



O.G.S.

*A History  
of the  
Oratory  
of the  
Good Shepherd*

*Henry R.T. Brandreth*

THE ORATORY OF  
THE GOOD SHEPHERD

AN HISTORICAL SKETCH

BY

HENRY R. T. BRANDRETH, O.G.S.

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## FOREWORD.

The Oratory of the Good Shepherd is now over forty years old, so it is time that its history was written. From a group of young Cambridge Dons, trying to maintain a high standard of Catholic devotion and discipline amidst the apparent luxury of University life, it has grown to a Society of brethren in Africa, Canada, America, English parishes and Theological Colleges. At the same time it has never lost touch with Cambridge, where some members have always worked.

To me the Oratory means more than I could ever express in words, and I have no idea what I should do without it. Fr. Henry Brandreth has written an admirable record, and reading it has revived many memories of earlier days, and reminded me of how much I owe—as, indeed, do all the brethren—to the vision of great priests who created the Society under God—Edward Wynn, John How, and Eric Milner-White who introduced me to the Oratory in the first place. It is good to have a record such as this, and we should all be grateful for the time and care that Fr. Henry has given to its production.

GEORGE TIBBATTS, O.G.S.  
Superior.

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## PREFATORY NOTE

Although this little history has but one compiler, it is, of course, the work of many of the brethren who have never stinted their help and advice. I have been particularly fortunate in the willing help which I have received from the three Founder-Fathers. Our dearly-loved Father Edward some years before he died, gave a talk to General Chapter on his recollections of the early days, and very kindly gave me the notes he had prepared for it; during a visit he paid to me in Paris in 1954 he spent a long time going through these notes and adding to my knowledge. Bishop John How, 'Father John,' has been indefatigable in supplying his reminiscences and correcting my mistakes at many points. The early part of this booklet owes more to him than to anyone else. The Dean of York, 'Father Eric,' has added a number of touches in that charming style so inimitably his own, and those who know him will readily recognise them in my text. I am most deeply grateful to them all.

H.R.T.B., O.G.S.

## INTRODUCTION

The Oratory of the Good Shepherd is a society of unmarried priests and laymen of the Anglican Communion. It exists, as it began, to give its members the help of a close fellowship and a common Rule, which is fully set out in the *Manual*, ordinarily shown only to *bona fide* applicants for membership. The Rule includes the Constitution, of which a few details may be mentioned:— The Governing Body is the General Chapter, which meets at least once a year; there is one Superior for the whole Oratory, elected triennially; each ‘College’ similarly, is governed by its local Chapter under a Prior. Vocation is tested by a probation varying from one to three years. The *Manual* also contains a standard rule of life (to which the rule of each ‘College’ must conform, except for such modifications of detail as its particular conditions demand), and financial provisions.

The Oratory neither makes any claim on the capital of its members, nor requires that the income of all members shall be shared in common, though provision is made for the establishment of a common purse where circumstances allow. All members are required to submit regularly a statement of their income and expenditure to the Chapter of their ‘College’ and to consult it about the disposal of any surplus income.

The Rule was originally submitted for approval to the Archbishop of Canterbury. It is also laid before the Bishop of each diocese in which an Oratory College is established. The present Visitor of the Oratory is the Bishop of Gloucester. The Episcopal Consultant in the U.S.A. is the Bishop of Maryland.

# A HISTORY OF THE ORATORY

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The Oratory of the Good Shepherd grew out of a definite Anglo-Catholic movement (to use a term which had then a less partisan connotation than it has today), which began in Cambridge in the first decade of the present century. The prime mover in the first few years was a layman, H. L. Pass<sup>1</sup>, a member of St. John's College, but holding no official position either there or in the University. He was for many years a remarkable religious force in Cambridge, both among undergraduates and dons, a number of whom were beginning to find the extremely low standard of worship in the college chapels too meagre fare for them.

This movement was strengthened by the return to Cambridge of some young Anglo-Catholic priests who, after a spell at either Ely or Cuddesdon Theological Colleges, and experience in parish life, were recalled to official posts in colleges. The pioneer was A. S. Duncan-Jones<sup>2</sup>, who was recalled to Caius College after some time at Ely and parochial experience in London. In 1906, two more young priests, with similar experience behind them, returned to Cambridge, Spencer Carpenter<sup>3</sup>, was appointed Vice-Principal of the Cambridge Clergy Training School (later called Westcott House), and John How<sup>4</sup>, who returned to Cambridge after fifteen months at the Wellington College Mission, to be Hebrew Lecturer at St. John's College. Such a recall of men to academic work after theological college and parochial experience was, at this time, almost unprecedented.

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<sup>1</sup> He was subsequently ordained and became Principal of Chichester Theological College.

<sup>2</sup> Subsequently Dean of Chichester.

<sup>3</sup> Subsequently Dean of Exeter.

<sup>4</sup> Subsequently Bishop of Glasgow and Galloway and Primus of the Episcopal Church in Scotland.

These three at once began to form a small Anglo-Catholic caucus under the leadership of H. L. Pass. They met together regularly one afternoon a week for conference and prayer, and met again at the altar the next morning for Mass. In addition to that weekly gathering, John How, S. C. Carpenter and Duncan-Jones, met constantly in each other's rooms to plan for the wider dissemination of Catholic faith and practice.

(7) Meanwhile, there was a growing movement on Anglo-Catholic lines among the younger men in various colleges. Some of these were destined to hold high office in the Church in England and elsewhere—Will Spens<sup>5</sup>, Geoffrey Clayton<sup>6</sup>, E. G. Selwyn<sup>7</sup>, Bertram T. D. Smith<sup>8</sup>. All these were in due course drawn into the little circle that met in Pass's lodgings. In 1907 two freshmen appeared at Trinity Hall who were destined to be great influences in the Church in Cambridge and beyond. These were Edward Wynn and Ralph Eves.

The little group received encouragement and support from a number of older dons, among them the Regius Professor of Divinity (H. B. Swete), the Ely Professor (H. V. Stanton), Dr. J. H. Srawley of Selwyn, Dr. A. H. McNeile of Sidney Sussex, and the Professor of Ecclesiastical History (J. P. Whitney).

The brethren, as they called themselves, had hoped to be able to extend their weekly conferences into rather more concentrated discussion during spells of residence together during vacations, at some suitable country place, rather on the lines of the Oxford 'Holy party' of an earlier day which had produced *Lux Mundi*. In point of fact, only two such gatherings matured, one in September, 1908, at the parish of Witham-on-the-Hill, Lincolnshire, where John How was in charge for a short time, and the next a year later at St. Deiniol's Library, Hawarden. At this meeting, Pass, John How, Ralph Eves and Tom Thompson<sup>9</sup> formed an association of prayer for the restoration of the religious life in the universities, which developed into the Association of St. Benedict. Philip Crick, who subsequently became Bishop of Rockhampton, joined the brethren at about this time.

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<sup>5</sup> Subsequently Master of Corpus Christi College.

<sup>6</sup> Subsequently Archbishop of Capetown.

<sup>7</sup> Subsequently Dean of Winchester.

<sup>8</sup> Later Fellow and Dean of Sidney Sussex College.

<sup>9</sup> He resided at St. Anselm's House, where he was engaged in liturgical research with J. H. Srawley. His early death in 1916 was a loss to scholarship.

One of the chief aims of the brethren was to establish in Cambridge a religious house of some kind, as both a place for theological study and also a centre for pastoral and evangelistic work in the University. Largely through the energy of H. L. Pass a house was acquired in Malting Lane, to be called St. Anselm's House. A majority of the brethren decided to invite the well-known Cowley Father, Philip Waggett, to be Warden of the House and, after a first refusal, Cowley released him for the work. He took up residence towards the end of 1909. The combination of two such marked individualists as Waggett and {8} Pass was not likely to be permanent. In fact it lasted less than a year. In September, 1910, Waggett secured a house at the other end of Cambridge, where he was joined by Father Longridge. Both houses continued their good work independently.

The Chapter, as the brethren now called themselves, held its meetings in Waggett's house, and it was there that there was formed the plan to prepare for a mission to the University. This mission was undertaken towards the end of 1912 by Bishop Maud of Kensington, with Father W. H. Frere C.R. as Assistant. It gave the young men the lead for which they had been looking, and Edward Wynn said that he always regarded it as the real beginning of the Oratory.

The general religious life of the University had markedly improved, mainly on account of the work of the two Houses and of the group of priests in the colleges who were connected with them. The original group had been depleted. S. C. Carpenter had married in 1908 and left Cambridge, though he returned in 1913 to be Fellow and Tutor of Selwyn College. Arthur Duncan-Jones married in 1907, and finally left Cambridge in 1912, and E. G. Selwyn married in 1910 and in 1913 left Cambridge to be Warden of Radley. But their ranks were greatly strengthened by the arrival of two newly-appointed young dons, both ardent Catholics, in 1912. These were Eric Milner-White at King's and Edward Wynn at Jesus. Edward Wynn was young and new to the work of a college chaplain, and naturally was drawn into fellowship with those of riper experience, and in particular with Eric Milner-White, who had valuable pastoral experience behind him, and with John How with his six years of experience of life as a priest in college, first at St. John's and then at Trinity, where he had been appointed Precentor and Hebrew Lecturer in 1907.

These three were drawn increasingly together into intimate spiritual fellowship. Each was trying to maintain the kind of ideals they had learned and absorbed in their theological colleges and, in the case of John How and Eric Milner-White, in their parishes—the ideal of an ordered life of prayer on



Catholic lines. But in the theological colleges and clergy houses they had had the very definite advantage of fellowship with others, living in community with them in an atmosphere of ordered and regular devotion and discipline. They found a very different atmosphere in their Cambridge colleges, where in general they had to plough a lonely furrow. In addition to this, both John How and Edward Wynn were members of the little group of ‘Associates of St. Benedict,’ which was praying regularly for the restoration of the religious life in the universities.

{9} These three were coming to a common mind. Their undisputed leader, alike from seniority, experience, vigour, austerity and, to quote the Dean of York, ‘glorious humour,’ was John How. The sequel may be told in Bishop How’s own words:

“We three got together—I can remember the occasion well—and the subject was broached, and in some measure planned; a ‘Fellowship of Catholic-minded priest-dons,’ but we could not use the title ‘fellowship’ in Cambridge, for obvious reasons, living under a common rule and meeting together (as far as possible) for common devotions, at least Mass and one of the Hours. We felt the need of fellowship and a sense of community, though we lived each his own separate life in separate colleges. So it all began. We drew up a simple outline rule, leaving specific details to be filled in after growing experience.”

The three brethren arrived quickly at the dedication to the Good Shepherd, but it took longer to arrive at the word ‘Oratory.’ Its adoption was due to Eric Milner-White, who not only had a great knowledge of the French Oratory of Cardinal de Berulle, but was able to take the brethren back further to an earlier Oratory for their ideal, the *Oratorio del Divino Amore* founded in Rome in 1516 by Ettore Vernazza, a disciple of St. Catherine of Genoa, whose most famous member was St. Cajetan<sup>10</sup>. This was the inspiration, though not the model, of the brethren, and they pretended no kinship either with that Oratory, or with St. Philip Neri’s or de Berulle’s later foundations.

The brethren met daily for Mass in St. Michael’s church. They met again for Nones, had a definite time for Meditation and a fixed hour for retiring. They also met weekly in chapter. At Edward Wynn’s request, Father J. N. Figgis of Mirfield agreed to act as a kind of unofficial adviser to the

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<sup>10</sup> This Oratory is now only remembered by specialist students of Catholic devotions, amongst whom Eric Milner-White holds a distinguished place. There is a brief account of it in P. Pourrat, *Christian Spirituality*, vol. III, pp. 234ff and 269ff.

group. There was no thought of founding a religious order on the lines of any existing or ancient society, or even of the kind of religious institution which was later to develop. In the nature of the case, 'common life' was clearly out of the question, but the brethren planned to try to arrange for some periods during which they could live together in community, and live out their rule together more fully.

On March 3rd, 1913<sup>11</sup>, Father Figgis visited Cambridge, and the brethren, who had been joined by Bertram T. D. Smith, Vice- {10} Principal of the Cambridge Clergy Training School and T. Knox-Shaw who had been a Fellow of Sidney Sussex College since 1909, made a declaration of intention in the Chapel of Sidney Sussex College. Edward Wynn was ordained priest at Trinity in the same year, and the other three priest-brethren took part in the laying-on of hands. The daily Mass was moved at this time from St. Michael's to Sidney Sussex chapel.

One can now see the movement towards the kind of religious society which was fairly quickly to develop; by the adoption of a common rule the religious ideal of each member would be strengthened by the fellowship, and at the same time the general tone of religion in Cambridge be raised.

Eric Milner-White had also been studying the life of Nicholas Ferrar of Little Gidding, who may be regarded as the precursor of the modern religious life in the Church of England. In December, 1913, the brethren went for some ten days of common life at the farm at Little Gidding, and held their services in Nicholas Ferrar's little church. The rudiments of a constitution were drawn up at this time, which came to be known among the early brethren as 'the Provisions of Little Gidding.' The Oratory has always had an especial devotion to Nicholas Ferrar, commemorates him annually on December 4th, the day of his death, and honours him as patron of the Society.<sup>12</sup>

The brethren were all, of course, engaged in pastoral work in their colleges, but they soon found at hand work which the Oratory could do as a

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<sup>11</sup> There is uncertainty about this date. Edward Wynn was certain of it; Bishop How puts it a year later. Such records as there are seem, on balance, to point to the date given, as is the opinion of Colonel Knox-Shaw.

<sup>12</sup> It is fitting that the statue of him which once stood in the chapel of the Oratory House in Cambridge is to be placed in the new church of Nicholas Ferrar on the Arbury Road Estate, Cambridge, in a parish staffed by members of the Oratory. There was perhaps a prophecy in the official Court Circular the day after the foundation stone of this church had been laid by the Princess Margaret, when it referred to the 'Church of *Saint* Nicholas Ferrar.'

body, both in the University and in the town, for which their particular kind of rule and association fitted them. The daily Mass was removed from Sidney Sussex Chapel after a few months, to St. Edward's church and the brethren undertook a Sung Mass there each Sunday, preached special courses of sermons, and heard Confessions at fixed times. The Oratory services at St. Edward's became a marked feature of the religious life of Cambridge.

In August, 1914, came the war. Knox-Shaw went at once, and gave up membership of the group, though he remained a close friend of the Oratory and was for many years its Treasurer. The others, with Father Figgis, went again to Little Gidding in September. Then they were scattered. Eric Milner-White went *{11}* to France in December, and Edward Wynn and Bertram Smith also got commissions as Chaplains. Only John How, under treatment for acute sciatica, remained behind in Cambridge, shouldering all the Oratory activities there as well as, so soon as his health permitted, serving as a home C.F. at the Barnwell V. D. Hospital. He was able not only to carry on the work which O.G.S. had already started, but to develop it by starting the Oratory Club, as it came to be called, for young men and boys, the nucleus being his old Trinity choristers, augmented by a number of boys from the town. This gathering developed ultimately into the 'Company of St. John,' within the Companionship of the Oratory, which also included a 'Company of our Lady' for women and girls. This work was later greatly to develop. But although the brethren were scattered, and the rule could not be kept, this time of separation was also a time of consolidation. John How, in a letter from the Chaplain's Office in Cambridge in September, 1917, requested Eric Milner-White to return to Cambridge to take over the Oratory work there. Of that work he said: "The O.G.S. Mass is being valued by very different types of people; more and more people come to their confessions at St. Edward's—people entirely unknown to me; the nurses of 1st E.G.H. are now asking for a special weekly service of devotion and instruction on Friday evenings, and I am arranging for it at the request of Fr. Russell, late of St. Alban's, Holborn, who is a prop of the nurses' Guild of St. Barnabas."

In 1917, too, some of the brethren in France managed to meet from time to time in chapter. A note on St. Chad's Day, 1917, states that "after a celebration of Holy Communion at 8-15 in the Church Army hut, Basil Churchward was admitted to the noviciate, according to the usual form. The chapter was held at intervals throughout the morning, being much interrupted and for long spaces." The brethren also kept in touch by a comprehensive scheme of letter-writing.

Eric Milner-White had been offered the Deanship of King's, had refused, and again been pressed to accept. He had for some time been considering testing his vocation with the Community of the Resurrection at Mirfield but finally, in September, 1917, decided to accept the offer from King's, and to remain with the Oratory. He resigned his Army Chaplaincy and returned to Cambridge at the beginning of 1918, thus releasing John How for service overseas. Shortly after his return to Cambridge he set down on paper an 'Ideal of the Oratory,' from which it is worth quoting at some length:

"The Oratory has been cradled in an historical epoch, which must largely determine its mission and labours. There are new *{12}* needs to be met by the Church, and old needs, as yet unsatisfied by her, have been made visible to all eyes. Thus the sphere in which our little brotherhood is to work is marked by these outstanding characteristics:

"1. It is a world tuned to high spiritual self-sacrifice for causes and claims, however sacred, less sacred than those of Christ:

"2. A world in part ignorant of the Faith, in part with eyes directed on the verifiable facts of human truth; as a whole, blind to the Presence, even the use, of Jesus Christ, and of any obligation to membership in His Church:

"3. A world, therefore, eager to find occasion against those who openly profess Christianity; and finding it (1) in the scandal of Christian disunion and (2) in impatience of old definitions and ecclesiastical watchwords, etc., which only irritate:

"4. A world, that, nevertheless, has seen and learned deep things, made new resolves, longs for brotherhood and for healing.

"The Oratory, we hope, is to devote its life and energy in this new world, to the service of Christ in His Catholic Church. It is, in ideal, a close and loyal brotherhood of priests and laymen in the Church of England, which shall hold and live by the Catholic Faith with boldness and enthusiasm. But it is, at the same time, deeply conscious of a stewardship in a new and widened world; and so will make it a special study and fearless duty to welcome truth in all branches of thought, to meet modern thought and categories with sympathy in all presentation of Christian teaching, and to refrain entirely from outworn labels and ecclesiastical catchwords which, by offending the modern man, or savouring of past controversies, are fit to die.

"The Oratory must seek to fulfil a high ideal of self-sacrifice, and rival by a life of poverty and self-sacrifice, the death of that great company, who

sacrificed life for country in the Great War. It shall definitely tread a way of the Cross. The outward sign of this shall be the common purse, strictly interpreted. More important, shall be the corresponding spiritual effect of loving unselfishness.

“Within the brotherhood, the Oratory shall present an example of a perfect family of Christian love. The spirit of love is to permeate every rule and every labour. Deliberate efforts shall be made to heighten loyalty and love, not only by rule, but by upholding the very loftiest standard of fellowship and mutual self surrender as a mark of the community.....

*{13}* “In the world outside, the brethren shall not only count every opportunity of unselfish action for the sake of others as a first duty, but also seek daily to make such opportunities. They shall be absolutely forbidden to speak scorn or ill of other types or bodies of Christians. So that in all things the practice of Christ-like love shall be the motive and method of Oratory shepherdy.

“To these ends, the Rule shall be made so severe as to necessitate every day a real effort of love on the part of each brother; and so light as will not enchain his charitable energy in the course of his daily round.”

Having thus stated the Oratory ideal, he proceeds to discuss a number of practical points for the future work and organisation of the society. What he has to say of the work in Cambridge is of interest:

“Work at Cambridge has the happiest promise of any in the width of the Empire. In many respects it has already defined itself:

- “1. In the work of individual brethren in their colleges.
- “2. In the 9-30 Sung Mass in the Oratory Church (sc. St. Edward’s) on Sundays.
- “3. In the provision of mid-day intercessions, and opportunities for Saints’ Days and Confessions for undergraduates.
- “4. In the establishment of an Oratory Fellowship with rules of life, for undergraduates, men and women, graduates, schoolmasters and priests.
- “5. In the religious charge of the choirboys of all the college chapels, including club and annual camp.
- “6. In the fruit pickers’ mission in the Long Vacation.”

He puts forward various hopes for the future, including the founding of an Oratory House in Cambridge “to facilitate our own common life, and converse with university men.” But although there was so much emphasis on Cambridge, an emphasis much stimulated and encouraged by Father Neville Figgis, yet an important purpose of the memorandum is to legislate for the expansion of the Oratory in places other than Cambridge, both in the foreign mission field and in parishes at home.

The memorandum was circulated to the brethren, and in principle approved by them. Indeed, although much has changed in the Oratory since it was written, it expressed once for all the *{14}* spirit by which the brethren have tried to rule their lives, and the ideal which has been before them in their ministry. Later, a more detailed scheme was worked out and circulated under the title of ‘The Oratory Fellowship.’ This provided for “a fellowship including, under three various groups or rules, such men and women, whether in Holy Orders or no, as desire to live a life of spiritual hope and order for love of the Good Shepherd, and the perfecting of His Catholic Church. Of this fellowship, the Oratory of the Good Shepherd, living in close congregation, and with a common purse, shall form the first section, out of which, for each of the three further groups of the fellowship, the Superior shall appoint a Vicar.” These three groups were to be known as ‘The Oratory of Precious Charge,’ ‘The Oratory of Vision’ and ‘The Oratory of Venture.’ The scheme did not prove practicable, though there was formed an ‘Association of the Oratory of the Good Shepherd,’ consisting of “men and women who would associate themselves with the ideals and work of the Oratory of the Good Shepherd, and who are endeavouring to live a life of devotion in accordance with traditional Catholic practice.” This was the embryo from which sprang the present Oratory Companionship, which links a number of men and women in all parts of the world to the brethren in this way. It was, of course, a development of the Oratory Club started in Cambridge during the war.

Great stress was laid in these early days on the matter of the ‘common purse.’ The brethren, with the exception of B. T. D. Smith, who parted from them after the war, were unanimous in regarding it as an essential feature of their common life. Clearly such an ideal was extremely difficult of realisation considering the diverse work of the brethren. In a leaflet printed about 1917, two considerations are given prominence:

“That there be a real community of goods, whereby the members may practise the abnegation of possessions and yet not be crippled in their work in the world.”

“That owing to the peculiar circumstances of the Oratory, members should be in a position to spend on their own initiative. Means must therefore be secured whereby the possibility of individual extravagance be checked.”

The leaflet went on to propose that all monies be paid into a common purse, and that each quarter the brethren should present their accounts to a bursar, who would reimburse them the sum paid.

In fact the common purse was never a practical possibility for the Oratory as a whole, though it was practised in local colleges {15} where the brethren lived under one roof, or in close proximity. The ideal which motivated the original brethren in this matter, namely, “to make financial matters a special region wherein love of God, and love of the brethren is practically exercised,” has been safeguarded in all subsequent general or local forms of the Oratory Rule.

These schemes were, of course, all tentative. The brethren were seeking bases of discussion when, after the war, they should meet to draw up a full and detailed rule and constitution. On the other hand, they did need something of their ideals on paper in order to show to enquirers who might wish to join them. Those who sought to join in the early days as, indeed, most who have done so since, did so on account of contact with one or other of the brethren.

It was personal contact of this kind which led the Rev. Gordon Day and a small band of priests in Northern Rhodesia, who had been seeking some form of fellowship under a common rule, to get into touch with the Oratory in 1916. They referred the matter to their Bishop, Bishop Alston May, who replied to them in January, 1917:

“I have been reading your letter and the enclosures over again—in fact I have read them several times since they arrived—and my first impression is strengthened, that the Oratory seems so exactly to meet your needs, as to suggest the inference that it has been providentially called into being for that purpose amongst others.....I hereby give my full approval to the Constitution and Rule of Life of the Oratory of the Good Shepherd, as modified by you to meet the special circumstances and conditions of this country; and I authorize the formation of a congregation of the Oratory in this Diocese. And I pray, and shall continue to pray, that God’s blessing may rest upon it; and that it may

bear fruit in the lives of its members, and the spread of the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. Your affectionate, Alston N. Rhodesia.”<sup>13</sup>

In forwarding a copy of the Bishop’s letter to the brethren in Cambridge, Gordon Day wrote:

“First of all you proposed that we should be an independent African ‘Congregation of O.G.S.’ and we agreed within the limits outlined below. We must be independent in government but one in life; and it has been our main object throughout to adhere as closely as possible to everything in your whole scheme, {16} while at the same time differing from you only in so far as the exigencies of African life demand adjustment in detail.”

This was the first congregation of the Oratory outside Cambridge, and the decisions taken in its formation have influenced Oratory practice ever since in dealing with the life of individual colleges. Gordon Day returned to England in the early summer of 1917 to join up, and was admitted to the noviciate at a chapter held in John How’s rooms. The others, Harold Leeke and Gerard Pulley, followed later, and they were joined by Ronald O’Ferrall, who left them later to become Bishop in Madagascar.

In 1918 the Rev. William Lutyens joined the group and with him came the promise, later fulfilled, of a parochial college at St. Luke’s, Gillingham, of which parish he was Vicar. Ralph Eves, who acted as Chaplain of St. John’s College, was later Vicar of St. Michael’s, Beckenham, and was well-known as Vicar of St. Alban’s, Holborn, had also joined the brethren in England.

In August, 1918, an interesting proposal was made to the Oratory by Mr. Athelstan Riley—the first of many similar requests from various parts of the world. Eric Milner-White circularised the brethren thus:

“Athelstan Riley has got together four Cornish parishes with which the Bishop and he wish to make ‘a bold administrative experiment.’ They are too small for resident priests in these days—their total population is under a thousand, the churches old, well furnished and beautiful; the district the loveliest in Cornwall. He asked Frere for a religious to be head of a little community to run them. Mirfield could not spare one, and suggested application to us. Now, whether we accept it or not, here is a definite call, to

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<sup>13</sup> Bishop Alston May remained Bishop of Northern Rhodesia until 1941, when it is pleasant to record that he was succeeded by Robert Selby Taylor, a professed member of the Oratory.



be considered most carefully, a call to do the very things to which somehow O.G.S. has always felt particularly drawn.”

The parishes were St. Issey, St. Ervan, St. Eval and St. Petroc Minor. Each had a vicarage house, and the total income was something under £800 per annum. Several of the brethren were strongly in favour of acceptance and, indeed, the scheme probably would have been accepted if Mr. Athelstan Riley himself had not entered some caveats, and held out the bait that in time he would be able to offer the Oratory a town like Bodmin. Ralph Eves was particularly keen on the idea, made a trip to Cornwall to visit the parishes, and produced grandiose plans for the use of each of the vicarage houses, but they proved as chimerical as Mr. Riley’s original scheme and, in the event, no more was heard of the offer of Bodmin.

{17} When the war was over, and as the brethren who had been with the Forces returned and began to resume normal life, it was clear that the various schemes and dreams that had circulated among them during the war years should be sifted, coordinated and woven into a constitution and rule. In September, 1919, they met at St. Nicholas, Guildford, for a spell of community life, including a retreat and the first General Chapter. The retreat was conducted by Father Alfred Kelly, S.S.M. If the Bishop of Kensington’s mission may be regarded as the beginning of the Oratory, the Guildford retreat and chapter was certainly its consolidation. It took there a character which it has retained throughout its history.

The main work at Guildford was the compilation of the Oratory Manual, of which Eric Milner-White was Editor, and which, in addition to the constitution and rule, should contain forms of admission and profession, certain offices and a calendar of private memorials. The *Manual* was prefaced by the ‘Seven Notes of the Oratory,’ which, the work of Fathers Eric and John, were from then onwards to express the ideal of life at which the brethren aimed. There was a discussion whether O.G.S. was a religious community; some wished to be more tightly bound, while others were nervous of this. Edward Wynn acted as a brake on those who had more ambitious ideas and, in fact, was the only one of the original group who remained a life-long member. On the other hand, it may be doubted whether the brethren at Guildford had a very clear idea of exactly what the society they were founding was to be, a fact which was to have repercussions some years later. The College at Gillingham, for example, led a much stricter life in community than was possible for the brethren living in colleges in Cambridge, and they shared a common purse, from which each received 2/6 a week pocket money.

The brethren at Guildford asked the Bishop of Winchester (E. S. Talbot), to act as Visitor to the new society, and a typescript of the rule was laid before the Archbishop of Canterbury. Father John was elected Acting-Superior, with William Lutyens as Acting-Prior of Gillingham and Harold Leeke as Acting-Prior of Northern Rhodesia. "All these on profession *ipso facto* assume full office to date from profession," states the Minute of the meeting. They had so far been bound by simple and informal declarations of intention.

The first profession of the full members of O.G.S. took place in St. Edward's Church, Cambridge, on Saturday, October 25th, 1919, at 7.0 a.m. Father W. H. Frere, Superior of Mirfield, sang the Mass and received the brethren's professions. A number {18} of the Oratory's friends in Cambridge kept the rest of that morning as a time of continuous intercession in St. Edward's.

The brethren all met again, at Gillingham, in January, 1920. It was at this meeting that they took the important decision to open an Oratory House in Cambridge. The idea was by no means new, and the need for such a house had been seen in Father Eric's memorandum quoted above. Certain monies had already been subscribed to this end, and the House was also to receive the £300 per annum which the English Church Union had previously given to St. Anselm's House. St. Anselm's House had come to an end during the war, and the new Oratory House was to be, in some degree, the inheritor of its tradition, as it was also of a number of its books and of the altar from its chapel. John How outlined the general use to which the House would be put: "1. As a home for the Oratory, 2. a centre for work in the University and 3, to be a religious house under strict order and discipline."

A desirable house was quickly found, in Lady Margaret Road, and was opened on June 24th. Of the £4,000 required for the purchase of the lease (68 years), some £2,500 was raised by the brethren themselves through the sale of their private investments for the benefit of the common purse. The formal opening of the House did not take place until November 4th, when it was dedicated by the Bishop of Ely (Dr. Chase), and the Hon. Edward Wood (the present Earl of Halifax), presided over the day's festivities. A list of some of those who were present on this occasion gives some idea, not only of the place which the Oratory had made for itself in the few years of its existence, but also of the need felt for such an establishment in Cambridge; Bishop Gore, Canon William Temple, Father Frere, C.R., the Rev. V. S. S. Coles, two Bishops from the U.M.C.A., as well as the senior members of the Divinity

Board. *The Church Times* commented on the enterprise that “the presenting and living of the full Catholic Faith in the Universities of to-day is so important that the Oratory looks hopefully to the ardour of Catholics everywhere to support this foundation in Cambridge.”

The *First Annual Report* of the Oratory, published in August, 1921, is able to speak thus of the first year of the House:

“The first year of experimental work has been most satisfactory. Three members of the Oratory lived in the House, each having some particular piece of work on hand. The Superior, as Director of Studies in Hebrew and Oriental Languages at St. John’s College, was giving lectures and taking class work; the (19) Rev. Wilfred Knox<sup>14</sup> was engaged mainly in study and research for a book which he hopes shortly to produce. The Rev. Harold Dibben had charge of the club for boys and men, and was secretary to the Cambridge University branch of I.C.F. .... Six members of the University resided with the members of the Oratory during term<sup>15</sup>; and during vacations there were frequent visitors for longer or shorter periods. There was a constant flow of callers throughout the year, especially during term, when large numbers of undergraduates visited the House. The visitors’ book shows over 700 entries for the year. Besides the Bishop of the Diocese, and the Bishops of Zanzibar and Northern Rhodesia and the present Bishop of Manchester (Temple), who attended the opening, we were privileged to receive visits from Bishop Gore and Bishop Halford, and the Bishops of Assam, Bloemfontein, Calcutta, Corea, Guildford, Lebombo, Singapore, Southampton and Zululand. .... It was not thought advisable to add to the ever increasing number of meetings in the University during term by arranging a regular sequence of lectures or conferences, but a few special meetings were held, notably those addressed by the Bishops of Corea, Calcutta and Zululand, Father Alfred Kelly of S.S.M., the Rev. Harold Ellis of Newcastle and the Rev. A. S. Duncan-Jones.”

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<sup>14</sup> The Rev. W. L. Knox resided at the House throughout the whole of its existence, except for a short period when he returned to parochial work at St. Saviour’s, Hoxton. Admitted to probation in October, 1920, he made his first profession the following year and life profession in 1931. As Superior from 1941 until his death in 1950, he was the architect and inspirer of the expanded Oratory as it exists to-day.

<sup>15</sup> The six residents were Philip Strong, now Bishop of New Guinea, J. G. L. Murray, sometime Provost of Glasgow Cathedral, Fred Brittain, biographer of Quiller-Couch, Oswin Gibbs-Smith, now Archdeacon of London, and Joseph Needham, Fellow of Caius.

This was the average kind of programme which the House fulfilled for the next seventeen years, though it was not always possible for three professed members to be in residence.

In 1931, when Wilfred Knox had been for some time the only member resident in the House, William Lutyens resigned the vicarage of St. Luke's, Gillingham, in order to join him and Alec Vidler also returned to Cambridge. They entertained a constant stream of undergraduate visitors and in other ways maintained the corporate life and work of the House till 1938.

Although O.G.S. did not claim to be a religious community in the usual sense, the Oratory House could justly be termed a religious house. The time-table was as follows: 6-15, calling bell: 7-0, Mattins and Mass: 8-0, breakfast, followed by {20} housework in rooms: 9-15, Terce and Meditation: 10-0—12-45, individual work: 1-0, midday intercessions with the brethren in Colleges (out of term Sext in the House): 1-30, lunch: 4-20, Nones, followed by tea and individual work until 7-0, Evensong: 7-30, dinner: 10-0, Compline. Silence was kept from Compline until 10-0 a.m. The brethren did the work of their own rooms, but a married couple were employed, the wife to cook and the husband to look after the kitchen garden (It is doubtful whether he was ever allowed to look after the flower garden, which was Wilfred Knox's especial delight and which he loved to tend between lunch and tea every day, and made it beautiful for inmates and passers-by alike to look upon).

Requests for the Oratory to undertake work in different parts of the world continued to be sent. Two such requests were dealt with by the second General Chapter, in January, 1920, one from Bombay and the other from Delhi. Neither could be entertained at the time, though later Hugh King went from Gillingham to work in Delhi and was joined there in 1923 by a lay probationer, Mr. W. O. Fitch, now a Cowley Father, so that for a short time there was a mission college there of the Oratory. The *Fourth Annual Report* (1923-24), said that, "constant witness reaches us of the good work which the Rev. Hugh King is doing in Delhi."

In 1920, Father John was elected Bishop of Pretoria, and a General Chapter met in London to consider the matter. "In view of the conflicting opinions," states the somewhat austere minute of the proceedings, "he was left to decide for himself" He refused the bishopric, rightly interpreting the mind of the brethren that he should remain in Cambridge and become first Warden of the Oratory House. A few years later, however, the *Fourth Annual Report* opened with the following words: "During the past year the Oratory suffered the heaviest blow in its history by the departure of the Superior, the Rev. John

How, to be Diocesan Missioner in Manchester.” The fact that he was going to Manchester was not, in itself, any reason that he should leave the Oratory, even though it might necessitate his ceasing to be Superior. But two reasons impelled him; first, his pastoral and missionary vocation felt cramped at being over-long confined to young men of student age and type and, secondly, he wanted to marry. This brought the Oratory, for the first time, face to face with questions as to its own nature, which, indeed, required a further fifteen years of life fully to solve. The brethren deeply regretted his departure, but no religious obligation was broken; he obtained his release from the Oratory by constitutional means, and personal affections between him and the brethren remained unaffected by his departure. Eric Milner-White performed {21} the marriage ceremony and Edward Wynn said the Nuptial Mass. Eric Milner-White was elected Superior in his place, a position which he held for the next fourteen years.

In spite of Father John’s departure the *Fifth Annual Report* (1924-25), gave news of important Oratory ventures outside Cambridge—the formation of two new colleges and the taking over, at the request of the committee, of the spiritual side of the work of the Cambridge Fruiting Campaign at Wisbech, a work in which the brethren have ever since taken an active interest.

In the Spring of 1925, a mission college was started at Walworth, where the Rev. Harold Dibben, at the Wellington College Mission, was joined by the Rev. Christopher Norfor. This college rapidly developed owing to the action of the Bishop of Southwark (Dr. Garbett), in asking the Wellington Mission Council to take over the adjoining parish of St. Mark, Walworth, and appointing Harold Dibben as Vicar. This made it possible for the Oratory to find an opening for the Rev. Charles Bouch and the Rev. Theodore Godwin, who had for some years been looking forward to membership. Unfortunately, as regards Walworth itself, this college had a short life. In 1927, Harold Dibben was appointed by the Duke of Devonshire to the important vicarage of Staveley, in Derbyshire, and moved there accompanied by Theodore Godwin. He was joined there by two priest-companions of O.G.S. and what was known as the Staveley College continued to flourish until early in 1930. The *Tenth Annual Report* (1929-30), however, had the following note:

“It is with great regret that we have to report that the Staveley College has come to an end. The claims of this large and complicated parish have, in the judgment of the members of the college there, proved incompatible with an adequate fellowship with the Oratory as a whole. The work itself at

Staveley is going forward most happily, and the clergy continue to live by the rule which they observed as members of the Oratory.”

The second college founded in 1925 was to have a longer, if somewhat chequered, life, that of Rockhampton in Queensland, Australia. This was a considerable undertaking, and had been under discussion for some time. The *Report* states: “Two of the new College come from Gillingham, the Rev. Leonard Poole and the Rev. Rex Malden. They have been joined by the Rev. Arthur Robinson, late Vicar of St. Augustine’s, Haggerston, who has resigned his living in order to return to Rockhampton where he has worked before. His experience should be of the utmost value to the new College, and we need not say how warmly we welcome him as a member of the Oratory. The fourth member {22} is the Rev. Henry Hannaford, who was admitted as probationer to the Mother-House shortly after the issue of the last Report. He was ordained deacon by the Bishop of Rockhampton in St. Michael’s Church, Cambridge, on August 30th. The sermon at the Ordination was preached by the Master of Sidney Sussex (G. A. Weekes), of which, Mr. Hannaford is a member. The service on this occasion was of a most impressive character; the Bishop of Rockhampton was assisted by members of the new College, the servers being composed of young laymen who were accompanying the new venture and hope in time to proceed to Holy Orders and to membership of the Rockhampton College.”

The Bishop of Rockhampton was that Philip Crick who had been with the brethren at Hawarden in 1909, and his welcome of the new College was, naturally, of the warmest kind. None the less, great difficulties beset the brethren on arrival in Rockhampton. Arthur Robinson was put in charge of the Cathedral parish, with Henry Hannaford to assist him, while the other two brethren went to Barcaldine, where their work included the oversight of the Diocesan School for Boys and two or three parishes. Unfortunately soon after the brethren’s arrival, the area was hit by the worst drought on record, which appears to have lasted for some years, since one reads of its havoc in successive Annual Reports. In the *Annual Report* for 1928-29, it stated that: “The drought in Queensland has affected Church life in the province in common with all social life, and diocesan finance is difficult.” This financial difficulty had already led to the closing of the Diocesan School at Barcaldine because parents, hit by drought, could not afford to pay the fees, and the two brethren and two lay companions, who had been in charge of the work there, had to return to England.

Arthur Robinson had meanwhile been met with considerable opposition in the Cathedral parish. This, however, gradually subsided, and when, in 1929, the new Bishop of Rockhampton made him Archdeacon of the Western Districts, “with special charge of work in the ‘back-blocks,’ ” the members of the parish regarded the severance of his close connection with them with real regret.

The Rockhampton College continued until 1934, but from 1930 onwards the history of the Oratory in Australia is really that of Arthur Robinson. When he died in August, 1953, the Oratory said this of him:

“His work was one of heroic ministry to isolated groups spread over a large area, and he carried it on long after most men would have retired from so much activity..... He retired in 1937 and came to Cambridge to live in the Oratory House, but {23} the appeal of Rockhampton could not be resisted, and he returned there at the end of 1938 to be acting Warden of the Brotherhood of St. Andrew. He has since done a variety of jobs which might well have daunted many younger men, and his great love of souls kept him at work as long as possible. He was well over eighty years old.”<sup>16</sup>

So throughout the late twenties and early thirties the Oratory continued on its way, consolidating and expanding in one place, and perhaps finding it necessary to retrench in another. A constant ministry throughout these years was that at St. Edward’s Church, where the Oratory continued to be responsible for the Sung Mass on Sunday mornings, at which, during term, the brethren preached special courses of sermons which were widely attended by undergraduates.

The annual Retreat and General Chapter was, from 1919 onwards, a great feature of the Oratory’s life. For many years, except for a break during the second World War when the community was evacuated, this has been held at St. Mary’s Abbey, West Malling in Kent, and in the course of these years there has grown up a close attachment between the Oratory and the Benedictine Community of Malling, an attachment which was strengthened when, for some years, Father Brian Oman, O.G.S., acted as their Chaplain. The Oratory has been fortunate in those who have given of their time to conduct the annual retreat, and the impressive list of those who have done so includes some of the great names of Anglican spirituality in the present century: Father E. K. Talbot, C.R., Father G. C. Rawlinson of St. Barnabas,

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<sup>16</sup> *Thirty-third Annual Report*, p. 4.

Pimlico, Dom Bernard Clements, Father Biggart, C.R., Father Lucius Cary, S.S.J.E., Bishop J. A. Kempthorne, Bishop Carpenter-Garnier and others.

In 1937, Eric Milner-White asked to be given a rest from the office of Superior, which he had held without a break since 1924, and Edward Wynn was elected in his place. He remained Superior until his appointment to the bishopric of Ely in 1941. One of the most trusted and best-loved of the brethren, he was shortly to have to guide them through one of the most difficult periods in the history of the O.G.S., and it is due to his wise statesmanship at that time that the society not only survived, but began markedly to expand. When he died in 1956, there appeared an appreciation in the Pembroke College, Cambridge, Society's Annual Gazette, from which, the following is an extract: "Fortunate is the man who, in his youth, has this supreme blessing, of coming under the sway and influence of an older {24} man, himself wise and compassionate. Such, during the past forty years was the experience of a multitude, of whom, humanly speaking, it may be said, they 'owe their souls' to Edward Wynn..... His achievement and his fame, and they are great, amply rest upon the influence he had on his friends, who were countless, in Cambridge, in the Diocese, and in the world at large, not excepting America."

We have already noted that at Guildford in 1919 there had been a discussion as to the nature of the Oratory, whether it was a religious order, in the generally accepted sense of the term, an institute or simply a society.<sup>17</sup> For eighteen years this problem had remained unsolved. Some of the brethren clearly took one view, others, the opposite one. In fact, the majority of the brethren did not regard the Oratory as a 'religious institute,' in the strict sense of the word, still less as a religious order, but rather what the *Codex Juris Canonici* (Can. 673), defines as a 'society.'<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> It was not until 1931 that the rule was altered to make profession for life possible, and the vote to do so was not unanimous. It was made clear at the time that any brother who wished to continue in annual profession was of the same status in the Oratory as those in life profession. The Oratory has always eschewed the word 'vows,' though, in fact, the commitment made falls within most definitions of that word.

<sup>18</sup> There is some terminological confusion. The (Anglican) *Directory of the Religious Life* (1st ed. p. 10), speaks of an 'Institute' as a religious community in which simple vows, whether perpetual or temporary, are taken." The *Codex Juris Canonici*, Can. 488, simply says: *Religionis, societas, a legitima ecclesiastica suctoritate approbate, in qua sodales, secundum proprias ipsius societatis leges, vota publica perpetua vel*



The question of the status of the Oratory was brought up at the General Chapter of 1936 by Edward Wynn, who was asked to prepare a memorandum on the subject for circulation among the brethren. He stated in this document the case for the ‘non-religious’:

“The *raison d’être* of the Oratory seems to be to give priests and laymen doing their own individual work, the advantage and help of a rule and a close fellowship. There is little or nothing in the rule that contradicts this or that implies more. But we should now, after twenty-four years of life, consider carefully our direction. Impressions have been received and are being received by people, that we claim to be a ‘religious community.’ As far as we ourselves are concerned the discussion of the exact definition of the word ‘religious’ may be unprofitable. But scandal is caused, 1, because the life of some of us bears little or {25} no relation to the ordinary and reasonable conception of a ‘religious.’ 2, By the number of our brethren who leave us to be married. It is also significant that some have left us because they need the ‘religious’ life and have gone to Cowley and to Mirfield. We are happy that this should be; but if we have any claims to be religious this would not in every case be a source of satisfaction.”

He went on to point out that, although the Oratory undertook certain corporate responsibilities, such as the Oratory House, no brother could be *ordered* to do any particular piece of work, or to live in a particular place, and that, in view of the fact that there is no obligation to life profession, the possibility of permanence is reduced to a minimum.

He proposed two solutions for discussion. 1. That the rule be so changed as to give the Oratory full and absolute control over the brethren, and insist that the common purse be a reality to every brother, or, 2. to return to what he conceived the original plan of the Oratory to be, of a brotherhood of priests and laymen working in the world, which would, again, involve certain changes in the rule.

This memorandum was circulated among the brethren, together with one by Alec Vidler, in which, accepting Father Edward’s second solution, he sought to set out the practical consequences. The more radical of his proposals, both of which were, in principle, subsequently accepted, were: “1. If we accept the latter solution, the idea of the Oratory as a kind of religious community is discarded, and the idea of the Oratory House as the mother

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temporaria, elapso tamen ternpore renovanda, nuncupant, atue ita ad evangelicum perfectionem y tendunt.”

house of a religious community goes with it. In any case, it will here be proposed that this aim of the Oratory House should be discarded, and that such a centre as the Oratory needs should be distinct from the Oratory House, and elsewhere. 2. That pastoral work among undergraduates as the primary aim of the Oratory House should also be discarded. A priest whose primary vocation was for that kind of work, would be normally better employed in a responsible post which gave official opportunities for it.” He went on to propose that the Oratory House should be retained as a house of sacred study. In regard to the Oratory as a whole, in view of the need for such a society among celibate priests, he said that it would need, 1, to take steps which would make it clear that it was not a predominantly academic institution and 2, a centre elsewhere, where one or more members of the O.G.S. would make it their primary business to serve the whole life of the Oratory.

These two memoranda were discussed by the General Chapter of 1937, which, however, took no action upon them beyond [26] moving that Edward Wynn had done the Oratory an extremely opportune service in bringing to a head issues which must be faced forthwith, and that there was a strong *prima facie* case for a careful examination of the proposals contained in Alec Vidler’s memorandum.

A special General Chapter was held in Cambridge in March, 1938, to consider the matter further. The brethren had before them a memorandum from Father Eric stating his reasons for disagreeing with both the other documents, and pointing out reasons for regarding O.G.S. as a religious community in the generally accepted sense of the term.

In the event, the matter was already partially solved. Alec Vidler reported to the brethren that he had been offered the editorship of *Theology*, together with residence at St. Deiniol’s Library, Hawarden, near Chester. There was also the strong probability that he would be offered the post of Warden of that institution when it became vacant by the retirement of Bishop Wentworth-Sheilds the following year. The brethren were unanimously in favour of his accepting the offer. The fate of the Oratory House was again in the balance, and, after a long discussion, the General Chapter decided that it was no longer practicable to keep it, and that it should be offered to one of the established religious communities for men. At the General Chapter in August that year it was reported that the Society of St. Francis had accepted the invitation of the Cambridge Chapter to take over the House in October, 1939.

The General Chapter in August, 1938, passed a resolution defining what it meant by the word ‘profession’: “The word ‘profession’ as used by the

Oratory, has not the implications that it has when used in the technical sense of taking vows in a religious order. It means self-commitment before God and within the fellowship of the Oratory, to the way of life described in the Rule—no more and no less.”

This definition, if such it was, caused Eric Milner-White, who had already been unsettled by the other proposed changes, to record “a statement that he cannot accept the definition of the word profession as proposed by the General Chapter, August, 1938, as representing the meaning of the first and subsequent professions which he then understood himself to be making in the Oratory. In view of this interior divergence of one professed for life, with the Chapter’s conception of the Oratory, and the difficulties with which it presents him in the fields both of conscience and action, he asks for time to consider, in consultation with the Superior, his position.” On September 23rd, 1939, he wrote to the Superior that “I feel both that I ought to and would {27} like to resign my membership; and with sadness, but also with settled purpose, do so. For me, no problem arises about ‘life-profession.’ The change in the character of the Oratory seems to me automatically to wipe out a ‘profession’ made to something quite other, and with a wholly different interior intention. And I could not but continue to protest against such a term and thing, with its ancient and solemn associations, being maintained in the new order.”

The Chapter was unable to accept the view that the changes made since 1937 had constituted a fundamental change in the character of the Oratory, but, apparently with the view that one self-committed could not be self-dispensated, referred the matter to the Episcopal Visitor, Bishop J. A. Kempthorne, who issued the dispensation in April, 1940, though agreeing with the Chapter’s view of the nature of the Oratory.

After the disposal of the Oratory House, the ‘Centre’ of the Oratory was moved to Hawarden, where Alec Vidler had been joined by William Lutyens. During the war the brethren visited Hawarden for their annual retreat and General Chapter and, with Alec Vidler as Secretary-General of O.G.S. and Warden of St. Deiniol’s Library, there was little sense of loss at the handing-over of the Oratory House.

The second World War was less disruptive of the life of the Oratory than the first, and there was not the same impulse to become military chaplains, though the brethren in their various areas played their part in civil defence. The War was also a time of growth. At its beginning there had been twelve professed brethren and two probationers, while at its end there were seventeen professed and five probationers.

The most significant development of the Oratory during the war years was the foundation of an Oratory College in America. This was due to the initiative of Robert P. Casey, whose first contacts with O.G.S. had been through Edward Wynn at Jesus shortly after the first war, and who had frequently stayed at the Oratory House. Edward Wynn, in 1941, reported Wilfred Knox's judgement that Casey was a scholar of outstanding distinction. The great distances in America were clearly a difficulty for a society such as the Oratory, and for a year or two Robert Casey remained the only professed member, with a few priest and lay companions. Gradually, however, others joined him and, although distance is always likely to hinder the development of the Oratory in America, the College there has become firmly established and the brethren are able to maintain contact with each other.

[28] Fellowship with the Oratory in England is maintained by the visits, when possible, of American brethren to General Chapter, while four members of the home Oratory, Edward Wynn, Alec Vidler, Henry Brandreth and Eric Mascall, have been able to visit brethren in the United States.

In 1941, two of the brethren were raised to the episcopate. Edward Wynn was consecrated Bishop of Ely in Westminster Abbey on St. James's Day. All the Cambridge brethren were present at the consecration, which was described by one of them as "edifying in spite of the sheeplike wanderings of Bishops in the sanctuary." Robert Selby Taylor, who had been working in the Diocese of Northern Rhodesia since 1935, was consecrated Bishop of that Diocese in Likoma Cathedral on the Feast of St. Michael and All Angels.<sup>19</sup>

On becoming Bishop, Edward Wynn resigned from the office of Superior, and in his place the brethren elected Wilfred Knox who held the office with marked distinction until his death on February 9th, 1950. After Father Wilfred's death the *Annual Report* spoke thus of him:

"He was greatly beloved of his brethren, who had come, more and more as the years went on, to depend on his wisdom and on his deep attachment to, and understanding of, the way of life to which the Oratory is committed. There has never been anyone like Father Wilfred, and it is impossible to believe that there ever will be. It would be absurd to regard him as a typical member of the Oratory, or of any other society to which he belonged. Yet, despite his highly marked individuality and his singular but endearing eccentricities, there is no doubt that he has done more than anyone

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<sup>19</sup> He was translated to Pretoria in 1951.

else to give the Oratory the stability and cohesion which it at present possesses. The Oratory had the first place in his affections, and he sacrificed his own interests and inclinations on its behalf with a wonderful steadfastness. His brethren thank God for his unpretentious devotion, his delightful fellowship and his sagacious leadership.”

The day after his death *The Times* paid tribute to his fine scholarship, ending its obituary thus: “He was indeed one of the holy and humble men of heart, and the nimble wit and intellectual ingenuity he shared with other members of his family never obscured the fundamental simplicity of his character. In many respects he was utterly unworldly. During the last years of his life he made a deep impression upon the college of his adoption (Pembroke). Appointed Chaplain at an emergency period, he quickly established himself, socially as well as spiritually, in the {29} affections of his colleagues and of his pupils. In the ordinary sense, Wilfred Knox was entirely untroubled by ambition; but perhaps it would be truer to say that he had two ambitions—to be a good scholar and to be a good Christian. Certainly he fulfilled them.”

In 1942 the Hawarden College produced a memorandum, *The Oratory of the Good Shepherd and Parochial Work* and, with the approval of the Superior, circulated it to several diocesan bishops. The memorandum stated that, “The time has come when we should explore the possibilities of establishing a new parochial college. We have at least two members who are sufficiently experienced to form the nucleus of such a college, and if a definite scheme were projected, it is likely that there would be one or more probationers available to join them..... The following points need to be clearly understood in advance: 1. The distinctive character of the Oratory parochial college will lie in the common adherence of the members to the Rule and to the ideal or ethos set forth in the Seven Notes. 2. The primary emphasis should be on the common spiritual life of the brethren, and not on financial economy or ecclesiastical efficiency. 3. In regard to finance, the brethren will not be committed to the poverty of a religious order. Their aim will be to live according to a standard of reasonable simplicity and to share their combined means with equity. This will normally involve some form of common purse.....

“We are seeking an opening for an Oratory College in a country area or small industrial or market town (where there is sufficient pastoral work for at least three priests), rather than a city or large town.”

Several bishops replied favourably to the memorandum, and two concrete offers were made, one by the Bishop of Derby of a new, and apparently singularly ‘tough,’ housing-estate near Chesterfield, and the other, by the Bishop of Sheffield, of a mining parish. Neither of these proved practicable and, indeed, neither fitted the desiderata which the Oratory had stated.

In 1944 a revised form of this memorandum was submitted to General Chapter, and it was agreed that it should be sent “to those of the English Diocesan Bishops who would be likely to receive it with sympathy.” A notable difference in this second memorandum was that this time the brethren available to work such a parish had “a strong preference for a small industrial town, market town or new housing estate, with or without outlying mission churches, since they consider that their training and ability best equip them for these types of parish.”

{30} Three concrete offers were received as a result of this document, of Northolt Park in the Diocese of London, at Wallasey in the Diocese of Chester, where there was a choice of two churches, and at Middlesbrough in the Diocese of York. The brethren concerned visited the various parishes and finally, after consultation with the Superior, it was decided to accept the Bishop of London’s offer of St. Barnabas, Northolt Park. Northolt Park was a London Home Mission District with two churches and a population of just under twenty thousand. Ian Carrick and Henry Brandreth, who had already been together for some six months doing pastoral work at the Swynnerton Ordnance Factory in Staffordshire, were instituted by the Bishop of Kensington on Advent Sunday, 1945. There was no permanent vicarage, and the brethren lived in two small houses, meeting daily for Sext and lunch and again for Evensong.

Northolt Park, now a fully-constituted parish with a fine church and modern vicarage, has remained connected with the Oratory and Ian Carrick became its first vicar.

In Oxford, Eric Mascall, who had been Student and Tutor of Christ Church since 1941, and Leslie Arnold, who had been Vicar of St. Mary and St. John, Oxford, since 1946 and became a member of the O.G.S. in 1952, were joined by Edward Knapp-Fisher, who was appointed Principal of Cuddesdon in October of that year. This made it possible for General Chapter in 1952, to constitute an Oxford College.

Since the war the Oratory has continued to grow. On the death of Wilfred Knox, George Tibbatts was elected Superior, and has been twice re-elected to that office. Father George has spent the whole of his ministry within the Oratory, having served his title at St. Luke's, Gillingham with Father William Lutyens. In an increasingly widely-flung Oratory, the present Superior has done much to preserve the original family spirit by assiduously visiting different colleges and individual brethren. He is the first Superior who has been able to visit the brethren in Central Africa, where he himself worked for some years after leaving Gillingham.

General Chapter in 1957 gave permission for the formation of a Southern African College, comprising brethren working in the Provinces of South and Central Africa. This College was formed in January, 1958.

In 1957 the number of professed brethren was thirty-three, with six probationers and four postulants. Cambridge, in some ways, has regained its place as the 'Centre' of the Oratory, but {31} the brethren are widely scattered in many parts of the world in a variety of occupations—parish priests, diocesan bishops, theological dons, missionaries overseas, schoolmasters. The early connection with the work of the U.M.C.A. has not been interrupted, and three brethren are at work in Central Africa, two of them being archdeacons.

APPENDIX

**IN PRAISE OF NICHOLAS FERRAR**

To Thee Good Shepherd now we raise  
Our thankful hymn of joy and praise  
For Nicholas Thy servant bless'd  
Who Thee in heart and deed confess'd.

A scribe instructed wise and true  
He brought forth treasures old and new.  
He found Thy Word, Eternal Cause,  
In sacred page and nature's laws.

The Gospel music of Thy Love  
In four-fold harmony he wove.  
His life returns an answering note  
To each who Gospel music wrote.

Like Mark in early days of youth  
He learned of Thee the Way, the Truth.  
Like Matthew, counted riches vain  
To find in Thee, O Christ, his gain.

Like Luke, his hands made sick men whole;  
His words a medicine to the soul.  
Like John he saw Thy Light to shine  
In mystic fellowship divine.

Good Shepherd may we in our turn  
Like him Thy Holy Wisdom learn,  
And seeking but Thy Will alone  
Rejoice with him before Thy Throne.

Bishop John How.