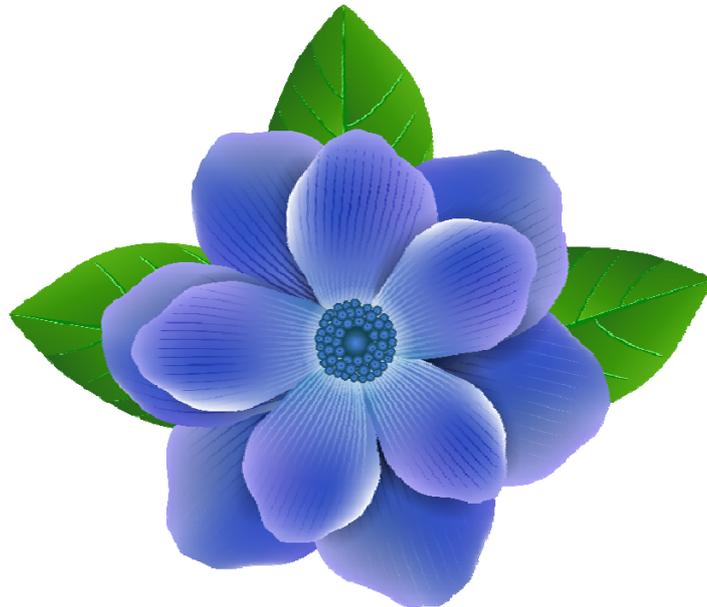


# THE BLUE FLOWER



I

SUMMER SOLSTICE

2018

**EDITOR**

Rev'd Anthony J. Chadwick

Anglican Catholic Chaplaincy of Saint Mary the Virgin  
193 route d'Héricourt,  
76190 Hautot Saint Sulpice  
France

E-mail: [anthony.chadwick@wanadoo.fr](mailto:anthony.chadwick@wanadoo.fr)

Blog: <https://sarumuse.wordpress.com/>

Website: <http://civitas-dei.eu/>

\* \* \*

This journal is made available free of charge on a web server in pdf format. It may be printed on private computer and printing equipment. Any copying must acknowledge authorship in the proper form.

## Contributors to this issue

- Fr Jonathan Munn Obl OSB is a priest in the Anglican Catholic Church having been previously a Reader in the Church of England though he retains his Oblation with the community of monks formerly at Elmore and Nashdom. He studied and lectured in mathematics at the University of Warwick where he received his doctorate in the study of instanton construction on the four-dimensional sphere. He spent some time studying the geometry of fluid flow at Imperial College London and has lectured in Los Alamos, Palo Alto and the University of Göttingen. Upon leaving university, he taught mathematics, philosophy and thinking skills to schoolchildren at Eltham College. Today, after withdrawing from teaching, he looks after his two infant children full time in the outskirts of Sheffield and wouldn't have it any other way.
  
- Fr Anthony Chadwick is a priest in the Anglican Catholic Church having been an organist and choirmaster in the Church of England and a deacon in the Roman Catholic Church. He studied philosophy at the Angelicum in Rome and theology at Fribourg University in Switzerland, writing his Licentiate work on the Roman missal at and after the Council of Trent. He has lectured on this subject at Pusey House in Oxford. He is a self-employed French to English translator, and enjoys sailing dinghy cruising and playing the organ in his spare time. He also occasionally moves and reinstalls redundant church organs.
  
- Dr Timothy Graham is a medical doctor specialising in Gastroenterology at St George's Hospital in London. He obtained an MPhil in Philosophy in 2011 with a dissertation on the thought of Austin Farrer from Queen's University Belfast where he had previously completed his medical training. He is a layman in the Ordinariate of Our Lady of Walsingham, lives in Surrey with his wife and a young family of five, and keeps up his interests in Scripture, Romantic philosophy and books generally when he has the time.

\* \* \*

Note: The footnote numbers run from one article to the next as if they were chapters of a single work. We will try to fix this problem in the next issue of *The Blue Flower*.

## Editorial

It is my pleasure to introduce this new journal. Its purpose is one of promoting a school of thought and maybe even an impetus for a small movement for the revival of a particular kind of Christian thought and life. The beginnings of *The Blue Flower* are extremely modest.

For many years, I have reflected on the relationship between faith and culture, a notion that has been present in many great Christian thinkers over the past couple of hundred years. I have largely come to the conclusion that the Christian message is utterly stifled by what is termed as modernity or the legacy of the Enlightenment. My own experience of life and as a Christian believer clearly brought me to the same kind of thought as the Idealists and Romantics of the end of the eighteenth century, a time when an old order fell and could not be restored. There had to be something new like when the Middle Ages gave way to the Renaissance. Man can only assimilate the truth of Christ through some experience other than being preached at with a hollow and tired message.

The same processes of thought and experience brought me to consider a succession of movements of culture and philosophy along the same lines since the French Revolution and the tumultuous upheavals of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Appearances and fashions change, but the underlying thoughts and conflicts remain essentially the same.

A Christian priest loves to discover divine revelation through the sources of Tradition and Scripture, through the work of the Fathers of the Church and the many theologians through the centuries. However, there comes a time when the spirit soars above the dry theological systems to embrace the beauty of creation, both by God and man. Revelation comes to us through symbols and allegory, through metaphor and poetry. Many of these signs are found in nature and speak of us of transcendence beyond our earthly experience. We respond to the Mystery with our whole person and not only by assent to doctrines and texts. Revelation is a continuing process which did not end with the deaths of the Apostles.

*The Blue Flower* will certainly discuss much more than simply a cultural and intellectual movement of the past two centuries, but a constant human experience faced with creation, nature, beauty and longing for the transcendent. German Idealism and Romanticism have many links with Neo-Platonism and even with some aspects of ancient Gnosticism, and these aspects need to be studied and brought into the open, above all not condemned through ignorance and prejudice in the name of orthodoxy.

The process of conversion should be one of spiritual awakening and being on a pilgrimage. The way is shown by our instinct of *Sehnsucht*, an inconsolable yearning and longing for what is impossible to find in this earthly life. This is what is symbolised by the blue flower in the thought of a number of Romantic thinkers like C.S. Lewis, Novalis (Friedrich von Hardenberg) and George MacDonald. I am always sceptical about claims of sudden conversion, perhaps with the exception of St Paul. It is a process of growth and discovery, of yearning for a kind of light that illuminates

people of all religions and philosophies of life. When we turn to this light, it penetrates our entire being and never leaves us unless we reject it. Christ is the full revelation of God to humanity, and expresses himself universally. He brings creation back to God in a work of recapitulation.

Our faith brings us to approach God as a child who at the same time is born and dies. We are indeed brought to face the mystery of death. Our "enlightened" times seek to prolong human life indefinitely by means of medicine and machines, and only reveal futility and the very theme of *Frankenstein* as imagined two hundred years ago in the year without a summer. Death is a part of *Sehnsucht*: our passage to the eternal Reality and universal consciousness that we cannot imagine in this life. We yearn for absolute love and beauty, which we believe we will find on passing over. Light and beauty triumph over darkness and sin. Salvation is an expression of god's love. As is believed by the Orthodox East, it is a matter of "deification" (θεώσις) or evolution to the universal God-man who is Christ.

I wish to encourage readers to forsake the legalistic and juridical concept of Christian salvation, even if such terms are only metaphors and analogies. I remember reading something by Fr George Tyrrell to the effect that the soul is not brought to belief by force but by becoming aware that God is already present. St Athanasius of Alexandria said: "The Son of God became man so that we might become God". This ancient mystical dimension of Christianity found renewal in the minds of those who were awakening from the spiritual aridity of the Enlightenment and modernity. For many years, I was tempted by Orthodoxy from having read authors like Dostoyevsky, Vladimir Soloviev and Nicholas Berdyaev, but the depth of this thought went far beyond the "ecclesial reality" I was idealising. Much of it went back, not to Holy Russia, but Jakob Böhme and to the Idealists of Jena, Leipzig and Berlin. As Böhme wrote about the *Ungrund*, that bottomless and indeterminate freedom of the spirit, Novalis explored the *Night*, as St John of the Cross before him. It is all tied together in one illuminating whole. The Night is a place of suffering and loss where God is truly revealed.

One of my yearnings, as for so many before me, is a renewed Christianity, not one that is banalised and "adapted" to soulless modernity, but one of a sanctified universe and longing for eternity. Most religions lead us into a fear of death, especially what happens to us if we are bad or disobedient, but Christ reconciled us with death, something to be embraced and overcome with love. The Romantic does not fear death but yearns for what lies beyond. We must overcome materialism and the "modern" notion of science and rationalism. The idealist sees creation through spirit, and the things of God through symbols. The title of this periodical is not a biological organism of interest to gardeners and horticulturalists, but a profound and moving symbol. The *Blue Flower* is precisely our growth way from this earthly life and our deliverance. It is not a wish for death or a temptation to suicide, but a journey inwards to the Kingdom we seek within and beyond. It is a dream, a journey towards a home for which we yearn. Indeed I would like this work to be an expression of my priestly calling through study and writing.

We are also struck by the collusion between Romantic *Sehnsucht* and Christian mysticism from the middle ages and the Renaissance period in Latin countries like

Spain. Here was an all-devouring desire and longing for the transcendent that was correlative with a feeling of being an alien on this earth. We would find this sentiment in the poetry of William Blake and Novalis. There is definitely a resurgence of a form of Gnosticism that found diverse expressions including the immanentism of the Modernists at the beginning of the twentieth century. Christianity has lived through the dialectics of the eschatological and the here-and-now all the way through its history, ever since the foundation of the first monasteries in the desert. *Sehnsucht* is central in the famous expression in many of our liturgical prayers: *doceas nos terrena despiciere et amare caelestia*. We are aliens and exiles on this earth, and our longing is for something we will never find here.

After the French Revolution, it was remarkable that Christianity made any kind of comeback at all. The Revolution was born of the Enlightenment and destroyed it. Philosophical rationalism came from the privileged classes, those who most ridiculed the notion of God and the so-called superstition of the masses. The response of the Terror and the Napoleonic Wars brought an end to another illusion after that of the rationalists. A new philosophy had to emerge from the suffering and tragedy. Today, we find ourselves in another period of devastation of our civilisation, a watershed between the ultimate evolution of what is symbolised by Frankenstein's monster and a return to barbarity and submission to the most repressive religions ever known to mankind. Romantics are called to continue the same combat, though with other words and outward appearances.

The nobility of the spirit is a theme that arises again and again. As the fish rots from the head, so I believe culture can be brought back to being ready to receive Christ. Christianity began a very tiny community of chosen souls. Some of us experience life and think in an "eccentric" way, in opposition to the "world" of social conformity, collectivism, fashion and competition. Perhaps we are predisposed through differences like some form of autism, perhaps. Predisposition is only a beginning from which we come to terms with ourselves, discover what God gave us when we were born and soar to a higher life that most people do not understand. The Christian Church operates at the levels of the collective and for this tiny concentration of noble souls. Unfortunately, the Church at the collective level has nearly failed or become so corrupt as to be unrecognisable as a sacramental symbol of Christ's incarnation. It must turn to secular humanism or accept a new infusion of leaven. This leaven is one of prophecy. This higher soul suffers from barbarity, ugliness, banality and many of the things that are just part of the life of "ordinary" people.

Of course, such elitism can suffer corruption by contempt of the ordinary and commonplace. Berdyaev said, "*Had the Gnostics won the day, Christianity would never have been victorious. It would have been turned into an aristocratic sect*". Pride is a sin as much as philistinism, and for this reason, Gnostic elitism could not be allowed to become the norm. The Romantic was always concerned for humanity, especially for the poor and forsaken. This spirit, not only of *Sehnsucht* but also of *Sturm und Drang* fired the zeal of the slum priests of Victorian England. This movement must be revived again from the small beginnings of the Jena Idealists, the Oxford Movement

and La Chesnaie and the stubborn Breton, Félicité de Lamennais. Just two or three of us will do it.

In my view, Romanticism has the appeal of a wider vision than that of most institutional churches. I see the purpose of this journal not merely in terms of academic study of Romanticism and similar movements over the past two hundred years, nor in the fuelling of a religious revival for its own sake, but in a wider vision that is capable of challenging modern über-rationalism, materialism and fundamentalist intolerance. Where we go on this journey is a mystery, and it will depend on the material yet to be written.

Like in the beginning of the nineteenth century, there are signs of an analogy of Romanticism in the various subcultures of young and idealistic people who lack any experience of organised Christianity and church services. It is my conviction that churches are no longer capable of relating to such as aspiration like in the 1960's and the so-called *flower-power*. Perhaps this journal is about *blue flower power*! We all revolted against an authority we perceived to be insincere, hypocritical and without any profound purpose beyond social respectability and convention. Some took drugs and slouched about in dirty clothes, whilst others tried to come to a compromise with bourgeois society or wrote and expressed themselves in art.

It would seem that an attempt to whip up support for a movement with its ideology would not only be futile, but opposed to its very purpose. We live in a time when every noble idea is taken, analysed, dissected and presented as a front of herd-mentality fashions and the profit of the businessman. This has happened to all ideas, including Christianity itself, and this one too should it ever become too popular and fashionable. It is for this reason that no attempt will be made to relate to "ordinary people" but rather to found a small and elite school of thinkers and artists.

This journal will for the time-being be published in the form of a pdf file to be downloaded free of charge by all who are interested. There is no sense in making a financial investment in paper booklets for which there would be no "market". Like in the spirit of the Arts & Crafts movement, I am interested in an ideal more than marketing, business and profit. We would therefore be working for nothing other than the vocation of reviving a rich culture and philosophy that relates to the truest form of Christianity as an alternative to obscurantism and gnat's piss. The issues will be available on a web server and the site address made known through blogs and word-of-mouth. I would invite contributions by PayPal without charging a fixed sum. Any money collected would be used for buying books or other expenses involved in finding information in libraries and websites requiring payment for subscriptions.

I hope to introduce various themes and seek the advice of my present and future colleagues in this work. This first issue clearly delves into Medievalism as conceived by the world-weary soul seeking sublimity and purity. I hope also to go into Romantic epistemology to unravel some of the difficulties of knowledge and truth outside the fetters of Aristotle and the Enlightenment. Subjects of articles should be extremely wide-ranging from history, theology and philosophy, liturgical studies, art and architecture, music, poetry and literature, in short, every expression of the

human spirit transcending the individual person, society and modern civilisation. I am counting on my correspondents and contributors to produce work of quality and the best of ourselves.

Will there ever be a practical application of this work? It seems too soon to tell, and ideas may fall into place with usage and experience. Notions of alternative communities have been put forward and even put into practice. One must keep an open mind. Doing this journal will help its writers overcome laziness and to return to serious reading and study. That can only be a good thing. University is merely an initiation in a lifetime of learning, writing and teaching.

## The First Signs of Freedom: William Morris's Romantic medievalism and the Oxford Movement.

Dr Timothy Graham

In his socialist essay *Art and Labour* (1884) William Morris argues that given the right conditions - a pleasant place to live, education according to capacity, and "unanxious leisure" - men who were masters of their work, who owned their materials, tools and time would produce things of beauty. Instead of producing products or mere parts of products as machine-operating wage-earners for an employer who pockets the profit, a task alienating themselves from their own productions, they would produce useful things rather, for their own enjoyment. Artistry and therefore beauty would penetrate even their simplest productions of everyday things. Morris's *News from Nowhere* (1890), a utopia where such a society is realised, is at first disconcerting for the narrator who has wandered into it: "you are not yet used to our life of repose amidst energy", says the character Ellen, "of work which is pleasure and pleasure which is work."

Leaving to one side Morris's social claims, *viz.* the necessary conditions for craftsmanship to flourish, the main weight of his essay's argument is supported by his claim that such social conditions did exist for a period in the Middle Ages, and that the works of this period reveal the kind of beauty in craftsmanship which he is setting up as an exemplar and goal. The backdrop to his picture are the hopeless faces seen through the smog of an industrial town, and while his essay is prompted by his broad manly sympathies with the poor, the lineaments of the nineteenth century Romantic reaction arguably define the main features of *Art and Labour*. I would like to explore firstly the role of medievalism in the Romantic movement in the light of Morris's essay, and in the wider setting of Morris's life and work. Secondly, Morris had significant contact with the Oxford Movement at Exeter College, therefore can Morris be placed somewhere within the stream of the Oxford Movement and its sequelae, especially the medieval aesthetic which issued from it?

### 1. Romanticism and the Middle Ages.

Firstly, Morris's turn to the Middle Ages in this essay is unsurprising for those have read his work or seen his craftsmanship: but why did the Romantics and those influenced by Romanticism turn to the medieval period for imaginative nutriment? The argument in *Art and Labour* presents a brief epoch of the Western medieval social structure as worthy of imitation, but as a mere temporary and externally driven accident of social history, as something detachable from Christian belief and spiritual effect. Such an unsympathetic and extrinsic analysis is belied by Morris's persistent return to the social structure and artistic forms of medieval Europe in his works of imagination or artistic output. What are the Middle Ages "doing" for Morris and the Romantics more generally?

A brief note on Romanticism before proceeding: because the word has so many potential meanings some limits are needed. For convenience, I will follow M.H. Abrahms' classification<sup>1</sup>. He divides the historical movement into (1) seminal early Romantics such as Schiller and Hölderlin in Germany, and Wordsworth, Coleridge and Blake in England, and (2) the later "post-Romantics". The early Romantics came to literary maturity at the time of the French Revolution, experienced as an "intellectual, moral and aesthetic as well as political crisis". They assumed a prophetic identity and aimed to awaken their contemporaries to the need for redemption of civilisation through visionary works embodying "life, love, liberty, hope and joy". Typically, following a common crisis engendered by the failure of their revolutionary hopes, the Romantics conceived of the redemption of Western civilisation as being brought about through an inner transformation of our perception of the world - and the following points are crucial for understanding the form of their thought - in which we return to the unifying vision of a child or primitive golden age for whom the world is not the dead object of our post-Enlightenment science and sensibility, and in which the traditional Christian ideas of regeneration are realised in a secular, internal new birth of the one who now sees and feels truly. Abrahms speaks of later writers and artists within this broad tradition as post-Romantic: I will simply call them Romantics, but my use of the term will assume his genealogy of the movement, and set of common features.

The idea of the return to a golden age or the paradise of Eden is a recurrent and constitutive image in early Romantic thought. Schiller's essay *Concerning the First Human Society, according to the Guidance of the Mosaic Records* (1790) was his early attempt at a secular *Universalgeschichte*, in which the Biblical narrative of the fall was presented as a mythical representation of mankind's history, as a loss of something akin to Rousseau's childlike primitive freedom. His work however was preceded by several influential treatments which established the genre. G.E. Lessing's *The Education of the Human Race* (1780) and J.G. Herder's *Ideas on the Philosophy of the History of Mankind* (1785) were taken up by Immanuel Kant in his *Conjectural Origin of the History of Man* (1786). Common to these works of *Universalgeschichte* was the idea that primitive man, represented by Adam, fell from an instinctively childlike state of unity with nature into a state of reason where the burden of free choice was opened up, inevitably ejecting him from his primal innocence and simplicity into a world of foresight of death and possibility of evil, and - like the cherub with the flaming sword - barring hope of return to his aboriginal crude simplicity. There is departure from the traditional biblical framework of interpretation not only in the interpretation of Genesis as a myth, accommodated to a childish stage of human development, but also in that the fall, so interpreted, is seen as an inevitable development of man's moral existence. According to Schiller the fall tears mankind "loose from the leading strings of nature" and sets him on "the dangerous road to moral freedom".

---

<sup>1</sup> M.H. Abrahms, *Natural Supernaturalism* 1971, cf. part 3, ch. 8, "The Poet's Vision". My subsequent analysis of the over-arching Neoplatonic conceptual structure of Romanticism is indebted to Abrahms' superb treatment.

As a result of this secularising of the story of the fall into a history of Everyman and the human race in general, their evaluation of the results of the fall are drastically altered from the traditional Christian position. The fall is now both simultaneously gain and loss: loss to the individual certainly, because (in Kant's words) it led to "evils, and - what is even worse, in association with the refined reason - vices". The fracturing effects damaged not only man's relation to nature, but also his inner psychological unity and society as a whole. However, the fall for mankind as a whole, as opposed to the individual, is beneficial: the goal of re-integration remains, and, says Schiller, "our culture shall lead us, by the road of reason and freedom, back to nature again", led by the prophetic Romantic poet, who reveals the Ideal and opens the way. The overall structure of the Romantic philosophy of history and nature is a modified version of Plotinus's *exitus* and *reditus* to the One. The Neoplatonic circle becomes an upward spiral. We will take all the scientific knowledge gained from our divorce from nature, all the self-knowledge gained from our psychological fracturing, and all the wisdom achieved through social discord back into a new unity which (Schiller again) is "infinitely higher than that which he reaches by means of nature", because it is freely willed, consciously participated in, and self-won. Although one can arguably find precedent for a similar justification of the fall in terms of an ultimately greater benefit for mankind in the Christian understanding of history - the *felix culpa* of the *Exsultet* and of Ambrose - the Christian theodicy has a radically different saving power. We are rescued by divine grace and the Incarnation, rather than by the immanent regenerative power of creative imagination within human culture: there is perhaps no pithier summation of the Romantic doctrine and its point of contact with and departure from a traditional Christian understanding than William Blake's "Imagination/ Which is the divine Body of the Lord Jesus, blessed for ever"<sup>2</sup>.

The reason for this detour into the Romantic idea of *Universalgeschichte*, and the longing for the golden age and Eden, is to grasp one of the most significant imaginative and conceptual nodes of the movement, a vantage point from which to repeat the question: what is the significance of the apparently instinctive turn to the Middle Ages for the Romantic movement? The main lines of the answer, and how the medieval period is related to the Romantic longing for Eden, can be gained from Novalis's<sup>3</sup> *Christendom or Europe*, written in 1799. It was written - as were the other early Romantic works - under the pressure of the perceived failure of the French Revolution to enact the ideal which Novalis and others had espoused, and also the evils of the fragmentation of human knowledge and the perceived disintegration of nature beneath the lens of the Enlightenment. The response of Novalis, however, is (so far as I am aware) the first and earliest example of a "medieval turn" in early Romanticism. Novalis incorporates the main features of the Romantic dialectic of history, but in place of Eden is set a golden age of medieval love, faith, harmony and flourishing under the benign spiritual rule of Rome, the new Jerusalem; and in place of the fall the ecclesiastical corruption, increasing social complication and the cultural advance of the laity, so that even before the violent overthrow of the Reformation,

---

<sup>2</sup> From *Jerusalem*, Plate 71.

<sup>3</sup> The pseudonym and pen name of Georg Philipp Friedrich Freiherr von Hardenberg (1772-1801).

"the actual mastery of Rome had... silently ceased to be". The inevitable result of rebellion against the medieval order and progressive obliteration of the sacred was the Enlightenment. In an especially purple patch in this uniformly purple essay Novalis writes that the priests of the new philosophy "made imagination and emotion heretical... reduced the infinite creative music of the universe to the monotonous clatter of a monstrous mill", worse, a "mill in the abstract... a mill that milled of itself", and were happily engaged in "tirelessly cleaning the poetry off Nature, the earth, the human soul, and the branches of learning".

How seriously Novalis takes his opening description of the medieval golden age is I think made clear towards the close of his essay. "We now stand high enough", he says, "to smile amicably at those previous ages mentioned above", at both the ages of religion and the age of science, although both have been necessary stages in the dialectic of history. His account can therefore be read as a typically Romantic mythical rendering of the golden age which we can aspire to rebuild, not on the bases of paternalistic authority and instinct, but "awakened from the morning dream of helpless childhood" a science yoked to imagination and creative will is about to give birth to "an Age of reconciliation". Wordsworth's apocalyptic marriage of Mind and Nature is given expression in Novalis as the association of "both the external and the internal worlds". The renewed Christendom he envisages as freedom from both old religious and new secular oppression, uniting the ancient faith in Christ with "joy", religion's creative element, and - a profoundly Romantic idea - "faith in the universal capacity of all earthly things to be the bread and wine of eternal life". The mystic and apocalyptic marriage is accompanied by the mystic banquet: in Wordsworth's rendering, it will be the consummation of a union with the common earth that will require of us "nothing more than what we are".

William Morris's vision of the degradation of work in *Art and Labour* and his invocation of a happier medieval past can therefore be seen to have profound Romantic undertones. Leaving aside the chasm in style and aim of the two writers, a series of common themes emerge when comparing his essay and Novalis's prototype of Romantic medievalism.

(1) They both subscribe to a dialectical view of the historical process. In his analysis of the fall of medieval social structure, Novalis asks "is not an oscillation, an alternation of opposing movements, essential?" Decline and fall - but also, happily, rejuvenation are inevitable. The obedience and faith of the Middle Ages gave way to complacency and corruption, resulting in the corrosive rationalism of the Enlightenment, is about to be replaced by a new age rooted in the supernatural possibilities inherent in human nature. "Progressive, ever augmenting evolutions are the stuff of history." Morris similarly identifies a crucial point of new synthesis. The exclusive, rational, aristocratic art of Greece founded on a thirst for beauty died in "the academical pedantry of Roman art", yet art is mysteriously and obscurely reborn in the days of the Byzantine emperors, breathing a life that it never had before, that makes us "forgive it all its rudeness, timidity, and unreason". The quality that it now breathes is "its wide sympathy", born as it is from a free

people, rather than slaves or an aristocratic elite. The art of this period displays "the first signs of freedom".

(2) Both present the historical process as an immanent and (in a sense) inevitable development. For Novalis it is obvious that peace will lead to complacency will lead to corruption will lead to violent reaction, and so on; and the overweening rationalism of the Enlightenment will lead to a self-defeating fragmentation that is inevitably on its way to being overcome by poetic reintegration of the internal and external experience, the objective and subjective. Morris's immanent historical engine (as an index of the beauty of art) is popular freedom and the contrary will of the master to dominate. The tensions to which Greece and then the Roman Empire were subject, and to which they succumbed; the gradual liberation from serfdom, and the glory of the medieval guilds and their art; the gradual birth of capitalism and the subjection of the people as wage-slaves - these are explicable by the oscillation from servitude to freedom back to servitude, a struggle of people and master.

(3) It is however the identification of the Middle Ages as a high point of social organisation that is the most obvious thematic parallel, despite their divergence. Novalis deliberately idealises the Middle Ages as a social Garden of Eden in which God's authority is mediated by the Pope and the Church, and the beasts of the warring secular states are named and tamed. The people's unquestioning obedience parallels the Romantic picture of a mythical golden age of instinctive human innocence. Morris, on the other hand, presents a more realistic picture - a picture of serfs liberated from their feudal lords, combining together in democratic guilds for mutual protection and authority. The structure of the craft-guilds, when they had finally gained hard-won freedom from the merchant-guilds or corporations, was such that "every worker apprenticed to a craft was sure if he could satisfy the due standard of excellence to become a master". For a brief period of history "the worker had but one master, the public, and he had full control over his own material, tools, and time; in other words he was an artist". As a result, in the Middle Ages, says Morris, everything that man made was beautiful, because things were made primarily for use and not to be bought and sold, with beauty an adjunct that carries an extra cost. There is one telling addition to Morris's account that slides into his otherwise rather severely social theory of the necessary (and apparently also sufficient) cause of the production of beautiful art and craftsmanship. Free medieval man made beautiful everyday things, "just as everything that nature makes is always beautiful": a phrase that could have come from Rousseau. Perhaps unconsciously Morris the social campaigner, bent on stirring the consciences of his middle-class audience, lets his Romanticism slip into the open.

(4) The remedy for present ills is a return to the dominant social conditions of the Middle Ages, but without (for both Morris and Novalis) the Church's hegemony, and (most definitely as far as Morris is concerned) without the motive of religious faith that accidentally brought about the medieval social structure. Novalis invokes the myth of the high Middle Ages in his Romantic

longing for a restored golden age, but as the culmination of hard-won freedom and the work of creative imagination. He does not wish for a return to an era of unthinking obedience. Morris most definitely does not suggest that a return to Christianity or the spirit of the Middle Ages more generally would bring about the revolution in society that he seeks: it is the merely accidental freedom of the medieval craftsmen that made them so "amazingly different from ourselves, far more so than any religion, and spirit of chivalry, romance, or what not could have made them".

Do Morris's professed opinions on the Middle Ages in *Art and Labour* sit uneasily beside the rest of his artistic output - the books of the Kelmscott Press, the productions of Morris & Co., his prose romances and poetry? I think that they do, and a cursory examination of his work and biography reveals that the near-Marxism of his socialist theory gives way to a more thorough-going expression of a Romantic aesthetic which turns to the Middle Ages for a vocabulary of symbol and beauty.

But before turning to a consideration of Morris in the wider movement of English Romanticism, it is worth pointing out that the fact that Morris's socialism shares features with Marx's dialectical materialism does not necessarily distance him from Romanticism. Marx's dialectic in his early *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* (1844) is Romantic and Hegelian, history being an inevitable upward spiral from primitive communism through various modes of production dependent on class-struggle, the final turn of the spiral being the violent destruction of the evils of capitalism and egoism. Marx's idea of the alienation of man from his work in capitalism also has a Romantic derivation. Man's production in servitude divorces him from his primitive natural unity with nature: the objects produced by force for another dominate and alienate him. Man's innate drive is to humanise nature, to transform nature into humanity and integrate humanity into nature: "society is the accomplished union of man with nature". Marx's theory, and by extension the theory of the necessary social conditions for art that Morris describes, is one turn that Romanticism can take. Marx extends the Romantic idea of reconciling a divorced man and a fragmented social order to all the work of human hands, and not only to the imaginative work of the prophetic poet or artist. (It is by no means the only possible development of Romanticism. Friedrich Nietzsche, for one, did not make much of this "optimistic glorification of man" on which socialist movements rested their "paradisiacal prospects", and emphasised the elite and individual nature of art<sup>4</sup>.) I will return later to the fact that Morris was not alone in his Romantic-inspired social theory and action in Victorian England.

## 2. Morris's medievalism and the Oxford Movement

One does not need to dig very far into Morris's biography<sup>5</sup> to find evidence of the formative role played in his youth by the Oxford Movement and the contemporary

---

<sup>4</sup> *The Birth of Tragedy* 1872. cf. part 6, ch. 5 of Abrahms' *Natural Supernaturalism* for a resume of the diverse directions taken by the post-Romantics.

<sup>5</sup> I rely in my biographical detail on the definitive biography of Morris, *William Morris: A Life for Our Time*, 1995 by Fiona MacCarthy.

Gothic revival in church architecture. Raised in a well-to-do mercantile family with (by his account) a rather stuffy and conventional piety, the young William's escape was to his fruit-laden gardens, to the idyllic woods around his childhood home Woodford Hall in Essex, and significantly to Sir Walter Scott. He is said to have read everything by Scott that he could get his hands on by the age of nine, and to have taken his boisterous love of the Middle Ages so far as to have had a suit of armour made for him to ride on his pony. The love of the forest seems to have permeated Morris's work, and what C.S. Lewis was to describe in *The Discarded Image* (1964) as the shadowy medieval hinterland of faery and daemon bordering on the transparent classical hierarchy of medieval cosmology was of enduring imaginative force in Morris. There are other hints of the medieval influence on young Morris, the love of buildings and picture that saturate his later work: his awe at his first childhood visit to Canterbury cathedral, his rapture at the first sight of an illuminated manuscript, the wall paintings of the Essex churches within wandering distance of home. His schooldays would see him introduced to Anglo-Catholicism: he found himself at home in Blore's English Gothic revival chapel at Marlborough with its choir ("better than Salisbury") where he was confirmed in 1849, and the assumption was formed at school that he was destined for the Church. The family as a whole were caught up in the movement of that period: one sister was received into the Catholic church in Rome; another went to work in an Anglo-Catholic mission in the Battersea slums. There is circumstantial evidence that Morris cherished a latent anger to his late father's complacent religion and stingy attitude to the local poor, and what Morris perceived as an unmanly life in the City, concerned with exchange and mercantile pursuit rather than a life of imaginative creation; ironically Morris would go on to become a very successful entrepreneur through own productions. Thus there may well have been a reaction of conscience drawing him to a socially active Anglo-Catholicism as well as the pull of an aesthetic that answered to the Romantic Sehnsucht of his childhood.

It was at Exeter College in the immediate aftermath of the Tractarian controversies and Newman's defection that Morris met Edward Burne-Jones, also destined for the Holy Orders, still a fierce partisan of the austere Newman who had taught him to "venture all on the unseen" in an "age of materialism". A glance at the evening reading material of the pair is instructive: *The Tracts for the Times*, J.M. Neale's *History of the Eastern Church*, the *Acta Sanctorum*. They found Tractarian emphasis on ceremonial and the sacraments congenial, and there was a point when they hesitated on whether to follow Archdeacon Wilberforce to Rome in 1854. At the same time they were immersing themselves in medievalism and Arthurian legend through Tennyson's *Morte d'Arthur*, but as embodying a chivalric mode of life to be imitated rather than merely as an aesthetic pleasure. The shared passions with Burne-Jones and others led to plans to set up an artistic monastic community, the "Brotherhood", its patron Sir Galahad, for a "Crusade and Holy Warfare against the age". Against the age meant a life of chastity, a pure aesthetic ideal, of anti-mercantile art united with religious devotion. Such an ideal was in fact attempted at S. Isodoro's, a disused convent in Rome, by the St Luke's Brotherhood, a group of Catholic and German artists who were similar to the pre-Raphaelites in that they believed that the moral purpose of art had degenerated. But it was Ruskin's appreciation of the Gothic in his

*Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849), and Morris's and Burne-Jones's tour of the cathedrals of northern France (among them Amiens, Beauvais, Chartres and Rouen) that were to bring about a dual movement in Morris which he describes as a kind of epiphany. After the walking tour of 1855, his vocation was to Art, and by extension to his fellow man. From henceforward, his enthusiasm for the Tractarians and their dogmas died.

Morris himself gives a clue as to what brought about this obscure but momentous change. His vocation to art with a socialist foundation seems to have been under the influence of Ruskin, who taught him to see the social and artistic freedom that underlay Gothic art: "the signs of the life and liberty of every workman who struck the stone". This is not the only note of Ruskin's *Seven Lamps* to re-echo in *Art and Labour* - compare Ruskin's attack on the monotony of labour in the Victorian industrial system, the alienating divorce of work from leisure, the disintegration of intellect and work. But some kind of inner alteration towards a loss of Christian faith was underway for which the tour of northern France was a catalyst. MacCarthy notes in her biography that the following year Morris wrote a short story "A Night in the Cathedral" for the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*. In the story the narrator (on a walking tour of cathedrals, no less) finds himself accidentally locked in a cathedral. It is the spiritual crisis that this precipitates in the narrator, rather than his vision of ghosts of "knights and sad priests" that give a hint that we are reading autobiography. He sees in the soaring stone "awful, cold beauty - inexpressibly lovely, but with no love for me... I could see the beauty, but could not feel it - at least not as I had felt it of old, when it was almost unmixed delight to me". Morris, already suspected of heterodoxy at Oxford, had crossed the English Channel, after viewing Ely with its typically English higgledy-piggledy style and comfortable juxtaposition of centuries, by which his childhood faith is untroubled, and had come to the vertiginous and terrible beauty of Beauvais and of Chartres: to find (in MacCarthy's words) "that the heart of God had gone from it".

Curiously, although his vocation to art is through the works of Ruskin, the churches of northern France, and the Middle Ages, yet this vocation is accompanied by a loss of faith and a distancing from the Tractarians. It is typical of most of the early Romantics, with their stress on the inner transformation of creative imagination, to react against a lifeless, externalised form of Christianity, of which the arch-typical expression was Paley's divine watchmaker, all divine transcendence and no immanence. In this context one might argue that the early Romantics' secularisation and psychologising of Christian ideas of history into ideas of immanent process were a healthy reaction against a Christianity that was lifeless under the influence of the Enlightenment. But Morris as an Anglo-Catholic in Oxford was not a party to that kind of Christianity. I would suggest that the conflict in Morris is a result of very personal reaction of which we are given a glimpse in "A Night in the Cathedral", and that it should not lead us to wrong conclusions about the relations between Romanticism, the turn to the Middle Ages, and the Oxford Movement. In beginning an exploration of the relation between Morris's medievalism and the Oxford Movement, I would note the following two points. (1) The overall theme of Morris's artistic biography is of a childhood and youth exposed to medieval models mediated through a Romantic lens, from Scott to the pre-Raphaelites, and the ideals and

aesthetic of the Oxford Movement were at least a part of this. Morris's art and craftsmanship develops in a vein that is best expressed as Romantic medievalism, even though his understanding of the Middle Ages has been criticised, but aesthetically at least his work is barely touched by his loss of interest in religion sometime around 1855. (2) The Oxford Movement was not antithetical to Romantic medievalism; in fact, considerable scholarly work has demonstrated that at the theological and philosophical core of the Tractarians' thought is a synthesis through which one can arrive at a deeper understanding of the role of medievalism in Romanticism than the early Romantics achieved.

I do not intend to attempt a demonstration at any length of (1) Morris's Romantic medievalism. There are certainly currents of disenchantment with the Church and religion in his fiction (such as the somewhat cynical and worldly picture of a Pope who has little more profound to offer than simplistic moralising in *The Hill of Venus*<sup>6</sup>). But overall, although his imaginative works are set in some indefinable point and place in the Middle Ages, religion is simply left out. In his later richly suggestive fantasies such as *The Well at the World's End* (1896) or *The Water of the Wondrous Isles* (1897) a kind of natural good magic or faery replace the aid of divine grace for the hero or heroine. In the latter book the good use of nature magic counters the witchery of evil magic that aims at enslavement and frustration of love and life. The magic itself is not evil, it is simply a natural mechanism in Morris's fantasies. The solitary female Witch is darkly possessive and wants to use magic for domination. Freedom for the Virgin under her domination comes through the power of transcendent longing taking the form of Eros, called out by the irresistible yet chaste beauty of the virginal Birdalone in the *The Water of the Wondrous Isles*. Magic is used only by the lovers for loving purposes, never as an end in itself or for domination. There are abundant themes in Morris's poems and later fantasies especially that touch very nearly Romantic concerns for freedom and Enlightenment domination over nature. Morris deals with arcane knowledge (magic or "science"), power and longing, embodied in the symbols of the Woman, the Quest or Voyage prompted by desire, and the Forest as a place of uncultivated Nature and freedom.

The absence of overt religious reference does not make him (aesthetically) less of a medievalist in form: the medieval paradigm of courtly love was to substitute Eros for mystical experience, and the advances of love for religious offices; and the list of classical subjects chosen for the stories of *The Earthly Paradise* would not have shocked the devout Chaucer. As with his formative influences, so with his art: the typical concerns of his literature - transcendent longing expressed through symbols of erotic love, liberty and the power inherent in nature - are Romantic, but are given a medieval dress as his preferred vehicle. In his architecture and designs, Morris, as a follower of Ruskin, drew deliberately on medieval buildings and illustration for his architecture and designs that throng with ordered life, imparting a domesticity to his artistic form, echoing his appreciation of the "measured, mingled, varied" and "serious" English landscape, "abundant of meaning for those who choose to seek it", which is "neither a prison nor a palace, but a decent home".

---

<sup>6</sup> From *The Earthly Paradise*, published 1868-1870.

What of the claim (2) that there are resources in the Oxford Movement for making sense of the attraction of the Middle Ages for the Romantics, and can give shape to a Romantic philosophy that organically integrates the various conflicting movements, artistic and social, to which Romanticism gave birth, and of which Morris's life and work is an example? The conceptual groundwork for such an attempt has been laid by (among others) Owen Chadwick in his study *The Spirit of the Oxford Movement* (1990), in a thematic study of the catholic revival in Anglicanism, *The Vision Glorious* (1983) by the late Bp. Geoffrey Rowell, and in David Haney's *William Wordsworth and the Hermeneutics of Incarnation* (1993). These works have been brilliantly drawn together in an unpublished but frequently cited 2001 MA thesis on Romanticism and the Oxford Movement<sup>7</sup> by Christopher Snook. I am indebted to Snook's thesis for much of what follows.

Hurrell Froude was possibly the only full-blooded Romantic medievalist among the Tractarians, and his sonnet *Farewell to Toryism* (1833) could stand beside the opening of Novalis's *Christendom or Europe* for naivety: "The Feudal court, the Patriarchal sway / Of kings, the cheerful homage of a land / Unskill'd in treason, every social band / That taught to rule with sweetness, and obey". The influence of literary Romanticism within the mainly (at least at its beginnings) theological movement, however, was profound, though not usually so overtly expressed. Rowell in *The Vision Glorious* rightly notes that the context of the Oxford Movement was the - like Romanticism - a "reaction against the aridity of eighteenth-century rationalist discourse", and that attention to the neglected sermons of the Tractarian leaders reveal an exploration of the "the subjective and the place of imagination and deep feeling in relation to both faith and reason". Owen Chadwick concurs. It was more "a Movement of the heart than the head", for although it was "earnestly dogmatic" it "always saw dogma in relation to worship, to the numinous, to the movement of the heart.... to the immediate experience of the hidden hand of God". It was English Romanticism, typified by Wordsworth and Coleridge, that would influence the Tractarians most directly, although it is also worth noting that E.B. Pusey (like Coleridge thirty years earlier) studied in Germany under Johann Eichorn in both 1825 and 1826, and had been influenced by the thought of Friedrich Schleiermacher. Pusey found in Schleiermacher the notion of a distinct faculty which was neither aroused religious emotion, nor discursive reason, but an *Empfindung* or "feeling intellect" that was analogous to Coleridge's concept of the mediating Imagination<sup>8</sup>.

Snook argues that although the Tractarians were reserved about Coleridge's philosophy - J.H. Newman talks of his indulgence in a "liberty of speculation, which no Christian can tolerate" - he provided them, Pusey in particular, with "a language and a theory of knowledge in which to articulate" an "increasingly sacramental vision of the world, and the one which corresponded closely with its notion of God's "reserved" manifestation of Himself in nature, the Sacraments, and the Church". Coleridge's precise significance here lies in his re-moulding of German idealism and

---

<sup>7</sup> "*Thy Word is all, if we could spell*": *Romanticism, Tractarian Aesthetics and E.B. Pusey's Sermons on Solemn Subjects*: to read this thesis in full, the web address is <file:///C:/Users/User/Documents/snook.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> See Leighton Frappell's "'Science' in the Service of Orthodoxy: The Early Intellectual Development of E.B. Pusey", in *Pusey Rediscovered* (1993) SPCK.

Romanticism, departing from "their man-centred subjective individualism" in his theory of knowledge which "accounts for the formation of self-consciousness as dependent upon the *prior* existence of a Supreme Being". In articulating this theory, Coleridge was - as a Romantic - trying to overcome the divorce of matter and spirit, subject and object, into a more "dynamic vision". His (Coleridge's) experience of having a consciousness at all, and of having a unity of consciousness implies a God prior to and implicated in "all particular modes of being"<sup>9</sup> Thus God's priority is internal; He does not stand related to us as an external object, but rather the Divine Mind is constitutive of consciousness. Thus there is no incontestable certainty of the existence of God achievable through discursive reason alone; but "Nature excites" our belief "as by a perpetual revelation"<sup>10</sup>. Greater objective intellectual certainty would reduce moral effectiveness, as we would be compelled to a cold and worthless assent. God is present to us, in the evidence of our feelings and the prompting of conscience, but assent to Him still requires an act of will. Whilst Coleridge's account of faith reverberates in Pusey's thought, it is perhaps Coleridge's philosophy of Imagination that had the most profound impact on Tractarian thought.

The Imagination for Coleridge is a mediating power, the repetition of the divine I AM in the human soul, by which the circular energy of Reason and the "flux of the Senses" are married, giving "birth to a system of symbols, harmonious in themselves, and consubstantial with the truths, of which they are the *conductors*"<sup>11</sup>. Just as Christ's work in Creation, and in a higher key the Incarnation, reconciled the divine Spirit and matter, we too participate in the divine Act in our perception of the world through Imagination, and we behold in the symbols their divine Author. The perceiving mind does not create. Snook again: "the perceiving mind is a necessary aspect of noting the Divine, what it traces inheres in the object it identifies." The Imagination perceives the world symbolically. Symbol is not mere allegory, denoting another object, but speaks of the Reality as a whole, of which it abides as a living part. Symbol is characterised by "the translucence of the Eternal through and in the Temporal"<sup>12</sup>. For the Tractarians, the archetypal symbols are the sacraments and the visible Church. However Brittain rightly points out that in Tractarian thought the symbolical nature of reality spills over into nature: the "perichoresis (coinherence) between God and Creation is not limited to the bread and wine laid upon the altar", but the world is also a sacrament, an epiphany, such that "comprehending that beauty was a reception of Grace"<sup>13</sup>. To recapitulate, then: Coleridge gave the Oxford Movement a philosophy that translated Romanticism not merely into a Christian idiom, but that moved the Incarnation to a central position and grounded their theological conceptions of belief in God, symbol and sacrament, and resonated with

---

<sup>9</sup> *Biographia Literaria*, 1817.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> *On the Constitution of the Church and State According to the Idea of Each*, 1830.

<sup>12</sup> From *On the Constitution of the Church and State According to the Idea of Each*, 1830.

<sup>13</sup> M.C. Brittain, "God's Better Beauty: Hopkins, Pusey and Tractarian Aesthetics." *Christianity and Literature* 40.1 (1990): 7-22. Cited in Snook.

their idea of an approach to God by the feeling intellect, rather than either naked reason or sentiment.

If Coleridge's freedom of theological speculation made the Tractarians wary, ironically Wordsworth - much more pantheistic in his underlying philosophy - met with a warm reception. Wordsworth's preference for the humble and the outcast as well as his love of nature may well have had something to do with this: Keble's dedication to his *Lectures* commend the "Inspired Poet" who never ceased to "champion the cause of the poor and simple". But more than this, Wordsworth's theory of poetic (linguistic) expression was incarnational: Nature, argues R.E. Brantley, is for Wordsworth a "textual site"<sup>14</sup>, material language. The work of the poet who translates thought to word is not just akin to, it is a participation in the Divine mystery of the Word made Flesh in the Incarnation. Snook notes that Wordsworth's incarnational theory of poetics (and therefore language) gave the Tractarians a "central dogmatic principle around which to organise their theories of language and nature". Inspired by Wordsworth's intimations of the divine in poems such as *Tintern Abbey*, Keble argues in his *Lectures on Poetry* (given 1832-41) that the "poetical interpretation of natural phenomena in which all things are invested with higher associations" could lead to the moral "'healing' of the soul" and ultimately "to the acceptance of the *mystical* or *prophetical* interpretation, in which all visible objects are regarded as 'shadows of the good and true things to come'<sup>15</sup>. Keble argues that "Poetry lends Religion her wealth of symbols and similes: Religion restores these again to Poetry, clothed with so splendid a radiance that they appear to be no longer merely symbols, but to partake (I might almost say) of the nature of sacraments". The reference to the sacraments is an emphasis - again borrowed from Wordsworth - on the materiality of poetic language: note Wordsworth's statement, "if words be not an incarnation of the thought but only a clothing for it, then surely will they prove an ill gift." They are also a statement of the effectiveness of language - language, like the sacraments, communicates to us that which it symbolises. The Tractarians saw no radical division between poetic and theological or Scriptural language in this regard. Newman writes "every word of Revelation... is the outward form of a heavenly truth, and in this sense a mystery or Sacrament... which we can only" - to a greater or lesser extent "enter in to." The confession of the Articles of the Creed, for example, joins us to something "incomprehensible in its depth". Words are the mediate term between Coleridge's Imagination and its activity within us and the world.

A note of warning is sounded by Wordsworth on the potential of language to be mere dress of thoughts rather than an incarnation of thought: by its incomplete nature and vagueness, its subjection to misuse and decay in meaning. Even at best our attempts to express the nature of God are stammering, though in language "God condescends to our finitude".<sup>16</sup> Wordsworth's sober assessment is that "Language, if

---

<sup>14</sup> In *Wordsworth's Natural Methodism*, 1975. Cited in Snook.

<sup>15</sup> This statement of Keble seems to rely heavily on the traditional four senses of Scriptural interpretation - he moves from nature (the "literal" interpretation) to the poetical (or "allegorical" in general) to the moral (allegory tailored to the individual soul) to the mystical (the "anagogical" or properly symbolic interpretation which points prophetically to the Age to Come).

<sup>16</sup> From Rowell's *The Vision Glorious*.

it do not uphold, and feed, and leave in quiet, like the power of gravitation or the air we breathe, is a counter-spirit, unremittingly and noiselessly at work to derange, to subvert, to lay waste, to vitiate, and to dissolve." Snook argues that the Tractarian's use of symbolic language, embodied in their sermons, accepts and overcomes this inherent weakness of language: of which more shortly.

Pusey's unpublished *Lectures on Types and Prophecies*<sup>17</sup> draws together the two strands outlined above (1) Coleridge's making of aesthetics, or the act of creative Imagination, both contingent on and participating in the divine Act by which our consciousness is constituted, and (2) the alignment of poetical and spiritual perception and life, so that we are (by Newman) "bid to colour all things with hues of faith" as a response to the divine creativity by which God has invested all material things with holy meanings (Keble)<sup>18</sup>. The Tractarians famously articulated the principle of reserve: God's revelation of Himself is simultaneously a veil. The mysteriousness of His presence in nature "corresponds to the way He reveals Himself in sacred Scripture and in the Incarnation: in the one, he appears as a pillar of fire... in the other, He appears with His divine glory veiled by human flesh"<sup>19</sup>. If reserve is God's method of revelation, then analogy grounds our recognition of the eternal truths to which nature witnesses. Pusey in his *Lectures* notes that when a poet such as Wordsworth or Keble tries out such correspondences between nature and the divine, we recognise these as true and not merely beautiful: our imagination traces out a correspondence that is inherent in the objects through their divine author. Pusey's *Lectures* on typology move analogy into the realm of Scriptural hermeneutic. The "type" in the Old Testament - such as Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac - prefigures the New Testament anti-type - in this case, Christ's sacrificial death on the cross. The Tractarians revived the patristic practice of typology and allowed a type to prefigure multiple anti-types, including the Church and the sacraments as well as Christ, on the basis that what refers to Christ primarily refers also to His mystical body and its sacramental acts. In a reversal of the order of types, Pusey reads typology backwards: the ultimate anti-type (the Incarnate Christ) is the complete meaning of Scripture, but also the symbols of nature and nature as a whole. In Snook's phrase, "what we read *through* Christ is Christ", or to quote Pusey himself, the most "insignificant detail" of the word of Scripture and creation are "penetrated with Him". For Pusey, so to read Scripture and by extension nature sanctifies our imagination and so provides a gracious stimulus to our will. Thus - through the Tractarian concepts of reserve, analogy and typology - Pusey achieves in the *Lectures* a synthesis of Scriptural interpretation, aesthetics, the nature of language, consciousness and the life of faith.

One final step needs to be taken to gain a point from which to survey the ground and see where William Morris, the medievalism of the Romantic movement more generally, and the Oxford Movement are situated in relation to each other. Snook

---

<sup>17</sup> These are in the archive at Pusey House: I have been able to obtain only excerpts and a digest of the *Lectures* via a doctoral thesis. See G.D. Westhaver's *The Living Body of the Lord: E.B. Pusey's 'Types and Prophecies of the Old Testament'*, 2012 at the following address: <http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/6373/>

<sup>18</sup> See Tract 89 of *Tracts for the Times*.

<sup>19</sup> Snook.

advances the thesis that the Tractarian sermons grapple in a practical way with Wordsworth's fear that language can be misused, that it will mislead, shift its meaning, or even dissolve and destroy it. The language of science or the dissection of philosophical analysis will fix language as a dead sign of a mechanised nature or abstract concept, rather than letting it "feed and uphold" as an incarnate and living vehicle of Imagination. However theology faces a difficulty, and more so than science: how (within creedal Christianity) is one to limit and define the meaning of symbols whose meanings are unstable, capable of misappropriation, and potentially misleading, without stripping them of their power to symbolise and therefore taking away their efficacy for the believer? There is both a moral and an intellectual dimension to this difficulty: the words of the Christian faith may be rejected, and also the theologian must reject our intellectual grasp of each successive symbol of the faith as a complete grasp of the divine. On the moral side, Snook places Pusey sermons in the context of the believer's repentance and new life of faith, as a saving participation in the death and resurrection of Christ. Our spiritual lack is our failure to respond in heart to the words that we receive as merely representative, or our misunderstanding, or rejection of the symbols spoken to us - both are a failure of the word that (in an incarnational theory of the language) corresponds to the crucifixion of Christ. Our repentance is an acknowledgment of this lack, awakened by the central symbol of Christ's passion and death, and gives us back the symbols of Christian faith in a renewed and vivified realisation of their power. In the faith that follows repentance we partake in the life of the resurrected Christ by uniting ourselves again to the symbols of His life. On the intellectual side, Pusey's sermons pile symbol upon successive symbol, our grasp of each symbol being set aside in turn as inadequate, and thus each image undergoes a kind of death. Our need and fulfilment in Christ parallels the simultaneous lack and plenitude of theological language: Christ's actual death and resurrection and the words of the Gospel interpenetrate each other because of the sacramental power of language.

The Tractarian synthesis, with Pusey its most fulsome exponent, recalls the Neoplatonic and Romantic motif of the upward spiral of *Universalgeschichte*. The Romantic motif is the re-integration of our social fragmentation and alienation from ourselves and Nature in a higher key than our primitive and instinctive unity. The structure of the return to unity achieved by the synthesis of aesthetic, linguistic and theological theory in the Oxford Movement leads to a radical alteration in this movement. Instead of being a self-moved and immanent process, the Incarnation, and the Cross and Resurrection, are the fulcrum and influx of divine grace that turns the circle back to God. Man participates in the movement, but is not its initiator; the Spirit is immanent within Nature, history and consciousness, but is also emphatically transcendent, hovering above the waters into which the Word will utter the divine speech of Imagination. The early Romantics reacted against the mechanistic and extrinsic deity of the eighteenth century, but kept its ideas of human self-perfectibility; *via* Coleridge, the Tractarians restored the traditional Christian ideas of divine transcendence and human helplessness, without rejecting the healthy spirit in the Romantic reaction. The upward spiral from Eden to the New Jerusalem can (in the Tractarians' terms) accommodate the downward fall, social disintegration and alienation of Romanticism, but the upward movement must also include repentance,

the Gospel, inner transformation issuing in a holy life, a restored vision of created nature as sacrament, and yearning for the infinite through the finite.

### Conclusion

In the new light shed by Snook's claims about the Tractarian achievement can we uncover any deeper reasons for the medievalism of the Romantic movement beyond Novalis's deliberate naivety about the golden Middle Ages, as a stand-in for a child-like state of innocence, and obedient social harmony from which Western society has fallen? By excavating the substructure of Romantic aesthetic, I think that several of the main pillars that uphold its edifice can be seen to be medieval in form, and I would like to make several suggestions in conclusion.

(1) I would suggest that the link (in the Tractarian synthesis) to the patristic interpretation of Scripture is one such pillar. The literal words of Scripture (or the material symbols of nature) are a type providing a sacramental participation in their originating anti-type (Christ, the divine Word of God) *when they are so read* through the divinely given faculty of Imagination, bringing about moral transformation and eventually leading one to the fullness of the divine life. This rich typological approach to Scripture - and also created nature - in the Church Fathers was defining schema that underpinned medieval philosophy and aesthetic. The medieval aesthetic expresses the sense that each created thing is a distinct symbol of the divine, that each thing has the dignity of being individuated and is yet related to all the others, and that the relation of each thing to the whole is within a hierarchically ordered movement of upward aspiration to its Maker. The elements of both downward Incarnation and upward Neoplatonic ascent are both incorporated, driven from within by divine Life, and turning crucially upon the insufficiency of each individual symbol. When the Romantics searched for a congenial aesthetic, the Middle Ages seemed to answer most clearly to their need for a Nature indwelt by Imagination and Life, and in which things were integral and organic symbols and not machines - mainly (on this reading) because the Romantic philosophy was simultaneously an internalisation and a secularised expression of Christian ideas of creation and history. This is the aesthetic that William Morris found thronging with life in the cathedrals of Chartres and Beauvais, and is the aesthetic that informs his own works of art. If we are fortunate enough to see the "first signs of life", however rude and simple, re-emerge in a movement of art or literature or architecture in our lifetime, I suspect that the same actuating and energising philosophy will be, consciously or unconsciously, at its root.

(2) The idea of the social structure of medieval society reproduces the conception of individual created dignity (Man was the completed *Imago Dei* in the paradise of Eden) and hierarchical ordering, and is correlative to the aesthetic vision<sup>20</sup>. As Morris

---

<sup>20</sup> I stress that I refer here to the idea of medieval social structure rather than its reality. Its actual existence in anything like the ideal in the thirteenth century for example is partly irrelevant. A controlling social ideal can exert an imaginative hold over the society in which it is poorly put into practice: witness our own ideal of "democracy" which most people would agree is not sufficiently incarnated in our political institutions, but which most people would point to as a system of government which they are proud to have.

intuited in his throwaway remark about free man creating beautiful things just as nature does, the aesthetic vision (the craftsman in the Middle Ages producing art with the unconscious beauty of nature) and the social structure indwell each other. In one sense it is irrelevant as to whether or not the particular freedom of the medieval craftsman achieved through his slow release from serfdom was a mere accident of social evolution, or whether it was achieved in part through the dogmas of the dignity of every human as an Image of God. What matters is that the social freedom that Morris saw as essential for real art allowed the craftsmen of the Middle Ages the free agency to express an aesthetic which was the immanent ideal of "nature", because the idea of the medieval social order and the medieval idea of nature were made of the same vision. Morris is right in *Art and Labour* to say that the art of the Middle Ages is "natural", but it seems to me that he is completely wrong-headed to exclude the medieval man's religion from his definition of nature. This particular failure of Morris's aesthetic theory in the essay is most likely intrinsic to his obscure reaction against Christian dogma and practice, and his adoption of socialism as his new religion in his laudable concern for the dignity and freedom of his countrymen, whilst inconsistently maintaining a medieval Romanticism in his art which had Christianity as its foundation. What seems particularly Christian about Morris is his insistence that every humble craft - the transforming work of human hands on nature for pleasure - is truly art. However, it does not seem in retrospect to have been necessary for Morris to abandon the Tractarian cause to work for the causes he espoused, though perhaps as an artist rather than as a priest. The Tractarian vision and aesthetic included within in it a richly incarnational understanding of the Church as a visible sacrament, an organic life spreading its boughs and branches into every facet of daily human life, of which the interpenetrated church and society of the Middle Ages was an ideal symbol. The intellectual theology of the Oxford Movement, as is well documented, overflowed therefore into hard work in the slum mission churches and parishes, in the areas and social strata most blackened and disenchanting by the industrial age, while Morris became an entrepreneur patronised by the middle classes. This is not a jibe at Morris, but a simple statement of fact that while Morris could not escape from participating in the social evils of his era - none of us ever can - his ideal was put into practice in an exemplary way by the religion that he left behind.

(3) Finally, I would like to suggest that a third medieval pillar of Romanticism is the image of erotic desire for a burning love for God, translated by the early Romantics into a desire for Plotinus's "fire for which all thirst", a longing that brings in its wake true self-knowledge. This recurrent image in the work of early and later Romantics is a veil through which the medieval and Christian lineaments can be clearly discerned. It is present in an early work of William Morris, his short story *The Hollow Land* (1856), that emerged from his period of personal crisis and artistic vocation. It tells the story of divine vengeance on a blood-soaked feudal house who ask fearfully, as the *simulacra* of their enemies pursue them over the edge of a chasm: "Had our house been the devil's servants all along? I thought we were God's servants." But it is in the loveliness of the Hollow Land into which the narrator falls that the purgatorial power of love is known, forgiveness is realised, true art is achieved, and the beloved and (through the beloved) the self is rediscovered in Joy. In the Hollow Land the

beauty of nature is experienced as a thing remembered when found, but somehow inexplicably forgotten among the cares and violence of a feudal life. The progressive stages of the narrator's return could easily stand for the Romantic idea of a return to Eden, but with gains: and for the fundamentally Christian idea of the final return to an Eden that is also a New Jerusalem, in which stands the tree of life laden with healing fruit. The ending of William Morris's *The Hollow Land* plays on the Romantic trope repeated memorably in T.S. Eliot's *Little Giddings*: "the end of all our exploring/ Will be to arrive where we started/ And know the place for the first time", but with the addition of love to the moment of recognition. In Morris the lovers realise that they have been here before long ago, as they stand trembling before the gates in the golden "hollow city" in the hollow land; but there is the recognition of a prior moment they have seen each other this way, reflected in each other's eyes, long and long ago. Prior to this consummation, on his return to the Hollow Land in old age and death, the narrator meets and forgives his enemy, whom he realises is very like his murdered brother. These two old enemies are deeply reconciled through painting together of God's judgments, and by a common vision of grief and death; there are deeply Christian undertones here of a passage back to paradise that comes about through a chivalric fellowship that is united in its forgiveness, and through a cleansing vision of sin and death. One might say that the prophetic power of the story lies in its introduction of this intervening narrative of forgiveness and death as a necessary prelude to the final return to the Hollow Land; just as the Tractarians saw the need for passion and death within the Romantic imaginative vision, in their configuration of the Romantic idea to the One who said that without dying, life cannot be had.

## Modern Romantic Medievalism

Rev'd Anthony Chadwick

*In loving memory of Dr Raymond Winch (1921-2001)*

### Introduction

It is a known fact that the gothic revival, the liturgical movement, monasticism and Anglo-Catholicism owe their existence to Romanticism. This subject would be absolutely huge and insuperable except for my decision to identify and describe it as it still subsists in our own time. Romanticised medievalism on the face of things commits the fundamental error of historical anachronism, as one might be tempted to claim. There was only one middle age in history, surely, and that period has passed. From a historian's point of view, that is the only position possible.

At the root of Romanticism in the eighteenth century was a criticism of the Enlightenment in its emphasis on reason and abstract principles. For the Romantics, classical thought lacked humanity, emotion, imagination, love and beauty. Interestingly, this was not a reaction but a quest for a third and new way between the Scylla of obscurantist religion and the Charybdis of materialism. They inherited many Enlightenment aspects that founded the French Revolution like the individual person, equality, freedom and criticism of authority, but found that these ideals had become too abstract. There needed to be an alternative world view.

Romantics yearned for a forgotten world, as did many nineteenth-century clerics, scholars, artists and architects. The Romantics often offered a notion that might have been quite far from the reality as it was historically, and here my friend in Oxford saw his role. This is a lesson we will learn when reading *Die Christenheit oder Europe*<sup>21</sup> written by Novalis (Friedrich von Hardenberg, 1772-1801) in 1799 with what appear to be serious historical errors. This piece could well be rejected with a considerable amount of contempt by the historian or by those who have been exposed to a very stale version of French Traditionalism. What Novalis wrote was a parable of sorts, not a historical account of the middle ages or a dream of a revival of the old regime. We also need to consider the historical context of the year 1799 and the state of war between France, Prussia, England and just about everywhere else.

The Idealists like Kant and Fichte sought ways towards peace, but for the Romantics like Schlegel and Novalis, there needed to be a more human element. Novalis worked out a new form of cosmopolitanism in this fragment to be read to the Romantic circle in Jena. As he sought to replace the cold and abstract Enlightenment principles with more human considerations, he used the idea of a medieval period as

---

<sup>21</sup> Pauline Kleingeld, *Romantic Cosmopolitanism: Novalis's "Christianity or Europe"*, in: *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, vol. 46, no. 2 (2008) 269-84.

an image to illustrate these founding ideas. This fired the imagination irreversibly up to our own times.

Romanticism was a very wide category encompassing not only philosophy, but also many different currents everywhere in Europe, analogous to each other but extremely diverse. The French critic Emile Faguet wrote that

*The basis of Romanticism is a horror of reality and a desire to escape from it ... [a desire] to liberate oneself from the real by means of the imagination, to liberate oneself again through solitude and by retiring into the sanctuary of personal feeling*<sup>22</sup>.

That is certainly a characteristic of my own life as I know myself, but I find that such an idea is far from general. However, this is only a superficial view of the issue. What is reality? What is truth? These are questions of philosophy, and at least the German Romantics were no intellectual lightweights. Romanticism is not so much a fugue from someone's reality, but rather a quest for another level of reality beyond that of materialism and empirical rationalism. The Romantic feels that the finite does not justify itself, but that there is some kind of Absolute, whether you call this God or something else. Another characteristic is to see the sublime and the universal in symbols and small elements of daily life.

How did the idea of appealing to the Middle Ages come in? It seems to have been a kind of rebellion from the classicism and certitudes of their era in seeing a distant era. The Romantic Middle Age is unashamedly an invention. Religion remained free from the criticism of the Enlightenment and could only be true in subjective terms. This was an ideal starting point for the Romantic. Immediately the nineteenth-century religious world was split between the subjective and neo orthodoxy. Jesus Christ is the man who would most reflect the Romantic tragedy, *Sehnsucht* and unworldliness. Medievalism was born. Tradition embodied continuity and personified a sense of permanence. One part of the longing and yearning of Romanticism was getting over the barriers of time. Novalis began his fragment:

*Those were beautiful, magnificent times, when Europe was a Christian land, when one Christianity dwelled on this civilized continent, and when one common interest joined the most distant provinces of this vast spiritual empire*<sup>23</sup>.

This sentiment was shared by Chateaubriand and Sir Walter Scott. Catholicism found a new vitality in Maistre and Lamennais among others, though these characters would eventually be condemned as Liberals and Traditionalists<sup>24</sup>. This very same movement converged with the Oxford Movement in spite of the distance between French Catholicism and Anglicanism. It is a paradox that the individualism of Romanticism would be so uncritical in regard to authority and dogmatic traditionalism. The movement in France would lead to Ultramontanism under Pius

---

<sup>22</sup> Bernard M.G. Reardon, *Religion in the Age of Romanticism*, Cambridge 1985, p 3.

<sup>23</sup> Novalis, *Die Christenheit oder Europa*. In German: *Es waren schöne glänzende Zeiten, wo Europa ein christliches Land war, wo Eine Christenheit diesen menschlich gestalteten Welttheil bewohnte; Ein großes gemeinschaftliches Interesse verband die entlegensten Provinzen dieses weiten geistlichen Reichs*.

<sup>24</sup> Traditionalism in this context refers to a theory which held that all metaphysical, moral, and religious knowledge derives from God's revelation to man and is handed down in an unbroken chain of tradition. It denied the possibility of human reason by itself to have the power to attain to any truths in these domains.

IX, the *intégriste* reaction against Modernism and the movement of Archbishop Lefebvre in the 1970's. It is the very antithesis of the libertinarianism of Byron and Shelley. Thus French Romanticism took a very different direction from the German and English versions I find more appealing. Lamennais the Ultramontanist must have got the nastiest surprise of his life when he was condemned by Pope Gregory XVI! He abandoned Christianity altogether at the end of his life.

If that is Romantic medievalism, it would seem not to be very healthy. Newman began with an energetic opposition to "liberalism", the so-called "anti-dogmatic principle". This notion of liberalism was based on the idea that no one should believe what he does not understand or when there is no proof. Newman's Romanticism appealed to tradition and "organic development". There had to be room for mysteries, miracles and faith in the world of classical rationalism. Like the French, Newman appealed to ecclesiastical authority but with more doubt and scepticism. Medievalism actually went much further than religion and sought to revive the ideals of chivalry and literature based on Arthurian romance. In this essay, I will stick to themes that are directly relevant to Christianity and religion.

Early Romanticism and the Oxford Movement were mainly philosophical and theological respectively. In practical terms, in his Anglican days, Newman did little more than set up the little community of Littlemore. This was little more than a retreat house where Newman could write and lead a contemplative life.

The next stage was the Gothic Revival movement and Ritualism which only began after Newman became a Roman Catholic. The former spread over the entire European continent, whilst Ritualism only concerned a small tendency within Anglicanism. After the clearly caricatured style of Strawberry Hill Gothic, the first churches were built in gothic style from the early nineteenth century. The revival was centred largely on the Anglo-Catholic movement and the emancipation of Roman Catholicism. Augustus Welby Pugin (1812 - 1852) was the first architect to be seriously concerned by the Romantic roots of this desire for a "new middle age". He was enormously successful and built a number of Roman Catholic cathedrals and parish churches, and even the Houses of Parliament. He incorporated many features that had been removed from medieval churches at the Reformation, especially the Rood screen and stained glass. Eugène Viollet-le-Duc (1814 - 1879) was largely Pugin's French counterpart, and their styles were quite similar. The movement spread to Germany and even to the United States. Gothic architecture was better studied towards the end of the nineteenth century, and we have many treasures in England of men like Gilbert-Scott and George Frederick Bodley. The apotheosis came with the Arts & Crafts era.

While we are still in the mid nineteenth century, the subject of Ritualism is important. It marked a division between those who aspired to reunion with Rome and those who aspired to a gothic revival, namely the revival of pre-Reformation liturgical norms and ceremonies. Ritualism is seen as the practical aspect of what the Tractarians represented in terms of theological development. This was largely a matter of parish priests. The first steps were timid, to avoid too much opposition from the bigots, beginning with an altar frontal and a stole over the surplice. Newman began to use altar candles and a mixed chalice (a drop of water in the wine)

in 1837. The “eastward position” was first adopted in about 1840. The rite was still the strict 1662 Prayer Book. Without going into details, Ritualism became much more controversial towards the 1860’s and clergy were sometimes sanctioned and even imprisoned for illegal liturgical practices. Examples of parishes where this happened were St George in the East and St Alban’s Holborn and Fr Alexander Heriot Mackonochie (1825 – 1887). More often than not, the style of the liturgy tended to emulate the Roman Catholic Church and evolved towards a concept known as Anglo-Papalism.

At about the same time, some clergy showed interest in the pre-Reformation uses, especially that of Sarum. In 1861, Dickinson produced a complete edition of the Sarum missal in Latin <sup>25</sup>. The Sarum missal was translated into English a few years later <sup>26</sup>. Canon Frederick Warren did a nicer translation in 1911 <sup>27</sup>. This assiduous work was not limited to making the Sarum texts available, but became an entire “English Use” movement. John Mason Neale pushed for a full-scale medieval revival. The Victorian mind being both pragmatic and eclectic, some of those men published liturgies that amalgamated historical sources, contemporary Roman Catholic practice, the compulsory Prayer Book and whatever they fancied. The other forgotten Uses of England were plundered for material to fill in the gaps. Scholarship was what it was in those days, and the movement continues to this day, in particular by the Canadian musicologist Dr William Renwick. I have myself attempted to collate information on the internet <sup>28</sup>.

I know of no example of a complete Sarum revival in the nineteenth century. Percy Dearmer (1867 – 1936) came the closest to this ideal, but retained the Prayer Book rite out of legalism and unwillingness to incur the wrath of his Bishop. His famous book was the *Parson’s Handbook*, and other works include Vernon Staley’s *Ceremonies of the English Church* and W. H. Frere’s *Principals of Religious Ceremonial*.

Romanticism took another meander in the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, a group of English painters, poets and critics. They rejected the classical and “mechanistic” approach to art of the Mannerists who succeeded Michelangelo and Raphael. Through William Morris (1834-1896) who sympathised with the Pre-Raphaelite movement, the Arts and Crafts movement took hold. This movement mostly concerned domestic homes and their furnishing. The style was sober in a marked contrast to the fussy Victorian interior. However impractical the idea was of offering affordable art to the masses whilst making it by hand, the Romantic roots are easily discernible.

The Arts & Crafts movement was not simply a medievalist or romantic movement. It was resolutely modern and post-industrial. I feel in my deepest being that a movement based on this philosophy would be what is needed today as man is moving inexorably towards ever more godless totalitarian dystopias and the loss of

---

<sup>25</sup> Francis Henry Dickinson (ed.), *Missale ad usum insignis et praeclarae ecclesiae Sarum*, Burntisland 1861.

<sup>26</sup> A. Harford Pearson, *The Sarum Missal done into English*, London 1884.

<sup>27</sup> Frederick Warren, *The Sarum missal in English*, London 1911.

<sup>28</sup> [http://civitas-dei.eu/sarum\\_index.htm](http://civitas-dei.eu/sarum_index.htm)

his spiritual soul and his very humanity. What is characteristic in the artistic and aesthetic dimension of this movement is simplicity of design and work by hand. Like Hilaire Belloc and Chesterton, this movement gave a link to the medieval artisan guilds. One may find a considerable interest in Chinese and Japanese art and their influences in the Art Nouveau. Perhaps what brought the movement to a premature end was not only the war of 1914, but also its failure to produce arts and furnishings for the people. Hand-made things are a luxury and only well-to-do people can afford them. The very purpose of industrialisation has been to mass-produce consumer goods at affordable prices. There is the irony.

We can see here that the movement's best work was not consumer goods for private clients but buildings of public utility like libraries and churches. When creation was of more universal appeal, the underlying idea found its coherence and beauty. In music, there was a folk song revival at the end of the nineteenth century as composers sought their English identity. Gustav Holst and Ralph Vaughan Williams were uppermost in their work in collating traditional songs and incorporating their melodies in their compositions. In passing, I mentioned Percy Dearmer. He and Vaughan Williams worked together to create the *English Hymnal* in 1906, bringing folk-song tunes and plainsong to take their place alongside the old favourite Anglican hymns we all love.

Few know that this movement inspired the National Trust and many associations and societies that care for rural England and ancient buildings. New towns of the early twentieth century were designed to combine the convenience of living in town with closeness to nature.

It is good to outline the influence of the Arts & Crafts movement in the Church. What Sir Edwin Lutyens (1869 - 1944) and Sir John Ninian Comper (1864-1960) were for architecture, Dearmer was for English church furnishings and the liturgy. Some specialists in Victorian and Edwardian neo-medieval architecture denigrate Dearmer and the Wareham Guild, but the key to understanding this man and his work is the cultural movement in which he was situated. He was not a "medieval purist", but a man of his time. He emphasised art and beauty in worship. In the *Parson's Handbook*, his goal was to help in "remedying the lamentable confusion, lawlessness, and vulgarity which are conspicuous in the Church at this time". Perhaps he was aiming his invective against baroque altars that symbolised Anglo-Papalism. Dearmer wrote books on English altar followed by illustrations of altars produced by the Wareham Guild or others working to similar standards.

When I trace this long development of an idea from the 1790's to the beginning of the century in which I was born, I am forced to affirm that the Romantic movement never left us. It is the reaction of the human being against any culture that tries to "abolish" man as C.S. Lewis would have put it. Every time a culture of abstract rationalism and materialism rules our world, there will be a reaction from the bowels of our very humanity. This is Romanticism. This essay is essentially about a man who lived in our own time, but yet in another world.

## Dr Ray Winch

In our own time, we occasionally come across oddly dressed bachelors riding bicycles around university towns in England. Others may appear a little less eccentric. I cannot generalise for all. I first met Dr Raymond Winch during Holy Week in 1988. During a visit to Blackwell's Bookshop, I found a publication of the Gregorian Club giving the address of a modest Victorian terraced house in Oxford. I went and knocked on the door and was greeted by this friendly academic in his 60's. He was as eccentric as they come, living in an untidy and messy house. I was an undergraduate at Fribourg in those days. He was an academic liturgical scholar with a doctorate in philosophy and many years experience in school and university teaching. His real subject was philosophy. Most people sleep at night. He and I would talk until daybreak, and until I was too sleepy to continue.

From the first time I met him during Holy Week (western) 1988 until his death in 2000, I counted him among my personal friends. I usually dropped in to see him when I was travelling between the south of England and my parents' home up north. I also enjoyed days in Oxford and especially in the churches, college chapels and the bookshops. Ray's conviction in Orthodoxy was already fading in the 1990's, and he did not encourage me to seek out any "solution" with Orthodoxy. It was frustrating to me that the idea would remain academic. Since then, there have been successful initiatives in the Antiochian Church in the USA, and the Russian Church outside Russia has something, of which there are some small congregations in England – quite comparable to ours in the Anglican Catholic Church. I abandoned any serious idea about Western Orthodoxy from about 1999. I try to be courteous with those who believe they have found the "true church", but to me it is little more than hyperbole and ideology. I was sad for Ray towards the end of his life when he was attending Roman Catholic masses, but the "punch" had gone from him. He requested a secular funeral, at which I was not present, living as I was at the time in western France.

When approaching this subject, I had the idea of trying to complete the work he left unfinished at the time of his death. I possess only a few fragments and letters, and this would hardly give me the plan and bibliography needed to do him justice. Instead of attempting to do his work, it seemed the right thing simply to write about him and what he seemed to live for. I have no idea about whether Ray was a Romantic, but he certainly was a medievalist down to his black cape and hairstyle. It was my regret not to be able to spend time by writing his ideas down and collecting his notes and references from the libraries in Oxford he consulted. Over many years he was concerned with parish life in the last decades of pre-Reformation parish life in England and a comparison with Roman Catholic parish life up to the reform of the Holy Week ceremonies by Pius XII. The link between Ray and the German Idealist dawned on me almost as a revelation. One obvious clue is Ray's tendency to generalise. The very idea of describing parish and worship is as challenging as surveying the records of every single parish from a given period. There were too many local differences and permutations to give a comprehensive typology. All the same, Ray was a historian and was aware of the need to rely on objective sources and references.

It is not clear when Ray became Orthodox. He had not been an Anglican but a cradle Roman Catholic. He already has issues with the definition by Pius XII of the Assumption in 1950<sup>29</sup>. It would be germane here to resume the idea of Western Orthodoxy here very briefly, and for this purpose, I base myself on an article by Jean-François Mayer<sup>30</sup>. There has been, and still is, a movement of conversions of Anglicans and Roman Catholics to the various eastern Orthodox Churches with the desire to keep a western rite, almost of the “mirror image” of Eastern Rite churches in communion with Rome, something which is called *uniatism*.

There are many approaches to this aspiration, especially that of using the historical Roman rite in classical English instead of Latin. Other pioneers sought to revive ancient liturgies from the time of before the eleventh-century schism, especially the Gallican and Celtic rites. For the reason that some of those rites subsist only in fragmentary forms, some attempted to restore them by adding elements from the Byzantine and Roman rites. The approach would largely depend on the origins of the converts: Anglo-Catholics, Roman Catholics, Old Catholics and even Eastern Orthodox interested in the Western Orthodox question.

Eastern Orthodox bishops and synods perceived the question in various ways. Most were hostile, but some were quite welcoming, at least in theory. “Uniatism in reverse” was a notion that caused reserves among many Orthodox hierarchs. The initiatives always came from western individuals and groups of converts and not from Orthodox looking for converts. The movement is quite old, essentially going back to the Non-Jurors in the seventeenth century. They tended to imagine that the Orthodox would be more sympathetic to Anglicanism than they would actually prove to be.

The nineteenth century brought other developments. Romanticism and the “spiritual unity” movements sought respite from the Napoleonic wars. The Irvingites in England of the 1830’s drew up liturgical forms inspired by the oriental rites. Old Catholicism contributed departures from the Roman rite in the form of new eucharistic rites from the 1880’s, Bishop Edward Herzog of Berne in particular. A French priest, Fr Guettée (1816 – 1892) is one of the most famous converts to Russian Orthodoxy in his time. Julian Joseph Overbeck (1821-1905) was of German origin, ordained a Catholic priest in 1845, went over to Protestantism in 1857 and went to England the same year, where he devoted himself to publishing Syrian manuscripts (especially the texts of Saint Ephraim the Syrian). He was received into Orthodoxy in London in 1869. He was more of a scholar than the polemical Fr Guettée. I have heard of Dr Ray Winch being compared with Fr Overbeck.

Overbeck’s idea was one of transforming western Catholicism into Orthodoxy by getting rid of the heterodox teachings, getting rid of the *Filioque* and putting an epiclesis back into the Canon of the Mass. The order of Mass is very close to the Roman rite with these two main modifications. He dreamed of the conversion of the

---

<sup>29</sup> Raymond Winch, Victor Bennett, *The Assumption of Our Lady and Catholic Theology*, London 1950.

<sup>30</sup> Jean-François Mayer, *Attempts at creating a Western Orthodox rite*, in: *Religioscope – May 2002*. Cf. *Must Orthodoxy be Byzantine? Attempts at creating a western Orthodox rite*, in: *Regards sur l’Orthodoxie. Mélanges offerts à Jacques Goudet* (under the direction of Germain Ivanoff-Trinadztaty), Lausanne 1997, pp. 191-213.

entire Western Catholic world to Orthodoxy, and that Old Catholicism would be instrumental in this aspiration. This was not to happen and Overbeck became increasingly disappointed. Like Ray Winch a century later, Overbeck attended the Byzantine Liturgy as he waited, and the group dispersed. The Russian Church was favourable to Overbeck's project, but the Greeks were not. It was all abandoned in 1884. There were several attempts in America by Episcopalians to get the Prayer Book accepted. The Orthodox insisted on modifications for the reason that the rites were formulated with Protestant intentions. There were also "uncanonical" attempts at establishing Orthodox communities with western rites. Bishop Aftimios Ofiesh (1880-1966) was a particularly colourful character.

Attempts at Western Orthodoxy in Europe, France in particular, were less interested in Anglican and Roman Catholic rites, but rather aspired to a restoration of the ancient Gallican Liturgy. The *Eglise Catholique-Orthodoxe de France* represented a convergence of a community of the *Liberal Catholic Church* and some sympathetic Russians. They were received in 1937, and a *Liturgy according to the Ancient Rite of the Gauls* in Paris was ready for use in May 1945. After that date, they were accepted by the Romanian Church, but their canonical situation at present is uncertain. Attempts at restoring Celtic rites happened in various independent communities, especially the Patriarchate of Glastonbury and the Celtic Orthodox Church in France, the former of which now belongs to the Coptic Church.

Various attempts have been made to revive the Use of Sarum in Orthodox settings, the best known being a monastery in Texas belonging to the Metropolis of Milan. The Russian Orthodox Church outside Russia, again in communion with the Patriarchate of Moscow, has established a western rite vicariate. The best known western rite vicariate, almost exclusively in the USA, is under the Patriarchate of Antioch.

There are certainly many Romantic ideas and feeling that characterise this movement as in Anglo-Catholicism and nineteenth-century Roman Catholicism in England and France. I certainly see many parallels and analogies all the way across the board.

Ray Winch paralleled Overbeck's aspirations, though he advocated a rite based on *Ordo Romanus I* and the Gregorian Sacramentary<sup>31</sup>. However, he disagreed with Overbeck, insisting that the Roman Canon had no need of a descending Epiclesis, and that the *Supplices te rogamus* was perfectly sufficient for this purpose and theological meaning. The Roman Canon had no need of any reordering and that it was perfectly acceptable to Orthodox liturgical and sacramental theology.

He became Orthodox long before women's ordinations in the Church of England, but in any case, he had been a Roman Catholic like Overbeck. The prospect of Anglicans wanting to become Orthodox was passed up as an opportunity. Ray attended the Byzantine Liturgy for many years, but with an increasing awareness that he was not in his own liturgical culture. He knew that post-Tridentine Roman Catholicism had little to do with the medieval Church even though the 1570 Pisan missal was almost identical to the old use of the Roman Curia. He was often seen in the Oxford Union and Bodleian libraries until his death, researching mainly English church

---

<sup>31</sup> Raymond Winch, *The Canonical Mass of the English Orthodox*, Oxford 1989.

antiquities and ordinary parish life in the 14th and 15th centuries. He was no longer inspired by what he had found in Orthodoxy.

One problem with Ray Winch is that he had little self-discipline for writing books and articles. Most of what I know of his thought was from nights of conversation and long handwritten letters. Rather than quote everything in its “raw” state, it would seem best to summarise the ideas and try to conceptualise what he was looking for. To his credit, he attempted to create a medieval world in the imagination, and this alone distinguishes him from the academic historian. I was most impressed by his rendering of a college of canons in England which, by virtue of special laws and customs, were left intact and undisturbed by the Reformation, but yet did not follow the Recusant movement of the Roman Catholics in penal times. It was a monument that stood outside time and history. He used this imaginary canonry to bring medieval Catholicism into our present time without our culture affecting it.

He brought me to awareness that Counter-Reformation Catholicism represented a vastly different religious culture from the more “natural” parish life of the late middle ages or even since then in countries like France where the Counter-Reformation has less influence. For the time that Dr Winch was a convinced convert to Orthodoxy, he sought to “reverse-engineer” his vision of western rite Orthodoxy. He compared what was probably English Catholic culture in the fifteenth century to remote areas where Greek orthodoxy has known no reforms or major disturbances. The idea is appealing, and certainly laid the foundation of Winch’s thought.

He reminisced at length about his experience of English Roman Catholicism in the post World War II period. He did attend services in parishes, but sought to follow the Office tradition usually associated with clerics and monks. Having acquired a breviary at about the age of fifteen, he noticed very acutely that the form of the service and the Latin language were about the same in 1950 as in 1450. However, what happened in church was radically different. He was taken the way of the solitary medievalist, walking or cycling the streets of Oxford with his black cape and pageboy haircut.

It is one thing to imagine the canonry frozen in the quirks of English custom law, another to cast our minds to real parish life as it happened. Perhaps not everything would be so rosy without the Romantic imagination! Ray did spend long periods of time in those wonderful libraries of Oxford, read books and made copious notes, which I do not possess. The notes I have in my possession are quite fragmentary, but they lead my thoughts towards wondering whether we were in academic historical study or the Romantic imagination. I suggest the latter, even though we should keep sight of the historical evidence we have. The first thing we have to fix in our minds is that Roman Catholic liturgical books of the 1950’s were very similar to their medieval counterparts, but the surrounding “culture” was totally different. It is for this reason that Ray focused on the surrounding cultural aspects rather than the texts, because this would avoid the error of a historian who committed a gross anachronism:

*I think I told you about the author Hamilton-Thompson, who had obviously used a Missale Romanum to describe the ceremonies of Holy Week in a medieval parish church. Unfortunately, he had taken a book published in the 1960’s! Hamilton-Thompson is now a Reader in Medieval History somewhere!*

Some points on which he insisted were the use of the Office in parishes as well as cathedrals and monasteries and the language of the liturgy. For the Office, the medieval parish grouped daily offices into two clusters, Mattins and Evensong. The times of services were determined by sunrise and sunset. Mass was celebrated each day. The laity attended Mass and Evensong on Sunday, as other great days.

*Those who had some leisure – particularly old men and young boys – were often in church for at least some of the choir offices.*

Ray saw many parallels between medieval English parish life and its counterpart today in the Greek Orthodox world. Churches had clerics in all the minor and major orders, which after the Council of Trent were reserved to seminarians. We are far from the Low Mass of a Roman Catholic parish in the years following World War II. Rubricism was absent, and many anomalies were tolerated like the use of whatever service books the parish could get its hands on. He found the example of an Ambrosian missal being in use in Twyford near the Welsh border, but did not disclose his source.

His observations about the use of Latin are most interesting. Our own experience of Latin is usually what we learned at school and in the context of ancient classical Roman texts, hardly the style of the liturgy and medieval ecclesiastical texts. Ray was convinced that Latin was less of an obstacle to following the liturgy than supposed by the Reformers. Medieval Latin had almost become a vernacular language alongside various forms of Middle and Early Modern English. He even made the point that people living in Wales and Cornwall would have found the familiar Latin far more intelligible than Cranmer's London English. Would the historical evidence support such a claim? It is a subject for another study.

Unfortunately, Ray's work on this subject has remained extant only in manuscript notes and personal letters, in long conversations which are easily forgotten over the years. He left his estate to Magdalen College School in Oxford and this would have included his papers and writings. I just need someone on good terms with the librarian and archivist...

### **Parish Liturgy in the Fifteenth Century**

Ray gave me this notion of the Romantic vision, the *Christenheit* of Novalis, alongside the historical study on the basis of textual evidence. This being said, we know that there is never enough in the way of sources. I ran into this difficulty when trying to eke something out of Ray Winch's fragments and notes. No historical source is complete and only the imagination can play its restoring role. This is the most significant aspect of Romanticism, so often despised by the empiricist. We cannot trust comparisons with present-day Roman Catholic and Anglican practice, through there is some room for a certain amount of "retro-engineering". This aspect is going to give us great insight into the mind of the Romantics from our own experience.

I must now leave Ray, and pursue the subject on my own. I already went into aspects of the question when I was studying the Tridentine liturgical reforms in the wake of the Council of Trent, which itself gave some descriptions of medieval liturgical life, if

only to describe the abuses that needed to be corrected. My judgement was somewhat clouded by my Anglican origins and associations with the Catholic traditionalist movement. This was the case when I wrote my Licentiate work at Fribourg University, some of which was resumed in my chapter *The Roman Missal of the Council of Trent* in a collection compiled by Dom Alcuin Reid <sup>32</sup>. My assumption was that Pius V's reform was something sacrosanct and perfect in relation to an altogether condemnable situation. Already, when I was finishing the work in 1991 from my cosy little seminarian's room at Gricigliano, the certitude was cracking – largely due to Ray Winch's influence.

I wrote:

*It is certain that the liturgical life of a typical English parish of the fourteenth century was healthier, more manly, and holier, than its counterpart in the nineteenth or early twentieth. Parish life was more easy-going than in post Tridentine Catholicism, close in spirit to what is still to be seen, for example, in the Greek Church of Cyprus. The choir Office was still very much a part of parish life at that time, and deacons, subdeacons and other ministers were to be found alongside the priest.*

There were excesses of popular religion, but nothing worse than what I have seen at the shrines of Lourdes, Fatima and less “recognised” places. Priests celebrating Mass sloppily were and are found just about everywhere. Ignorance is not resolved by reform and repression, but rather by education and good example.

My long nocturnal conversations with Ray often revolved around the reason for liturgical ceremonies: practical or allegorical. I will therefore go into this subject. The situation was far from uniform as suggested by Reformation and Counter-Reformation polemics. Such confusion is also compounded by liturgical scholars involved in reforms in their Churches who had an agenda to promote. Muttered low masses were as frequent after the Council of Trent as before, perhaps more frequent. The allegorical understanding of ceremonies perhaps arose from or was expressed in the liturgy as a kind of mystery play. The signs of the cross and kissings of the altar, especially during the Canon, were increased in number. The stretching out of the celebrant's hands, bowing the head and striking the breast at certain parts of the Mass served to dramatise the words. These usages, fascinating the curious eyes of the faithful, began to take on an allegorical meaning <sup>33</sup>. Such notions were also known in the Byzantine Church <sup>34</sup>. It is tempting to form something of a dualist distinction between the lofty and theological vision of the eastern liturgy and some of the more absurd trends of those domains that were influenced by neo-scholastic theology. Where is the line drawn?

One of my tendencies as a student was to consider such abstract notions as allegory, scholastic theology and the dramatic dimension of the liturgy as an abuse. Ray Winch put me in a spot in that parish worship was no more uniform than it is now in

---

<sup>32</sup> Anthony J. Chadwick, *The Roman Missal of the Council of Trent* in: Alcuin Reid (ed.), *T&T Clark Companion to Liturgy*, London 2016, pp 107-131.

<sup>33</sup> J. A. Jungmann, *The Mass of the Roman Rite (Missarum Sollemnia)*, Westminster (Maryland) 1986, vol I, pp 107-108.

<sup>34</sup> Nicholas Cabasilas, *A Commentary on the Divine Liturgy*, ed. J. M. Hussey and P. A. McNulty, London 1960.

either Anglicanism or Roman Catholicism. There is a world of difference between a city parish or one in the countryside. Which should I prefer, or should I emphasise only what there is in common in all parishes (as opposed to cathedral and monastic churches)?

Nevertheless, the drama aspect had its influence as has figured in every attempt to make the liturgy “relevant” to the people. Allegorism would try to explain every movement in the liturgy like going up steps, moving the missal from one side to the other. There was various works written over the centuries like the *Expositiones Missæ*<sup>35</sup>.

It is easy to imagine people in churches wide-eyed and like children on Christmas morning contemplating their presents. Certainly the faithful were catechised in some way, and the medieval church was a feast for all the senses through the use of sculpture, iconography and stained glass. Symbolism undeniably was perceived much more strongly in people who were not exposed to audio-visual media as we are. The building is the prime witness to this way of understanding what was going on. The Gospel is read towards the north in most western rites, and that direction (where there is the least light in the northern hemisphere) associated with evil and faithlessness<sup>36</sup>. The altar increased in length unlike in the eastern Churches or the west in earlier times<sup>37</sup>.

The priest’s liturgical vestments also took on various meanings. The humeral veil was held to represent the hiding of Christ’s divinity by his humanity; the alb, of purity; the stole, of Jesus’ obedience unto death; the maniple, of service; the chasuble, of the seamless garment of Christ which is the Catholic Church<sup>38</sup>. Liturgical colours came to be codified on this basis, but which symbolised what was not standard until 1570. The Gothic chasuble came to be adorned with a Y-shaped cross. The original pillar-orphrey had for its only function the covering of the seam<sup>39</sup>. This new type of orphrey became an allegorical representation of the Cross. The chasuble was increasingly ornamented, and the required stiffness of the cloth led to the degradation of its shape<sup>40</sup>. I noticed how Ray Winch must have jumped out of his skin on reading one historian’s anachronism of fixed liturgical colours before the Reformation!

We could go on copiously about general theological tendencies and their expression in popular piety and culture. In some places, there were doubtlessly reactions from certain forms of Gnosticism and Catharism in a greater emphasis on the Incarnation. In time, this led to increased shows of devotion to the Blessed Sacrament like

---

<sup>35</sup> Cf. A. Wilmart, *Primum in ordine*, in: *Ephemerides Liturgicæ*, 50 (1936), pp 133-139; Simmons, *The Lay Folk’s Mass book*, London 1879; Langford’s *Meditations on the Mass* (ed. J. Wickham Legge, *Tracts on the Mass*, 1904, pp 19 sqq.).

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 109-110; cf. Ivo of Chartres, *De conven. Vet. et Novi Test.*, PL, CLXII, p 550 A. The north sides of medieval churches were frequently adorned with grotesques and figures of demons.

<sup>37</sup> H. C. King, *The Chancel and the altar*, London 1911, p 91. Altars of this length could be found at Tewkesbury Abbey and at Arundel Castle. The latter is still intact.

<sup>38</sup> Jungmann, *op. cit.*, I, p 111-112; cf. Rupert de Deutz, *De divinis officiis*, PL, CLXX, col 11-332.

<sup>39</sup> E. A. Roulin, *Vestments and Vesture*, London 1931, p 60.

<sup>40</sup> Jungmann, *op. cit.*, I, p 112.

genuflections and elevations. By the eve of the Reformation in many places, we will find a complex superimposition of popular devotion and liturgical tradition. This situation would continue in southern Europe and the old Spanish and Portuguese colonies.

One great thing about the medieval era is that things were still quite “fluid”, not yet fixed in amber with decrees from the Congregation of Rites in Rome. Elevating the host at the consecration was quite a late development, though it grew here and there from about the thirteenth century. People called for it <sup>41</sup> in words that might seem to us crude and surprising. One grievance of Cranmer was noticing that people ran from church to church or from altar to altar if several masses were being celebrated simultaneously in one church to see the elevated host as often as possible. The most recent manifestation of this kind of piety is in the Spanish cult of Palmar de Troya, which has reduced the rite of Mass to the mere words of consecration <sup>42</sup>. The most extreme result of this tendency was that people would enter the church hearing the bell at the *Hanc igitur* and leave as soon as the elevation was finished <sup>43</sup>. I doubt that many parishes in the fifteenth century had fallen so low.

It would seem doubtful that lay folk and country priests would have been very involved in scholastic theology, and going too far down that road would make us digress ever further from our subject. The issue of popular superstition and quackery among the clergy is a favourite whipping-boy of the old Reformers and their Roman Catholic iconoclastic counterparts from the 1960's to our own times. Snake-oil salesmen abound through the ages in and outside the Church. Seeing priests crammed into little chapels around the church offering votive masses might come as a shock to us, but we do not live in those times. The votive masses are still printed in Roman missals, even the Paul VI rite, and in the pre-Reformation uses. They were

---

<sup>41</sup> Fortescue, *The Mass, a Study of the Roman Liturgy*, London 1917, pp 341-342. An English protestant at the time of the Reformation reported that the faithful of the parishes complained that the Host was not elevated high enough: *The rude people of the countrey in diverse partes of England will crye out to the priest: houlde up Sir John, houlde up. Heave it a little higher.*

<sup>42</sup> <https://magnuslundberg.net/2017/08/29/the-palmarian-order-of-the-mass/>

*In nomine Patris et Fillii +, et Spiritus Sancti. Amen.*

*Orate, fratres ut meum ac vestrum sacrificium acceptabile fiat apud Deum Patrem omnipotentem. Per + Christum Dominum nostrum. Amen.*

*Offero Tibi, Pater, hanc immaculatam hostiam, pro me et pro omnibus fidelibus christianis vivis atque defunctis: ut mihi, et illis proficiat ad salute in vitam aeternam. Amen.*

*Offero Tibi, Pater, calicem salutaris, pro mea et totius mundi salute. Amen.*

*In + nomine Christi.*

*Hoc est corpus meum.*

*His est Sanguis meus.*

*Per Christum Dominum nostrum. Amen.*

*Corpus Domini nostri Jesu Christi custodiat animam meam in vitam aeternam. Amen.*

*Sanguis Domini nostri Jesu Christi custodiat animam meam in vitam aeternam. Amen.*

*Benedicat vos omnipotens Deus Pater, et Filius, et Spiritus + Sanctus. Amen.*

<sup>43</sup> Jungmann, op. cit., I, p 121.

universal. The kind of *Gnadenkapitalismus* the Protestants bewailed can be found in Lourdes and Fatima to this day.

Something else has changed very little over the past five hundred years: the Low Mass. The *blessed mutter of the Mass* <sup>44</sup>, that is to say, the Low Mass said nearly entirely *submissa voce*, became an occasion for the people to find inspiration in their devotions <sup>45</sup>. Ray Winch was not so sure that Low Mass was as much an institution, for parish masses, as in the 1950's, the whole point of his short reminiscence of his own childhood and youth. All the contestable points find an exact parallel between 1514 (to pick a year at random) and 1950 to justify a complete reform by way of authority and repression.

What about the point of participation? That particular buzz-word is capable of different interpretations. Ironically, some of the Reformers maintained the ethos of the silent Mass. The layman's role was one of seeing, and above all, to *hearing Mass* <sup>46</sup>. The logical development would have been to remove the external action, leaving the individual to his devotions <sup>47</sup>.

Up to now, we have been isolating various issues that motivated the Reformers, and, later on, those involved in the Council of Trent who wanted to take the ammunition out of the Protestants' guns. What was it like in a late fifteenth-century English parish? We can get clues from existing historical studies, contemporary literature and the church buildings themselves, some of which were less defaced by the Puritans than others. In spite of the Reformation and the vicissitudes over the centuries, Anglican parish life as it was until about fifty years ago probably better reflected medieval parish life than pre-conciliar Roman Catholic parishes in spite of the liturgy being substantially medieval and in Latin. The bedrock of the Anglican parish has always been Mattins and Litany, and Evensong. From the beginnings of the Catholic revival, Holy Communion was more frequently celebrated after the Litany. This was what has been called *Mass and Office Catholicism* as opposed to devotions and Benediction with lip service paid to the Mass and Sunday Vespers. Here is the essential.

Piers the Ploughman is quoted as saying:

*Lewd men to labour; and lords to hunt,*

...

*And upon Sundays to cease; God's service to hear*

---

<sup>44</sup> The expression is of G. K. Chesterton.

<sup>45</sup> Dom Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy*, London 1945, p 599. Many medieval lay people preferred the Low Mass to the Solemn Mass on account of its brevity and silence. Not distracted by exuberant ceremonies and music, they were freer to practice their pious exercises.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p 599.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p 603. The effect of the Low Mass on protestant liturgy is evident from the following quotation of the English puritan divines: "*The minister is appointed for the people in all publick services appertaining unto God, and the Holy Scriptures both of the Old and New Testaments intimating the people's part in publick prayer to be only with silence and reverence to attend thereunto*".

*Both matins and mass; and after meat, in churches*

*To hear evensong; every man ought.* <sup>48</sup>

This would also apply to holidays. Legg quotes other sources as attesting the need for ordinary lay people to attend the choir offices. Astoundingly, Legg wrote on the next page:

*It is likely enough that the demand for or condemnation of mediaeval ceremonies is based upon a considerable misconception of their nature and character. Many of those who ask for or condemn mediaeval services, think that mediaeval ceremonial means an almost exact replica of the system pursued at the present moment at Farm Street or the Brompton Oratory. (...) A mediaeval service, they say, must of necessity be of the nature of a pageant. And the Reformers of the sixteenth century, never too scrupulous, did their best to foster this idea. The changes brought about in divine worship on both sides, Catholic and Puritan, have not yet been properly realized. The Protestants have exaggerated the sensuous character of the mediaeval services; while the Papists have quietly assumed that the ceremonial all through the middle ages was exactly that to be found at the present time on the Continent. Mr. Edmund Bishop, whose prejudices, if he have any, would be on one side, tells us that the genius of the early mediaeval Roman rite was "soberness and sense". The modern extravagance in the use of flowers and candles, of theatrical music, the fussiness of modern ceremonial, are all opposed to soberness and sense. If we are to return to mediaeval services there will have to be a radical change made in the ceremonial adjuncts introduced within the last twenty or thirty years. At the present moment it is no longer authority or precedent that dictates ceremonial. It is mere hedonism – what the parish will like best, or what will draw the largest congregations, or what will look prettiest. To use the words of Mr. Robert Bridges, speaking of another church practice: it would seem, if our ceremonial "is to stir the emotions of the vulgar, that it must itself be both vulgar and modern ; and that, in the interest of the weaker mind, we must renounce all ancient tradition and the maxims of art, in order to be in touch with the music-halls". There can be no doubt that to be in touch with the music-halls is the aim of a great deal of the ceremonial of the day. The wish is to draw people to church ; by what means, flower services, egg services, doll services, lantern services, or any other extravagance, does not very much matter; nor what they do when they are got to church. The worship of Almighty God passes into the background.*

This was written in 1905, when Pius X was on the throne of St Peter and the traditionalists and integralists had their day. There were no "clown masses" or guitars! It has been my own experience of reviving the Use of Sarum that I have found a much more "monastic" and sober form of worship than the Roman rite or its translation in the English Missal. The paradigm has changed as much for myself as the kind of hyperbole and hypocrisy involved in both Protestantism and Tridentine Catholicism. This was also a persistent message from Ray as I heard my private nocturnal lectures and seminars in that little brick house in Oxford.

We are going to have to be a lot more critical of the criticism levelled at medieval parish life. It is also difficult to make the distinctions necessary for answering Ray's

---

<sup>48</sup> J. Wickham Legg, *Ecclesiological Essays – Mediaeval Ceremonial*, London 1905, p 37.

enquiries, because some parish churches were served by canons or religious priests. There are essentially two possible approaches, one through the study of sources, to which I only have access through standard historical works like Eamon Duffy<sup>49</sup>. The other is through practical re-enactment of medieval liturgies, usually as a genuine service celebrated by a priest. Is such reconstruction a true guide, because we doing it are formed in our own culture, far removed from the people who never knew electricity, telecommunications or medicine. Perhaps the nearest reconstruction, if you can call it that, I knew, was the parish of Le Chamblac near where I am writing under Fr Montgomery-Wright. It was a real parish, but there were many concessions to the movement of Archbishop Lefebvre and its associated ideology. In addition to that, people came to attend Mass by car and returned home shortly afterwards. The parish consisted of a château, the church, the primary school and *mairie*, and a couple of houses. There were other houses under that *Mairie*, but scattered fairly wide. In reality, like Bouloire in the Sarthe, the parish church was a traditionalist community and very few people in the parish were remotely interested.

Can the old parish life of eighteenth-century France or fifteenth-century England be reconstructed? This might have an inkling of authenticity if people made a conscious decision to live something like the Amish, the Russian Old Believers or the *Petite Eglise*. I know of no such community. Were medieval people consciously medieval? No, they were just people who had no other experience. The conscious revival of the old becomes a museum. It would certainly be more difficult to reconstruct parish life than a cathedral or a monastery. Monks have just continued as they always were, though something has changed – what is invisible.

Perhaps it is possible for a group of people to imagine themselves into the role, with carefully prepared choreography from the sources, perhaps a little like playing baroque music on period instruments. I have the experience of celebrating Sarum low masses alone, probably in a similar way as the massing priests in the chantry chapels. I am probably still influenced by my experience with the 1570-1962 Roman liturgy and its ethos. It all leaves a rather hopeless feeling in the gut.

Like now, parish worship, especially in the country, must have been rough and ready. There was rarely anything like an organ to accompany elaborate music. Clergy and laity must have sung awfully flat and raucously. Do the same now and that is what you get. Perhaps clerics received some training in reading and singing plain chant, more so than people today without musical experience. I am as much a victim of transposing modern Catholicism to an obscure past as anyone else. How was Latin pronounced then? We have some idea, but no certitude.

The parish Mass and Office would have been surrounded by a whole culture of concern for the people's families and work to earn their living. The liturgy was also situated in a context of processions, sprinkling of holy water, prayers in the churchyard, sermons, blessings of bread and just about everything else. Ray Winch attended the Sarum Mass of Candlemas in 1997 celebrated by the Roman Catholic priest Fr Sean Finnegan in Merton College chapel, and his observation was that it was "fussy". One of the three processional crosses got caught by an electric light.

---

<sup>49</sup> Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, Yale and London 1993.

Many of the reconstructed liturgies were one-off, and took a considerable amount of work and self-consciousness to prepare.

Short of establishing some kind of isolated sect, I wonder how medieval parish worship could be restored. Do we have to resign ourselves to the options currently available in the Roman Catholic and Anglican Churches? Is the past absolutely dead and buried, history at the mercy of ideology? Perhaps we might get close if a group is defined in cultural terms and spends time in spiritual preparation of an act of worship. Also, such services should be regular so that people become familiar and enrooted.

Another obstacle is the question of the institutional Church hosting the event. Rome put a stop to the Merton Sarum masses. Such a group would be impossible in the Roman Catholic Church as in the Church of England. My use of Sarum under the jurisdiction of the Anglican Catholic Church is isolated, insulated and contained – better than nothing. What about who may go to Communion? In my own Church, faithful of all Catholic Churches believing in the Real presence may receive Communion. However, I might find some Roman Catholics and Orthodox believing that I am not a priest. There must be another ecclesiological basis. Independent bishops have been tried, and most are quacks or the experience of schism brings them to lose all sense of vocation. It is a difficult one. Maybe the Office and a Mass at which only the priest receives Communion – as it would have been in the medieval era.

In spite of these obstacles, I believe that the medieval model was much healthier than what we have known and has alienated us from mainstream Roman Catholicism, Anglicanism and failed Western Orthodox projects. How can it possibly work? The answer to this is the relationship between faith and culture in general, which will have to be the subject of another study. There is also the tormenting question of continuity of tradition? Is Christianity a “mega-church” religion of the Book like Islam? Is Christianity itself obsolete and something to be abandoned? For what?

### **In Guise of a Conclusion**

The Romantic is an alien to this world and its *reality*. My own intuition about the object of modern medievalism, restoring something of medieval parish and liturgical life is that it is an impossible dream in this world. It can only exist in a sub-culture that has self-consciously rejected modern materialism and “realism”. The temptation of such a sub-culture would be to become a totalitarian cult.

The biggest fallacy in thinking about some kind of “community” is who would join it. Romanticism is something for individuals, not groups. There may be some sharing of thought, which is the aim of this journal *The Blue Flower*, but the fact remains that we are on our own. We cannot be parishes on our own!

There may be different ways of seeing things. Christianity has “had its day” for centuries, probably since the Peace of Constantine when the Church became an extension of the temporal power of the Roman Empire. Some of us see the

downward path with every blow. Others would see evolution and progress in the Reformation, the French Revolution and the late twentieth century.

There is discussion about a *Benedict Option*, an idea of a sort of lay monasticism. It will be the subject of study since none of my blog articles have been conclusive for the precise reason that I have not yet read the book by that name by the American author Rod Dreher <sup>50</sup>.

Outside the American context, one could consider two possibilities, namely an established abbey like Fontgombault in France with lay people and their families living and working in their own homes in reasonable proximity. The other possibility for a community life might be one of those abandoned Spanish or French villages in the mountains adapted for use as some kind of commune consisting of a number of families. There could be two levels of participation in the church services, a “hard core” and those who engage in farming, arts and crafts, humanitarian work, academic work, &c. Little Gidding in the seventeenth century, the Amish and the Bruderhof are frequently mentioned in this kind of context.

From the moment you have several people and families together, there are conflicts of personalities and differing approaches to religious and philosophical questions. You need a “charismatic leader” and therefore the temptations of the totalitarian cult. I fail, at least as yet, to see any solution at a community level.

Frankly, there is little we can do other than what can be done by individual persons. This is how it has always been, even with short-lived groups of Romantics like the sinister summer of 1816 at the Villa Diodati where some of the darkest thoughts came to the fore. Most of the time, we work alone writing or in our arts and crafts. The Breviary is very important, because it is a form of service that does not require a priest or a particular place. Anyone can pray its psalms and other texts. The residential community seems to be out of the question for most of us, but we can share our thoughts with each other through this journal, our blogs and anything we write for others to read. Perhaps that is modern Romantic medievalism or the way of the future in our hostile and uncertain world. Such was Ray Winch’s solitary way in Oxford. Only in England!

---

<sup>50</sup> Rod Dreher *The Benedict Option: A Strategy for Christians in a Post-Christian Nation*, New York 2017.

## Mathematical Sehnsucht

Rev'd Dr Jonathan Munn

*In which we look into The Deep holding on by something less material than the skin of our teeth but perhaps more substantial.*

### Introduction

Peppa Pig stands the last in the line as her little brother George leapfrogs over her. "Ten!" she calls out.<sup>51</sup>

Ten.

It's where we start. We learn to count to ten and we do so for a reason. For the majority of our childhood we are faced with the task of counting things – how many beans make five; how many steps upstairs; how many biscuits in the tin; how many fingers, how many toes.

Then we ask our questions: "what happens if I have five more beans?"; "are there the same number of steps going upstairs as coming downstairs?"; "how would an alien with twelve fingers and toes count?"; "how many biscuits are left if I eat half of them?" In so doing, we begin to consider mathematics not only about number but also about relationships between things. Our mathematical language begins as description of what reality appears to be, and yet...

We might be tempted to see numbers as mere adjectives such as "red," "big," "clumsy," "foreign," but many of our adjectives, by and large, are based on subjectivity. The red that you might be thinking of may not necessarily be the same shade as that thought by your spouse: is it scarlet or crimson? However, it is when you see the robes of an Oxonian D.Phil that you both agree that, in this case, "red" means "scarlet". Are you still seeing the same colour, though? This is more of a problem for the nature of consciousness.

Numbers, though, behave differently from adjectives. Indeed, there are numbers which do actually lose their ability to quantify. You can ask a class of sixth-formers how to integrate or differentiate functions and they will do so by following the rules and ideas that they are taught, but ask them the question, "what is a number?" and you will see some young faces twist and contort with mental gymnastics as they try to say what they are. After all, it seems difficult to define the word "count" and its synonyms without using the word "number". We can only understand any notion of quantity after having a concept of number, and vice versa.

---

<sup>51</sup> Peppa Pig, Series 3, Episode 25 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vq86AV9TF0E>

### **On the existence of Numbers**

You and your spouse would probably both agree when there are five oranges on the table. Even if you were to argue over whether that one on the left is technically a tangerine and not an orange, the number five seems utterly inescapable. Whatever we know about numbers is actually more concrete, more objective than anything else we experience in life. Whatever language we speak, we know that there is a direct correspondence between one-*un-eins-Yī*, two-*deux-zwei-Èr*, three-*trois-drei-Sān*... How universal is this? Difficult to say, but it is clear that, in much of the communicating world, such a correspondence has been practically set up through the mechanisms of translation.

Although we cannot experience numbers in themselves with the senses, we can say things which are necessarily and objectively true about them. In whatever system of counting we use, three is always less than five, multiplying any number by zero gives zero, and there will always be the same number of steps up as there are down. This would even be true if we didn't have ten digits on our hands and ten digits on our toes. There is still a translation between the number systems of five-fingered folk and three-fingered folk.

We experience numbers and other mathematical objects as objective quantities. If we think carefully here, this is exactly our experience of physical things: we can only obtain objective data about an object that is real. This does lend itself to the distinct possibility that numbers, and thus other mathematical objects, do exist in reality but not as material objects. Maybe, then, mathematical Platonism is true. Maybe mathematical things do have their own existence beyond the human mind. Maybe we invent mathematics in the literal meaning of the word, not as the building of a machine, but rather like the Invention of the Holy Cross.

### **On the language of Mathematics**

Mathematics begins, in our experience, as a system of quantifying adjectives and builds up into its own, nonphysical, ideal world. From numbers spring algebras, geometries, topologies, calculus and mechanics and so on, each with their own level of abstraction. Our numbers can be extended by appending new and unquantifiable numbers who square to minus one, and thus we open up the way to studies in moving particles, Quantum Mechanics and computer graphics. In topology, we see the world without reference to measurement and in so doing, our teacups turn into doughnuts and, further, we begin to see why Space itself must be the shape that it is. Our geometries cease to be flat, angles in a triangle cease to sum to two right angles, and the shapes they produce become frighteningly curved. Further, they pull us out from the page and into a solidity that we can imagine but never hope to see in our earthly experience as the number of dimensions opens up from three to four, five, ten, eleven, twenty-six and even infinitely many. Even infinity as many know it ceases to be "the number we can't count to" and opens out like an ever expanding flower into hierarchies of infinities all pointing albeit futilely to the Absolute as we

consider collections, collections of collections, collections of collections of collections...

How can this be? How can the things we first understand as quantifying and enumerative adjectives suddenly possess not only an interpretation but also an *existence* that goes far beyond the simple task of enumeration for which they were supposed to be used?

*Words and figures determine one another in constant alternation – audible and visible words are actually word figures – Word figures are the ideal figures of other figures – All figures etc. should become literal or linguistic figures – just as figurative words – are the inner images etc., the ideal words of other thoughts or words – they all should become inner images.*<sup>52</sup>

Novalis sees this strange Platonic mathematical world at the heart of his understanding of language and asks the question whether, within language itself, there is a deeper existence that grows out from this mathematical heart. For him, a variable quantity becomes a real mathematical living being, a function *in specie* an organic quantity. There is, for him, a mathematics of poesy as well as a poesy of mathematics. He invites us to contemplate mathematics at the very edge of what can be thought.

How might this work in practice?

### The Universal Set

An example might be drawn from set theory. Any definable collection of objects is called a set, and that's something that we are used to. We can have a set of cutlery, a set of rules, a set of numbers, and so on...

What about a set of sets?

That seems rather straightforward in our understanding. We simply gather up all the sets that are and put them into one great big set. Let's call this set  $U$ . Inside  $U$ , we find all the sets we might like to think of. The set of all the cutlery in your drawer lies in  $U$ . The set of all numbers lies in  $U$ . The empty set – the set which literally has nothing in it – lies in  $U$ . The trouble comes when we realise that  $U$  is a set and thus must itself lie in  $U$ . In fact, given any subset of  $U$  (i.e. any possible collection of things that lie in  $U$ , to wit sets) this must also lie in  $U$ . In other words,  $U$  must contain itself and all possible subsets of itself. This was shown to be mathematically impossible by Georg Cantor.<sup>53</sup>

Mathematically speaking,  $U$  cannot exist and mathematicians cannot define sets so naively in order to be logically coherent. Yet, there is something troubling about  $U$  – it makes sense as a thing even though it is not a thing: it has a meaning that we can comprehend and a description that makes sense.  $U$  presents itself as a single set that

---

<sup>52</sup> Novalis, *Mathematical Studies on Bossut and Murhard* (1798) [http://www.academia.edu/15762280/Novalis\\_Mathematical\\_Fragments](http://www.academia.edu/15762280/Novalis_Mathematical_Fragments)

<sup>53</sup> See for example, Mendelson, E. *Introduction to Mathematical Logic*, 4th ed. London: Chapman & Hall, pp. 257 and 295, 1997.

cannot be thought of logically as a single set. It becomes a many that cannot be thought of as a one, yet is a single collection of many things nonetheless.<sup>54</sup> Whatever this *U* is, it jostles about in our minds in a dynamic fashion. If we try and understand it in one way, it flips and we cease to have a practical handle on it. We have here, written into Reason itself, an argument to show that the Holy Trinity is not an impossible concept as a One which presents itself as a Many and yet never fails to be a One but will defy attempts to cohere either its Oneness or its Manyness into a logically graspable framework.

Perhaps this example shows that we can see Novalis' idea of life within the fabric of Mathematics connected with some expression from the soul.

*In the end, the whole of mathematics is certainly not a special science – but only a general scientific instrument – a beautiful instrument is a contradiction in terms. It is possibly nothing more than the soul-force of the intellect fashioned into an exoteric, external object and organ – a realized and objectified intellect. Isn't this perhaps also the case with many or even with all the forces of the soul – that through our efforts they should become external instruments? – Everything should be drawn out of us and rendered visible – our soul ought to become representable. – The system of the sciences should become the symbolic body (organ system) of our inner life. – Our soul ought to become a sense perceptible machine – not within us, but outside us.<sup>55</sup>*

Here, Novalis cries out for our notion of existence to be understood beyond our physical world and that the discoveries of Science become an outward expression of an invisible and unfathomable truth that lies at the heart of what really is. The existence of Mathematics should begin to give a language for us to understand the non-physical part of ourselves. Mathematics is outside of the “us” we know and comprehend thus, in comprehending mathematics in our minds, our soul itself must be outside of the “us” we know and comprehend. In knowing mathematics – in digging Mathematics up from the darkness of knowledge – we discover the fact of our own transcendent selves.

### **Non-Euclidean Geometry**

*The highest and the purest is the most common and the most understandable. Hence, elementary geometry is higher than higher geometry. The more difficult and more intricate a science, the more derived, the more impure, and the more mixed<sup>56</sup>.*

For Novalis, it might appear that the usual Euclidean Geometry of the flat plane that we learn at school is the purest form of geometry there is. This would pose a little problem for him, though. While he would not live to see the discovery of viable non-Euclidean geometries in the early nineteenth century, he might be said to miss an

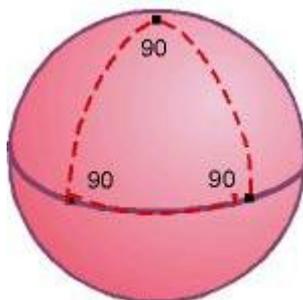
---

<sup>54</sup> This idea is expressed nicely in Chapter Five of Rudy Rucker's *Infinity and the Mind*. Princeton University Press; New Ed edition (21 Nov. 2004) <http://www.rudyrucker.com/infinityandthemind/>

<sup>55</sup> Novalis. *Mathematical Reflections from: Das allgemeine Brouillon* (1798/99)

<sup>56</sup> Novalis, *Mathematical Fragments* (1798)

important fact: the Earth is spherical. This means that triangles drawn on the surface of the Earth will typically have an angle sum greater than two right angles.

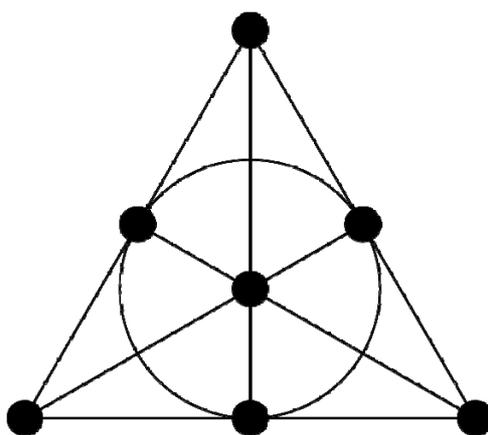


Indeed, if one draws a triangle on the Earth's surface starting at the North Pole, travelling down the Greenwich Meridian to the Equator, then travelling West for a quarter of the Earth's circumference before travelling due North to return to the Pole, we end up with a triangle whose angle sum is precisely three right angles. Spherical geometry is not Euclidean – there are no parallel lines for starters! – and yet, as any sailor knows, it is real, empirical geometry: it is literally the geometry of the real world!

Novalis seeks a certain simplicity. Following David Hilbert<sup>57</sup>, we can propose a very simple form of plane geometry consisting of three sets, Points and Lines with the rules that

- 1) Every point must lie on at least three lines.
- 2) Every line must contain three points.
- 3) Two distinct lines must meet in a single point.
- 4) Two distinct points must determine a single line.

The simplest such plane is consists of three points lying on one line. The next simplest is called the Fano plane consisting of seven points and seven lines.



In this picture, not all the lines may appear straight. This is because, again, the geometry is not Euclidean and our eyes have a tendency to prefer a Euclidean space.

<sup>57</sup> David Hilbert, *Grundlagen der Geometrie* (1899)

What might be Novalis' "highest geometry", then?

The geometry of the Universe is probably vaguely Euclidean, but with Einstein's great hypothesis, the very presence of matter itself bends space. This seems not to be the ideal for Novalis where the more involved the science, the less pure the geometry. Yet, this is perhaps not quite what Novalis is saying.

Like many of today's mathematicians and physicists, there is a belief that our theories have a certain elegance and our understanding of geometry is, in some sense, the measure of that elegance. Would Novalis prefer the perfect sphere which is an ideal and simple shape with an infinite number of symmetries to a shape like a potato which, despite its lack of geometric symmetry is real?

However, ideal the sphere may be, it does possess a reality that can expose deeper structure to our Universe. An ideal sphere can be made physical and one can indeed bring geometric methods to bear on physical problems.

We can, for example, use geometry to turn the Maxwell equations for classical electromagnetism from a rather cumbersome set of equations:

$\nabla \cdot \mathbf{D} = \rho$	(1)	Gauss' Law
$\nabla \cdot \mathbf{B} = 0$	(2)	Gauss' Law for magnetism
$\nabla \times \mathbf{E} = -\frac{\partial \mathbf{B}}{\partial t}$	(3)	Faraday's Law
$\nabla \times \mathbf{H} = \frac{\partial \mathbf{D}}{\partial t} + \mathbf{J}$	(4)	Ampère-Maxwell Law

into a much simpler and elegant form on free space given by

$$dF = d^*F = 0$$

where the quantity  $F$  is built geometrically from  $\mathbf{B}$ ,  $\mathbf{D}$ ,  $\mathbf{E}$ ,  $\mathbf{H}$  and  $\mathbf{J}$  as above.<sup>58</sup> This seems to be more of Novalis' goal in finding the simplest way of expressing the truth of our empirical existence with elegance.

*The science that joins and puts both into contact with one another – that instructs in deriving the particular from the common, and the inverse, as well as with the external and internal aspects – this science is the connecting – and higher science<sup>59</sup>.*

<sup>58</sup> A nice demonstration of this is given in T. J. Willmore, *Riemannian Geometry*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1993

<sup>59</sup> Novalis, *Mathematical Fragments* (1798)

This geometrical formulation of Maxwell's equations certainly seems to be the order of the day.

Novalis, himself, was contemporary with the mathematician Marquis Pierre-Simon de Laplace whose goal was very much for a mathematical theory of everything and whose monumental work on Celestial Mechanics predicted the existence of black holes. While his views on the existence of God veered between Deism and Atheism, Laplace maintained a curiosity for God and respect for Christianity. While he believed the universe to be in many ways simple clockwork, there was always the suspicion of a clock-maker. On his death bed, he is reported to have responded to praise of his discoveries with "Ah! We chase after chimeras."<sup>60</sup>

The question is whether Novalis' dreams can be realised. Is there a Theory of Everything?

### Quantum Mechanics and the Theory of Everything

*Spirit of mechanics – is surely the spirit of the whole, without any connection to the parts – or to the individuality.*<sup>61</sup>

One might wonder what Novalis might have thought about the present state of Mechanics and the physics which it informs.

It is true to say that Mathematics itself gives us the language for Science. All of our physics is written in mathematical formalism. Novalis would certainly recognise velocity as being the ratio of space with time. However, as the search for a Theory of Everything continues, the relationship between mathematics and physics becomes more strained. Fundamental particles cease to be understood as empirical objects but rather as statistical wave functions describing the probability that these particles are at a given point. Scientific observations are replaced with self-adjoint operators on a Hilbert space of physical states. Mathematics sets up the premise that observation affects the motion of the physical system simply through the use of a Lie bracket.<sup>62</sup> Heisenberg breeds his uncertainty through a subtle yet simply stated inequality.

We have a tension between things that present themselves in physical reality and how they correspond in mathematical reality. We wrestle in making this correspondence by trying to construct Theories of Everything. We are obsessed with the idea that there might be one and only one correspondence which will allow us to know physical reality. In this quest, we reject Newtonian Physics, General Relativity and Quantum Mechanics as candidates for the Theory of Everything because they cannot explain everything: there are points at which the correspondence breaks. The same is true for the more recent theories of Quantum Loop Gravity, Twistor Theory

---

<sup>60</sup> De Morgan, Augustus (1872). *A budget of paradoxes*, Longmans, Green, and co, London, p. 3.

<sup>61</sup> Novalis, *Mathematical Notebook of 1798*

<sup>62</sup> One might look at any introductory text on Quantum Mechanics, such as Keith Hannabuss, *Introduction to Quantum Mechanics*, OUP 2005

and the study of Superstrings. At each step the theory has to be more and more refined and yet more and more convoluted. Novalis would regard that as becoming more and more impure.

And then, what if the Theory of Everything is found?

Will the Physicist say, “this is the only mathematics. The rest no longer exists!”?

Many will be tempted to do so. This mathematics will be the only one that exists because it is the only one that has a perfect correspondence with reality. They can say this, but it simply cannot be true. Even Mathematics cannot close the door on itself. Kurt Gödel proves not one but two theorems which demonstrate that Mathematics cannot be complete<sup>63</sup>. There exist statements which cannot be proved either true or false using mathematics, nor can we know which statements they are. It might be said that even St Paul knew this from Epimenides.<sup>64</sup> Paul Cohen proves that there are two different but consistent Mathematics based on whether we accept whether two infinities are the same.<sup>65</sup> Mathematics shows that there are things that we cannot ever know just like the existence of the Universal set  $U$  above. The reality of mathematics beyond the material shows the short-sightedness of all who would seek to render every thing a naturalistic object.

### Desperately seeking Sehnsucht

We simply cannot possess mathematics just as we cannot possess any aspect of the Absolute. Our consciousness may be the arena on which the action of mathematics plays out, but we cannot see behind the scenes too far.

*In the end, mathematics is only common, simple philosophy, and philosophy, is higher mathematics in general.*

*In particular, higher mathematics connects common mathematics with the system of mathematics, while the latter borders on the philosophy of mathematics – or philosophical mathematics, just as systematic science is generally always the precursor and boundary of a higher degree of science – of the philosophical degree.<sup>66</sup>*

Novalis seems to have foreseen the flourishing of modern mathematics. The simple flat Universe of Isaac Newton and the clockwork Universe of Laplace have been replaced with ever higher and more arcane theories. Yet, the higher mathematics has been used to unite physical ideas. Understanding symmetries of the universe also means understanding fundamental particles and their interactions. At every stage,

---

<sup>63</sup> For the technically minded, these can be found here (<http://mathworld.wolfram.com/GoedelsIncompletenessTheorem.html>)

<sup>64</sup> Titus i.12-13

<sup>65</sup> Paul Cohen, *Independence of the Continuum Hypothesis*. *Proc Natl Acad Sci U S A*. 1963 Dec; 50(6): 1143-1148. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC221287/>

<sup>66</sup> Novalis, *Mathematical Reflections from: Das allgemeine Brouillon* (1798/99)

we ascend higher looking for a unity between the subatomic and the cosmological scales - a unity which the wonderfully predictive theories of Quantum Mechanics and General Relativity do not provide.

The search goes on and, as it does so, it throws light on great and beautiful theories which are, for physics, the side-show to where reality lies and yet, beyond physical relevance, an integral part of finding out what is. Our understanding of reality diverges as soon as we discover it: Novalis would have our understanding of what is real find its unity in the physically unobtainable Absolute in its sublime transcendence. Perhaps so would we all.