescing around the advocating of the supernatural as a reality in the realm of time and place. Putting the dangers marked by Schwartz, Lothian and Birzer aside, though not forgetting them, there is perhaps an opposite problem here, that of concentrating too specifically and missing the broader picture. In standing too close to a cathedral we fail to ascertain its true outline, as well as its situation in the surrounding landscape. In a way, such work on a Catholic literary revival, for example, has stood too close to the building. This is not really a flaw, however. The negatives of either approach can be offset, in part, at least by acknowledging them as such. Each may, of course, supplement the other. In this case, the focus of my thesis is founded on establishing outlines rather than details – though this will not always be the case. There is a balance to be sought here. This will operate on two levels: within the family; and without. This means that I will clarify commonalities, on one level, within the stated Catholic 'revival' itself, as well as, on a second level, forwarding an evident harmony, in terms of a rejection of wholesale materialism, amongst a broader set of intellectuals and artists. So it is worth briefly examining the first level here, since this brings me into contact with Lothian's recent work, in particular.

Lothian, in *The Making and Unmaking of the English Catholic Intellectual Community, 1910-1950* (2009), has sought to emphasise a divergence between 'the political and economic focus of the Bellocians', formed around the Roman Catholic writer Hilaire Belloc, between the two world wars, and the Dawsonsite 'challenge […] from within', which, 'in contrast', stressed 'theology and philosophy', and was centred around the emerging influence of the Catholic convert and historian Christopher Dawson, just before, and during, the time of the Second World War.[52] Lothian has presented a compelling case, arguing that Belloc and his compatriots were essentially political in their outlook, much like Cardinal Henry Edward Manning, who Lothian argues anticipated the

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[50] Lothian, *The Making and Unmaking,* xvii.
[51] Bradley J. Birzer, *Sanctifying the World: The Augustinian Life and Mind of Christopher Dawson* (Front Royal: Christendom Press, 2007), xii.
[52] Lothian, *The Making and Unmaking,* xiii.

Bellocians, while the Dawsonites tended to consider 'the theological issues and spiritual concerns that preoccupied [Cardinal John Henry] Newman'.[53] While I think Lothian is correct to state this difference, which is clearly demonstrated, particularly in the output of Belloc and Chesterton, as well as, contrastingly, 'the Chelsea group' and the advent, in 1926, of the publishing house Sheed and Ward[54], I seek to show that there was a great deal of theological and philosophical conformity between the so-called Bellocians and Dawsonites. As Lothian himself has stated, 'it would be remiss, indeed, not to acknowledge the similarities and personal links even between Dawson himself and the Bellocians', for 'much of his diagnosis of the maladies of contemporary Europe were so similar to those of Belloc, Chesterton'.[55] 'There was no absolute dichotomy.'[56]

As well as this, Lothian, determined to examine the 'social thought rather than the quality of […] [the] fiction or poetry that united the Catholic writers of the era', has concluded that, initially, 'Belloc, the mediocre novelist, was much more important to the English Catholic intellectual community than Chesterton'.[57] His argument here is convincing. As my own work will show, confirming Lothian's point, Chesterton's influence was most keenly felt, and indeed expressed, later, in the output of the Dawsonites. But there is a further point to be made here. Much like Lothian's work, this thesis will resist addressing such intellectuals 'in the context of a "literary revival" […] selected via aesthetic criteria'.[58] However, following this rule, as well as attempting to advance a persona purely 'Bellocian', it may be that Lothian has been unfair to Belloc, in that he has jettisoned any such 'literary' work of Belloc's, such as *The Four Men: A Farrago* (1911), which is actually far from being mediocre, in favour of advancing his Bellocian/Dawsonite partition. I believe that Lothian's division here can survive the intrusion of *The Four Men*: *A Farrago*. In this sense, it is my purpose not to contradict Lothian but 'acknowledge the similarities', not only within the boundaries of the now acknowledged 'English Catholic intellectual community'[59], which of course was in need of acknowledgment, but further afield. It is

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[53] Ibid., 11.
[54] Ibid., 229. As Lothian writes, 'in contrast to the Bellocian[s]', Sheed and Ward, under the management of Frank Sheed and Maisie Ward, 'helped foster a new focus on theology and spiritual concerns', addressing a 'modern audience that consisted of those ignorant of Christianity rather than Protestant partisans'.
[55] Ibid., 290.
[56] Ibid., 291.
[57] Ibid., xvi.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Ibid., 378.

my point that this grouping, which has recently been given its due, might now be considered more broadly and located within an even more considerable context, that of, for want of a better term, the 'Old Western Men' – a phrase employed by Lewis in 1954, which I shall adopt in my thesis. In essence, then, Lothian's division of Bellocian and Dawsonsite finds its place within an even greater dissection, which itself deserves to be explored, but then attached to an even broader concord in spirit.

It is also important, I think, that we continue to make vital distinctions. This unity that we speak of only went so far. To illustrate the limits of my claim, my final chapter, in particular, will turn to what I will argue was a 'Catholic' monopolisation of the spectre of Christendom as a response to the rise of nationalism, and Nazism in particular, on the continent, as well as its asserted corollary, political internationalism, which was viewed as being equally inimical. Christendom, or rather the memory of it, was a vital possession of Roman Catholics such as Chesterton and Belloc, and later Dawson too, who were far less willing to accept the claims of the so-called 'Whig interpretation of history', which was a principally Protestant reading of the national, as well as the European, past. In this sense, I shall argue, Catholic intellectuals were especially sensitive to themes of nationalism and internationalism, which, it might be said, predominated much intellectual discourse in Britain, particularly between the two world wars. But it will also be my point to illustrate how figures such as M. R. James, the writer of ghost stories, the artist Paul Nash and John Ireland, the composer – who will also form part of my thesis – though concerning themselves with the theme of the supernatural, were wholly exempt from such discourses on Christendom and politics. In terms of a consideration of the relevance of the supernatural in the world of politics, both national and international, we shall see that Roman Catholic and Anglo-Catholic writers really did represent a 'counterculture', never more so when they found themselves questioning the prevailing political doctrines and narratives of the day, in which they were an actual minority. However, in doing so, we will also see that Lothian's division between Bellocians and Dawsonites is not always workable. Therefore, in revealing one divide within a commonality we unearth a so far unacknowledged unity, but on a smaller, far more localised scale. Here, then, we guard against a wholesale impressionism that might, otherwise, weaken this thesis.

Now we must turn to the context of this combat of ideas, which, I think, represents a vital shift in thought from 1900 onwards. Taking an impressionistic approach will allow us to perceive an especially Christian – though not implicitly Roman Catholic (or indeed Anglo-Catholic) – engagement with modernity. Above all, this will bring the thought and output of the Inklings into relation with Lothian's more strictly Catholic Bellocians and Dawsonites. Indeed, the four recent accounts on the Catholic intellectual revival have concentrated on what Ker, for example, has deemed an 'explicitly Catholic literature' in twentieth century Britain.[60] Because of this, this group – congregating, in particular, around the work and consequent influence of G. K. Chesterton – has found itself separated from another group, which, though not wholly Catholic, was in close alignment with it: the 'Inklings', the name given to what Carpenter, in 1978, narrowed down to the literary grouping of C. S. Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien, and Charles Williams. In *Romantic Religion: A Study of Owen Barfield, C. S. Lewis, Charles Williams, and J. R. R. Tolkien* (2006), R. J. Reilly included Barfield in this consortium of what he termed 'Romantic' Christian (not always Catholic) writers. For though Tolkien was a Catholic, Lewis, Williams and Barfield were Anglican. Consequently, for the sake of neatness, perhaps, Lewis, a significant figure, has been jettisoned by historians from the narrative of a 'Catholic' revival; while Tolkien, when considered as part of a larger grouping of likeminded writers, has been largely considered within the rather more 'Anglican' alignment of the Inklings. While the elevation of the Inklings makes sense in terms of this group's geographic location, being based predominately in Oxford, there was, in fact, a very great concurrence in thought between what has been generally been referred to as the Inklings and the so far separately considered Catholic revival.

The same might also be said of the Anglo-Catholic poet Eliot, who has generally been considered as part of a broader, but even more separate, movement of 'literary modernism'. This view, of Eliot's place within the various intellectual and literary groupings in twentieth century culture, has recently begun to change. Barry Spurr's 2010 work *'Anglo-Catholic in Religion': T. S. Eliot and Christianity* signalled a shift in focus away from Eliot's literary modernism toward the Christianity and conservatism expressed in his writings. This has brought Eliot into relation with a host of Christian writers, as has been revealed, for instance, in *T. S. Eliot and Christian Tradition* (2014), a collection of essays, edited by Benjamin G. Lockerd, representing an essential addition to Spurr's effort to

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[60] Ker, *Catholic Revival,* 203.

assess the neglected aspect of Eliot's considerable religiosity. Lockerd, especially, has established a vital linkage between Eliot's developed Christian leanings and the work of the historian Christopher Dawson – a figure of some note, who will become familiar to us as this thesis develops. In this sense, it is my purpose here to gather together a not inconsiderable number of separate threads, some more separate than others, into a comprehensive spiritual ethic; or what Callum G. Brown terms 'discursive Christianity'.

The drive of my thesis is founded, in part, on Brown's 2001 conception, in *The Death of Christian Britain: Understanding Secularism, 1800-2000*, of 'discursive Christianity'. Brown defines the Christian 'religiosity of the industrial era' as, in essence, 'the people's subscription to protocols of personal identity which they derive from Christian expectations, or discourses, evident in their own time and place'.[61] By 'protocols' Brown takes into account a broad spread of 'rituals or customs of behaviour, economic activity, dress, speech and so on which are collectively promulgated as necessary for Christian identity'.[62] These are then 'prescribed or implied in discourses', which might be official, public or, indeed, private.[63] Such 'discourses' may be 'discerned in the "voices" of the people', he suggests, but also in 'the dominant media of the time (such as popular books, magazines and religious tracts)'.[64] Here, then, Brown writes, we may observe 'a personal process of subscription to often very public discourses', as well as an adoption of 'very private (indeed sometimes intensely secret) protocols related to those discourses'; relating, that is, to the presiding 'Christian' culture.[65] The key phrase here, in terms of 'discursive Christianity', is 'subscription', which is the result of, and indeed a particular contribution to, an ongoing and identifiably Christian correspondence:

> This subscription is thus not necessarily an action which unifies
> individuals' behaviour or religious beliefs, but it creates a compelling
> religious culture (in the jargon a "discursivity") to the construction of
> religiosity in the society at large.[66]

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[61] Callum G. Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain: Understanding Secularism, 1800-2000* (2001; London: Routledge, 2009), 12.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Ibid., 13.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid.

Brown takes his 'discursive' conception of Christian religiosity 'as the prerequisite of all other roles of religion in society: of institutional, intellectual, functional and diffusive Christianity'.[67] For it is his point, essentially, that for Christianity 'to achieve popular participation, support or even acquiescence' – which it must if it is to gain any 'democratic' significance in a 'society free from state regulation of religious habits' – 'it must have a base of discursivity'.[68] In this sense, Brown concludes, 'secularisation […] is inconceivable without decay in discursive religiosity', the result of a fundamental 'loss of popular acceptance and recirculation of those discourses'.[69] In assessing a supposed religious mode of response, this thesis is also, in a sense, identifying such a form of 'discursive Christianity'.

As Berger wrote in 1967, 'men forget. They must, therefore, be reminded over and over again. Indeed, it may be argued that one of the oldest and most important prerequisites for the establishment of culture is the institution of such "reminders".'[70] 'Religious ritual', Berger asserts, was 'a crucial instrument of this process of "reminding"'.[71] David Torevell elucidated this point to a greater degree in *Losing the Sacred: Ritual, Modernity and Liturgical Reform* (2000). 'The unique power and potential of ritualized liturgy' is in its ability to 'transform individual and collective identities and […] reaffirm the values and beliefs on which a religious community is based'.[72] This 'potential', he writes, was given up, however, in the wake of the Reformation, when 'the Protestant emphasis on the word coupled with the emergence of a highly suspicious [Cartesian] attitude to the body, ensured […] a far more cerebral approach to the sacred', one that ultimately undermined the potency of Christian ritual.[73] It is, in part, the purpose of this thesis to forward the idea that, in response to this loss, identified by Torevell, and indeed Berger, the Old Western Men, a sort of 'discursive Christianity', were in the business of 'reminding' – attempting, in the absence of ritual, to foster a community united around the recognition of the supernatural. Ironically – since many of them were Catholic – this was to be attempted through the media of their day, which was the written word.

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[67] Ibid.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Ibid.
[70] Berger, *The Sacred Canopy,* 40.
[71] Ibid.
[72] David Torevell, *Losing the Sacred: Ritual, Modernity and Liturgical Reform* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000), 11.
[73] Ibid., 200.

Another point must be made here, relating to the place of the Old Western Men within the broader view of intellectual history itself. J. W. Burrow, in *A Liberal Descent: Victorian Historians and the English Past* (1981), deemed Chesterton and Belloc 'a twentieth-century epilogue' to 'the radically disaffected, overtly reactionary strand in the English approach to the past', which 'in the middle years of the nineteenth century', in such figures as Augustus Pugin, John Ruskin and William Morris, 'constantly called for […] the conception of a medieval utopia'.[74] Although Burrow was, I think, right in supposing that Chesterton and Belloc were part of what was, indeed, a 'radical critique of capitalism', as well as 'a repudiation of Whiggish complacency about national history', the supposition that they were no more than an 'epilogue' deserves some attention.[75] It is one of the aims of this thesis to show that this 'overtly reactionary' coda, in Chesterton and Belloc, was no meagre 'nineteenth century' regurgitation, but a genuine 'reactionary strand', or rather, a competing narrative that went much further in actually confronting the perceived societal ailments of the so-called 'modern age'. Nor was this protest a postscript; being instead a vital expression of religious dissent that survived well into the twentieth century in yet another generation of 'radically disaffected' intransigents: including Waugh, Dawson and Eliot. What the following chapters will attempt to do, then, is disassociate Chesterton and Belloc from Burrow's sweeping, and I think somewhat flippant, classification of a homogeneous 'Tory-Radical critique of English society […] from the 1820s onwards'.[76] My thesis will conform more to Michael Alexander's notion of a fundamental move toward 'dissent'[77] rooted in 'an Edwardian relaunch' of medievalism.[78]

In *Medievalism: The Middle Ages in Modern England* (2007) Alexander touched upon the idea of 'a second Medieval Revival'[79], which, unlike the first, 'was consciously Christian'.[80] Alexander observes that medievalists belonging to the first revival of interest in the Middle Ages, in the nineteenth century – those such as Thomas Carlyle and John Ruskin

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[74] J. W. Burrow, *A Liberal Descent: Victorian Historians and the English Past* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 240, 241.

[75] Ibid., 241.

[76] Ibid., 240.

[77] Michael Alexander, *Medievalism: The Middle Ages in Modern England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), xxv.

[78] Ibid., 212.

[79] Ibid.

[80] Ibid., 265.

– had 'little to say about the Christianity of Britain in the past'.[81] Although 'Carlyle ventured boldly into medieval social history', for instance, in *Past and Present* (1843), it was the '"social vitality"' of the monastery, rather than 'the monastic life of prayer and worship', which impressed itself upon him.[82] Unlike Burrow, then, Alexander has made what I think is a vital and necessary distinction between nineteenth century 'thinkers such as Cobbett, Carlyle and Ruskin' – a first wave, it might be said, of medievalists, who were 'the first to see and to seek to understand the uglier effects of industrialism and capitalism' – and early twentieth century thinkers such as Chesterton and Waugh, whose minds turned more toward the Christian spirit underlying the medieval period itself.[83] As Paul E. Kerry and Laura Judd write, in *Thomas Carlyle Resartus* (2010), Carlyle in his writings opposed 'the model of positivist history, in which history leads teleologically or progressively toward a superior present state'.[84] This at least led to a reappraisal of the Middle Ages, even if it was ultimately a superficial one. It might be said, then, that Chesterton represented a further development, as Alexander suggests; a development that was really religious in impetus. And in a sense more sophisticated, as well as *authentic*. I want to develop this idea; and also build upon a formulation made, in 2014, by Roger Scruton, which is also related to medievalism, but also secularism.

Scruton has made the point that Matthew Arnold and Friedrich Nietzsche embody a 'distinction between two kinds of loss'.[85] While Arnold's anxious cogitations on a loss of faith, in such works as *Dover Beach* (1867), were really a 'subdued lamentation', marking 'a personal tragedy, to be regretted but concealed', Nietzsche's sense of 'loss' was, conversely, 'an absolute loss, not only a loss of inward conviction but also of the outward symbols of faith […] an existential transfiguration, to be accepted and affirmed', there being no other 'alternative'.[86] Interestingly, Scruton argues that Arnold's 'very English melancholy' marked 'a not-quite-resigned attempt to fit the world of unbelief and scientific scepticism into the Gothic frame of Anglican architecture'.[87] In this sense, too, 'the Gothic revival' was the 'idealized expression' of a sort of 'shoring up [of] the religious

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[81] Ibid., 98.
[82] Ibid.
[83] Ibid., xxiv.
[84] Paul E Kerry, and Marylu Hill, eds., *Thomas Carlyle Resartus: Reappraising Carlyle's Contribution to the Philosophy of History, Political Theory, and Cultural Criticism* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2010), 162.
[85] Roger Scruton, *How to be a Conservative* (2014; London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 174.
[86] Ibid.
[87] Ibid., 173.

worldview by replicating its outward signs', attempting, as Ruskin did as well, 'to recapture the sacred for a secular age [...] in the midst of the utilitarian madness'.[88] Nevertheless, Scruton asserts, Arnold's legacy, as well as the Gothic revival as a whole, was essentially pessimistic.[89] What we may take from this is that the Gothic revival in the nineteenth century was a form of prevarication that lacked a vital authenticity. It replicated only the 'outward signs' of faith. It was, in the end, insincere. This brings us to a point that Chesterton made, which I think might be taken to signify a paradigm shift in the early years of the twentieth century, from the ultimately defensive 'shoring up' of faith, by the Gothic revival, to an aggressive reassertion of the reality and relevance of the supernatural; an authentic medievalism, in a sense, by way of its very insistence, which Burrow failed to take into account.

One statement by Chesterton especially illustrates what was really a move away from the pessimism that Scruton has perceived as being central to the Gothic revival, which was itself a medievalism. Chesterton essentially agrees, writing that 'the Pre-Raphaelites, the Gothicists, the admirers of the Middle Ages, had in their subtlety and sadness the spirit of the present day'.[90] While in actual fact, he claimed, it was Charles Dickens who, 'in his buffoonery and bravery', really possessed 'the spirit of the Middle Ages. He was much more medieval in his attacks on medievalism than they were in their defences of it.'[91] As Alexander suggests, I want to forward the view that, starting around 1900, there emerged a Christian reading of the Middle Ages that sought to recover the spirit of that time in order to competently combat modernity. Chesterton was reaching for a vital authenticity rooted in the observation that modernity, which he opposed, was at least consistent in its set of assumptions. If he and his fellows were to somehow reproach it, as well as offer an 'alternative', they had to be equally constant. As it turned out, to achieve this, many turned to Catholicism itself, as Cowley noted; making, perhaps, the same sociological assessment of it as Berger did. But more than this, when speaking of a second medieval revival, this thesis contends that this really entailed a combative approach that accepted the challenge of Nietzsche's 'absolute loss', seeking to engage it publicly rather than privately, unlike Arnold.

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88 Ibid., 176.
89 Ibid., 174.
90 Quoted in Ian Ker, *G. K. Chesterton: A Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 171.
91 Quoted in ibid.

Modernism may be mentioned here briefly, in conclusion, although this thesis is not a study of modernism itself. There is, however, a case to be made here that what this thesis is identifying is a sort of Old Western modernism – meaning a historical perspective, incorporating a finely tuned theology, which was forwarded in opposition to modernity. Eliot provides us with a useful case in point. Historians, not simply Cowley, have noted that Eliot appears to have been something of a living contradiction. Peter Gay, in *Modernism: The Lure of Heresy from Baudelaire to Beckett and Beyond* (2007), notes how unlike a modernist Eliot really was, rejecting 'most if not all of their contemporary culture, including features that […] fellow modernists found perfectly unobjectionable'.[92] Eliot's 'unimpeachable [literary] modernism' went hand in hand with 'a most intense anti-modernism'.[93] For Gay, Eliot presents too much of a problem. He dealt with him as well as he could by dubbing him one of 'the eccentrics […] the anti-modern modernists'.[94] Gay evidently views modernism, or rather literary modernism – a vital distinction – through the lens of a modernism that is essentially avant-garde, as well as aesthetic, in its fundamentals. In this sense, as he readily admits, Eliot's place within this definition takes on 'the awkward quality of apparent self-contradiction'.[95]

Scruton has also written about 'the paradox of T. S. Eliot – that our greatest modernist should also be our greatest modern conservative'; meaning a general social, political and cultural, but not aesthetic, conservativism underscored, and indeed conditioned by, an even more comprehensive religiosity.[96] However, Scruton argues that 'this seeming paradox' was no paradox at all since 'conservatism is itself a modernism'. For Eliot, he writes, 'perceived that it is precisely in modern conditions – conditions of fragmentation, heresy and unbelief – that the conservative project acquires its sense.'[97] Scruton's 'modernism' may be said to be more inclusive than Gay's, in the sense that there is, indeed, a place for conservatism as a reflective mode of response to the conditions of modernity. What Scruton's and Gay's respective definitions have in common, however, is a conception of modernism as being what David Peters Corbett has referred to as 'a

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[92] Peter Gay, *Modernism: The Lure of Heresy from Baudelaire to Beckett and Beyond* (2007; London: Vintage Books, 2009), 396.
[93] Ibid., 400-401.
[94] Ibid., 396.
[95] Ibid, 401.
[96] Roger Scruton, *A Political Philosophy* (2006; London: Continuum, 2011), 193-194.
[97] Ibid., 194.

critical description of modern experience'.[98] Modernism, it seems, implies 'oppositionism' – a 'critique' and '*direct* address and evaluation of the conditions of modernity'.[99] The historian John Lukacs, for example, writes of modernism as entailing 'a breaking away from the bourgeois world'.[100] The art historian Charles Harrison shared this view.[101] While John Carey, too, has forwarded the thesis that 'the principle around which modernist literature and culture fashioned themselves was the exclusion of the masses, the defeat of their power, the removal of their literacy, the denial of their humanity'.[102] It should be noted, however, that modernism has also been forwarded as a modernism of reconciliation. This is particularly true in terms of British modernism. Sam Smiles, for instance, contributing to *The Geographies of Englishness: Landscape and the National Past, 1880-1940* (2002), has observed 'that significant elements within British modernism seem to have negotiated an accommodation with the relics of the past'.[103] Alexandra Harris, in her work *Romantic Moderns: English Writers, Artists and the Imagination from Virginia Woolf to John Piper* (2010), has also charted the effort on the part of modernists to reconcile conservatism, as well as a sense of locality and national pride, with modernist aesthetic principles.

The utility of Scruton's claim that conservatism is a modernism is that we are no longer obliged to couch modernism in such terms, as a negotiation between two opposed principles, which has previously resulted in the exclusion of a religious mode of response to modernity, thus denying it legitimacy as a modernism; granting, too, that conservatism is in some way synonymous with a religious or 'spiritual' conception of the universe. Gay's ostensible paradox – 'anti-modern modernists' – may be transformed into a tautology. Certainly, this runs counter to Harrison's avowal that 'the critique of modernism […] has

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[98] David Peters Corbett, *The Modernity of English Art, 1914-30* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 1.

[99] Ibid., 4.

[100] John Lukacs, *Democracy and Populism: Fear and Hatred* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 87.

[101] Charles Harrison, *Modernism* (1997; London: Tate Publishing, 2011), 27-28. 'From the mid nineteenth century until at least the late twentieth, no single factor served more consistently to identify the members of this constituency than their concern to distance themselves from the normal tastes and values of "the bourgeoisie".'

[102] John Carey, *The Intellectuals and the Masses: Pride and Prejudice among the Literary Intelligentsia, 1880-1939* (London: Faber and Faber, 1992), 21.

[103] David Peters Corbett, Ysanne Holt, and Fiona Russell, eds., *The Geographies of Englishness: Landscape and the National Past, 1880-1940* – Studies in British Art 10 (New Haven: Yale University Press: published for The Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art and The Yale Center for British Art, 2002), 216.

failed if all it does is usher in the conservative as a supposed form of modernity'.[104] However, if we are to take the late Harrison at his word, that 'modernism may fruitfully be thought of as a form of tradition, but one maintained in a kind of critical tension with the wider surrounding culture', a conservative critique must be accorded its rightful place within this critique.[105] For we should consider the point that there is a difference of opinion about what Harrison's 'surrounding culture' – modernity – might be said to actually constitute. As Olsen discerns, there is an evident 'ambiguity in the idea of modernity'.[106] Indeed, he writes that we should recognise that 'there has in fact been no single modernity which can take its assured place in the (alleged) progress of history, that is, that can mark a new and definitive stage of the new, but rather, various competing modernities'.[107] In this sense, too – returning to Cowley's notion of a divide amongst intellectuals – it may be said that we also have competing modernisms; not in terms of literary modernism, which, as we see in Elliot, straddled both sides of the divide, but rather a general modernist 'oppositionism' to a prevailing modern paradigm, as it was perceived by either side.

Finally, a quick word on this thesis's choice of individuals. There is no point in being so impressionistic as to render any such analysis devoid of any substantialised conclusions. Therefore, I will concentrate on a limited number of individuals, excluding others, but including those who represent a broad range, making up for this loss. Central players, such as Chesterton, Belloc and Lewis are included, in part because of their undoubted significance, but also because it will allow us to establish a common ground between the Inklings and the Catholic revival: between Anglican and Catholic. Paul Nash, M. R. James and John Ireland will feature in reference to broader themes of the supernatural itself, representing what I think is a tellingly diverse, and not always Christian, range of commonality. Eliot and Waugh, who tend to stand apart from any particular Christian grouping, will be considered as well, since it is a worthwhile task to attempt to locate them within a broader community – though to some extent this has happened, as with Tolkien, who also deserves attention. Although there exists a substantial body of work on Tolkien, he has so far been excluded from the academic literature concerning a Catholic

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[104] Charles Harrison, *English Art and Modernism, 1900-1939* (New Haven: Yale University Press, second edition published for the Paul Mellon Centre for the Studies in British Art, 1994), x.
[105] Harrison, *Modernism*, 14.
[106] Olsen, *The Turn to Transcendence,* 114.
[107] Ibid.

intellectual grouping in Britain in the twentieth century. One explanation for this is that Tolkien has generally been located within the literary cohort of the, not specifically Catholic, Inklings, formed around Lewis; though it must be stated that both Birzer and Pearce have touched upon Tolkien's place within a broader awakening of '[Christian] thought and faith'.[108] Persons also featured in this thesis include the poet Roy Campbell, since today, as Scruton notes, 'Campbell is almost forgotten. Few of his writings remain in print, and in British literary publications he is mentioned, if at all, only as the notorious poet who was on "the wrong side" in the Spanish Civil War.'[109] There have been works on this poet, however: John Povey's *Roy Campbell* (1977); Peter Alexander's Roy Campbell: A Critical Biography (1982); and most recently, Pearce's *Bloomsbury and Beyond: The Friends and Enemies of Roy Campbell* (2001). Nevertheless, Campbell is an immensely interesting character who deserves more attention. Then, finally, there is Dawson, who more than any other person will feature heavily in my thesis as a sort of hub.

Dawson is a historian who is a curiously neglected figure. Recently, there has been something of a rediscovery of Dawson, however. Until the 1990s he was a forgotten man. A biography, written by his daughter, Christina Scott, published in 1984, was the only substantial work on his life and works. However, in 1997, a series of essays, titled *Eternity in Time: Christopher Dawson and the Catholic Idea of History*, edited by Stratford Caldecott and John Morrill, marked a rekindling of interest in Dawson, who had been the subject of a conference in Oxford in 1995, which formed the basis of the later work. Not long after this, Dawson's major works once again found themselves in print; reissued by both Ignatius Press and the Catholic University of America Press. Birzer's work *Sanctifying the World: The Augustinian Life and Mind of Christopher Dawson* (2007) might be said to represent a culmination of a renaissance of interest in the so-called 'Catholic literary revival', which has increasingly found itself centred around the influence of Dawson himself. During the last ten years, Pearce, Lothian, Olsen, Lockerd, Schwartz, as well as Joseph T. Stuart's 2009 Ph.D. thesis[110], have featured Dawson in their work. As we shall see, Dawson was a noteworthy figure who, it might be said, stands at the centre of this thesis's subject too.

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[108] Birzer, *Sanctifying the World,* xi.

[109] Scruton, Roger, 'A Dark Horse', *The American Spectator,* October 12, 2009.

[110] Joseph T. Stuart, 'Christopher Dawson in Context: A Study in British Intellectual History between the World Wars', Ph.D thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2009.

The date 1900-1970, specified in this thesis's title, requires a brief explanation. The works considered here date from around 1900, in the output of G. K. Chesterton (1874-1936) and Hilaire Belloc (1870-1953). There is, after this, a concentration of works produced during the interwar years, carried over into the Second World War, as part of a second generation, including Christopher Dawson (1889-1970) and Evelyn Waugh (1903-1966), for example, lasting to around 1970, when Dawson, a major figure in this thesis, died. 1970, I believe, is a reasonable cut-off point for the scope of this work.

As for the chapters, they will present themselves accordingly. Chapter one will reveal how a broad spread of Christian intellectuals confronted the prospect of what Alan D. Gilbert consequently dubbed 'the epistemological imperialism of science'.[111] This deals with an identification of modernity as entailing Berger's 'crisis of implausibility'. This chapter will also forward a definition of the term Old Western Men, which I have borrowed from Lewis. Chapter two will focus on an even broader, though not always Christian, diagnosis of specifically modern conditions informing the crisis of modernity, as well as the attempt to circumvent it through art, music and literature, asserting a sense of spirit or otherworldliness in a worldly context. This will reveal Olsen's 'transcendentals' at their fullest extent, representing what I think was a key division between artists and writers in the twentieth century. Chapter three will then narrow the sights and make a key distinction within that group: the reality of the supernatural being thus established, how was it relevant? The chapter's aim is to show how it actually informed a central piety amongst Roman Catholics in particular, founded on a philosophy of history that guarded against despair. Finally, Chapter four will delve into the Catholic notion of Christendom, touching upon political themes of nationalism and internationalism, including their proposed connection to culture and spiritual values. This will also serve to further underline how the Old Western Men saw religion as profoundly relevant to modern day concerns that threatened to shake civilization apart – which ultimately underscores the central question that my thesis sets out to answer: to what extent did notions of the supernatural inform Cowley's stated divide between intellectuals in the twentieth century? This is what I will set out to establish.

Two final notes, on the title of this thesis, should be forwarded here. 'Old Western Men' is a phrase taken from C. S. Lewis; a phrase that this thesis is, in part, seeking to give

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[111] Gilbert, *The Making of Post-Christian Britain,* 57-58.

definition to. This will be expanded upon more in the first chapter. However, it should be noted that 'Western', in this thesis, should not be taken to mean any political or geographic identification or allegiance. Instead, it should be considered broadly as a particular way of viewing the world as part of a religious outlook. As well as this, although the persons included within this work are predominantly men, the word 'Men' should not be taken to imply any exclusivity in terms of gender.

Afterword

This thesis was originally conceived as a work relating to art history, centred around the artist Paul Nash and his fascination with trees, history and a 'spirit of place'. During the process of writing this thesis, however, I found myself irresistibly drawn toward the broader intellectual context that Nash operated in; beyond the realm of art history itself. His work was, I think, a natural outgrowth of its own time, though Nash has come to feature only slightly in this thesis. This work is now a history of culture, where art, of course, has a legitimate home alongside literature, philosophy and theology. Nash may now, I argue, take his place amongst the historical community of the Old Western Men.

In terms of how this thesis might alter our understanding of British visual culture in the twentieth century, what we are essentially reconsidering here is the informing spirit of the work of such artists as Nash. Recent works on British art of this time have tended to locate it within a heightened sense of national identity: *The Geographies of Englishness: Landscape and the National Past, 1880-1940* (2002), and *Romantic Moderns: English Writers, Artists and the Imagination from Virginia Woolf to John Piper* (2010), for instance. A similar view has overtaken Nash too, as an individual artist. However, what this thesis seeks to identify is a broader ethic that might be said to transcend nationality and the national past in the sense that this 'past' is a pre-modern past; not a vague nostalgia, but one entailing, I argue, a key religiosity and incarnational view of the world, including its landscape. By recognising this, we reinterpret a central ethic that informed visual culture at this time.

Chapter One

Via Media – A Thomist 'Middle Way'

De Descriptione Temporum – the 'Great Divide'

Fulfilling his appointment to the newly-created Chair of Medieval and Renaissance Literature at Cambridge University, C. S. Lewis presented to a select 1954 audience an inaugural lecture on the description of ages: *De Descriptione Temporum*. In it, he forwarded the notion of a 'Great Divide' in history; a divide so great that all other divergences dissipated before it.[1] It was his belief that 'the greatest of all divisions in the history of the West' ought to be placed 'between Jane Austen and us'.[2] His theory was essentially along these lines: that the English redcoats who fought at Waterloo had much more in common with the culture of the Ancient Greek hoplites at Marathon than the peoples of the period referred to as the 'modern'. It did not matter that the Duke of Wellington's men were closer in proximity to Lewis's own day than that of Homer's, or Aeschylus's, for that matter. For it was a vital point to grasp, Lewis argued, that 'the age of Jane Austen and Scott' was really 'a specimen of something far larger […] something which had already begun when the *Iliad* was composed and was still almost unimpaired when Waterloo was fought'.[3] And although, of course, there were 'important differences within […] [that] chosen area', Lewis posited that in actual fact the 'whole thing, from its Greek or pre-Greek beginnings down to the day before yesterday' constituted an essential 'homogeneity' that was 'certainly important and perhaps more important than its interior diversities'.[4]

Lewis forwarded a number of justifications for this conclusion. The one that this chapter will focus on, in particular, was that the 'Great Divide' entailed a fundamental division between the religious and the irreligious, or in other words, the spiritual and the material. In this sense, Lewis thought it essential that his 1954 audience recognise that 'whereas all history was for our ancestors divided into two periods, the pre-Christian and the Christian, and two only, for us it falls into three – the pre-Christian, the Christian, and what may

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[1] C. S. Lewis, *Selected Literary Essays* (1969; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 3
[2] Ibid., 7, 10.
[3] Ibid., 7, 11.
[4] Ibid., 12.

reasonably be called the post-Christian'.[5] These were his categories, which were vital to his conception of a 'Great Divide'. For he came to the conclusion that these transitions in belief were not ultimately of equal significance. It was the transition from 'Christian' to 'post-Christian' which was the 'more radical', he argued. The reason was simple. For all their differences, Christians and Pagans shared a belief in the supernatural. In this one vital sense, a Christian and a Pagan 'had much more in common with each other than either […] [had] with a post-Christian'.[6] 'Post-Christian man is not a Pagan', Lewis wrote.[7] The post-Christian believed neither in God or gods. This constituted 'a momentous difference'.[8] The transition, then, was not specifically a transition of beliefs, but a slide from belief to unbelief. This was crucial. For 'the gap', he wrote, 'between those who worship different gods is not so wide as that between those who worship and those who do not'.[9] And while it was true that 'there were lots of sceptics in Jane Austen's time and long before', what had occurred since then was a change in 'presumption'.[10] When once 'some kind and degree of religious belief and practice were the norm', now it was an 'exception'.[11] It would be going too far to say that for Lewis this was the 'Great Divide' entirely, but it was an underlying aspect that very much informed it. That most men and women in history had, until comparatively recently, believed just as much as Homer's Achaeans in some manner of spiritual order was an important point to grasp, he asserted. This was what made them different from 'moderns'. This was Lewis's fundamental thesis.

'Old Western Men'

Having established this notion of a 'Great Divide', Lewis then went on to claim that he was himself part of this pre-Christian/Christian grouping. It was in this sense that he very deliberately presented himself as the endangered native of an 'Old European, or Old Western, Culture'.[12]

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[5] Ibid., 5.
[6] Ibid., 12.
[7] Ibid., 10.
[8] Ibid., 5.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Ibid., 9
[11] Ibid., 9, 10.
[12] Ibid., 12.

I myself belong far more to that Old Western order than to yours. I am going to claim that this, which in one way is a disqualification for my task, is yet in another a qualification. The disqualification is obvious. You don't want to be lectured on Neanderthal Man by a Neanderthaler, still less on dinosaurs by a dinosaur. And yet, is that the whole story? If a live dinosaur dragged its slow length into the laboratory, would we not all look back as we fled? What a chance to know at last how it really moved and looked and smelled and what noises it made! And if the Neanderthaler could talk, then, though his lecturing technique might leave much to be desired, should we not almost certainly learn from him some things about him which the best modem anthropologist could never have told us? He would tell us without knowing he was telling. One thing I know: I would give a great deal to hear any ancient Athenian, even a stupid one, talking about Greek tragedy. He would know in his bones so much that we seek in vain. At any moment some chance phrase might, unknown to him, show us where modem scholarship had been on the wrong track for years. Ladies and gentlemen, I stand before you somewhat as that Athenian might stand. I read as a native texts that you must read as foreigners.[13]

Lewis was making a very serious point. He was himself a 'dinosaur'.[14] Or rather, one of the 'Old Western Men'[15] – his own phrase – who was in possession of what Dennis Danielson, writing of this speech as well, in *The Cambridge Companion to C. S. Lewis* (2010), terms a 'pre-modern perspective'.[16] Accordingly, Danielson argues that here 'the relationship between Lewis and his modern audience' is 'tinged with something akin to mutual xenophobia [...] if only for reasons of their cultural distance from each other'.[17] Certainly, it seems that Lewis was suggesting that people belonging to a modern audience were 'foreigners', echoing L. P. Hartley's opening line in *The Go-Between* (1953), that 'the past is a foreign country: they do things differently there'.[18] Of course, what Lewis was essentially

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[13] Ibid., 13.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid., 14.
[16] Robert MacsSwain, and Michael Ward, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to C. S. Lewis* (2010; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 47.
[17] Ibid.
[18] L. P. Hartley, *The Go-Between* (1953; London: Penguin Books, 2000), 5.

saying in 1954 was that, from his perspective, modernity was a foreign country. As early as 1918, he had commented that 'I'm afraid I shall never be an orthodox modern'.[19] Later on, Lewis came to refer to himself as 'a dogmatic Christian untinged with Modernist reservations and committed to supernaturalism in its full rigour'.[20] What he means here is that he believes that he views modernity from a decidedly pre-modern perspective. This was what Lewis likely intended to convey in his rhetorical device the 'Old Western Men', a sense of difference and aloofness from modernity, founded on the notion that modernity was, according to his definition, irreligious.

What the phrase Old Western Men also conveys, too, is the notion that Lewis was not alone in his perception: 'men', he writes, not man. Indeed, it is one of the purposes of this thesis to reveal that Lewis was far from alone in his definition of modernity. For instance, in a letter to the historian Christopher Dawson, Lewis described the effect of reading his work *Religion and Culture* (1948); of 'greedily reading it at lunch and splashing it with gravy'.[21] This was 'the most exciting kind of reading', he rejoiced, 'exactly what I wanted, going of course, far beyond my knowledge but often linking up with the little I do know'.[22] In other words, Lewis found Dawson's book 'strangely "corroborating"'.[23] Lewis and Dawson feature heavily in this thesis. Although they knew of each other, they were not close acquaintances. Dawson would not have such a profound influence on Lewis as J. R. R. Tolkien, for example. Lewis's greatest stimuluses will be touched upon later. Nevertheless, it is clear that Dawson affirmed Lewis's own conclusions. There was, indeed, a clear confluence in thought. For example, while Lewis had, in 1954, avowed that 'whereas all history was for our ancestors divided into two periods, the pre-Christian and the Christian, and two only, [but] for us […] falls into three – the pre-Christian, the Christian, and what may reasonably be called the post-Christian', Dawson had expressed much the same thing two years earlier, in his work *Understanding Europe* (1952), asserting that 'the whole development of Western culture falls into three main stages – Christian, pre-Christian and post-Christian'.[24]

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[19] Quoted in Humphrey Carpenter, *The Inklings: C. S. Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien, Charles Williams and their Friends* (1978; London: HarperCollins Publishers, 2006), 12.

[20] Quoted Ibid., 175

[21] Quoted in Christina Scott, *A Historian and His World: A Life of Christopher Dawson 1889-1970* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1984), 158.

[22] Quoted in ibid.

[23] Quoted in ibid.

[24] Christopher Dawson, *Understanding Europe* (1952; Washington D.C.: The Catholic University Press of America, 2009), 22.

Although it has been suggested that Dawson's thought, particularly in *Progress and Religion* (1929), formed the substance of one of Lewis's most significant works, *The Abolition of Man* (1943), what this thesis seeks to underline is the corroborative aspect of the Old Western Men.[25] It was not a movement with an underlying manifesto or founding constituent, but a concatenation of individuals, whose outlook as a collective – constituting a religious mode of response to modernity – was primarily synonymous and 'corroborating'.

The 'Old' in Old Western Men I take to be Lewis's historical perspective, suggesting that he was viewing history from a particular historical point in time. He is not merely a 'Western' man. He is now a 'dinosaur'. Accordingly, Lewis is actually inescapably 'modern', in that he is himself a citizen of modernity, even as he questions it. In this sense, we should not take Lewis's soaring rhetoric too literally. He exaggerated for effect in 1954. As we shall see, from his own intellectual and religious development – for they go hand in hand – Lewis had been an atheist himself; not 'Old Western', then. Indeed, as we shall also see, this was often the case with such Old Western Men. Many were initially 'modern', by Lewis's standard. For example, the novelist Evelyn Waugh was 'as near to an atheist as one could be' in 1930.[26] Yet he would later convert to Catholicism. Therefore, as we develop this thesis, it is important to note at the outset that, contrary to Lewis's stated opinion about himself, he was not a 'dinosaur' as such, but a modern who had journeyed into Hartley's 'foreign land'. In other words, he had gone native. And by 'foreign' we essentially mean 'medieval'. For there is a strong case to be made that the historical perspective mentioned previously was one afforded to Lewis and his ilk by the Medieval revival, which provided the foundation for a rather more 'consciously Christian' revival in the twentieth century, as Michael Alexander has attested to. The 'Old' in Old Western Men might also be taken to imply, then – as I think Lewis does imply – that modernity also entailed a teleological snobbery toward the past that he was attempted to redress.

Having now loosely defined what this thesis means by Old Western Men, this chapter will build upon this definition and add a number of important qualifications that need to be made, particularly in terms of what 'Western', in the context of this thesis, should be taken

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[25] Bradley J. Birzer, *Sanctifying the World: The Augustinian Life and Mind of Christopher Dawson* (Front Royal: Christendom Press, 2007), 7.

[26] Quoted in Philip Eade, *Evelyn Waugh: A Life Revisited* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 2016), 148.

to signify when I argue for the presence of a broad group of Old Western intellectuals present in twentieth century British culture. We shall now concentrate on the 'Western' element.

The 'Western' Element: 'to think christianly'

'Western' is a vague expression with a set of associations. For example, Victor Davis Hanson's work *Carnage and Culture: Landmark Battles in the Rise of Western Power* (2001) forwarded a narrative that 'concentrated on those West-East fault lines that emphasize the singular lethality of Western culture at war'.[27] Richard Tarnas's account of the 'Western Mind' concentrated far more on its intellectual foundations, asserting that even today the West's 'way of thinking is still profoundly Greek in its underlying logic'.[28] And at the 'basis' of this logic 'was a view of the cosmos as an ordered expression of certain primordial essences or transcendent first principles, variously conceived as Forms, Ideas, universals, changeless absolutes […] and archetypes'.[29] This characterisation of the Western tradition will, to some extent, define what this thesis means by 'Western'. Yet it will also take into account what Nick Spencer, for instance, recently identified as its Christian emphasis: what he describes as 'the role of Christianity in forming Western values that we hold dear'.[30] This is not to say that the Western tradition is wholly Christian, as Spencer also notes: 'the tree of Western values did grow in Christian soil but it would be a mistake to imagine that soil had some precise blueprint for what the tree would eventually look like.'[31]

Broadly speaking, what this thesis means by 'Western' is what the theologian Harry Blamires, a protégé of Lewis, forwards as essential Christianity. Writing in his work *The Christian Mind: How Should a Christian Think?* (1963), Blamires explains that Christianity 'sees the natural order as dependent upon the supernatural order, time as contained within

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[27] Victor Davis Hanson, *Carnage and Culture: Landmark Battles in the Rise of Western Power* (2001; New York: Anchor Books, 2002), xv.

[28] Richard Tarnas, *The Passion of the Western Mind: Understanding the Ideas that Have Shaped Our World View* (1991; London: Pimlico, 2010), 2.

[29] Ibid., 3.

[30] Nick Spencer, *The Evolution of the West: Christianity has Shaped Our Values* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2016), 3.

[31] Ibid., 6.

eternity'.[32] 'For the Christian', he explains, 'truth is supernaturally grounded: it is not manufactured within nature'.[33] Moreover, 'a prime mark of the Christian mind is that it cultivates the eternal perspective. That is to say, it looks beyond this life to another one.'[34] This, Blamires writes, is what it is to think from the purely Christian perspective, 'to think christianly', which is essentially what the Old Western Men, I argue, were attempting to do when responding to modernity: 'to accept all things with the mind as related, directly or indirectly, to man's eternal destiny as the redeemed and chosen child of God.'[35]

The Old Western Men may be seen as the tradition that has concluded, as the theologian David L. Schindler has done recently, that 'modern culture marginalizes love'.[36] What he means here is 'God-centered love': or 'reality' as 'an order of love […] a bearer of a "word" or "logic" (logos) that presupposes an ordering intelligence […] that gives things their deepest and most proper order and meaning, always and everywhere'.[37] Schindler sees that 'love', or 'order', is necessarily participatory, in terms of there also being a 'created universe', *we* being a 'constitutive *relation* […] mediating the love between God and the rest of the cosmos'.[38] 'Living within the horizon of modernity', however, Schindler notes, modern man has succumbed to, as well as 'become accustomed to', a 'distorted anthropocentrism […] forgetting being and God'.[39] In this sense, then, it seems that there is, in the words of Schindler's son, D. C. Schindler, 'an implicit atheism' at the centre of modernity 'by effectively separating God's being from the being of everything else', denying or undermining, therefore, 'the significance of receptivity'.[40]

The theme of 'receptivity' is fundamental here. For, as Blamires notes, Christianity is also 'a religion of things that have happened'.[41] It is 'incarnational'.[42] We are happening and

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[32] Harry Blamires, *The Christian Mind: How Should a Christian Think?* (1963; Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2005), 57.
[33] Ibid., 106
[34] Ibid., 57.
[35] Ibid., 44.
[36] David L. Schindler, *Ordering Love: Liberal Societies and the Memory of God* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2011), ix.
[37] Ibid., ix, x.
[38] Ibid., 4, 6.
[39] Ibid., 5.
[40] Nicholas J. Healy Jr., and D. C. Schindler, eds., *Being Holy in the World: Theology and Culture in the Thought of David L. Schindler* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2011), 15.
[41] Blamires, *The Christian Mind,* 111.
[42] Ibid., 156.

exist in history, just as Christianity claims that Christ existed in history. Therefore, unlike other religions, 'to think christianly' is not a renunciation of the world, because the world and its 'positive richness' is, in Christianity, seen to be 'derivative from the supernatural' itself.[43] In this sense, the 'Christian mind' thinks 'sacramentally', meaning that it also has roots in the worldly.[44] Glenn W. Olsen has also referred to this aspect of Christian thinking as a 'theology of the participation' – meaning 'the act-of-being' – 'of the creature [us] in the life […] of the Creator [God]'.[45] This, he notes, is evident 'especially in the thought of Thomas Aquinas'.[46] Indeed, to better understand the Old Western Men, who were mostly Christian, we must come to grips with Thomism itself.

Thomism and the 'word made flesh'

It was the view of the Roman Catholic writer G. K. Chesterton that the 'Western' element in culture has 'as good a right to be called the Christian element', since 'its common sense is but the holy familiarity of the word made flesh'.[47] Chesterton, a pivotal figure in this chapter, and indeed the thesis as a whole, made this claim in his work *St Thomas Aquinas* (1933), a book which should be viewed as a sort of Old Western handbook or pamphlet, usefully detailing what is meant by 'Western' in the context of this thesis. Like Lewis, Chesterton was of the view that moderns viewed existence from 'the wrong side of the tapestry', meaning that moderns thought secularly.[48] Chesterton, as a Christian, assented to a religious worldview, of course, but it was also what might be termed a 'Thomist' view of existence: with a heavy 'incarnational' emphasis on *the word made flesh*. In other words, a conception of the universe to a large extent synonymous with, though not exclusive to, a theology associated with Catholicism and medievalism. For, as Diarmaid MacCulloch writes, 'Aquinas's huge corpus of writings mark the height of [Medieval] Western Europe's enthusiasm for Aristotle.'[49] Tarnas, too, views Aquinas as a pivotal figure who 'showed the

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[43] Ibid., 173.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Glenn W. Olsen, *The Turn to Transcendence: The Role of Religion in the Twenty-First Century* (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 209, 210.

[46] Ibid., 209.

[47] G. K. Chesterton, *St Thomas Aquinas* (1933; Kelly Bray: House of Stratus, 2001), 7.

[48] G. K. Chesterton, *The Complete Father Brown Stories* (1992; Ware: Wordsworth Classics, 2006), 124.

[49] Diarmaid MacCulloch, *A History of Christianity: The First Three Thousand* Years (2009; London: Penguin Books, 2010), 412.

complementarity of the two Greek philosophers, of Plato's exalted spiritual absolute and Aristotle's dynamically real nature, an integration achieved by using Plato's participation relative not to the Ideas but to Existence'.[50] 'In effect, Aquinas synthesized Plato's transcendent reality with Aristotle's concrete reality by means of the Christian understanding of God as the loving infinite Creator.'[51] In this sense, we should view the thought of Aquinas not as a rejection of Plato but an essential *via media* (middle way) that rooted Plato's transcendent reality in the material world: in other words, an 'incarnational' view of the world.

The effort 'to think christianly', and possess an incarnational worldview – facilitating a reconciliation between both the temporal and the eternal – is what defined the approach that such Old Western Men as Lewis and Chesterton took in the twentieth century: the attempt to reconcile mind with matter. That many such men, including Chesterton, were Roman Catholic, and indeed converts, is significant since this was the tradition that Thomism – with its stress on 'the word made flesh' – was arguably most at home.[52] Therefore, it is worth examining what it was in the thought of Aquinas that Chesterton, amongst others, found so appealing. And as Chesterton himself claimed, in his 1933 work on Aquinas, it was St. Thomas's great achievement that he 'reconciled religion with reason', precisely because he possessed an incarnational conception of the universe.[53]

In 1933, Chesterton commences his study by asserting that Thomism perceives that 'Plato was right, but not quite right'.[54] In other words, St. Thomas continued to recognise an objective spiritual reality that is common to all religion. However, Thomism, Chesterton continually emphasises, constitutes a rejection of what he terms 'a sort of Platonic pride in the possession of intangible and untranslatable truths within', as if this 'wisdom' has '[no] root anywhere in the real world'.[55] It was St. Thomas's view, which Chesterton shared, that such religious truths were embodied in the here and now. As Chesterton writes, 'St. Thomas, for all his love of Greek philosophy, saved us from being Platonists.'[56] This is not

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[50] Tarnas, *The Passion of the Western Mind,* 184.

[51] Ibid.

[52] 'From its early days in the nineteenth century the Neo-Thomist movement had directed its attention to the historical study of its medieval heritage.' Gerald McCool, *The Neo-Thomists* (1994; Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2016), 134.

[53] Chesterton, *Aquinas*, 8.

[54] Ibid., 52.

[55] Ibid., 7.

[56] Ibid.

to say, however, that Thomism is itself a wholesale rejection of Platonism.[57] Nevertheless, while the Neo-Platonist continued to insist that 'the mind was lit entirely from within […] St. Thomas insisted that it was lit by five windows […] the windows of the senses'.[58] Moreover, this turn toward Aristotelian immanence complemented Christianity since it was a central piece of Christian orthodoxy 'that God and the image of God had come in contact through matter with a material world'.[59] The Incarnation was in actual fact 'the opposite of abstraction', Chesterton asserts.[60] A large part of Christianity's substance, then, he argues, is that it places a high degree of emphasis on the body; and it is exactly this emphasis on *the word made flesh* that makes Thomism 'the philosophy of common sense', since it asserts – and in so doing, contradicts Cartesian thought – that the senses can be trusted.[61] As Chesterton proclaims:

> The Thomist stands in the broad daylight of the brotherhood of men, in their common consciousness that eggs are not hens or dreams or mere practical assumptions; but things attested by the Authority of the Senses, which is from God.[62]

This conception that 'Thomist philosophy is nearer than most philosophies to the mind of the man in the street'[63] brought Chesterton into, a likely premeditated, conflict with what he perceived as modernity itself and its representatives, the intellectuals of his own day, the 'pessimists', who he believed operated in nonsensical abstractions.[64] Chesterton addressed them in one passage by paraphrasing St. Thomas himself:

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[57] David L. Schindler concurs, writing that he takes 'the demand that a metaphysical argument be free of the influence of faith, or the claim to be able cleanly to abstract what in such an argument is a matter purely of nature or purely of reason, to be in the end Cartesian rather than, say, authentically Thomist'. David L. Schindler, *Ordering Love,* 14, 15.

[58] Chesterton, *Aquinas*, 83.

[59] Ibid., 10.

[60] Ibid., 38.

[61] Ibid., 73.

[62] Ibid., 75.

[63] Ibid., 74.

[64] Ibid. Chesterton asserts that 'since the modern world began in the sixteenth century', philosophers such as Hobbes, Hegel and Kant tended to forward 'a peculiar point of view demanding the sacrifice of what […] common men would call common sense'; the 'modern philosopher' claiming, 'like a sort of confidence man, that if once we will grant him this, the rest will be easy; he will straighten out the world, if once he is allowed to give this one twist to the mind'. Indeed, Aiden Nichols has noted, too, for example, that Thomism appealed 'as a resource for resolving the crisis in the philosophical order which affected Chesterton's intellectual environment'. Aiden Nichols, *G. K. Chesterton, Theologian* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2009), 73.

> I do not believe that God meant Man to exercise only that peculiar,
> uplifted and abstracted sort of intellect which you are so fortunate as to
> possess […] I owe a great deal of what I think to what I see and smell and
> taste and handle; and that so far as my reason is concerned, I feel obliged
> to treat all this reality as real.[65]

Here Chesterton argued for 'a middle field of facts […] given by the senses to be the subject matter of the reason', which in the 'field the reason has a right to rule, as the representative of God in Man'.[66]

Aiden Nichols, writing in *G. K. Chesterton, Theologian* (2009), has dubbed Chesterton's Thomist approach 'metaphysical realism', a 'commonsense epistemology […] which over against all forms of reductionist empiricism and solipsistic Idealism' insists on a philosophy that holds to an objective standard that, as Chesterton himself argues, must in some sense be metaphysical and taken on 'faith'.[67] This was certainly what Chesterton meant when he wrote, in *The Incredulity of Father Brown* (1926), that 'the first effect of not believing in God, is that you lose your common sense'.[68] His friend, the Belgian intellectual Émile Cammaerts would later paraphrase Chesterton, writing that 'the first effect of not believing in God is to believe in anything'.[69] And what Cammaert meant by 'anything' was what Chesterton, or rather his popular character Father Brown, railed against in the detective story 'The Oracle of the Dog'. It was what he 'noticed more and more in the modern world'.[70] What it essentially amounted to was 'something that's arbitrary without being authoritative':

> In all sorts of newspaper rumours and conversational catchwords […]
> People readily swallow the untested claims of this, that, or that other. It's
> drowning all your old rationalism and scepticism, it's coming in like a sea;
> and the name of it is superstition.[71]

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[65] Chesterton, *Aquinas*, 7.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Nichols, *Chesterton*, 57.
[68] G. K. Chesterton, *Father Brown: Selected Stories* (London: Collector's Library, 2003), 292.
[69] Émile Cammaerts, *The Laughing Prophet: The Seven Virtues and G. K. Chesterton* (London: Methuen & Co., 1937), 211.
[70] Chesterton, *Father Brown*, 292.
[71] Ibid.

What the legacy of René Descartes had done was to render void the Christian orthodoxy of *the word made flesh*. Consequently, since the intellect was now left untethered to material existence, the intellect had descended into a vacuum of pure abstraction, thus denying common sense. At the same time, however, the body, separated from the intellect, had brought about a radical disenchantment of material existence. This was Chesterton's common line of thought that was mirrored by the Old Western Men as a whole. As Tarnas has stated: 'Descartes helped emancipate the material world from its long association with religious belief.'[72] 'Western', in this thesis, therefore entails a restoration of the union of mind and matter.

Losing the Sacred

There is a general proposition, originating in the work of Max Weber, propounding the idea that modernity essentially constitutes a radical 'disenchantment' of the world.[73] David Torevell's work *Losing the Sacred: Ritual, Modernity and Liturgical Reform* (2000) propounds this interpretation: that 'the Middle Ages' overriding involvement with an embodied experience of the sacred', which he argues was 'rooted in the centrality of the body as a site and route for an experience of the sacred', was superseded by 'a far more cerebral approach to the sacred' rooted in a 'Protestant emphasis on the word coupled with the emergence of a highly suspicious [Cartesian] attitude to the body'.[74] Torevell is not alone here. Olsen agrees, citing 'Descartes's separation of mind from matter', as well was 'the non-sacramental (by Catholic definition) Christianity of Calvin', which he believes

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[72] Tarnas, *The Passion of the Western Mind,* 279. 'The universe, therefore, was not a live organism, as Aristotle and the Scholastics supposed, endowed with forms and motivated by teleological purpose.' Ibid., 278.

[73] 'For Weber, the development of practical rationality from magic to disenchantment entails an increase in the ratio of the calculable to the incalculable [...] Protestantism is its ultimate product.' Charles Turner, *Modernity and Politics in the Work of Max Weber* (1992; London: Routledge, 2002), 177. 'In the beginning of human history, according to Weber, magic ruled. The modern world, in contrast, is characterized by disenchantment or the lack of a belief in magic, spirits, and the like.' Richard Swedberg, *The Max Weber Dictionary: Key Words and Central Concepts* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 153. 'Weber posits that disenchantment has shaped not only the institutional structures and procedures in modern society but also the psychological attitudes of modern human beings.' Basit Bilal Koshul, T*he Postmodern Significance of Max Weber's Legacy: Disenchanting Disenchantment* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 11.

[74] Torevell, *Losing the Sacred,* 12, 200.

'prepared the way for the disenchantment of the world'.[75] Olsen cites the example of the 'Pre-Protestant' doctrine of 'the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist', which 'kept the visible and invisible worlds connected […] for literally in the Eucharist each world was present to the other'.[76] Peter L. Berger believed, too, that 'Protestantism served as a historically decisive prelude to secularization'.[77] 'The Protestant believer', he writes, 'no longer lives in a world ongoingly penetrated by sacred things and forces'.[78]

What emerges here is a link between the 'disenchantment' of the world and Protestantism itself, which 'stressed the radical transcendence of God and the utter fallenness of humanity'.[79] Accordingly, matter ceased to have any real significance; as Torevell writes:

> Protestantism entailed seeing the universe in a radically new framework which was to have consequences for the location of the sacred. Protestant theology began to stress the "idolatry of place" rather than its sacredness.[80]

The Old Western Men at the centre of this thesis essentially sought a return to an ontologically 'pre-modern cosmos', which, as Torevell describes, was 'a thing of symbolic and spiritual potency, a sacred arena for discovering knowledge and truth, another book like scripture, from which one could constantly and easily read off the things of God'.[81] This 'previous Christian onto-theological synthesis' had since been severed, Torevell writes, and 'replaced by a view that there was nothing rational or beautiful about nature at all; ideality was a thing of the mind'.[82] This is significant since in this thesis we are also considering Alexander's notion of a second, 'consciously Christian', more authentically 'medieval', revival in the twentieth century; more authentic, I argue, since it entailed a rediscovery of exactly this 'onto-theological synthesis' detailed by Torevell. When we speak of a second Medieval Revival we are, to some degree, speaking of a Catholic revival – which, to some

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[75] Olsen, *The Turn to Transcendence,* 219.
[76] Ibid.
[77] Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (1967; New York: Anchor Books, 1990), 113.
[78] Ibid., 111.
[79] Torevell, *Losing the Sacred,* 69.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Ibid., 73, 76.
[82] Ibid., 73.

extent, went hand in hand with a revival of Thomism.[83] This has been noted before; As Joseph Pearce has observed, in *Literary Converts: Spiritual Inspiration in an Age of Unbelief*, 'in the twentieth century, the Neo-Thomist revival paralleled the Catholic revival, one feeding off the other'.[84] This is particularly evident in the meeting of Catholic minds referred to as the 'Chelsea group'. Here we can observe the Old Western Men in microcosm; especially in terms of an essentially corroborative, overtly Christian, response to modernity.

The 'Chelsea Group'

The Chelsea group, inaugurated in the late 1920s, was a salon held at the Chelsea home of Tom Burns where English Roman Catholics met to discuss religion. Notable members included the historian Dawson, the poet and painter David Jones, the well-known priest and scholar Martin D'Arcy, the radio actor Harman Grisewood, as well as the actor and writer Robert Speaight, the later biographer of Chesterton's great friend and ally Hilaire Belloc. Burns was himself an employee of the fledgling Catholic publishing house Sheed and Ward, founded in 1926. Burns' Chelsea home provided a place of intersection for disparate Catholic intellects to ruminate on matters of a theological and aesthetic nature. It was here that many English Catholics first came into contact with the movement of Neo-Thomism, popular on the continent at the time, where a revival of interest in St. Thomas Aquinas, instigated by Pope Leo XIII and his 1879 encyclical *Aeterni Patris*, had come to fruition in the work of such writers as Étienne Gilson and Jacques Maritain. The Chelsea Group, as well as Burns' short-lived journal *Order*, sought to popularise the Aristotelian/Thomist conception of order, known as Divine Economy, which asserted that 'the proper end of everything is something good'.[85] Like Chesterton, *Order* assented to a pre-Cartesian/pro-incarnational view, expounded in Thomism, that, as David L. Schindler explains, perceives that 'the logic of creation, expressed metaphysically […] implies a constitutive relation on the part of the creature consisting in reception from and movement toward […] God'.[86] This also prioritised the consecrating role of the 'moral imagination'.

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[83] For an account of this, see Gerald McCool, *The Neo-Thomists* (1994); and Fergus Kerr, *After Aquinas: Versions of Thomism* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003).

[84] Joseph Pearce, *Literary Converts: Spiritual Inspiration in an Age of Unbelief* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2006), 176.

[85] Quoted in James R. Lothian, *The Making and Unmaking of the English Catholic Intellectual Community, 1910-1950* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009), 247.

[86] Schindler, *Ordering Love,* 6.

As James R. Lothian has shown, the Chelsea group was not so much interested in 'social or political questions' as they were with the philosopher Edmund Burke's conception of the moral imagination, coupled with Thomism, as well as the Neo-Thomism of Jacques Maritain; 'training the intellect' to 'recognize "right order"', as Burns put it.[87] 'The Chelsea group', Lothian writes, 'was convinced that the sacred needed to be restored to everyday life'.[88] This could be achieved, they believed, by elevating what they saw as the Godly 'utility' of the 'Thomist' conception of beauty, including the 'Burkean' notion of the moral imagination; as Bradley J. Birzer notes: both, 'they believed, led to truth'.[89]

Writing in his classic work *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), the philosopher Edmund Burke defined the 'moral imagination' as that 'which the heart owns and the understanding ratifies', an understanding that, in 1790, he believed was at risk of being 'dissolved' by a 'new conquering empire of light and reason'.[90] Burke then explained what he meant by the term:

> [Without the moral imagination] a king is but a man, a queen is but a woman; a woman is but an animal; and an animal not of the highest order. All homage paid to the sex in general as such, and without distinct views, is to be regarded as romance and folly. Regicide, parricide, and sacrilege, are but fictions of superstition, corrupting jurisprudence by destroying its simplicity. The murder of a king, or a queen, or a bishop, or a father, are only common homicide; and if the people are by any chance, or in any way gainers of it, a sort of homicide much the most pardonable, and into which we ought not to make too severe a scrutiny.[91]

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[87] Lothian, *Making and Unmaking,* 248.
[88] Ibid.
[89] Bradley J. Birzer, *J. R. R. Tolkien's Sanctifying Myth: Understanding Middle Earth* (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2003), 51.
[90] Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. Fourth Edition (London: J. Dodsley, 1790), 114.
[91] Ibid., 114, 115.

Burns later explained that his group 'was after' exactly this notion of the 'moral imagination' that '"aspires to the apprehending of right order in the soul and right order in the commonwealth"'.[92]

The moral imagination, in conjunction with Maritain's *philosophia perennis* – 'over and against materialism in its myriad forms' – constituted, in a sense, a rejection of the world. As Burns remembered later, 'it astonishes me now what little attention my group – with the exception of Christopher Dawson – paid to politics as such'.[93] Grisewood noted, too, that the issue of politics only 'arose as an inference from aesthetic and philosophical beliefs'.[94] Tom Villas, in his 2013 study on British Catholics' relationship with fascism, confirms this, writing that Burns' milieu 'sought a spiritual transcendentalism which echoed aspects of the European right while criticising its political authoritarianism'.[95] In particular, Villas exonerates Dawson with regards to the claim that he was a fascist.[96] And although Burns tells us that Dawson was the 'exception' to the group's lack of interest in politics, it should be noted, as it has been, that Dawson's focus on politics, particularly in the 1930s, in such works as *Religion and the Modern State* (1935), sought to warn British readers against the rise of authoritarianism, on both sides of the political divide – see chapter four.

Insofar as the Chelsea group was 'worldly', its intellectual impetus was terrestrial to the extent that, in its Thomist worldview, beauty was an echo of a higher 'spiritual' order, which I argue is a very Old Western concern; what Adrian Walker dubs 'the More-Than-World […] within the world'.[97] Here the Chelsea group emphasised aesthetics over politics. This was true 'order', one rooted in transcendentalism, in which art was, indeed, an end in itself. Consequently, what such intellectuals as Grisewood advocated was a sort of 'Christian modernism' that was modelled on a Thomist framework:

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[92] Tom Burns, *The Use of Memory: Publishing and Further Pursuits* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1993), 46.
[93] Ibid.
[94] Quoted in Tom Villis, *British Catholics & Fascism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 116.
[95] Ibid., 117.
[96] 'He was not a fascist, but his ideas are representative of fascism's cultural critique against liberal democracy. While Dawson did not sympathise with fascism, he emphasised with it, and this allowed him to construct a sensitive interpretation of the phenomenon at a time when most Englishmen and women dismissed it as extreme militarism with no deeper ideological content.' Ibid., 105.
[97] Healy and Schindler, eds., *Being Holy in the World,* 124.

> "The proper end of anything is something good", St. Thomas had written. The art works of Cocteau, of James Joyce, of the post-impressionists in France and of Ben Nicholson and David Jones in England seemed to us to have realised their "proper end"; since the expressions of good are related in the celestial order, there should in the terrestrial order be no estrangement.[98]

This brought the Chelsea group into conflict with the Catholic world around them who, as Grisewood described, 'tended to judge all art works according to their conformity with Christian precept'.[99] In attempting 'to assert an autonomy for art', they were also seeking to break down 'the distinction between sacred and profane'.[100] Grisewood expressed this notion neatly when he wrote that they 'did not believe that the art of Salvator Rosa was "religious" because he painted so many pious Madonnas and the art of Renoir was not because he painted none'.[101]

As well as opposing their fellow Catholics, the Chelsea group also saw themselves as a conservative equivalent of the aesthetes of the Bloomsbury group, as Grisewood recounted:

> Bloomsbury was fashionable and trendy; we were relatively unknown and espoused unpopular causes. Bloomsbury was leftist; we were decidedly rightist. Bloomsbury was late Victorian English; we were twentieth-century European. We were tenaciously Catholic; Bloomsbury was confidently agnostic. In the words of Samuel Butler, they regarded the end of Christianity as "virtually settled"; we looked forward to a renaissance.[102]

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[98] Harman Grisewood, *One Thing at a Time: An Autobiography* (London: Hutchinson, 1968), 80. Erik Tonning, in 'David Jones: Christian Modernism at the BBC', has described how Jones's '"Christian modernism"' allowed 'for a strongly positive valuation of artists who were by no means believers: for their work could still function as a revitalizing antidote to the mainstream products of a mass civilization'. Matthew Feldman, Erik Tonning, and Henry Mead, eds., *Broadcasting in the Modernist Era* (2014; London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 121.
[99] Grisewood, *Autobiography*, 80.
[100] Ibid.
[101] Ibid.
[102] Quoted in Lothian, *Making and Unmaking,* 249.

What emerges from this statement, of course, is the sense that Grisewood perceived himself and his own group as representing one side of the divide between English intellectuals: Malcolm Cowley's stated divide, essentially, in *Exile's Return* (1934). Certainly, Burns found himself on the side of 'divinely inspired tradition'[103], not Bloomsbury's rather more reductionist view of religion:

> My first contacts with Bloomsbury baffled rather than shocked me. I could make little of its denigrating approach to so many values that I held to be sacred […] I was not awed by Bloomsbury intelligence. Its religious requirements appeared to be satisfied by [James George] Frazer's *Golden Bough* and its sexual mores seemed to derive from Trobriand Islanders.[104]

Burns characterised his own side as 'what Bloomsbury would call a Catholic sub-culture', but what he preferred to dub a Catholic 'super-culture'.[105] Moreover, Burns subscribed to Lewis's notion of a 'great divide' in history, noting that in his 'endless talk and rumination with friends like David Jones and Christopher Dawson and Harman Grisewood', they came to face what they perceived to be '"the Break" – an alienating event in what was known of our civilization: more a slow-burner than an event, in fact'.[106] For it appeared to them, he remembered, 'that the Reformation, the age of Revolution and Industrialism had eroded the territory of the sacral in daily living'.[107] 'Modern man', it seemed, 'was losing a vital dimension in his life, the utilitarian motive was self-sufficient'.[108] It might be said, then, that the great difference between Chelsea and Bloomsbury was that the former, as Burns wrote, believed that 'a culture without religion was no culture – and scarcely civilised'.[109]

Burns also had an important role at Sheed and Ward, which included playing 'midwife', as he put it, to the output of Dawson, many of whose works were published by the husband and wife joint venture of Frank Sheed and Maisie Ward.[110] As Lothian has written, this new publishing house, which published the works of such writers as Chesterton and Maritain as well, 'helped foster a new focus on theology and spiritual concerns' that ran parallel to the

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[103] Malcolm Cowley, *Exile's Return* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1934), 128.
[104] Burns, *The Use of Memory,* 41.
[105] Ibid., 120.
[106] Ibid., 52.
[107] Ibid.
[108] Ibid.
[109] Ibid.
[110] Ibid., 49.

Chelsea group.[111] Burns provided a point of intersection. While seeking to address 'a modern audience that consisted of those ignorant of Christianity', Lothian points out that Sheed and Ward were also attempting to find 'a new St. Thomas', but a St. Thomas who would not simply be a mere 'repetition of Scholasticism'.[112] What was needed, Ward believed, was an exposition of Thomism tailored for a modern audience:

> The revelation of eternal truth made by God to man has to be explained in human language. The Greek and Latin Fathers, the Medieval Schoolmen, the men of the Nineteenth Century all had to explain it to the world around them in language that the world understood. But the divine reality remained substantial, unalterable.[113]

Via Media

Sheed and Ward, in seeking a new St. Thomas, provided a vital outlet for the Catholic literary revival. However, insofar as there was a revival in Thomist thought, too, this was represented more broadly in a number of writers and artists. In this sense, Old Western Men as a term of definition is perhaps more apt, since not all such men were self-described Thomists, or even aware that their conception was broadly Thomist. However, when reduced down to its bare essentials, or rather Chesterton's 1933 version of it, Thomism provides us with a definite template, or *via media*; admitting to the 'More-Than-World', but also, vitally, in a true Thomist sense, the More-Than-World *within the world*.

It can be argued fairly that Chesterton was Thomist in outlook. Jay P. Corrin's argument that 'the Chesterbelloc was solidly Thomistic in its philosophical orientation' has found no detractors – and Corrin includes Belloc in this estimation of Chesterton.[114] Whether Lewis was Thomist is a different matter. Lewis, indeed, is an interesting case in point, in terms of how far he was prepared to take the incarnation principle. However, I think that Lewis's shying away from Thomism, as we shall see, was not founded on any fundamental

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[111] Lothian, *Making and Unmaking,* 229.
[112] Ibid., 229, 240.
[113] Quoted in Lothian, *Making and Unmaking,* 241.
[114] Jay P. Corrin, *G. K. Chesterton & Hilaire Belloc: The Battle Against Modernity* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1981), 28.

disagreement with what we might term Chesterton's brand of Thomism. Instead, it was rather more an issue of emphasis. As Stewart Goetz has recently observed, Lewis believed Thomism's conclusions to be too materialistic.[115] It was for this reason – taken in conjunction with Lewis's mistaken notion that an assent to Thomism was required by the Papacy – that he never converted to Catholicism, Goetz has concluded.[116] Lewis's St. Thomas is not the same St. Thomas as Chesterton's, but Lewis would not, I think, have disapproved of Chesterton's 'commonsense epistemology' expressed throughout his 1933 work on St. Thomas. What Lewis was after, too, he expressed, was 'a *via media* between syllogisms and psychoses'.[117] But by 'syllogisms' he essentially meant Chesterton's version St. Thomas, it may be said, and by 'psychoses' he meant the sensuality of D. H. Lawrence. And although Lewis wrote that 'Thomas Aquinas and D. H. Lawrence do not divide the universe between them',[118] Pearce writes that Aquinas nevertheless came to exert 'a strong pull' on the very centre of Lewis's *via media,* through Thomas's disciple Dante, in *The Pilgrim's Regress* (1933); see Pearce.[119] Whether we accept this argument or not, Lewis's *via media* was a search for 'the path of truth':

> In true Coleridgean fashion, Lewis now believed that the true path
> between the "syllogisms" of the head and the "psychoses" of the heart
> was through the establishment of the correct relationship between faith
> and reason.[120]

Indeed, as we shall see later on in this chapter, it was Samuel Taylor Coleridge, rather than St. Thomas, who provided Lewis with a solid intellectual grounding, in much the same manner that Aquinas provided Chesterton with his centre. In defining what it means to be Old Western, then, it is precisely this attempt at achieving a vital *via media* that provides us with a common grounding. Although there are shifts in emphasis, between the imagination (mind) and an epistemology rather more material (matter), the uniting ethic

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[115] Stewart Goetz, *A Philosophical Walking Tour with C. S. Lewis: Why It Did Not Include Rome* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 171.
[116] Ibid., 175.
[117] Quoted in Joseph Pearce, *C. S. Lewis and the Catholic Church* (2003; Charlotte: Saint Benedict Press, 2013), 44.
[118] Quoted in ibid, 44.
[119] Ibid., 48.
[120] Ibid., 47.

is, as Pearce indicates, 'the *marriage* of faith and reason'.[121] We see this, too, in the output of both Dawson and Waugh.

Evelyn Waugh's St. Helena

Waugh's novel *Helena*, published in 1950, presents us with an interesting contrast to both the work of Chesterton, and later Dawson, in the sense that Waugh's Thomism is implicit rather than explicit. As we shall also see, Waugh's *via media* places an emphasis on reason. His novel *Helena*, which is founded on the historical St. Helena, the mother of Constantine the Great, is a predominantly fictional account of the life of the saint who allegedly discovered the True Cross in Jerusalem in the early fourth century. Waugh constructs his narrative around this one claim: that Helena's great discovery '[turned] the eyes of the world back to the planks of wood on which their salvation hung'.[122] In other words, in an age that rejected matter, the Cross underlined the Incarnation as a matter of fact.

David Wykes has previously emphasised the extent to which Waugh set out to forward the character of Helena 'as a near-caricature of the British empiricist […] utterly impatient of all mystery and obfuscation'.[123] Douglas Lane Patey has noted, too, that in the novel 'Helena is a practical, common-sensical girl always asking questions'.[124] Waugh's approach here actually complements his choice to elevate Helena as the discoverer of the True Cross as he evidently holds to the Thomist principle that faith is reconcilable with reason. Indeed, in 1950 Waugh presented this scholastic epistemology as common sense, much like Chesterton had in his book on Aquinas, rejecting an absolutism of spirit in favour of a *via media* between Platonic transcendentalism and Aristotelian immanence.

In Waugh's novel, Helena's empiricism necessitates an answer rooted in the worldly. At a key point in the book Helena attends a lecture on Gnosticism, a Catholic heresy that rejected matter in favour of pure spirit, a '"truth"', says the lecturer, that '"by nature

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[121] Ibid.
[122] Evelyn Waugh, and Donat Gallagher, ed., *The Essays, Articles and Reviews of Evelyn Waugh* (1983; Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1986), 410.
[123] David Wykes, *Evelyn Waugh: A Literary Life* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1999), 162.
[124] Douglas Lane Patey, *The Life of Evelyn Waugh: A Critical Biography* (1998; Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 2001), 291.

transcends material proof"', being '"beyond time and space"'.[125] However, he is unable to answer Helena's question, 'How do you know?'[126] After the lecture, Helena enters into a conversation with Lactantius, a Christian and historic advisor to her son Constantine. Unable to understand a word the Gnostic said, Helena enquires about Lactantius's Christian god: '"if I asked you when and where he could be seen, what would you say?"'[127] Lactantius answer is crucial, as it underpins the novel's Thomist premise: 'I should say that as a man he died two hundred and seventy-eight years ago in the town now called Aelia Capitolina in Palestine.'[128] Moreover, Lactantius adds, there are '"accounts written by witnesses"', as well as '"the living memory of the Church"' itself, which testify to a Christ that inhabited history.[129] These are statements purposefully couched in a language of reality.

Waugh summarised what Helena really meant to him in a talk he made in 1952: that the empress essentially stood for, as well as reaffirmed in her own day, as well as his own, 'the unreasonable assertion that God became man and died on the Cross; not a myth or an allegory; true God, truly incarnate, tortured to death at a particular moment in time, at a particular geographical place […] a matter of plain historical fact'.[130] It is, indeed, clear that it was Christianity's materiality, not merely its immateriality – the belief that 'God became man' and was *in fact* crucified at a specific time in history – that Waugh sought to emphasise in 1950. Writing to his friend John Betjeman that same year, he noted that 'by going straight to the essential physical historical fact of the redemption' Helena's story in effect 'snubbed' Aldous Huxley's reduction of religion, in *The Perennial Philosophy* (1945), to a narrow set of ultimately spiritual fundamentals.[131] What the Cross stands for, therefore, is Christianity's vital historicity; as the novel itself concludes, 'It states a fact.'[132]

Waugh's Thomism, stressing reason – arguing that it is reconcilable with faith – is set out most clearly in his work *Helena*. It is telling, perhaps, that he would repeatedly insist that it was his finest novel.[133] It may be that Waugh believed that this work was the purest exposition of his newfound faith in Catholicism, which he had converted to in the early

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[125] Evelyn Waugh, *Helena* (1950; Penguin Books, 1963), 83.
[126] Ibid.
[127] Ibid., 85.
[128] Ibid.
[129] Ibid.
[130] Waugh, *Essays,* 410.
[131] Waugh, *Letters,* 387.
[132] Waugh, *Helena*, 159.
[133] David Wykes, *Evelyn Waugh,* 158.

1930s. Here in this work, Waugh achieves a *via media* through Helena's recovery of the material Cross.

Christopher Dawson

Dawson, contrary to Waugh, approached Thomism explicitly while also rejecting Waugh's emphasis on empiricism. Much like Lewis, Dawson's view of St. Thomas was troubled by what he perceived to be Thomism's apparent emphasis on reason – just what Waugh appeared to find so admirable. Again, Chesterton's St. Thomas marked out what it was that Dawson venerated in Aquinas. Indeed, he evidently saw much to cherish in the way 'medieval philosophy had assimilated the Aristotelian ethical and sociological principles and integrated them into the structure of Christian thought'.[134] For Dawson, this *via media* – what he termed this 'harmonization of the two orders' – was the great intellectual achievement of the Middle Ages.[135] Moreover, he traced this tradition back to the formation of Christendom itself. For instance, Dawson made sure to stress that Augustine, for all his Neo-Platonism, was 'also a Latin, and his Latin sense of social and historical reality led him to do justice to the social and historical elements that are implicit in the Christian tradition'.[136] There is also Dawson's commentary on St. Francis of Assisi, which praises this saint in a similar manner, regarding him 'the embodiment in flesh and blood of the new spirit' that would come to characterise the medieval achievement; breaking the barrier 'between faith and life', and thus constituting a 'union of soul and body'.[137] We should note Dawson's use of 'flesh' and 'body' here, chosen specifically to emphasis the point that the development of Christianity in the West went hand in hand, he tells us, with a rejection of what he labels, in one instance, 'the old established tradition of oriental spiritualism and Neoplatonic idealism'.[138] This led to St. Thomas, the culmination of this rejection,[139] which

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[134] Christopher Dawson, *Religion and the Rise of Western Culture* (1950; New York: Image Books, 1991), 176.

[135] Ibid.

[136] Christopher Dawson, *Progress & Religion: An Historical Inquiry* (1929; Washington D. C: The Catholic University of America Press, 2001), 130.

[137] Christopher Dawson, *Medieval Essays* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1953), 111.

[138] Dawson, *Progress & Religion,* 137.

[139] As Dermot Quinn writes, while '[St] Francis made that Augustinian fusion a reality, St Thomas gave it philosophical authority […] precisely because he recognized the incarnational implications of that autonomy'. Stratford Caldecott, and John Morrill, eds., *Eternity in Time: Christopher Dawson and the Catholic Idea of History* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997), 81.

would come to be known as Thomism.[140] Man is now 'the point at which the world of spirit touches the world of sense, and it is through him and in him that the material creation attains to intelligibility and becomes enlightened and spiritualized'.[141] 'This is the fundamental principle of St. Thomas', Dawson concludes: that the Incarnation complements nature itself, becoming an analogy, as well, of 'the bond of union between [the] material and the spiritual worlds'.[142] A *via media*.

Dawson did, however, have concerns about the legacy of St. Thomas, as can be perceived in his couching of Thomism in such subdued phraseology as the building up of 'an intelligible world slowly and painfully from the data of the senses, ordered and systematized by science'.[143] For a historian noted for his elevation of the imagination in the field of knowledge, as we will see later, such language hinting at a systemisation of thought is telling.[144] More explicit, however, is Dawson's view that Aquinas's legacy, in the form post-Thomas Scholastics; for it was Dawson's view that 'it inaugurated a period of intellectual criticism and culture change which […] proved fatal to the synthesis of religion and culture'.[145]

As well as this, there was also Dawson's lament that the Thomist incorporation of every level of material existence in a spiritual whole brought Augustine's conception of the City of God down to the level of the Earthy City, entailing theocracy: Papal monarchy, for example.[146] Dawson's Christendom – see chapter four – was a synthesis of religion and culture, not religion and politics. Just as Coleridge would be Lewis's preferred model for a *via media*, Dawson's most archetype was actually Dante, not Aquinas:

> The *Divina Commedia* of Dante, the greatest literary achievement of the
> Middle Ages, in which every aspect of life and every facet of personal and
> historic experience is illuminated by a metaphysical vision of the universe
> as an intelligible unity. And behind the *Divina Commedia* there is the work
> of St. Thomas […] devoted to the building up of a great structure of

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[140] Dawson, *Progress & Religion,* 137.
[141] Ibid., 138.
[142] Ibid.
[143] Ibid., 137.
[144] We should note Birzer's recent observation that Dawson's most 'damning' condemnation of liberals was that they 'lacked the power of imagination'. Birzer, *Sanctifying the World,* 50.
[145] Dawson, *Religion and the Rise of Western Culture*, 198.
[146] Ibid., 178.

thought in which every aspect of knowledge is co-ordinated and subordinated to the divine science – *Theologia* – the final transcendent end of every created intelligence.[147]

Method vs. Ideology

As Lothian suggests, Thomism, or rather Neo-Thomism, was at its best when applied as a method rather than as an ideology spouting a set of rigid conclusions.[148] It might be argued that Dawson was right to suggest that Thomism had problematic consequences in its worldliness, in terms of its political ramifications, compared to the otherworldliness of Augustinism. Indeed, we should take note of Lothian's 2009 work on the English Catholic intellectual community, 1910-1950, which emphasises the contrast between the 'political and economic focus of the Bellocians' – including Chesterton – and the focus on 'theology and philosophy' of the 'Dawsonites'.[149] Unlike the Bellocians, Dawson's 'hopes' for the future were 'spiritual, rather than […] political or economic'.[150] Perhaps it should not surprise us that Chesterton, a Thomist without Dawson's reservations, should place such an importance on politics, which was perhaps naïve. When we, instead, consider the Old Western Men as a whole, as a method or perspective, for it is not an ideology, I think, we should take into account Adam Schwartz's conclusion: that Thomism provided Chesterton with a 'comprehensive, integrative system' of metaphysics; a 'realism' that supplied 'a secure starting point', as opposed to the 'idealist', and all too abstract, 'abyss' that was 'Augustine's latent Platonism'.[151] Schwartz's study on Chesterton, Dawson, Jones, and Graham Greene, each a convert to Roman Catholicism, concludes that an 'incarnational emphasis on the goodness of both spirit and matter' was 'central' to their 'personal and religious identity'.[152] This chapter affirms Schwartz's 2012 conclusion that such converts were informed by both Augustinian and Thomist thought, even though 'they differed about which lode had the most valuable ore'.[153] What we are generally aiming at describing here, then, is an Old Western synthesis, as mentioned before, that incorporates shifting, though

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[147] Ibid., 194.
[148] Lothian, *Making and Unmaking,* 235.
[149] Ibid., xiii.
[150] Ibid., 287.
[151] Adam Schwartz, *The Third Spring: G. K. Chesterton, Graham Greene, Christopher Dawson & David Jones* (Washington D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2012), 106.
[152] Ibid., 377.
[153] Ibid.

not ultimately contradictory, tones of emphasis in search of a *via media* between mind and matter. In achieving this union, many intellectuals, such as Lewis, were actually converted to Christianity themselves. It was, indeed, a very long and personal journey of discovery.

Romantic Religion

R. J. Reilly's 2006 book *Romantic Religion* (second edition) argues the case that the work of Lewis, as well as that of Owen Barfield, Charles Williams and Tolkien, should be viewed as a 'revival of the elements of nineteenth-century romanticism'.[154] In the context of his own work, Reilly forwarded a broad definition of 'Romanticism', or rather he reduced it to one key element that he believed to be common to the work of such poets as Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, Blake, and Shelley; that is, of Romantics being 'in touch with something other than themselves'.[155] 'Thus I call Kant's "transcendental" philosophy romantic; I call Coleridge's doctrine of the primary and secondary imagination romantic; I call Wordsworth's view of Nature romantic', Reilly writes.[156] In other words, romantic experience is a religious experience, he asserts. In this sense, then, the work of Barfield, Lewis, Williams, and Tolkien, Reilly argues, entailed a revival of 'a historical attitude brought about by the romantic reaction to Newtonian mechanical laws'[157], a renewal that constituted a fundamental 'meeting of minds'[158], which sought in the twentieth century 'to defend romanticism by showing it to be religious, and to defend religion by traditionally romantic means'.[159] 'Romantic experience', otherwise known 'subjective experience'[160], therefore had its uses, insofar as 'romantic experience' might bring the individual 'closer to God'.[161] A. N. Wilson, too, has declared Lewis 'a Romantic egoist in the tradition of Wordsworth and Yeats'.[162] I concur with both Reilly's and Wilson's assessment, that what we are studying here is indeed a 'revival' of romanticism, but a revival that ran parallel to Alexander's second Medieval revival, in the sense that both sought a *via media*, meaning a

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[154] R. J. Reilly, *Romantic Religion: A Study of Owen Barfield, C. S. Lewis, Charles Williams, and J. R. R. Tolkien* (Great Barrington: Lindisfarne Books, 2006), 6.
[155] Ibid., 7.
[156] Ibid., 8.
[157] Ibid., 7.
[158] Ibid., 3.
[159] Ibid., 4.
[160] Ibid., 5.
[161] Ibid., 216.
[162] A. N. Wilson, *C. S. Lewis: A Biography* (1990; London: Harper Perennial, 2005), 291.

marriage between faith and reason, or mind and matter. As has been noted before, this marriage was not Lewis's starting position. Examining how Lewis came to God through romanticism will serve to reveal how Reilly's forwarding of a 'romantic religion', as well as this thesis's employment of 'Thomism' in the context of the Old Western Men, actually intersect. As stated earlier, Lewis's Thomas is essentially Coleridge, derived through his friendship with Barfield. Yet there was Chesterton, who was also to play a key role in Lewis's development. Both served to liberate Lewis's imagination from the proposed tyranny of modern rationalism and positivism. It is instructive to see just how effective they were in guiding him in this process.

It is the central point of Lewis's autobiography *Surprised by Joy* (1955) to relate to us how he 'passed from Atheism to Christianity'.[163] The fundamental quandary that Lewis faced up until 1929, when he finally converted to theism, was how he might reconcile his 'imaginative life' with the life of the 'intellect' – 'the two hemispheres of my mind', he wrote, which 'were in the sharpest contrast. On the one side a many-islanded sea of poetry and myth; on the other a glib and shallow "rationalism".'[164] Lewis's initial 'impression' of 'religion in general' was essentially reductionist, then, believing it to be 'utterly false', yet 'a natural growth, a kind of endemic nonsense into which humanity tended to blunder'.[165] Contact with James George Frazer's *The Golden Bough* (1890) had only served to strengthen this belief. Frazer's influence is clear in a letter Lewis wrote to Arthur Greeves in 1916, for example:

> You ask me my religious views: you know, I think, that I believe in no religion. There is absolutely no proof for any of them […] All religions, that is, all mythologies to give them their proper name are merely man's own invention – Christ as much as Loki. Primitive man found himself surrounded by all sorts of terrible things he didn't understand – thunder, pestilence, snakes […] These he kept off by cringing to them, singing songs and making sacrifices.[166]

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[163] C. S. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy: The Shape of my Early Life* (1955; London: HarperCollins Publishers, 2012), ix.
[164] Ibid.
[165] Ibid., 71.
[166] C. S. Lewis, and Walter Hooper, ed., *They Stand Together: The Letters of C. S. Lewis to Arthur Greeves, 1914-1963* (London: Collins, 1979), 135.

While religion was itself curious, to the anthropologist or the sociologist, Lewis could not get over the notion that to actually *believe* in it was not intellectually respectable: 'superstition of course in every age has held the common people but in every age the educated and thinking ones have stood outside it, though outwardly conceding to it for convenience.'[167] At first, then, Lewis found himself on the other side of the 'Great Divide' that he would go on to stipulate in 1954; the same side as George Orwell, for instance, who in 1942 expressed his view that:

> In theory it is still possible to be an orthodox religious believer without being intellectually crippled in the process; but it is far from easy, and in practice books by orthodox believers usually show the same cramped, blinkered outlook as books by orthodox Stalinists or others who are mentally unfree.[168]

Virginia Woolf's reaction, in 1928, to T. S. Eliot's conversion to Christianity reflected very much the same attitude as Orwell's:

> I have had a most shameful and distressing interview with dear Tom Eliot, who may be called dead to us all from this day forward. He has become an Anglo-Catholic believer in God and immortality, and goes to church. I was shocked. A corpse would seem to me more credible than he is. I mean, there's something obscene in a living person sitting by the fire and believing in God.[169]

Lewis himself, however, even in his most fervent atheism, was never entirely comfortable accepting the view that to be religiously orthodox was tantamount to being an intellectual cripple. Spiritually, at least, it did not satisfy him. As he would later write, 'nearly all that I loved I believed to be imaginary', while 'nearly all that I believed to be real I thought grim and meaningless'.[170] What is more, quite maddeningly, 'the only non-Christians' who seemed to him 'to know anything were the Romantics and a good many of them were

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[167] Ibid.

[168] George Orwell, and Peter Davison, ed., *Keeping Our Little Corner Clean, 1942-1943* (1998; London: Secker & Warburg, 2001), 66.

[169] Virginia Woolf, Nigel Nicholson, and Joanne Trautmann, eds., *The Letters of Virginia Woolf* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1997), 457-58.

[170] Lewis, *Surprised by Joy,* 197.

tinged with something like religion, even at times with Christianity'.[171] Lewis's problem here, in truth, was that really he was a romantic himself. Indeed, it was exactly that 'imaginative life', which he had possessed from childhood, which was holding him back from a total immersion in atheism. Although Lewis did not know it at the time, it was his latent romanticism that would open the way back to a reconciliation between reason and faith.

Looking back, Lewis believed that it was, indeed, his 'romanticism' that had saved him from becoming 'a Leftist, Atheist, satiric Intellectual of the type we all know so well'.[172] From an early age, he had found himself 'in the midst of the Romantics'.[173] Without a doubt, he wrote, before he had even begun to seriously contemplate Christianity he was 'waist deep in Romanticism'.[174] Nevertheless, for a while, this 'romanticism' was latent rather than active. It would take his personal acquaintances with certain individuals of an identifiably, self-confessed religious type to give him permission to act upon what was essentially an instinct, but an instinct that so far had no foundation in reason, which was above all what Lewis required.

Much has already been made of the effect that particular individuals had on Lewis's 'imaginative growth'; by Wilson and Reilly, for instance.[175] Indeed, there is the influence of Lewis's friend Arthur Greeves, who, as Wilson has written, 'occupied a position of unique importance in Lewis's life'.[176]

> It was in writing to Greeves that he decided, very often, the sort of person
> he wanted to be. We could very definitely say that if it had not been for
> Arthur Greeves, many of Lewis's most distinctive and imaginatively
> successful books would not have been written.[177]

Then there was George MacDonald and his 1858 fantasy *Phantastes, a faerie Romance for Men and Women*, which Lewis chanced upon in 1916. Lewis remembered that unlike the

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[171] Ibid., 250.
[172] Ibid., 200.
[173] Ibid., 189.
[174] Quoted in Reilly, *Romantic Religion,* 102.
[175] Wilson, *C. S. Lewis,* 38.
[176] Ibid.
[177] Ibid.

work of Thomas Malory, Edmund Spenser, William Morris, and William Butler Yeats, MacDonald's fairyland introduced to him an entirely novel notion: 'holiness.'[178] When Lewis read *Phantastes*, his 'imagination was, in a certain sense, baptised', he remembered.[179] Wilson, in particular, has already provided us with a useful account of this. Still, it may be that the effect of *Phantastes* had been overstated, even by Lewis. Whether or not it really had a transformative effect on him or not, it seems that what Lewis was really after, at least after 1916, was a contemporary example – a *via media* – that was capable of resolving those two hemispheres of the mind that might be brought together; meaning the example of an evidently high-intellect who nevertheless had the temerity to *believe*. One such example was W. B. Yeats.

In the poet Yeats, whom Lewis had met in 1921 in Oxford, was a poet who actually 'believed […] He really thought that there was a world of beings', wrote Lewis.[180] What was important here was that Yeats was not a Christian. If he had been Lewis would 'have discounted his testimony', since in 1921 he still believed 'Christians [to be] "placed" and disposed forever', he admitted.[181] In Yeats, however, Lewis 'learned that there were people, not traditionally orthodox, who nevertheless rejected the whole Materialist philosophy out of hand'.[182] In fact, it was not just Yeats, but a panoply of writers and friends, including Barfield and Tolkien, who granted Lewis leave to liberate himself from the restraints of rationalism. Yeats' importance, at a time when Lewis was still suspicious of the claims of Christianity, was that Yeats was a non-Christian who believed, nonetheless, in another realm other than material existence.

During the 1920s Lewis was becoming increasingly aware that what he had previously taken for granted – the 'authority' of 'what I believed to be the findings of the sciences' – was being challenged by 'an opposite authority'.[183] In fact, this challenge was coming in from all sides, including his own work in the field of literature. Wilson, for example, attributes, rightly I think, the importance of his studies in English at university, which served to redress the overbearing material and rationalist influence of the classics.[184] 'Reading English',

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[178] Lewis, *Surprised by Joy,* 207.
[179] Ibid., 209.
[180] Ibid., 201-202.
[181] Ibid., 202.
[182] Ibid.
[183] Ibid.
[184] Wilson writes that 'English was to restore to him with inescapable force the message which he had been hearing haphazardly but forcibly ever since he became addicted to reading as a small

Wilson writes, 'confronted him with questions which would not go away about the nature of Man, questions which infuriatingly formed themselves into religious shapes'.[185] But this only took Lewis a little way. He was reconsidering his position, but nevertheless still required an actual epistemological framework that would lead him to an active belief which would, in effect, christen his imagination. This he finally attained through his friend Barfield, who passed on to him the theories of the poet Coleridge.

Francis J. Morris and Ronald C. Wendling have written that both Lewis's and Barfield's 'intellectual journeys trace out in biographically circumstanced real time the complementary but antagonistic routes that Coleridge's earlier epistemological vision projected as the paths to knowledge'.[186] Barfield later recalled that 'the point at issue at the time' was whether 'the kind of mental activity which goes to the appreciation of art or poetry [could] be applied epistemologically'.[187] What role might the imagination have to play in the seeking of knowledge? Pope John Paul II made this question the central issue in his 1998 encyclical *Fides et Ratio,* explaining that, from the Catholic point of view, 'our vision of the face of God is always fragmentary and impaired by the limits of our understanding. Faith alone makes it possible to penetrate the mystery […] enabling the mind in its autonomous exploration to penetrate within the mystery by use of reason's own methods, of which it is rightly jealous.'[188] As Morris and Wendling write, 'Lewis's temperament and intellect were […] first set suspiciously against this notion'.[189] Knowledge, Lewis believed, could only by inferred from experience relating to the external, the object, not the realm of subjective experience, which he distrusted. The difference between Barfield and Lewis was explicit, as Barfield explained: '[I wanted] to combine sharp logical thought with imagination somehow in the same act; and Lewis always wanted to keep them separate. He was taking a holiday from logic when he was using imagination. I always wanted to get them together somehow.'[190] Barfield's 'Coleridgean notion'[191] – that

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child in Northern Ireland. This was the knowledge that human life is best understood by the exercise not only of the wit, but also of the imagination; that poets and moral essayists and novelists, with their rounded sense of human experience, have perhaps more to teach us than logicians.' Wilson, *C. S. Lewis,* 77.

[185] Ibid.

[186] Francis J. Morris, and Ronald C. Wendling, 'Coleridge and "the Great Divide" between C. S. Lewis and Owen Barfield", *Studies in the Literary Imagination,* vol. 22, no. 2 (1989), 149.

[187] Quoted in ibid., 151.

[188] John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio: On the Relationship between Faith and Reason* (Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 1998), 22, 23.

[189] Morris and Wendling, 'Coleridge and "the Great Divide"', 151.

[190] Quoted in ibid.

[191] Ibid., 153.

the imagination enables the observer to perceive the materially imperceptible – entailed a creative coming together of subject and object; what Coleridge termed 'a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM'.[192] Coleridge's philosophy of nature and consciousness, which Barfield 'elucidated and expanded' upon, Morris and Wendling continue, was no less than a rejection of 'Cartesian dualism' itself[193], which since seventeenth century had 'dominated the Western mind', insisting upon the 'isolation of consciousness from the phenomena it contemplates'.[194]

The divide that Morris and Wendling themselves insist on is essentially Coleridge's notion of the vital intercommunication between subject and object opposed to Cartesian isolationism, 'a picture of a world wherein inert phenomena – the only and ultimate reality – are peered at longingly by an isolated human consciousness sealed inside a vacuum of meaningless'.[195] Lewis would later describe his communications with Barfield on this matter as 'one of the turning points of my life'.[196] 'Our logic', he concluded, 'was participation in a cosmic *Logos'*.[197] Lewis would achieve a *via media* this way. Although it was Coleridge who opened the door for him, then, not Aquinas, it may be argued that Thomist thought did influence him, through Chesterton.

The Influence of G. K. Chesterton on C. S. Lewis

It was during the First World War, while Lewis was recovering in hospital from trench fever in 1918, that he first came into contact with the work of Chesterton:

> I had never heard of him and had no idea of what he stood for; nor can I quite understand why he made such an immediate conquest of me. It might have been expected that my pessimism, my atheism, and my hatred of sentiment would have made him to me the least congenial of all authors.[198]

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[192] Quoted in ibid., 154.
[193] Ibid., 154-155.
[194] Ibid., 154.
[195] Ibid.
[196] Lewis, *Surprised by Joy,* 241.
[197] Ibid., 243.
[198] Ibid., 220.

Although Lewis's acceptance of Chesterton was not immediate, he nevertheless enjoyed his work. 'I liked him for his goodness', Lewis recalled.[199] Then sometime around 1929, a significant year for Lewis, he read Chesterton's *The Everlasting Man* (1925); it was to prove pivotal in Lewis's spiritual and intellectual development. 'For the first time', he wrote, he 'saw the whole Christian outline of history set out in a form that seemed to me to make sense'.[200] Chesterton's 1925 work was intended as a repudiation of H. G. Wells' *The Outline of History* (1919-20), which had portrayed the history of mankind as an essentially Darwinian progression, famously bestowing less attention to the life of Christ and his historical implications than it did on the attempted Persian conquest of Greece. Chesterton's critique of Wells' work was that it basically reduced man to little more than a progressive offshoot of primordial slime.

What Chesterton did in *The Everlasting Man* was to put Wells in his place by restoring man, including Wells himself, to his rightful place beside Christ. 'Man is not merely an evolution', Chesterton wrote, 'but rather a revolution'.[201] Although, as Lewis recounted, he 'contrived not to be too badly shaken' by the author's avowal that there was much more to man than a highly evolved splotch of gunk, there was no going back for Lewis after having read *The Everlasting Man*.[202] As Lewis himself remarked in 1955: 'in reading Chesterton, as in reading MacDonald, I did not know what I was letting myself in for. A young man who wishes to remain a sound Atheist cannot be too careful of his reading.'[203] Indeed, he could not help but conclude that 'Chesterton had more sense than all the other moderns put together'.[204]

Lewis believed *The Everlasting Man* to be the 'best popular defence of the full Christian position'.[205] Writing to Sheldon Vanauken in 1950, Lewis remarked that his BBC radio broadcasts, defending Christianity, made during the war – which were later published as *Mere Christianity* (1952) – were very much inspired by Chesterton's own spirited justifications for the Christian faith in 1925.[206] Chesterton evidently had a profound

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[199] Ibid., 221.
[200] Ibid., 260.
[201] G. K. Chesterton, *The Everlasting Man* (1925; Mansfield Centre: Martino Publishing, 2010), 13.
[202] Lewis, *Surprised by Joy,* 260.
[203] Ibid., 221-222.
[204] Ibid., 248.
[205] Quoted in David Werther, and Susan Werther, *C. S. Lewis's List: The Ten Books that Influenced Him Most* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2015), 37.
[206] Quoted in ibid.

influence on Lewis and his own work. Donald T. Williams, for example, believes that *The Everlasting Man* was very likely 'a source for many of Lewis's most characteristic ideas'.[207] Humphrey Carpenter, too, in his work on the Inklings, has written of 'the breezy outdoor Chestertonian Christianity of Lewis'.[208] In particular, Carpenter believes that Lewis shared with Chesterton 'a very boyish element'.[209] Not surprisingly, Pearce's work *C. S. Lewis & The Catholic Church* (2003) makes much of Lewis's connection to Chesterton; though other works, it should be noted, such as *The Cambridge Companion to C. S. Lewis* (2010), edited by Robert MacSwain and Michael Ward, barely mention the influence of Chesterton's output on Lewis. Nevertheless, Chesterton's presence in Lewis's intellectual development, confirming his instinctual reach for a *via media*, is clear. Lewis plainly recognised a kindred spirit in Chesterton that is telling in itself. Indeed, Chesterton, more than any other Old Western intellectual, looms large elsewhere too; not only Chesterton the philosopher, but also Chesterton the historian.

The Historical Imagination

Having so far focused for the most part on the theme of reconciling reason with faith and the imagination, it is worth turning our attention toward the application of the imagination as an Old Western ethic in the interpretation of history itself. This is especially relevant to this thesis, not simply because we are focusing on a group of intellectuals who perceived themselves as combatting modernity, and what they saw as its positivistic underpinnings, but also because a large part of this combat was played out in the arena of history. Indeed, it should not surprise us that such an Old Western emphasis on the moral imagination also found expression in other streams of thought, such as history. Here again, as we shall see, Chesterton's influence is clear. Although it is arguable that his influence is evident most of all in the writings of the historian Dawson. In terms of an Old Western response to modernity, a key part of that revaluation was an adoption of a historical method that was essentially imaginative and contemplative.

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[207] Ibid., 43.
[208] Carpenter, *The Inklings,* 155.
[209] Ibid., 218.

What Dawson had in mind when considering the fundamental function of the writing of history was its use 'as a weapon *against* the modern age'.[210] Writing in the introduction to his work *The Making of Europe* (1932), Dawson forwarded his conviction that 'history should be the great corrective' to what Bertrand Russell, 'rightly', in his opinion, labelled a 'parochialism' in time, dubbing it 'one of the great faults of our modern society'.[211] Dawson agreed. Modern man was in danger, it seemed, of succumbing to a narrow-mindedness rooted in the here and now, one that paradoxically blinded him to the problems of the present. History's utility, as Dawson saw it in the 1930s, was that it might, indeed, serve as a vital corrective in his own time, as he wrote in 1932:

> One of the great merits of history is that it takes us out of ourselves –
> away from obvious and accepted facts – and discovers a reality that
> would otherwise be unknown to us. There is a real value in steeping our
> minds in an age entirely different to that which we know: a world
> different, but no less real – indeed more real, for what we call "the
> modern world" is the world of a generation, while a culture like that of
> the Byzantine or the Carolingian world has a life of centuries.[212]

This corrective was of especial importance, then, when coming to grips with an age radically different to one's own; a period such as the Dark Ages, or the early Middle Ages, which Dawson believed was a 'neglected and unappreciated subject', largely because it did 'not manifest itself in striking external achievements'.[213] Moderns, who were far more materialistic and secular in their worldview, he argued, were quite naturally drawn to the 'superficial attractiveness' of the Renaissance, for example, rather than to the 'internal organic process' that had actually brought that external brilliance – the '"easy" periods' of study for moderns – into being in the first place.[214] For there was no doubt in Dawson's mind that the time of the Dark Ages was actually 'the most creative age of all, since it created not this or that manifestation of culture, but the very culture itself'.[215] And since

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[210] Christopher Dawson, *The Making of Europe: An Introduction to the History of European Unity* (1932; Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2003), 4.
[211] Ibid.
[212] Ibid., 3-4.
[213] Ibid., 3.
[214] Ibid.
[215] Ibid.

Dawson believed that 'the real forces that rule the world are spiritual ones'[216], as he wrote later in 1935, any study that would serve to accentuate the 'spiritual forces that have gone to the making of Europe', he wrote in 1932, was surely worth the effort, if only because it combatted exactly that 'parochialism in time' that Dawson had decided it was the purpose of history to correct.[217]

Dawson should be viewed as a similar figure to the historian Herbert Butterfield, his near contemporary, who, as C. T. McIntire has shown, saw 'the intrusion of religion into historical study' as 'a matter of dissent'.[218] In particular, Dawson saw that he was well placed to play the intermediary between the Dark Ages and the present since he was a Roman Catholic. As he wrote in 1932, 'it is impossible to understand medieval culture unless we have a sympathy and appreciation for medieval religion, and here the Catholic historian possesses an obvious advantage'.[219] While most modern historians were 'cut off from the European past by a spiritual barrier and […] forced to study it from outside with the disinterested curiosity of the archaeologist who disinters the relics of a dead culture', Dawson, as a Roman Catholic, was studying it as a living tradition from the inside.[220] This was significant, wrote Dawson, because 'to the Catholic the so-called 'dark ages' were 'ages of dawn, for they witnessed the conversion of the West, the foundation of Christian civilization, and the creation of Christian art and Catholic liturgy. Above all, they were the Age of the Monks.'[221] Dawson was essentially echoing the conclusion of his fellow Catholic convert Chesterton – an important figure in his development as a historian – who in 1908 wrote that 'the most absurd thing that could be said of the Church is the thing we have all heard said of it. How can we say that the Church wishes to bring us back into the Dark Ages? The Church was the only thing that ever brought us out of them.'[222] This was a view that Dawson evidently shared with Chesterton. They were both part of Alexander's stated revival of interest in the Middle Ages, which in their own case was synonymous with conversion to Catholicism. But Dawson also saw that it might be 'very difficult for anyone

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[216] Christopher Dawson, *Religion and the Modern State* (1935; London: Sheed and Ward, 1936), 152.
[217] Dawson, *Making of Europe,* 255.
[218] C. T. McIntire, *Herbert Butterfield: Historian as Dissenter* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 413.
[219] Dawson, *Making of Europe*, 5.
[220] Ibid., 7.
[221] Ibid., 5.
[222] G. K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy* (1908; New York: John Lane, 1909), 174.

who is not a Catholic to understand the full meaning of this great tradition'.[223] For example, Dawson cited the example of 'monasticism', which he believed was a formative influence in the development of Western culture; which 'to the ordinary secular historian [...] must remain as alien and incomprehensible a phenomenon as the Lamaism of Thibet or the temple priesthood of the ancient Sumerians'.[224]

While Dawson saw that he obviously possessed an advantage over secular, and even Protestant, historians – being able himself to communicate that tradition to a modern audience, he believed – he also recognised that this advantage had not insignificant disadvantages. For example, he noted in 1932 that for the last century and more' there had 'certainly been a tendency among Catholic writers to make history a department of apologetics and to idealise medieval culture in order to exalt [...] religious ideals'.[225] This was ultimately counterproductive, Dawson concluded: 'this way of writing history defeats its own ends, since as soon as the reader becomes suspicious of the impartiality of the historian he discounts the truth of everything that he reads.'[226] Dawson was likely referring, in part, to the writings of the Chesterton and Belloc: the 'Chesterbelloc.' In 1955, Dawson noted that he had 'never been a Bellocite', and resented the suggestion by those 'so violently anti-Chesterbelloc' who claimed that he was one of them.[227] As we shall see, however, Dawson was greatly influenced at least by Chesterton, although he looked less favourably on Belloc; as Christina Scott, Dawson's daughter, later remembered: 'Christopher admired Chesterton's work and also came to know him later. He preferred Belloc as a poet rather than as a historian, for he considered his views one-sided and unreliable, nor did he feel at home with Belloc's particular brand of triumphant Catholicism.'[228] However, there was not, in fact, much to choose between them in terms of a so-called triumphalist Catholicism on the part of the Chesterbelloc. After all, this is the same Dawson who would dub Chesterton 'one of the greatest champions of Christian culture in our time'.[229] Rather, Dawson's disparagement of Catholic 'apologetics' was not rooted in the idea that it was wrong as such, but rather, I think, that it was identifiably Catholic, and overtly brash in its communication, meaning that it instantly provided any

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[223] Dawson, *Making of Europe,* 5.
[224] Ibid., 5-6.
[225] Ibid., 5.
[226] Ibid.
[227] Quoted in Birzer, *Sanctifying the World,* 152.
[228] Scott, *A Historian and His World,* 71.
[229] Quoted in Birzer, *Sanctifying the World,* 28.

opposing school of history the excuse to decry it for its apparent bias. Dawson was particularly sensitive to such accusations; in part because, in 1933, he had been refused a professorship at Leeds University on the grounds that he was, indeed, a Roman Catholic: 'they had much the same attitude to Catholics as the Nazis have to the Jews!', he complained.[230]

Dawson's introduction to *The Making of Europe* might, therefore, be seen as a pre-emptive clearing of the throat, distancing himself from the Chesterbelloc, for fear of being accused of bias; concluding that ultimately 'this is not a history of the Church or a history of Christianity; it is a history of culture […] and if the non-religious reader should feel that an undue amount of space or of emphasis has been given in this book to theological or ecclesiastical matters, he must remember that it is impossible to understand the past unless we understand the things for which the men of the past cared most'.[231] It was not his purpose 'to prove a theological point or to justify a religious point of view, but to explain the past', he made sure to note.[232] Indeed, Dawson saw that in actual fact he was himself combatting the prevailing 'provincialism' of the time, which had for a long time manifested itself in 'the Pharisaic self-righteousness of the Whig historians' whose writing about history involved a limiting and, what he termed, 'unhistorical […] subordination of the past to the present'.[233] This brings us to another problem that Dawson sought to confront in his writings, particularly on the writing about history itself; which was how the non-Catholic might, indeed, transcend the parochialism of his own time. Ironically, Dawson's solution was that very lack of partiality that he so much guarded against: the historical imagination. In this sense, his solution to the problem of a lack of sympathy directed toward the past was rooted in the same accommodation that Lewis would make regarding the problem of reconciling mind with matter.

It was the historian Hebert Butterfield's view that 'it is through something like a creative act of the historical imagination' that we make 'the actual effort of historical understanding'.[234] In his most famous work *The Whig Interpretation of History* (1931), Butterfield elucidated his view that 'real historical understanding is not achieved by the

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[230] Quoted in Scott, *A Historian and His World,* 111.
[231] Dawson, *Making of Europe,* 7.
[232] Ibid.
[233] Ibid., 4.
[234] Herbert Butterfield, *The Whig Interpretation of History* (1931; New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1965), 91.

subordination of the past to the present, but rather by our making the past our present and attempting to see life with the eyes of another century than our own'.[235] In this sense, then, the historian ought to be 'something more than the mere passive external spectator'.[236] It was Butterfield's view, then, that 'something more' was required if the historian was to make 'the past intelligible to the present'.[237] That 'something' was what he termed 'imaginative sympathy'.[238] Butterfield's 'case against the whig historian' was that he essentially brought that 'effort of understanding to a halt', particularly 'in the case of the men who are most in need of it': 'tories and conservatives and reactionaries.'[239]

It is difficult to imagine that, prior to the writing of the introduction to *The Making of Europe,* Dawson had not read Butterfield's famous denunciation of Whig history published the year before his own work. Dawson studied historians as well, in the same way that Butterfield, too, 'promoted historical thinking about the study of history itself', as McIntire writes.[240] Moreover, Dawson, like Butterfield, was also part of what McIntire terms 'the major revival of Christian interpretations of history among religious thinkers and historians after the Second World War' – though this process should be located in the 1930s, and perhaps even earlier in the work of Chesterton and Belloc, as we shall see.[241] And it seems likely that Butterfield's treatise confirmed a notion already present in Dawson, that of the importance of an imaginative or spiritual understanding regarding history. We see this understanding displayed, for example, in Dawson's writings on the historian Edward Gibbon, author of *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776–89).

First, we should note that it was Dawson's view that Gibbon's 'position as the classical historian of the Decline of the Roman Empire' was largely because he 'identified himself with his subject, as no other historian has done […] He felt as a Roman; he thought as a Roman, he wrote as a Roman.'[242] This, he believed, was at the root of Gibbon's greatness as a historian. But it was also the foundation of his greatest failing, since, as Dawson wrote,

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[235] Ibid., 16.
[236] Ibid., 92.
[237] Ibid.
[238] Ibid.
[239] Ibid., 94-95.
[240] McIntire, *Herbert Butterfield,* 407.
[241] Ibid., 408. Butterfield 'was a historian for whom religion mattered and a religious thinker for whom historical understanding was crucial'. Ibid., xiv.
[242] Christopher Dawson, and John J. Mulloy, ed., *The Dynamics of World History* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1956), 335.

'anyone who lives his subject […] is bound to be a partisan'.[243] In Gibbon's case, his partisanship made him particularly 'unjust to Christianity, [especially] the Catholic Church'.[244] For 'Gibbon's great defect as an historian', Dawson wrote – 'a very serious one, since it invalidates his judgment on the very issues which are most vital to his subject' – was his 'complete lack of sympathy and understanding for the religious forces which have exerted such an immense influence on Western culture'.[245] For what Gibbon lacked most of all was 'spiritual vision and historical imagination', he explained.[246] This, Dawson believed, was what accounted for his great 'failure of understanding' when attempting 'to deal with the problem of the rise of Christianity', which ultimately proved 'invisible and unintelligible' to Gibbon, a historian who had 'no understanding of specifically religious values', Dawson tells us.[247] Dawson attributed to Gibbon that 'provincialism' in time, therefore, which he had attributed, in 1932, to the modern historians of his own time: 'Gibbon's religious prejudices rendered it impossible for him to understand the positive achievements of mediaeval religion and culture.'[248] Dawson employed the example of Gibbon, it seems, to forward his own point, one that he shared with Butterfield, that history required 'something more' if the historian was to rise above the prejudices of his own time: metahistory.

In 1951 Dawson contributed an article, titled 'The Problem of Metahistory', to *History Today* in response to the historian Alan Bullock's condemnation of metahistory, that same year in the same publication; metahistory meaning an imaginative understanding of the past that relied as much on the creative force of intuition as it did on isolated facts. Dawson argued that 'metahistory', in this sense, was 'pervasive' and, indeed, 'inevitable', ever since it had 'entered into relations with philosophy'.[249] Dawson suggested that what Bullock was actually after – 'the pure historian uncontaminated by any extraneous metahistorical or sociological elements' – was the 'antiquarianism' of the seventeenth century.[250] Although Dawson conceded that antiquaries 'were the real founders of modern historical

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[243] Ibid., 335, 336.
[244] Ibid., 335.
[245] Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Volume 4 (1788; Paris: Baudry's European Library, 1840), 333.
[246] Dawson and Mulloy, ed., *The Dynamics of World History*, 353.
[247] Ibid., 333.
[248] Ibid., 344.
[249] Ibid., 288.
[250] Ibid., 287.

scholarship'[251], he also pointed out that Bullock had neglected the role of metahistory 'in the modern historical development'.[252] Indeed, it was Dawson's conviction that the prestige that history had attained in the modern world was due not to the 'pure historians', but 'the new types of philosophic historians', such as Alexis de Tocqueville.[253] In this sense, Dawson's problem with modern historians was that they had not recognised their own lack of impartiality. But Dawson went further, arguing that a certain amount of subjective understanding was vital to the historian if it allowed access to a reality that would otherwise remain unknown to him. Dawson had, of course, argued this point in 1932. The essential difference, then, between Dawson and Bullock was that the latter believed that it was the role of historian to discover what had happened in history, while the former, Dawson, sought to discover the laws that determined the course of history itself. In reference to this, Dawson took Tocqueville as the 'classical' example of a 'metahistorian', being a historian possessed by a 'spiritual vision' that, far from being 'the enemy of true history', was 'its guide and its friend', a 'metahistorical vision' founded upon 'religious contemplation' rather than 'scientific generalisation'.[254] What Dawson was really aiming at, then, was a recognition of the possibilities and legitimate uses of metahistory, which he believed complemented rather than undermined the study of history. In this sense, it might be argued that Dawson's own vision was essentially inclusive and reconciliatory, as is evident in the passage that most appropriately summed up his own view on the virtue of metahistory, which again exhibits in almost blatant form Butterfield's influence too, that of 'something more':

> The academic historian is perfectly right in insisting on the importance of
> the techniques of historical criticism and research. But the mastery of
> these techniques will not produce great history, any more than a mastery
> of metrical technique will produce great poetry. For this something more
> is necessary.[255]

Dawson differs very much to Richard Tarnas's description of a type of 'academic history' that has 'now disengaged itself from the task of discerning great overarching patterns and

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[251] Ibid.
[252] Ibid., 288.
[253] Ibid.
[254] Ibid., 293.
[255] Ibid.

comprehensive uniformities in history', limiting itself 'to carefully defined specialized studies, to methodological problems derived from the social sciences, to statistical analyses of measurable factors such as population levels and income figures'.[256] Dawson, it may be said, was responding to what E. H. Carr later termed the 'great age for facts […] an age of innocence', the nineteenth century, when 'historians walked in the Garden of Eden, without a scrap of philosophy to cover them'.[257] So while 'the positivists, anxious to stake out their claim for history as a science, contributed the weight of their influence to this cult of facts […] the nineteenth century was weak in medieval history, because it was too much repelled by the superstitious beliefs of the Middle Ages […] to have any imaginative understanding of medieval people'.[258] Carr, also of Dawson's generation, was himself a representative of this principle of imaginative understanding, concurring that 'history cannot be written unless the historian can achieve some kind of contact with the mind of those about whom he is writing'.[259] As John Lukacs writes, too, historians such as R. G. Collingwood, born in the same year as Dawson, in 1889, represent a time 'during the twentieth century' when 'the Cartesian and objectivist and scientific conception of the world and of human knowledge was surely on the wane'.[260] Indeed, Collingwood, writing in such works as *The Idea of History* (1946), also viewed 'historical thought' as being 'in one way like perception', serving 'as the touchstone by which we decide whether alleged facts are genuine'.[261] In this sense, he wrote, 'the historical imagination […] is properly not ornamental but structural'.[262] Dawson, Butterfield and Carr were therefore not alone in their estimation of what they saw as the vital utility of the imagination in the understanding of history; Collingwood writing that 'historical thinking is that activity of the imagination by which we endeavour to provide […] the idea of the past […] with detailed content'.[263] But we should, perhaps, question Carr's assertion that Collingwood was the 'only British thinker in the […] [twentieth] century who has made a serious contribution to the philosophy of history'.[264] Although Dawson is still a neglected figure, his own theories paralleled Collingwood's own. So, too, did Butterfield's own theories.

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[256] Tarnas, T*he Passion of the Western Mind,* 383.

[257] E. H. Carr, and R. W. Davies, ed., *What is History?* Second Edition (1961; London: Penguin Books, 1990), 8, 20.

[258] Ibid., 9, 24.

[259] Ibid., 24.

[260] John Lukacs, *Remembered Past: John Lukacs on History, Historians, and Historical Knowledge: A Reader* (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2005), 133.

[261] R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), 233, 244.

[262] Ibid., 141.

[263] Ibid., 247.

[264] Carr and Davies, ed., *What is History?*, 21.

In a piece titled 'Memories of a Victorian Childhood', written in 1949, Dawson recalled that it was largely due to the influence of his parents that the 'essential connection between *story* and *history*' was made clear to him, 'so that I came to know the past not so much by the arid path of [Charles Dickens'] *The Child's History of England*, as through the enchanted world of myth and legend'.[265] This was vital, Dawson explained, since he 'discovered very early that history was not a flat expanse of time, measured off in dates, but a series of different worlds', each possessing 'its own spirit and form and its own riches of poetic imagination'.[266] 'No doubt this initiation into the past had its disadvantages from the practical utilitarian point of view', he conceded, 'but it was education in the true sense of the word'.[267] And the result of this 'education' would ultimately find perfect expression in his essay 'The Kingdom of God and History', published in 1938, in which Dawson expressed his view that 'the essence of history is not to be found in facts but in tradition'.[268] This notion stemmed from his realisation, which we can date back to his childhood, that 'the pure fact is not as such historical', but 'only becomes historical when it can be brought into relation with a social tradition so that it is seen as part of an organic whole'.[269] He offered the reader an example:

> A visitor from another planet who witnessed the Battle of Hastings would possess far greater knowledge of the facts than any modern historian, yet this knowledge would not be historical knowledge for lack of any tradition to which it could be related; whereas the child who says "William the Conqueror 1066" has already made his atom of knowledge a historical fact by relating it to a national tradition and placing it in the time-series of Christian culture.[270]

What Dawson was essentially driving at here was the idea that a disciple of his, the historian John Lukacs, would expand upon later – in *Historical Consciousness: The Remembered Past* (1968) – the idea that 'the value of Facts may depend on their relationships even more than

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[265] Quoted in Scott, *A Historian and His World,* 239.
[266] Quoted ibid.
[267] Quoted in ibid.
[268] Dawson and Mulloy, ed., *The Dynamics of World History*, 273
[269] Ibid.
[270] Ibid.

on their accuracy'.[271] Lukacs shares Dawson's conception of history in the sense that it is his view, too, that 'historical knowledge is the knowledge of human beings about other human beings', and that 'this is different from the knowledge which human beings possess of their environment'.[272] This in itself involves a vital recognition of the boundaries of history itself; that 'history is not a science in the modern sense of the word', Lukacs argues, since 'historical information is incomplete […] inaccurate and not measurable'.[273] Rather, the 'very purpose of historical knowledge is not so much accuracy as a certain kind of understanding'.[274] In this Dawson and Lukacs are in agreement; and are counted amongst those, including Arnold Toynbee and Herbert Butterfield, generally referred to by Gerald J. Russello, in 2007, as the 'philosophical historians', who 'believed that history is the memory of humanity', its 'interpretation' being the 'attempt to plumb the mysteries of the human condition'.[275] This conception necessarily entailed what Lukacs described in 2002 as 'an attempt at participation' on the part of the historian, attempting to gain 'a glimpse of intuitive understanding' that would precede, but also engender, 'knowledge' itself, therefore rejecting 'the antiseptic, or wholly detached, ideal of objectivity', believing that 'understanding is more important than is certainty'.[276] This takes us back to Dawson's 'Memories of a Victorian Childhood', which expressed the same view that Lukacs would later make his own, that 'the old myths are better not only intrinsically, but because they lead further and open a door into the mind as well as into the past'.[277]

> This was the old road which carries us back not merely for centuries but for thousands of years […] a whole series of ages – a river of immemorial time which has suddenly dried up and become lost in the seismic cleft that has opened between the present and the past.[278]

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[271] John Lukacs, *Historical Consciousness: The Remembered Past* (1968; New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2009), 104.
[272] Ibid., 7.
[273] Ibid.
[274] Ibid.
[275] Gerald J. Russello, *The Postmodern Imagination of Russell Kirk* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2007), 72. McIntire writes similarly of Butterfield as a historian engaged 'with the contemplation of the larger questions of human history […] particularly those which induce him to ponder history and religion'. McIntire, *Butterfield*, 403.
[276] John Lukacs, *At the End of an Age* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 137.
[277] Quoted in Scott, *A Historian and His World,* 239.
[278] Quoted in ibid.

Dawson, like Lewis too, expressed a foreboding about a perceived break with the past, which, in his own words, was no less than 'a change in human consciousness' itself, one that was 'far greater than we have realised'.[279] It is important, then, that we note here that Dawson and Lewis shared a similar, if not exact, categorisation of modernity; a spiritual divide rather than one that was strictly material. For Dawson, at least, what had been lost as a result of that breach was also the cumulative knowledge of the human condition that found expression *historically* through story or myth. Having, therefore, identified this divide, Dawson came to the conclusion that the only way to bridge this divide between past and present was to return history to the essential connection between story and history that had existed as an essential instinct in Dawson since childhood, an intuition that was ultimately, he believed, visual. The very material fabric of history would, it seemed, lead the materialist back toward a metahistorical contemplation, and rediscovery, of the past.

It was Dawson's view, as early as the 1920s – in the unpublished essay 'Art and Society' – that 'nothing is more difficult for the natural man than to understand a culture or social tradition different from his own', since this would necessitate 'an almost superhuman detachment from inherited ways of thought and education and […] social environment'.[280] And 'no amount of detailed and accurate external knowledge' could 'compensate' for a 'lack of that immediate vision which springs from the comprehension of a social tradition as a living unity'.[281] 'We cannot bridge the gulf by a purely scientific study of social facts, by the statistical and documentary methods that have been so much used by modern sociologists', he explained.[282] Ultimately, only 'an immense effort of sympathetic imagination' could bridge 'the gulf of mutual incomprehension that separates cultures'.[283] And it was one of Dawson's chief convictions that 'an appreciation of art' was 'of the first importance' in bringing this task of imaginative understanding to fruition.[284] 'We can learn more about medieval culture from a cathedral than from the most exhaustive study of constitutional law.'[285] For Dawson this was a vital realisation, one learnt in childhood, as he would later explain elsewhere:

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[279] Quoted in ibid.
[280] Dawson and Mulloy, ed., *The Dynamics of World History*, 68.
[281] Ibid.
[282] Ibid.
[283] Ibid.
[284] Ibid.
[285] Ibid., 69.

> I learnt more during my schooldays from my visits to the Cathedral at Winchester than I did from the hours of religious instruction in school. That great church with its tombs of the Saxon kings and the medieval statesmen-bishops, gave one a greater sense of the magnitude of the religious element in our culture and the depths of its roots in our national life than anything one could learn from books.[286]

As well as Dawson's introduction to Winchester Cathedral, his earlier youth was perhaps even more significant, since he had spent the first six years of his life at Hay Castle in Wales, where he was born on 12 October 1889. '[Hay] probably influenced me more than any [other place]', he later wrote.[287] 'Full of history and legend, it was a romantic house for a child in his early years', Scott writes.[288] Then there was Hartlington, in Craven, in the Yorkshire Dale, where Dawson spent the next years of his upbringing, on the site of a previous manor that the Dawson family had held since 1687. But it was not simply the family connection, on his father's side, which so much excited Dawson – rather, the whole area oozed history and romance, including nearby Bolton Abbey:

> And as myth passed into history, so history in its turn left its visible imprint on the world I knew. The scattered farms and hamlets of Craven often preserved the names that one found in the Sages – Grims and Helgis and Thorlaks – and it was on Stainmoor on the northern frontier of Craven that one of the great figures of Viking saga and poetry met his end.[289]

Vitally, then, although he was undoubtedly bookish, it seems that Dawson's initiation into the past was not intellectual or antiquarian as such, but aesthetic and imaginative – and even monkish. As Dermot Quinn observes, in *Eternity in Time: Christopher Dawson and the Catholic Idea of History* (1997), Dawson's 'imagination was primarily visual. History was not an abstraction but a thing to be seen, in churches and graves, in the soil itself.'[290] Moreover, it should be noted, too, that it was contemplative; and in an even more refined sense,

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[286] Quoted in Scott, *A Historian and His World,* 33.
[287] Ibid., 223.
[288] Ibid., 14.
[289] Quoted in ibid., 239.
[290] Caldecott and Morrill, eds., *Eternity in Time,* 75.

lonely, which arguably complemented Dawson's notion of a particular type of historian possessing a 'spiritual vision', as a sage, almost.

The novelist Ralph Ricketts, who visited Dawson a number of times in Budleigh Salterton in the 1950s, recollected 'the impression of loneliness' in Dawson's 'incongruous setting […] exiled in a world of tea cups and retired colonels […] a voluntary exile', a result of 'his extreme sensibility'.[291] Dawson was certainly shy and retiring, as Scott attested to in her biography of her father in 1984.[292] It should be noted first, however, that Dawson held part-time posts as a lecturer at the universities of Exeter (1930-36), Liverpool (1934), Edinburgh (1946-48), and Harvard (1958-62). Therefore, Dawson's 'voluntary exile' was not total, nor was it entirely self-imposed. Nevertheless, the picture of Dawson as 'the lone individual', as Birzer termed him, is not a false portrait.[293] As Scott writes, her father often 'seemed silent and withdrawn'.[294] Even his great friend E. I. Watkin found it difficult to penetrate through what he dubbed Dawson's 'outward impassivity'.[295] Scott has conjectured that the origin of 'Christopher's lonely personality' was a result of 'his solitary but happy childhood and his unhappy schooldays, when he could not feel himself one of the herd'.[296] As a child, she writes, 'he preferred the more solitary activities of climbing trees, exploring caves or riding his pony'.[297] Then there was boarding school, where he was sent in 1899, where Dawson, in his own words, was forced to live alongside 'a hoard of savages with no common interests or ideas or beliefs or traditions'; a telling choice of words, perhaps, since it suggests that what truly appalled Dawson was not so much the school's brutality, but rather the absence of exactly that spiritual and introspective element that he believed was so vital to the understanding of history.[298] Scott has even posited that 'the sufferings of his schooldays – both physical and mental – […] had a disastrous and permanent influence on his whole life'.[299] It might, however, have been formative, serving Dawson well. He retreated into himself, into a sort of exile, that same exile that Ricketts observed in the 1950s. Dawson was somewhere else, exploring other (historical) realities: 'a world

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[291] Quoted in Scott, *A Historian and His World,* 173.
[292] Ibid., 38.
[293] Birzer, *Sanctifying the World,* 37.
[294] Scott, *A Historian and His World,* 111.
[295] Quoted in ibid., 52.
[296] Ibid., 52.
[297] Ibid., 31.
[298] Ibid.
[299] Ibid.

different, but no less real – indeed more real', as he wrote in 1932. As Watkin observed of his friend Dawson in 1912: 'he is full of mysticism and history.'[300]

Francesca Murphy has written that 'Dawson had a type of imaginative insight rather than a type of method'.[301] Dermot Quinn writes similarly of Dawson, that he was 'a visionary historian, imaginatively aware of great movements of people and civilizations'.[302] Scott, who knew Dawson best, has characterised his career as being, essentially, 'the lonely life of a freelance scholar and writer'.[303] To certain extent, his perennial ill health – he suffered from a weak chest – 'created the situation in which he was able to write his books', she writes.[304] However, 'had he not been content to live the quiet and sequestered life of a scholar, "ploughing a lonely furrow", as he once put it, he would never have been able to achieve his great work'.[305] Dawson's first serious work, *The Age of Gods* (1928), was a product of what Dawson referred to as 'fourteen years of isolated study'.[306] The image that we are presented with, from personal acquaintances as well as retrospective study, and indeed personal admission, points us toward the outline of a solitary figure in search of a 'spiritual vision' that would itself lead to a hitherto hidden insight into the past; as Watkin observed, 'he finds in revelation the necessary key to the interpretation of history'.[307] We might also add that it appears that an element of loneliness, or rather isolation, was vital to Dawson's process. Indeed, while Bullock insisted on one form of quarantine, a supposed antiquarianism, Dawson imposed, or perhaps simply fell into, a remoteness all of his own, but one that was not as absolute as Bullock's, in terms of the admitted knowledgeability of the study of history. However, in another vital sense, Dawson found himself in good company in discerning the supposed right precincts of history; the roaring company of the Chesterbelloc. Here, once again, we return to the influence of Chesterton.

Writing to Chesterton in 1932, forwarding him a copy of *The Making of Europe*, Dawson credited him with having introduced him to the 'spiritual' constituent in history:

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[300] Quoted in ibid, 57.
[301] Caldecott and Morrill, eds., *Eternity in Time,* 130.
[302] Ibid., 75.
[303] Scott, *A Historian and His World,* 68.
[304] Ibid.
[305] Ibid.
[306] Ibid., 67.
[307] Quoted in ibid., 58.

> Years ago when I was an undergraduate your Ballad of the White Horse
> first brought the breath of life to this period for me when I was fed up
> with [William] Stubbs and [Charles] Oman and the rest of them.[308]

Chesterton's epic poem – lauding Alfred the Great's victory over the Danes at the Battle of Edington – was a work that sought to establish the idea that Christianity had saved the English in their hour of need. Alfred's win in 878 was not merely a military success, it was also spiritual triumph, Chesterton claimed. Dawson confided to Chesterton that he, too, had attempted to 'give a proper place to spiritual factors'.[309] For it was 'characteristic of modern "left-wing" thought' that 'academic history' should 'leave out everything that matters', Dawson added.[310] One result of this, he posited, was that it engendered a fatal 'boredom […] in people's minds', resulting in 'a positive anti-historicism'.[311] Here, then, in his letter to Chesterton, Dawson acknowledged the importance of Chesterton in his own development as a historian, opposing what he supposed was a left-wing historical establishment that neglected 'spiritual factors'. Chesterton himself also believed in some manner of imaginative historical insight, it seems. Indeed, Joseph McCleary has noted Chesterton's 'intense imaginative appreciation of particulars' when studying the past.[312] It is telling, for example, that Chesterton, in *The Victorian Age in Literature* (1913), praised the philosopher and historian Thomas Carlyle as 'a seer' who possessed 'a grand power of guessing'.[313] It was this, Chesterton asserted, which was at the root of Carlyle's accomplishment as a historian:

> He *saw* the English charge at Dunbar. He *guessed* that Mirabeau,
> however dissipated and diseased, had something sturdy inside him […]
> He supported the lawlessness of Cromwell, because across two centuries
> he almost physically *felt* the feebleness and hopelessness of the
> moderate Parliamentarians.[314]

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[308] Quoted ibid., 103-104.
[309] Quoted in ibid., 104.
[310] Quoted in ibid.
[311] Quoted in ibid.
[312] Joseph McCleary, *The Historical Imagination of G.K. Chesterton: Locality, Patriotism, and Nationalism* (2009; Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), 3.
[313] G. K. Chesterton, *The Victorian Age in Literature* (1913; London: Williams & Norgate, 1925), 50.
[314] Ibid., 50-51.

In terms of Chesterton himself possessing an observable imaginative sympathy – one that is also noticeably anti-Whig, in that it reversed the so-called Whig historian's subordination of the past to the present – one example of this may be observed in *A Short History of England* (1917), in Chesterton's portrait of Richard III's final moments at the Battle of Bosworth:

> Whatever else may have been bad or good about Richard of Gloucester, there was a touch about him which makes him truly the last of the medieval kings. It is expressed in the one word which he cried aloud as he struck down foe after foe in the last charge at Bosworth – treason. For him, as for the first Norman kings, treason was the same as treachery […] the sin of false friends and faithless servants. Using his own voice like the trumpet of a herald, he challenged his rival to a fight as personal as that of two paladins of Charlemagne. His rival did not reply, and was not likely to reply. The modern world had begun.[315]

Here Chesterton actively takes offence on behalf of Richard, and in doing so disowns modernity itself. In the matter of a couple of sentences, Chesterton comes clean – his bias is clear, but forwarded to us in the manner of an insight, or rather an imaginative understanding, one that is not a 'modern' understanding of treachery as such, but Richards's understanding. As McCleary has written, Chesterton's 'powerful imagination served to enhance his intellectual grasp of specific contours of English history'.[316] He was, perhaps, particularly adept at entering into the medieval mind, for example; and as with Dawson, this imaginative sympathy was often visual. Chesterton also took the example of the cathedral to heart, contrasting 'the cold Pagan architecture' and 'the dingy dress of this Rationalistic century' with 'the grinning gargoyles of Christendom', which Chesterton argued demonstrated that 'Christianity is itself so jolly a thing that it fills the possessor of it with a certain silly exuberance, which sad and high-minded Rationalists might reasonably mistake for mere buffoonery and blasphemy'.[317] 'This difference holds good everywhere.'[318] We should note 'might reasonably mistake': implying that Chesterton

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[315] G. K. Chesterton, *A Short History of England* (1917; Teddington: Echo Library, 2008), 62.
[316] McCleary, *The Historical Imagination of G.K. Chesterton,* 3.
[317] George Haw, ed., *The Religious Doubts of Democracy* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1904), 18.
[318] Ibid.

believed that there was, indeed, a natural failure of understanding at large amongst those divorced from the medieval mind.

As well as this, Chesterton's insight also extended to myth. Indeed, Dawson's understanding of history, of the interplay between history and story, was much the same as Chesterton's, who for example wrote that 'the paradox remains that Arthur is more real than Alfred'.[319] For the Dark Ages 'the age of legends', writes Chesterton.[320] And we ought to pay attention to those legends, he argues. Although the nineteenth century historian elevated Hengist, the Dark Ages really belonged to Arthur, a ninth century figment of the imagination; the reason being, Chesterton supposed, that 'nobody thought [Hengist] important enough to lie about'.[321] What Chesterton meant, and what Dawson would likely have agreed with, was 'that we should remember that if this was not their real past, it was their real memory'.[322] In this sense, he concluded, 'it is a paradox that the past is always present', for history is not 'what was, but whatever seems to have been; for all the past is a part of faith'.[323] This at once acknowledged the limits of history, in one sense, in epistemological terms, while also recognising its possibilities; that history is itself a creative process, but also that a legend, though a 'lie', speaks to a higher truth, which is the primary concern of the 'philosophical' historian. Here, too, Belloc was also in concurrence.

In an essay titled 'On Legend', published in 1932, Chesterton's great Catholic ally Belloc also lamented that legend in his own day had 'been so much neglected as almost to fall out of use'.[324] What he really meant here was that legend no longer appeared to be taken as seriously as truth. Belloc, a firm believer in legend, therefore interceded on its behalf, writing that though legend might, indeed, be 'a mere piece of fiction', its 'historical value' lay in its being a fiction 'relating to, exalting, and fixing in the mind, reality of permanent value'.[325] For what taking legend seriously really amounted to was 'listening with profit to a story [...] a story told about some real person, real virtue, or real spiritual experience', a story 'of such a quality that it illuminates and satisfies the recipient while [...] [giving] further substance to the matter to which it is attached'.[326] Legend was not, on the other hand,

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[319] Chesterton, *Short History*, 13.
[320] Ibid.
[321] Ibid., 14.
[322] Ibid.
[323] Ibid.
[324] Hilaire Belloc, *Essays of a Catholic Layman in England* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1931), 161.
[325] Ibid.
[326] Ibid., 161, 162.

Belloc made sure to point out, to be confused with 'Myth' – such as the 'official anti-Catholic history' at large in England at the time, he argued – which was simply 'falsehood passing for historical truth'.[327] Rather, it was Belloc's central point that legend, though 'picturesque' and sometimes verging on 'fairy story', nevertheless contained an element of truth, be it actual or philosophical.[328] As for the reason why 'Legend' had apparently gone 'out of fashion', and in his view had been 'abused and ridiculed and at last almost lost', Belloc believed that it was because men had fallen 'into a habit of measuring everything exactly and neglecting whatever could not be exactly measured'.[329] Here there is an essential confluence in thought between himself and Dawson. Belloc also went so far as to assert that 'this mechanical mood' was 'the great intellectual disease of our time', arising 'from the success achieved in physical and other sciences through exact measurement'.[330] When we consider Belloc's essay 'On Legend', then, it is apparent that he in a sense anticipated, and was a part of, the school of thought referred to generally as that belonging to the 'philosophical historians', who put a premium on historical 'understanding', as a sort of spiritual vision, rather than historical 'accuracy', a view that Belloc evidently approved of:

> Legend ranges from the fairy story at one end of the spectrum to the exquisitely told and admirably illustrated true anecdote at the other end; while in between lies the great mass of legends which have in them a greater or less proportion of historical fact, but nearly always the same proportion of value to holiness and right living.[331]

There are others comparisons between Belloc and Dawson, however. Belloc, a Roman Catholic too, was also an isolated figure; 'an outsider in twentieth-century British society', writes Victor Feske.[332] Indeed, Feske's excellent portrait of Belloc, in *Belloc to Churchill: Private Scholars, Public Culture, and the Crisis of British Liberalism, 1900-1939* (1996) paints a vivid portrait of Belloc railing against the 'entrenched guardians of the official historiographical orthodoxy that he was slowly learning to detest'.[333] Like Dawson, Belloc

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[327] Ibid., 161, 174.
[328] Ibid., 162, 164.
[329] Ibid., 162.
[330] Ibid.
[331] Ibid., 164
[332] Victor Feske, *From Belloc to Churchill: Private Scholars, Public Culture, and the Crisis of British Liberalism, 1900-1939* (North Carolina: The University of Carolina Press, 1996), 17.
[333] Ibid., 19.

placed a very great emphasis on imaginative understanding, which can be condensed into a number of statements that Dawson himself could have written: that 'it is not bad to make [the Battle of] Waterloo fall on a Monday, but it is bad history to say it was won on the playing fields of Eton';[334] that 'history is to *know* on one's first vision [and then] to confirm and build by an immense deal of coincident *work* of research & judgement one's original knowledge';[335] and that 'history', Belloc wrote, 'is a matter of flair rather than of facts'.[336] And as Robert Speaight, Belloc's first biographer observed in 1957, referring to his subject's historical novel *The Girondin* (1911):

> It is imagination – a much larger thing than invention – that makes fiction live; and Belloc's imagination was as keen when he was coping with the past as it could be clumsy when he was coping with the present. His invented characters were was real as those handed to him by history because his imagination had entered, equally, into both.[337]

One question that deserves to be answered is whether, as historians, Dawson's and the Chesterbelloc's positive view of the Dark Ages, as well as the Middle Ages, conformed to Butterfield's ideal of the historian touched with 'imaginative sympathy' or, instead, to Dawson's idea of Gibbon identifying with his subject. Did they come to their conclusions as moderns themselves or as Catholics? There is, however, a third option; that their starting position was itself imaginative, and that this sympathy, in turn, led them to identify wholly with it. In other words, they came to think as Christians, much like Lewis had, having come to understand Coleridge. In effect, they were moderns who went native, having gained, or rather regained, a 'living membership' with the past, an *imaginative* membership, as Dawson concluded it must be. Certainly, at least for Dawson and Chesterton, who were both converts to Catholicism, this may be a possibility; as, indeed, John Henry Cardinal Newman proclaimed, in a revised 1878 edition of *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*: 'to be deep in history is to cease to be a Protestant.'[338] Just as it was possible for Lewis to reconcile reason with faith, it was one of the virtues of a liberated imagination,

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[334] Quoted in ibid., 23.
[335] Quoted in ibid.
[336] Quoted in ibid.
[337] Robert Speaight, *The Life of Hilaire Belloc* (London: Hollis & Carter, 1957), 324.
[338] John Henry Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (London: Basil Montagu Pickering, 1878), 8.

and historical sympathy, that the Old Western ethic was also applicable to the understanding of history as well.

Chapter One Conclusion

The importance of the imagination – in terms of the process of realising religious, as well as historical, truths, which were in a sense synonymous – was that the imagination might serve to counter the modern trend toward positivism and its supposed corollaries. Intuitively in some cases, and consciously in others, it was a defining mark, it shall be seen, of the Old Western response to modernity, that it forwarded the supernatural reality as real, the central underpinning of existence, but also – and this is key – of spiritual experience too: the 'More-Than-World' within the world. For there was the notion, too, that it was a condition of modernity that man had been robbed of this experience of the sacred, an experience that was vital to the recognition of the true nature of existence itself; Tolkien, for example, would refer to as the 'Perilous Realm'. What followed, then, as part of the Old Western imaginative ethic, was an attempt to return modern man to the realm of 'spiritual' actuality through a literary, and indeed artistic, re-enactment of the supernatural in real-time, but also in real place, meaning a spirit of place. Again, then, the imagination had a key role to play leading men to truth. As well as this, the Old Western response itself would attain its broadest, and not specifically Christian, effect. This visionary rejoinder to the modern was not so much Catholic as it was truly catholic in its message and appeal to a modern audience in combatting the notion of an 'idolatry of place'.

Chapter Two

The 'More-Than-World' within the world

It is the purpose of this chapter to illustrate how the Old Western Men, who believed in a supernatural order, nevertheless registered a loss of 'transcendence' in the twentieth century, attributable to some manner of break with the past, but more particularly, the medieval past and a sacramental view of reality. We touched on this, in part, in the previous chapter, of course. Theology mattered. However, there were other aspects of modernity – industrialism, urbanism, as well as modern science – that were also perceived to render conditions unfavourable to the admittance of the 'More-Than-World' within the world. In terms of a second medieval revival, then – in search of a vital *via media* – the Old Western Men may also be defined as the attempt to rekindle a sense of wonder; entailing, in essence, a key revitalisation of a medieval, very much incarnational, mode of response to secular materiality.

A Thomist Sense of Wonder

> Even when I thought, with most other well-informed, though unscholarly, people, that Buddhism and Christianity were alike, there was one thing about them that always perplexed me; I mean the startling difference in their type of religious art. I do not mean in its technical style of representation, but in the things that it was manifestly meant to represent. No two ideals could be more opposite than a Christian saint in a Gothic cathedral and a Buddhist saint in a Chinese temple. The opposition exists at every point; but perhaps the shortest statement of it is that the Buddhist saint always has his eyes shut, while the Christian saint always has them very wide open. The Buddhist saint has a sleek and harmonious body, but his eyes are heavy and sealed with sleep. The mediaeval saint's body is wasted to its crazy bones, but his eyes are frightfully alive. There cannot be any real community of spirit between forces that produced symbols so different as that. Granted that both images are extravagances, are perversions of the pure creed, it must be

a real divergence which could produce such opposite extravagances. The
Buddhist is looking with a peculiar intentness inwards. The Christian is
staring with a frantic intentness outwards. If we follow that clue steadily
we shall find some interesting things.[1]

G. K. Chesterton's contrast between Buddhism and Christianity, in *Orthodoxy* (1908), may be viewed as an early affirmation of what was to become the author's strident avowal of Thomist theology as an indispensable *via media* in the twentieth century. Here Chesterton very much anticipated his work *St Thomas Aquinas* (1933), in the sense that, long before he became a Roman Catholic, he was essentially rejecting what he would later term 'a sort of Platonic pride in the possession of intangible and untranslatable truths within; as if no part of their wisdom had any root anywhere in the real world'.[2] What Chesterton was emphasising in his example of the 'frightfully alive' eyes of the Christian saint, 'staring with a frantic intentness outwards', was the notion that the Christian stares 'in astonishment' at the world precisely because 'Christian admiration […] strikes outwards, towards a deity distinct from worshiper'.[3] The 'pantheist', on the other hand, 'cannot wonder, for he cannot praise God or praise anything as really distinct from himself'.[4] What Chesterton was saying here, essentially, was that a sense of wonder, or enchantment, was synonymous with a mode of thought that was identifiably 'mediaeval' and Christian.

As chapter one has already suggested, it is a mark of the Old Western ethic that it defined modernity in terms of a Cartesian separation of mind from matter. Their idea was that modernity had severed the link between what we might loosely term Platonic transcendence and Aristotelian immanence. In response to this, Chesterton, amongst others – as part of a second, more 'consciously Christian', medieval revival, sought to reconcile this dualism by restoring the medieval concept of what Adrian J. Walker terms the appearance 'of the More-Than-World from within the world', entailing an 'intersection of nature and grace'.[5]

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[1] G. K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy* (1908; Cavalier Classics, 2015), 105.
[2] G. K. Chesterton, *St Thomas Aquinas* (1933; Kelly Bray: House of Stratus, 2001), 7.
[3] Chesterton, *Orthodoxy*, 107.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Nicholas J. Healy Jr., and D. C. Schindler, eds., *Being Holy in the World: Theology and Culture in the Thought of David L. Schindler* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2011), 124.

Walker writes that the 'appearing of the More-Than-World in the world unites, without confusion or separation, things that conventional thinking tends to hold apart […] overcoming dualism without leaving behind duality.[6] As David Torevell explains, too, in *Losing the Sacred: Ritual, Modernity and Liturgical Reform* (2000), this was a Christian concept of the 'sacred' common to the Middle Ages, founded on 'an embodied experience of the sacred'.[7] In other words, a 'sacramental view of reality'.[8] Here, the Dominican Friar Ephraem Chiffley explains, the 'sacred' is an expression of the 'revelation of God in Christ through the incarnation […] ritually expressed'.[9] In the same way that liturgy is itself a participation, or intersection, of nature with and grace, embracing the supernatural, nature has a vital utility; what David L. Schindler has referred to as 'the necessary and legitimate *instrumentality* of nature […] as a sign and expression of […] the intrinsic or transcendental truth and goodness and beauty of things […] in relation to God'.[10] As Harry Blamires proclaims, 'God calls; and all the vehicles of natural and human beauty are at his disposal in tugging at the soul of man with the vision of the glory'.[11] However, as Glenn W. Olsen claims, this sacramental conception, 'that there is a reality beyond the visible', was gradually lost, 'beginning in the late Middle Ages and continuing to the present'.[12] Olsen, in this sense, sees modernity as constituting 'a muffling of transcendence'.[13] Chiffley essentially concurs, remarking that 'modern society […] does encounter certain problems with conceiving of the cosmos as an objective reality bearing the capacity for meaning'.[14] Moreover, Chiffley, in 'The Altar: Place of Sacrifice and Sacred Space in the Religious Building', perceives that this is because Protestantism – synonymous with post-medieval society – has tended 'to adopt a theology of sacred space which takes every opportunity to avoid an "idolatry of place"'.[15] This runs contrary to Catholicism, which, Chiffley implies,

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[6] Ibid.

[7] David Torevell, *Losing the Sacred: Ritual, Modernity and Liturgical Reform* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000), 12.

[8] Glenn W. Olsen, *The Turn to Transcendence: The Role of Religion in the Twenty-First Century* (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 159.

[9] Sean Finnegan, ed., *Altar and Sacrifice: The Proceedings of the Second International Colloquium of Historical, Canonical and Theological Studies on the Roman Catholic Liturgy* (London: The Saint Austin Press, 1998), 24.

[10] David L. Schindler, *Ordering Love: Liberal Societies and the Memory of God* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2011), 9.

[11] Harry Blamires, *The Christian Mind: How Should a Christian Think?* (1963; Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2005), 183.

[12] Olsen, *The Turn to Transcendence,* 209.

[13] Ibid., 176.

[14] Finnegan, ed., *Altar and Sacrifice,* 27.

[15] Ibid., 22.

emphasises 'the numinosity of place'.[16] For Catholic theology takes a 'different view of the relationship between nature and revelation in which the nature of rite and sacred space […] is given its appropriate theological emphasis'; 'an entirely Catholic instinct' that functions within an 'immanentist context', working 'to investigate created nature as a means of coming to understand more deeply the supernatural revelation of Christ'.[17]

It was this revival of a medieval 'numinosity of place', of Aristotelian matter re-sanctified and invested with sacred meaning, which this chapter will now underline as being fundamentally Old Western, in response to an 'idolatry of place' that was considered to be fundamentally modern.

A Loss of Enchantment

In 1935 the English poet Laurie Lee was travelling down through Spain, an experience which would later form the core of his work *As I Walked Out One Midsummer Morning* (1969). At one point, in a 'nameless', though of course typically Spanish, village, we are told, he settled down for the evening in a smoky barn, illuminated inside by a glowing fire, around which men and animals gathered. This, Lee explained, was the 'pattern of Spanish life', a life 'which could have been that of England two centuries earlier'.[18] For 'across the whitewashed walls', he noticed, 'the shadows of man and beast flickered huge like ancestral ghosts, which since the days of the caves have haunted the corners of fantasy, but which the electric light has killed'.[19] There was in this description more than a hint of the otherworldly or numinous. And it was, indeed, with a note of melancholy that he thought this scene, or rather this experience, a tableau lost in England, perhaps forever.[20]

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[16] Ibid., 24. Torevell forwards this notion as well, that 'the Protestant emphasis on a sense of the sacred as the sublime (brought about by reading the word of God), rather than as a consequence of collective experience instigated through ritual engagement, became a hallmark of much Protestant thinking'. Torevell, *Losing the Sacred,* 13.

[17] Sean Finnegan, ed., *Altar and Sacrifice,* 24, 29. Erik Tonning has noted how the poet David Jones's 'attraction to the Catholic faith was grounded in the dignity and seriousness attributed to sign-making in the liturgy and sacramental tradition of that church'. Matthew Feldman, Erik Tonning, and Henry Mead, ed., *Broadcasting in the Modernist Era* (2014; London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 119.

[18] Laurie Lee, *As I Walked Out One Midsummer Morning* (1969; London: Penguin Books, 1971), 62.

[19] Ibid.

[20] This loss, Martin Pugh notes, was the 'underlying story' of Lee's 1959 work *Cider with Rosie*; meaning 'the process of opening up isolated villages as a result of improved transport and better prospects after 1918'. Martin Pugh, *We Danced All Night: A Social History of Britain Between the Wars* (2008; London: Vintage Books, 2009), 271-272.

What is implied here is that electricity was one of the many facets of modernity that had conspired to deprive society of those 'corners of fantasy' that had so much entertained Lee's imagination in that nameless barn in what might as well have been medieval Spain.

There was, indeed, a sense that, as a consequence of modernity, the world, including those who were bound to it, had become de-natured; 'take away the supernatural, and what remains is the unnatural', Chesterton wrote in 1905.[21] A thought that had overtaken those such as Lee in England, where modernity was particularly pronounced, arguably, insofar as it was not Spain, was a loss of enchantment or wonder. And the electric light was, for Lee at least, an appropriate symbol of that waylaying, in the sense that it was a likely cause. We should note this. When we consider this supposed loss of enchantment – a category of literature in itself, a poignant reflection on the secularisation of the West in general, meaning the decline of Christianity, essentially – we are also considering the conditions that prompted, or at the very least served to accelerate, that process in the eyes of the Old Western ethic. For this reason, this portion of Lee's work is telling. What it tells us, or what we may suppose from this scene in the barn, is that Lee himself thought it far easier to believe in dragons and goblins and other such beings in the medieval context of the fireplace. In this sense, too, theology was not so important. Rather, it was suburbia, in particular, which was viewed as being especially inimical to the imagination and its sense of wonder.

During the interwar period, there existed the notion that something akin to a hideous, unrestrained monster was assaulting England's green and sacred pastures. And what it amounted to was a broad de-consecration of the land itself. Clough Williams-Ellis's *England and the Octopus* (1928), as well as *Britain and the Beast* (1937), riled against the sprawl of modern suburbia, particularly in the Home Counties. 'Aliens incursive into the Home Counties' summed up what was fast overtaking the south of England.[22] This conception, expressed by Williams-Ellis, amongst others, did, despite the overbearing rhetoric, have a basis in fact. The interwar period, we should note, saw an average of 300,000 houses built annually, mostly as suburbs, reaching an eventual peak of 350,000 in 1936. 60,000 acres of rural land, much of it in the south of England, was built on every year.[23] As a result, those such as Sheila Kaye-Smith, for example, were left indignant at 'our lovely Kent and Sussex

[21] G. K. Chesterton, *Heretics* (1905; London: John Lane, 1909), 99.
[22] Clough Williams-Ellis, ed., *Britain and the Beast* (London: Readers' Union, 1938), 211.
[23] Tristram Hunt, 'England and the Octopus', History Today, vol. 56, no. 7 (2006).

lanes, stripped, gashed, widened'.[24] Sussex, importantly, received a particular attention to detail, very much evident in Howard Marshall's contribution to Williams-Ellis's work; including his focus on the region around the Cuckmere Valley, as well as the increasingly suburbanised stretch of coast between Seaford and Brighton. And though such works as *Britain and the Beast* were not constrained in terms of their geographical coverage of Britain as a whole, there was, nonetheless, a sense that the Home Counties – perhaps because of their close vicinity to London – attained an honorary, protectionist title, exactly because this was where modernity, in the form of suburbia, was making its presence felt most of all. *Britain and the Beast* was a carefully considered response to this. And such bodies as the *Council for the Preservation of Rural England* (CPRE), inaugurated in 1926, as well as such enactments as the *Restriction of Ribbon Development Act*, in 1935, constituted an attempt to prevaricate upon 'the disorganised, unsightly, and highly dangerous method of ribbon development'.[25] The author Evelyn Waugh would surely have welcomed this, having deplored, in his novel *Vile Bodies* (1930), the nauseating sight, seen from an aeroplane, of the so-called 'sceptre'd isle, this earth of majesty, this something or other Eden', pathetically reduced to a 'straggling red suburb; arterial roads dotted with little cars; factories, some of them working, others empty and decaying; a disused canal; some distant hills sown with bungalows; wireless masts and overhead power cables'.[26] These were the conditions of modernity that made it increasingly difficult to believe 'this something or other Eden'. Waugh's use of Shakespeare's description here, it is important to note, is not so much patriotic as it is religious. The earth was fast being made spiritually inert by the advances of secular modernity. And despite the efforts of Williams-Ellis, there remained the sense that what was being fought out in such counties as Sussex was a rear-guard action, one that always appeared on the brink of defeat. This was one such context that spurred on Lee to eulogise Spain, perhaps, which had so far not experienced what Waugh described in *Vile Bodies*. What we also see here is that, insofar as Sussex, in particular, was a battlefield, this war was being fought in a specific place; and this is significant in itself. For what the 'electric light' and 'suburbia' threatened was not abstract theology alone, but a locatable 'fairy wildness', Sussex itself, which bestrode both the material and the spiritual plane of existence – to such an extent that when Sussex was threatened so, too, was Eden. In this sense, we shall now go beyond the common identification of the countryside as 'a

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[24] Williams-Ellis, ed., *Britain and the Beast*, 42.

[25] *Hansard*, House of Lords Debates, vol. 96, 16 May 1935, c. 918.

[26] Evelyn Waugh, *Vile Bodies* (1930; London: Penguin Books, 2000), 168.

key element in English national identity'.[27] While such works as *The Geographies of Englishness: Landscape and the National Past, 1880-1940* (2002), *Romantic Moderns: English Writers, Artists and the Imagination from Virginia Woolf to John Piper* (2010), and *English Journeys: National and Cultural Identity in 1930s and 1940s England* (2012), have recently forwarded this narrative, this section will emphasise what might be termed the 'geographies of the sacred'.

Sussex provides us with a compelling example and case study of the perceived loss of enchantment in the twentieth century being rooted in a specific time and place. And what was threatened was *belief* itself; a belief in fairies, for example, which came to stand as an allegory, or rather a stand-in, for a belief in a spiritual conception of the universe itself. Already Peter Brandon has detailed, in *The Discovery of Sussex* (2010), how the county, south of London, came to be 'honoured in book after book', to the point that 'exalting Sussex was done as a matter of course'.[28] Owing to the rise of the railways, as well as the near proximity of the city, there was, he explains, a '"discovery of Sussex', tantamount to 'Sussex-mania'.[29] In particular, Hilaire Belloc and Rudyard Kipling, who adopted the county as their home, 'helped Sussex acquire a new, super-charged identity'.[30] Brandon has noted three strands that informed this conception: a critique of *laissez-faire* capitalism; the denunciation of 'the insidious "Londonisation" of the Sussex countryside'; and a 'love of the rural life'.[31] However, I would like to forward a fourth strand here: which is Sussex as a sacramental expression of the 'More-Than-World' within the world. Although Brandon writes that the Sussex of writers such as Belloc and Kipling 'was a vision of Eden', in the sense that it was idyllic, it may also be argued that Belloc, especially, took this view far more literally.[32]

Writing in H. J. Massingham's *English Country* (1934), for instance, the poet Edmund Blunden wrote a eulogy for the county that he knew so well, explaining that he saw 'in much of Sussex a fairy wildness'.[33] This, Blunden admitted, was the Sussex of his childhood: 'naiads were common with me in those days – for this was the fairy Sussex. Even hunting

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[27] Pugh, *We Danced All Night,* 276.
[28] Peter Brandon, *The Discovery of Sussex* (Andover: Phillimore, 2010), 1.
[29] Ibid., 11, 17.
[30] Ibid., 193.
[31] Ibid., 210, 211.
[32] Ibid., 194.
[33] H. J. Massingham, *English Country: Fifty Essays by Various Authors* (London: Wishart & Co., 1934), 44.

the hedges there in winter for the dormouse in his drey had some thrill of a troll-and-elf creation in it.'[34] This was, of course, a vision of Sussex that transcended, or rather ignored, the worldly reality of county life; for example, that of 304 children in the village of Cuckfield, as late as 1936, one third suffered from malnutrition.[35] As Massingham noted, then, Blunden's love letter to Sussex was an 'elegiac, exquisitely lettered memorial of the Sussex of reverie rather than reality, in which the very phrases he often uses wistfully recall the old poets of the countryside (not to mention that there is a blossoming bough of his own poetry)'.[36] However, this was actually the problem at the heart of the loss of enchantment in the twentieth century. This 'fairy Sussex' was increasingly seen to be a vision relegated to 'reverie' rather than 'reality'. We see this unease expressed most obviously in the work of Belloc.

Belloc's short novel *The Four Men: A Farrago* (1911) – dubbed by Brandon 'the most passionate and original book on Sussex ever written'[37] – recounts a plaintive trek across Sussex, taking in what remained of what Blunden had described as a 'fairy wildness'. Belloc, like Lee, too, was signalling the ostensible end of fairy Sussex. Indeed, he had written that, living in Sussex, 'one feels a little like a man watching a survival, or like living upon one of the group of islands remaining out of the lost Atlantis'.[38] Writing in *The Four Men*, Belloc explained that he 'would, if he could, preserve this land in the flesh, and keep it there as it is, forever'.[39] But since he knew that, in the face of the 'Beast', as expressed by Williams-Ellis later, he could not, he would, instead, 'keep her image', meaning that he would immortalise it in prose before it was 'forgotten' and made 'different' by modernity:

> For many years I have meant to write it down and have not; nor would I write it down now, or issue this book at all, Sussex, did I not know that you, who must like all created things decay, might with the rest of us be very near your ending. For I know very well in my mind that a day will come when the holy place shall perish and all the people of it and never more be what they were.[40]

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[34] Ibid., 57.

[35] Pugh, *We Danced All Night*, 270.

[36] Massingham, *English Country*, xi.

[37] Brandon, *Sussex*, 217.

[38] Hilaire Belloc, and Robert Speaight, ed., *Letters from Hilaire Belloc* (London: Hollis & Carter, 1958), 46.

[39] Hilaire Belloc, *The Four Men: A Farrago* (1911; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), xix.

[40] Ibid., xix, xx.

Sussex, Belloc saw, was 'approaching its doom'.[41] And here, too, there is the sense that Belloc's Sussex shared something with J. R. R. Tolkien's Middle-earth at the conclusion of *The Lord of the Rings* (1954-55); in fact, *The Four Men* in a way anticipated this work. For Belloc's words chime with the wizard Gandalf's own pronouncement, near the end of Tolkien's work, that '"the Third Age of the world is ended, and the new age is begun; and it is your task to order its beginning and to preserve what may be preserved. For though much has been saved, much must now pass away."'[42] What marks both Belloc's Sussex and Tolkien's Middle-earth, at the conclusion of their respective epochs, is a loss of enchantment. The Elves, one of the races populating Tolkien's world, are departing Middle-earth forever; just as the Ents, an enchanted species of walking and talking trees, are also said to be in decline. '"The New Age begins,"' Gandalf says to one such tree, '"and in this age it may well prove that the kingdoms of Men shall outlast you, Fangorn my friend."'[43] 'Treebeard's face became sad. "Forests may grow," he said. "Woods may spread. But not Ents."'[44] Here, then, we are forced to face the melancholy thought that such beings are no longer considered to be a reality.

Belloc himself evidently disapproved of what was happening to his county. Already, in such commuter towns as Burgess Hill and Haywards Heath, 'towns of the London sort', as Belloc relates to them, modernity had established beachheads in Sussex.[45] This is made clear in *The Four Men*, as the character 'Myself', perhaps Belloc himself, sets out on his journey with his three companions, 'Grizzlebeard', the 'Poet' and the 'Sailor', across the 'fairy wildness' of Sussex, which is a vision of an enchanted Sussex that can only be maintained by deliberately avoiding such railway towns as Haywards Heath and Burgess Hill, which Belloc condemns as that 'detestable part of the county, which was not made for men, but rather for tourists or foreigners, or London people that had lost their way'.[46] Here another notion, and indeed an extra level of complexity, is touched on here, in that it is not so much that modernity had killed off the fairies, but instead deprived them of their natural habitat: a vital rurality.

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[41] Ibid., xix.

[42] J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King* (1955; London: HarperCollins Publishers, 2011), 971.

[43] Ibid., 979.

[44] Ibid., 981.

[45] Belloc, *The Four Men, 2*3.

[46] Ibid., 24.

Rudyard Kipling's work *Puck of Pook's Hill* (1906), a novel that, like Tolkien's and Belloc's own works, forwarded the notion that the supernatural and all of its attendant auxiliaries – fairies, trolls and talking-trees – had retreated in the face of the modern world. It also posits, implicitly, that people themselves, or rather those country people disposed to believe in fairies, had been lost to modernity. Kipling's chapter 'Dymchurch Flit' is a particular example of this. The two children Dan and Una, Kipling's main characters, have unwittingly conjured up the famous Puck, of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, on Midsummer Eve. Like Treebeard – 'the oldest living thing that still walks beneath the Sun upon this Middle-earth'[47] – Puck describes himself as 'the oldest Old Thing in England', a fairy, being one of the 'People of the Hills', though 'unluckily the Hills are empty now', he adds mournfully: 'I'm the only one left.'[48]

> There's no good beating about the bush: it's true. The People of the Hills have all left. I saw them come into Old England and I saw them go. Giants, trolls, kelpies, brownies, goblins, imps; wood, tree, mound, and water spirits; heath-people, hill-watchers, treasure-guards, good people, little people, pishogues, leprechauns, night-riders, pixies, nixies, gnomes, and the rest – gone, all gone![49]

'"But they didn't all flit at once"', we are told. '"They dropped off, one by one, through the centuries."'[50] However, the 'Dymchurch Flit', Puck relays, was 'the biggest flit of any'.[51] This tale within a tale is particularly curious since the reason cited for the flight of the fairies from England is the Reformation – which was seen by many Catholic intellectuals, such as Belloc and Chesterton, to have ushered in modernity, being seen as tantamount to the rise of Protestantism. Kipling is not so explicit, and he might not have subscribed to this view at all, although the conversation between old Hobden and Puck, in disguise, which Dan and Una are in the know, is perhaps telling. The Pharisees (fairies), we are told, were content in England '"till Queen Bess' father", Henry VIII, 'come in with his Reformatories"'.[52]

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[47] J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers* (1954; London: HarperCollins Publishers, 2011), 499.
[48] Rudyard Kipling, *Puck of Pook's Hill* (1906; Kelly Bray: House of Stratus, 2009), 8.
[49] Ibid., 9.
[50] Ibid., 13.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Ibid., 193.

> "He used the parish churches something shameful. Justabout tore the gizzards out of I dunnamany. Some folk in England they held with 'en; but some they saw it different, an' it eended in 'em takim' sides an' burnin' each other no bounds, accordin' which side was top, time bein'. That terrified the Pharisees: for Goodwill among Flesh an' Blood is meat an' drink to 'em, an' ill-will is poison."[53]

'"This Reformation tarrified the Pharisees"', and '"they packed into […] [Romney] Marsh from all parts"', crying '"Fair or foul, we must flit out o' this, for Merry England's done with, an' we're reckoned among the Images."'[54] In the end, we are told, the Pharisees sailed '"to France, where yet awhile folks hadn't tore down the Images"'.[55] This 'flit', a sort of supernatural Dunkirk, Puck attributed to the death of the Middle Ages in the tumult of the sixteenth century.

Puck, in a sense, is a sort of Loch Ness figure, in that he ought not to have survived the ending of his own Age. Nor, indeed, should old Hobden have survived. He, too, might be seen to be a remnant of the Middle Ages. Perhaps this is implied by Kipling, though in a roundabout manner, when Puck tells Dan and Una that '"I came into England with Oak, Ash, and Thorn, and when Oak, Ash, and Thorn are gone I shall go too."'[56] This seems to suggest that the fate of the last supernatural being in England depends on the survival of rural England itself, a vital prerequisite, whose representatives, in this case, might be said to be old Hobden and Tom Shoesmith, who Puck impersonates in the telling of this tale. Their rustic speech, as well as Kipling's substitution of the word 'fairies' with the old Sussex dialect equivalent, 'Pharisees', marks them out as true Sussex men, in the sense that, as Belloc would have recognised, they are most certainly not 'London people that had lost their way'. And Old Hobden, it is implied, does believe in the fairies when he throws a small piece of potato toward the door for them. Puck, impersonating Tom, presses him on the subject: '"D'ye believe or – do ye?"'[57] Old Hobden's reply is evasive, yet somehow confirming: '"I ain't sayin' nothin', because I've heard naught, an' I've seen naught. But if

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[53] Ibid.
[54] Ibid., 193-194.
[55] Ibid., 194.
[56] Ibid., 9.
[57] Ibid., 191.

you was to say there was more things after dark in the shaws than men, or fur, or feather, or fin, I dunno as I'd go far about to call you a liar."'[58] What we might take from this is that the fairies are not dead, then, so long as men such as old Hobden, a rural remnant of the Middle Ages, survive to believe in them.

There is a scene in Belloc's *The Four Men* that, rather significantly, takes place on All Hallow's Eve, when Grizzlebeard asks Myself if he has '"ever seen the Fairies?"'[59] Such a question places Belloc's work in a literary tradition that Carole G. Silver terms 'the fairy lore complex. The fairies – never quite believed in – are always leaving but never gone.'[60] As Nicola Brown has written, too, in her own study of the subject:

> Fairies are part of the lost enchantment of the world. The enchanted
> world, in its purest sense, was inhabited by the gods of animistic religions:
> supernatural beings with whom, in the course of daily living, primitive
> man had to interact, and through whom the unknowable chanciness of
> the world was mediated and made meaningful.[61]

'To dream of fairies is to dream of the world modernity has lost; to imagine the fairies' farewell is to say goodbye to it forever.'[62] Belloc, however, was not prepared to say goodbye to the fairies forever. For what *The Four Men* also constitutes, apart from a eulogy, is an attempt at recovery – or rather a re-discovery and affirmation of the 'More-Than-World' within the world. Belloc's work, unlike that of Kipling's, was, in this sense, a departure from the fairy-lore tradition of the nineteenth century. Moreover, it was consciously Christian.

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[58] Ibid.

[59] Belloc, *The Four Men,* 55.

[60] Carole G. Silver, *Strange and Secret Peoples: Fairies and Victorian Consciousness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 192.

[61] Nicola Bown, *Fairies in Nineteenth-Century Art and Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 182.

[62] Ibid.

Reaffirming 'Faërie'

> "I do not think I have ever seen them: alas for me! But I think I have heard them once or twice, murmuring and chattering, and flattering and mocking at me, and alluring me onwards towards the perilous edges and the water-ledges where the torrent tumbles and cascades in the high hills."[63]

The character Myself believes in fairies, though he has not seen them. Although at the outset of *The Four Men* Belloc's work is suffused with melancholy and foreboding, there is a sense, which develops as the four men delve deeper into Sussex, that Blunden's 'fairy wildness' is still out there if the reader is willing to follow Belloc wholeheartedly. In other words, Belloc finds a way for us to recover what we believe we have lost forever. And the way back is through the imagination. If the flame that is seemingly so necessary to enliven those 'corners of fantasy', evinced by Lee, is no longer available to us, it might still be reproduced in the arts, including literature, as part of the Old Western ethic. This, I posit, was what Belloc was attempting to do in *The Four Men*. For there is a key scene, which takes place on 31 October, 'on this night of all nights in the year', writes Belloc, when 'there is most stir and business among the things that are not seen by men, and there is a rumour in all the woods; and very late, when men are sleeping, all those who may not come to earth at any other time, come and hold their revels'.[64] Myself sits that night in the 'fire-lit darkness' – much the same as Lee did in the barn in Spain – engulfed, it appears, in a darkness that is nevertheless very much 'alive'.[65] 'Still wakeful', and 'remembering All-Hallows and what dancing there was in the woods that night', Myself 'slipped to the door very quietly […] and went out and watched the world'.[66]

Belloc's first biographer Robert Speaight believed that *The Four Men* represented a 'watershed' moment in Belloc's 'life and work'.[67] 'I put my whole heart into that book', Belloc was once heard to say.[68] Yet Speaight forwards the work to us as a product of shattered illusions in which 'many hopes had been disappointed' – pointing out, too, that

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[63] Belloc, *The Four Men,* 55.
[64] Ibid., 53.
[65] Ibid., 70.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Robert Speaight, *The Life of Hilaire Belloc* (London: Hollis & Carter, 1957), 327.
[68] Quoted in ibid., 328.

the story concludes with Myself alone on the South Downs on 2 November, the Day of the Dead.[69] Of course, Sussex is doomed, in terms of it becoming a mere suburb of London. However, it may be that Belloc escapes this. He had entered into his own world, where the Sussex of reverie was very much a reality; and hence, incarnational. Belloc was happy to be there. And it is exactly this material Sussex interlocking with the Sussex of reverie that Belloc bequeaths to us as reality. In this manner, *The Four Men* culminates in a profound sense of elation at this recovery. As Belloc himself pens:

> … and therefore even youth that dies
>
> May leave of right its legacies
>
> […]
>
> … and of mine opulence I leave
>
> To every Sussex girl and boy
>
> My lot in universal joy.[70]

The source of that 'joy' is Belloc's discovery of 'this Eden which is Sussex still'.[71] In fact, the Garden of Eden, Belloc tells us, is locatable, just '"under Duncton"'![72] In 1906, Belloc had also referred to Sussex as 'that part of England what is very properly called her Eden'.[73] It is no mere coincidence that by being able to access, once more, those 'corners of fantasy', Belloc's journey is actually a religious experience that affirms a Thomist reading of the landscape that wholly rejects the 'idolatry of place': for 'all four of us together received the sacrament of that wide and silent beauty, and we ourselves went in silence to receive it', Belloc writes.[74] In recovering a belief in the supernatural we also rediscover our religiosity and thus reject the modern. We become Chesterton's Christian saint, wild eyed, staring outwards toward a material manifestation of the eternal reality made real in the incarnation. In this sense, too, Tolkien's conception 'Faërie' – a theory that ultimately found most perfect expression in his work *The Lord of the Rings* – might also said to be Old Western in its employment of the imagination to realise a higher reality.

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[69] Ibid., 327.

[70] Belloc, *The Four Men,* 160.

[71] Ibid., 43.

[72] Ibid., 41-42.

[73] Hilaire Belloc, *Hills and the Sea* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1906), 237.

[74] Belloc, *The Four Men*, 55.

Tolkien's 'Perilous Realm'

There is a general view that *The Lord of the Rings*, in particular, reflects in some manner Tolkien's Christian faith. However, the extent to which this aspect of the work has been emphasised by scholars has differed. Christopher Wrigley believes that *The Lord of the Rings* 'is rife with Christian thought and feeling', for instance.[75] Jeffrey L. Morrow concurs, writing that 'Tolkien's stories of Middle Earth are, in some sense, about the real world; that is, about the world God created and in which God is active'.[76] They 'deserve to be understood as a form of Christian fiction'.[77] Bradley J. Birzer also links this work with the author's affirmation 'that the hope of the modern world lay in a return to some form of the *Christiana Res Publica'*.[78] Joseph Pearce, too, has dedicated a work to uncovering 'the hidden meaning of The Lord of the Rings'.[79] For Pearce, this meaning is more specifically Roman Catholic; though Birzer and Morrow also underline Middle-earth's theological, arguably Catholic, underpinnings. Tom Shippey, on the other hand, while admitting that the work 'contains within it hints of the Christian message', sees it in terms of 'a heathen or a pre-Christian world'.[80] Ronald Hutton takes a similar view, noting that though Tolkien's fiction 'can be made to seem compatible with Christianity in general', they are, nevertheless, 'not only devoid of any formal practice of religion by their characters, but are enjoyed by huge numbers of readers who lack any sense that these books are specifically Christian works'.[81] Paul E. Kerry, however, posits that Tolkien did not seek to feature Christianity explicitly because this would reduce the potency and readability of the work. This was 'the theoretical challenge that Tolkien faced': that 'exhibiting monotheism would force Tolkien to define its relationship to actual Judaism and Christianity […] Much of the debate over the relationship between Christianity and Tolkien's fiction is over how he

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[75] Christopher Wrigley, *The Return of the Hero: Rowling, Tolkien, Pullman* (Sussex: Book Guild Ltd., 2005), 58.

[76] Jeffrey L. Morrow, *Seeking the Lord of Middle Earth: Theological Essays on J. R. R. Tolkien* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2017), xvi.

[77] Ibid., xv.

[78] Bradley J. Birzer, *J. R. R. Tolkien's Sanctifying Myth: Understanding Middle Earth* (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2003), xxiv.

[79] Joseph Pearce, *Frodo's Journey: Discovering the Hidden Meaning of The Lord of the Rings* (Charlotte: Saint Benedict Press, 2015), 142.

[80] Tom Shippey, *J. R. R. Tolkien: Author of the Century* (2000; London: HarperCollins Publishers, 2001), 182, 210.

[81] Paul E. Kerry, ed., *The Ring and the Cross: Christianity and The Lord of the Rings* (2011; Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2013), 91.

negotiated this trap.'[82] What we should note here, then, is that no Tolkien scholar views Middle-earth as a wholly material world.

'Faërie' was a literary concept developed by Tolkien. It was delineated most clearly in his work *On Fairy-Stories* (1947). Here he laid out in clear view his motivation for writing fantasy. In doing so, he made sure to point out that 'the definition of a fairy-story' had very little to do with fairies, but was instead primarily concerned with 'the nature of *Faërie*: the Perilous Realm itself'.[83] As Verlyn Flieger writes, Tolkien's 'essential concept', in regards to this, 'never altered'.[84] Faërie 'did not denote a supernatural creature but rather a supernatural region of enchantment'.[85] This is an important point to grasp, as Tolkien writes:

> [Faërie] contains many things besides elves and fays, and besides dwarfs,
> witches, trolls, giants, or dragons: it holds the seas, the sun, the moon,
> the sky; and the earth, and all things that are in it: tree and bird, water
> and stone, wine and bread, and ourselves, mortal men, when we are
> enchanted.[86]

Moreover, Faërie, as explained in his work *On Fairy-Stories*, is 'plainly not primarily concerned with possibility, but with desirability'.[87] 'The magic of Faërie is not an end in itself, its virtue is in its operations: among these are the satisfaction of certain primordial human desires', Tolkien informs us.[88] In another sense, it is a rebellion, for Faërie, or 'fantasy', ultimately means 'freedom from the domination of observed "fact"' – and it was for this reason that Tolkien said that he believed his subject to be 'not a lower but a higher form of Art, indeed the most nearly pure form, and so (when achieved) the most potent'.[89]

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[82] Ibid., 19-20.

[83] J. R. R. Tolkien, *On Fairy-Stories: Expanded Edition, with Commentary and Notes* (1947; London: HarperCollins Publishers, 2014), 32.

[84] Michael D. C. Drout, ed., *J. R. R. Tolkien Encyclopaedia: Scholarship and Critical Assessment* (2007; New York: Routledge, 2013), 183.

[85] Ibid.

[86] Tolkien, *On Fairy-Stories,* 32.

[87] Ibid., 55.

[88] Ibid., 34.

[89] Ibid., 60.

We should make sure to note Tolkien's use of the phrase 'observed "fact"', as well as his careful consideration of the word 'supernatural', which he termed 'a dangerous and difficult word in any of its senses, looser or stricter'.[90] Certainly, he wrote, the word 'supernatural' ought not to be applied to fairies themselves. And this was the moment, which is easy to miss, when Tolkien revealed the essential theology at the heart of his conception of Faërie: for in *reality*, which, paradoxically, fairy tales for Tolkien are all about, 'it is man who is, in contrast to fairies, supernatural (and often of diminutive stature); where they are natural, far more natural than he'.[91] This was really an expression of a notion that was itself a product of his Roman Catholic faith; a simple principle that while fairies, in Faërie, were an imaginary creation of Man,[92] Man himself is a creation of God, and is, therefore, a 'supernatural' creation. This is what Michael Tomko means when he writes about 'the spiritual depth of […] [Tolkien's] countercultural response to modernity'.[93] Essentially, this was what *The Lord of the Rings* was. For, as Tomko writes, Tolkien's work 're-presents and embodies a Catholic view of the world', as well as the author's 'own sincere expression of relief and joy in discovering it'.[94] We can see a parallel with Belloc here, of course. Tolkien's vision need not be a specifically Catholic vision. To clarify Tomko's point here, the purpose of Faërie is to remind the reader, who has been brought up by modernity to only accept 'observed "fact"', that they are themselves 'supernatural' beings, and that, being enchanted, life itself is a wholly 'religious' experience. As Chesterton, who would become Catholic, had written in 1908: 'we have all forgotten what we really are.'[95] Tolkien also encourages us to view the world through the eyes of Chesterton's gawping gothic saint. There is, then, an evident closeness between Chesterton and Tolkien as well.

Writing in one of his chief works, *Orthodoxy*, Chesterton's chapter 'The Ethics of Elfland' expressed a vision very similar to Tolkien's later conception of the 'Perilous Realm', that 'Fairyland is nothing but the sunny country of common sense'.[96] And it was for this reason that he 'would always trust the old wives' fables against the old maids' facts'.[97]

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[90] Ibid., 28.
[91] Ibid.
[92] The 'essential power of Faërie', writes Tolkien, 'is thus the power of making immediately effective by the will the visions of "fantasy" […] Man becomes a sub-creator.' Tolkien, *On Fairy-Stories,* 42.
[93] Kerry, *The Ring and the Cross, 2*07.
[94] Ibid.
[95] Chesterton, *Orthodoxy*, 39.
[96] Ibid., 35.
[97] Ibid., 34.

My first and last philosophy, that which I believe in with unbroken certainty, I learnt in the nursery. I generally learnt it from a nurse; that is, from the solemn and star-appointed priestess at once of democracy and tradition. The things I believed most then, the things I believe most now, are the things called fairy tales. They seem to me to be the entirely reasonable things.[98]

Chesterton was, in this sense, 'more inclined to believe the ruck of hard-working people than to believe that special and troublesome literary class' to which he belonged.[99] And he shared, or rather anticipated, Tolkien's concept of Faërie, which he termed, for want of a better term, 'Elfland'. Fairyland was supposed to be 'astonishing', and for one very singular purpose:

We all like astonishing tales because they touch the nerve of the ancient instinct of astonishment. This is proved by the fact that when we are very young children we do not need fairy tales: we only need tales. Mere life is interesting enough. A child of seven is excited by being told that Tommy opened a door and saw a dragon. But a child of three is excited by being told that Tommy opened a door […] These tales say that apples were golden only to refresh the forgotten moment when we found that they were green. They make rivers run with wine only to make us remember, for one wild moment, that they run with water.[100]

It was for this reason, too, that Tolkien complained that 'fairy stories' had 'in the modern lettered world been relegated to the "nursery"'.[101] In fact, he wrote, 'the association of children and fairy-stories' was largely 'an accident' of history.[102] And it is telling, too, that Tolkien claimed that he had only acquired 'a real taste' for fairy stories 'after his '"nursery" days'.[103] Tolkien had much the same idea as Chesterton, then, and it was for this reason, as well, that he even went so far, in 1956, to say that he found it 'a pity' that 'children' had

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[98] Ibid., 35.
[99] Ibid., 34.
[100] Ibid., 38-39.
[101] Tolkien, *On Fairy-Stories,* 50.
[102] Ibid.
[103] Ibid., 56.

'become interested, even engrossed, in *The Lord of the Rings* […] [for actually] it was not written for them'.[104]

Tolkien's creation 'Middle-earth' was necessarily how he described it in 1955:

> A monotheistic world of "natural theology". The odd fact that there are no churches, temples, or religious rites and ceremonies, is simply part of the historical climate depicted […] [although] the "Third Age" was not a Christian world.[105]

Again, writing this time in 1953, Tolkien noted:

> *The Lord of the Rings* is of course a fundamentally religious and Catholic work; unconsciously so at first, but consciously in the revision. That is why I have not put in, or have cut out, practically all references to anything like "religion", to cults or practices, in the imaginary world. For the religious element is absorbed into the story and the symbolism.[106]

Ultimately, Tolkien thought it 'fatal' for a fairy story to be noticeably 'Christian', though he believed it 'must, as all art, reflect and contain in solution elements of moral and religious truth (or error), but not explicit, not in the known form of the primary "real" world'.[107] And an indivisible 'element' of that 'truth', was the 'Perilous Realm itself'. Accordingly, *The Lord of the Rings*, it may be argued, is an allegory of the 'More-Than-World' within the world.

Writing to his publisher Stanley Unwin, in 1937, Tolkien commented that 'the presence (even if only on the borders) of the terrible' was what gave the 'imagined world its verisimilitude. A safe fairy-land is untrue to all worlds.'[108] 'Faërie', Tolkien insists, is, and must be, a 'perilous land'.[109] What Tolkien was responding to here was the author Richard Hughes' suggestion, to Unwin, that certain parts of Tolkien's story *The Hobbit* (1937) might

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[104] J. R. R. Tolkien, and Humphrey Carpenter, ed., *The Letters of J. R. R. Tolkien* (1981; London: HarperCollins Publishers, 2006), 249.
[105] Ibid., 220.
[106] Ibid., 172.
[107] Ibid., 144.
[108] Ibid., 24.
[109] Tolkien, *On Fairy-Stories,* 27.

prove 'too terrifying for bedtime reading'.[110] Tolkien, to the contrary, thought that the 'terrible' was actually an essential aspect of Middle-earth, or rather Faërie: 'the realm or state in which fairies have their being.'[111] The 'terrible' was a large part of its appeal. Dragons, especially Tolkien's dragons, are dangerous. And he freely admitted that he 'desired dragons with a profound desire [...] at whatever cost of peril'.[112] Of course, his 'timid body did not wish to have them in the neighbourhood', not in Oxford at least.[113] And yet, he concluded, 'the dweller in the quiet and fertile plains may hear of the tormented hills and the unharvested sea and long for them in his heart. For the heart is hard though the body be soft.'[114] Tolkien desired a sombre world not without risk; a universe of consequences, or meaning, as well as potential misdeeds and wrong turns, but not without light either: a reflection, perhaps, of Man as a supernatural creature, but also of Life as a religious experience in itself, pointing toward an objective cosmic order. Tolkien certainly believed that it was. Indeed, he desired it, 'at whatever cost of peril'.

Mirkwood

What the Old Western Men harboured was a desire, as expressed by Tolkien, which, as a result of the modern world, indeed because of it, required an active response capable of challenging modernity. Faërie was such a response; a key element of which was, Tolkien explained, 'recovery', meaning 'a return and renewal of health', the 'regaining of clear view'.[115] One method of achieving this – which was employed on a broad scale, in literature, art and music – was to make use of Faërie, or the 'Ethics of Elfland', to reenchant a landscape that modernity had ostensibly rendered supernaturally inert. In this sense, art's purpose was to sprinkle fairy dust over a landscape and re-awaken Pan or Treebeard from their slumber. Trees and woods now attain a particular prominence in Faërie. It is, therefore, worth taking note of the work of Tolkien, but also that of the artist Paul Nash and the composer John Ireland, who, in their work, managed something of a 'recovery', reenchanting the landscape in the face of modernity. In doing so, what they also did, invariably, was to introduce an element of menace, which was so important to the

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[110] Tolkien and Carpenter, ed., *Letters,* 24.
[111] Tolkien, *On Fairy-Stories,* 32.
[112] Ibid., 55.
[113] Ibid.
[114] Ibid.
[115] Ibid., 67.

rendering of a 'perilous realm', setting aside the warmth and comfort of Tolkien's Shire in order to step across the border into the world of the supernatural – where we discover that it is, in fact, real. For, of course, this is something that we are meant to experience, as we do, in the case of *The Lord of the Rings*, through Frodo and the other journeying hobbits; as we will also do later with Nash and Ireland. The literary device that served most of all to achieve this effect of shocking the disbeliever out of his disbelief might be best summed up as 'Mirkwood'.

The Old Forest is '"a dark bad place, if half the tales be true"', says Daddy Twofoot, in Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*.[116] But are the tales true? Deep in 'the comfortable heart of the Shire', the idyllic home of the hobbits, the majority are disbelievers in the supernatural.[117] Although some hobbits, 'whose business took them to the borders [of the Shire] saw strange things […] most hobbits still laughed at them'.[118] '"Queer things you do hear these days, to be sure"', says Sam Gamgee to Ted Sandyman in *The Green Dragon* in Bywater; '"queer things"' which Ted disparages as being mere '"children's stories"' for the '"fire-side"':

> "No doubt…", retorted Sam, "and I daresay there's more truth in some of them than you reckon. Who invented the stories anyway? Take dragons now."
> "No thank 'ee," said Ted, "I won't. I heard tell of them when I was a youngster, but there's no call to believe in them now. There's only one Dragon in Bywater, and that's Green," he said, getting a general laugh.[119]

Ted Sandyman constitutes a rare intrusion of modernity into Middle-earth. For most hobbits, apart from such notable examples as Sam, discount entirely anything that they have not seen with their own eyes. On a superficial level, then, it might seem that the hobbits are a representation of 'Merrie England' itself: they are, after all, described by Tolkien in the prologue as being a 'merry folk' dwelling in 'a well-ordered and well-farmed countryside'.[120] There is also the view of Tom Shippey, one of Tolkien's most noted

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[116] J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring* (1954; London: HarperCollins Publishers, 2002), 29.
[117] Ibid., 58.
[118] Ibid.
[119] Ibid.
[120] Ibid., 1-2.

biographers, who believes that the Shire represents 'political misrule', as well as a 'crisis of confidence', which is itself 'an allegory of England in the aftermath of the war [1939-45]'.[121] But as quaint as the hobbits may seem to us, they are, in one vital sense, entirely 'modern', in that they are generally unwilling or unable to believe in the supernatural. This is all the more curious since Tolkien once wrote that he was 'in fact a hobbit (in all but size)'.[122]

In *The Green Dragon* Sam and Ted move on to discuss '"these Tree-men, these giants"'.[123] '"They do say that one bigger than a tree was seen up away beyond the North Moors not long back"', says Sam.[124] His cousin, Hal, had claimed that he had seen one: '"This one was *walking*."'[125] '"Then Hal can't have seen one", said Ted. There was some laughing and clapping: the audience seemed to think that Ted had scored a point.'[126] These 'Tree-men', or rather the 'Ents', we find out later, turn out to be very real creatures. Ted is wrong to dismiss such reports, though, of course, at the time the majority of the hobbits in *The Green Dragon* are on his side. Tolkien will shock us out of our comfortable complacency by forcing us to journey outside of the borders of the Shire and into 'Mirkwood'.

Tolkien writes that the hobbits 'only lived on the borders of the Wild, and were mostly unaware of it'.[127] The Wild is the area outside of the Shire, an inhospitable land, which is only prevented from encroaching on it because rangers, unbeknownst to the hobbits, patrol and protect its borders. In their 'pleasant corner of the world', the hobbits heed 'less and less the world outside where dark things moved', thinking 'that peace and plenty were the rule in Middle-earth and the right of all sensible folk. They forgot or ignored […] the labours of those that made possible the long peace of the Shire.'[128] It is not unduly surprising, then, that most hobbits, such as Ted Sandyman, tended to disbelief strange tales of the uncanny and the supernatural. For the most part, they assume that such tales of 'Tree-men' or dragons must be false. There are those, however, such as Frodo, who begin to wonder 'about the wild lands' across the river.[129] Of course, in *The Lord of the Rings,* Frodo and the hobbits are cast into the Wild by Tolkien, as part of the story, where they

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[121] Shippey, *Tolkien,* 219.
[122] Tolkien and Humphrey Carpenter, ed., *Letters,* 288.
[123] Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, 58.
[124] Ibid.
[125] Ibid., 59.
[126] Ibid.
[127] Tolkien and Carpenter, ed., *Letters*, 31.
[128] Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, 7.
[129] Ibid., 56.

discover for themselves the true nature of the world and its enchantment. It is there, for example, that they encounter forests for the first time; the Old Forest, Lothlórien, Fangorn , and (in the instance of Bilbo in *The Hobbit*) Mirkwood, all of which are important symbols in the work of Tolkien; mysterious arboreal realms, ancient to the point of nigh-immeasurability, the last remaining bastions against the encroaching high-tides of the contemporary. They can be, and often are, dark, dank and dangerous places. 'Mirkwood', for example, first coined in English by William Morris in 1888, was taken from the Old Norse for 'dark wood', *Myrkviðr*, as Tolkien explained:

> Mirkwood is not an invention of mine, but a very ancient name, weighted with legendary associations. It was probably the Primitive Germanic name for the great mountainous forest regions that anciently formed a barrier to the south of the lands of Germanic expansion […] It was never, I think, a mere "colour" word: "black", and was from the beginning weighted with the sense of "gloom".[130]

Myrkviðr is a keystone in Tolkien's vision of Faërie, loaded with potential menace and doom, though not intrinsically wicked in undertone, nor entirely benign; 'I am not on anybody's *side*, because nobody is altogether on my *side*', Treebeard, who represents Fangorn, says to Merry and Pippin.[131] In this sense, the enigmatic region of the wood, a safe harbour for the supernatural to shelter in, became an essential asylum for Tolkien's moral imagination, a place of mystery that a hobbit, as well as the reader.

It is fitting that it is the Old Forest that the hobbits enter in to when they leave the Shire for the first, and possibly the last, time. What is more, they make their way into it with a mind full of rumour and dark foreboding. '"Are the stories about it true?"' asks Pippin.[132] Apparently '"the stories about it are a nightmare"'.[133] It is here, of course, as George Clark and Daniel Timmons note in their study on Tolkien's forests, where 'the first real villain to be met [with]', the entrapping and most certainly belligerent Old Man Willow; the Old

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[130] Quoted in Wayne G. Hammond, and Christina Scull, *The Lord of the Rings: A Reader's Companion* (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 2005), 12-13.
[131] Tolkien, *The Two Towers*, 472.
[132] Ibid., 145.
[133] Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, 142.

Forest is 'the first really dangerous, frightening adventure that they experience'.[134] In Middle-earth 'old-wives' tales almost invariably turn out to be true. This is, of course, facilitated by, and in doing so justifies, Faërie. '"Indeed we have heard of Fangorn [Forest] in Minas Tirith," said Boromir. "But what I have heard seems to me for the most part old wives' tales, such as we tell to our children […] [though] it is now many lives of men since any of us visited it, to prove or disprove the legends that have come down from distant years."'[135] Merry and Pippin, who in the story are forced to take refuge in Fangorn, where they meet Treebeard, find out for themselves that what Boromir and Ted Sandyman dismiss as tales for infants should be carefully considered by adults too. As Celeborn of Lothlórien counsels the hobbits, in regards to Fangorn: '"do not despise the lore that has come down from distant years; for oft it may chance that old wives keep in memory word of things that once were needful for the wise to know."'[136]

Such places as Fangorn – 'frightfully tree-ish', and making themselves 'felt as a great brooding presence, full of secret presence, full of secret purpose'[137] – are indeed wondrous and pleasingly menacing instances of enchantment. And as Matthew Dickerson and Jonathan Evans write:

> Looking toward the future, Middle-earth is threatened with becoming a much diminished world when places like Fangorn and the Old Forest cease to exist, for once the environment is completely reshaped, the life-forms that subsist within it lose the rooted sense of place on which they depend for meaning and for life itself.[138]

Nevertheless, Tolkien's forests survive for the meanwhile, safe in Faërie. Discovering, and then emphasising, the notion of *genius loci* (a spirit of place), was part of Tolkien's purpose. So, too, was it the case with Paul Nash, who did the same, but with a brush rather than the pen. And what Tolkien referred to as 'Mirkwood' Nash saw as *genius loci*. Both essentially

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[134] George Clark, and Daniel Timmons, *J.R.R. Tolkien and His Literary Resonances: Views of Middle-earth* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2000), 148.

[135] Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, 491.

[136] Ibid.

[137] Tolkien, *The Two Towers*, 442, 461.

[138] Matthew Dickerson, and Jonathan Evans, *Ents, Elves, and Eriador: The Environmental Vision of J.R.R. Tolkien* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2006), 144.

rejected what Chiffley sees as the Protestant stress on the 'idolatry of place' in favour of a 'numinosity of place', or spirit of place, which was essentially incarnational in emphasis.

Paul Nash

Nash shared a vision very much analogous with Tolkien's 'Myrkviðr', particularly of trees as living beings, noting in a letter to Gordon Bottomley, in 1912, that 'I have tried […] to paint as tho [sic] they were human beings […] because I sincerely love & worship trees & know they *are* people & wonderfully beautiful people – much more lovely than the majority of people one meets'.[139] In a key sense, then, Nash conformed to what Tolkien believed was 'one of the primal "desires" that lie near the heart of Faërie: the desire of men to hold communion with other living things'.[140] But there was also a darkness evident in much of his work and thought. Although Nash's work is not itself Christian, it is, it might be argued, an Old Western expression of the 'More-Than-World' within the world.

Nash's autobiography *Outline* (1949) is permeated with the artist's relationship with trees, woods and woody clumps. Indeed, the arboreal nature of the English landscape, as well as a spirit of place, is the one constant theme in Nash's artistic career. Where Tolkien had Faërie to fall back on, Nash had *genius loci*; in fact, they were remarkably similar. Both of them desired enchantment, a world animated by a sense of spirit, and which contained an element of menace.

Nash made a point, in *Outline*, of relating the memory of his 'first taste of the country', when, as a child on an outing to Kensington Gardens, he 'became aware of trees, felt the grass for the first time, saw an expanse of water, listened to a new kind of silence'.[141] Here, near the Tea Gardens, and vitally engaged by the peculiarity of a particularly old tree, was the genesis of Nash's sense of *genius loci*:

> Hereabouts the Gardens have almost a wild quality and coming in from
> the open spaces round the Pond, you have a sense of entering a wood.

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[139] Letter from Paul Nash to Gordon Bottomley, 1 August 1912, published in Paul Nash, *Poet & Painter: Letters Between Gordon Bottomley, 1910-1946, with an introduction by Dr Andrew Causey* (Bristol: Redcliffe, 1990), 42
[140] Tolkien, *On Fairy-Stories,* 36.
[141] Paul Nash, *Outline: An Autobiography* (1949; London: Columbus Books, 1988), 34.

On the outskirts stands an ancient beech, leaning precariously forward and, for some years now, held up by a crutch […] full of personality as a tree and dangerously like a witch, if that is how your mind works. For me it held a compelling charm [...] Sometimes it was poetically pale and enchanted and could suggest a magical presence, not, however, by its personal figuration, but by some evocative spell which conjured up fantastic images in the mind. You might say it was haunted, but indeed that influence was spread all round its neighbourhood. This tree merely guarded the threshold of a domain, which, for me, was like hallowed ground.[142]

Importantly, the charm and the lure of the prospect of menace – 'dangerous like a witch' – played a key role in Nash's notion of a spirit of place:

There are places, just as there are people and objects and works of art, whose relationship of parts creates mystery, an enchantment, which cannot be analysed […] There was a peculiar spacing in the disposal of the trees, or it was their height in relation to these intervals, which suggested some inner design of very subtle purpose, altogether defeating the conventional lay-out of the Gardens and ignoring their respectable character […] It was strangely beautiful and excitingly unsafe! Who came here came at his peril […] It was here that Indians lurked behind the trees, or an ogre might appear – according to my mood.[143]

'Excitingly unsafe' is the vital word here. One gets the sense that Nash would have been very at home in Tolkien's Fangorn, or in the Old Forest, or Mirkwood. And however constructed and mythologised the artist's own account was of his experience in Kensington Gardens, the forwarding of the formative influence of nature and, in particular, the ancient beech tree, acting upon the impressionability of Nash the boy, tells as much about the man. 'He was conscious always', he claimed, 'of the influence of the place at work upon […] [his] nerves' – his mind was forever engaged by 'the promise of a joy utterly unreal'.[144] Again, as with Belloc, the revelation of some manner of spiritual realm leads to joy.

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[142] Ibid., 35.
[143] Ibid.
[144] Ibid., 36.

1. **The Combat**, by Paul Nash, 1910, pen, ink and wash on paper, 35.6 x 25.8 cm – ©
   Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Nash's *The Combat* **(fig.1)**, otherwise known as the *Angel and Devil*, a work of ink, pencil
and wash, made in 1910, has been appraised extensively by art historians as a kind of visual
genesis for Nash's artistic imagination. Andrew Causey asserts that its composition is
'instructive for the whole course of his development as an artist', representing 'a short but
intensive period of introspective study early in his career in which he projected personal
feelings on to natural forms'.[145] This is also the view, expressed by Malcolm Yorke, too, for
example, that though 'the drawing has a certain weirdness it 'is otherwise […] [an] awkward
and […] badly drawn angel and a flying devil looking as fierce as a budgerigar'.[146] Causey

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[145] Andrew Causey, *Paul Nash* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), v.

[146] Malcolm Yorke, *The Spirit of Place: Nine Neo-Romantic Artists and their Times* (London: Tauris
Parke, 2001), 29.

agrees, writing that such expressions 'in which Nash seems to have indulged when he was a student', affecting an 'imaginary detachment which was a result of his upbringing and threatened to curtail his development', are 'alarming'.[147]

> He was inclined to value art more on account of its subject than the success or relevance of its style or technique [...] His taste inclined towards the academic historical and mythological painters. But release from the thrall of Rossetti and the ninetieth century, and the acquisition of an independent basis for development appropriate to his period, was a prerequisite of Nash's progress. His imaginative detachment had allowed him to be carried away by a kind of art which had not really been digested and made his own, and by the example of another artist's lifestyle.[148]

There was, indeed, something here out of step with Nash's own time, something which Lewis, of course, noted in Tolkien's work: a 'heroic romance, gorgeous, eloquent, and unashamed [...] suddenly returned at a period almost pathological in its anti-romanticism'.[149] Perhaps what Causey so much disapproves of in Nash's *The Combat* is that very principle: that of Mirkwood itself. It is true that the figure in drawing displays a particular naiveté and ineptness on the artist's part. However, it is also the case that assessments of *The Combat* have assigned much too much prominence to Nash's figures, while neglecting what constitutes the picture's most accomplished and lasting facet: the appetising spread of sprouting 'Myrkviðr' in the valley below. Indeed, in Nash's much-maligned verse, attached to *The Combat*, it is the dark wood that serves to define the drama of the piece:

> A place of gibbet-shapen trees & black abyss.
> Where gaunt hills brooded dark & evil
> Girdled by dense wet woods & rushing streams
> A dread place only seen in dreams
> Of which there is no history but this
> That on yon' stony shouldered tor

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[147] Causey, *Paul Nash*, 16.
[148] Ibid., 17.
[149] Lewis, C. S., 'The Gods Return to Earth', *Time and Tide*, August 14, 1954.

An angel fought a devil.[150]

Causey has in one sense noted the image's menace, insofar as 'the representation of opposed forces […] [meaning] the angel and devil themselves, hill and valley, light and dark […] a series of polarities'.[151] Yet Causey neglects the wood itself, so essential in its import, as 'a place of gibbet-shapen trees & black abyss', which, like Tolkien's Mirkwood, is invested with a vital spirit of place, or Faërie, where this combat may be permitted to take place. And like Tolkien's Middle-earth in parts, particularly his forests, it is an observably dark and, indeed, menacing place. And what it is important here is that this was what Nash very much desired, ever since he was a child, by his own account.

In *Outline*, a work dedicated to charting his emotional and intellectual foundation as an artist, Nash makes the most of relating those experiences that impressed him as a child, such as at his old home 'The Grange':

> The Grange was everything that the name suggests; or is it that I have always identified that name with the character of the house I knew? It was rambling and shady, shut in by shrubberies and heavy trees. It had a sense of airlessness and gloom […] If ever a house could be said to be haunted – in the abstract – without the illustration of a ghost, The Grange was haunted. Or was it I who was haunted?[152]

The oppressive yet homely reclusiveness of The Grange, a place where Nash's commentary forwards the view of a happy haunting, one that is far from traumatic, and indeed so palatable to the young boy and his temperament that his elder-self ponders whether it was, in fact, he who was carrying out the haunting, is illustrative of how 'gloom' contributed to Nash's development as an artist. 'Shut in' by 'heavy trees', Nash's native temperament was one of introspection, of isolation, but not necessarily, as we might fathom, one intent on shutting out the world, or rather all worlds, ushering in a sort of bosomy safety, but instead one founded on another domain of pleasing menace. There was something of fairy-land in this too, in its dark magic, implying danger, as Tolkien once described it: 'Faërie is a perilous land […] In it are pitfalls for the unwary […] The realm of the fairy-story is wide and deep

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[150] Quoted in Yorke, *The Spirit of Place,* 29.
[151] Causey, *Paul Nash*, 9.
[152] Nash, *Outline,* 43.

and high and filled with many things: all manner of beasts and birds are found there; shoreless seas and stars uncounted; beauty that is enchantment, and an ever-present peril.'[153] The forest or wood is, of course, a romantic commonplace set within the landscape of the fairy-tale, and by implication prefiguring the fantasies of its adolescent readership. In this fashion, the writer H. E. Bates attempted to explain the enduring childhood appeal of woods:

> To a child there must be something about it that is not quite real. It belongs very nearly to the world of mystery. A field can be seen and understood and explored. Whereas in a wood the wood is very much hidden by the trees: there are countless darknesses, unknown places. It is an exploration into the unknown. It is at once a joyful and fearful place. Children are never frightened in fields, except by cows or by the hostile appearance of irate hats.[154]

In this sense, it might be argued that trees were *the* formative influence in Nash's imagination, offering an unsafe seclusion on which a dynamic English art might subsist. If in the universe of C. S. Lewis children entered the imagination through the creaking doors of a wardrobe, Nash entered his Narnia through the pillared borders of the woodland realm – and particularly, as a child, 'Hawk's Wood':

> This wood was the peak of our discoveries when, as children, we came originally to Iver Heath. It represented then our most daring adventures into unknown country. Its curious solitude was one of its charms, for we very seldom met anyone on the road outside and, in spite of its precincts being sacred to pheasants, we had no awkward encounters with keepers as far as I can remember. The fear of such made us alert and sensitive to every sound as we crawled through the hedge into the undergrowth, and added to the thrill of our explorations.[155]

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[153] J. R. R. Tolkien, *Tales from the Perilous Realm* (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 2008), 315.
[154] H. E. Bates, *Through the Woods: The English Woodland – April to April, with 73 Engravings on Wood by Agnes Miller Parker* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1936), 41-42.
[155] Nash, *Outline,* 108-109.

And of course, Frodo, too, in *The Lord of the Rings*, is much like Nash the child, coming to view the unknown country beyond the borders of the Shire as a land ripe for discovery; for 'the old paths seemed too well-trodden […] [Frodo] looked at maps, and wondered what lay beyond their edges: maps made in the Shire showed mostly white spaces beyond its borders.'[156] Also contained within these white spaces is the prospect of peril, as Bilbo reminds Frodo: '"Do you realize that this is the very path that goes through Mirkwood, and that if you let it, it might take you to the Lonely Mountain or even further and to worse places?"'[157] Indeed, '"It's a dangerous business, Frodo, going out of your door […] You step into the Road, and if you don't keep your feet, there is no knowing where you might be swept off to.'"[158]

This sense of mystery, and of the potentially 'dangerous business' of pursuing the path wherever it may lead, never left Nash. It persisted and was still evident even as he began to mature as an artist. We can see this in his watercolour *Wittenham Clumps* **(fig.2)**, produced sometime between 1911 and 1913. He 'felt their importance long before […] [he] knew their history', Nash wrote of the Clumps; 'an ancient British Camp' that 'stood up with extraordinary prominence'.[159] 'Ever since I remember them', he explained, 'the Clumps had meant something to me […] They were the Pyramids of my small world.'[160] Realising that he 'might well make a dozen drawings and still find new aspects to portray', the 'one aspect' he felt compelled to convey was 'the strange character of the place, one image which, in its form, would contain the individual spirit'.[161] The magnetism of the Wittenham Clumps, for Nash, 'was due almost entirely to their formal features rather than to any associative force […] It was the look of them that told most, whether on sight or in memory.'[162] At work here was perhaps the same instinctual sensibility that was present all those years before in Kensington Gardens. As Herbert Read, one of Nash's greatest champions, wrote in 1944: 'I use the doubtful word "intuition" because what we are concerned with in the most distinctive work of Paul Nash must be called an intuition of the *genius loci*.'[163] And as Fraser Jenkins noted in *Paul Nash: The Elements* (2010), 'Nash's pictures are impossible to

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[156] Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, 57.
[157] Ibid., 98.
[158] Ibid.
[159] Nash, *Outline,* 122.
[160] Ibid.
[161] Ibid.
[162] Ibid.
[163] Herbert Read, *Paul Nash – The Penguin Modern Painters* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1944), 10.

paraphrase, but in the most powerful of them, including some apparently ordinary landscapes and still lifes, there is a sense of something additional out of sight that was determining his vision.'[164]

2. **Wittenham Clumps**, by Paul Nash, 1911-13, watercolour, ink and chalk on paper, 30.9 x 39.5 cm – © Tullie House Museum & Art Gallery, Carlisle.

Indeed, there is something out of site, if we consider Nash's intuition – which might be said to be Old Western – being a focal point between past and present, between materiality and the spiritual realm, a point of intersection that was implicitly incarnational in its attribution of spirit to place. Again, Read noted the sense of the invisible in Nash's landscapes:

> In their isolation, these objects immediately revealed their significance;
> or they might be combined into an ideal landscape, like the "stumps of
> trees, weeds, and animals of various kinds," which Gainsborough used to
> bring in from the fields. Such objects are probably unconscious symbols,

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[164] David Fraser Jenkins, *Paul Nash: The Elements* (London: Scala, in association with Dulwich Picture Gallery, 2010), 29.

but it is simpler to say that they possess magic. Primitive people ascribe a supernatural animation to stones and trees, especially when these have an unusual shape or position. We dismiss their childish superstitions, or used to; nowadays we are learning to suspect a real foundation for their most irrational behaviour […] The world can no longer be comfortably divided into detached categories of animate and inanimate, visible and invisible, real and unreal.[165]

In a very dynamic way, trees and woods, as well as clumps of wood such as the Wittenham Clumps, through their history, so evidently brandished in the face of the contemporary, collapsed such opposites, abolishing the border between past and present, in a way that made something of a conjurer of Nash. Indeed, perhaps it is better to think of Nash as more of a shaman. It was not so much the historic that appealed to Nash, though it was perhaps a prerequisite, so much as it was what Tolkien would have recognised as his vision of Faërie. Nash's desire for 'Pan-ish places down by the river […] full of strange enchantment' was what drove him in the production of such works as *The Combat* and *Wittenham Clumps*: 'a beautiful legendary country haunted by old gods long forgotten.'[166]

As Read noted, Nash's art owed a great deal to what might be described as 'childish superstitions', ascribing 'a supernatural animation to stones and trees'.[167] Writing to Nell Bethell in 1909, Nash wrote that 'I quite believe in Pan & when I should be cast upon the hospitality of the woods and hedgerows I should study Nature and make never ending drawings & make use of Life by learning something deep and never never dull'.[168] In such places of mystery as the Wittenham Clumps, Pan still lurked – this was the premise of Nash's approach to woods in his art, one that might be detected in his final series of Wittenham from Boar's Hill during the Second World War; a group of oils, including the 1944 oil on canvas *Landscape of the Vernal Equinox III* **(fig.3)**, that Roger Cardinal has rightly labelled 'the acme of Nash's landscape production'.[169] However, art was not the only medium that conjured up a supernatural animation of the landscape. Nor were trees and woods the sole subject of that attention.

[165] A. C. Hannay, Herbert Read, and D. A. Ross, eds., *Paul Nash: A Portfolio of Colour Plates with an Introduction by Herbert Read, Contemporary British Painters* (London: Soho Gallery, 1937), 3.
[166] Quoted in Causey, *Paul Nash*, 30.
[167] Hannay and Read and Ross, eds., *Paul Nash*, 3.
[168] Quoted in Causey, *Paul Nash*, 18.
[169] Roger Cardinal, *The Landscape Vision of Paul Nash* (London: Reaktion Books, 1989), 113.

3. **Landscape of the Vernal Equinox III**, by Paul Nash, 1944, oil on canvas, 63.50 x 76.20 cm – National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh; photo by Antonia Reeve.

'Legend'

The composer John Ireland's *Legend* for piano and orchestra (1933) summons up much the same inauspicious atmosphere as Nash's and Tolkien's evocation of malevolent Myrkviðr. Ireland's landscape, however, is the South Downs – or more precisely, Harrow Hill, a prominent rise atop those downs, south of Storrington in West Sussex. The opening horn solo sets the scene: one of remembrance, but also of absence and mystery; an eerie downland, the peoples long removed, save their spirits, which still might wander and play aloft the smooth burghs, barrows which might actually be their own sepulchres. In *Legend,* Ireland leads us through this landscape, from the village called Burpham, along an ancient trackway, known locally as the 'Leper's Path', to Harrow Hill. Ireland's composition meanders its way between two alternate moods: the blithe, exultant on the crest of the downs, and the disturbed. Indeed, at first, we, the rambler in this piece, might be perturbed

by the scene that Ireland presents us with: a barely concealed menace lurks in the hills above, along the way. And as we advance up the path, once trodden upon by the leper, centuries before, a chill takes over and we are suddenly assailed, in this instance, by the unsympathetic strings of the orchestra, which violently climax in a disconcerting melodrama, implying peril. However, this mood passes. The downs are empty and unthreatening again, though they retain their air of mystery and memory. As well as this, we feel ourselves to have been oppressed by some manner of malignant spirit. And at its conclusion, too, we are once again subject to the prospect of a haunting atop the South Downs, as the theme that announced the piece in the first-place repeats itself; Ireland wishes us to remain haunted, having experienced it himself when he was on Harrow Hill. *Legend* is, in fact, an account of his own contact with a supernatural happening.

Harrow Hill was a location on the South Downs very much favoured by Ireland. Its ancient hillfort and flint mines, as well as the earthworks, within sight of an abandoned medieval village, no doubt attracted him. When asked how the South Downs had influenced his work, Ireland remarked that there were 'a good many traces of the ancient' there, 'the burial mounds and so forth', and he had 'always felt moved by that sort of thing'.[170]

> My *Legend for Piano and Orchestra* was inspired by an experience of that kind. I was intrigued by an old track leading to the ruins of an ancient church. During the Middle Ages the track was used by lepers. Although they were not allowed to mix with ordinary people they could not be denied the right to worship God, and so they were allowed to enter the church by another entrance and to peer through an opening in the wall called "The Lepers' Squint". Things like that would often start up certain thoughts and images, and these would be reflected in my music.[171]

What also inspired *Legend* was the occurrence on Harrow Hill, noted before. Jocelyn Brook later relayed Ireland's experience:

> Soon after he had sat down and unpacked his sandwiches, he was suddenly aware that a number of children had invaded the open space in

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[170] Quoted in Lewis Foreman, ed., *The John Ireland Companion* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2011), 61.
[171] Quoted in ibid.

front of the bank on which he was sitting. His first feeling was one of annoyance at being thus unexpectedly disturbed in so lonely a place. A moment later he realized that the children were in fact no ordinary children: they played and danced together on the downland turf, but in complete silence; and they were dressed in white garments of a curious and archaic pattern. Ireland watched them for some time: that they were "real" enough he had, at first, no doubt whatsoever. Then reason reasserted itself: *could* they be real – these silent, dancing children in their strange white raiment? The composer glanced away for an instant, then looked up again: the "children" had vanished.[172]

Ireland wrote these ghostly dancing children into the *Legend* as a theme. Appropriately, Ireland dedicated the movement – the first in a planned concerto that was never to be completed – to the Welsh author of supernatural stories Arthur Machen. His effect on Ireland has been documented by, amongst other, Colin Scott-Sutherland. It was Ireland's contact with the writing of Machen – *The Hill of Dreams* (1907) and *The Great God Pan* (1890), in particular, Scott-Sutherland writes – that was to prove one of the most formative influences in his development as a composer: primarily because he found 'himself drawn to this writer who seemed conscious of, even in contact with, something supernatural. The remote peace of the countryside that had for so long attracted him took on now a mysterious and sinister significance.'[173]

Faërie being thus established through literature, painting and music, we must now cast Nash and Ireland aside. For it is important that we draw a distinction between those such as Nash and authors such as Tolkien, who saw a moral and specifically religious significance in Faërie. In this sense, it should not surprise us that while Nash and Ireland were not particularly religious, those such as Tolkien, Chesterton and Belloc were devout Roman Catholics, who built their respective Mirkwoods in tandem with a theological framework. Nevertheless, Nash and Ireland are examples of a desire – a uniting and, I think, Old Western desire – to return to a medieval conception of time and space. In this sense, they perceived the 'More-Than-World' within the world.

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[172] Quoted in ibid., 354.
[173] Ibid., 4.

'The Ethics of Elfland': The Meaning of the Sinister

The 'Perilous Realm' may be said to be loaded with moral and religious significance. As Tolkien himself explained, although the tales of Beatrix Potter were not strictly fairy stories, they did, however, 'lie near the borders of Faërie', a nearness that was 'due largely to their strong moral element', by which he meant 'their inherent morality'.[174] Although *Peter Rabbit* was a 'beast-fable', what it shared with 'Faërie' was 'the great mythical significance of prohibition'.[175] 'Thou shalt not – or else thou shall depart beggared into endless regret. The gentlest "nursery-tales" know it. Even Peter Rabbit was forbidden a garden, lost his blue coat, and took sick. The Locked Door stands as an eternal Temptation.'[176] Another vital aspect of Faërie, then, was its moral dimension:

> And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.[177]

The clearest example of the supernatural enforcing a prohibition in Tolkien's universe actually pre-dates, on Middle-earth at least, *The Lord of the Rings*, in the story of 'the Fall' of the Númenóreans, a race of men who dwelt on the island of Númenor, and fell 'because of a Ban or prohibition, inevitably', writes Tolkien.[178] They 'were forbidden to sail west beyond their own land because they were not allowed to be or try to be "immortal"'.[179] A huge fleet sailed out to Valinor in an attempt to reach the 'Undying Lands', or 'Blessed Realm', the province of the Valar, Tolkien's equivalent of angels or divine beings, who are themselves subservient to the one 'God'. The Númenórean fleet is, of course, as it must be in Tolkien's universe, destroyed as a result of 'their fall from grace', and Númenor itself is engulfed by a giant wave.[180] The survivors flee to Middle-earth.

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[174] Tolkien, *On Fairy-Stories,* 36-37.
[175] Ibid., 49.
[176] Ibid.
[177] Genesis 2:16-17, *King James Bible*.
[178] Tolkien and Carpenter, ed., *Letters,* 204.
[179] Ibid.
[180] Ibid., 155.

Injunctions were very important to Tolkien. The most significant ban, of course, in Tolkien's world, and the one that comes closest to a Biblical prohibition, is that given to the Númenóreans. They are, we know, punished for failing to take this religious commandment seriously. A vicious retribution is brought down on them for failing to take note of the 'Perilous Realm' itself. However, there was another don, too, with a similarly unforgiving streak: Montague Rhodes James. It was James more than Tolkien, perhaps, who, through his tales of the supernatural, was able to more succinctly express an 'Old Western' anxiety that, in the absence of the supernatural, civilization itself might crumble. James would set out as a sort of Old Testament God himself to visit cruel terrors on those unbelievers who he believed had brought into being a 'chaos of ideas', synonymous with modernity. Tolkien enabled his readers to enter the 'Perilous Realm' and escape the conditions of modernity. James, on the other hand, would force the 'Perilous Realm' on modernity itself. What he desired was a more immediate manner of retribution; and in this sense, too, a very visceral 'Edwardian restart' of the medieval revival, in which demons, ostensibly consigned to the amusing margins of the medieval manuscript, were raised from their slumber and brought to bear on moderns themselves. In the world of James, demons are an even more immediate, and altogether more material, manifestation of the apparent ramifications of the 'More-Than-World' within the world.

Montague Rhodes James

Arthur Christopher Benson, Master of Magdalene College, Cambridge, noted 'what a strange creature' M. R. James was: 'so absolutely the same, so stubbornly Tory, so inaccessible to all ideas, so hating discussion and speculation […] If it were not for his humour he would be frozen, dull, inaccessible; the very worst kind of Don.'[181] If James was not unintellectual, he was apparently anti-intellectual. It is an important distinction to make. Nathaniel Wedd recounted an incident when James overheard two men in the depths of philosophic conservation: '[James] rapped sharply on the table with his pipe and called out: '"no thinking, gentlemen, please."'[182] We should not, however, take such swordplay too seriously. There is a high degree of banter and showmanship in James's sardonic reproof. Nevertheless, as Wedd noted, it did seem to be the case that '"thought"

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[181] Quoted in Michael Cox, *M. R. James: An Informal Portrait* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 125.
[182] Quoted in ibid., 97.

in this sense really did disturb Monty throughout his life'.[183] It was not that James could not manage it, but that 'the eager pursuit of truth along many paths, regardless of where the path would lead and what obstacles would be thrust aside or destroyed in blazing the trail [...] the hall-mark of a living college, was not to Monty's taste'.[184] Michael Cox, his biographer, writes that James 'tended to distrust intellectual inquiry that was not rooted in a sensitive respect for tradition and orthodoxy'.[185] Furthermore, Cox believes that much of this – what amounted to a 'lifelong disinclination to pass much beyond what his upbringing and education had taught him to believe' – 'must be attributable to his father's condemnation and avoidance of "ill-regulated speculation"'.[186]

Herbert James, James's father, was a Church of England clergyman 'closely associated with the evangelical wing'.[187] 'Dogma', explains Cox, 'was central' to his 'religious thinking. He traced what he called the "anarchy of belief" to an antagonism towards dogma and claimed that people were hampered by misbeliefs "because they are not taught fully what to believe".'[188] This parallels Chesterton's own view that 'the first effect of not believing in God, is that you lose your common sense'.[189] As Herbert James wrote, there existed 'a symmetry as well as a substance about God's truth which cannot be dispensed with. Its lines are defined for our guidance.'[190] Such lines 'repress ill-regulated speculation'.[191]

> Badly will that teacher fare who thinks it possible to be free from their environment and wholesome restraint. He would be like a kite cut loose from its string. He might have a certain liberty, and soar to a certain height. But he soars only to fall, and the higher the height, the more damaging the descent.[192]

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[183] Quoted in ibid.
[184] Quoted in ibid.
[185] Ibid., 8.
[186] Ibid., 8-9.
[187] Ibid., 2.
[188] Ibid., 8.
[189] G. K. Chesterton, *Father Brown: Selected Stories* (London: Collector's Library, 2003), 292.
[190] Quoted in Cox, *M. R. James,* 8.
[191] Quoted in ibid.
[192] Quoted in ibid.

The importance of dogma, then, in combating what Belloc, too, labelled 'a chaos of ideas', was vital to Herbert James's identification of an 'anarchy of belief' present in his own day.[193] And as Cox has written, 'this emphatic trust in doctrine and precept must have had an effect on Monty'.[194] This is what likely led Benson to reflect that James appeared to possess 'the mind of a nice child – he hates and fears all problems, all speculation, all originality or novelty of view. His spirit is both timid and unadventurous.'[195] It was for this reason, too, that Benson grimaced at the thought of James as Provost of King's College:

> He will simply be a Head on the old lines – reactionary, against novelty
> and progress. He will initiate nothing, move nothing. Monty has *no*
> intellectual, religious, or philosophical interests really. He just has some
> aesthetic perceptions, antiquarian tastes, and a wonderful memory.[196]

Of course, it might also be said that what James exhibited to a high degree was intellectual humility. Certainly, it seems that James inherited, or at the very least shared, his father's suspicion of 'ill-regulated speculation' insofar as it had apparently brought into being an 'anarchy of belief'. Indeed, this almost profound aversion to hubris and intellectual inquiry would work its way into his own works of supernatural fiction.

What is very apparent in James's spectral and demonic tales is the pleasure he seemingly takes in visiting doom upon the members of his own profession. So many of his victims are themselves academics: Dennistoun, in James's first ever tale, 'Canon Alberic's Scrap-book', is 'a Cambridge man', we are told;[197] the narrator's cousin in 'Number 13' is a scholar 'engaged upon some researches into the Church history of Denmark';[198] Mr. Wraxall in 'Count Magnus' is said to be 'an intelligent and cultivated man […] near being a Fellow of his college at Oxford';[199] the unfortunate Parkin in 'Oh, Whistle, and I'll Come to You, My Lad' is a professor; while Fanshawe in 'A View from a Hill' is described as being 'a man of academic pursuits'.[200] Crucially, all discount, or are indifferent to, the supernatural.

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[193] Hilaire Belloc, *The Great Heresies* (1938; CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2011), 93.
[194] Cox, *M. R. James,* 8.
[195] Quoted in ibid., 125.
[196] Quoted in ibid., 174.
[197] M. R. James, *Collected Ghost Stories* (2011; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 3.
[198] Ibid., 48.
[199] Ibid., 64.
[200] Ibid., 326.

Professor Parkins states explicitly, for instance, that he is 'a convinced disbeliever in what is called the "supernatural"'.[201] Often in James's stories there is a character, not always the protagonist, who reproves any inclination toward a belief in ghosts or uncanny beings and occurrences. In 'An Episode of Cathedral History' there is the dean, in the fictional Southminster Cathedral, who only permits an altar tomb to be opened in order to dispel the 'arrant nonsense' that some nefarious being lies within: 'another time perhaps you'll take the advice of an educated man', he complains.[202] The landlord, too, in 'Number 13', proclaims that 'an educated man [...] has no business with these superstitious notions'.[203] An intelligent, cultured man ought not to believe in the supernatural; and James's characters generally do not. And for this, they often pay severely; at the very least suffering a grave fright as a result of a confrontation with the supernatural. Wraxall and Parkin do not survive their respective encounters. James evidently delighted in gently manoeuvring his fellows into the path of some terrible malevolence. Their crime, a lack of humility, which causes them to discount the supernatural, rebounds on them. Essentially, what James does, then, in such stories as 'Count Magnus', is to hold the Wraxalls, Paxtons and Dennistouns of this world to account for the 'anarchy of belief' that they have brought into being as a result of their 'over-inquisitiveness'. As James's himself wrote, Mr. Wraxall's 'besetting fault', in 'Count Magnus', is 'pretty clearly that of over-inquisitiveness'.[204] It is a fault that ultimately proves fatal to Wraxall when he awakens Count Magnus and the strange creature that has bound itself to him. He had thought the engraving of 'strange form [...] pursuing a haunted soul' on the Count's tomb 'an allegorical representation'.[205] Magnus is merely 'picturesque', he believes.[206] It is only when the final padlock, keeping the tomb secure, falls and the lid starts to open that Wraxall exclaims in horror, '"What is this that I have done?"'[207] What he thought was an allegory now becomes his pursuer: 'what can he do but lock his door and cry to God?'[208] Later, he is found dead, having paid the ultimate price.

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[201] Ibid., 86.
[202] Ibid., 266.
[203] Ibid., 55.
[204] Ibid., 64.
[205] Ibid., 71.
[206] Ibid., 68.
[207] Ibid., 73.
[208] Ibid., 74.

Thomas Sowell, of the Hoover Institution, laments the sad truth that in the real world 'intellectuals pay no price for being wrong'.[209] The step 'from unaccountability to irresponsibility can be a very short step'.[210] What James does in his stories, however, through such creations as Count Magnus, is to hold such men to account for their intellectual sins. And as Ralph Harrington writes, for example, 'Parkins's sin', in 'A Warning to the Curious', 'is ultimately one of hubris; he believed that his rationalistic understanding of the world provided a total and all-encompassing explanation of the workings of the universe. In this sense, the point of the story is more than just a foolish individual being taught a lesson.'[211] This is some disagreement here, however. Simon MacCulloch, contributing to *Warnings to the Curious: A Sheaf of Criticism on M. R. James* (2007), figures that James's 'protagonists' are 'intelligent, cultivated representatives of an ordered, fatally limited world view. Against them are pitted barbarous antagonists who represent the chaos, irrationality, and inhumanity that an unreserved embrace of the inhuman cosmos produces.'[212] I think that MacCulloch misses the point here. He is right in surmising that James intended them to represent a 'fatally limited world view'. However, it is they, not the 'barbarous antagonists', who, as a result of their 'limited world view', are the ultimate agents of 'chaos'. It is a mistake to say, as MacCulloch does, that '"Count Magnus" is James's clearest expression of his own proclivity for the strange and the danger he saw in it for his faith in conventional Christianity'.[213] It is, I think, the 'strange' that leaps to the defence of Christian orthodoxy. Harrington, however, comes much closer to the truth when he writes that 'the supernatural world as depicted by M. R. James is not capricious and arbitrary but reflects its creator's conviction that human beings have a duty to act morally, and that they will ultimately be held to account for their failings'.[214]

Nevertheless, James's universe is, we have to recognise, savage. As Michael A. Mason notes, though a protagonist has, admittedly, so often 'awakened trouble for himself by his temerity or even by his criminal actions', the 'retribution' that is brought down on him,

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[209] Thomas Sowell, *Intellectuals and Race* (New York: Basic Books, 2013), 136. Sowell, for example, cites the promotion 'of genetic determinism by intellectuals on both sides of the Atlantic in the early decades of the twentieth century', which 'had impacts on things ranging from immigration policies to compulsory sterilization policies to the Holocaust', as a key case in point.
[210] Ibid., 137.
[211] Ralph Harrington, 'Supernaturalism, Christianity and Moral Accountability in the Ghost Stories of M. R. James', unpublished essay, 2006, 3.
[212] S. T. Joshi, and Rosemary Pardoe, eds., *Warnings to the Curious: A Sheaf of Criticism on M. R. James* (New York: Hippocampus Press, 2007), 77-78.
[213] Ibid., 97.
[214] Harrington, 'James', 2.

though 'just', is nevertheless 'unmerciful'.[215] John Alfred Taylor also writes that 'judging from some of James's stories, a person must be careful to the point of near-paralysis' to avoid an unfortunate end.[216] It is possible, of course, that James was articulating two concepts at the same time in his stories: that his fellows should be held to account for their ideas, especially those that discounted the supernatural, as well as restrain themselves from forwarding such a view; but also that the real world in which they lived was, indeed, perilous, and would become even more so if the supernatural and religious conception of the universe was cast aside. The world itself was not merciful, but to preserve what was worth preserving required some manner of supernatural intervention which was itself ruthless and suffused with fury. In this sense, MacCulloch is correct when he affirms that 'the central deity of James's fictional cosmos, although never explicitly stated, can be discerned as something […] [resembling] an Old Testament-styled god of patriarchal anger and vengeance'.[217] So, too, is Tolkien's God, 'Eru', who drowns Númenor for its sin of 'pride', it might be added. James's universe is a dark, hard and sobering one, as is Tolkien's to a certain extent.

Despite this harsh environment, Darryl Jones has written that 'what James's stories do, it seems, is to give articulation to a particularly English longing for the past'.[218] In this sense, Jones concurs with Julia Briggs, the author *of Night Visitors: The Rise and Fall of the English Ghost Story* (1977), that the 'Monty Jamesian' ghost story was really 'a vehicle for nostalgia'.[219] 'The temptation to retreat into an idealized Etonian youth', Jones writes, 'must have been overwhelming' for James.[220] Jones seems to suggest that James gave in to it; that his stories were essentially nostalgic. What is implied here is that the author perceived the past through a rose-tinted lens. Moreover, it leaves James open to the accusation that in doing so he lacked the courage to view history as it really was. However, it can be reasonably argued that James's stories have very little to do with 'an idealized Etonian youth'. The universe that James desired was one filled with considerable terrors. Insofar as he looked back to the Middle Ages, as part of a second medieval revival, it was not 'Merrie England' that he longed for. James's vision is not one of village feats, damsels in distress and court jesters, but an Old Testament tableau suffused with fire and

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[215] Joshi and Pardoe, eds., *Warnings to the Curious,* 118.
[216] Ibid., 197.
[217] Ibid., 78.
[218] James, *Collected Ghost Stories*, xxix.
[219] Quoted in ibid., xxix.
[220] Ibid., xxix.

brimstone: a very fiery 'More-Than-World' within the world. Perhaps this also explains why Catholicism features so heavily in his work. For buried deep within the pages of James's stories is the implication that his gentle Anglicanism was exactly what he was attempting to escape. George Orwell's vision of 'old maids biking to Holy Communion through mists of the autumn mornings' was very likely what it appeared to be: a charming vista, but one bereft of any supernatural content. This chimes with a complaint Waugh made in 1947, to John Betjeman, that the various Anglican chaplains that he had come to know during his time in the army 'seemed to have no sense of the supernatural at all'.[221] This was an observation that found its way into *Sword of Honour*, where, early on in the story, the main protagonist Guy Crouchback asks a chaplain whether he agrees '"that the Supernatural Order is not something added to the Natural Order, like music or painting, to make everyday life more tolerable"', but something that '"*is* everyday life"'.[222] '"The supernatural is real"', Crouchback asserts, and '"what we call 'real' is a mere shadow, a passing fancy. Don't you agree, Padre?"'[223] The chaplain's reply is telling: '"up to a point."'[224] Catholicism was more able than Protestantism, perhaps, to acknowledge, as well as associate itself with, the supernatural; a common association, as we have seen.

Harrington has observed that James's stories display 'a knowledgeable and sympathetic respect for Catholicism on the part of their firmly Protestant author'.[225] Peter Ackroyd has also noted this tendency in James, writing that, though he evidently possessed 'a thoroughly English mind', he was nevertheless 'not untouched by intimations of the Catholic past'.[226] It certainly seems that James, an Anglican, displayed more often than not in his stories a curious deference toward Catholicism. This is not to say that James did not at times display a somewhat chauvinistic attitude toward Catholicism. In 1909, as Provost of King's College, Cambridge, he would not permit a performance of Edward Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius*, remarking that the piece was 'too papistical'.[227] Previously, in 1901, after an alleged discovery of some relics in Toulouse, he complained 'about the bones of St

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[221] Evelyn Waugh, and Mark Amory, ed., *The Letters of Evelyn Waugh* (London: Phoenix, 2009), 283.
[222] Waugh, *Sword of Honour*, 65.
[223] Ibid., 66.
[224] Ibid.
[225] Harrington, 'James', 1.
[226] Peter Ackroyd, *Albion: The Origins of the English Imagination* (2002; London: Vintage Books, 2004), 375, 377.
[227] Harrington, 'James', 5.

Edmund which the Papists are foisting upon us'.[228] However, James was not, it should be noted, entirely taken in by the so-called 'Whig interpretation of history' regarding the Reformation. In his work *Abbeys* (1925), a Great Western Railway guide book, he wrote that 'whatever the venal commissioners of Henry VIII may have said, the monasteries were not hotbeds of crime and luxury'.[229]

> Your mental picture of the monk should not be that of the fat man holding his stomach and bursting with laughter at a good story, or brandishing his goblet in the conventional attitude of the stage carouser. Nor need you fly to the other extreme and figure them all as pallid ascetics passing their lives on their knees. There were monks of both sorts, no doubt: but the bulk of them were steady prosaic men, perhaps more like the Fellows of Colleges in the eighteenth century than anything else.[230]

Many monks 'were somnolent, many were insolvent', but 'few were evil'.[231] There was really no need to feel 'shocked' upon sight at 'the opening of a subterranean passage' that led 'to a nunnery five miles off'.[232] 'You may rest assured', wrote James, that it 'really [was] the main drain of the establishment.'[233] If James did not necessarily associate the Catholic Church with avarice, sloth and irrepressibly randy monks, he certainly appears to have associated Catholicism, particularly around the time of the Reformation, with the supernatural: Torevell's ontologically pre-modern cosmos, 'a thing of symbolic and spiritual potency, a sacred arena for discovering knowledge and truth'.[234] For example, 'Number 13' relates to a room in Vigorg, in Denmark, inside a house once owned by 'Bishop Jörgen Friis, the last Roman Catholic who held the see'.[235] James's protagonist, who is examining papers 'relating to the last days of Roman Catholicism in the country',[236] discovers that one of the Bishop's tenants was Nicolas Francken, 'a scandal and a stumbling-block to the reforming

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[228] Cox, *M. R. James,* 117.
[229] Quoted in ibid., 216.
[230] Quoted in ibid.
[231] Quoted in ibid.
[232] Quoted in ibid.
[233] Quoted in ibid.
[234] Torevell, *Losing the Sacred*, 73.
[235] James, *Collected Ghost Stories*, 51.
[236] Ibid., 48.

party'.[237] He was, it was written, 'a disgrace', practising 'secret and wicked arts', having 'sold his soul to the enemy [the Devil]'.[238] 'It was', indeed, 'of a piece with the gross corruption and superstition of the Babylonish Church that such a viper and blood-sucking Troldmand should be patronized and harboured by the Bishop'.[239] 'Abbott Thomas', too, in James's tale of the same name, is evidently one of the last Catholic abbots in England, dying, it is revealed, in 1529, the same year the Reformation Parliament was inaugurated. While the magic field-glasses in 'A View from a Hill' afford Fanshawe a glimpse of the now demolished tower of 'Fulnaker Abbey', presumably demolished as a result of Henry VIII's dissolution of the monasteries in the sixteenth century. Moreover, the whistle discovered by Parkin in 'Oh, Whistle, and I'll Come to You, My Lad' is found on the site of a reputed Templars' preceptory. Indeed, as in 'An Episode of Cathedral History', the artefact is recovered from an area that Parkin believes was the base of the altar. It is also surely significant that the tomb that the demon in 'An Episode of Cathedral History' escapes from is reputed to be of the pre-modern 'fifteenth century'. We may reasonably assume that the demonic form in this tale last saw the light of day toward the latter end of the Middle Ages, when England was still a Catholic country. It is also telling, perhaps, that the sceptic in this story is the Anglican dean, who thinks it 'arrant nonsense' that some demonic force is afflicting the locals.

'An Episode of Cathedral History' is particularly interesting since the ghostly presence is not a ghost at all, but 'a thing like a man, all over hair, and two great eyes to it'.[240] The inscription, from the Vulgate of Isaiah 34:14, affixed to the altar tomb at the conclusion the story – 'IBI CUBAVIT LAMIA' (there too Lilith shall repose, and find a place to rest) [241] – is a reference to the Lamia, the child-eating demon of Greek legend.[242] It is a demon, not a ghost. In 'Count Magnus', too, we are presented with another 'strange form', presumably a demon, brought back from what James referred to as 'the Black Pilgrimage' to Chorazin, a city in Galilee. This monstrous figure, as examined by Wraxall when he studied its effigy on Magnus's tomb, 'was unduly short, and was for the most part muffled in a hooded garment which swept the ground. The only part of the form which projected from that

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[237] Ibid., 51.
[238] Ibid.
[239] Ibid.
[240] Ibid., 266.
[241] Ibid., 267.
[242] Michael David Coogan, ed., *The New Oxford Annotated Bible: New Revised Standard Version with the Apocrypha* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 1013.

shelter was not shaped like any hand or arm.'[243] Wraxall thought it most akin 'to the tentacle of a devil-fish'.[244] Both of these demons are essentially survivors, the supernatural equivalent of the Loch Ness monster. Such beings should not have survived the Reformation. What James did, however, was to bring these pre-modern demons out of retirement after they had been mothballed at the end of the Middle Ages. Indeed, James had apparently invented 'a new type of ghost', noted the prominent horror author Howard Philips Lovecraft, in his work *Supernatural Horror in Literature* (1945).[245] In doing so, wrote Lovecraft, who was a great admirer of James, he 'departed considerably from the conventional Gothic tradition; for where the older stock ghosts were pale and stately, and apprehended chiefly through the sense of sight, the average James ghost […] [was] lean, dwarfish, and hairy – a sluggish, hellish night-abomination midway betwixt beast and man – and usually *touched* before it is *seen*'.[246]

What Lovecraft probably had in mind when he wrote this especially perceptive passage was 'Canon Alberic's Scrap-book', first published in 1895 in *The National Review*. Written between 1892 and 1893, it was James's first ghost story. Strictly speaking, it is not a ghost story at all, however. Rather, it is typically 'Jamesian': an educated cynic is brought face to face with an avenging, supernatural remnant of a pre-modern past; not a ghost as such, but identifiably material and demonic. The story is centred around a man named Dennistoun who journeys to Saint-Bertrand-de-Comminge in France, near the border with Spain. After encountering a nervous sacristan in the cathedral there, Dennistoun purchases a manuscript that once belonged to 'the unprincipled Canon Alberic, who had doubtless plundered the Chapter library of St. Bertrand to form this priceless scrap-book'.[247] One of the items that the scrap-book contains is an antique sepia image of an especially horrific-looking creature; the scene itself depicting King Solomon and five soldiers, one of whom is dead, 'his neck distorted, and his eyeballs starting from his head', evidently a result of an unfortunate encounter with what James intended to forward to the reader as a demon plucked straight out of the pages of the Old Testament. Indeed, Helen Grant believes that the demon was actually 'intended to be an actual, possibly even a specific Solomonic

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[243] James, *Collected Ghost Stories*, 71.
[244] Ibid.
[245] Howard Philips Lovecraft, *Supernatural Horror in Literature* (1945; New York: Dover Publications, 1973), 102.
[246] Ibid.
[247] James, *Collected Ghost Stories*, 8.

demon'.[248] Grant argues convincingly that James's demon is actually Ornias, who was forced by King Solomon to cut the stone for his famous Temple.[249] James's description of what might possibly be Ornias is particularly vivid:

> At first you saw only a mass of coarse, matted black hair; presently it was seen that this covered a body of fearful thinness, almost a skeleton, but with muscles standing out like wires. The hands were of a dusky pallor, covered, like the body, with long, coarse hairs, and hideously taloned. The eyes, touched in with a burning yellow, had intensely black pupils […] Imagine one of the awful bird-catching spiders of South America translated into human form, and endowed with intelligence just less than human, and you will have some faint conception of the terror inspired by this appalling effigy.[250]

The narrator is clear about its effect on the reader:

> I recollect once showing the photograph of the drawing to a lecturer on morphology – a person of, I was going to say, abnormally sane and unimaginative habits of mind. He absolutely refused to be alone for the rest of that evening, and he told me afterwards that for many nights he had not dared to put out his light before going to sleep.[251]

After purchasing the valuable scrap-book, including the sepia image of the demon, for a mere two hundred and fifty franks, Dennistoun returns to his lodgings, where James's story reaches its inevitable, horrifying climax. Examining Canon Alberic's collection of pieces poached from the cathedral library, the demon finally manifests itself, placing a hand on Dennistouns's desk:

> His attention was caught by an object lying on the red cloth just by his left elbow […] "A rat? No too black. A large spider? I trust to goodness not – no. Good God! a hand like the hand in that picture!

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[248] Joshi and Pardoe, eds., *Warnings to the Curious,* 231.
[249] Ibid., 234.
[250] James, *Collected Ghost Stories*, 9.
[251] Ibid.

In another infinitesimal flash he had taken it in. Pale, dusky skin, covering nothing but bones and tendons of appalling strength; coarse black hairs, longer than ever grew on a human hand; nails raising from the ends of the fingers and curving sharply down and forward, grey, horny and wrinkled.

He [Dennistoun] flew out of his chair with deadly, inconceivable terror clutching at his heart. The shape, whose left hand rested on the table, was rising to a standing posture behind his seat, its right hand crooked above his scalp.[252]

When considered as part of a second revival of interest in the Middle Ages, James's very physical demons are significant because they underline the theology implicit at its core, which is a sense of spirit manifest in the world of time and space, as laid out at the beginning of this chapter. James's beings are not ghosts, or pure spirits, they are palpable, gruesome and lethal. In this way, they may be viewed as a prime expression of the Old Western ethic that this thesis seeks to forward as a significant cultural shift in Britain that set itself against secular modernity in the twentieth century.

Chapter Two Conclusion

Having rediscovered through literature, art and music a semblance of the supernatural, such authors, artists and composers as Belloc, Tolkien, Nash, Ireland, and of course James, reoccupied the 'Perilous Realm' in the twentieth century. It was a territory that had been given up, it appeared, sometime around the Reformation. This is implied, and sometimes stated explicitly, for instance, in the writings of Kipling and James. As well as this, the modern world itself – the suburbs in particular, and indeed the electric light – had conspired, it appeared, to prevent any such attempt to return to a pre-modern cosmos; unless one was willing to remove oneself to Spain, as Lee did, to gain, almost by accident, a faint impression of the supernatural world apparently familiar to his ancestors. The firelight, relayed so compellingly by Lee, as well as other such prerequisites available to a primarily rural, and one might also say Roman Catholic, community were lost to the modern world. It was no longer possible to enter into the world of the supernatural through the

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[252] Ibid., 11.

front entrance. Another route was required. It was Faërie, or what is more familiarly known to us as fantasy, that managed to reproduce the same effect as the dancing flames that Lee experienced in the barn in Spain. And it should not surprise us that so many turned to fantasy in the twentieth century – because really Faërie was the only way back for those unable to escape entirely the materialistic platitudes of modernity. If one could not go through modernity, one could at least circumvent it through a leap of the imagination. What moderns required, however, was a gentle push. Those such as Tolkien did just that – just as he forced Frodo and his friends to journey out beyond the safe space of the Shire (modernity) into the Wild (Blunden's fairy wildness). But what ultimately makes this significant – and what, as Chesterton would say, is the true purpose of the fairy story, as he saw it at least – is that the route back to the 'Perilous Realm' also provided a path back toward religious faith: the 'Perilous Realm' and his Catholicism were, for him, one and the same. What marks out those such as the 'Chesterbelloc', Tolkien and James, rather than Nash and Ireland, is that such fantasy is also a matter of 'religious faith', meaning that it incorporates 'the supernatural order in all its ramifications', as Waugh describes it. For to believe in such an order is also to subject yourself to its prohibitions, as we see expressed most clearly in Tolkien's and James's work. Nevertheless, the work of Nash and Ireland does emphasis an incarnational view of the universe too. What is also vital here is that this conception is presented as part of the living order of things, as part of the material world, manifesting itself in enchanted trees, haunted landscapes and even demons. Each is ultimately a very 'Old Western' affirmation of the 'More-Than-World' within the world.

Chapter Three

Cultivating the Eternal Perspective

Divine Indifference

> These were the conditions of life, always vexatious, often utterly
> disastrous, of the people to whom the Jesuits were being sent, people
> drawn from the most responsible and honourable class, guilty of no crime
> except adherence to the traditional faith of their country. They were the
> conditions which, in the natural course, could only produce despair, and
> it depended upon their individual temperaments whether, in
> desperation, they had recourse to apostasy or conspiracy. It was the work
> of the missionaries, and most particularly of [Edmund] Campion, to
> present by their own example a third, supernatural solution. They came
> with gaiety among a people where hope was dead. The past held only
> regret, and the future apprehension; they brought with them, beside
> their priestly dignity and the ancient and indestructible creed, an entirely
> new spirit of which Campion is the type; the chivalry of Lepanto and the
> poetry of La Mancha, light, tender, generous and ardent […] not the fine
> flower only, but the root and stem of English Catholicism […] [those who]
> surrender themselves to their destiny without calculation or reserve; for
> whom the honourable pleasures and occupations of an earlier age were
> forbidden; whose choice lay between the ordered, respectable life of
> their ancestors and the faith which had sanctified it; who followed
> holiness, though it led them through bitter ways to poverty, disgrace,
> exile, imprisonment and death; who followed it gaily.[1]

The Jesuit Edmund Campion's great achievement, wrote Evelyn Waugh in 1935, in his
biography of the prominent Catholic martyr, was prompted 'by the supernatural grace that
was in him'.[2] And it was that grace that allowed men such as Campion to 'surrender

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[1] Evelyn Waugh, *Edmund Campion: Jesuit and Martyr* (1935; London: Penguin Classics, 2012), 80-81.

[2] Ibid, 55.

themselves to their destiny […] gaily', even though it would likely end in personal catastrophe on the scaffold at Tyburn in London. Campion's achievement, which was no less than a triumph, *Edmund Campion: Jesuit and Martyr* proclaimed, was to carry that 'grace' in an age of 'despair'; an age, we might posit here, as perhaps we are supposed to, which paralleled Waugh's own, of civilization on the brink, where 'the past held only regret, and the future apprehension'. What Campion did, then, Waugh wanted his readers to believe, was not only to endure the modernity of his own age – in which the old certainties were no longer so certain – but to combat it 'by their own example […] with gaiety'. Vitally, however, this very peculiar 'spirit', comparable to 'the chivalry of Lepanto' – a telling choice of words – was only achievable in Campion's day through a vital feat of 'supernatural grace'. What Waugh was essentially driving at here was that the foundation of Campion's courage was his 'gaiety', which was synonymous with his ability to 'surrender' himself entirely to the 'supernatural' – meaning the reality of the eternal – which was so vital to Waugh himself, since it was a 'solution' to the ills of his own day; engendering 'hope', albeit a hope in the eternal, but one that might very well rouse a 'spirit' of resistance to modern despair that was characterised by what might be best described as a divine indifference. Having focused in the previous chapter on the expression of the 'More-Than-World' within the world, then, which can be said to be more Thomist, thus material, in emphasis, by now turning our attention to Waugh, amongst others, this chapter will concentrate its attention on the rather more 'Augustinian' element that complements, and in so doing completes, an Old Western *via media*.

Explaining what it means to think 'christianly', Harry Blamires tell us that it is 'a prime mark of the Christian mind is that it cultivates the eternal perspective. That is to say, it looks beyond this life to another one.'[3] As we shall see, this assertion shall underscore this chapter: that when Waugh composed his work on Campion, as well as other works, this was very much his perspective; that, as Blamires writes, to constantly 'think within a frame of reference bounded by the limits of our life on earth' is 'to think secularly', but 'to think christianly is to accept all things with the mind as related, directly or indirectly, to man's eternal destiny as the redeemed and chosen child of God'.[4] It is a central theme of Waugh – a theme that is itself a key Old Western conviction – that it is only by keeping an eye trained on the eternal that we cultivate divine indifference to worldly circumstance. It is

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[3] Harry Blamires, *The Christian Mind: How Should a Christian Think?* (1963; Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2005), 57.
[4] Ibid., 44.

only through studying this Augustinian conception, of surrendering oneself to eternity, and in doing so inviting God's grace, as Waugh reveals above, that the Old Western Men, taken in conjunction with their Thomist impulse, achieve a true *via media*. Having set aside the 'More-Than-World' within the world, we shall now turn to the 'More-Than-World'.

Christopher Dawson and Augustine of Hippo

In terms of forwarding a common theme here, it is worth examining the thought of Christopher Dawson, since it is the thought of this historian that is most consciously Augustinian; in other words, 'Christian Platonism', which centuries before had come 'to permeate virtually all of medieval Christian thought in the West'.[5] As Diarmaid MacCulloch writes, Augustine, who 'was faced with the problem of explaining the Roman world's catastrophe […] was heir to the world-denying impulses of Platonists and Stoics'.[6] With regards to this, it was Dawson's view, too, that the age that St. Augustine of Hippo inhabited was 'one of the most vital moments in the history of the world' since it marked 'the failure of the greatest experiment in secular civilization that the world had ever seen, and the return of society to spiritual principles'.[7] For what the fall of Rome in the fifth century had brought about was both 'an age of material loss and of spiritual recovery', he wrote, 'when amidst the ruins of a bankrupt order men strove slowly and painfully to rebuild the house of life on eternal foundations'.[8] Indeed, in 'this age of universal ruin and destruction'[9] – a time of 'horror and suffering' that had seen the 'sack of cities, the massacre and enslavement of the population and the devastation of the open country'[10] – what was so remarkable was the divine disregard, rooted in eternity, that countered the mounting despair of the time; by which Dawson meant the 'indifference to temporal results' on the part of such Catholic churchmen as Augustine and St. Gregory of Tours.[11] As James J. O'Donnell has written, 'Augustine devoted the full measure of his rhetorical skill to demonstrating that the misfortunes of life here below are insignificant by comparison with

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[5] Richard Tarnas, T*he Passion of the Western Mind: Understanding the Ideas that Have Shaped Our World View* (1991; London: Pimlico, 2010), 103.

[6] Diarmaid MacCulloch, *A History of Christianity: The First Three Thousand Years* (2009; London: Penguin Books, 2010), 305, 308.

[7] Christopher Dawson, *Medieval Essays* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1953), 28, 29.

[8] Ibid., 29.

[9] Christopher Dawson, *The Making of Europe: An Introduction to the History of European Unity* (1932; Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2003), 173.

[10] Dawson, *Medieval Essays*, 50.

[11] Dawson, *The Making of Europe,* 173.

the rewards beyond, and the injustices suffered here irrelevant to the final accounting in heaven.'[12] And for Dawson this heroic indifference to the 'temporal' was also founded on a fundamentally 'spiritual' principle:

> To the materialist, nothing could be more futile than the spectacle of Augustine busying himself with the reunion of the African Church and the refutation of the Pelagians, while civilisation was falling to pieces about his ears. It would seem like the activity of an ant which works on while its nest is being destroyed. But St. Augustine saw things otherwise. To him the ruin of civilisation and the destruction of the Empire were not very important things. He looked beyond the aimless and bloody chaos of history to the world of eternal realities from which the world of sense derives all the significance which it possesses. His thoughts were fixed, not on the fate of the city of Rome or the city of Hippo, nor on the struggle of Roman and barbarian, but on those other cities which have their foundations in heaven and in hell.[13]

Augustine was ultimately 'justified in his faith', Dawson concluded, and his indifference to worldly things, which 'were not very important', would continue 'to live and bear fruit long after Christian Africa had ceased to exist'.[14] In fact, this drive toward the 'eternal', which characterised Augustine's work *The City of God* (426), Dawson believed to be still 'an inalienable part of our spiritual heritage'.[15] This tradition might be called upon once more, then, in Dawson's own century. In this sense, Bradley J. Birzer is correct in emphasising Dawson's 'Augustinian Mind', at least in this one aspect.

That 'the sense of despair and unlimited impotence and abandonment that the disasters of the time [of the barbarian invasions] provoked […] [were] not inconsistent with a spirit of courage and self-devotion which inspired men to heroic effort and superhuman activity' was vital, Dawson believed.[16] After all, he wrote in 1932, 'the foundations of Europe were laid in fear and weakness and suffering – in such suffering as we can hardly conceive today,

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[12] James J. O'Donnell, *Augustine, Sinner & Saint: A New Biography* (London: Profile Books, 2005), 249.
[13] Dawson, *Medieval Essays*, 51.
[14] Ibid., 52.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Dawson, *The Making of Europe,* 6.

even after the disasters of the last eighteen-years'.[17] What made the difference in the fifth century, he asserted, was that for Augustine it was not Rome that mattered in the long run, but the City of God, meaning the eternal. Dawson was not alone in thinking this. G. K. Chesterton, for example, had written in 1917 that it was 'the paradox of this time that only the unworldly things had any worldly success'.[18] In fact, this was one of the key mantras of the Old Western ethic. Dawson would have agreed wholeheartedly with his intellectual progenitor's statement that 'we are never really on solid ground except on consecrated ground'.[19] Waugh, in his work Campion, had touched on this too, as we have seen. What fortified the fifth century, as well as Campion's own strength centuries later, against the despair of their own time, we are told, was a sense of the supernatural, of supernatural grace, which had, in turn, engendered such 'superhuman activity'. In this sense, the 'More-Than-World' informs 'the world' through the application of the Augustinian mind.

Dawson's point throughout his career was that twentieth century society had given up the City of God (the More-Than-World) in favour of Rome (the world), which was a wholly materialistic and essentially atheistic conception of the universe. The inevitable result of this, Dawson contended, was that in his own day, with the barbarians once more at the gates, society was now prone to despair and defeatism – a sort of moral deficit that a religious, and particularly a Christian, outlook had once guarded against, since it taught that material disaster was 'not very important'. Dawson believed that if his own century was to salvage itself from the depths of its own despair it must rediscover the City of God – 'the world of eternal realities from which the world of sense derives all the significance which it possesses' – and, in particular, its corollary, an accompanying philosophy of history, which could provide man with the intellectual grounds for hope. This was Dawson's solution, much like Waugh's. The first step, then, in recovering Campion's gaiety, his essential courage, was to recover this sense, this faith in final victory. This was essentially Augustinian; as Henry Chadwick has pointed out, the City of God was 'also an important attempt to establish a vantage-point from which a panoramic view of the history of the world becomes possible'.[20]

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[17] Ibid.

[18] G. K. Chesterton, *A Short History of England* (1917; Teddington: Echo Library, 2008), 19.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Henry Chadwick, *Augustine of Hippo: A Life* (2009; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 144.

Dawson's 'Theology of History'

In his own day, Dawson believed that there was a philosophy of history, the 'Religion of Progress', which threatened to supersede Christianity.[21] The modern 'idea of Progress', which he deemed in 1938 a 'rationalized theology', constituted a new and 'even more complete' reformation than the Reformation in the sixteenth century, he argued, essentially 'emptying Christianity of all supernatural elements and interpreting history as the progressive development of an immanent principle'.[22] In other words, while Progress 'had no place for the supernaturalism of Christian eschatology', or 'divine judgement and divine grace', the 'very essence of the Christian attitude to history', it nevertheless clung on to the 'Christian teleological conception of life'.[23] So it happened that the 'belief in the moral perfectibility and the indefinite progress of the human race took the place of the Christian faith in the life of the world to come, as the final goal of human effort'.[24] Although 'Christianity' and 'Progress' are both 'historical faiths', then, Dawson tells us – 'that is to say beliefs founded on history and implying a definite *theory of history*'[25] – Christian 'progress' is a fundamentally 'invisible one and its results can only be fully seen at the end of time'.[26] In this sense, for Dawson, 'to think christianly' means, in part, to accept that history only attains a right proportion when viewed, as a matter of faith, from an eternal perspective. 'The essential meaning of history is to be found in the growth of the seed of eternity in the womb of time', he wrote in 1951.[27]

Dawson's argument, which he held consistently, was that Christianity's 'theology of history' differed very much with the modern doctrine of 'Progress', which was altogether 'bound up with […] [the] rapid improvement in the material conditions of existence'.[28] Dawson defined it simply enough in *Progress and Religion*, in 1929, as 'the belief that every day and in every way the world grows better and better'.[29] 'To the average European, and still more to the average American', this was a form of progress that entailed 'more cinemas, motor-

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[21] Christopher Dawson, *Progress and Religion: An Historical Enquiry* (1929; London: Sheed and Ward, 1938), 246.
[22] Christopher Dawson, and John J. Mulloy, ed., *The Dynamics of World History* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1956), 283.
[23] Dawson, *Progress and Religion,* 199.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Christopher Dawson, *Religion and the Modern State* (1935; London: Sheed and Ward, 1936), 73.
[26] Ibid., 120.
[27] Dawson and Mulloy, ed., *The Dynamics of World History*, 249.
[28] Dawson, *Progress and Religion,* 6.
[29] Ibid., 4.

cars for all, wireless installations, more elaborate methods of killing people, purchases on the hire system, preserved foods and picture papers'.[30] Then there were 'the political theorists', in whose minds 'the belief in Progress found its chief support'.[31] These were the prophets of progress, Dawson posited, who rejected eternity in favour of 'the immediate future', as well as the 'almost apocalyptic belief in the possibility of a complete transformation of human society'.[32] This was in direct contrast to Augustine, whose attention was directed toward the society of the world to come: the City of God. Modernity's understanding of the workings of history, however – what Dawson deemed 'the working faith of our civilization' for the last 'two centuries' – was now so much 'a part of the modern mind that any attempt to criticize it' seemed, or rather had until recently seemed, 'almost an act of impiety'.[33]

Dawson was working within the Old Western perspective that sought to criticise modernity's vision of progress. Certainly, Dawson had observed a shift in paradigm, noting in 1935, in *Religion and the Modern State*, the 'series of shocks' which 'during the last twenty years […] almost destroyed the old complacency and self-confidence that marked the pre-war world':

> In those days it seemed as though nothing could shake the stability of our
> civilization, and the average man was content to take it for granted and
> to concentrate his attention on securing a good place for himself in it,
> and appropriating as many as possible of the advantages that it had to
> offer.[34]

Now, however, in 1935, it was Dawson's view that '[we] can no longer help realizing that something very serious is the matter, and that unless something is done about it, and done quickly, we shall all find ourselves in a desperate plight'.[35] Here Dawson was referring to the First World War, of course, but also its aftermath, the political upheavals in Europe, currently ongoing, in Germany and elsewhere. Significantly, Dawson forwarded the notion of a spirit of despair as a corollary of this shift in paradigm. Indeed, it was clear to Dawson,

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[30] Ibid., 6.
[31] Ibid., 5.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid., vii, 3.
[34] Dawson, *Religion and the Modern State*, xi.
[35] Ibid.

at least, that a 'spirit of pessimism and moral defeatism' – which 'was especially strong in Italy owing to the disillusionment of the peace', as well as in Germany, 'owing to the bitterness of defeat' – had come to pervade 'the post-war period' as a whole.[36]

It was a central part of Dawson's thesis that a modern conception of progress had brought about an epoch of moral defeatism as a result of its 'emptying' out of Christianity's 'supernatural elements', the eternal perspective in particular. The twentieth century had lost sight of any real 'theology of history' that alone was capable, Dawson believed, of affording 'full weight to the unknown and unpredictable element in history', that of the Christian theology of 'divine judgement and divine grace'.[37] Modernity, it seemed, could not countenance any recognition of 'the world of eternal realities'. It was Dawson's view that as a result it had given up a vital bulwark against despair. Consequently, wherever this modern despair was particularly pronounced, in Germany and Italy, for instance, the population had turned to political solutions, such a fascism, as a way out of this despair. Fascism, Dawson posited, had essentially taken advantage of the broken promise of progress on the similarly doubtful premise of 'banishing pessimism and defeatism' in the wake of the First World War.[38] What modernity, meaning a world bereft of the eternal perspective, had brought about, therefore, was a self-perpetuating drive toward despair engendered by utopianism tendering worldly triumph. In this sense, then, Nazism might be said to be a reaction itself against the very principle that it had subsequently made its own: '[the] determination to build Jerusalem, at once and on the spot.'[39]

There is more than one Jerusalem, Dawson tells us, writing in 1935 that 'there is the Muscovite Jerusalem which has no Temple, there is Herr Hitler's Jerusalem which has no Jews, and there is the Jerusalem of the social reformers which is all suburbs'.[40] What united all of these respective Jerusalems was that they were 'exclusively this-worldly'.[41] 'Social reform, social credit, or socialism pure and simple', for example, though they had a root in Christianity, were no longer considered 'the indispensable preparation for the Kingdom of God', but 'the Kingdom of God itself'.[42] This was a criticism that Dawson applied just as

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[36] Ibid., 10.
[37] Dawson and Mulloy, ed., *The Dynamics of World History*, 250.
[38] Dawson, *Religion and the Modern State,* 10.
[39] Ibid., 109.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid., 108.
[42] Ibid., 109.

much to 'the self-satisfied optimism' of the nineteenth century as he did the twentieth century.[43] The error in all of this, particularly 'from the Catholic point of view', he saw, was that it ignored the concept 'of Original Sin and its consequences'.[44] Dawson's point of view, as both a historian and a Catholic, was that society was not ultimately perfectible and that the attempt to do so, 'by political or economic measures', was 'the very force which is responsible for the intolerance and violence of the new political order'.[45] The benefit, then, of possessing a theology of history that was accustomed to defeat was that it prepared its adherents for coming disappointments, while at the same time promising victory at the end of Time. J. R. R. Tolkien, a fellow Catholic, neatly summed up what was essentially Dawson's own theology of history, writing in 1956:

> Actually I am a Christian, and indeed a Roman Catholic, so that I do not
> expect "history" to be anything but a "long defeat" – though it contains
> (and in a legend may contain more clearly and movingly) some samples
> or glimpses of final victory.[46]

The Christian should not demand, nor expect, victory in Time. Rather, victory lies beyond the precincts of history in eternity. This was Tolkien's, as well as Dawson's, essential premise. For them, this was what it meant to think 'christianly'.

The 'Long Defeat'

In 1942, in *The Judgement of the Nations*, Dawson pondered that 'in these dark times there must be many who feel tempted to despair when they see the ruin of the hopes of peace and progress that inspired the Liberal idealism of the last century'.[47] However, he also believed that, for Christians, 'the shock and the disillusionment should be less severe than to those who have put their faith in the nineteenth-century gospel of secular progress', since 'the Christian faith never minimized the reality of the forces of evil in history and

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[43] Christopher Dawson, *The Spirit of the Oxford Movement* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1933), 39.
[44] Dawson, *Religion and the Modern State*, 109, 110.
[45] Ibid., 109.
[46] J. R. R. Tolkien, and Humphrey Carpenter, ed., *The Letters of J. R. R. Tolkien* (1981; London: HarperCollins Publishers, 2006), 255.
[47] Christopher Dawson, *The Judgement of the Nations* (1942; Washington D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2011), 7.

society'.[48] As Chadwick writes, the perspective of Augustine makes it especially clear that 'no earthly state is free from overthrow either from without or, more commonly, by corrosion from within'.[49] One of Christianity's virtues, Dawson also argued, was that it 'prepared men's minds to face the extreme consequences of the external triumph of evil, and the apparent defeat of good'.[50] Nevertheless, this was 'no defeatist philosophy', but 'a triumphant affirmation of life – of eternal life victorious over death, of the kingdom of God prevailing over the rulers of this world of darkness'.[51] This was Dawson's philosophy of history; one that, as a Catholic, he shared with Chesterton and Waugh, as well as Tolkien, who referred to this theology as the philosophy of the 'long defeat'.

In the concluding chapter of *Beyond Politics* (1939), Dawson posed a number of questions that he believed he must answer in order to forward Christianity as a serious response to modern despair:

> Have we any reason to believe that a Christian social order could be immediately realized here and now? Have we any reason to suppose that the right side necessarily wins? Or if we believe that it must win necessarily, must it win this time, in this particular age and these particular circumstances? And finally, have we any right to suppose that history will proceed according to plan, that it will realize the hopes and ideals of men? In other words, is history a reasonable process or is it essentially incalculable and irrational?[52]

Certainly, Dawson noted, 'nothing could be more discouraging to the man or woman who believes in the need for applying Christian principles to social and political life than the present state of the world and the present political outlook'.[53] However, it was his view that it was ultimately a mistake to expect the triumph of the Christian ideal in Time:

> We have no right to expect that Christian principles will work in practice
> in the simple way that a political system may work. The Christian order is

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[48] Ibid.
[49] Chadwick, *Augustine*, 130.
[50] Dawson, *The Judgement of the Nations*, 7.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Christopher Dawson, *Beyond Politics* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1939), 120-121.
[53] Ibid., 119.

a supernatural order. It has its own principles and its own laws which are not those of the visible world and which may often seem to contradict them.[54]

This was no reason to despair, however, Dawson reasoned, asserting that Christianity's 'victories may be found in apparent defeat and its defeats in material success'.[55] It was not always obvious what direction history was heading. This, he argued, was the true nature of history. In this sense, too, 'the life of Christ' was 'profoundly historical' and a useful analogy.[56] After all, Christ's story was 'the fulfilment of a historical purpose, towards which priests and prophets and even politicians had worked'.[57] But 'from the worldly point of view, from the standpoint of a contemporary secular historian, it was not only unimportant, but actually invisible'.[58] We should take note, is Dawson's point here; Christ's life did not appear to 'lead to any kind of historical achievement but moved swiftly and irresistibly towards its catastrophic end'.[59] No one at the time could have supposed that 'out of the heart of this catastrophe there arose something completely new': Christianity.[60] This was a prime example of the 'unpredictable element in history' that Dawson believed ought to forestall any temptation toward despair and defeatism. As Chesterton himself had written in 1909, in *The Ball and Cross*, 'the cross cannot be defeated [...] for it is Defeat'.[61] Dawson's own work is peppered with similar remarks, which are essentially variations on a theme: that 'apparent success often means spiritual failure, and the way of failure and suffering is the royal road of Christian progress', for example.[62] Dawson's point was that 'the Christian ought to be the last person in the world to lose hope in the presence of the failure of the right and the apparent triumph of evil. For all this forms part of the Christian view of life, and the Christian discipline is expressly designed to prepare us to face such a situation.'[63] As he had noted earlier, in 1935, 'Christianity began with a startling failure, and the sign in which it conquered was the Cross on which its Founder was executed.'[64] So though the Christian was obviously 'bound to believe that there is a spiritual purpose in history – that

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[54] Ibid., 127.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Ibid., 128.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Ibid.
[61] G. K. Chesterton, *The Ball and Cross* (New York: John Lane Company, 1909), 207.
[62] Dawson, *Religion and the Modern State*, 120.
[63] Dawson, *Beyond Politics*, 127.
[64] Dawson, *Religion and the Modern State*, 152.

it is subject to the designs of Providence and that somehow or other God's will is done', Dawson stressed that this was a 'very different thing from saying that history is rational in the ordinary sense of the word'.[65] Enduring history – or the 'long defeat', as Tolkien termed it – was predicated on recognising the 'unpredictable element in history'. At the moment when Europe appeared to be sliding toward catastrophe, Dawson wrote in 1939 that Christ in fact employed such a 'forecast of calamity as a motive for hope. '"When you see these things," He said, "look up and lift up your heads for your redemption is at hand."'[66] Although this might 'seem a strange philosophy of history', wrote Dawson, it was 'the philosophy of Christ, and if the prospect of these things causes us to hang down our heads instead of lifting them up, it shows that there is something wrong with our point of view'.[67] Christianity made a speciality out of defeat. It was for this reason that it appealed so much to Dawson.

Enduring the 'Long Defeat'

Writing at a pronounced low-point for Britain during the Second World War, Waugh reproved the socialite Diana Cooper for suggesting that he was 'unchristian to expect evil', and also that he was essentially a 'pessimist' for thinking so.[68] Waugh responded that it was true that for the past six years he had 'seen everything moving to disaster'.[69] However, he also added that it was a mistake to suggest that this should ultimately lead to a despair so profound that he should take his own life. This was Cooper's great error, Waugh asserted, 'saying that because one expects disaster one should despair'.[70] Waugh's attitude to defeat is essentially the same as Dawson's philosophy, as is evident in his letter to Cooper:

> Despair is a sin and has nothing to do with intellectual conclusions resulting from observation [...] I live in a world which seems to me to deteriorate daily before my eyes and I am not tempted to suicide. And

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[65] Dawson, *Beyond Politics*, 121.
[66] Ibid., 135.
[67] Ibid., 135-136.
[68] Evelyn Waugh, Diana Cooper, and Artemis Cooper, ed., *The Letters of Evelyn Waugh and Diana Cooper* (New York: Ticknor & Fields, 1992), 74.
[69] Ibid., 75.
[70] Ibid.

when things get very much worse indeed I shall not commit suicide; why

should I at the expectation of them?[71]

In actual fact, he argued, what Cooper's view really amounted to was 'the worst pessimism and ingratitude to God, saying that you find life tolerable only on the assumption that it will get a great deal better'.[72] Here Waugh was asserting the classical Christian perspective that Dawson had articulated so well in his own work. It was also expressed in Tolkien's own philosophy of the 'long defeat', which found perfect expression in his work *The Lord of the Rings*, where a vital philosophy of history served to uphold the entire quest. Essentially, Tolkien would express in literary form what Dawson had explained as a historian and a theologian, how a person, availing themselves of the Christian philosophy of history, might endure immediate or prospective disaster and yet, as Waugh termed it in his work on Campion, 'surrender themselves to their destiny without calculation or reserve […] though it led them through bitter ways to poverty, disgrace, exile, imprisonment and death'. What is more, they would follow it 'gaily'.

Tom Shippey has observed 'that most of the characters in *The Lord of the Rings* are staring "universal final defeat" in the face'.[73] Indeed, characters such as Frodo and Treebeard 'seem to be on the edge of a situation of existential despair'.[74] Another is Denethor, the despondent Steward of Gondor, introduced to us toward the latter end of Tolkien's epic. A model of modern fatalism, he is, in a sense, what Cooper envisaged in Waugh. Employing one of the *Palantíri* seeing stones to gain knowledge of the enemy, Denethor is driven to despair by the prospect of his kingdom's prospective annihilation by Mordor's vast armies. Minas Tirith, his capital, seems certain to fall: '"soon all shall be burned. The West has failed. It shall all go up in a great fire, and all shall be ended. Ash! Ash and smoke blown away on the wind!"'[75] As Tom Shippey notes, 'despair […] is Sauron's chief weapon', a despair which is itself, he argues, a representation of 'post-war and post-faith disillusionment' in Tolkien's Britain.[76] Denethor, overwhelmed by a spirit of defeatism,

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[71] Ibid.

[72] Ibid.

[73] Tom Shippey, *J. R. R. Tolkien: Author of the Century* (2000; London: HarperCollins Publishers, 2001), 211.

[74] Ibid., 212.

[75] J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King* (1955; London: HarperCollins Publishers, 2011), 852.

[76] Shippey, *Tolkien,* 220, 221.

knowing what forces are arrayed against him, informs Gandalf the wizard that Gondor cannot hope to win against such huge odds:

> "For a little space you may triumph on the field, for a day. But against the Power that now arises there is no victory. To this City only the first finger of its hand has yet been stretched […] The West has failed."[77]

Denethor, in his despair, kills himself, reasoning that '"battle is vain. Why should we wish to live longer?"'[78] Here we see what Waugh perceived in Cooper's logic, that life is only bearable if the prospect of victory is favourable. Gandalf's rebuke of Denethor is much the same as Waugh's, that despair is essentially a sin:

> "Authority is not given to you, Steward of Gondor, to order the hour of your death," answered Gandalf. "And only the heathen kings, under the domination of the Dark Power, did thus, slaying themselves in pride and despair."[79]

Joseph Pearce has suggested that Tolkien intentionally set up the link between 'pagan despair' and the Steward of Gondor, and that this is evident in the very name Denethor; Thor being the Norse god of thunder, while Théoden, the king of Rohan, another character who conversely overcomes his despair, fights on. Théoden, Pearce notes, 'connects to true religion via *Theos*, the Greek word for God'.[80] Certainly, the notion of fighting against terrible odds is seen by Tolkien to be not antithetical to Christianity. Moreover, there is a vital philosophy of history at work in *The Lord of the Rings* that, like Christianity, makes a specialty out of defeat, which is evident throughout Tolkien's created history. As well as this, Tolkien would also touch upon the idea that Waugh forwarded earlier, of virtue being rewarded through supernatural grace. The individual through his sanctity is himself capable of influencing events through the reciprocal nature of grace, which was Waugh's estimation of Campion the Jesuit, Denethor's opposite. To find Campion's equal on Middle-earth we must turn to Frodo.

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[77] Tolkien, *The Return of the King*, 853.
[78] Ibid., 852-853.
[79] Ibid., 853.
[80] Joseph Pearce, *Frodo's Journey: Discovering the Hidden Meaning of The Lord of the Rings* (Charlotte: Saint Benedict Press, 2015), 101.

Middle-earth's Theology of History: Providence and Free Will

'Providence' is a significant aspect of Tolkien's created universe. It is not a godless universe; there is a philosophy of history that is implicit in his work, particularly in Frodo's story, though it is only hinted at, for example when Gandalf explains to Frodo early on in *The Lord of the Rings* why the Ring is now in his possession:

> "There was something else at work, beyond any design of the Ring-maker. I can put it no plainer than by saying that Bilbo was *meant* to find the Ring, and not by its maker. In which case you also were *meant* to have it. And that may be an encouraging thought."[81]

As Pearce has pointed out, it is these words spoken by Gandalf to Frodo 'which are among the most important in the whole story':

> The "something else" is obviously God and that which is meant by God to happen is clearly providence. It is this scarcely concealed presence of God, made manifest in His providence, which makes The Lord of the Rings a "fundamentally religious" work.[82]

We should note that Gandalf finds this thought 'encouraging'. He views the coming of the Ring to Frodo, via Bilbo, optimistically, exactly because it suggests that a greater power is on their side. And it continues to be a source of hope. Later, providence appears to interfere again when Frodo wonders at the 'marvel' of his escape from the black riders during his flight to Rivendell:

> "Yes, fortune or fate have helped you," said Gandalf, "not to mention courage. For your heart was not touched, and only your shoulder was pierced; and that was because you resisted to the last. But it was a terribly narrow shave."[83]

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[81] J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring* (1954; London: HarperCollins Publishers, 2002), 74.
[82] Pearce, *Frodo's Journey,* 34, 36.
[83] Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, 291.

It is Gandalf's use of the word 'fate' that is most telling here. It appears to be one of the functions of Gandalf to remind Frodo, as well as the reader, that history is not merely a meaningless chaos. At the very least, he suggests that it is somehow being guided. Indeed, in this sense, there is something of Dawson in Gandalf, insofar as there is one character in the work who is the story's historian and theologian.

Tolkien's works are suffused with providence. Indeed, collectively it is a profound expression of a philosophy of history that finds a parallel in Christianity, in terms of God's interference in Time, his rewarding and punishing of the actions of those who are part of his universe. Nowhere is this more evident, in terms of its nod to religion and the Bible, than in the story of the destruction of Númenor by Ilúvatar (God) in *The Silmarillion* (1977), a pre-history that takes place many centuries before *The Lord of the Rings*. Númenor is the island home of the Númenóreans, a race of prosperous mariners. To the west of the island lies the Undying Lands, where men are forbidden to tread. However, resenting this ban, the Númenóreans break this vital prohibition and sail westwards in an attempt to gain the great gift of everlasting life. This decision turns out to be catastrophic:

> Ilúvatar showed forth his power, and he changed the fashion of the world; and a great chasm opened in the sea between Númenor and the Deathless Lands, and the waters flowed down into it, and the noise and smoke of the cataracts went up to heaven, and the world was shaken. And all the fleets of the Númenóreans were drawn down into the abyss.[84]

The destruction of Númenor obviously has a peer in the story of the fall of Man in the Garden of Eden. We can see here that Tolkien has constructed an entire framework for his philosophy of history, where Ilúvatar rules Middle-earth as well as all the lands and seas beyond its precincts. Within this universe, then, we have the vital interplay between what is essentially the Christian concept of the relationship between providence and free will, which we see at work in such stories as *The Lord of the Rings*. This, Pearce writes, is really what 'makes it a specifically Catholic work', underlining the 'relationship between providence and free will', which provides us 'with the opportunity to make good moral choices that will, in turn, have good moral consequences'.[85] The small group of

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[84] J. R. R. Tolkien, and Christopher Tolkien, ed., *The Silmarillion* (1977; London: HarperCollins Publishers, 2013), 334.
[85] Pearce, *Frodo's Journey,* 36, 37.

Númenóreans who resist the temptation to sail west is spared the fate of those who broke the ban. Instead, they are rewarded and carried to the shores of the Middle-earth. We see this repeated once more when Frodo makes just choices, which prompts providence to intervene on his behalf in recompense for his right action, even when at the end of his quest he cannot bring himself to drop the One Ring into Mount Doom, which is the objective of his mission.

When it was pointed out that Frodo had actually failed in his task to destroy the One Ring himself, Tolkien replied that he had 'indeed "failed" as a hero', but only 'as conceived by simple minds' who neglect 'that strange element in the World that we call Pity or Mercy, which is also an absolute requirement in moral judgement (since it is present in the Divine nature). In its highest exercise it belongs to God.'[86] Frodo's defeat was not a moral failure, since he 'had done what he could and spent himself completely (as an instrument of Providence) and had produced a situation in which the object of his quest could be achieved':

> His humility (with which he began) and his sufferings were justly
> rewarded by the highest honour; and his exercise of patience and mercy
> towards Gollum gained him Mercy: his failure was redressed.[87]

In 1956 Tolkien wrote in a letter that Frodo's 'quest was bound to fail as a piece of world-plan, and also was bound to end in disaster as the story of Frodo's development to the "noble", his sanctification'.[88]

> Fail it would and did as far as Frodo considered alone was concerned […]
> But at this point the "salvation" of the world and Frodo's own "salvation"
> is achieved by his previous *pity* and forgiveness of injury. At any point any
> prudent person would have told Frodo that Gollum would certainly
> betray him, and could rob him in the end. To "pity" him, to forbear to kill
> him, was a piece of folly, or a mystical belief in the ultimate value-in-itself
> of pity and generosity even if disastrous in the world of time. He did rob
> him and injure him in the end – but by a "grace", that last betrayal was at

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[86] Tolkien and Carpenter, ed., *Letters,* 326.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Ibid., 234.

a precise juncture when the final evil deed was the most beneficial thing any one cd. [sic] have done for Frodo! By a situation created by his "forgiveness", he was saved himself, and relieved of his burden.'[89]

The moral of the story, then, is that Frodo and the 'Cause' are saved 'by Mercy [...] by the supreme value and efficacy of Pity and forgiveness of injury'.[90] 'Grace' rewards Frodo for his sanctity. This is vital, since, as Tolkien writes, 'one must face the fact: the power of Evil in the world in not finally resistible by incarnate creatures, however "good"'.[91] Another agency, a supernatural force, is required: 'I think rather of the mysterious last petitions of the Lord's Prayer: Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.'[92] Referring to this, in 1947, Tolkien wrote that once this was accepted there was 'no horror conceivable that such creatures [as Frodo] cannot surmount, by grace (here [in *The Lord of the Rings*] appearing in mythological forms)'.[93] This raises another vital aspect contained within this particular philosophy of history, which takes us back to Campion: that, as Tolkien wrote, 'salvation from ruin will depend on something apparently unconnected: the general sanctity (and humility and mercy) of the sacrificial person'.[94] Salvation is ultimately reliant on sacrifice and '"sacrificial" situations', situations, Tolkien tells us, when 'the "good" of the world depends on the behaviour of an individual in circumstances which demand of him suffering and endurance far beyond the normal', even though it might 'demand a strength of body and mind which he does not possess'.[95]

He is in a sense doomed to failure, doomed to fall to temptation or be broken by pressure against his "will": that is against any choice he could make or would make unfettered, not under the duress [...] Frodo was in such a position.[96]

So, too, was Campion. Indeed, in both Waugh's and Tolkien's individual expressions of a benevolent philosophy of history, they both emphasised the vital requirement of suffering and sacrifice, which would ultimately bring about victory. This was Frodo's achievement,

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[89] Ibid.
[90] Ibid., 252.
[91] Ibid.
[92] Ibid.
[93] Ibid., 120.
[94] Ibid., 252.
[95] Ibid., 233.
[96] Ibid.

and it was important that he should invite grace into himself, since he was not capable of resisting Evil entirely. Waugh made much the same point. Campion, he wrote, was of 'an age replete with examples of astounding physical courage'.[97] Yet compared to the glut of Elizabethan 'sea-dogs and explorers […] tough men, ruthlessly hardened by upbringing, gross in their recreations', Campion stood out amongst 'even his most gallant and chivalrous contemporaries […] Philip Sidney and Don John of Austria'.[98] What was so impressive about Campion, then, was that this 'the gentle scholar', who had 'trained all his life for the pulpit and the lecture room, was able at the word of command to step straight into a world of violence, and acquit himself nobly'.[99] This could be said of Frodo too. 'I do not think people of that sort and stage of life and development can be both peaceable and very brave and tough "at a pinch"', Tolkien wrote.[100] Certainly, this was the apparent 'mystery', Waugh asserted, which set 'Campion's triumph apart from the ordinary achievements of human strength'.[101] At the root of that mystery was supernatural grace.

Waugh's work on Campion has been described as 'a polemic' for the Catholic Church, as well as a 'personal affirmation of his new-found faith'.[102] While this is true, it was also an attempt to offer a 'solution' to the 'mystery' of Campion's strength, which Waugh attributed to his 'piety', a self-sanctification that might armour modern society against the trials of the present.[103] Waugh's examination of his subject in 1935 was not simply an expression of his 'romantic enthusiasm for […] the spirit of the Counter-Reformation', as Douglas Lane Patey has suggested.[104] What Waugh did was link Campion's 'physical courage' to his 'gaiety', which Waugh stated was a manifestation of 'the supernatural grace that was in him'. His triumph, then, was a result of his 'faith', which was 'concrete and indestructible', and 'of such transcendent value that, once it was held, all other possessions became a mere encumbrance' – including, by implication, his own life.[105] All of this had resulted from his willingness to sacrifice himself and suffer the material consequences that

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[97] Waugh, *Campion*, 55.
[98] Ibid.
[99] Ibid.
[100] Tolkien and Carpenter, ed., *Letter*, 196-197.
[101] Waugh, *Campion,* 56.
[102] Selina Hastings, *Evelyn Waugh: A Biography* (1994; London: Minerva, 1995), 324.
[103] Waugh, *Campion,* 56.
[104] Douglas Lane Patey, *The Life of Evelyn Waugh: A Critical Biography* (1998; Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 2001), 130.
[105] Waugh, *Campion,* 121.

were implied in that sacrifice.[106] This was underscored and emboldened by the promise of final victory that was at the heart of the Christian philosophy of history. What history essentially required, then, was an army of saints. But because of the vital collaboration between providence and free will, it called for self-sanctification rather than an elite of pre-ordained saints. Sinners trying to be saints is now seen as a vital currency in history.

Self-Sanctification

Ian Ker recently referred to 'that favourite Chestertonian subject of free will'.[107] This was a major part of Chesterton's clear inclination toward the Middle Ages. 'The medieval mind turned centrally upon the pivot of Free Will', Chesterton wrote in 1912.[108] 'In their moral philosophy they always thought of man as standing free and doubtful at the cross-roads in a forest [...] They had a much stronger sense than we have of the freedom of the soul.'[109] Chesterton believed that this 'sense', of 'a man that may turn either way', had subsequently been 'weakened', in part, by 'the Calvinism of the seventeenth [century]', which had 'darkened this liberty with a sense of doom'.[110]

> Of the idea of Predestination there are broadly two views; the Calvinist and the Catholic; and it would make a most uncommon difference to *my* comfort, if I held the former instead of the latter. It is the difference between believing that God knows, as a fact, that I choose to go to the devil; and believing that God has given me to the devil, without my having any choice at all.[111]

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[106] The sacrifice of Campion and other such martyrs has been credited with keeping the Catholic Church alive. Edward Norman, *Roman Catholicism: From the Elizabethan Settlement to the Second Vatican Council* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 20. Roy Hattersley, *The Catholics: The Church and its People in Britain and Ireland, from the Reformation to the Present Day* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2017), 30.

[107] Ian Ker, *G. K. Chesterton: A Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 304.

[108] G. K. Chesterton, *A Miscellany of Men* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1912), 271.

[109] Ibid.

[110] Ibid., 272.

[111] G. K. Chesterton, *The Collected Works of G. K. Chesterton*, *Volume 3* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1990), 180.

Dawson also believed that Calvin's 'doctrines of predestination and election' were 'inimical to that spirit of hope which inspired the Christian culture of the past'.[112] The idea, however, that a 'man has the power to choose his own good; either to find his peace in subordinating his will to the divine order, or to refer all things to the satisfaction of his own desires and to make himself the centre of his universe' was an identifiably Catholic concept.[113] In this sense, Catholicism, both Dawson and Chesterton agreed, was exclusively inclusive, unlike Calvin's doctrine of a spiritual elite, since admission to God's Kingdom was open to both saints and sinners. The reason why this was such a relevant subject was that this essentially opened the way for a personal quest of self-sanctification, one that intersected with history itself. Any individual could co-operate with the Divine.

In 1951, Dawson wrote that 'Christians not only believe in the existence of a divine plan in history, they believe in the existence of a human society which is in some measure aware of this plan and capable of co-operating with it'.[114] 'The Christian', he believed, not only 'had to keep his eyes fixed on the future like a servant who waits for the return of his master', he also had to 'prepare himself for the coming of the Kingdom' that Providence was working toward.[115] The individual had his own role to play in history, therefore. Here Dawson consciously identified himself with the Augustinian tradition of the vital interplay between free will and history. This, he explained in *Progress and Religion* (1929), was Augustine's revolutionary philosophy of history that 'the present world' was essentially 'the birth process of a spiritual creation', God's Kingdom, which would be brought about through man's collaboration with 'the Divine Spirit', the 'actuating principle [...] which manifests itself in the world, outwardly through the sacramental order of the Church, and inwardly in the soul by the operation of the spiritual will'.[116] Having thus established the Divine objective, the City of God, it was the role of the individual, contained within the precincts of history, to work toward it in a state of preparation, therefore, availing himself of the grace afforded to him by God. The 'human will', in this sense, wrote Dawson, was 'the engine that God employs for the creation of a new world'.[117] And really the individual had only two choices before him, or rather a choice between to 'two loves [...] The love of

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[112] Christopher Dawson, and Gerald J. Russello, ed., *Christianity and European Culture: Selections from the Works of Christopher Dawson* (Washington D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1998), 51, 52.

[113] Dawson and Mulloy, ed., *The Dynamics of World History*, 310.

[114] Ibid., 249.

[115] Ibid., 297.

[116] Dawson, *Progress and Religion,* 171.

[117] Ibid., 172.

Self [that] builds up Babylon to the contempt of God, and the love of God [that] builds up Jerusalem to the contempt of Self'.[118] As Augustine had written in *The City of God*:

> If the soul and reason do not serve God as God himself has commanded that he should be served, then they do not in any way exercise the right kind of rule over the body and the vicious propensities [...] [being instead] prostituted to the corrupting influence of vicious demons.[119]

It was the Christian's mission, Augustine posited, to reject the love of Self and bring himself 'into relation with God'.[120]

The theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar observed that 'since the great period of Scholasticism' there had 'been few theologians who were saints'; meaning one whose 'vocation' was 'to expound revelation in its fullness' and whose own life 'reproduced the fullness of the Church's teaching, and their teaching the fullness of the Church's life'.[121] This chapter has essentially been arguing that this attempt to be saintly was also a vital part of the Old Western ethic itself: bringing oneself into relation with the 'More-Than-World'. Miles Hollingworth, in his 2013 biography of Augustine, explains that the *City of God* was underscored by its author's central 'obsession […] the idea that the writing out, and speaking out, of reality – Confession – was the only way that we could grasp something'.[122] Contained within this was Augustine's chief reflection: 'how men and women must carry themselves between heaven and earth.'[123] Hollingworth elucidates this point further, that in Augustine's view we are 'congenital materialists' inhabiting 'a spiritual universe', and therefore 'doomed to be going about things the wrong way'.[124] In this sense, 'the human heart' is 'a needle in a compass' that 'quivers between its poles […] what Augustine would call his "two cities"'.[125] Having come to fully admit the supernatural as a reality, accepting an accompanying theology of history, one that very much chimes with Hollingworth's own

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[118] Ibid., 171.
[119] Augustine of Hippo, *City of God*, trans. Henry Bettenson (1972; London: Penguin Classics, 2003), 891.
[120] Ibid.
[121] Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Explorations in Theology: The Word Made Flesh*, trans. A. V. Littledale and Alexander Dru (1964; San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989), 181.
[122] Miles Hollingworth, *Saint Augustine of Hippo: An Intellectual Biography* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 5.
[123] Ibid., 6.
[124] Ibid.
[125] Ibid., 7.

account of Augustine's theology – of an individual being able to choose between two poles – the Old Western Men would themselves attempt to practice what they preached. It was for this reason, perhaps, that so many of these men, those such as Dawson and Chesterton, converted to 'the sacramental order of the Catholic Church', which, as Dawson noted, was the outward manifestation of the 'actuating principle' itself. Arguably, it was Catholicism, in the twentieth century, which conformed most of all to the Augustinian tradition that accepted Providence, yet which did not diminish the role of the individual in that history. A person's role within history was to bring himself into a closer relation with the Divine and sanctify himself. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* expresses this line of thought particularly well.

Aspiring to Sanctity: Faramir

Tolkien had written that he was in actual fact a hobbit.[126] However, in 1956, in a letter to a fan, Tolkien claimed that 'as far as any character is "like me" it is Faramir – except that I lack what all my characters possess (let the psychoanalysts note!) *Courage'*.[127] Although there is some correlation between hobbits and Faramir – an appreciation of gardens, most notably[128] – there is an apparent contradiction here, in that Faramir himself is hardly a hobbit. Rather, he is a warrior invested 'with an air of high nobility such as Aragorn […] a captain that men would follow'.[129] This is not to say there are not facets to Faramir's character that speak of Tolkien himself: he was 'gentle in bearing […] [and] a lover of lore', for example.[130] Nevertheless, it is problematic to reconcile Tolkien's two statements here – that he was at once a hobbit and Faramir – unless we understand that Faramir was not necessarily who Tolkien was, but who he wanted to be; that Faramir was the standard that Tolkien set himself as a Christian on his own quest toward self-sanctification.

Faramir has already been likened to a 'saint', by Pearce.[131] Birzer, too, has recently identified Faramir as one of a number of 'sanctified heroes' in *The Lord of the Rings*; the

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[126] Tolkien and Carpenter, ed., *Letters,* 288-289.
[127] Ibid., 232.
[128] '"Your land [the Shire] must be a realm of peace and content, and there must gardeners be in high honour"', says Faramir. J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers* (1954; London: HarperCollins Publishers, 2011), 681.
[129] Tolkien, *The Return of the King*, 810.
[130] Ibid., 1056.
[131] Pearce, *Frodo's Journey,* 64.

others being Frodo, Sam, Gandalf, and Aragorn, each representing and fulfilling 'not only St. Augustine's post-Roman vision of heroism – a synthesis of Stoic realism and Christian hope – but particularly St. Paul's notion that each individual was a member of the larger and eternal Body of Christ'.[132] In Faramir's case, a large part of his quality is his humility, which is a reflection of that 'eternal Body'. This is the essence of his saintliness. For example, Faramir is particularly notable since he is one of the few characters in Tolkien's work to resist the temptation to take the Ring for himself, chancing upon Frodo and Sam in *The Two Towers*. At the root of this resistance is his humility:

> "I would not take this thing, if it lay by the highway. Not were Minas
> Tirith falling in ruin and I alone could save her, so, using the weapon of
> the Dark Lord for her good and my glory. No, I do not wish for such
> triumphs, Frodo son of Drogo."[133]

Faramir allows Frodo and Sam to go on their way, letting them complete their mission. This is in stark contrast to Boromir, his brother, who had attempted to take the Ring from Frodo previously. While Faramir is a 'saint', then, Boromir, Pearce has written, is really Tolkien's idea of 'the sinner who is trying to be a saint'.[134] What prevents him from achieving this goal is his own pride; a thirst for personal glory, which Faramir himself succeeds in repudiating. Following Hollingworth's line, what we might say is that Boromir is a prime example of man 'going about things the wrong way'.

Tolkien, it seems, intended Faramir to be a direct counterpoint to Boromir. Faramir, we are told, is very much like Boromir in that he, too, is 'personally courageous'.[135] The great difference between them, however, is that Faramir is 'also modest, fair-minded […] and very merciful'.[136] Unlike Boromir, Faramir 'did not seek glory in danger without a purpose', even though it meant that 'his courage was judged less than his brother's'.[137] This may be Faramir's true glory. It is what makes him a saint. In this sense, as Tolkien himself noted,

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[132] Bradley J. Birzer, *J. R. R. Tolkien's Sanctifying Myth: Understanding Middle Earth* (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2003), 86.
[133] Tolkien, *The Two Towers*, 671.
[134] Pearce, *Frodo's Journey,* 64.
[135] Tolkien and Carpenter, ed., *Letters,* 79.
[136] Ibid., 323.
[137] Tolkien, *The Return of the King*, 1056.

one of Faramir's uses is that he expresses 'some very sound reflections no doubt on martial glory and true glory'.[138]

True heroism, Tolkien argues, must include humility. He would touch on this notion again when writing a commentary on the poem *The Battle of Maldon*, a piece of Old English verse that recounted the events of a battle between the Anglo-Saxons and a Viking army in 991. Here Tolkien criticised the heroic Anglo-Saxon ethic epitomised by the actions of Byrhtnoth, the leader of a band of Anglo-Saxon warriors, who permitted a Viking army to cross the causeway from Northey Island to the mainland, allowing them to utilise their full martial strength. That Byrhtnoth actually acquiesced to this entreaty was 'magnificent perhaps', Tolkien admitted, 'but certainly wrong'.[139] The Anglo-Saxons, including Byrhtnoth were annihilated, all because of an 'act of pride and misplaced chivalry'.[140]

Tolkien employed the example of the poem *The Battle of Maldon* to illustrate his own distinction between 'bleak heroic necessity' and heroism carried 'to excess' by the 'element of pride, in the form of the desire for honour and glory'.[141] Faramir is, of course, Byrhtnoth's opposite, not allowing pride to blind himself to the right course of action. As Faramir himself relates, '"I do not love the bright sword for its sharpness, nor the arrow for its swiftness, nor the warrior for his glory. I love only that which they defend."'[142] Faramir's attitude toward battle, Tolkien implies, is entirely of a piece with his moral capacity to resist the power of the Ring. His virtue as a solider is synonymous with his sanctity.

Faramir represents sanctity. On the other hand, the drive toward self-sanctity is present in the quest itself, not Faramir. This introduces the notion of the sinner trying to be a saint, which from the Catholic perspective is the Christian's mission in life, as Stratford Caldecott writes:

> God created us incomplete, because the kind of creature that can only be
> perfected by its own choices (and so through Quest and trial) is more

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[138] Tolkien and Carpenter, ed., *Letters,* 79.
[139] J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Tolkien Reader* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1966), 24.
[140] Ibid., 4.
[141] Ibid., 22.
[142] Tolkien, *The Two Towers*, 672.

glorious than the kind that has only *to be* whatever it was made to be by another.[143]

Here, then, free will and providence coalesce, affording the individual meaning and purpose since it grants them the autonomy to decide for themselves whether they will accept the quest of self-sanctification. Charles Moseley, referring to the presence of Christian metaphysics in Tolkien's work, believes, too, that at 'its root lies the Christian model of a world loved into being by a Creator, whose creatures have the free will to turn away from the harmony of that love to seek their own will and desires'.[144] Sean McGrath agrees, writing that '*The Lord of the Rings* myth depicts the dynamics of this fundamental option to give up our lives for the sake of a higher good'.[145] Such '"escapist" literature' as *The Lord of the Rings*, McGrath continues, 'presents in vivid dramatic pictures what is otherwise intangible and inexpressible: our battle for salvation, for overcoming the all-pervasive, crippling legacy of sin'.[146] In Tolkien's story, it is Frodo's quest to destroy the Ring that most obviously signifies this 'battle for salvation' or self-sanctification. Sam, Gandalf and Aragorn, too, as Birzer notes, fulfil their own individual quests or destinies. But there is Boromir too. Although this example is less obvious, Faramir's brother's story is perhaps the most human journey of all since his story is most evidently a tale of redemption, which comes through penitence as well as sacrifice.

Boromir's exoneration, having attempted to take the Ring from Frodo, is his act of sacrifice – a common theme and requisite, in this regard – being mortally wounded fighting to protect his friends, as well as his subsequent penitence when he confesses his sins to Aragorn as he lies dying: 'Boromir opened his eyes and strove to speak. At last slow words came. "I tried to take the Ring from Frodo," he said. "I am sorry. I have paid."'[147] Pearce notes that Boromir's words mirror 'precisely the actions required of the penitent according to the form of the Sacrament of Confession in the Catholic Church', meaning 'the three acts required by the penitent before the priest': contrition (remorse); confession (of the sin); and satisfaction (achieved by the act of confession itself).[148] Aragorn fulfils the role of the

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[143] Quoted in Joseph Pearce, *Tolkien: Man and Myth* (1998; London: HarperCollins Publishers, 1999), 107.
[144] Charles Moseley, *J. R. R. Tolkien* (Plymouth: Northcote House Publishers, 1997), 60.
[145] Quoted in Pearce, *Tolkien,* 114.
[146] Quoted in ibid.
[147] Tolkien, *The Two Towers*, 414.
[148] Pearce, *Frodo's Journey,* 60.

priest in this instance. When Boromir says '"I have failed"', it is Aragorn who insists that he has actually '"conquered. Few have gained such a victory."'[149] Boromir is dying, of course. In this sense, he has failed. What Aragorn is referring to, however, is a spiritual triumph, a very specific sort of victory that Boromir has won for himself, transcending the old heroic ideal, since it was achieved under the auspices of sacrifice and penitence rather than pride, thus transcending himself, which is the objective of self-sanctification. Above all, then, Boromir has conquered himself in a way that Byrhtnoth, at Maldon, had not. Aragorn kisses his brow and tells him to '"be at peace"'.[150]

The Song of Roland

Boromir's redemption has a parallel in literature that has so far gone unmentioned, which is the eleventh century epic poem *The Song of Roland*, a fictionalised account of the death of a real-life Roland at the Battle of Roncevaux Pass in 788. In the poem, Roland and the soldiers under his command are ambushed by Saracens. Out of pride, he refuses to sound his horn to call for reinforcements, a decision that seals his fate. Only when his force has been all but destroyed does he sound his horn. Whether Tolkien was purposely setting up a link between these two characters or not, Boromir, too, blows his horn for assistance as he fights for his life, prior to his death. Their respective death scenes are also similar, in that Roland confesses his sins:

> Roland feels that his time has come;
> He is on a steep hill facing Spain.
> With one hand he beat his breast:
> "O God, the Almighty, I confess
> My sins, both great and small,
> Which I have committed since the time I was born,
> Until this day on which I have been overtaken."
> He held out his right glove to God;
> Angels come down to him from Heaven.[151]

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[149] Tolkien, *The Two Towers*, 414.
[150] Ibid.
[151] *The Song of Roland,* trans. Glyn Burgess (London: Penguin Books, 1990), 104.

Roland's exoneration, then, like Boromir's, is his humility at the last in an act of Christian penitence. Although Tolkien himself never compared and contrasted, explicitly at least, *The Song of Roland* with the actions of Byrhtnoth in *The Battle of Maldon*, Dawson did.

Writing in 1932, Dawson explained that 'in *The Song of Roland* we find the same motives that inspired the old heathen epic – the loyalty of a warrior to his lord, the delight in war for its own sake, above all the glorification of honourable defeat'.[152] Dawson compared this facet of the poem to *The Battle of Maldon*, 'with its great lines: "Though shall be harder, heart the keener, courage the greater, as our might lessens."'[153] This, he wrote, was a clear expression of the northern 'heroic ideal'.[154] This philosophy was still apparent in *The Song of Roland*. The hero's 'obstinate refusal to sound his horn is entirely in the tradition of the old poetry', Dawson notes.[155] What made *The Song of Roland* revolutionary, however, in terms of the ethical ideal that it espoused, as revealed in Roland's death scene, was that the northern ideal was 'now subordinated to the service of Christendom and brought into relation with Christian ideas'.[156] Now 'the defiant fatalism of the Nordic heroes', as exhibited in *The Battle of Maldon*, is 'replaced by the Christian attitude of submission and repentance'.[157] We see these themes expressed in Tolkien's own work.

For Dawson, *The Song of Roland* was the prime 'symbol of the fusion of Nordic and Christian traditions in the medieval unity' that he made his central subject of study in the 1930s.[158] This 'synthesis […] between the Germanic North and the spiritual order of the Church and the traditions of the Latin culture' was what he termed 'Nordic Catholicism', he explained.[159] Dawson believed that the Dark Ages had been characterised by an essential dualism, in which 'there was one ideal for the warrior and another for the Christian, and the former still belonged in spirit to the barbaric world of northern paganism'.[160] Then in the eleventh century the 'crusading ideal' arose, when this 'military society was incorporated into the spiritual polity of Western Christendom'.[161] This entailed a

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[152] Dawson, *The Making of Europe,* 252.
[153] Ibid., 253.
[154] Ibid.
[155] Ibid., 252.
[156] Ibid.
[157] Ibid.
[158] Ibid., 253.
[159] Ibid., 252, 253.
[160] Ibid., 253.
[161] Ibid.

'translation into Christian forms of the old heroic ideal of the Nordic warrior culture' in 'the institution of knighthood'.[162] 'The medieval knight was the barbarian warrior with a veneer of Christian chivalry', he emphasised.[163] The medieval knight no doubt appealed to Dawson for the same reason that the notion of self-sanctification appealed to Tolkien. They were essentially identical concepts that remained relevant even in their own day. The knight was no saint, Dawson made sure to stress, but he was at least an improvement. Chesterton, too, shared the same view as Dawson, that *The Song of Roland* was a piece of 'semi-barbaric poetry'.[164] Nevertheless, it contrived 'to express the idea that Christianity imposes upon its heroes a paradox: a paradox of great humility in the matter of their sins combined with great ferocity in the matter of their ideas. Of course the Song of Roland could not say this; but it conveys this.'[165]

Dawson agreed with Chesterton's view. 'Nordic Catholicism' was a compromise. The knight was a sinner attempting to be a saint, much like Boromir. But what mattered more, of course, to Tolkien, Dawson and Chesterton, in terms of this compromise, was that it constituted a very Christian attempt at self-sanctification, which was the fundamental glory of the saint. What is more, because such works as *The Lord of the Rings* expressed a vital Christian truth – that of the interplay of free will and providence, of action and consequence – it was applicable to themselves in the real world. This was the reality that so much impressed the poet W. H. Auden when he reviewed Tolkien's work. John Milton's *Paradise Lost* was 'hard to stomach because of the conjunction of two incompatible notions of Deity, of a God of Love who creates free beings who can reject his love and of a God of absolute Power whom none can withstand'.[166] In this sense, though Tolkien was 'not as great a writer as Milton', he had 'in this matter [...] succeeded where Milton failed'.[167] Tolkien had established a compelling universe that clarified the individual's mission within the Christian and Catholic philosophy of history. Indeed, he was attempting, just like Dawson, to re-establish this notion of the quest for self-sanctity. There was no doubt in Dawson's mind, certainly, that this was essentially a vanishing ethic, ever since 1524, when its 'last representative [Chevalier de] Bayard, "the good knight", died like Roland with his

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[162] Ibid.
[163] Dawson, *Religion and the Modern State*, 120.
[164] G. K. Chesterton, and Alberto Manguel, ed., *On Lying in Bed and Other Essays by G. K. Chesterton* (Calgary: Bayeux Arts, 2000), 178.
[165] Ibid., 179.
[166] Quoted in James P. Stobaugh, *British Literature-Student: Cultural Influences of Early to Contemporary Voices* (Green Forest: Master Books, 2012), 447.
[167] Ibid.

face to the Spaniards at the passage of Sesia, in the age of Luther and Machiavelli'.[168] What Tolkien's vision in *The Lord of the Rings* left unanswered, however, was whether this ethic could be resurrected in reality, and particularly in their own century. And if it could, what form would it take? Moreover, if sanctity was reliant upon what Tolkien termed '"sacrificial" situations', what opportunities were there for sacrifice in the twentieth century? Ought they to be sought out? The South African poet Roy Campbell, in particular, would struggle with these questions, more so than Tolkien and Dawson perhaps, because he sought to emulate Roland as a soldier.

Roy Campbell

On 6 October 1944, Tolkien wrote a letter to his son Christopher recounting a meeting of note in his local pub 'The Eagle and Child' in Oxford:

> I noticed a strange tall gaunt man half in khaki half in mufti with a large wide-awake hat, bright eyes and a hooked nose sitting in the corner. The others had their backs to him, but I could see in his eye that he was taking an interest in the conversation […] It was rather like Trotter at the Prancing Pony, in fact v. [sic] like. All of a sudden he butted in, in a strange unplaceable accent, taking up some point about Wordsworth. In a few seconds he was revealed as Roy Campbell.[169]

Tolkien would later change the name of 'Trotter' to 'Strider', otherwise known as Aragorn, one of the central characters in his work *The Lord of the Rings*. Tolkien's meeting with Campbell was reminiscent, he thought, of the introduction of Aragorn into the story at the Prancing Pony in Bree. Indeed, Tolkien referred to Campbell as a sort of 'old-looking war-scarred Trotter' himself; a 'powerful poet and soldier […] limping from recent wounds'.[170] Campbell had, it seems, regaled him with tales of adventures and personal glory. Tolkien was evidently very much impressed. Campbell, he found out, was not only a poet, but a bullfighter too, who had fought, supposedly, for Franco in the Spanish Civil War. Campbell was certainly a man of action. The story that Tolkien 'most enjoyed', however, 'was the tale

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[168] Dawson, *The Making of Europe,* 253.
[169] Tolkien and Carpenter, ed., *Letters,* 95.
[170] Ibid.

of greasy [Jacob] Epstein (the sculptor)', who Campbell had fought and allegedly put 'in hospital for a week'.[171] What Campbell amounted to, Tolkien concluded, was a poet very much 'unlike the Left – the "corduroy panzers"', those such as Auden, 'who fled to America' at the outbreak of war in 1939.[172] Campbell, it appeared, was exactly the opposite. And it is, indeed, telling that what so much impressed Tolkien was not Campbell's poetry, but his apparent physical courage.

Certainly, Campbell cultivated an image of hardiness, fortitude and chivalry. He wrote in his autobiography that when 'in an unfamiliar predicament' he would 'invariably take one of the paladins of Chivalry for […] [his] Model – the Cid Campeador, Roland, Oliver, or some other worthy of that sort'.[173] This was a telling sort of bravado. It was not so much Campbell 'the poet' that counted as it was Campbell the 'warrior' who really mattered in his own mind. This much is clear from his meeting with Tolkien in 1944. Moreover, it was an idea of himself that he sought to demonstrate at every opportunity, but not only in passing conversation. It was not simply a matter of bluster. What drove Campbell, it might be argued, was a sort of pugilistic piety, a piety that not only underscored his poetry but informed his actions as part of the Old Western ethic.

It was vital to Campbell's own sense of himself that he should actually realise what he purported. He shared his contemporary Catholics' philosophy of history; of the importance of sacrifice and its corollary, sanctity, through which final victory might be gained. His own drive toward sanctity, however, would be characterised by an ostensible fierceness that really entailed what Dawson identified as a 'fearlessness of consequences', which was a sanctity in its own right. Both Dawson and Campbell were, in effect, in search of a battleground, although they differed in terms of what the battle itself might look like. What they were seeking, essentially, was a type of combat that suited their own capabilities.

Dawson and the Oxford Movement

In his 1933 work *The Spirit of the Oxford Movement,* Dawson emphasised the peculiar 'fierceness of spirit' that marked the movement's founding members: Richard Hurrell

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171 Ibid., 96.
172 Ibid.
173 Roy Campbell, *Light on a Dark Horse: An Autobiography* (London: Hollis & Carter, 1951), 258.

Froude, John Keble and John Henry Newman.[174] It was Froude, in particular, 'the hero and champion of the movement', Dawson wrote, who embodied the characteristic Tractarian combativeness most of all; a 'supernaturalized chivalry', which was 'a vindication of the supernatural order' itself, realised 'in the spiritual life of the individual Christian'.[175] Writing in 1933, Dawson was relaying the Augustinian notion that Newman had himself sought to establish, that Froude was really a saint. This is a common conception. Piers Brendon, for example, wrote in 1974 that Froude represented his movement's 'heroic, chivalric, self-sacrificing aspect'.[176] The Tractarians were 'dominated by the ideal of personal holiness'.[177] This entailed 'a quest for holiness', as revealed, for instance, in the posthumous publication of Froude's diary in *Remains* (1838).[178] Brendon explains that the leadership of the Oxford Movement 'won support for their ideology through the quality of their lives rather than through the strength of their arguments'.[179] 'Froude's heroic attempts at self-sanctification' were particularly impressive.[180] That he died from tuberculosis at the comparatively early age of thirty-three also served to confer on Froude an irresistible mystique, the personification of 'the heroic qualities to which nineteenth-century Anglo-Catholics aspired'.[181] Dawson, too, made a point of stressing Froude's 'intense thirst for personal holiness'.[182] It is interesting to note that the qualities that Dawson explained were of a piece with Froude's personal piety were fundamentally combative pieties. 'He was a natural leader of men and a born fighter.'[183] What Dawson meant by this was that Froude represented the best of the Tractarians in terms of his 'fearlessness of consequences', manifest in a 'fierceness […] that led them to despise compromise and to defy the prejudices of the majority'.[184] In this sense, Froude's virtue, his essential piety, was his extremism. He was a pugilist who 'never had any sympathy with a policy of moderation and compromise', wrote Dawson.[185] And it was this 'Froudian extremism' that was 'characteristic of the original spirit of the Oxford Movement', he argues.[186] Froude led by example, and it was his example – that licensed that 'extremism' for others, such as

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[174] Christopher Dawson, *The Spirit of the Oxford Movement* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1933), 36.
[175] Ibid., 20, 125.
[176] Piers Brendon, *Hurrell Froude and the Oxford Movement* (London: Paul Elek, 1974), x.
[177] Ibid., 16.
[178] Ibid., 9.
[179] Ibid., xviii.
[180] Ibid., 26.
[181] Ibid., 25.
[182] Ibid., 121.
[183] Dawson, *Oxford Movement*, 75.
[184] Ibid., 36.
[185] Ibid., 114.
[186] Ibid.

Newman – that 'saved the movement from becoming prematurely respectable, while at the same time giving it a fresh impulse towards the Catholic ideal'.[187]

Dawson and Brendon agree that Froude's great influence and effect on the Oxford Movement stemmed from his own drive toward a personal holiness, meaning, in Dawson's own words, a recognition of 'the supernatural life of the Christian' and its 'necessary corollary', the 'supernatural authority of the Church'.[188] In other words, Froude's apparent 'extremism' was synonymous with the Roman Catholic conception of an apostolic succession of saints; what Dawson terms 'those rare, hidden souls who are the heirs of the world to come'.[189] Dawson evidently believed that Froude was such a soul and that what made the Oxford Movement 'Catholic' was not simply its focus upon 'the hierarchical principle of episcopal succession', but something altogether 'more mystical'.[190] What made Froude the character that he was, Dawson suggests, was that he was one of a number of successors to the holiness of the Apostles, who, in Newman's words, were 'enough to carry on God's noiseless work'.[191] Dawson admired Froude, clearly. Indeed, it would not be so far-fetched to suggest that Froude's 'fierceness', which was in effect an expression of his sanctity, Dawson argued, was the standard that he set himself as an intellectual; just as much as Faramir was Tolkien's ideal. What is more, it was a realistic gauging of his own proficiencies. Campbell, too, would make a similar assessment, but one that came to a very different conclusion. His personality was very different to the shy scholar; as his friend David Wright would later write: 'Campbell was a man of action.'[192]

Campbell's Fierceness

Wright cautions us that 'some idea has to be given of Campbell's background and upbringing if the cast of his mind is to be understood'.[193] Essentially, it was Campbell's 'South African birth and half-pastoral upbringing', he believed, which gave his 'work its unique bias'.[194] This bias, the poet's peculiar violence in verse – which, in Wright's words,

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[187] Ibid., 120.
[188] Ibid., 121-122.
[189] Ibid., 41.
[190] Ibid.
[191] Ibid.
[192] David Wright, *Roy Campbell* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1961), 6.
[193] Ibid., 7.
[194] Ibid., 5.

'burst like a bomb in the middle of the faded prettiness of the "Georgian" poetry' – had its origins in the sun-baked bush of Campbell's native Natal.[195] Campbell evidently thought so too. *Light on the Dark Horse* (1951), his autobiography, accentuated the severe environment that he believed had served to infuse a corresponding asperity in himself. 'As children', he wrote, 'we used to amuse ourselves with scorpions much in the same way as English boys do with chestnuts or "conkers"', for example.[196] He also described the killing of a stag with his bare hands. It was 'one of the happiest days of my life'.[197] Campbell revelled in the ferocious physicality of the action:

> I was knocked over with a flesh wound on the hip, recovered, and
> throwing myself on the animal, went for it with my bare hands. After
> much tossing and tussling, I got a leverage on its horns, wrestled it down,
> and gradually drowned it, in less than eighteen inches of water.[198]

That the stag had also drawn blood on this occasion was vital to the image Campbell had of himself. The nature of his upbringing had exposed him to danger at an early age. And it is perhaps telling that he would continue to place himself in such situations throughout his life, as one of his daughters, Anna, later recalled:

> Roy would take the opportunity to take part in all sorts of sports which,
> after […] writing, were essential to his well-being. It was important also
> that the sport should […] involve a certain amount of risk which, for some
> paradoxical reason, restored his nervous equanimity.[199]

This may also explain Campbell's passion for bullfighting.

Writing in a small book titled *Taurine Provence: The Philosophy and Religion of the Bullfighter* (1931), a work that was later consulted by Ernest Hemingway in the writing of a similar work, *Death in the Afternoon* (1939), Campbell expressed his view that 'bull-fighting is the only sport which is at the same time a great art and in which the man opposes a

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[195] Ibid., 10.
[196] Campbell, *Light on a Dark Horse,* 83.
[197] Ibid., 66.
[198] Ibid.
[199] Judith Lutge Coullie, ed., *Remembering Roy Campbell: The Memoirs of his Daughters Anna and Tess* (Hamden: Winged Lion Press, 2011), 29.

terrific adversary with inferior weapons'.[200] This chimes with Hemmingway's own claim, in 1939, that 'bullfighting is the only art in which the artist is in danger of death and in which the degree of brilliance in the performance is left to the fighter's honor'.[201] Bullfighting was the only art in which the aptitude of the artist was almost entirely dependent upon his 'ability temporarily to ignore possible consequences'.[202] 'The usual bullfighter is a very brave man', Hemmingway tells us.[203] But what marks the truly great bullfighter, however, is 'a more pronounced degree of bravery', which is 'the ability not to give a damn for possible consequences' – in fact, he must actively 'despise them'.[204] Campbell would have agreed with Hemmingway. An exquisite pass, or the perfect kill, required a high degree of physical courage on the part of both the bull and the torero. A contempt of consequence was what Dawson so much admired in Froude as well, we should note.

By seeking out combat – for Campbell took part himself, on occasions, in bullfighting – he was, in his own mind, attempting to transcend himself since, in the words of Hemmingway, it obliged him 'not to give a damn for possible consequences'. This chimes with Dawson's own identification of Froude's fierceness, attempting to conform to a conception of the 'More-Than-World', we might say. But while Froude's particular 'extremism', in this regard, was entirely intellectual, Campbell's was tipped with a very physical edge. In this sense, Campbell's arena was really that of the bullring itself; and sometimes he would pick fights, with Epstein, for instance. Brutality was not, however, part of Campbell's nature, it seems. Anna wrote that what 'irritated' her 'most was that this very gentle man should spend so much time and energy trying to prove that he was tough'.[205] 'He always made light of his gifts as a poet, but exaggerated his prowess in the fields of action.'[206] Furthermore, Campbell's friend Wright also perceived 'a great and fundamental gentleness beneath a superficial truculence'.[207] 'Campbell's ruggedness', Wright believed, 'was theatrical; a thing put on; the vainglory and braggadocio, with which he embroidered his exploits'.[208]

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[200] Roy Campbell, *Taurine Provence: The Philosophy and Religion of the Bullfighter* (London: Desmond Harmsworth, 1932), 14.
[201] Ernest Hemmingway, *Death in the Afternoon* (1939; London: Arrow Books, 2004), 78.
[202] Ibid., 51.
[203] Ibid.
[204] Ibid.
[205] Coullie, ed., *Remembering Roy Campbell,* 31.
[206] Ibid., 99.
[207] Wright, *Roy Campbell*, 39.
[208] Ibid.

Birzer writes that 'Tolkien believed that as a part of one's preparation for heaven, or one's sanctification, one should perform acts of Christian heroism. For Tolkien, that meant doing God's will and being a part of Christ's army.'[209] Campbell, we might say, took this injunction far more literally than any of his Old Western contemporaries. This was, perhaps, Campbell's flaw. He set himself up for disappointment. Anna has written of her father's 'lifelong ambition to become a soldier'.[210] It was an ambition that was thwarted time and time again. This had much to do with Campbell's age. Born in 1901, he was too young to fight in the early stages of the First World War, though he attempted to volunteer twice. When he was finally accepted and sent to Europe the war was over. By 1939, however, Campbell was too old for active service in the armed forces. He was also suffering from a bad hip, which limited his mobility. Before this, too, he 'longed to fight the communists physically' in Spain, Anna remembers; while later he 'could get no peace until he actually enlisted to fight Hitler'.[211] Although he was eventually accepted into the British army, he was posted to Africa, far away from the fighting. In actual fact, Campbell never experienced battle. Tolkien's impression of Campbell was founded on a lie. His only experience on the frontline in Spain, during the civil war, was a tour by car of a battlefront in 1937. Anna later attempted to defend her father:

> I know that Roy was very disappointed not to be allowed to join up […] He has been criticised for saying that he actually fought in the Spanish Army, but I find nothing wrong with this. It was Poetic Justice. He did his best to get in and that was equivalent, for him, with having done so. The courage needed was the same. He really longed to fight the communists physically, but since he was unable to do so *he fought for Christianity and against Communism with his pen*.[212]

However, there is another sense in which Campbell was justified in saying that he had fought Communism, in terms of his philosophy of history and his conversion to Catholicism in 1936.

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[209] Birzer, *Sanctifying Myth,* 68.
[210] Coullie, ed., *Remembering Roy Campbell,* 99.
[211] Ibid, 89, 99.
[212] Ibid., 89.

Toledo, 1936

The ancient city of Toledo in Spain stood for Campbell's newfound philosophy of history. The fortress, in particular, which bore the brunt of a Republican attack in 1936, during the civil war, had been at the cynosure of what was, in his mind, a very Christian victory. For it was his view that this victory was achieved not through strength of arms, but through the strength of faith, as he advertised in his short verse 'The Alcazar Mined': 'This Rock of Faith, the thunder-blasted – / Eternity will hear it rise.'[213] Campbell eulogised the 'Miracle [...] / How fiercer tortures than their own / By living faith were overthrown; / How mortals, thinned to ghastly pallor, / Gangrened and rotting to the bone / With winged souls of Christian valour' withstood the siege.[214] Campbell's implication here was that 'living faith' was integral to 'Christian valour'. Here we see the root of the significance that he attached to the Nationalist success in Toledo in 1936. It was, he believed, a 'miracle', one that had been gained through suffering and willingness to sacrifice all, including his own life.

Campbell's daughter Teresa summed up her father's attitude toward 'the victory at Toledo': it 'was one of the examples of the supernatural working during the Spanish war'.[215] Anna also believed that 'supernatural tactics' were the only way 'to explain the resistance of the Alcázar to the overwhelming attacks of every kind by superior forces that it sustained'.[216] For two months, Toledo had held out against large numbers of Republican forces. Eventually, it was relieved, on the arrival of Franco's Army of Africa. Subsequently, as Michael Seidman states, 'the Alcázar became a mythical example of Nationalist resistance'.[217] Judith Keene explains, too, that 'the event encapsulated archetypal interwar anxieties, which is probably why the narrative of the Toledo siege was retold in many languages'.[218] In particular, it 'captured the imagination of people outside Spain who were backing Franco's victory', even though, 'strategically, this side campaign made little sense'.[219] Hugh Thomas, in his seminal work *The Spanish Civil War* (1961), wrote similarly, that though 'Franco knew the importance attached to symbols in Spain [...] the "epic" of

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[213] Roy Campbell, *The Collected Poems of Roy Campbell, Volume 1* (London: The Bodley Head, 1949), 154.

[214] Ibid.

[215] Coullie, ed., *Remembering Roy Campbell,* 234.

[216] Ibid., 70.

[217] Michael Seidman, *The Victorious Counterrevolution: The Nationalist Effort in the Spanish Civil War* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2011), 49.

[218] Judith Keene, *Fighting for Franco: International Volunteers in Nationalist Spain During the Spanish Civil War, 1936-39* (2001; New York: Hambledon Continuum, 2007), 37.

[219] Ibid., 34.

the Alcázar in subsequent propaganda' was also designed to justify Franco's decision 'to divert to Toledo, even though it gave the republic time to organise resistance in Madrid'.[220] Although the Nationalist victory at Toledo had much to do with the 'incompetence' of the Republican armed forces,[221] Campbell himself believed that the defence of the Alcázar was essentially, in his own words, 'a victory of the spirit over […] materialists'.[222] Yet it was not simply that 'spiritual people' were 'better' than 'materialists […] and 50 times braver', as Campbell argued they were.[223] In such poems as 'The Alcazar Mined', there was also the notion that their suffering and sacrifice had actually served to rouse the supernatural and press it into action on their behalf. In this sense, physical courage had a role to play in the philosophy of history that Campbell held to as a Catholic convert. It explains why the poet placed such a stress on physicality and risk taking, insisting that they were not only soldierly virtues, but saintly prerequisites.

Eusebio

A friar named Eusebio del Niño Jesús, Campbell's confessor in Toledo, takes on a special significance here. On their arrival in Toledo, in 1935, Campbell and his family became conversant with the Carmelite friars at the local convent. At this time, both Roy and Mary, his wife, were well on their way to total immersion in the Catholic church. It was Eusebio, however, the leading friar, who became Campbell's 'spiritual director'.[224] Although their time together was ultimately cut short, his influence was significant and protracted. For what he essentially provided Campbell with was an example. Campbell was a sinner in search of a saint. Eusebio was that saint. It was not so much his spiritual example that so much impressed Campbell as it was his example as solider of Christ, although the two might be held to be synonymous As Campbell's wife later related, Eusebio 'was perhaps the only saint we have ever known'.[225]

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[220] Hugh Thomas, *The Spanish Civil War*. Fourth Edition (1961; London: Penguin Books, 2012), 398, 400.

[221] Ibid., 372.

[222] Quoted in Coullie, ed., *Remembering Roy Campbell*., 83.

[223] Quoted in ibid.

[224] Ibid., 66.

[225] St John of the Cross*, St John of the Cross Poems,* trans. Roy Campbell (1951; Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1960), 11.

It could be claimed that Campbell already had a saint in his life: his wife. The writer Laurie Lee, who stayed with the Campbells in Toledo for a week, later wrote that 'soft-voiced' Mary exuded 'the banked-up voluptuousness of a young and beautiful convert'.[226] Lee also attested to Campbell's own self-professed adoration of his wife: 'marvellous girl, that Mary […] She's got more genuine saintliness in her little finger than the whole of this god-damn town.'[227] However, Mary was the type of saint that Campbell could not possibly imitate. Piety demanded sacrifice, which no doubt appealed to Campbell. However, what he was seeking around this time was a piety that complemented his own idea of himself, one that was very different to his wife. And while Mary found satisfaction in joining the Order of Carmelite Tertiaries, which necessitated a high level of strictness and spiritual devotion, including fasting, daily prayers, as well as abstinence during Advent and Lent, Roy's idea of piety, essentially that of high stamina, high spirits and physical courage, found a perfect match in Eusebio – an example Campbell could actually follow.

'Eusebio's saintliness was noticed by everyone', Anna wrote later.[228] In him, it seemed that 'sacrifice took on a new dimension. His feet, bare except for sandals in the icy Castilian winter, seemed to float rather than walk across the freezing flagstones.'[229] Eusebio's sanctified hardiness surely appealed to Campbell. However, it was the Spanish Civil War that underscored Eusebio particular saintliness, contrasted against the background of anti-clericalism that was soon to turn murderous. Indeed, the clergy would come to be seen by many Spaniards as a legitimate target, since, as Thomas explained, Catholicism had become 'the critical question of politics since 1931, because of the supposed subordination of priests to the upper classes, and because of the provocative wealth of many churches, and of the old suspicion about the secretiveness of orders'.[230] What resulted, he writes. was a 'colossal onslaught on the lives of members of the church'.[231] Tensions were already high in Toledo in early 1936, following the elections in February that had brought Spain to the brink of conflagration. There were riots in March. The Campbells housed a number of

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[226] Laurie Lee, *As I Walked Out One Midsummer Morning* (1969; London: Penguin Books, 1971), 112

[227] Ibid., 115.

[228] Coullie, ed., *Remembering Roy Campbell,* 66.

[229] Ibid.

[230] Thomas, *The Spanish Civil War*, 258. Beevor also notes that 'the Catholic Church was the bulwark of the country's conservative forces, the foundation of what the right defined as Spanish civilization'. Antony Beevor, *The Battle for Spain: The Spanish Civil War 1936-1939* (2006; London: Phoenix, 2007), 91.

[231] Thomas, *The Spanish Civil War*, 259.

Carmelites in their house. Then the Nationalist uprising occurred. On 22 July, as Toledo was attacked, Eusebio and sixteen other monks of the Carmelite Order where lined up against a wall in Toledo and shot by Republican militiamen. Campbell later discovered Eusebio's body under a tarpaulin; above him was scrawled 'thus strikes the Cheka', written in the blood of the murdered friars. In total, 12 bishops, 4,184 priests, 2,365 monks, as well as a few hundred nuns, were murdered by Republicans during the course of the war.[232] Eusebio was no mere statistic, however. For Campbell, Eusebio's martyrdom had transformed him into a very personal symbol of the philosophy of history that would come to characterise his subsequent war poetry.[233] In his mind, in particular, the Spanish Civil War was really an exercise in the Christian philosophy of history in microcosm, in which, as Dawson wrote, 'victories may be found in apparent defeat'.

What impressed the Campbells most of all about their friend Eusebio was the manner in which he met his death, as Anna recounts: 'it was he who kept up the spirits of his fellow monks when they were all dragged out to be shot. They died heroically – a friend of ours who was with them to the end said that Fr. Eusebio was smiling when he fell, and shouting, "Long live Christ the King! Long live Spain!"'[234] It was his gaiety that seemed so telling, as if he was aware of the future victory to come. We see this idea played out in Campbell's 1939 poem the *Flowering Rifle: A Poem from the Battlefield of Spain*, for example, which set up a comparison between the Nationalist victory in Toledo and the Resurrection of Christ, victories founded on two ostensible defeats, both of them executions: the death of Eusebio in a street in Toledo, and the Crucifixion of Christ in Palestine. In this sense, Campbell portrayed his friend's death as a turning point in the Spanish Civil War, when 'The Carmelites rose up to show the way: / For martyrdom their eagle spirits burned / As fierce as angry captains for the fight – / In these charred cells where Victory was learned / As others study medicine or law'.[235] Eusebio and his friars served as an example, then, that faith was the ultimate weapon in the arsenal of the army of Christ:

> In *this*, Eusebio prayed whom I last saw –

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[232] Quoted in ibid., 259.

[233] It has been observed, however, that the Nationalists exaggerated the extent of the crimes committed against the Catholic clergy; resulting, it may be said, in a false impression that might itself have affected Campbell's subsequent view of the conflict. Beevor, *The Battle for Spain,* 91.

[234] Coullie, ed., *Remembering Roy Campbell,* 66.

[235] Roy Campbell, *Flowering Rifle: A Poem from the Battlefield of Spain* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1939), 85-86.

> His flesh already flame, his blood its light –
>
> Questing the fire as fire would seek the straw.
>
> On that dark night, too dark to say "goodnight,"
>
> When what was gentlest in the shaken hand
>
> Cut like a sword – how could I understand
>
> My friends in their true mastery and height?
>
> Or guess at half the fury of delight
>
> That armed these Titans to belittle Death
>
> And made my life, so dear to me that night,
>
> Seem suddenly not worth the waste of breath?[236]

This was the lesson that Campbell took from the events of July 1936. Eusebio's gaiety was a manifestation of his faith in an eternal reality. Accepting martyrdom was a natural progression. In return, the cause was won. Campbell went so far as to suggest that the murderers were in some way aware of this too:

> They knew the eternal Presence of their Prey
>
> And that it was themselves they'd come to slay;
>
> Then from the place they slunk in guilt away;
>
> For These were first to catch the sacred fire
>
> That winged the Phoenix city from her pyre
>
> And made the might of Resurrected Spain
>
> More terrible for every martyr slain.[237]

Campbell's poem 'Toledo, July 1936' had seen him make use of the theme of resurrection before: 'Toledo, when I saw you die / And heard the roof of Carmel crash, / A spread-winged phoenix from its ash / The Cross remained against the sky!'[238] The Cross in Campbell's work is synonymous with immediate defeat, but victory in the long term. 'The Carmelites of Toledo', on the other hand, a poem that evidently anticipated Campbell's larger work 'The Flowering Rifle', emphasised how through their faith Eusebio and the other friars, unlike the 'faith-starved multitudes', had ultimately contributed to that victory:

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[236] Ibid., 86.
[237] Ibid., 86-87.
[238] Roy Campbell, *Collected Poems, Volume 1*, 153.

And well might Hell feel sick and sorry

To see the brown monks lying dead,

Where, as with coarse tarpaulins spread,

Each seemed a fifty-horsepower lorry

That to the troops had brought the Bread!

Their wounds were swords – how bravely worth

The care the angels took to smith them!

We thought they took their victory with them

But they had brought it down to earth,

For it was from their neighbouring spire

The proud Alcazar caught the fire

Which gave that splendour phoenix-birth.[239]

Enlistment into the Catholic Church

In June 1936, Eusebio had visited the Campbell residence in Toledo, informing Roy and Mary that Cardinal Goma, knowing what risks they had taken in sheltering local monks, had decided that they should be confirmed immediately, 'just in case', even though their instruction in the Catholic Church was incomplete.[240] Anti-clerical violence meant that the Campbells might not have much longer to live. Certainly, Campbell noted, 'it was no longer safe to be seen in religious habit'.[241] Accompanying Eusebio was another friar, 'the diehard Evaristo, a roaring lion of man whose laugh could shake the rafters', who deliberately flaunted his habit in broad daylight'.[242] Evaristo was yet another example for Campbell to emulate. Campbell later remembered that it made him 'feel six inches taller to stride beside him'.[243] In the early hours of the morning, Campbell and his wife went with the two friars, 'in their "full-regimentals" as Carmelites', to the cardinal's palace and were received into the Church.[244] That Campbell later chose to conclude his autobiography with this scene is

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[239] Roy Campbell, *The Collected Poems of Roy Campbell, Volume 2* (London: The Bodley Head, 1957), 31-32.
[240] Campbell, *Light on a Dark Horse,* 347.
[241] Ibid.
[242] Ibid.
[243] Ibid.
[244] Ibid.

significant: 'on that day, before dawn, began an entirely new chapter in our lives, which had hitherto been somewhat drab and dull compared with the new splendours of experience for which we were lucky enough to be preserved.'[245] What this moment essentially signified for Campbell was the moment of his passing out parade in the crack unit of the army of Christ, the Catholic Church. In much the same way that Froude's extremism, as described by Dawson, was his Tractarian fierceness, Campbell's own fierceness ultimately found a home in the Catholic Church. Indeed, this was typical of a poet who had at one point referred to 'Protestantism' as 'a cowardly sort of Atheism, especially in the anglo-Oxfordish-Henry VIII sense'.[246] The Church of England simply would not do for Campbell in 1936. 'Up to then', he wrote, 'we had been vaguely and vacillatingly Anglo-Catholic: but now was the time to decide whether, by staying in the territorials, to remain half-apathetic to the great fight which was obviously approaching – or whether we should step into the front ranks of the Regular Army of Christ'.[247] There was, indeed, a recognition, at least amongst other Catholics, that the Church constituted not only an army, but the Household Division itself, as the Catholic writer Graham Greene observed of its priesthood:

> I think that for many people, especially the young, the priesthood must
> have the attraction of a crack unit. It's an organisation which has to train
> for combat, one which demands self-sacrifice […] I'm convinced that the
> drop in vocations has to do with the fact that we don't put across clearly
> enough the attraction to be found in a difficult and dangerous calling.[248]

Chesterton, another convert, shared much the same view as Greene and Campbell. In a carefully considered passage, Chesterton explained to his mother why he had chosen to convert to Catholicism, the 'one fighting form Christianity':

> I have thought about you, and all that I owe to you and my father, not
> only in the way of affection, but of the ideals of honour and freedom and
> charity and all other good things you always taught me: and I am not

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[245] Ibid.

[246] Joseph Pearce, *Bloomsbury and Beyond: The Friends and Enemies of Roy Campbell* (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 2002), 156.

[247] Campbell, *Light on a Dark Horse,* 317.

[248] Quoted in Joseph Pearce, *Literary Converts: Spiritual Inspiration in an Age of Unbelief* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2006), 418.

conscious of the smallest break or difference in those ideals; but only of

a new and necessary way of fighting for them.[249]

Both Campbell's and Chesterton's conversion – and we might say Dawson's and Waugh's too – were rooted in this fundamental notion, that only Catholicism's philosophy of history, which incorporated both the doctrines of providence and free will, was capable of facing down their century and allowing willing converts, such as themselves, to participate in that battle through their own faithfulness as part of what Chesterton termed that 'insatiably fighting thing, the Catholic Church'.[250] In this sense, Campbell really did fight. By following the example of Eusebio, he found a way to reconcile his natural spirit of resistance with a world that offered very little opportunity for actual combat. As it happened, Waugh would undergo a similar process of resolution.

Guy Crouchback: *il Santo Inglese*

Waugh's *Sword of Honour* trilogy – *Men at Arms* (1952), *Officers and Gentlemen* (1955) and *Unconditional Surrender* (1961) – is centred around a similar quest for self-sanctification, that of Guy Crouchback, a Catholic English aristocrat, who, like Campbell, takes the notion of a crusade quite literally, desperate to transcend himself through the opportunity of war. At the beginning of the trilogy, we find discontented Crouchback in exile in Italy. Europe is on the cusp of the Second World War. Having determined himself to return home to England, Crouchback says goodbye to an old friend, who also happens to be something of a saint: Roger of Waybroke, an English knight entombed in the local church, who had died on his way to the Holy Land during the Second Crusade. Crouchback 'felt an especial kinship with "il Santo Inglese"'.[251] Townspeople came to Sir Roger with 'their troubles and touched his sword for luck'.[252] On his last day there, Guy 'made straight for the tomb and ran his finger, as the fishermen did, along the knight's sword. "Sir Roger, pray for me," he said, "and for our endangered kingdom."'[253] This scene sets up the universe that Crouchback, as a Catholic, believes he inhabits, the same universe that the locals, 'to whom the

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[249] Quoted in Ker, *Chesterton,* 476.
[250] Quoted in ibid., 332.
[251] Evelyn Waugh, *Sword of Honour* (1965; London: Penguin Books, 2001), 5.
[252] Ibid.
[253] Ibid.

supernatural order in all its ramifications was ever present', held to as well; the same townspeople who had canonized Sir Roger.[254] This universe is fundamentally the same universe that Frodo in *The Lord of the Rings* occupies, where supernatural grace is a very real force in history. Crouchback must find his place in that history. He yearns to follow Sir Roger's path and live up to the example of the grace that was in him. Guy's story – or rather Waugh's, for Crouchback's war will very consciously mirror the author's own experience – is essentially the attempt to live up to the title 'il Santo Inglese'. Noting Hollingworth's exploration of Augustine's theology once more, Crouchback has been 'going about things the wrong way'. The novel will chart his attempt to conform to one of Augustine's two poles: the City of God.

Guy's crusade in Waugh's novel is really a crusade directed against his universe's direct opposite, the atheistic modern world and all its material ramifications, which, at the beginning of the novel, announces itself blatantly in the alliance between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany: 'now, splendidly, everything had become clear. The enemy at last was plain in view, huge and hateful, all disguise cast off. It was the Modern Age in arms. Whatever the outcome there was a place for him in that battle.'[255] Guy's war, however, turns out to be very different to the one he imagined in Italy. After finding a position in the fictional regiment the Halberdiers, Guy is sent home after having taken part in an unauthorized reconnaissance mission, during the Dakar Expedition, under the orders of his commanding officer, the ferocious Ben Ritchie-Hook. Guy's experience paralleled Waugh's own war experience insofar as his participation, with the Royal Marines, in the real-life 'Dakar fiasco'[256] – the aborted attempt in September 1940 to wrest the key port in French West Africa from the grips of Vichy – had begun to undermine his enthusiasm for the war. 'Bloodshed has been avoided at the cost of honour', he wrote to his wife afterwards.[257] The debacle at Bardia, by which time Waugh had been transferred to the commandos, also dented his confidence in the overall competency of the British war effort, when an entire company of men was left behind by accident during a coastal raid in April 1941.[258] However,

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[254] Ibid.

[255] Ibid., 4.

[256] Evelyn Waugh, and Michael Davie, ed., *The Diaries of Evelyn Waugh* (1976; London: Phoenix, 2009), 506.

[257] Evelyn Waugh, and Mark Amory, ed., *The Letters of Evelyn Waugh* (1980; London: Phoenix, 2009), 162.

[258] Even though the operation was reported to have been a strategic success, Waugh's own account of the raid recounted what was essentially a bungled military operation: one boat landed on the wrong beach; an officer was accidently shot and killed by his own men; another commando was

it was his experience on Crete that served to dispel forever the vision of the war that he had entertained at its commencement.

In May 1941, Waugh accompanied a formation of commandoes, named 'Layforce', under the command of Robert Laycock, to Crete. They were to assist in the defence of the island, which had been invaded by German parachutists on 20 May. By the time they had arrived there, however, the defence of the island had turned into an evacuation. Although both Waugh and Laycock escaped, many of the commandoes were left behind. When Waugh wrote home to his wife he revealed something of his consequent mood: 'I have been in a serious battle and have decided I abominate military life. It was tedious & futile & fatiguing. I found I was not at all frightened; only very bored & very weary.'[259] However, it seems that Waugh was concealing his true feelings about the battle, as one of his fellow soldiers, Christopher Sykes, recollected:

> [Waugh] said that he had never seen anything so degrading as the cowardice that infected the spirit of the army. He declared that Crete had been surrendered without need; that both the officers and men were hypnotized into defeatism by the continuous dive-bombing which with a little courage one could stand up to; that the fighting spirit of the British armed services was so meagre that we had not the slightest hope of defeating the Germans; that he had taken part in a military disgrace, a fact that he would remember with shame for the rest of his life.[260]

I think that Waugh's extreme reaction here may be said to be rooted in his wish to emulate the 'spirit of which Campion is the type', the *spirit* of those who 'surrender themselves to their destiny without calculation or reserve'. This was the spirit that he believed was absent in the botched defence of Crete.[261] The army was, in this sense, far from saintly in its

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wounded by a grenade that turned out to be his own; one of the landing craft developed a faulty ramp; and there were reports of one officer having 'behaved badly'. Moreover, the enemy targets in Bardia singled out as objectives for the raid by military intelligence either turned out to be non-existent or in the wrong place. 'The only incidents' of the raid, Waugh concluded, were 'caused by our own incapacity'. Waugh and Davie, ed., *Diaries,* 520.

[259] Waugh and Amory, ed., *Letters,* 176.

[260] Hastings, *Waugh,* 430.

[261] The military historian Antony Beevor essentially concurred with Waugh, when he wrote in his work on that battle that 'the loss of Crete was the most unnecessary defeat in that initial period of Allied humiliation at the hands of Hitler's Wehrmacht'. Antony Beevor, *Crete 1941: The Battle and the Resistance* (London: Penguin Books, 2014), xv.

conduct. It had retreated. What is more, Waugh had been carried away by it too, into ignominy. Then there was the question of his own escape from Crete. Laycock later recalled that 'by the look on his face at the time I gathered that Evelyn believed this to be a dishonourable thing to do though it made sense to me for, at least, we lived to fight another day'.[262] For Waugh, however, it seems that it was the principle that counted. He had been evacuated, the majority of the commandoes had not. This is underscored in *Sword of Honour* in the desertion of Ivor Claire. Waugh had not abandoned his post. However, perhaps he believed he had personally failed to live up to the spirit of Campion. If so, he had set himself a high standard.[263] Although he had not been captured, he had, in a sense, made himself a prisoner of his own expectations – all too keen to step into a 'world of violence' and prove himself, much like Campbell. As he writes of Crouchback's own ethic: he 'was perfectly ready, should need arise, to sacrifice himself for them [his men] – throw himself on a grenade, give away the last drop of water – anything like that'.[264] Sacrifice, as we have seen, was a vital aspect of the Old Western ethic, through which history itself might be determined. Crouchback's view of the war conflates the Second World War with the philosophy of history itself. He is therefore willing to sacrifice himself for the cause. The only snag is that the defeatist spirit of the army robs him of that chance.

Then came Operation Barbarossa, which Waugh saw as another defining moment in the war; as we see when Crouchback finds his country allied with one of the forces that he had initially set out to fight:

> Now that hallucination was dissolved, like the whales and turtles on the
> voyage from Crete, and he was back after less than two years' pilgrimage
> in a Holy Land of illusion in the old ambiguous world, where priests were
> spies and gallant friends proved traitors and his country was led
> blundering into dishonour.[265]

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[262] Quoted in Philip Eade, *Evelyn Waugh: A Life Revisited* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 2016), 235.

[263] Ann Pasternak Slater has recently suggested that Waugh's 'traumatic' experience on Crete, particularly the way in which it attacked 'his moral core', informed a large part of the 'ideas for the trilogy' itself. Ann Pasternak Slater, *Evelyn Waugh* (Tavistock: Northcote, 2016), 243.

[264] Waugh, *Sword of Honour*, 151.

[265] Ibid., 440.

'It doesn't seem to matter now who wins', Crouchback relates to his father, after he has concluded that the war is not so much a war against modernity, but modernity itself. From this moment Crouchback's march toward self-sanctification, as *il Santo Inglese,* realigns itself, as it must if he is to continue to pursue that end. Therefore, he looks to a new example, the saint that is standing in plain view: his father.

Gervase Crouchback

Diarmaid MacCulloch states that because 'God in Platonic mode was transcendent, other, remote', the notion of the saint was conceived as 'a logical outcome of the Platonic cast of Augustine's theology' itself, which, in the Middle Ages, required 'a myriad of courtiers who could intercede with their imperial Saviour for ordinary humans seeking salvation or help in their everyday lives'.[266] In the *Sword of Honour* trilogy, it is Guy's father Gervase Crouchback who fulfils this role of the saint. He is, we are informed, 'an innocent, affable old man who had somehow preserved his good humour – much more than that, a mysterious and tranquil joy – throughout a life which to all outward observation had been overloaded with misfortune'.[267] He had 'been born in full sunlight and lived to see night fall'.[268] Despite life's disappointments, Guy's father had not lost his essential gaiety. A very Chestertonian virtue – as we shall see. Indeed, Waugh's character very much resembles Chesterton in this sense. Both were Catholics too. Of course, in Waugh's work, Gervase's staunch Catholicism is fundamental to his character. 'Mr Crouchback acknowledged no monarch since James II', Waugh writes.[269] 'It was not an entirely sane conspectus but it engendered in his gentle breast two rare qualities, tolerance and humility.'[270] Humility, as we have seen, is a vital currency in a Christian universe. This is at the root of Gervase's saintliness, just as much as it is the foundation of Faramir's quality. In *Sword of Honour*, Guy concludes that 'his father was the best man, the only entirely good man, he had ever known'.[271]

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[266] MacCulloch, *A History of Christianity,* 309.
[267] Waugh, *Sword of Honour*, 25.
[268] Ibid.
[269] Ibid.
[270] Ibid.
[271] Ibid., 499.

His father had been a "just man"; not particularly judicious, not at all judicial, but "just" in the full sense of the psalmist […] Few people, Guy thought, had ever spoken ill of his father […] His father had suffered as much as most men – more perhaps – from bad news of one kind or another; never fearfully.[272]

Peter Hitchens has suggested 'that Guy's father is what Waugh himself would have wished to be, but knew perfectly well he could not be'.[273] I think that this is likely the case. As Waugh wrote to Anthony Powell to 1955: '"[Guy] Crouchback" (junior: not so his admirable father) is a prig. But he is a virtuous, brave prig.'[274] Gervase is at a different level to his son. Waugh is Guy, though Gervase was the standard that he set himself, an impossible standard, but one that he might have felt was necessary, if only because it provided him with an example to live up to. Waugh was reaching for self-sanctification, like Tolkien was in his view of Faramir. Gervase, at least, is the epitome of the saint. '"Not long for purgatory," his confessor had said of Mr. Crouchback.'[275] Waugh signalled Gervase's sanctification in the aftermath of the character's death, writing that 'Guy's prayers were directed to, rather than for, his father'.[276] This, too, proves to be an important moment in the story.

Crouchback continues to take part in the war, but ultimately his soldierly ambitions, as well as his hopes for the war itself, are thwarted. However, the moment when he prays to his father at his funeral is a key moment in his own transformation. Sacrifice is still on his mind, but so, too, a lesson that his saintly father had relayed to him shortly before his death: that '*quantitative judgments don't apply. If only one soul was saved that is full compensation for any amount of loss of "face"*.'[277] Guy is still searching for his opportunity, but he no longer believes that the war will afford him that opportunity. '"I don't ask anything […] I am here

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[272] Ibid., 498.
[273] Hitchens, Peter, 'The Second World Waugh – some thoughts on "Put Out More Flags" and the "Sword of Honour" trilogy', Mail Online. http://hitchensblog.mailonsunday.co.uk/2013/04/the-second-world-waugh-some-thoughts-on-put-out-more-flags-and-the-sword-of-honour-trilogy.html (accessed 12 January 2016).
[274] Waugh and Amory, ed., *Letters,* 503.
[275] Waugh, *Sword of Honour*, 498.
[276] Ibid., 500.
[277] Ibid., 453.

if you want me"', he had prayed to God previously.[278] Then at his father's funeral Guy is overcome by a defining realisation:

> That was the deadly core of his apathy […] That emptiness had been with him for years now even in his days of enthusiasm and activity in the Halberdiers. Enthusiasm and activity were not enough. God required more than that. He had commanded all men to *ask*.[279]

So Crouchback asks: '"show me what to do and help me to do it," he prayed.'[280] This is the moment when Guy invites into himself the 'supernatural grace' that Waugh had claimed was in Campion too, which allowed the modest, unsoldierly Jesuit the chance to co-operate with God's 'divine plan':

> In the recesses of Guy's conscience there lay the belief that somewhere, somehow, something would be required of him; that he must be attentive to the summons when it came. They also served who only stood and waited […] One day he would get the chance to do some small service which only he could perform, for which he had been created. Even he must have his function in the divine plan. He did not expect a heroic destiny. Quantitative judgements did not apply. All that mattered was to recognize the chance when it offered. Perhaps his father was at that moment clearing the way for him.[281]

Soon after Gervase's funeral, Crouchback's chance presents itself. Guy's ex-wife Virginia turns up at his door pregnant by another man. Her first instinct had been to procure an abortion. Having obtained the address of a doctor on Brook Street, she had made the journey to the abortionist, only to find rubble and a bomb crater. Whether or not Waugh intended to imply divine intervention here is unclear, though it does appear to be suggestive: 'there's a special providence in the fall of a bomb.'[282] Certainly, the end result

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[278] Ibid, 500.
[279] Ibid.
[280] Ibid.
[281] Ibid.
[282] Ibid, 627. Slater's 2016 work on Waugh emphasises the extent to which providence plays a central role in the *Sword of Honour* trilogy. Waugh's world, she writes, is a world where 'the heavy wheels stir and the little ones spin – not in vain, but in obedience to God's unknown, greater design'. Slater, *Waugh*, 268.

is that Virginia must turn to Guy, who agrees to marry her. Having been presented with the opportunity to save a 'soul', Guy recognises it as such, as the chance that he has prayed for, and duly takes that chance: '"I don't think I've ever in my life done a single, positively unselfish action. I certainly haven't gone out of my way to find opportunities. Here was something most unwelcome, put into my hands; something which I believe the Americans describe as "beyond the call of duty."'[283] Guy has achieved a measure of satisfaction.

The *Sword of Honour* trilogy was essentially Waugh's attempt to infuse the concept of supernatural grace, and its corollary philosophy of history, with a sense of realism in the twentieth century, having come to realise that the Second World War had compromised any sense of an actual crusade; the sword itself, that gave its name to the trilogy, being the sword dedicated by the British government to Stalin's atheistic Soviet Union. The moral, then, is that in terms of self-sanctity 'quantitative judgements' do not apply. In this sense, Waugh's achievement was to look beyond the pageantry of Chesterton's *Lepanto*, as well as the epic sweep of Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, and even the sheer heroism of Campion, and instead root supernatural grace, or rather Dawson's 'supernaturalized chivalry', in everyday life and 'in one frustrated act of mercy'.[284] Crouchback's faith is rewarded. The supernatural is confirmed as real, though not in the manner that he foresaw at the beginning of his quest when he prayed to Sir Roger.

A Flame Burning Anew

In Waugh's seminal, and most obviously Catholic, novel *Brideshead Revisited* (1945), the central character Charles Ryder goes from having 'no religion' to having 'come to accept the supernatural as the real'.[285] What represents that belief in the supernatural, most of all, in the story is the sanctuary lamp in the chapel at Brideshead – the lamp that, in Catholicism, is traditionally kept alight wherever the Blessed Sacrament is reserved, signifying the actual presence of God in the tabernacle. This was the same 'Great Presence' that John Henry Newman, in his novel *Loss and Gain* (1848), noted, which made 'a Catholic

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[283] Waugh, *Sword of Honour*, 580.
[284] Ibid., 656.
[285] Evelyn Waugh, *Brideshead Revisited: The Sacred & Profane Memories of Captain Charles Ryder* (1945; London: Penguin Books, 2000), 77.

Church different from every other place in the world; which makes it, as no other place can be, holy'.[286]

> A priest, or at least an assistant, had mounted for a moment above the altar, and removed a chalice or vessel which stood there; he could not see distinctly. A cloud of incense rose on high; the people suddenly all bowed low; what could it mean? the truth flashed on him, fearfully yet sweetly; it was the Blessed Sacrament - it was the Lord Incarnate, who was on the altar, who had come to visit and to bless His people.[287]

In *Brideshead Revisited* – which, as Ann Pasternak Slater identifies, 'is steeped in theology' – Waugh makes a point of registering, just as Newman did in 1848, the 'Lord Incarnate'.[288] Without his supernatural presence, the chapel at Brideshead is merely an 'oddly decorated room', which is made clear to us when the chapel is itself deconsecrated following the death of Lady Marchmain:

> They've closed the chapel at Brideshead, Bridey and the Bishop; mummy's Requiem was the last mass said there. After she was buried the priest came in – I was there alone. I don't think he saw me – and took out the alter stone and put it in his bag; then he burned the wads of wool with the holy oil on them and threw the ash outside; he emptied the holy-water stoop and blew out the lamp in the sanctuary, and left the tabernacle open and empty, as though from now on it was always to be Good Friday. I suppose none of this makes any sense to you, Charles, poor agnostic. I stayed there till he was gone, and then, suddenly, there wasn't any chapel there any more, just an oddly decorated room. I can't tell you what it felt like.[289]

The absence of the supernatural force of the 'Great Presence', in the form of the Blessed Sacrament, was keenly felt by Waugh. Indeed, for him, it 'was always to be Good Friday' in Anglican churches. As Waugh wrote in *Edmund Campion: Jesuit and Martyr*, as a result of

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[286] John Henry Newman, *Loss and Gain* (London: James Burns, 1848), 382.
[287] Ibid.
[288] Slater, *Waugh*, 99.
[289] Waugh, *Brideshead Revisited, 2*06.

'the Tudor revolution' English 'village churches' were merely 'empty shells, their altars torn out and their ornaments defaced'.[290] Yet the actual recognition of the supernatural was so vital for Waugh, as it was for Tolkien and others. It is for this reason that Ryder is moved, and indeed overjoyed, when he returns to Brideshead during the war and finds that the sanctuary lamp is alight once more:

> A small red flame – a beaten-cooper lamp of deplorable design relit before the beaten-cooper doors of a tabernacle; the flame which the old knights saw from their tombs, which they saw put out; that flame burns again for other soldiers, far from home, farther, in heart, than Acre or Jerusalem. It could not have been lit but for the builders and the tragedians, and there I found it this morning, burning anew among the old stones.[291]

Although we might take this flame to mean the flame which was extinguished a number of years before, upon the death of Lady Marchmain, it also might also very aptly stand for Catholic England itself, as well as Ryder's own conversion to the old faith, which, above all, provides him with hope. And this brings us back to Waugh's own estimation of Campion. The supernatural is real, it is recognised as real; through this admission – of supernatural grace and its accompanying theology of history – modern despair dissipates and man regains his sense of mission, his quest for sanctity. The manner of Waugh's proposed 'supernatural solution' is hope. As one of Ryder's fellow soldiers observes, in the final line of *Brideshead Revisited*: 'you're looking unusually cheerful today.'[292] Like Campion, Ryder is now able to face the doom of the world with a smile on his face. That is the true nature of his sanctity. Ryder essentially symbolised Waugh's realisation of the significance of the supernatural. Part of the purpose of *Brideshead Revisited*, then, was show that it was indeed discoverable, and its implication profound, in terms of the optimism that its 'ramifications' were capable of engendering.

Roy Hattersley has observed that 'the novels of Evelyn Waugh' have 'a preoccupation with despair'.[293] This is certainly true, though this aspect of Waugh's work has not always been

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[290] Waugh, *Campion,* 93-94.
[291] Waugh, *Brideshead Revisited, 3*26.
[292] Ibid.
[293] Hattersley, *The Catholics,* 487.

understood correctly. For example, the writer Conor Cruise O'Brien commented in 1946 that Waugh's 'Catholicism' was 'dark and defeatist'.[294] Gore Vidal, too, reviewing the concluding book in the *Sword of Honour* trilogy, noted 'a new pessimism in Waugh'.[295] Although Waugh's novels might seem essentially bleak and foreboding, once we place them in their right context, however, a context rooted in the realisation of an eternal reality, or the 'Great Presence', we see that Waugh's apparent pessimism is fundamentally superficial.

Saint Chesterton

Dawson mourned the notion that 'Chesterton's Christian optimism is out of fashion today, when the external perils of Western civilization are reflected in the moral discouragement and spiritual anxiety of Western man'.[296] Dawson believed that society would do well to follow his example. And in that sense, Chesterton was particularly important, since he was an example. As we have seen, examples were a vital aspect of the Old Western ethic, as a standard to live up to, in terms of sanctity. And there was a general consensus amongst those such as Dawson, Tolkien, Campbell, and Waugh, that optimism and gaiety were indicators of saintliness. Certainly, Chesterton was himself particularly sensitive to the subject jollity. Indeed, it was Christianity's natural inclination, he believed: 'Christianity is itself so jolly a thing that it fills the possessor of it with a certain silly exuberance.'[297] Chesterton was part of that very consensus, then. For example, he could not help but contrast 'cold Pagan architecture' with 'the grinning gargoyles of Christendom'.[298] 'Nowhere in history has there ever been any popular brightness and gaiety without religion', he wrote.[299] It was for this reason, too, that he took issue with the 'Pre-Raphaelites', amongst others, who in reality, he argued, 'had in their subtlety and sadness the spirit of the present day'.[300]

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[294] Martin Stannard, ed., *Evelyn Waugh: The Critical Heritage* (1984; Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 260.
[295] Ibid., 440.
[296] Dawson and Russello, ed., *Christianity and European Culture,* 51.
[297] Quoted in Ker, *Chesterton,* 118.
[298] Quoted in ibid.
[299] Quoted in ibid.
[300] Quoted in ibid., 171.

However, the relevance of Chesterton in his own day, we may conclude, was not that he preached jollity. He also led by example and embodied that very jollity. In this sense, it was his example, most of all, it seems, which served as a motivation for others to reach for such salvation. There was, it appears, a genuine recognition that he had actually attained a level of sanctity that might very well serve as a beacon for others to follow in the darkness. Indeed, Chesterton's colleague, the Catholic convert William Richard Titterton, writing shortly after Chesterton's death in 1936, expressed his hope that one day it would be acknowledged that his friend 'died a saint'.[301] In particular, it was 'his heroic jollity' that Titterton admired.[302] For in reality, 'he was a very ill man'.[303] 'It is entirely untrue that Gilbert Chesterton suffered little throughout his life.'[304] Though 'it would have left many peevish, irritable, [and] unable to take any interest in anything but their own insides', Titterton was sure that 'the only part of his inside that occupied the attention of G. K. C. was his immortal soul'.[305] And it is telling, perhaps, that Titterton couched his praise of his friend in terms of Chesterton the 'fighter', who 'would die fighting'.[306] 'He died working. I am rather inclined to call that heroic.'[307]

Chesterton can be said to have epitomised the Campion-like figure, who, as Waugh wrote, 'came with gaiety among a people where hope was dead', presenting by his 'own example a third, supernatural solution'. Insofar far as any figure was generally considered by his fellow Catholics to be an actual saint, it was Chesterton. As Titterton attests, it was essentially Chesterton's jollity that raised him up. Indeed, the Belgian author Émile Cammaerts referred to Chesterton as the 'Laughing Prophet'. His joviality was obvious. What is perhaps less clear to us is what the essence of that jollity was. Cammaerts, however, was the most perceptive of Chesterton's biographers when he noted that Chesterton's 'hope seemed to grow stronger as the issue of the long conflict in which he had been engaged became more remote'.[308] Even though 'political events at home and abroad caused him some disappointments', and 'confirmed his apprehensions', Chesterton, Cammaerts tells us, 'learned to consider them with a new sense of proportion',

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[301] W. R. Titterton, *G. K. Chesterton: A Portrait* (1936; London: Douglas Organ, 1947), 232.
[302] Ibid., 234.
[303] Ibid., 232.
[304] Ibid., 231.
[305] Ibid.
[306] Ibid., 233.
[307] Ibid., 231.
[308] Emile Cammaerts, *The Laughing Prophet: The Seven Virtues and G. K. Chesterton* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd, 1937), 84.

coming to the conclusion 'that that a man cannot expect to witness the triumph of his ideals during his lifetime'.[309] What Cammaerts was relating here was essentially Chesterton's philosophy of history; what we now might recognise as that of Tolkien's 'long defeat'.[310] Although 'he was still in the front line', he 'considered the battle from a new angle'.[311] 'His resolution did not waver', but Chesterton came to be 'unimpressed by success or defeat. His ultimate goal was elsewhere.'[312] This, Cammaerts determined, was the essence of Chesterton's hope: 'he walked in the shadow of eternity.'[313]

Chapter Three Conclusion

The Old Western Men placed a very great emphasise on the idea that their own century was defined by a pronounced narrowness in terms of a closing of the modern mind to the reality of the supernatural, as well as eternity. Their prognosis was bleak; if moderns did not return to the concept of eternity, civilization itself might crumble, or at least lose that essential quality that had characterised civilization up to that point. The result was clear, the apparent crisis in Europe; fascism and communism. Despair was seen to be a significant root of this. And it was self-perpetuating. We have seen that it was an important Old Western objective to find some way of fathoming a way out of those despairing shallows into safer waters, not only proffering a solution, but attempting to embody it too. Campion, Faramir and Gervase are our saintly standards, in this instance. Therefore, as a response to the modern, this supernatural solution to despair constituted a broad Old Western awakening. In terms of understanding to what extent an Augustinian consideration of the 'More-Than-World' informed that response, the output of the Old Western Men on the subject of the philosophy of history, was, as this chapter has shown, undeniably couched in the language of a theology of eternity and ultimate victory that was itself an answer to modern despair.

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[309] Ibid.
[310] Ibid.
[311] Ibid.
[312] Ibid., 201.
[313] Ibid., 84.

Chapter Four

The Redemptive Discourse of Christendom

The subject of England, and the pilgrimage into the national past that animated its intellectuals, particularly between the wars, has received much attention in recent years. For example, *The Geographies of Englishness: Landscape and the National Past, 1880-1940* (2002) observed how 'the sixty years up to the Second World War were marked by repeated attempts to imagine a way out of modernity through national identity'.[1] Alexandra Harris, in *Romantic Moderns: English Writers, Artists and the Imagination from Virginia Woolf to John Piper* (2010), also revealed how a broad spread of writers and artists in Britain abandoned modernism's 'international language of form' in favour of a rather more national language of 'eccentricity' and 'locality'.[2] Peter Lowe, as well, has described the same turn toward nativism in his work *English Journeys: National Cultural Identity in 1930s and 1940s England* (2012). There is, indeed, a considerable consensus surrounding the notion of what Jed Etsy termed, in *A Shrinking Island: Modernism and National Culture in England* (2003), the rise of 'the redemptive discourse of Anglocentrism' in the twentieth century.[3] This, he continues, was openly manifest in the attempt, on the part of high modernists, such as Virginia Woolf and T. S. Eliot, to 'reinscribe universalism into the language of English particularism'.[4] Etsy cites Woolf's novel *Between the Acts* (1941), as well as Eliot's poem the *Four Quartets* (1943), as key examples of this shift toward Anglocentrism, in which 'aging high modernists participated in the process of anthropological introversion by modifying some of their most distinctive stylistic and generic choices'.[5]

Certainly, it appears that there was a curious intersection between high, or rather aesthetic, modernism and nativism, especially evident in the 1930s and 1940s, which attempted to

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[1] David Peters Corbett, and Ysanne Holt, and Fiona Russell, eds., *The Geographies of Englishness: Landscape and the National Past, 1880-1940* – Studies in British Art 10 (New Haven: Yale University Press: published for The Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art and the Yale Center for British Art, 2002), xvii.

[2] Alexandra Harris, *Romantic Moderns: English Writers, Artists and the Imagination from Virginia Woolf to John Piper* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2010), 11.

[3] Jed Etsy, *A Shrinking Island: Modernism and National Culture in England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 10.

[4] Ibid., 14.

[5] Ibid., 10-11.

resolve the antagonism between the universal and the particular. There was, however, another approach that Etsy also touched on in his 2003 analysis, albeit briefly, which related to religion rather than high modernism. Eliot, he writes, was part of 'a transitional generation' that 'cut their Anglocentricism with international ideas'.[6] Nevertheless, Eliot's sense of a broader community was also located in his 'investment in the unity of European Christendom'[7] – which in the case of the *Four Quartets* achieved 'a kind of epic revaluation of time and space', Etsy notes.[8] This was very much unlike the atheist Woolf, whose own approach precluded any such adoption of the concept of Christendom. Etsy has recognised this difference.[9] However, it may be that Etsy mischaracterises an essential aspect of Eliot here, in the sense that Eliot, an Anglo-Catholic, is portrayed as a high modernist, like Woolf, first. For this reason, too, the emphasis that has been placed on the theme of Anglocentricism seems to have excluded what this thesis forwards as the rather more significant theme of religion. In this sense, then, though there was certainly a turn toward nativism in twentieth century Britain, as Etsy notes, the accentuation of this particular discourse has, in Eliot's case especially, served to obscure another vital, specifically Old Western, mode of response that was explicitly spiritual and Christian: what we might term the redemptive discourse of Christendom. As Edwin Jones has stated in *The English Nation: The Great Myth* (1998):

> A truth, an "essential commonplace" of the medieval world, which
> historians often fail to discern – that before the Reformation Christianity
> in the West meant a unified body or community of people rather than a
> body of differing "isms".[10]

'Out of the violence of the Great War it seemed that a new international order had emerged', Adam Tooze has written in *The Deluge: The Great War and the Remaking of Global Order, 1916-1931* (2014).[11] This notion constituted a 'politicization of international

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[6] Ibid., 13.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid., 18.

[9] 'The notion of tribal bonds lying underneath modernist anomie seems to have driven Eliot to embrace cultural rather than aesthetic authority [...] My readings therefore suggest, not ideological unity between Woolf and Eliot, but converging paths inflected by a similar sense of British crisis and English opportunity.' Ibid.*,* 19.

[10] Edwin Jones, *The English Nation: The Great Myth* (1998: Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2003), 10.

[11] Adam Tooze, *The Deluge: The Great War and the Remaking of Global Order, 1916-1931* (2014; London: Penguin Books, 2015), 4.

affairs'.[12] In this sense, too, he writes, 'although sovereignty was multiplied, its context was hollowed out'.[13] As Mark Mazower explains, in *Governing the World: The History of an Idea* (2012), in the immediate aftermath of the First World War, this politicization found chief in expression in the League of Nations: 'a vehicle for world leadership based on moral principles and the formal principles and formal equality of sovereign states.'[14] Similarly, Casper Sylvest asserts, in *British Liberal Internationalism, 1880-1930: Making Progress?* (2009), that the twentieth century represented a 'coming of age' of 'internationalist ideology', in terms of a 'shift towards more institutional modes of argument', in part because 'British liberal internationalism', an ideology espousing the thought of such nineteenth century theorists as Richard Cobden and John Stuart Mill, 'was markedly accelerated during the Great War'.[15] This, it may argued, was the context in which the redemptive discourse of Christendom was conceived.

At a time when, as Mazower has noted, 'competing visions of world order' – the League of Nations and Communism, as well as 'the fascist element', Nazi Germany – appeared to be in the ascendancy, the Old Western ethic forwarded another form of 'world order', but one that was essentially non-political.[16] This alternative may be considered as part of what Sylvest has recently termed the 'historically minded language of internationalism', manifest in the work of the historian James Bryce and his disciple George Peabody Gooch.[17] As Sylvest writes, both were absorbed in 'the continuing attractions of the medieval ideal [of Christendom] in a conflict-ridden modern world. In fact, it became a mainstay of Gooch's internationalist writings to attempt a very Brycean resurrection of the medieval ideal.'[18] However, an important distinction should be made here, which is that the Old Western alternative considered in this chapter will not conform to Gooch's vision, in the sense that 'Gooch tied his enthusiasm for the *respublica Christiana* firmly to the mast of institutional internationalism, the League of Nations'.[19] Rather, what this chapter is focusing its

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[12] Ibid, 10.

[13] Ibid., 5.

[14] Mark Mazower, *Governing the World: The History of an Idea* (2012; London: Penguin Books, 2013), 153.

[15] Casper Sylvest, *British Liberal Internationalism, 1880-1930: Making Progress?* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), 199, 225. Sylvest defines 'internationalist ideology' as the conceptual 'possibility and importance of achieving progress, order and justice in internationalist politics', also including 'the applicability of public morality to this domain'. Ibid., 198.

[16] Mazower, *Governing the World,* 154.

[17] Sylvest, *British Liberal Internationalism,* 217.

[18] Ibid, 224.

[19] Ibid.

attention on here is an ideal that Bryce, tellingly known as 'the Holy Roman', had first espoused in his own output as a historian; an ideal that was not tied to an institutional mode of response to the problem of European conflagration. Importantly, too, it was a type of *cultural* internationalism that did not seek to supersede the nation.

T. S. Eliot

Barry Spurr's recent contribution to the scholarly literature on Eliot, in *'Anglo-Catholic in Religion': T. S. Eliot and Christianity* (2010), argued the case that it was 'Eliot's fidelity not only to Christianity but to a particular variety of it, over a period of nearly forty years until his death in 1965', which was 'the dominant element in his life and work'.[20] Spurr's conclusion here reveals Eliot to possess an especially 'Old Western' ethic, I think, which it is the purpose of this thesis to forward as one side of Malcolm Cowley's stated divide amongst intellectuals. What stands out, in particular, in Spurr's analysis is the importance Eliot placed on the value of the supernatural:

> Eliot was highly critical of a religious system which had jettisoned
> theology and prioritised morality, which could not survive (he believed)
> in a vacuum. He came to see this as the antithesis of the Anglo-Catholic
> understanding of moral issues and conduct.[21]

For an authority that was not supernatural was, Eliot ultimately came to decide, no authority at all. As early as 1916, Eliot had admitted that he believed that 'man requires an askesis, a formula to be imposed upon him from above'.[22] It was for this reason, too, that Eliot thought it important to 'question whether we could live without superstition'.[23] He would conclude that civilization could not. Spurr has detailed this process in his own work. However, Eliot was not alone in his conclusion here. The supposed 'vacuum' that had been created when society abandoned its belief in the supernatural was a conception that was by no means unique to Eliot, as we have seen. This was an essential Old Western

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[20] Barry Spurr, *'Anglo-Catholic in Religion': T. S. Eliot and Christianity* (Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press, 2010), ix.
[21] Ibid., ix, 2.
[22] Quoted in ibid., 23.
[23] Quoted in ibid., 22, 23.

conception. What concerned Eliot most of all – and what arguably gave Old Western Men their impetus in the twentieth century – were the perceived corollaries of that 'vacuum', including the present condition of Europe. One such concern was the rise of nationalism. As Keith Lowe writes, the Second World War itself, which for many writers came to define the century, would not only be a 'traditional conflict for territory': it would also 'simultaneously [be] a war of race, and a war of ideology […] interlaced with half a dozen civil wars fought for purely local reasons.'[24]

Enzo Traverso has written that the intellectuals able to 'resist' the 'nationalist wave' that appeared to overcome Europe in the first half of the twentieth century 'were extremely few'.[25] Ian Kershaw has noted, too, in *To Hell and Back: Europe, 1914-1949* (2015), that 'the belief in spiritual renewal through national rebirth accounts in good measure for fascism's appeal to intellectuals'.[26] Moreover, Kershaw also asserts that 'belligerent nationalism, vicious antisemitism and other brands of racism were commonplace outside the minority drawn to the doctrines of international socialism'.[27] Both Traverso and Kershaw have, I argue, neglected a significant discourse, particularly prominent between the two world wars, which, though seeking to combat nationalism and racism, did not subscribe to 'international socialism' or what Tooze and Mazower identify as the post-1918 'world order'. No where do we see the Old Western ethic exhibited more plainly, and indeed broadly, as we do in the manner in which the professed ill-health of Europe – where all its ideologies, disunities and, most apparently, its great wars of recent years, were all seen to be a direct result of the spiritual vacuum identified by Eliot, but also by Christopher Dawson, G. K. Chesterton and Hilaire Belloc. Here, then, Eliot found himself on the side of what this thesis argues was a very real divide amongst the intellectuals of his day.

Notes towards the Definition of Culture

Writing in one of a number of articles that would later form *Notes towards the Definition of Culture* (1948), Eliot expressed his view that:

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[24] Keith Lowe, *Savage Continent: Europe in the Aftermath of World War II* (London: Viking, 2012), 367.

[25] Alexander Anievas, ed., *Cataclysm 1914: The First World War and the Making of Modern World Politics* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 214.

[26] Ian Kershaw, *To Hell and Back: Europe, 1914-1949* (2015; London: Penguin Books, 2016), 453.

[27] Ibid., 16.

For the health of the culture of Europe two conditions are required: that the culture of each country should be unique, and that the different cultures should recognize their relationship to each other, so that each should be susceptible of influence from the others. And this is possible because there is a common element in European culture, an interrelated history of thought and feeling and behaviour, an interchange of arts and of ideas.[28]

The sociologist Émile Durkheim wrote in his seminal work *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (1912) that 'the idea of religion is inseparable from that of the Church [...] an eminently collective thing'.[29] In a sense, then, Eliot also emphasised such 'a moral community formed by all the believers in a single faith, laymen as well as priests'.[30] However, Eliot's collective was just as much historical and cultural as it was religious, though he believed that 'the dominant force in creating a common culture between peoples, each of which has its distinct culture, is religion'.[31] Moreover, with regards to Europe, there was only one 'common culture' that could conceivably be called upon: 'I am talking about the common tradition of Christianity which has made Europe what it is, and about the common cultural elements which this common Christianity has brought with it.'[32] This tradition was vital, Eliot believed:

It is in Christianity that our arts have developed; it is in Christianity that the laws of Europe have – until recently – been rooted. It is against a background of Christianity that all our thought has significance. An individual European may not believe that the Christian Faith is true, and yet what he says, and makes, and does, will all spring out of his heritage of Christian culture and depend upon that culture for its meaning.[33]

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[28] T. S. Eliot, *Christianity & Culture: The Idea of a Christian Society and Notes towards the Definition of Culture* (1948; San Diego: Harcourt, 1988), 197.

[29] Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life,* trans. Joseph Ward Swain (1915; London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1964), 47.

[30] Ibid., 45.

[31] Eliot, *Christianity & Culture*, 199.

[32] Ibid., 200.

[33] Ibid.

What is more, Eliot was certain 'that the culture of Europe could [not] survive the complete disappearance of the Christian Faith […] not merely because I am a Christian myself', he wrote, 'but as a student of social biology. If Christianity goes, the whole of our culture goes.'[34] Lucy McDiarmid has noted previously that Eliot was himself part of a 'wishing away Luther, Machiavelli, Descartes, Cromwell, Hobbes, Newton, and Locke', in favour of a 'unified Christendom, believing in one God, speaking one language'.[35] And the reason why Eliot thought it essential that Europe – and particularly its intellectuals – preserve that 'culture', a culture common to all Europeans, was that he thought it 'wrong that the only duty of the individual should be held to be towards the State'.[36]

Fear of the State

> It has become increasingly clear that the whole social structure of the modern world is undergoing a process of change which not only affects politics and economics but also raises fundamental moral and religious issues. It matters little whether we regard this development as tending towards State-socialism or State-capitalism, whether we describe it as collectivist or totalitarian; the vital point is that it invokes a new relation between society and the individual and a new conception of the nature and function of the State.[37]

Writing in one of his most pressing works, *Religion and the Modern State* (1935), Dawson asserted his view that Europe was steadily being overtaken by a 'universal […] movement towards State control in every department of life', independent of the 'political tenets of a party, whether Communist or Fascist'.[38] Not only was the state 'becoming more centralized', but rather more tellingly, 'society and culture' as a whole were steadily 'becoming more *politicized*'.[39] This was suggestive because Dawson believed that at the root of this politicization, which he posited was 'responsible for the intolerance and

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[34] Ibid.
[35] Lucy McDiarmid, *Saving Civilization: Yeats, Eliot, and Auden Between the Wars* (1984; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 123.
[36] Eliot, *Christianity & Culture*, 201.
[37] Christopher Dawson, *Religion and the Modern State* (1935; London: Sheed and Ward, 1936), 7.
[38] Ibid., 47.
[39] Ibid., 45.

violence of the new political order', was the 'determination to build Jerusalem, at once and on the spot [...] never ceasing from mental strife till they have built Jerusalem in England's green and pleasant land'.[40]

Dawson's wielding of William Blake's poem 'Jerusalem' is significant because what underpinned his entire thesis in 1935, and what to a certain extent defined his life's work as a historian, was the proposition that 'the rise of the new State' should be 'regarded as the culmination of the process of secularization in Western history'.[41] And the theme of secularization – Eliot's 'vacuum' – is a primary Old Western preoccupation, of course. And ultimately, the rise of the modern state, in Dawson's view, was really 'an attempt to find some substitute for the lost religious foundations of society'.[42] Consequently, this endeavour to exchange religion for what was essentially a religion of politics had, in due course, found chief expression in a vital utopianism that had, in his own day, established itself in an apparent epidemic of worldly Jerusalems: 'there is the Muscovite Jerusalem which has no Temple, there is Herr Hitler's Jerusalem which has no Jews, and there is the Jerusalem of the social reformers which is all suburbs.'[43] But none of these 'earthly cities' were 'Blake's Jerusalem', which, in Dawson's view, was exactly the problem:

> If we believe that the Kingdom of Heaven can be established by political or economic measures – that it can be an earthly state – then we can hardly object to the claims of such a State to embrace the whole of life and to demand the total submission of the individual will and conscience.[44]

In this sense, Dawson found his views in alinement with the writer Paul Einzig, who claimed, in *The Economic Foundations of Fascism* (1933), that 'to a very great extent Fascism *is* Socialism'.[45] Dawson concurred, quoting Einzig, claiming himself that there existed 'a parallel line of development' between the two systems, since each in effect demanded 'an equally whole-hearted spiritual allegiance', which itself involved a 'large a claim on the life

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[40] Ibid., 108-109.
[41] Ibid., 44.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid., 109.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Quoted in ibid., 11.

of the individual'.[46] This was what Dawson found so worrying; that as a result of the politicization of society, in that it now sought to bring about the Kingdom of Heaven 'at once and on the spot', the state was 'steadily annexing all the territory that was formerly the domain of individual freedom', having 'already taken more than anyone would have conceived possible a century ago. It has taken economics, it has taken science, it has taken ethics.'[47] In his estimation, it was essentially totalitarian.

Dawson noted a number of symptoms of this impulse toward authoritarianism: an emergent class of 'professional politicians or demagogues'[48]; as well as the establishment of 'a direct relation of personal loyalty between the leader and the man in the street'[49]; hoping 'for the appearance of some political Messiah who will solve all our difficulties by the magic of his personality'[50]. Dawson's language here is significant. Idolatry was itself a sign that the politician had supplanted God in the hearts and minds of the general populace, according to Dawson. The purpose of his work *Religion and the Modern State* was to assert that, in actual fact, a religious 'society' was 'the only Kingdom of God on earth that we have any right to look for', and that it was only this 'membership' that provided 'an answer to the claims of the Totalitarian State'.[51] If the state had, indeed, 'become too totalitarian', this was 'because the average Christian' had 'not been totalitarian enough', not in the sense of Christian abuses of power, but rather in terms of rejecting worldly power in favour of the 'More-Than-World'.[52]

Dawson was not alone in his thesis that totalitarianism was a natural consequence of a widespread securitisation of society. In 1935, as well, Eliot had expressed a similar view in his journal *The Criterion*:

> We are really, you see, up against the very difficult problem of the
> *spiritual* and the *temporal*, the problem of which the problem of Church

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[46] Ibid., 106.
[47] Ibid., 127.
[48] Ibid., 41.
[49] Ibid., 40.
[50] Ibid., 41.
[51] Ibid., 113.
[52] Ibid.

and State is a derivative. The danger, for those who start from the temporal end, is Utopianism.[53]

It is worth reiterating the point here that Eliot's and Dawson's rejection of State power and organisation, which they classified as being totalitarian in instinct, was ultimately rooted in a religious reading of current events. Therefore, it is important that we recognise the true extent of this critique, one that was very much founded on a Christian reading of history, as we see, for example, in the work of Chesterton, who also asserted the importance of recognising the reality of the 'More-Than-World'.

Writing in *Christendom in Dublin* (1932), Chesterton declared that, 'Once abolish the god, and the Government becomes the God.'[54] Although Chesterton did not go into as much depth on the subject as Dawson and Eliot, he nevertheless argued the same point that 'wherever the people do not believe in something beyond the world, they will worship the world. But, above all, they will worship the strongest thing in the world […] the State.'[55]

> That fact is written all across human history; but it is written most plainly across that recent history of Russia; which was created by Lenin. There the Government is the God, and all the more the God, because it proclaims aloud in accents of thunder, like every other God worth worshipping, the one essential commandment: "Thou shalt have no other gods but Me."[56]

As early as the immediate aftermath of the First World War, Chesterton's friend and ally Belloc had also claimed, in *Europe and the Faith* (1920), that it was above all the Catholic Church and the European 'unity', the unity of 'Christendom', which was 'the guarantee of the plain man's healthy and moral existence against the threat of the wealthy, and the power of the State'.[57] Unsurprisingly, this critique survived the Second World War too, in part because this war appeared to confirm what had already been posited by the likes of

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[53] Quoted in Kirk Russell, *Eliot and His Age: T. S. Eliot's Moral Imagination in the Twentieth Century* (1971; Wilmington: ISI Books, 2008), 195-196.

[54] G. K Chesterton, *The Collected Works of G. K. Chesterton, Volume 20* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2001), 57.

[55] Ibid., 58.

[56] Ibid., 57.

[57] Hilaire Belloc, *Europe and the Faith* (1920; London: Black House Publishing, 2012), 49.

Dawson and others; that, in words of the poet Roy Campbell, in 1951, there was a reason why 'Demagogues always attack and destroy the traditional Faith or tribal beliefs of their fellow-countrymen', because only then would they be 'able to enslave them'.[58] 'Recent history', he wrote, had 'proved that wherever you get rid of your priest, you have to have a policeman, an S.S., or a Commissar, armed with a knout, to replace him'.[59] At the root of this, again, was the notion that religion, by default, was the only effective bastion against the encroachment of state power:

> Faith can move mountains: but Credulity (its inevitable substitute) can move whole continents: and it requires the most blatant credulity to believe in the Utopian futurism of "classless societies", "thousand-year Reichs", "five-year plans" and other demagogic blarney current in Europe during the last two hundred years, amongst people who have had their faith destroyed.[60]

The result of this move away from 'faith' toward 'credulity' had, in Campbell's view, ultimately been catastrophic:

> Far more people have been imprisoned for Liberty, degraded and humiliated for the sake of Equality, and tortured and murdered in the name of Fraternity during the last thirty years than in the previous thousand under less hypocritical forms of despotism.[61]

Campbell concluded, in his own mind, that 'even for us' religion was 'the only alternative to the police State and slavery in the long run'.[62] Again, it is worth pressing home the point that the Old Western Men may, in part, be defined by their wholesale rejection of state power.

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[58] Roy Campbell, *Light on a Dark Horse: An Autobiography* (London: Hollis & Carter, 1951), 148.
[59] Ibid., 151.
[60] Ibid., 148.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Ibid., 151.

J. R. R. Tolkien was also fundamentally opposed to what he termed the 'State-God',[63] affirming, in 1956, that he was 'not a "socialist" in any sense – being averse to "planning" (as must be plain) most of all because the "planners", when they acquire power, become so bad'.[64] This opposition also found expression in his output as an author of fantasy. Indeed, his depiction of his central villain Sauron, especially in *The Silmarillion* (1977), as an expression of the general Old Western ethic. Tolkien explains that Men – the Númenóreans, in this case – in the Second Age 'believed in the One, the true God, and held worship of any other person an abomination'.[65] Sauron, on the other hand, who had developed a 'lusting for Complete Power',[66] 'desired to be a God-King, and was held to be this by his servants'.[67] Sauron 'strove ever for the dominion of Middle-earth, to become a king over all kings and as a god unto Men'.[68] Ultimately, the root of Sauron's villainy, we come to realise, is his desire to supersede God himself, since he can only achieve 'dominion' over Men by being 'both king and god', Tolkien argues later on in his letters.[69] This, importantly, was not to suggest that Sauron was "evil" in origin'.[70] Instead, he was 'a "spirit" corrupted'.[71] This is significant, since Tolkien drew a comparison, in 1954, between Sauron and the self-destructive desire on the part of the planners of his own time, who sought to refashion the world along the lines of some utopian vision, confirming that Sauron 'was not indeed wholly evil, not unless all "reformers" who want to hurry up with "reconstruction" and "reorganization" are wholly evil, even before pride and the lust to exert their will eat them up'.[72] Writing again in 1956, Tolkien reaffirmed the point that Sauron 'had gone the way of all tyrants: beginning well, at least on the level that while desiring to order all things according to his own wisdom he still at first considered the (economic) well-being of other inhabitants of the Earth'.[73] Had Sauron been ultimately 'victorious he would have demanded divine honour from all rational creatures and absolute power over the whole world'.[74] Tolkien would conclude retrospectively that the broader 'conflict' in his story *The*

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[63] J. R. R. Tolkien, and Humphrey Carpenter, ed., *The Letters of J. R. R. Tolkien* (1981; London: HarperCollins Publishers, 2006), 244.

[64] Ibid., 235.

[65] Ibid., 243.

[66] J. R. R. Tolkien, and Christopher Tolkien, ed., *The Silmarillion* (1977; London: HarperCollins Publishers, 2013), xx.

[67] Tolkien and Carpenter, ed., *Letters,* 243.

[68] Tolkien and Tolkien, ed., *The Silmarillion*, 319.

[69] Ibid., 347.

[70] Tolkien and Carpenter, ed., *Letters,* 190.

[71] Ibid.

[72] Ibid.

[73] Ibid., 243.

[74] Ibid., 244.

Lord of the Rings was 'not basically about "freedom"', though was 'naturally involved', being instead 'about God, and His sole right to divine honour'.[75]

Tolkien's fellow 'Inkling' Lewis concurred, claiming that 'of all tyrannies, a tyranny sincerely exercised for the good of its victims may be the most oppressive'.[76] In this sense, he concluded, 'it would be better to live under robber barons than under omnipotent moral busybodies':

> The robber baron's cruelty may sometimes sleep, his cupidity may at some point be satiated; but those who torment us for our own good will torment us without end for they do so with the approval of their own conscience. They may be more likely to go to Heaven yet at the same time likelier to make a Hell of earth.[77]

Lewis, therefore, thought it prudent to at least 'face the possibility of bad rulers armed with', what he termed, 'a Humanitarian theory of punishment', which would attempt to 'cure' dissent rather than punish it.[78] For what this novel 'Humanitarian theory' actually entailed, he explained, was treating 'crime and disease […] as the same thing', the result being 'that any state of mind which our masters choose to call "disease" can be treated as crime; and compulsorily cured'.[79] Moreover, this new 'theory' might be applied to Christianity itself, which 'one school of phycology' already regarded 'as a neurosis'.[80] The worry, then, in Lewis's mind, was that should this 'neurosis' become inconvenient to government, what would 'hinder government from proceeding to "cure" it?'.[81] The danger of this theory lay, then, in its subtlety and its pronounced humanitarianism:

> Under the Humanitarian theory it will not be called by the shocking name of Persecution. No one will blame us for being Christians, no one will hate us, no one will revile us. The new Nero will approach us with the silky manners of a doctor, and though all will be in fact as compulsory as the

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[75] Ibid., 243.
[76] C. S. Lewis, and Walter Hooper, ed., *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics* (1970; Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2014), 324.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Ibid.
[79] Ibid., 325.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Ibid.

> *tunica molesta* or Smithfield of Tyburn, all will go on within the
> unemotional therapeutic sphere where worlds like "right" and "wrong"
> or "freedom" and "slavery" are never heard.[82]

Consequently, 'the practical problem of Christian politics' would 'not [be] that of drawing up schemes for a Christian society, but that of living as innocently as we can with unbelieving fellow-subjects under unbelieving rulers who will never be perfectly wise and good and who will sometimes be very wicked and very foolish'.[83] For it was an essential part of Lewis's understanding of the modern tyrant that 'they will usually be unbeliever. And since wisdom and virtue are not the only or the commonest qualifications for a place in the government, they will not often be even the best unbelievers.'[84] Although Lewis's identification of 'a Humanitarian theory of punishment' was ultimately left undeveloped, we may reasonably extract from it the critique that 'moral busybodies' were, in point of fact, 'unbelieving' Christians applying a dissociated Christian ethic, which, as a result of that dissociation, was political rather than spiritual.

Lewis had, in fact, touched on this idea in his work *Mere Christianity* (1952). Here he claimed that 'a Christian society would be what we now call Leftist'.[85] Indeed, in 'its economic life' such a society would seem 'very socialistic and, in that sense, "advanced"'.[86] Nevertheless, it was also a vital part of Christianity that 'the New Testament hates what it calls "busybodies"'[87] – the phrase Lewis had employed to describe the tyranny behind the 'Humanitarian theory of punishment'.[88] The difference, Lewis explained in 1952, between the Christian and Leftist 'busybodies', was this, then: '[that] Christianity has not, and does not profess to have, a detailed political programme for applying "Do as you would be done by" to a particular society at a particular moment.'[89] The Leftist, conversely, was in the business of attempting to bring about the Kingdom of Heaven in the here and now, rather than reaching it in the hereafter. Lewis concurs with Dawson. Meanwhile, the Christian 'clergy', for example, were 'those particular people within the whole Church who have been

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[82] Ibid.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Ibid.
[85] C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (1952: London: William Collins, 2016), 84.
[86] Ibid.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Lewis was referencing 2 Thessalonians 3:11 – 'For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies.'
[89] Lewis, *Mere Christianity,* 82.

specially trained and set aside to look after what concerns us as creatures who are going to live for ever'.[90] We may, therefore, deduce – because Lewis stated it explicitly – that what was implicit in Lewis's respective identifications in his unpublished essay, but in *Mere Christianity* too, was that at the root of the tyranny of 'Leftist' 'busybodies' was an absence of belief, not in the ethics of Christianity, but its supernatural claims. This puts Lewis in line with the Old Western ethic itself.

As we have seen, Eliot's own writing belonged to a tradition that rejected state power and, consequently, precluded any such solution to the issue of European cooperation that sought to apply the apparatus of the state trans-nationally. What was really required, he argued, was a union founded on an allegiance that was, to the contrary, cultural rather than political. This raised an issue of equal importance, which was the problem of spiritual loyalty. This would bring Eliot, as well as others, closer to the idea of the unity of culture, meaning 'Christendom'.

A Question of Loyalties

The legacy of the Second World War looms large throughout Eliot's *Notes towards the Definition of Culture*. Nazi Germany was a key case in point, he believed, of 'a country which is too well united – whether by nature or by device, by honest purpose or by fraud and oppression' – and which was, as a result, 'a menace to others'.[91] What Eliot hoped for, to the contrary, and indeed what he argued for, was 'a variety of loyalties'.[92] However, this 'variety' could only be got at through what he termed 'the unity of culture'.[93] For 'in contrast to the unity of political organisation' – which Nazi Germany, as well as fascist Italy, had stood for[94] – the 'unity of culture' would 'not require us all to have only one loyalty'.[95] 'We need variety in unity: not the unity of organisation, but the unity of nature', he

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[90] Ibid.
[91] Eliot, *Christianity & Culture,* 133.
[92] Ibid., 201.
[93] Ibid.
[94] 'In Italy and in Germany, we have seen that a unity with politico-economic aims, imposed violently and too rapidly, had unfortunate effects upon both nations. Their cultures had developed in the course of a history of extreme, and extremely sub-divided regionalism: the attempt to teach Germans to think of themselves as Germans first, and the attempt to teach Italians to think of themselves as Italians first, rather than as natives of a particular small principality or city, was to disturb the traditional culture from which alone any future culture could grow.' Ibid., 133.
[95] Ibid., 201.

argued.[96] In a sense, what Eliot was expressing was what he thought of as Christianity's supreme practicality in the area of international relations. What really Europe required, he concluded – in the wake of what was a fundamentally nationalistic and racialist outbreak of disorder, particularly in Germany, he supposed – was 'unity in culture', a unity founded on the cultural, and indeed emotional, framework of Christendom that would the negate the need to impose a unity from above that was essentially political and superficial.

Eliot was not alone in his forwarding of cultural unity as a solution to Europe's recent self-immolation. Dawson, it may be said, was part of what Daniel Laqua states was a 'diversity of transnational thought and action between 1919 and 1939', which he believes is 'frequently underestimated'.[97] Dawson also argued for the unitary principle of a common culture rooted in Europe's cultural inheritance, which was Christian, he posited. Writing in *The Judgement of Nations* (1942), in a chapter titled 'Christendom, Europe and the New World', Dawson broached the subject of a possible 'union' of European nations in answer to 'the great tragedy of our time'.[98] Dawson was, of course, referring to the ongoing conflagration on the continent that had yet again erupted into world conflict. Was 'it possible', he asked, 'to conceive of a Western European federation' that would 'reconcile the rights of nations with the existence of Europe, on the one hand, and the need of world order, on the other'?[99] The question that Dawson was really considering here, however, was what form 'a European union' should take. His own response, in 1942, was to argue that 'any such attempt to organise Europe by military or economic power divorced from spiritual vision' was 'doomed to failure'.[100] This caution was founded on the conviction that had informed much of Dawson's output as a historian, that 'the formal principle of European unity is not physical but spiritual'.[101] As he would stress later, in *Understanding Europe* (1952), Europe was 'a man-made continent, an historical creation'.[102] Accordingly, spiritual allegiance, not geography, was central to the understanding of European society

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[96] Ibid., 197.

[97] Daniel Laqua, ed., *Internationalism Reconfigured: Transnational Ideas and Movements Between the World Wars* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2011), xii.

[98] Christopher Dawson, *The Judgement of Nations* (1942; Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2011), 149.

[99] Ibid., 146, 147.

[100] Ibid., 150.

[101] Ibid., 140.

[102] Europe is 'an invention of the Greeks', Dawson explained; Greeks 'who adapted a myth in order to express their sense of independence towards the civilization of Asia and their struggle for freedom against Persian imperialism'. Christopher Dawson, *Understanding Europe* (1952; Washington D. C.; The Catholic University Press of America, 2009), 40.

as a whole. And one such 'spiritual' reality, which had to recognised, Dawson emphasised in 1942, was 'the intensive development of national political traditions and national culture', which had 'made every people so conscious of its own individuality that any limitation of its political sovereignty' was 'felt as a threat to its spiritual being'.[103] Later, in 1952, Dawson would forward the example of the German philosopher-politician Constantin Frantz, an opponent of Otto von Bismarck's policy of German unification, who foresaw the danger of transforming Germany into a centralised state, a state that was ultimately 'contrary to the deep-rooted political traditions of the German people'.[104] Similarly, Dawson argued that any such attempt to organise Europe artificially would not command the spiritual loyalties of the European peoples. As he had written in 1942, 'the reconciliation of the nations can only be accomplished on a deeper plane than that of political power or economic interest'.[105] The only solution, then, was some manner of organisation 'based on community of culture […] organized as a society of nations or states with autonomous rights'.[106] And just as Frantz invoked 'the older tradition of the [Holy Roman] Empire, which was based, on the one hand, on the principle of regional or territorial autonomy, and on the other, on the conception of a universal Christian society of which the Empire was the historical representative',[107] Dawson also called upon the example of 'Christendom', a culture based on the 'idea of spiritual universalism'; an idea 'which was more than an idea, because it was embodied in the superpolitical society of the Church'.[108] He was, in this sense, as Michael Bentley has identified, one of the 'heirs to a tradition of Roman Catholic historiography which provided a second challenge to the more comfortable assumptions of whigs about the Protestant state'.[109]

Christendom: 'the only league of nations that ever had a chance'

A vital aspect of the Old Western ethic is that it is, if not collaborative, then essentially corroborative. Regarding the revival of Christendom – arguably part of a broader revival of interest in the Middle Ages as a whole – it seems that Eliot was to some extent aware that

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[103] Dawson, *Judgement of Nations*, 147.
[104] Dawson, *Understanding Europe*, 67.
[105] Dawson, *Judgement of Nations*, 151.
[106] Ibid., 146.
[107] Dawson, *Understanding Europe*, 67.
[108] Dawson, *Judgement of Nations*, 140.
[109] Michael Bentley, *Modernizing England's Past: English Historiography in the Age of Modernism, 1870-1970* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 56.

his own personal view was part of a broader response to the contemporary situation, observing in 1939 that 'events during the last twenty-five years have led to an increasing recognition of the supra-national Christian society'.[110] This identification likely encompassed Dawson's own analysis, which in 1948 Eliot acknowledged personally in his preface to *Notes towards the Definition of Culture.* As we shall see, Eliot's own work and opinion owed a great deal to the influence of Dawson, but also to a broader Old Western ethic that proceeded even Dawson. For it is important that we recognise that what Eliot was attempting to affirm in 1948 was a variant of Chesterton's assertion, in 1917, that what 'Christendom' really constituted was 'variation without antagonism'.[111] In this sense, then, though they were a generation apart, and moved in very different circles, both Eliot and Chesterton, including his ally Belloc too, made it their business to defend the concept Christendom. Chesterton and Belloc – the 'Chesterbelloc' – were the first Old Western generation in the twentieth century to elevate the conception of a Christian league of nations modelled on a conception of Christendom that was also related, unashamedly, to their own Roman Catholic faith and sympathies. In doing so, they would attempt to reconcile a corporate Catholic identity with English identity.[112] Accordingly, the Chesterbelloc sought to remind the English of their European, or pre-modern, citizenship – an idea that, to a considerable degree, was alien to the tradition that Englishmen had for centuries been exposed; a tradition that has been dubbed a peculiarly 'English' narrative, in which 'the struggles of the Protestant Reformation' were 'fought out over and over again'.[113] In this sense, Chesterton and Belloc preceded Eliot, as well as Dawson, in combatting what they believed to be an ill-effect of the Reformation in the sixteenth century, which, amongst other evils, had, Chesterton was sure, 'destroyed the only league of nations that ever had a chance'.[114] In this sense, too, this recovery of the notion of Christendom constituted a key, though so far unacknowledged, component of Michael Alexander's 'Edwardian relaunch' of the medieval revival.

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[110] Eliot, *Christianity & Culture*, 42.

[111] G. K. Chesterton, *A Short History of England* (1917; Teddington: Echo Library, 2008), 74.

[112] Julia Stapleton has also observed how 'Chesterton located England firmly within the European family of nations, rooted in Christendom'. Julia Stapleton, 'The England of G.K. Chesterton', *The Chesterton Review*, vol. 32, no. 3/4 (2006), 348. This chimes with Joseph McCleary's identification of 'the interlocking themes of locality, patriotism, and nationalism' that 'constituted the essential elements of the philosophy of history that informed much of G. K. Chesterton's critical and literary work […] strongly influenced by his Catholic beliefs'. Joseph McCleary, *The Historical Imagination of G.K. Chesterton: Locality, Patriotism, and Nationalism* (2009; Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), 1.

[113] Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (1992; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 25.

[114] Chesterton, G. K., *The New Witness*, June 20, 1919.

Writing in 1919, for *The New Witness*, Chesterton could hardly have chosen stronger words to condemn what he believed to be the historically ruinous ramifications of the Reformation:

> I am firmly convinced that the Reformation of the sixteenth century was as near as any mortal thing can come to unmixed evil. Even the parts of it that might appear plausible and enlightened from a purely secular standpoint have turned out rotten and reactionary, also from a purely secular standpoint. By substituting the Bible for the sacrament, it created a pedantic caste of those who could read, superstitiously identified with those who could think. By destroying the monks, it took social work from the poor philanthropists who chose to deny themselves, and gave it to the rich philanthropists who chose to assert themselves. By preaching individualism while preserving inequality, it produced modern capitalism. It destroyed the only league of nations that ever had a chance. It produced the worst wars of nations that ever existed. It produced the most efficient form of Protestantism, which is Prussia. And it is producing the worst part of paganism, which is slavery.[115]

Chesterton's complaint here was not entirely novel. Previous critiques of the Reformation, such as Williams Cobbett's *A History of the Protestant Reformation* (1824-26), had accentuated its deleterious social effect: that the Reformation had, in the words of Cobbett, *impoverished and degraded the main body of the people in those countries*.[116] Around this narrative congregated what J. W. Burrow termed, in *Liberal Descent: Victorian Historians and the English Past* (1981), 'the radically disaffected, overtly reactionary strand in the English approach to the past', which, 'in the middle years of the nineteenth century, from Southey and Cobbett, Pugin and Disraeli, to Ruskin and Morris, with a twentieth-century epilogue in Belloc and Chesterton', 'constantly called for [...] the conception of a medieval

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[115] Ibid.

[116] Cobbett's history made use of John Lingard's *The History of England, From the First Invasion by the Romans to the Accession of Henry VIII* (1819), which has been described as 'a turning-point in English historiography'. Lingard's account of the English was the first to stress the negative effect of the Reformation. His 'conclusions had to be recovered by scholars in the twentieth century, when the academic world was able to accept them, often without knowing that Lingard had been there before'. Jones, *English Nation,* 27-28.

utopia'.[117] This 'radical critique of capitalism', writes Burrow, which naturally entailed 'a repudiation of Whiggish complacency about national history', perceived 'the Middle Ages as a lost paradise', a paradise that had been wilfully destroyed during the course of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.[118] However, though Belloc and Chesterton were, it is true, a 'twentieth-century epilogue', as Burrow says, insofar as they advanced a social critique of the effects of the Reformation, they were also, more originally, *a prologue*. They were a preamble, indeed, to Eliot's own *Notes towards the Definition of Culture*. For what Chesterton and Belloc did – preparing the way not only for Eliot, but for Dawson as well, as we shall see – was to add to that critique of the Reformation the view, a view in response, perhaps, to the First World War, that, as Belloc remarked in *How the Reformation Happened* (1928), the Reformation was the 'shipwreck of European unity'.[119]

There undoubtedly existed a common consensus amongst the 'Roman Catholic' core of the Old Western ethic that the Reformation was, indeed, the 'shipwreck' of the old 'European unity'. But what was that 'European unity'? Chesterton summed up his own conception of Christendom particularly evocatively in 1917, as Europe was engaged in one of the most shattering conflicts in its history. Chesterton was certain that he knew what Christendom was, but he also believed he knew when it had died:

> Shakespeare died upon St. George's Day, and much of what St. George had meant died with him. I do not mean that the patriotism of Shakespeare or of England died; that remained and even rose steadily, to be the noblest pride of the coming times. But much more than patriotism had been involved in that image of St. George to whom the Lion Heart had dedicated England long ago in the deserts of Palestine. The conception of a patron saint had carried from the Middle Ages one very unique and as yet unreplaced idea. It was the idea of variation without antagonism. The Seven Champions of Christendom were multiplied by seventy times seven in the patrons of towns, trades and social types; but

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[117] J. W. Burrow, *A Liberal Descent: Victorian Historians and the English Past* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 240-241.

[118] Ibid., 241.

[119] Hilaire Belloc, *How the Reformation Happened* (1928; Charlotte: Tan Books, 1992), 12. This shift in emphasis to 'a new approach to Reformation historiography' paralleled the work of F. W. Maitland, which, as Edwin Jones writes, 'revealed the great influence of Roman law and of the Catholic Church on English life up the Reformation'. Jones, *English Nation*, 282.

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the very idea that they were all saints excluded the possibility of ultimate rivalry in the fact that they were all patrons. The Guild of the Shoemakers and the Guild of the Skinners, carrying the badges of St. Crispin and St. Bartholomew, might fight each other in the streets; but they did not believe that St. Crispin and St. Bartholomew were fighting each other in the skies. Similarly the English would cry in battle on St. George and the French on St. Denis; but they did not seriously believe that St. George hated St. Denis or even those who cried upon St. Denis.[120]

In other words, neither the English nor the French were the chosen people; they were all God's people. In this sense, Chesterton believed that what Christendom had, above all, afforded the peoples of the Middles Ages was 'variation without antagonism'. St. George, whom an Englishman might conceivably invoke, finding himself imperilled upon the breach, embodied something far more comprehensive than the narrow confines of the nation itself. Christendom, in the manner of a 'common culture', which embraced peoples on a truly trans-national scale, ultimately transcended the nation, but, unlike political internationalism, which Chesterton equally disliked, did not seek to abolish the nation. This was Christendom's great appeal to a number of not insignificant writers in the twentieth century. Lodged precariously between the insular rock of state nationalism and the vast cultural nothingness of internationalism, as they characterised it, was Christendom. Its tradition was that neat trick of 'variation without antagonism', Chesterton argued. Christendom, it seemed to him, might reconcile the irreconcilable. It was a *via media*, in a way. And for centuries, he maintained, that *via media* had existed. Christendom was no utopian fancy, but, as one of Chesterton's protégés, Dawson, confirmed: 'an objective historical reality.'[121] It was exactly because it was not an abstraction that it might be revived.

It is significant, it should be noted, that in eulogising Christendom – which, in the view of many Englishmen, in the wake of the Reformation, had an all too Catholic connotation, as Linda Colley has detailed[122] – Chesterton, as we have seen, conscripted into his vision

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[120] Chesterton, *Short History,* 74.

[121] Dawson, *Understanding Europe*, 10.

[122] Colley writes of the fundamental 'British' narrative in which 'the struggles of the Protestant Reformation' were 'fought out over and over again'. She explains that 'the prospect in the first half of the eighteenth century of a Catholic monarchy being restored in Britain by force, together with recurrent wars with Catholic states', in particular, 'and especially with France […] helped to foster

perhaps two of the most recognisable Englishmen known to history: William Shakespeare and Richard the Lionheart.[123] Indeed, it was indicative of what Chesterton, as well as Old Western Roman Catholics as a whole, were attempting in the twentieth century, to confront the deep-rooted idea, revealed to us by Colley, for example, that to be Catholic was to commit the crime of being 'un-British'.[124]

A Very English Catholicism

Much of the history produced by the Chesterbelloc was conceived in order to correct the Protestant narrative that Catholicism and Englishness were fundamentally incompatible concepts. This was, of course, vital if Christendom – meaning 'variation without antagonism' – was to be accepted by Englishmen. Because Christendom was seen to be so much related to Catholicism, it was, therefore, of the utmost importance that Catholicism should be seen to be part of the 'English' tradition. This apparent antagonism, between Englishness and Catholicism, an ostensible contradiction in terms, is very much apparent in the history novel *Robert Peckham* (1930), for example, written by the Catholic convert Maurice Baring, a British diplomat who had spent much time on the continent. He was also a close friend of Chesterton and Belloc. Baring's novel is certainly a work that recognised the English/Catholic antagonism, which finds a particularly poignant expression in the book's central character, an Englishman who was real to history: an English Catholic buried,

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in reaction the forging and imagining of Great Britain as a coherent and embittered Protestant nation'. Colley, *Britons*, xx, 25.

[123] For example, Chesterton's Richard the Lionheart is an English hero exactly because he exhibited a sort of European cosmopolitanism. The crusades, Chesterton believed, had been particularly misunderstood and neglected, in this sense. No nationalistic modern history, he believed, had any interest in defending 'the cosmopolitan common sense of a crusade'. Indeed, Chesterton saw that 'the inadequacy of our insular method in popular history' was 'perfectly shown in the treatment of Richard Cœur de Lion', in the widespread 'implication that his departure for the Crusade was something like the escapade of a schoolboy running away to sea'. 'In truth', wrote Chesterton, Richard's crusade 'was more like a responsible Englishman now going to the [Western] Front': 'Christendom was nearly one nation, and the Front was the Holy Land.' Principally, Chesterton asserted, 'the Crusades were, for all thoughtful Europeans, things of the highest statesmanship and the purest public spirit'; so much so that Richard's contemporary in France, Philip Augustus, 'a particularly cautious and coldly public-spirited statesman', nevertheless 'went on the same Crusade'. However, the municipal quality of Christendom was almost entirely lost on twentieth century moderns, Chesterton complained; the Middle Ages reduced to a 'waxwork history', a mere medieval 'side-show of the age of abbots and crusaders'. As the result, 'the first half of English history', as it was now presented, had 'been made quite unmeaning in the schools by the attempt to tell it without reference to that corporate Christendom in which it took part and pride'. Chesterton, *Short History,* 4, 9, 31, 73.

[124] Colley, *Britons,* 19.

tellingly, in the church of San Gregorio Magno al Celio in Rome. His epitaph, inscribed in the church, expressed exactly the dilemma that permeates Baring's novel:

> Here lies Robert Peckham, Englishman and Catholic, who, after England's break with the Church, left England because he could not live in his country without the Faith and, having come to Rome, died there because he could not live apart from his country.[125]

Evidently moved by Peckham's plight, and indeed by his apparent tragedy, Baring constructed his novel around this epitaph. Accordingly, in Baring's novel, Peckham is 'an ardent patriot […] his country dear to him, so much so that his eyes filled with tears whenever the word England was pronounced in his presence'.[126] His father, Edmund Peckham, is also a loyal and trusted subject of King Henry VIII. England, Baring wrote, 'was the flame of his life'.[127] Its royal house, in particular, is beyond reproach. However, it is Robert's father's unhesitating loyalty that troubles him: 'I knew my father would never question anything the King might do. He would lay down his life for any of the Tudors, at any moment.'[128] 'The first duty of an Englishman, in my father's eyes, was loyalty to the King.'[129] However, this is a sentiment that Robert increasingly comes to question in Baring's novel. For like Baring, Edmund 'professed to be a good Catholic'.[130] However, this he comes to doubt. This is the question that comes to consume Robert Peckham. Ultimately, the issue that runs through the entire work is the Reformation. Robert is forced to choose between his loyalty to the English state and his loyalty to the Church.

Ultimately, Baring's Peckham thinks 'the King's assumption of the title "Head of the Church" a mistake, and perhaps a disaster', one which 'must at the end bring calamity to the Church'.[131] In what other terms could his father's acquisition of lands previously held by the Church be explained? It is no longer possible, it seems to Robert, to be at once a good Englishmen and a good Roman Catholic: 'I felt that England was no longer a home for me […] It was well-nigh impossible, and becoming daily more difficult, to practice my

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[125] Maurice Baring, *Robert Peckham* (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1930), 279.
[126] Ibid., 269.
[127] Ibid., 21-22.
[128] Ibid., 22.
[129] Ibid., 56.
[130] Ibid., 51.
[131] Ibid., 57-58.

religion.'[132] England had been truly 'severed from the authority that once bound Christendom'.[133] Unable to betray his Queen, for Elizabeth I is now on the thrown, but similarly incapable of giving up his religion, Robert's only path, he decides, is to go into exile in Rome – where he dies in 1569. It is significant, however, that toward the end of the novel Baring's Peckham is said to have 'made a mistake' in retreating to Rome.[134] The implication here is that he should have stood his ground in England. Christendom – 'the only league of nations that ever had a chance' – was a cause worth fighting for, and even worth dying for. Moreover, Robert Peckham's tragedy is that he had failed to reconcile two competing loyalties.

In response to this problem, of competing loyalties, two of Baring's fellow Roman Catholics, Dawson and Evelyn Waugh, attempted to create historic portraits rooted in an actual past that reconciled the Catholic faith with Englishness; and it does seem that the stress was, indeed, on Englishness rather than Henry VIII and the English state. Baring's focus on the antagonism between the Church and England as political units set up a problem that was arguably insoluble. And for Peckham, it evidently was. The issue had changed, however. What Waugh and Dawson sought to reconcile was the cultural antipathy that had emerged as a result of the England's split with Rome. This attempt at resolution was what Waugh's work *Edmund Campion: Jesuit and Martyr* (1935), in part, endeavoured to achieve. Here, for instance, Waugh employed the example of the Jesuit martyr Campion to express his view that being both English and Catholic was not so much a contradiction as it was a historic reality. He raised this point at the moment when Campion is convicted by the English state:

> It was then that Campion's voice rose in triumph. He was no longer haggling with perjurers; he spoke now, not merely for the handful of doomed men behind him, nor to that sordid court, but for the whole gallant company of the English counter-Reformation; to all his contemporaries and all the posterity of his race: "It was not our death that ever we feared. But we knew that we were not lords of our own lives, and therefore for want of answer would not be guilty of our deaths. The only thing that we have now to say is, that if our religion do make us

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[132] Ibid., 201.
[133] Ibid., 63.
[134] Ibid., 276.

traitors, we are worthy to be condemned; but otherwise are, and have been, as good subjects as ever the Queen had.

In condemning us you condemn all your own ancestors – all the ancient priests, bishops and kings – all that was once the glory of England, the island of saints, and the most devoted child of the See of Peter.

For what have we taught, however you may qualify it with the odious name of treason, that they did not uniformly teach? To be condemned with these lights – not of England only, but of the world – by their degenerate descendants, is both gladness and glory to us.[135]

What Waugh was attempting to confront in his work on Campion was the idea that to be Catholic was to be unpatriotic and un-English. Actually, he argued, to be Protestant was to betray 'the glory of England'. Waugh's short biography, which is really a historic novel, about Campion, had much the same objective as Chesterton's *A Short History of England*: to argue that to be anti-Catholic, and to consider Catholics to be 'un-English', was to consider the majority of English history, as well as those, such as Shakespeare and Richard the Lionheart, who dwelt within that history, as 'un-English', since they were either Roman Catholic themselves or heavily influenced by that culture.

Dawson also set out to remind Englishmen of their Roman Catholic heritage. This was the evident purpose of his analysis of the English medieval poet William Langland's fourteenth century poem *Piers Plowman*. This study was his contribution to a collection of essays, first published in 1933, under the title *The English Way: Studies in English Sanctity from Bede to Newman*. Edited by Maisie Ward, of Sheed and Ward, and featuring essays by other Catholics such as Chesterton and Belloc, each author had 'chosen characters who in their opinion' were 'very English and very Catholic'.[136] In 'The Vision of Piers Plowman', Dawson set out to portray Langland as just this, and in doing so forwarded a vision that was capable of combating what he had touched upon earlier, in his work *The Making of Europe* (1932).

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[135] Evelyn Waugh, *Edmund Campion: Jesuit and Martyr* (1935; London: Penguin Classics, 2012), 144.

[136] Maisie Ward, ed., *The English Way: Studies in English Sanctity from Bede to Newman* (1933; Tacoma: Cluny Media, 2016), xii.

Writing in *The Making of Europe,* Dawson had lamented that nationalism had, since the nineteenth century, so much 'permeated the popular consciousness and determined the ordinary man's conception of history':

> It has filtered down from the university to the elementary school, and from the scholar to the journalist and the novelist. And the result is that each nation claims for itself a cultural unity and self-sufficiency that it does not possess. Each regards its share in the European tradition as an original achievement that owes nothing to the rest, and takes no heed of the common foundation in which its own tradition is rooted.[137]

'This was no mere academic error', Dawson stressed, but something that had 'undermined and vitiated the whole international life of modern Europe'.[138] He believed that this historical error had ultimately found 'its nemesis in the European War, which represented a far deeper schism in European life than all the many wars of the past'.[139] It was this 'academic error' that Dawson sought to repair in 1933 by dubbing Langland 'the Catholic Englishman par excellence':

> [Langland is] at once the most English of Catholic poets and the most Catholic of English poets: a man in whom Catholic faith and national feeling are fused in a single flame. He saw Christ walking in English fields in the dress of an English labourer, and to understand his work is to know English religion in its most autochthonous and yet most Catholic form.[140]

Langland's 'Piers Plowman', an 'English farmer, ploughing his half-acre by the wayside', nevertheless turns his mind toward matters of a more spiritual nature.[141] 'Langland's hope of salvation for society rests on his faith in the redemption of humanity in the Incarnation.'[142] In this sense, Piers Plowman becomes 'John Bull spiritualized', writes Dawson.[143] This one phrase summed up Dawson's hopes for an English identity that might

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[137] Dawson, *The Making of Europe,* 8.
[138] Ibid.
[139] Ibid.
[140] Christopher Dawson, *Medieval Essays* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1953), 240.
[141] Ibid., 257.
[142] Ibid., 263.
[143] Ibid., 257.

itself be incorporated into a spiritual, rather political, unity: allowing for a variety of loyalties.

Dawson was in the same line of work as Chesterton and Belloc in promoting a vision of Christendom. However, the Chesterbelloc, far more than Dawson, saw themselves as contesting, in particular, the 'Teutonic' school of English history; particularly Edward Augustus Freeman and John Richard Green, whose theories, promulgated in the nineteenth century, and which were no less anti-Catholic, expounded the idea that England and the English were, way beyond the Reformation, essentially German, rather than Roman, in origin. As Edwin Jones has written:

> The "official" view of the English past was to regard English institutions
> as of purely indigenous origin. The only variant, but minor theme was an
> emphasis on the Germanic origin and teutonic nature of English people,
> dismissing a millennium of cultural development as simply an alien
> intrusion associated with the "Dark Ages".[144]

Unlike Dawson, Chesterton's and Belloc's Christendom was especially anti-Teutonic in emphasis. In a sense, the Chesterbelloc's redemptive discourse of Christendom was obliged to confront this legacy of the nineteenth century in a way that Dawson was not.

Roman Britain vs. Teutonic Britain

Chesterton's *A Short History of England*, published in 1917, and Belloc's *A Shorter History of England*, published in 1934, are kindred histories. As their titles suggest, these works were 'popular' works, abridging history for the common reader; in the case of Belloc, an abbreviated work of over six-hundred pages, condensed from his four (out of a planned six) volume *History of England* (1925-1931). In brief summary, both works set out to repudiate the Whig/Teutonic perspective of history; a Teutonic tale that, as Robert Speaight writes, seemed to Belloc not only to be 'a legend', but 'what sometimes appeared to be a vested interest'.[145] The history that both Chesterton and Belloc sought to challenge was that

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[144] Jones, *English Nation,* 7.
[145] Robert Speaight, *The Life of Hilaire Belloc* (London: Hollis & Carter, 1957), 409.

England was chiefly Anglo-Saxon, or rather Germanic, in origin and tradition; the notion that the Anglo-Saxon race liberated itself from a nefarious and deleterious foreign influence in its breach with Rome in the sixteenth century; and that this deliverance from Papal tyranny enabled an inexorable ascension toward an apotheosis of social, democratic and scientific 'progress', which Victorian liberals believed England stood for. All of this was contrary to the Chesterbelloc assertion, very much revisionist, that England was, in fact, Roman in foundation, including its institutions and character, therefore part of what was once the living body of a Christian league of nations. History had, therefore, become a battleground where Chesterton and Belloc would storm the nineteenth century barricades of Freeman and Green.

It was Belloc's belief that, in the absence of any real historical record between 420 and 597 in Britain, a 'vast amount of empty assertion, most of it recent, and nearly all of it as demonstrably (as it is obviously) created by a religious bias', had resulted in the creation of a national myth, asserting the Teutonic origins of the modern English.[146] Belloc was not incorrect to assert that the 'Teutonic' school had come to dominate the writing of English history, as even Burrow conceded in 1981: 'the idiom of English historiography was German […] accented in the second half of the [nineteenth] century'.[147] One such exponent of that history was the historian Freeman, who, writing in 1860, in the *Edinburgh Review*, had expressed the typical Teutonic school mantra: 'the fact that we Englishmen live in an island, and have always moved in a sort of world of our own', which, 'combined with the exterminating character of the first Teutonic settlements, made England, in the days of its earliest independence, a more purely Teutonic country than even Germany itself'.[148] As M. E. Bratchel writes, Freeman 'may be seen as the most extreme expression of the convictions of nineteenth century Englishmen about their past'.[149] 'Freeman never tired of insisting that the English of the fifth century were the same as the English of the nineteenth century, and that it was to the Anglo-Saxons that we owe our present constitution.'[150] And amongst 'his prejudices', which served 'constantly to disfigure his writings', were his 'racialism' and 'nationalism'.[151] Green, too, another historian of Freeman's type, producing his own *Short*

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[146] Belloc, *Europe and the Faith*, 143.
[147] Burrow, *A Liberal Descent,* 121.
[148] Edward Augustus Freeman, *Historical Essays.* First Series (London: Macmillan and Co., 1871), 50.
[149] M. E. Bratchel, *Edward Augustus Freeman and the Victorian Interpretation of the Norman Conquest* (Ilfracombe: Arthur H. Stockwell Ltd., 1969), 39.
[150] Ibid., 33.
[151] Ibid., 38.

History of the English People (1874), made a similar claim: that the true history of the 'English people' began in the 5th century A.D., with the arrival of the peoples of Schleswig, under Hengist and Horsa, from the Germanic territory of Angeln (Anglia), which Green thought to be the true 'fatherland of the English race'.[152] Chesterton's own *Short History of England* was, more so than Belloc's, a repudiation of Green's thesis. A particular piece of text which attracted Chesterton's censure ran accordingly:

> If by English history we mean the history of Englishmen in the land which from that time they made their own, it is with this landing of Hengest's war-band that English history begins. They landed on the shores of the Isle of Thanet at a spot known since as Ebbsfleet. No spot can be so sacred to Englishmen as the spot which first felt the tread of English feet.[153]

Chesterton responded:

> [It should be] permissible to disagree with the historian Green when he says that no spot should be more sacred to modern Englishmen than the neighbourhood of Ramsgate, where the Schleswig people are supposed to have landed; or when he suggests that their appearance is the real beginning of our island history. It would be rather more true to say that it was nearly, though prematurely, the end of it.[154]

It is possible, too, that Chesterton, always sensitive to any 'blood' narrative, disapproved of the notion that 'Englishness' was to be defined racially.

Underpinning Chesterton's, as well as Belloc's, criticism of Green and Freeman was the complaint that 'German history had simply annexed English history', to such a great extent that 'it was almost counted the duty of any patriotic Englishman to be proud of being a German', wrote Chesterton.[155] Ultimately, Chesterton believed that what he and Belloc were countering was the nineteenth century: an era 'overshadowed by Germany'.[156] The

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[152] John Richard Green, *A Short History of the English People, Volume 1* (1874; London: Macmillan & Co., 1902), 1.
[153] Ibid., 34.
[154] Chesterton, *Short History,* 11.
[155] Ibid., 107.
[156] Ibid.

fall of Paris – 'the capital of civilization' – to Germany in 1871 was, for Chesterton at least, very much symbolic; indeed, he went so far as to liken it to 'the sacking of Rome by the Goths'.[157] There was, indeed, a very severe anti-German strain running throughout Chesterton's work, including Belloc's too, whose family home near Paris had been ransacked by Prussian troops.[158] This antagonism was also rooted, in part, in England's 'social reform […] modelled upon Germany', which Chesterton opposed; for example, the *National Insurance Act* of 1911, which Belloc criticised vigorously in his work *The Servile State* (1912).[159] English education, too – its development in the nineteenth century through various Acts of Parliament – was 'inspired largely by the example' of Germany, in which its 'governments and great employers thought it well worth their while to apply the grandest scale of organization and the minutest inquisition of detail to the instruction of the whole German race'.[160] This, along with the Great War, exacerbated Chesterton's overt animosity toward Germany.

Nevertheless, it was also the Chesterbelloc's consideration of Christendom and its Roman root that drove them to repudiate the Teutonic school of history. As Belloc wrote:

> Nothing is commoner, for instance (in English schools), than for boys to be taught that the pirate raids and settlements of the fifth century in this Island were the "coming of the English", and the complicated history of Britain is simplified for them into a story of how certain bold seafaring pagans (full of all the virtues we ascribe to ourselves today) first devastated, then occupied, and at last, of their sole genius, developed a land which Roman civilization had proved inadequate to hold.[161]

Belloc's motivation, in such works as *Europe and the Faith*, was founded on the notion that 'no modern book in the English tongue [gave the Englishman] a conspectus of the past […] He is compelled to study violently hostile authorities, North German (or English copying

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[157] Ibid.

[158] Enzo Traverson has dubbed Chesterton one of the 'propagandists of the anti-German crusade'. Anievas, ed., *Cataclysm,* 211.

[159] Chesterton, *Short History*, 107.

[160] Educational reform in England was in part a response to Germany's stunning victories in the Franco-Prussian War (1870-71), which were attributed to the mass education of its populace. In a sense, then, educational reform in Germany had indeed contributed to the fall of Paris – and as Chesterton put it, 'the sacking of Rome by the Goths'. Ibid., 108.

[161] Belloc, *Europe and the Faith*, 59.

North German), whose knowledge is never that of the true and balanced European.'[162] 'The prime essential to be grasped in the story of England', wrote Belloc, was 'the Roman foundation' of its society.[163] As Chesterton wrote: 'the important thing about France and England is not that they have Roman remains. They are Roman remains.'[164] Britannia was, foremost in its history, a Roman province, continued Belloc:

> Our institutions, our laws, the instruments of our handicraft, our whole method of thought, our religion, our architecture, our alphabet, our political institutions, derive uninterruptedly from the day when the chaotic society of a half-barbaric island entered the fullness of Roman civilization.[165]

Belloc's *A Shorter History of England* ran in accordance with this assumption, accentuating the nation's most vital developments, which, of course, stressed its Roman origins: firstly, the establishment of Roman rule in Britain; secondly, the re-establishment of civilization, in the wake of Rome's fall, by the Catholic Church in the 7th and 8th centuries; and thirdly, the Norman Conquest, which ultimately settled the issue in the 11th century. Chesterton's history was no different. Fundamentally, for Belloc, as well as Chesterton, 'England begins as a province of the Roman Empire. From that origin did she develop. All our institutions, instruments, laws, building, and writing derive from the Roman civilization, of which we are still a department.'[166] Eliot, too, would later make a similar claim, though he preferred the more inclusive term Christianity.

Despite the undoubted energy and dedication of Chesterbelloc revisionism, there existed a subsequent notion that Chesterton and Belloc, however justified they might have been in redressing the balance between the Roman and the Teutonic, had argued their case in a way that was not likely to garner much sympathy. There was something altogether too swashbuckling about the Chesterbelloc – which even their fellow Catholics thought was a little too much at times. It might be argued that Chesterton's and Belloc's histories had swung too far in the opposite direction; to the extent that their narrative was an exclusively

[162] Ibid., 41.
[163] Hilaire Belloc, *A Shorter History of England* (London: George G. Harrap & Co. Ltd, 1934), 7.
[164] Chesterton, *Short History,* 7.
[165] Belloc, *Shorter History,* 7.
[166] Ibid., 21.

Catholic conception of the past: 'the Catholic alone is in possession of the traditions of Europe', Belloc proclaimed.[167] He continued:

> The Catholic notes not hypotheses but documents and facts; he sees the Parliaments arising not from some imaginary "Teutonic" root – a figment of the academies – but from the very real and present great monastic orders, in Spain, in Britain, in Gaul – never outside the old limits of Christendom.[168]

'To the Catholic reader of history (though he has no Catholic history to read)', Belloc chided, 'there is no danger of the foolish bias against civilization which has haunted so many contemporary writers'. There is 'no such thing as a Catholic "aspect" of European history', Belloc asserted in 1920.[169] 'There is no more a Catholic "aspect" of European history', he wrote, 'than there is a man's aspect of himself'.[170] 'The Church is Europe.'[171] 'The Faith is Europe and Europe is the Faith.'[172] These assertions made by Belloc – not merely a historian's hypothesis, but an avowed belief – was the fundamental refrain that informed his great work *Europe and the Faith*, and indeed much of his output as a historian.

Dawson and Eliot

The historian Dawson, a convert to Catholicism in 1914 – who, vitally, was to play an important role in the development of Eliot's own conception of Europe as a Christian 'common culture' – 'preferred' Belloc 'as a poet than as a historian', Dawson's daughter Christina Scott wrote.[173] 'I have never been a Bellocite and my view of Western culture is quite different from "Europe is the Faith"', Dawson commented in 1955.[174] Dawson, it

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[167] Belloc, *Europe and the Faith*, 46.
[168] Ibid., 52.
[169] Ibid, 39.
[170] Ibid.
[171] Ibid., 40.
[172] Ibid.
[173] Belloc was nonetheless one of Dawson's favourite writers. Suffering from depression, in his letters to his great friend E. I. Watkin Dawson referred to it as 'Uncle Paul', after a character who 'suffered from excessive gloom' in Belloc's *Dedicatory Ode* (1910). Christina Scott, *A Historian and His World: A Life of Christopher Dawson 1889-1970* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1984), 42.
[174] Quoted in Bradley J. Birzer, *Sanctifying the World: The Augustinian Life and Mind of Christopher Dawson* (Front Royal: Christendom Press, 2007), 152.

seems, felt much more of an affinity toward Chesterton, however. As we have seen in chapter one, Dawson owed a debt to Chesterton and his poem *The Ballad of the White Horse* (1911), relating King Alfred's great victory, on behalf of Christendom, against the heathen Danes. He acknowledged the poem's influence in a letter to Chesterton 1932: it had 'brought the breath of life to this period for me when I was fed up with Stubbs and Oman and the rest of them'.[175] It was William Stubbs, in particular, who, as Burrow has written, had represented, much like Freeman and Green, the nineteenth century 'patriotic and populist impulse to identify the nation and its institutions as the collective subject of English history, which made the new historiography of early medieval times an extension, filling out and democratising, of older Whig notions of continuity'.[176] Although Dawson and the Chesterbelloc were, it may be argued, kindred spirits, Dawson's approach to the writing of history would be different.

Russell Sparkes writes that 'whereas Belloc's book [*Europe and the Faith*] was based on rhetoric and assertion, Dawson's great works such as *The Making of Europe'* were 'grounded in deep scholarship.'[177] We should not, however, dismiss the influence of the Chesterbelloc. When Dawson wrote to Chesterton, in 1932, he also presented him with a copy of his own work *The Making of Europe*. It was, perhaps, the inclusion of this work, rather than the letter itself, which truly accredited to Chesterton the vital worth of his revisionist exertions earlier that century. It was not simply Chesterton's efforts in the area of Dawson's conception of 'metahistory', but also his defence and evocation of Christendom as a historic reality, which impressed itself upon Dawson. Indeed, it may be said that Dawson, to some degree, took up the mantle of the Chesterbelloc in the sense that he also championed the redemptive discourse of Christendom. In such works as *The Making of Europe,* he would spend much of his career developing what the Chesterbelloc had posited during, and particularly after, the First World War: that, in Dawson's words, 'the ultimate foundation of our culture' was not 'the national state, but the European unity'.[178] Insofar as the European unity could be said to exist, Dawson argued, it was not political, but spiritual, as we have seen; as he had also argued in his essay on William Langland's *Piers Plowman*. Writing in 1952, in another important work, *Understanding*

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[175] Quoted in Scott, *A Historian and His World,* 103-104.
[176] Burrow, *A Liberal Descent,* 228.
[177] Stratford Caldecott, and John Morrill, eds., *Eternity in Time: Christopher Dawson and the Catholic Idea of History* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997), 93.
[178] Dawson, *The Making of Europe,* 9.

Europe, Dawson claimed that it was Christendom – 'the medieval conception of Europe as the commonwealth of Christian peoples' – which was the living embodiment of a spiritual, rather than political, unity.[179] For what 'Christendom' really stood for, and indeed once was, Dawson explained, was 'a single society, consisting of a diversity of peoples and states, bound together by a network of mutual rights and obligations and founded on a common spiritual citizenship and a common moral and intellectual culture'.[180]

What motivated Dawson in his forwarding of Christendom as a historic reality was the idea that it was a conception that demanded that 'the peoples of Europe' should 'conduct their affairs like a civilized community, and not like a band of brigands, recognising that their rights are not conterminous with their powers and that their duties to one another are no less morally and legally binding than their duties to their citizens'.[181] For, as he had written as early as 1929, in *Progress & Religion,* it was 'the peculiar achievement of Western Christianity in the past' to 'co-exist with the national political units without either absorbing or being absorbed by them'.[182] It was in this sense – or, in other words, Chesterton sense of 'variation without antagonism' – that Dawson believed that:

> [A] return to this tradition would once more make it possible to reconcile
> the existence of national independence and political freedom, which are
> an essential part of European life, with the wider unity of our civilization,
> and with that higher process of spiritual integration which is the true goal
> of human progress.[183]

For there was no doubt in his mind that what Europe required in his own time was some manner of organising principle. The vital question, however, was whether that unity ought to be political or spiritual. Dawson, of course, sided with the latter, as he stated in 1929, in *Progress and Religion*:

> The return to the Christian tradition would provide Europe with the
> necessary spiritual foundations for the social unification that it so

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179 Dawson, *Understanding Europe*, 50.
180 Ibid.
181 Ibid.
182 Christopher Dawson, *Progress & Religion: An Historical Inquiry* (1929; Washington D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2001), 192.
183 Ibid.

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urgently needs [...] Europe has never possessed the natural unity of the other great cultures. It has owed its unity, and its very existence as a distinct civilization, to its membership of a common spiritual society. And perhaps that is the reason why it has never been able to be satisfied with a purely political unification. No doubt a giant supernational state would bring Europe relief from many of her practical problems, but it would also involve a sacrifice of many of the ideals that she has most prized. But this is not the only solution. It is possible that the ideal form of international unity for Europe is not a political one at all, but a spiritual one.[184]

In 1948, as we have already seen, Eliot, in *Notes towards the Definition of Culture,* forwarded much the same view:

No political and economic organisation, however much goodwill it commands, can supply what this culture unity gives. If we dissipate or throw away our common patrimony of culture, then all the organisation and planning of the most ingenious minds will not help us, or bring us closer together.[185]

Eliot's text here would fit very easily into Dawson's work *Progress and Religion*. Indeed, this was the work which first brought Dawson to the attention of Eliot in 1929.[186] And Eliot would go on to acknowledge, in *Notes towards the Definition of Culture*, the 'particular debt' he owed to Dawson.[187]

Up until recently the importance of Dawson in the intellectual life of Eliot had not been emphasised. Dawson has passed most Eliot scholars by, even though Eliot once dubbed Dawson the most influential intellectual in England.[188] Certainly, Dawson was very important to Eliot. Russell Kirk, for example, wrote in *Eliot and His Age* (1971) that of all the

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[184] Ibid., 191.
[185] Eliot, *Christianity & Culture*, 200-201.
[186] Eliot was acquainted with Algar Thorold, the editor of the influential *Dublin Review*, a Catholic periodical which Dawson contributed to (he would later become its editor). It was through Thorold that Dawson first came to be conversant with Eliot in 1929. And that year he was invited to submit a number of articles to Eliot's quarterly journal *The Criterion*; which Dawson duly did, his first piece, 'The End of an Age', appearing in April 1930.
[187] Eliot, *Christianity & Culture,* 83.
[188] Scott, *A Historian and His World,* 210.

'social thinkers in his own time, none influenced Eliot more than Dawson'.[189] For a long time, the weight that Kirk placed on the importance of Dawson as a formative influence on Eliot remained unexplored. For example, Peter Ackroyd's *T. S. Eliot* (1984) and Lyndall Gordon's *The Imperfect Life of T. S. Eliot* (1998), two major biographies, made no mention of Dawson at all. Neither did Louis Menand's *Discovering Modernism: T. S. Eliot and His Context* (1988). Dawson's absence from the scholarly literature on Eliot is decidedly odd. However, this glaring omission has to some extent been corrected. For example, Bradley J. Birzer, in the most recent biography on Dawson, in 2007, argued that 'first and foremost in terms of Dawson's significant influence' was Eliot.[190] More recently, Benjamin G. Lockerd, contributing to *T. S. Eliot and Christian Tradition* (2014), detailed how Dawson became Eliot's 'primary mentor on cultural issues'.[191] Lockerd writes that 'in Dawson's work', in particular, Eliot 'found verification of his own thinking, along with an array of historical examples from all cultures and times'.[192] What Dawson reinforced in Eliot's mind, therefore, was indeed the view that 'the ultimate foundation of our culture' was not 'the national state, but the European unity'. Fundamentally, this 'unity' was a community of thought, which translated itself into a common practice, transcending the racialism and petty nationalisms of the twentieth century in the manner of what Dawson dubbed a 'superculture', or civilization; no mere abstraction, but 'an objective historical reality', which, as he made sure to emphasise, had for centuries expressed itself in 'the old spiritual community of Western Christendom'.[193] This very much chimes with Eliot's estimation of Christianity as the vital common element in European culture. Just as much as Chesterton influenced Dawson, it appears that Dawson passed this influence on to Eliot. There is, then, a line of decent from Chesterton to Eliot, with Dawson acting as a sort of intermediary. It was, as we have seen, a fundamentally corroborative process. Moreover, with the rise of Nazism in the 1930s, the idea of a Christian common culture gained an added impetus.

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[189] Kirk, *Eliot and His Age,* 253.

[190] Birzer, *Sanctifying the World,* 6.

[191] Benjamin G. Lockerd, ed., *T. S. Eliot and Christian Tradition* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2014), 218.

[192] Ibid., 227.

[193] Dawson, *Understanding Europe*, 10.

Racialism

In November 1932, at the Italian conference the *Convegno Volta*, a symposium hosted by Benito Mussolini in Rome, that year dedicated to the subject of 'Europe', Dawson presented a lecture to an audience of distinguished representatives from across the continent. His subject was 'Interracial Cooperation as a Factor of European Culture'. Speaking to, amongst others, the then President of the Reichstag Hermann Goering, as well as Nazism's foremost racial theorist Alfred Rosenberg, Dawson condemned 'the fanaticism of the modern pan-racial theorists who subordinate civilization to skull measurements and who infuse an element of racial hatred into the political and economic rivalries of European peoples'.[194] If one was to 'subtract from German culture, for example, all the contributions made by men who were not of pure Nordic type, German culture', he was sure, 'would be incalculably impoverished'.[195] Dawson was necessarily opposed to any such racial prejudice; particularly one such as Nazism, which advanced itself in the form of a politicised ideology. The notion of 'variation without antagonism' made particularly effective opponents of racialism out of Catholics such as Dawson, whose expansive vision of a comprehensive community of Christians constituted one of the most consistent, perceptive and vigorous of critiques of the constrictive theories of Rosenberg.

The context in which Chesterton was writing was 'ethic nationalism', what has been termed one of the 'main legacies' of the Great War.[196] And 'in few countries was biological racism as central to the definition of the nation as it became in inter-war Germany'.[197] And Chesterton was no less of a critic. Indeed, as his most recent biographer, Ian Ker, has written, 'no one had more contempt for racial theories' than Chesterton.[198] He found the ascendency of racialism in Germany particularly worrying: 'I think this wild worship of Race far worse than even the excessive concentration on the Nation.'[199] Nationalism might 'in

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[194] Quoted in Scott, *A Historian and His World,* 106.
[195] Quoted in ibid.
[196] Kershaw, *To Hell and Back,* 91.
[197] Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century* (1998; London: Penguin Books, 1999), 102. 'The emergence of the German racial welfare state – which was in so many ways the apotheosis of very widespread trends in European social thought', including 'the definition of that community in terms of racial biology [and] the recourse to police repression and medical violence […] highlighted all the ambiguities present in European thinking about race'. Ibid., 101.
[198] Ian Ker, *G. K. Chesterton: A Biography* (2011; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 421.
[199] G. K. Chesterton, *The End of the Armistice*. Second Impression (London: Sheed and Ward, 1940), 103.

rational proportion help stability, and the recognition of traditional frontiers'.[200] This, Chesterton believed, was 'a patriotism quite compatible with a passionate personal humility'.[201] 'The patriot loves his country as a man loves a woman; but not as a man loves himself.'[202] 'The curse of race religion', on the other hand, was that it made 'each separate man the sacred image which he worships. His own bones are the sacred relics; his own blood is the blood of St. Januarius.'[203] Hitler was 'appealing to racial pride'.[204] Racialism made 'patriotism something altogether different from the enthusiasm for a flag or a charter or a shrine or an ideal commonwealth'.[205] Germany was no longer 'an abstraction but a breed', wrote Chesterton.[206] This made the 'Hitlerite problem different, for instance, from the Fascist problem'.[207] Nazism was essentially 'anthropology gone mad', Chesterton argued, since it meant 'everlastingly looking for your own countrymen in other people's countries'.[208] Consequently, Chesterton warned, racialism was far more belligerent in its nature than patriotism:

> In short, if the patriot is more or less trained as a watchdog, he may
> remain inside the fence, even if he does not remain on the chain. But if
> the patriots are trained as a pack of hounds, to follow a scent blown upon
> any breeze, to go through all fences and across all fields, they are trained
> in a certain spirit which is quite certainly of some peril to their
> neighbours.[209]

This was 'the essence of Nazi Nationalism', wrote Chesterton.[210] It was 'ordeal by blood; the blood-test'.[211] Chesterton recognised the danger implicit in such an ideology, one that sought 'to preserve the purity of a race in a continent where all races are impure'.[212] Always, when Chesterton ruminated on this topic, especially in relation to Nazi Germany, it was the notion of a particular people being 'chosen' that so much troubled him. It was for this

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[200] Ibid.
[201] Ibid., 112.
[202] Ibid.
[203] Ibid., 111-112.
[204] Ibid., 72.
[205] Ibid., 112.
[206] Ibid., 113.
[207] Ibid., 72.
[208] Ibid., 103.
[209] Ibid., 114.
[210] Ibid., 113.
[211] Ibid., 114.
[212] Ibid.

reason that he even went so far as to claim that 'Hitlerism is almost entirely of Jewish origin'.[213] It was probably with a sense of mischief, as well as calculated aim, that he turned Nazism back on itself, writing that it was in Nazism that 'German mysticism became more like Jewish mysticism […] thinking with intense imagination of the idea of a holy house or family, alone dedicated to heaven and therefore to triumph'.[214]

> [The] imperial idea of a Chosen Race, of a sacred seed that is, as the Kaiser said, the salt of the earth; of a people that is God's favourite and guided by Him, in a sense in which He does not guide other and lesser peoples. And if anybody asks where anybody got *that* idea, there is only one possible or conceivable answer. He got it from the Jews.[215]

The idea of 'men separated and sealed and waiting for a unique destiny' was a claim Chesterton rejected in the strongest terms, quite clearly.[216] 'Until we have utterly destroyed it', he wrote, 'we shall never restore Christendom'.[217] Indeed, there was the sense here that nationalism had itself come to fill a vacuum vacated to it by religious faith. John Lukacs echoes this view, writing that 'patriotism is not a substitute for a religious faith, whereas nationalism often is; it may fill the emotional – at least superficially spiritual – needs of people'.[218]

In 1942, the year of the Wannsee Conference, when the 'final solution' to the Jewish problem was ultimately settled, Dawson, like Chesterton, noted in his work *The Judgement of the Nations* the exceptional case of the 'incongruous fusion of racialist materialism and nationalist mysticism', which was 'the portentous phenomenon of National Socialism'.[219]

> Here the state is no longer regarded as the member of a society of nations but as existing solely to further the ends of the racial community which is the ultimate social reality. Between these ultimate units there is no community, for nature demands that each should keep rigidly within the

[213] Ibid., 92.
[214] Ibid., 96-97.
[215] Ibid., 94.
[216] Ibid., 97.
[217] Ibid.
[218] John Lukacs, *Remembered Past: John Lukacs on History, Historians, and Historical Knowledge* (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2005), 107.
[219] Dawson, *Judgement of the Nations*, 142.

limits of its own life forms. Therefore the mingling of races and cultures

is the supreme social crime. The purer the race, the higher the culture,

and the final law of human progress is to be found in the victorious

expansion of the higher types and the progressive elimination of the

lower races.[220]

The Old Western vision of Europe was, of course, a far more inclusive expanse than Rosenberg's. The former Professor of History at the European University Institute in Florence Luisa Passerini, although critical of much of Dawson's and Belloc's political thinking,[221] conceded that 'the value of a Catholic ideology for European unity cannot be denied insofar as it is potentially capable of tempering nationalisms and reaching some sort of harmony between them'.[222] Passerini even went so far as to admit that 'it is highly regrettable that the Catholic idea of Europe was not used more against Fascism and Nazism, since it actually had such potential'.[223]

Christendom rather than Internationalism

Eliot also sought a solution to the forces that had engendered Nazi Germany; a regime so intolerant that it felt 'impelled to stamp out, or to remould, every culture surrounding it' – as Chesterton also warned it might.[224] As we have seen displayed throughout this chapter, the Old Western ethic believed that the solution to such an intolerance as Nazism was 'the medieval conception of Europe as the commonwealth of Christian peoples'. The two world wars, in particular, had demonstrated, they believed, the utility of Christendom as a form of cultural loyalty. In this sense, too, they opposed internationalism in its institutional form, which they came to see as just as undesirable as Nazism. Dawson explained this opposition as early as 1932: that though there was of course 'no lack of thinkers who realise[d] the dangers [of nationalism]', most, he claimed, were as 'oblivious of the European tradition as their opponents'.[225] Accordingly, the opponents of nationalism had misguidedly placed

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[220] Ibid., 142-143.
[221] Passerini has labelled Belloc an exponent of 'intolerant and narrow' theories. Luisa Passerini, *Europe in Love, Love in Europe: Imagination and Politics in Britain Between the Wars* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1999), 68.
[222] Ibid., 74.
[223] Ibid.
[224] Eliot, *Christianity & Culture,* 196.
[225] Dawson, *The Making of Europe,* 9.

'their faith in an abstract internationalism which has no historic foundation', which in turn provoked 'a fresh outburst of nationalist sentiment'.[226] Nationalism and internationalism provoked each other onto further extremes, he argued. Something else was required. Not another 'ism', abstract and modern, but, instead, a revival. Christendom – 'variation without antagonism' – might cure the nationalist of his own sense of exceptionalism by reminding him of a far more expansive, and therefore more inclusive, exceptionalism in history. Internationalism was not the answer either because, it was argued, it was superficial and unable to command the emotional and cultural loyalties of the European peoples.

Chesterton, commenting a year later, in 1933, in *The Illustrated London News*, spoke from the same position as Dawson, asserting that ultimately only 'a religion might really unite nations'.[227] He was just as sceptical as Dawson was of internationalism. 'Internationalism', Chesterton wrote, was 'not a religion', but 'an "ism"; and an "ism" is never a religion. It is an abstraction without being an absolute.'[228] A nation, on the other hand, though it was not a religion, was 'a *thing*'.[229] It might 'be a bad thing', but at least it was 'a thing and not a theory'.[230]

> I know exactly what I mean when I say that I am an Englishman and not a
> Frenchman […] I do not know for certain what other people mean when
> they say that I am subject to the League of Nations, or am a party to a
> Pact made up by politicians in a series of Swiss hotels. In the same way, I
> do not know what other people mean when they say I am descended
> from Anthropoid Apes or Anglo-Saxons or Aryans, as Mr. Hitler would say.
> I do not know what they mean in the sense that I know what being an
> Englishman means.[231]

The nation was the card that had been handed to them by history. It was all that societies had to work with, Chesterton thought. Of course, as they knew all too well, the nation had

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[226] Ibid.

[227] G. K. Chesterton, *The Collected Works of G. K. Chesterton, Volume XXXVI, The London Illustrated News, 1932-1934* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2011), 297.

[228] Ibid.

[229] Ibid., 298.

[230] Ibid.

[231] Ibid., 299.

its dangers. What was required, then, was some manner of mitigating force to prevaricate upon such excesses as racialism.

It should be noted that Eliot's work *Notes towards the Definition of Culture* also thought 'the ideal of a world state' a 'mistake', since what it really entailed, he argued, was 'one uniform world culture'.[232] And 'a world culture which was simply a *uniform* culture would be no culture at all', he argued.[233] Eliot thought it 'fantastic to hold that the supreme duty of every individual should be towards a Super-State'.[234] This paralleled Dawson's own view. It is also significant that Eliot employed some of his strongest language to denounce such a conception of a 'world culture', writing that it would lead to 'a humanity de-humanised. It would be a nightmare.'[235] Eliot even went as far to suggest that such 'world-planners', though they were 'serious and humane', might 'be as grave a menace to culture as those who practise more violent methods'.[236] As we can see, Eliot's was very much informed by the Old Western ethic that rejected the agency of state power, which he held to be not simply the province of nationalism or fascism, but potentially internationalism too.

Eliot's response to the twentieth century, and particularly his answer to nationalism, was typically Old Western. It also related so much to himself: to propose that the peoples of Europe treat their neighbours in much the same manner as he lived his religion. Significantly, Eliot, a self-professed 'Anglo-Catholic', was the living embodiment of the 'dual allegiance, to the State and to the Church', which he believed was so 'essential to the idea of a Christian society'.[237] As he wrote in *The Idea of a Christian Society* (1939), any national church that was not 'part of the whole' had no claim upon him.[238] The conception of a 'Universal Church', in which 'the allegiance of the individual to his own Church' was 'secondary', was vital to Eliot.[239] In this sense, as an Anglican, Eliot had reconciled Englishness with Catholicism.

Eliot had, however, suffered a defeat, in the premature end of his pre-war publication *The Criterion*, which he had set up, he recounted in 1948, in 'the assumption that there existed

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[232] Eliot, *Christianity & Culture,* 197.
[233] Ibid., 135-136.
[234] Ibid., 201.
[235] Ibid., 136.
[236] Ibid., 135.
[237] Ibid., 44.
[238] Ibid.
[239] Ibid., 43.

an international fraternity of men of letters, within Europe: a bond which did not replace, but was perfectly compatible with national loyalties, and differences of political philosophy'.[240] Paul Robichaud, in *T. S. Eliot and Christian Tradition*, has already gone into some detail about how 'Eliot intended *The Criterion* to function as a bulwark against the divisions created by the various European nationalisms'.[241] It 'failed', Eliot admitted; the 'mental frontiers of Europe' proved to be too much of an obstacle.[242] Nevertheless, Eliot's view had not changed. And in conclusion, in 1948, he articulated a view that embodied a spirit that may be termed Old Western, in terms of its 'appeal [...] to the men of letters of Europe, who have a special responsibility for the preservation and transmission of our common culture':

> We may hold very different political views: our common responsibility is to preserve our common culture uncontaminated by political influences. It is not a question of sentiment: it does not matter so much whether we like each other, or praise each other's writing. What matters is that we should recognise our relationship and mutual dependence upon each other [...] [and] we can at least try to save something of those goods of which we are the common trustees: the legacy of Greece, Rome and Israel, and the legacy of Europe throughout the last 2,000 years. In a world which has seen such material devastation as ours, these spiritual possessions are also in imminent peril.[243]

An Attempt at Reconciliation

'Belloc['s] "Europe and the Faith" my foot', Waugh wrote in 1952.[244] Like Dawson, he did not subscribe to Belloc's view that 'Europe is the Faith'. He could, however, understand why Belloc had said it, as he explained in 1937. 'In natural revulsion from the exuberant and unscrupulous liberal historians of the last century', Waugh wrote, it had 'lately become fashionable to see the age of Elizabeth as a sombre and threatening time in English history:

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[240] Ibid., 195.
[241] Lockerd, ed., *Eliot,* 208.
[242] Eliot, *Christianity & Culture,* 194.
[243] Ibid., 201, 202.
[244] Quoted in Douglas Lane Patey, *The Life of Evelyn Waugh: A Critical Biography* (1998; Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 2001), 43.

the old Queen, obscene, unprincipled and superstitious […] [and] a dispossessed and oppressed peasantry helpless under the upstart landowners'.[245] It was in 'such in broad outlines', promulgated by, amongst others, 'Mr Hilaire Belloc', that 'the average Englishman [had been] educated during the last twenty years'.[246] 'No doubt there is more truth in it', he wrote.[247] Waugh did believe in Christendom. In a 1938 review, of Henry Romilly Fedden's work *Suicide: A Social and Historical Study* (1938), which argued how 'abruptly' the pagan conception of an 'honourable' suicide ceased 'with the triumph of Christianity', Waugh mused that **'**if one is ever tempted to suspect that the revived conception of "Christendom" is a myth and a controversial device of Mr Hilaire Belloc's' then one could not 'find a more reassuring' work than Fedden's, which went some way, he believed, to confirm it as a reality.[248] Christendom 'needed emphasizing', Waugh conceded. However, he also believed that 'now the time has come for more sober reflection'.[249] As I have argued in this chapter, Dawson and Eliot, but particularly Dawson, embodied that 'sober reflection'.

Waugh wrote as early as 1930, in the *Daily Express*, that it seemed to him 'that in the present phase of European history the essential issue' was 'no longer between Catholicism, on one side, and Protestantism, on the other, but between Christianity and Chaos'.[250] There was certainly the view that the outside world – beyond Chesterton's and Belloc's constant replaying of the battles of the Reformation – was becoming increasingly hostile. Catholics and Protestants might quite conceivably have to unite in order to in some manner combat modernity in its various forms. If Protestants were, indeed, to reconcile themselves with Catholics then it was not necessarily going to be achieved through the brash methods employed by the Chesterbelloc, As Speaight wrote, it was not 'to his co-religionists that Belloc addressed himself', although he 'had more effect among Catholics than among Protestants'.[251] This was not a criticism, in that 'no one', Speaight argued, 'did more to give the English Catholics confidence in themselves and to make them feel part of a European tradition'.[252] And we might say, too, that Chesterton did this for Dawson – and Dawson,

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[245] Evelyn Waugh, and Donat Gallagher, ed., *The Essays, Articles and Reviews of Evelyn Waugh* (1983; Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1986), 206.
[246] Ibid.
[247] Ibid.
[248] Ibid., 223-224.
[249] Ibid., 206.
[250] Ibid., 103.
[251] Speaight, *Belloc*, 384, 388.
[252] Ibid., 384.

importantly, for Eliot. However, Belloc had less, if any, of an effect on 'his Protestant fellow countrymen', it is claimed.[253] He was, Speaight wrote, 'needlessly provocative'.[254] In contrast, however, it was an aspect never lost on Dawson that an 'Iron Curtain' had, for centuries, made strangers of the common peoples of Western Europe, dividing them 'between two worlds – Catholic and Protestant – each possessing its own cultural development'.[255] And 'of all divisions between Christians', he believed, it was 'that between Catholics and Protestants' which was 'the deepest and the most pregnant in its historical consequences'.[256] And in this sense, Dawson was 'as an historian […] convinced' that 'the chief obstacle to Christian unity' was 'cultural rather than theological'.[257]

Although Dawson agreed with the Chesterbelloc in regards to the 'evil' of the Reformation, he also thought, as Waugh did, that, for the sake of combatting modernity, Catholics, in particular, should put aside the trauma of the Reformation. Certainly, Dawson and Eliot both went some way to achieving this on a personal level; and were, as a result, arguably more ecumenical in their reach than either Chesterton or Belloc. Dawson, for example, became the vice-president of Cardinal Arthur Hinsley's ecumenical movement 'Sword of the Spirit', founded in 1940 in order to oppose totalitarianism. And as Edward Norman has noted, Catholics were 'by the middle of the twentieth century an accepted part of the English religious pluralism'.[258] Indeed, as early as the 1920s there was 'the revival of the idea of some sort of reunion of the Catholic and Anglican Churches'.[259] And it is a vital point to grasp, too, that Eliot's *Notes towards the Definition of Culture* is a document very much unencumbered by the heavy historical burden of the Reformation. Indeed, Eliot wrote that 'we must acknowledge that many of the most remarkable achievements of culture have been made since the sixteenth century, in conditions of disunity'.[260] The Chesterbelloc was largely incapable of making such a concession as this. For them, Protestantism was *necessarily* and wholly bad – and every Christian achievement a Catholic triumph. We see this, for example, in Chesterton's treatment of Thomas Cranmer's *Book of Common Prayer,*

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[253] Ibid., 388.
[254] Ibid., 389.
[255] Christopher Dawson, *The Dividing of Christendom* (1965; San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2009), 142.
[256] Ibid., 25.
[257] Ibid., 37.
[258] Edward Norman, *Roman Catholicism: From the Elizabethan Settlement to the Second Vatican Council* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 125.
[259] Dawson, *Dividing of Christendom*, 127.
[260] Eliot, *Christianity & Culture,* 145.

'the masterpiece of Protestantism', its 'one positive possession and attraction', Chesterton wrote, and which, therefore, presented him with something of a problem. However, he solved this ostensible fix by claiming that, far from it being 'the first Protestant book', it was actually 'the last Catholic book': Catholic because it was a 'moving' expression of 'things which Protestants have long left off saying; and which only Catholics still say'.[261] Ultimately, Chesterton's Cranmer was not so much a good Protestant as he was a naughty Catholic.

Eliot, conversely, welcomed Protestantism. Indeed, he argued that 'one needs the enemy'.[262] And it worked both ways:

> The life of Protestantism depends upon the survival of that against which
> it protests; and just as the culture of Protestant dissent would perish of
> inanition without the persistence of Anglican culture, so the maintenance
> of English culture is contingent upon the health of the culture of Latin
> Europe, and upon continuing to draw sustenance from that Latin
> culture.[263]

This applied to nations too:

> So, within limits, the friction, not only between individuals but between
> groups, seems to me quite necessary for civilization. The universality of
> irritation is the best assurance of peace. A country within which the
> divisions have gone too far is a danger to itself: a country which is too
> well united – whether by nature or by device, by honest purpose or by
> fraud and oppression – is a menace to others.[264]

Chesterton once claimed that what he found 'hardest to forgive' about the Reformation was that 'it was a Christian mutiny during a Moslem invasion'.[265] This feeling found its way into one of his most expressive works, the poem *Lepanto* (1912), in which he recounted in verse the great naval battle of the same name, fought in 1571, on the Gulf of Patras in the

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[261] Quoted Ker, *Chesterton,* 709.
[262] Eliot, *Christianity & Culture,* 133.
[263] Ibid., 149.
[264] Ibid., 133.
[265] Quoted in G. K. Chesterton, and Dale Ahlquist, ed., *Lepanto:* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004), 85.

Ionian Sea, where the Holy League, an alliance of Catholic maritime strength under the command of John of Austria, inflicted a notable defeat on the Ottoman Empire, securing Christian jurisdiction of the Mediterranean and checking the westward expansion of Islam into Europe.[266]

> White founts falling in the courts of the sun,
>
> And the Soldan of Byzantium is smiling as they run;
>
> There is laughter like the fountains in that face of all men feared,
>
> It stirs the forest darkness, the darkness of his beard,
>
> It curls the blood-red crescent, the crescent of his lips,
>
> For the inmost sea of all the earth is shaken with his ships.
>
> They have dared the white republics up the capes of Italy,
>
> They have dashed the Adriatic round the Lion of the Sea,
>
> And the Pope has cast his arms abroad for agony and loss,
>
> And called the kings of Christendom for swords about the Cross,
>
> The cold queen of England is looking in the glass;
>
> The shadow of the Valois is yawning at the Mass;
>
> From evening isles fantastical rings faint the Spanish gun,
>
> And the Lord upon the Golden Horn is laughing in the sun.
>
>
> Dim drums throbbing, in the hills half heard,
>
> Where only on a nameless throne a crownless prince has stirred,
>
> Where, risen from a doubtful seat and half attainted stall,
>
> The last knight of Europe takes weapons from the wall,
>
> The last and lingering troubadour to whom the bird has sung,
>
> That once went singing southward when all the world was young,
>
> In that enormous silence, tiny and unafraid,
>
> Comes up along a winding road the noise of the Crusade.
>
> Strong gongs groaning as the guns boom far,
>
> Don John of Austria is going to the war.[267]

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[266] MacCulloch calls the Battle of Lepanto 'one of the most decisive checks on Islamic expansion into western Europe'. Diarmaid MacCulloch, *A History of Christianity: The First Three Thousand Years* (2009; London: Penguin Books, 2010), 639.

[267] Chesterton and Ahlquist, ed., *Lepanto*, 11-12.

Europe had, this time, in 1571, been saved; no thanks, however, to 'the cold Queen of England' and 'the Valois […] yawning at the Mass'.[268] Here, of course, Chesterton made sure to note the Protestant North's non-participation in a battle upon which the fate of Christendom arguably depended. For, 'full of tangled things and texts and aching eyes', the shattering paroxysm of the Protestant Reformation had, of course, ensured that no English ship sailed as part of the Holy League.[269] This was what Chesterton found so unforgivable. 'While it lasted', he wrote elsewhere, 'Christendom was not only one nation but more like one city – and a besieged city', fighting for its life against the external threat of Islam. By 1571, however, it had been left almost entirely to the 'Cross and Castle' and the 'plumèd lions […] of St. Mark' to resist the advancing shadow of the Ottoman 'crescent'.[270] While the importance Chesterton invests in the battle is largely correct, as well as the history as a whole, the poem nevertheless registers a bitterness that to some degree characterised the Chesterbelloc's approach to the idea of Christendom, a bitterness that Chesterton and Belloc never really overcame.

Nevertheless, we should also note that *Lepanto* did, in some sense, reflect the notion that Europe, in particular, was facing another Lepanto. The adversary was not, however, as it was in Don John of Austria's time, 'Mahound' and 'the crescent of his cruel ships', but the internal threat of nationalism and racialism – and later the external threat of the Soviet Union.[271] What was required, once again, then, was yet another assembled 'Christian' citizenry, united by the 'common culture' that, as the Old Western ethic argued, could only be provided by a spiritual unity.

Chapter Four Conclusion

The difference between the Chesterbelloc and Dawson, with Eliot, was that the former duo had to face the problem of emphasising Christendom in the first place. As Speaight writes, however, 'because so many people underestimated what the Faith had done for Europe,

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[268] Ibid., 11.
[269] Ibid., 15.
[270] 'Cross and Castle' and the 'plumèd lions of the galleys of St. Mark', featured within the space of a single couplet, indicate the combined maritime strength of the Spanish Empire and the Venetian Republic, which, united by their common Christianity, formed the core of the Holy League that defeated the Ottoman Empire at Lepanto. Ibid., 16.
[271] Ibid.

Belloc knocked them on the head to bring them to a juster appreciation of the truth. It is possible that he knocked them too hard.'[272] Dawson, however, it may be said, benefited from this, in that he could afford to pull his punches. This allowed for a far more ecumenical spirit to encompass a second generation of Old Western Men, evident in Eliot's Old Western plea to his own readership. In this sense, too, their ecumenicism might be said to have anticipated the later spirit of Vatican II in the 1960s.

Massimo Faggioli has written that 'understanding the rift between Augustinianism and Thomism is fundamental to understanding the debate about Vatican II and the resurfacing of a "theological fault line"'.[273] This rift is arguably defined by Augustinianism, a pessimistic view of the world, opposing a Thomist view that seeks a fuller, and essentially optimistic, engagement with the immanent. This is particularly relevant when we examine *Gaudium et spes* (1965), the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World. If this key Vatican constitution might be said to be Thomist, admitting 'new ways to truth', the Old Western Men themselves parallel this ethic.[274] The assertion, contained within *Gaudium et spes*, that 'theological enquiry should aim at deeper knowledge of revealed truth without losing touch with its own time', does indeed mirror the approach of this thesis's key characters.[275]

As we have seen with the example of the Chelsea Group, the Old Western ethic sought a broader engagement with the modern world; one that was not strictly Catholic or even Christian. The same might be said for the Catholic Church itself in the 1960s, as Joseph Pearce writes: 'Vatican II had nothing to do with surrendering to modernity. On the contrary, it had everything to do with enabling the Church to engage modernity, to respond to it, to *react* to it.'[276] And as Christina Scott tells us, Christopher Dawson 'welcomed the Second Vatican Council with all its promise of spiritual and cultural renewal for which he had spent his whole life working'.[277] We should also note, however, that Dawson, Tolkien and Waugh, who all lived to see the changes brought about by the Council, also lamented the changes to the Latin Mass, including the shift toward a vernacular form: 'I hate the

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[272] Speaight, *Belloc*, 393.
[273] Massimo Faggioli, *Vatican II: The Battle for Meaning* (New York: Paulist Press, 2012), 89.
[274] *Gaudium et Spes: On the Church in the Modern World*, trans. William Purdy (1966; London: Catholic Truth Society, 2004), 54.
[275] Ibid., 75.
[276] Joseph Pearce, *Catholic Literary Giants: A Field Guide to the Catholic Literary Landscape* (2005; San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2014), 90.
[277] Scott, *A Historian and His World,* 205.

changes in the liturgy and even the translations are so bad', Dawson remarked.[278] As David Torevell has written, the 'potential of ritualised liturgy [...] to reaffirm the values and beliefs on which a religious community is based' was 'forgotten' or 'underplayed' in the debates surrounding Vatican II.[279] It should not surprise us, therefore, that such Old Western Men, who so much emphasised the supernatural in their works, should have revolted against changes to the liturgy that had previously been 'characterised' by a sense of 'transcendence and mystery'.[280] Although they were willing to engage with the world, they were also deeply concerned by what exactly this engagement would entail.

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[278] Quoted in ibid.

[279] David Torevell, *Losing the Sacred: Ritual, Modernity and Liturgical Reform* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000), 11.

[280] Ibid., xiii.

Conclusion

Closing Observations

Jeffrey Herf has written that 'dichotomies - tradition or modernity, progress or reaction, community or society, rationalization or charisma - predominate in sociological theories of the development of European modernity'.[1] Andreas Huyssen's 'Great Divide', for example, was forwarded as 'the kind of discourse which insists on the categorical distinction between high art and mass culture'.[2] This division has come to categorise the 'fault lines between modernism and postmodernism', for example.[3] There is, of course, Émile Durkheim's noted dichotomy 'between the sacred and the profane […] the dichotomy between the social and the individual'.[4] Durkheim defined the profane as 'sensations coming from the physical world' while the sacred entailed a 'collectivity' of men in 'communion' with one another.[5] However, the essential dichotomy that this thesis has sought to underline lies elsewhere in terms of a separation between an immediate, and not necessarily communal, belief in spiritual and imaginative value – though not always in terms of Durkheim's sacred 'collectvity' – and an opposing belief in material reality. This is not an entirely novel concept; nor is the notion of a 'culture war'.

James Davison Hunter's work *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America* (1991) famously posited the idea that, at the time of writing, America was 'in the midst of a culture war'.[6] Hunter defined this 'very simply as political and social hostility rooted in different systems of moral understanding'.[7] In this sense, this 'division' was 'certainly "religious"' – a telling choice of term – though it had 'unmistakably political consequences too'.[8] Hunter essentially forwarded the two sides of his division as 'orthodox and progressive': the former

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[1] Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture, and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich* (1984; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 1.

[2] Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture and Postmodernism* (1986; Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988), viii.

[3] Ibid., ix.

[4] Steven Lukes, *Emile Durkheim, His Life and Work: A Historical and Critical Study* (1973; Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985), 26.

[5] Quoted in ibid., 25-26.

[6] James Davison Hunter, *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America* (New York: Basic Books, 1991), 34.

[7] Ibid., 42.

[8] Ibid., 132.

meaning 'the commitment on the part of adherents to an external, definable, and transcendent authority'; the latter entailing 'moral authority […] defined by the spirit of the modern age, a spirit of rationalism and subjectivism'.[9] He added that it almost went 'without saying that those who embrace the orthodox impulse are almost always cultural conservatives'.[10]

The reason why it is worth noting Hunter's notion of cultural conflict here is that this thesis contends that British intellectual and artistic culture underwent its own war, along similar lines, between 'orthodox and progressive' modes of thought, in the early to mid-twentieth century. As Hunter writes, 'our difficulty in coming to terms with the idea of such a conflict […] arises largely from the absence of conceptual categories or analytical tools for understanding cultural conflict'.[11] Categories are, indeed, indispensable. In this sense, too, the Old Western Men may be taken to be synonymous with Hunter's own conception of an 'orthodox' vision of the world. As Hunter writes, the 'practical' effect of the 'Reformation' is 'both politically and culturally defunct', in the sense that the old antagonism between Protestants and Catholics is now 'virtually irrelevant'.[12] His division – between a belief in a 'transcendent authority' or otherwise – 'is so deep that it cuts *across* the old lines of conflict'.[13] The new 'politically relevant world-historical event' that has now come to define this stated division is, he contends, 'the secular Enlightenment of the eighteenth-century and its philosophical aftermath'.[14]

In *The Passion of the Western Mind: Understanding the Ideas that Have Shaped Our World View* (1991), Richard Tarnas also noted 'a complex bifurcation of the Western outlook'.[15] On one side of his divide is 'the Scientific Revolution and Enlightenment', which 'stressed rationality, empirical science, and a sceptical secularism'.[16] On the other side is Romanticism, perceiving nature as 'a live vessel of spirit, a translucent source of mystery and revelation', valuing 'man rather for his imaginative and spiritual aspirations, his emotional depths, his artistic creativity and powers of individual self-expression and self-

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[9] Ibid., 44.
[10] Ibid., 46.
[11] Ibid, 34.
[12] Ibid., 43, 132.
[13] Ibid., 43.
[14] Ibid., 132.
[15] Richard Tarnas, *The Passion of the Western Mind: Understanding the Ideas that Have Shaped Our World View* (1991; London: Pimlico, 2010), 375.
[16] Ibid., 366.

creation'.[17] Hunter and Tarnas share similar categories, then: a vital divide between a belief in spiritual principles and a belief in the positivist ideals of the Enlightenment. Moreover, Tarnas writes that 'God was rediscovered in Romanticism […] [but] not the God of orthodoxy', however, but 'a divinity more ineffably mysterious'.[18] This thesis has also touched upon a similar recovery, but one that was more 'consciously Christian', though not always Roman Catholic. Whatever the shift in emphasis, however, it may be said that I have charted one side of a conflict of visions that at once precedes and succeeds the Old Western Men, in the form of Tarnas's Romantics and Hunter's 'orthodox' vision.

Apart from sharing a particular vision of the world synonymous with Romanticism, we may also view the Old Western Men as a twentieth century equivalent of John Holloway's conception of the 'sage', delineated in his 1953 work *The Victorian Sage: Studies in Argument*. Here Holloway advanced the notion of a writer whose 'peculiar gift' is 'that of seeing more widely or more deeply into life', perceiving 'it with a more searching, or perhaps a more subtle and sensitive gaze'.[19] This was a repudiation of empiricism and the legacy of the Enlightenment; the sage placing a far greater emphasis on 'imagination rather than logic'.[20] This also entailed 'seeing old things in a new way'.[21] This chimes with George P. Landow's work *Elegant Jeremiahs: The Sage from Carlyle to Mailer* (1986), which forwards a key notion that to a large degree defines the persons featured in this thesis:

> Whereas the pronouncements of traditional wisdom literature always take as their point of departure the assumption that they embody the accepted, received wisdom of an entire society, the pronouncements of the biblical prophet and Victorian sage begin with the assumption that, however traditional their messages may once have been, they are now forgotten or actively opposed by society.[22]

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[17] Ibid., 367.
[18] Ibid., 373.
[19] John Holloway, *The Victorian Sage: Studies in Argument* (London: Macmillan & Co, Ltd, 1953), 293, 296.
[20] Ibid., 4.
[21] Ibid., 9.
[22] George P. Landow, *Elegant Jeremiahs: The Sage from Carlyle to Mailer* (1986; Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), 23.

Accordingly, the sage may be said to oppose what E. H. Carr once described as 'the nineteenth-century fetishism of facts'.[23] In this regard, C. T. McIntire has written, the historian Herbert Butterfield emphasised, in the twentieth century, the 'inter-suffusion of religion and history' in a way that 'incited people to an insurgent type of Christianity'.[24] In other words, Butterfield 'transvalued the notion of dissent into an ethic of living in tension with any established system'.[25] Indeed, the type of intellectual or artist that this thesis has dealt with is the sort who, as McIntire explains, 'wished for his thought to unsettle the thinking of others'.[26] Moreover, opposing mere fact, in favour of asserting the importance of a sense of spirit, including the imagination, in epistemology, is what defined the process of 'dissent' that this work has underscored as a key discourse in the twentieth century; one that should not simply be defined as belonging to a Catholic literary revival, but instead be acknowledged as a broader countercultural impulse at work in the modern world. However, it may be said that the role of the sage, in the twentieth century at least, was a largely Catholic or 'Thomist' domain, because it arguably emphasised, more than any other theological tradition, the sacramental possibility of the 'More-Than-World' within the world.

Butterfield has not featured heavily in this thesis, though he may be considered part of the same intellectual grouping of the Old Western Men that includes the historian Christopher Dawson, who, as Joseph T. Stuart has identified, forwarded a 'critique of the empirical tradition and its exclusive devotion to "facts"'.[27] Dawson, he writes, 'highlighted the value of critical research methods but also the necessity of intuition, imagination, and what he called "universal vision" in comprehending and communicating history'.[28] The same may be said of G. K. Chesterton, whose 'mode of thought', Joseph McCleary writes, 'was highly dependent on imagination and intuition'.[29] Again, like Butterfield, Chesterton's manner of thought is seemingly linked to his 'inclination to conform to an external reality'.[30] This

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[23] E. H. Carr, and R. W. Davies, ed., *What is History?* Second Edition (1961; London: Penguin Books, 1990), 19.
[24] C. T. McIntire, *Herbert Butterfield: Historian as Dissenter* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 403, 414.
[25] Ibid., xv.
[26] Ibid., 412.
[27] Joseph T. Stuart, 'Christopher Dawson in Context: A Study in British Intellectual History between the World Wars' (Ph.D thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2009), 203.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Joseph McCleary, *The Historical Imagination of G.K. Chesterton: Locality, Patriotism, and Nationalism* (2009; Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), 2.
[30] Ibid., 4.

imaginative ethic can be applied to the poet Roy Campbell, of course, who also very much conformed to this outlook or theory of knowledge; as his friend Russell Kirk, the noted American conservative intellectual, observed: 'Roy's was the true poet's awareness that high truth is symbolic, rather than matter of fact. The poet's interpretation of reality is elastic.'[31]

Returning to Holloway's definition of the sage, we should also note that the sage will often articulate his vision of truth 'through obscurity or through suggestive hints cryptically worded'.[32] I would like to extend this view to incorporate the broader oeuvre of a writer such as Chesterton, who, as Ian Ker has argued, 'should be seen as the obvious successor to Newman, and indeed as a successor to the other great Victorian "sages"'.[33] For example, Roy Hattersley recently dubbed Chesterton 'the apostle of magnificent nonsense'.[34] Although Hattersley respects and admires Chesterton, he also writes that, 'like so many Catholic intellectuals, he looked on the Middle Ages with a sentimental reverence that was unrelated to the facts'.[35] I would like to suggest, as part of this conclusion, that Chesterton's perceived failure to adequately assess the negative aspects of the Middles Ages was really part of a broader attempt convey an impression of it most able to 'unsettle' his audience, as part of Michael Alexander's stated 'Edwardian relaunch' of medievalism, allowing them to see it in a 'new way'. This, I think, might also be applied to Chesterton's own life, as well as others, which was lived in such a way as to give that vision a foundation in reality; being the 'living exposition of theory in practice and of knowledge carried into action' that Hans Urs von Balthasar saw as belonging to 'the history of theology up to the time of the great Scholastics'.[36] Chesterton was always keen to underline the sheer jollity of the Middle Ages, for example, which he replicated himself, as we have seen. In his 'nonsense' we may perceive a consistency which is itself telling. Above all, Chesterton and his type forward a conception, obscure or otherwise, affirming principles of spirit and imaginative vision.

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[31] Russell Kirk, *The Sword of Imagination: Memoirs of a Half-Century of Literary Conflict* (1995; Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), 218.
[32] Holloway, *The Victorian Sage,* 297.
[33] Ian Ker, *G. K. Chesterton: A Biography* (2011; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), viii.
[34] Roy Hattersley, *The Catholics: The Church and its People in Britain and Ireland, from the Reformation to the Present Day* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2017), 476.
[35] Ibid, 476.
[36] Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Explorations in Theology: The Word Made Flesh,* trans. A. V. Littledale and Alexander Dru (1964; San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989), 181.

The historian Eric Hobsbawm famously defined the years 'from 1914 to the aftermath of the Second World War' as 'an Age of Catastrophe', one that 'stumbled from one calamity to another', as 'the great edifice of nineteenth century civilization crumpled in the flames of world war'.[37] The Great War, in particular, has been characterised elsewhere as 'the traumatic fall of the "Long Nineteenth Century"', one that signalled 'a crucial turn in intellectual history'.[38] In this sense, this thesis has focused on a particular coming to terms with the 'new order [that] emerged from the Great War'.[39] Moreover, as Adam Tooze writes, in *The Deluge: The Great War and the Remaking of Global Order, 1916-1931* (2014), 'the question of the derailment of liberalism is the classic question of interwar historiography'.[40] Mark Mazower's *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century* (1998) also follows this line of thought.[41] Although Martin Pugh believes that 'the 1920s and 1930s represented a calm interlude between the violent crime of the Victorian era and trends since the Second World War, the intellectual context that I have concentrated on is essentially one of angst, disorder and cultural conflict.[42] Indeed, Richard Overy has described the interwar years, in his work *The Morbid Age: Britain and the Crisis of Civilization, 1919-1939* (2009), as a period underscored by 'the constant theme of civilization in crisis'.[43] 'Pessimism was highly contagious', he writes.[44] Indeed, what emerged, as result, was a 'population of Cassandras and Jeremiahs who helped to construct the popular image of the inter-war years as an age of anxiety, doubt or fear'.[45] This, Overy adds, 'is a narrative that historians have in general neglected'[46] – although Lucy McDiarmid has also described the thirties, in *Saving Civilization: Yeats, Eliot, and Auden Between the Wars* (1984), as a time 'when "civilization" became a polemical term'.[47] This thesis has, I think, served to redress Overy's stated 'neglect'.

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[37] Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century, 1914-1991* (1995; London: Abacus, 2010), 6, 7, 22.

[38] Alexander Anievas, ed., *Cataclysm 1914: The First World War and the Making of Modern World Politics* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 202, 215.

[39] Adam Tooze, *The Deluge: The Great War and the Remaking of Global Order, 1916-1931* (2014; London: Penguin Books, 2015), 3.

[40] Ibid., 17.

[41] 'In most of Europe by the mid-1930s […] liberalism looked tired.' Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century* (1998; London: Penguin Books, 1999), 27.

[42] Martin Pugh, *We Danced All Night: A Social History of Britain Between the Wars* (2008; London: Vintage Books, 2009), x.

[43] Richard Overy, *The Morbid Age: Britain and the Crisis of Civilization, 1919-1939* (2009; London: Penguin Books, 2010), 384.

[44] Ibid., 3.

[45] Ibid., 2.

[46] Ibid., 3.

[47] Lucy McDiarmid, *Saving Civilization: Yeats, Eliot, and Auden Between the Wars* (1984; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 11.

In *To Hell and Back: Europe, 1914-1949* (2015), the historian Ian Kershaw also noted that, in the years following the First World War, the sense amongst intellectuals 'of civilization in crisis was pervasive'.[48] This parallels the view of Overy and McDiarmid. At the centre of this perception, Kershaw argues, was an 'intellectual reaction' that was fundamentally 'polarized' and defined by 'a move to the Left, towards some variant of Marxism', while 'a minority […] looked to the fascist Right'.[49] Kershaw goes on to assert that the rise of fascism was the reason why it became 'axiomatic for many intellectuals to make the only choice they felt was open to them: to support Soviet-backed communism, the most fervently committed force of anti-fascism'.[50] This purported dichotomy is a common conception. Enzo Traverso, for instance, writes of 'two opposed camps', post-1918 – 'on the one hand, pacifism; on the other hand, nationalism' – which, after 1933, took 'the form of an irreducible conflict between fascism and antifascism. The intellectuals had to choose between them, becoming actors of an ideological and political war.'[51] But as this thesis has shown, this supposed choice between two opposed sides has served to obscure a third alternative that was neither fascist nor Marxist.

In 2002, the writer Christopher Hitchens argued that 'the sheer hatred […] still to be found in some quarters' for George Orwell was because 'he discredited the excuse of "historical context" and the shady alibi that there was, in the circumstances, nothing else that people could have done'.[52] This might, to some degree, also explain Kershaw's dismissal of Evelyn Waugh's rejection of politics, which Kershaw deems 'eccentric' and 'remote from the preoccupation with crisis of most European intellectuals'.[53] But Waugh was very much concerned with the supposed crisis of civilization. Moreover, his refutation of worldly politics, his own response to modernity, was, as we have seen, far from 'eccentric' insofar as it was part of a broader mode of religious response to modern secularity. And although Kershaw acknowledges the work of Hannah Arendt, particularly *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951), as 'a striking transition in the post-war intellectual climate', when fascism and Marxism 'were seen as separate manifestations of essentially the same phenomenon', we have also seen how this 'new way' actually pre-dated the Second World

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[48] Ian Kershaw, *To Hell and Back: Europe, 1914-1949* (2015; London: Penguin Books, 2016), 448.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid., 449-450.
[51] Anievas, ed., *Cataclysm,* 215.
[52] Christopher Hitchens, *Why Orwell Matters* (New York: Basic Books, 2002), 12-13.
[53] Kershaw, *To Hell and Back: Europe,* 456.

War, in the writings of Dawson, for instance; someone who does not follow Kershaw's template of an intellectual seeking 'spiritual renewal' through 'national rebirth', which, it should be noted, he believes accounted 'in good measure for fascism's appeal to intellectuals'.[54] In other words, it appears that the neglect of intellectuals who espoused a decidedly religious outlook has led to a considerable blind spot on the part of historians today. This has itself resulted in a false picture of the cultural context of the interwar period in particular.

Coda

In escaping materialism in favour of a sense of spirit that did not wholly repudiate the world of matter, an escape that affirmed a spiritual absolute that gave meaning to the world of experience, the Old Western Men rediscovered a world that they believed had been lost around the time of the Reformation or the Enlightenment. Viewing modern problems through an apparently medieval lens opened up new avenues of thought that had previously been closed to them. The chapters in this thesis acknowledge a number of such considerations from an 'Old Western' perspective that, I think, represented a vast liberation of thought for a secular age that had been shackled, as it were, as a consequence of the Cartesian legacy and the rise of rationalism and Newtonian mechanics. In chapter one, we have seen the extent to which the role of the imagination was emphasised, not only in terms of conceiving of a supernatural universe, but also its use for historians such as Dawson, for example, and a conception of 'metahistory'. In chapter two, we examined how a conception of the 'More-Than-World' within the world found expression in literary, artistic and musical representations of landscape, as well as in a sense of peril, the 'Perilous Realm', in terms of a world that was governed by the supernatural and all its ramifications, including M. R. James's vengeful demons that took on a tellingly real, rather than ghostly, aspect. In chapter three, we have seen how the Old Western Men went beyond the fact of man's biology and saw themselves as spirits as well, capable of transcending materiality by moving toward a faith in the eternal, which also took on a conception of sainthood that accentuated the role of sanctity and divine indifference to worldly catastrophe. In chapter four, finally, we saw how such intellectuals such as Dawson, Chesterton and T. S. Eliot approached the subject of Europe, not in the sense of a political union, but one that was

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[54] Ibid., 453, 458.

fundamentally spiritual and, hence, cultural: the redemptive discourse of 'Christendom'. Here, in particular, we can see how the Old Western *via media* had a very practical and relevant application in attempting to forge a middle way between nationalism and internationalism. Without a sense of spirit or common culture, the only union possible in Europe was a political union, they argued. This is an essential Old Western viewpoint, as I think has been shown in each chapter, always approaching worldly circumstance in reference to a spiritual reality; without which, it was pointed out, culture would be drawn toward a moral, political and imaginative imbalance tantamount to modernity itself. In this sense, too, if modernism is to be defined as a critique of modernity, then the Old Western Men must be admitted as a legitimate and significant modernism that believed it had diagnosed modernity correctly and was itself in possession of a proposed antidote: a restoration of a religious conception of the universe.

Of course, what underpins this perceived antidote throughout the thesis is the centrality of religion, especially Christianity, in the life of individuals as well as societies. I think that, in part, the Old Western Men were a necessary response to a question that was increasingly deserving of an answer. If modernity was simply another expression for secularism, could modernity make a success of it? The Old Western Men exhibited, either implicitly or explicitly, a palpable, and I think sensible, scepticism toward modernity and its champions. While such writers as Chesterton and Hilaire Belloc tended to underestimate the problems of the past, as well as its viciousness, they were, as J. W. Burrow identified, 'a repudiation of Whiggish complacency about national history', but also modernity in general, rejecting what Dawson dubbed the modern religion of 'Progress'.

In the case of this Ph.D., covering a cultural mode of response as broad as the Old Western Men necessarily entailed a highly selective approach in order to illustrate its depth; while not taking away from its apparent breadth. Since this thesis has focused for the most part on the written word, however, the fine arts and music have been not nearly so prominent. This is a limitation that purchased a positive good elsewhere. Nevertheless, it is still a limitation. In terms of what this thesis has sought to highlight, the areas of the arts that I have neglected do beg further exploration. In particular, the genesis of this entire project is located in art history and in a 'spirit of place' that led to a rather more comprehensive conception of spirit, or religion, as a dynamic whole, informing one side of a divide that I identify as the Old Western Men. Further studies, especially in this area of twentieth

century art in Britain, would serve to supplement, as well as underscore, this identification. In doing so, this would also allow future scholars to view British artists through a lens that, far from isolating them as an eccentric outgrowth, would actually bring them into communion with a broader revival of spirit within the arts generally, but also amongst writers and historians too, such as Dawson and Chesterton.

Another limitation that should be noted here is a possible ambiguity in terms of whether this revival of spirit was exclusively Christian. In employing that notion of a second 'consciously Christian' revival of interest in the Middle Ages in the twentieth century, I have courted Christian, and especially Roman Catholic, intellectuals in particular. However, by also adopting C. S. Lewis's term the 'Old Western Men' I have also attempted to go beyond the recent identification of a Catholic literary revival. While this thesis may, indeed, be considered to be, as I think it is, a rather more thorough examination of Michael Alexander's conception of a twentieth century medieval revival, it is more inclusive in the sense that I believe it was really a Western revival, of which the Christian intellectual tradition is, of course, a major constituent. As I stated at the outset of this Ph.D., the purpose of these chapters has been to define, in particular, what is meant by 'Western' in Lewis's phrase the Old Western Men – not necessarily what it means today but what it meant to him and his fellow compatriots. What it meant was an essential *via media* that attempted to forward a balance between a spiritual and material conception of the universe, of history itself and the vital application of the imagination as a sort of spirit itself in a post-Cartesian vacuum that was synonymous with modernity, one that they took to be, by definition, materialistic and, hence, irreligious and historically without precedent.

While this thesis supplements the recent contributions of such scholars as Joseph Pearce, whose focus has been concentrated for the most part on Catholic intellectuals, I believe that my major contribution here has been to place this grouping within a far broader *scepticism* toward progress and modernity, noted, for example, by Malcolm Cowley. As he argued, T. S. Eliot's work *The Waste Land* appeared to mark a growing division in 1922 between what Eliot dubbed the 'real conflict [...] between the theistic and the aesthetic faith'. My chapters have gone some way to establish this conflict as a matter of fact – or at least one side of it, mirroring Hunter's own notion of a culture war in modern-day America; though much more work is required to give definition to my divide and root it in a larger collective. There are, however, a number of queries that result from such an affirmation of

Cowley's 1934 assessment; questions that have been beyond the scope of this thesis to answer, though they deserve future attention. Taking the year 1900 as a rough marker for when this conflict arose, particularly in the output of Chesterton – no small figure, as we have seen – to what extent, if any, did the trauma of the First World War serve to accentuate and acerbate this division, particularly amongst the second generation of Old Western Men, such as Eliot and Dawson. There is little doubt that Chesterton and his great friend Belloc, the first generation, were very much at odds with what they perceived to be the Prussian 'enemy'. But this thesis has also revealed a myriad of responses to twentieth century events and phenomena, which for all Old Western Men appeared to be a consequence of a broader spiritual crisis: modernity. In this sense, the Spanish Civil War was for the poet Roy Campbell, for instance, a physical manifestation of a seething antagonism between materialism, on the one hand, and the spiritual, on the other. Suburban sprawl and the apparent scouring of the Sussex countryside was also taken to be another sign, being one and the same with a 'loss' of what Peter L. Berger has termed the 'sacred canopy'. Another point that deserves some study is the legacy of the Old Western Men themselves, who, it might be said, died a strange death post-1970, in the sense that, in Britain at least, they failed to replicate themselves in a next generation of fellows. There is a parallel here, in Callum Brown's notion of the death of 'discursive' Christianity in Britain, of which the Old Western Men were, by definition, I argue, part of. While it may be said that Chesterton had successors in Dawson and Lewis, it is a struggle to name their progeny; unless we cross the Atlantic and turn our attention toward American conservatism, where Russell Kirk and John Lukacs may be said to represent a third generation of Old Western Men, taking part themselves in Hunter's stated 'culture war'. Indeed, Dawson appeared to prophesy this in 1959, speaking to an audience at Boston College, noting that when he began his career 'Belloc and Chesterton and my eyes were fixed on Europe and the European tradition. But to-day I have come to feel that it is in this country that the fate of Christendom will be decided.'[55] Future research might be directed toward establishing a line of lineage, then, a self-acknowledged line of descent, perhaps, connecting conservative intellectuals in America with both Chesterton's and Dawson's respective generations.

It is essential to underline the point, in conclusion here, that the Old Western Men were characterised by a historically-informed reluctance to conform to the belief that to be

[55] Quoted in Christina Scott, *A Historian and His World: A Life of Christopher Dawson 1889-1970* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1984), 198.

'modern' was axiomatically progressive. This is a perception that should be given more attention, since what has characterised recent studies of modernism, for instance, in reference to the past, is modernism's attempt to reconcile itself with that past. In England, this has often gone hand in hand with a specifically 'national' past, in such works as *The Geographies of Englishness: Landscape and the National Past, 1880-1940* (2002) and *Romantic Moderns: English Writers, Artists and the Imagination from Virginia Woolf to John Piper* (2010). Although it might sound counterintuitive – since the only 'modernist' in this thesis is Eliot, in the aesthetic sense – if modernism, by definition, entails 'oppositionism' then the Old Western Men constitute a purer manifestation of modernism than the attempt at reconciliation considered in the two previously mentioned studies. Although it may have vexed Cowley, Eliot's high modernism was entirely of a piece with his evident hostility toward modernity. Lewis, too, though he was antagonistic toward Eliot's aesthetic modernism, was nevertheless of the same mind as Eliot in his antagonism toward the 'modern' considered more broadly. Indeed, once we go beyond aesthetics a realignment occurs, particularly in the case of Eliot, whose view of religion and Christianity met with such an unreceptive response from Virginia Woolf. Future academic studies in modernism should consider whether the failure to acknowledge a modernism that is a religious mode of response to the present in the form of a critique, as Cowley saw it, has skewed our perception of modernism as a whole. What is perhaps required now is a concentration on the *geographies of Christendom*, indeed. For what underscored the period 1900 to 1970 was, I propose, a deeper and possibly far more consequential antagonism: that of the divide between the religious and the irreligious.

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