

THE ORATORY OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD

The First Seventy Five Years

by

GEORGE TIBBATTS,* OGS

{ spelling corrected}*

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FOREWORD

This history appears as the Oratory celebrates the seventy fifth anniversary of its foundation in Cambridge in 1913. Canon Tibbatts, who has served both as Secretary-General and Superior, is uniquely qualified to tell the story. His association with the Oratory began in his undergraduate days at Kings in the 1920ies. He knew personally the founding fathers and enjoyed their friendship.

In the years preceding the first world war three young clerical dons (John How, Eric Milner-White and Edward Wynn) sought to establish a society for celibate priests, bound by a common rule of life, marked by Catholic discipline of prayer and devotion, and characterised by the importance attached to regular and systematic study in the life of a priest Their inspiration was drawn from the Catholic revival of the previous century, and they were concerned to make a distinctive witness in the religious life of the University. The ethos of the Oratory was, and has continued to be essentially Anglican in its Catholic form. The devotion to Our Lord as the Good Shepherd, the adoption of Nicholas Ferrar of Little Gidding as patron, testify to the pastoral ideal and English temper of the Oratory. And within the framework of the Rule there is characteristically Anglican liberty which encourages members ‘to develop their personal gifts and thus to enrich the offering laid at the feet of Christ’.

In tracing the history of the Oratory Canon Tibbatts highlights three significant developments. The first relates to the Oratory’s self-understanding. Founded and established in the University, it seemed right to acquire the Oratory House, as a base for theological study and for evangelistic and pastoral work. There some, but not all of the Cambridge members lived, and the life of the house was ordered in the style of a religious community. In time this provoked questions: Was it the Mother House? In what way did it or should it set the standard for the religious life of what was increasingly becoming a dispersed Society? During the 1930ies there was debate on whether the Oratory was in essence a religious community or more simply an association of priests ministering in varied situations, and held together by a common rule and fellowship. It was the latter view that prevailed, and this was sealed by the disposal of the Oratory House to the Society of Saint Francis in 1939.

Secondly, although the Oratory has always been strongly influenced by its origins in the University, its distinctively pastoral ethos has given it a wider framework and appeal. Some of its priest members worked in English parishes, and others abroad. We see the Oratory spreading, with Colleges formed in Africa, Australia and North America as well as in different parts of England. Happily the Oratory did not withdraw from the universities. One recalls with affection the memory of Wilfred Knox and Christopher Waddams. And among the senior Oratorians to-day are two distinguished academic theologians: Fr Alec Vidler and Fr Eric Mascall. Yet many, indeed most members have been called to different forms of pastoral work. Canon Tibbatts movingly commemorates the faithful and selfless ministries of Leslie Arnold, Sidney Howard and Richard Seymour: unsung heroes of the parochial ministry.

Thirdly, as the century has worn on the discussions within the Oratory over the {vi} nature and style of priestly ministry have mirrored the wider debate that has been conducted in the Church. In the closing pages the new Superior, Robert Waddington, Dean of Manchester, explores the idea of the Oratory through its Colleges and Chapters as exhibiting the intersection of many ministries, many theologies and many professional tasks. So the Oratory like the Church it serves, continues in via wrestling with its vocation, yet committed to the ideal of ‘the adoration of God in the service of the Lord Jesus Christ and the imitation of His most holy life’.

† Colin Winton
September 1987

Father George Tibbatts died on 13th September 1987 shortly after completing this history. He had been caring for the parish of Saint Andrew, Caxton, during an interregnum and had been performing his duties as acting parish priest up to two days before his death. He was a true pastor.

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ORATORY HISTORY

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DITHYRAMBIC

by Eric Mascall on the
appointment of Edward Wynn,
Senior Tutor of Pembroke College,
Cambridge, to be Bishop of Ely.

What though the icy breezes
Sweep over Ely's isle?
What though, whene'er it freezes
The place is simply vile?
All good established voices
Unite in tuneful din,
And every heart rejoices
In worthy Bishop Wynn.

But Pembroke's halls are smitten,
The Fellows' heads are bowed,
The scholars weep in silence,
The porters wail aloud.
The Master finishes his port,
And moving slowly bedward,
His voice re-echoes round the court:
"My Edward! Oh my Edward!"

For Harold Edward Wynn, D.D.
By royal nomination,
Capitular election, and
The grace of consecration,
Adorned with mitre, ring and staff,
Now reigns supreme and freely,
Not only in the C. of E.,
But in the See of Ely.

{1}

Chapter 1

BEGINNINGS 1906 — 1914

‘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, a member of Saint John’s College.’¹ He had a profound effect on the young men who were to be leaders of this movement in Cambridge. He had entered Saint John’s as a foundation Scholar in 1894, and was elected a Stewart of Rannoch Scholar in the same year. In his memoir of Pass, Canon Charles Gillett wrote:

“He had been brought up in the Jewish faith, but what his religion was in his early undergraduate days, it would be difficult to say. No doubt he was passing through a phase of agnosticism. But after graduation, during the three years when, attached to the University Library, he was set to sort out and catalogue the collection of Hebrew papyri discovered in Egypt by Dr Charles Taylor, editorial work on which is still in progress, he met and learned to revere that austere, saintly, erudite, eccentric priest, and canonist, E.G. Wood, then and for many years Vicar of Saint Clement’s, who at that time stood almost alone in outspoken advocacy of Catholic principles in the University, and exercised a remarkable influence over a large number of Cambridge churchmen, both clergy and laity, both old and young. From Father Wood’s hands he received Christian Baptism, and not only assimilated the doctrines of the Church with an astonishing rapidity and completeness, but gave himself immediately and unreservedly to their propagation.”

He died in 1938, and Gillett wrote — “A vast number of priests and laymen all over England date their understanding of what the priesthood and the Catholic Faith in its fullness really means from the time when they met him, and the great evangelical truths were illuminated for them by his genius.”

The Catholic 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, 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 was appointed Vice-Principal of the Cambridge Clergy Training School (later called Westcott House), and John How, who returned to Cambridge after fifteen months at the Wellington College Mission, to be Hebrew lecturer at Saint John’s College. Such a recall of men to academic work after {2} theological college and parochial experience was, at this time, almost unprecedented.’

When John How arrived in October, 1906, there were 39 ordinands in Saint John’s College. Weekday Communion was rare in College Chapels before the first World War. All that Saint John’s College Chapel could produce at the beginning of the Michaelmas Term was the saying of the Litany!

John How’s remarkable influence made him the natural leader of the Catholic Movement as the years went by. At the same time, a number of new appointments to Chaplaincies and Fellowships in various Colleges brought Catholic sympathisers into the heart of the University itself. In addition to the three already mentioned there were Edward Wynn, ordained as Chaplain of Jesus College in 1912 — Eric Milner-White, who came from a curacy in South London to be Chaplain of King’s — Bertram Smith,

¹ Henry R. T. Brandreth, OGS: A history of the Oratory of the Good Shepherd. OGS Cambridge 1958 p6. This history is quoted extensively, and the {sic} quotations are marked by single quotation marks, and quotations from other sources by double marks.

Vice-Principal of Westcott House, and then Fellow and Dean of Sidney Sussex College — Tom Knox-Shaw, Fellow of Sidney Sussex College and many years later its Master. These were joined by Will Spens, later to be Master of Corpus Christi College; Geoffrey Clayton, subsequently Archbishop of Cape Town; and Gordon Selwyn, later to be Dean of Winchester. All these young men arrived in Cambridge between 1906 and 1910. And behind it all, with advice and stimulating encouragement, were H.L. Pass and E.G. Wood. They called themselves the ‘Brethren.’

Edward Wynn had come under the influence of the Brethren as an undergraduate at Trinity Hall in 1907, and had no parochial experience, being ordained straight from Ely Theological College. Many years later, at his enthronement in Ely Cathedral on 7 August 1941, he remarked in his sermon that he had never done a day’s parish work in his life. Until he became Bishop of Ely most of his ministry was spent in Pembroke College, Cambridge, as Dean and later Senior Tutor. He was an Army Chaplain in the first World War and after demobilisation briefly Vice-Principal of Westcott House.

In spite of his lack of parochial experience, Edward Wynn was a wise and successful pastor, and was long remembered in Ely Diocese. When he died in 1956, there appeared this appreciation in the Pembroke College gazette:

“Fortunate is the man who, in his youth, has this supreme blessing, of coming under the sway and influence of an older 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.”

After the funeral the Dean of York wrote as follows:

“It was Edward who long years ago first suggested to John (How) and Bertram (Smith) the idea of such a Society, and then these three marched off to me, and enrolled another very willing aspirant. But my affection for it from those early days remains very deep. But Edward, with his love, his sweetness of humour, his tender sympathies — what a loss to us all. Most thankful I am that these gifts were given full pastoral field in a Diocese; it will be long before Ely forgets such a Father. It killed him, of course, feeling things so deeply as he did, and of none is it truer to say, he bore his Cross in the higher places of this earth. May his spirit of happiness, deep sincerity, *{3}* deep devotion and visible Christliness abide with and mould the Oratory always.”

Bishop John How wrote: “What a really ‘beautiful’ creature he was. I rejoice in all my memories of him — no black spots — from the day I first set eyes on him at a meeting of S.T.C. in October, 1907 — a very young fresh face all bubbling with mirth, so that I enquired of someone next to me ‘Who is that young lad there, grinning all over his face?’ ‘A fresher at the Hall called Wynn.’” And a member of the Oratory, writing to the Superior after the funeral service, said “It suddenly came over me at the Service this afternoon that the first hymn (Firmly I believe and truly) has been as fully believed and lived by him as anyone I shall ever know.”

The influence of this little group was considerable, not only in their own Colleges, but in their contributions to the Church of Great Saint Mary’s. One of their greatest achievements was the mission to the University in March, 1913, conducted by Bishop Maud of Kensington and Father Frere of the Community of the Resurrection. They filled Great Saint Mary’s every night for a week, including the galleries, and had a tremendous impact on the University. They ‘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 met one afternoon a week, followed the next morning by a celebration of the Eucharist. This was to be the pattern from October, 1907 onwards. ‘They 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 Saint Deiniol’s Library, Hawarden.’

At Witham, on the first day, there was a discussion after lunch on ritual, and a paper read by W. Spens on 'Activity and Modernism'. Duncan-Jones on 'Religion in Cambridge' before dinner, and the next day a discussion on 'Fasting'. On the second evening Selwyn read a paper on 'Religion and Politics'. At Hawarden in 1909 papers were read by Spens on the Eucharist, Pass on 'Reality and Sacrifice', Duncan-Jones on 'Redemption', and Selwyn on 'Eschatology and the 4th Gospel'. 'At this meeting, Pass, John How, Ralph Eves, and Tom Thomson formed an association of prayer for the restoration of the religious life in the Universities, which developed into the Association of Saint Benedict. Philip Crick, who subsequently became Bishop of Rockhampton, joined the brethren at about this time.'

'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 Saint 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, {4} 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 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 the Mission to the University' already referred to. This Mission '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.'

Edward Wynn, Eric Milner-White and John How 'were drawn increasingly together into intimate spiritual fellowship. Each was trying to maintain the kind of ideals they had learned and absorbed 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 Saint Benedict', which was praying regularly for the restoration of the religious life in the Universities.'

'These three were coming to a common mind. Their undisputed leader, alike from seniority, experience, vigour, austerity, and, to quote the late 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 Bérulle, 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 Saint Catherine of Genoa, whose most famous member was Saint Cajetan. This was the inspiration, though not the model, of the brethren, and they pretended no kinship with that Oratory, or with Saint Philip Neri's or de Bérulle's later foundations.'

‘The brethren met daily for Mass in Saint 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 {5} Mirfield agreed to act as a kind of unofficial adviser to the 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, Father Figgis visited Cambridge, and the brethren who had been joined by Bertram T.D. Smith, Vice-Principal of Westcott House, and Tom 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 Saint Michael’s to Sidney Sussex College Chapel.’

Bertram Smith was by now Vice-Principal of Westcott House. After his war service as a Chaplain, he became Fellow and Dean of Sidney Sussex College, and a University lecturer in Theology. There is no doubt that he was an enthusiastic and able young man, attractive in appearance and charming in conversation. After the War he became sadly changed, withdrawn into his shell. Latterly he always arrived in Cambridge at the beginning of term on the last convenient train, and left by the first one the day that Full Term ended. He was a distinguished New Testament scholar, whose book “The Parables of Jesus”, published in 1939, suffered the fate of many books published that year, though its worth has now begun to be recognised.

Eric Milner-White was a historian, and he had been studying the life and work of Nicholas Ferrar of Little Gidding, who had created a remarkable community in the troubled days of Charles I. Nicholas had bought the Manor House of Little Gidding in a remote corner of Huntingdonshire in order that he and his family might live a life of devotion and discipline in what must have seemed a dark world. They restored the derelict church and made it the centre of their life. It was a unique experiment in the history of the Church of England, and it was natural that the future members of the Oratory encouraged by Eric Milner-White, should feel the attraction of the Gidding life, and later to accept Nicholas Ferrar as their patron. In December, 1913, the brethren went for some ten days of common life to 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’.² The Oratory has always had a special devotion to Nicholas Ferrar, commemorates him on 4 December, the day of his death, and honours him as patron of the Society. Little Gidding was conveniently near to Cambridge, and Nicholas had probably had some contact with the Oratorians in Italy, where he had spent several years.

‘The brethren were all, of course, engaged in pastoral work in their colleges, but they soon found at hand work that the oratory could do as a 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 College Chapel after {6} a few months, to Saint 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 Saint Edward’s Church became a marked feature of the religious life of Cambridge.’

‘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 should be strengthened by the fellowship, and at the same time the general tone of religion in Cambridge be raised.’

² See Appendix A.

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Chapter 2

THE FIRST WORLD WAR 1914 — 1918

‘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.’ As already recorded, Tom Knox-Shaw had been a Fellow of Sidney Sussex College since 1909, and after the War continued to live in College until his retirement from the Mastership in 1955. He was an able mathematician and University Treasurer for many years, and a most devout Catholic Christian. Apart from his War service, which was distinguished and for which he got the M.C., he made his whole life revolve round Sidney Sussex College, and that life was centred on the worship in the College Chapel. There must be few College Chaplains who have the experience of the Master serving at the Sunday Eucharist when the proper server did not turn up. It was unfortunate that his quiet and retiring nature made him shrink from leadership which he might have exercised on many occasions, notably his refusal to be Vice-Chancellor shortly after he became Master of Sidney Sussex College. He preferred to exercise his influence behind the scenes, and it was considerable.

The brethren went to Little Gidding in September, with Father Figgis. ‘Then they were scattered. Eric Milner-White went 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, as 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 OGS 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 ‘Companions of Saint 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 OGS Mass is being valued by very different types of people; more and more people come to their confessions at Saint 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 it at the request of Father Russell, late of Saint Alban’s, Holborn, who is a prop of the nurses’ Guild of Saint Barnabas.” ’

In 1917 John How was able to serve as a Chaplain overseas in the Middle East, and at the same time Eric Milner-White returned to Cambridge to be Chaplain, Fellow and Dean of King’s, which he did early in 1918. As a Chaplain in the War he was awarded the D.S.O., and became involved in controversy with the Chaplain-General, Bishop Taylor-Smith, who described him as the blackest sheep {8} of all his Chaplains! He had been considering testing his vocation with the Community of the Resurrection at Mirfield, but decided to remain with the Oratory. And so the process of thinking out the life and vocation of the new Oratorian Society was left in his hands. He set down on paper an ‘Ideal for 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 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 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 of 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 catchwords, 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 holiness 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.

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 {9} 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.”

This document expressed the spirit by which the brethren have tried to rule their lives, and the ideal which has been before them in their ministry, although many things have changed in detail since 1918. Eric Milner-White was a distinguished priest and historian, helped by a colourful imagination! ‘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 (Saint 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 choirboys of all the College Chapels, including club and annual camp.
6. In the fruit pickers’ mission in the Long Vacation.”

On the common purse he wrote: “That there be a real community of goods, whereby the members may practice 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 by *{sic}* secured whereby the possibility of individual extravagance is checked.”

‘He puts forward various hopes for the future, including the founding of the 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 agreed by them. Indeed though much has changed in the Oratory since it was written, it expressed once for all the 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 of rules, such men and women, whether in Holy Orders or not, 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 *{10}* 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 the Precious Charge,’ ‘The Oratory of Vision’ and the ‘Oratory of Venture.’ The scheme did not prove practicable, though there was founded 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.” ’

‘In fact, the proposed common purse was never a practical possibility for the Oratory as a whole, though it was practiced in local colleges 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 experienced,” 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 made with one or other of the brethren.’

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Chapter 3

AFRICA

The result of personal contacts in Cambridge led the Revd 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 in touch with the Oratory in 1916. They referred the matter to their 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 among 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 authorise 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. Yours affectionately, Alston N. Rhodesia.”

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

“First of all you suggested that we should be an independent college of OGS, 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, 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 novitiate at a chapter 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.’

Alston May had been appointed Bishop of Northern Rhodesia in 1914. He was a remarkably tough pioneer, and during his episcopate there was no official Bishop’s residence, for he was always on the move. He rode a motorcycle, and his luggage was a suitcase. He did much to lay the foundations of the Diocese, and died in harness at Chipili in 1941.

His successor was a member of the Oratory of the Good Shepherd, Robert Selby Taylor, and he was consecrated in Likoma Cathedral on Michaelmas Day, 1941. Bishop Taylor was subsequently Bishop of Pretoria and then of Grahamstown, and ultimately Archbishop of Capetown. He now takes up the story of the Oratory in Africa, apart from the record of the Oratory in Masasi.

“In 1915 when the Oratory of the Good Shepherd was only two years old two {12} members of the Society came to Africa. Father Harold Leeke and Father Gordon Jodrell Day started work at Chipili Mission, the most northerly outpost of the Diocese of Northern Rhodesia. Father Leeke remained at Chipili for ten years. He then ministered to the white community in Broken Hill before he returned to England. He did not renew his profession. Later he became Rector of Grantham. Father Day did not remain long at Chipili but went to look after the white community at Saint Andrew’s, Livingstone. After he returned to England he became the first full time Chaplain of Saint Catharine’s College, Cambridge, (where he was succeeded by Father Christopher Waddams, OGS). Later he returned to South Africa, the country of his birth. Father Day continued to work among students and was

responsible for helping many young men to find their vocation. He continued in the Oratory until the Oratory House, Lady Margaret Road, Cambridge, was disposed of. He considered the sale of the Oratory House meant that the Oratory was no longer a Community in the sense it was when he joined, and as there would no longer be a house to which elderly brethren could retire, he ceased to renew his profession. Father Herbert Barnes who was with Father Leeke at Chipili, continued there for a number of years. He was a member of the Community of the Resurrection and was for many years at Saint Augustine's, Penhalonga. Father Barnes was popularly known as 'Father Gadget' and for a long time at Chipili there were signs of his gadgetry. Among these, was a device which indicated whether the outside loo was occupied. On entry a visitor had to pull a string which hoisted a banner, which warned other possible occupants not to enter. The early members of the Oratory laid a sound foundation for the Oratory's witness in Africa."

"In the middle twenties as the Oratory's field of activity in Northern Rhodesia began to decline, a new area of work began in the Diocese of Masasi. Among the members of the Oratory who went to Masasi were Father George Tibbatts (1931) and Father George Briggs (1937), who has continued in East Africa throughout his ministry, except for a few years as first Bishop of Seychelles, and then for a short time Assistant Bishop of Derby."

Until Father Briggs became Bishop of Seychelles in 1973, the Diocese of Masasi in Southern Tanzania was unique in Oratory history in that it had an Oratorian working in it from before its creation. Archie Swainson had joined UMCA in 1912, and was sent to work in the Masasi country, which was then in the Diocese of Zanzibar. When Frank Weston of Zanzibar died on 2 November 1924, the Diocese was divided, and the fine Collegiate Church of Saint Bartholomew, Masasi, became the Cathedral of the new Diocese. Archie Swainson joined the Oratory, and was professed in Saint Edward's Church, Cambridge in 1923, three years before the consecration of the first Bishop in 1926.

When Father Tibbatts arrived in 1931, Father Swainson was Archdeacon of Masasi, and priest-in-charge of Lukwika in the Ruvuma country, and the two of them worked out a Rule for the approval of the Cambridge brethren.

In 1932, Father Tibbatts became Headmaster of the Teacher Training College at Chidya, where he remained until his return to England in 1938. In 1934 Father Swainson became seriously ill with arthritis and was invalided out of Africa, and did not renew his profession. He subsequently became Vicar of Beckley near [{13}](#) Oxford. Father Briggs arrived in 1937 and spent most of his ministry in Newala, and ultimately retired to Mtwara, the port of the unfortunate Ground Nuts Scheme of 1948. Archie Swainson was a shining example of the zealous pioneer missionary — always on safari in a very wild region of the Diocese near the Ruvuma river. He was only 44 years old when the crippling arthritis came upon him. He was ordained Deacon in Sidney Sussex College Chapel — his own College — and came there for his jubilee in 1963.

A member of the Oratory, Father Alfred Godfrey, arrived at Chipili in 1931. He was the only local member of the Oratory throughout most of the four years he spent in the Diocese of Northern Rhodesia. He stayed just long enough to welcome Father Selby Taylor who as probationer of the Oratory arrived at Msoro in February 1935. Father Taylor took over from Father Godfrey as Assistant Priest, Msoro Mission. Father Godfrey returned to England in 1936 but he did not renew his profession. Father Taylor became in turn Principal of the Diocesan Theological College and in 1941 Bishop of Northern Rhodesia. He continued to be the only member of the Oratory in Northern Rhodesia until March 1948 when Father Donald Weston came out from England to join him. Two years, later Father John Kingsnorth, who was already in the Diocese of Northern Rhodesia, joined the Society. In 1951 Father Taylor was translated to Pretoria. At first this may have seemed to be a loss to the Oratory's presence in Northern Rhodesia, but it subsequently proved to be the means of extending the Society's sphere of activity to South Africa.

"In 1958 the Superior, Father George Tibbatts, visited all the Oratory brethren in Southern Africa. He began his visitation with Father George Briggs, who was Archdeacon of Newala in the Diocese of

Masasi. He then flew down to Ndola, where he was met by Father Donald Weston, Rector of Saint Michael's, Kitwe, and Rural Dean of the Copperbelt. He went north to Chipili to stay with Father John Kingsnorth before flying down to Pretoria. The five brethren in Northern Rhodesia and South Africa all came to spend a week with the Superior in Pretoria. Unfortunately Father George Briggs, the only other member of the Oratory in Africa, was unable to be present either on this or any other occasion throughout the next thirty years. The Superior conducted a retreat for the brethren at Saint Benedict's House, Rosettenville. There were present at the retreat and informal Chapter which followed, the two brethren from Northern Rhodesia, Father Donald Weston and Father John Kingsnorth, and from South Africa Father Selby Taylor, Father Sidney Howard, a probationer who made his first profession, and Father Reginald Fane, who was admitted as a probationer. The informal 'Chapter' agreed to ask General Chapter for permission to form a Southern Africa College of the Oratory. The Annual Report for 1957/8 reports that a 'new college of the Oratory has been formed with the approval of General Chapter. It will be called the Southern Africa College, and it will consist of those brethren of the Oratory, now attached to Cambridge, who live in the Union of South Africa and the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. Father Donald Weston has been elected the first Prior.' '

"Before the first formal annual Chapter of the Southern African College could meet, tragedy struck the newly formed College. On 5 May 1959 Father Donald {14} Weston, the newly elected Prior, was killed in a motor accident. He was motoring from Harare to Kitwe, a distance of about 500 miles, which he intended to cover in the day, and it appears that he fell asleep. His death was a very tragic loss to the newly formed College of the Oratory, as well as to the church as a whole in Africa. Father Donald had been ordained comparatively late in life. He had already had a distinguished career as a Chartered Accountant in the City of London, where he was a member of one of the Livery Companies. The Church in Northern Rhodesia had already reaped great benefits from his superb administrative abilities. After a curacy at Grantham, where Harold Leeke was Rector, he served at Chipili for a full tour. The post of Rector of Kitwe came to him after 18 months in England as Vicar of Plymstock, Devon. The Chapter met in Pretoria only a few days after Father Donald's death. It had two new members. Father Ian Carrick, who had been professed for about twenty years, came out to Saint Martin's, Irene, in the Diocese of Pretoria in March 1958. He had been priest in charge and then first Vicar of Saint Barnabas', Northolt Park, London, for thirteen years. The Chapter also welcomed Father Keith Adams. Father Keith was from the Diocese of Northern Rhodesia where he had served for thirty-four years. All five members of the College were present at the Chapter which was held at Bishop's House, Pretoria. Father Ian Carrick was elected Prior."

"In spite of the fact that members of the College are separated by nearly two thousand miles, all the brethren have managed to attend all the annual College Chapter meetings, which have taken place every twelve months since 1959. There have been thirty Chapter meetings. These have been held at Rosettenville (6), Pretoria(5), Cape Town (4), five venues where it met once only and then for ten successive years with the Community of the Precious Blood at Masite in Lesotho. These annual gatherings have always included a retreat. On five occasions these retreats have been conducted by brethren of the Oratory, on six occasions by other Religious, on six occasions by seculars and seven years the retreats were unconducted."

"The College has had four Priors. Father Donald Weston was Prior for only one year. His tragic death prevented him from presiding over the first meeting of the Southern Africa College Chapter. Father Ian Carrick, who was elected to succeed Father Donald, was prior for ten years. He was succeeded by Father Reginald Fane. Father Reginald's membership of the Oratory was terminated by his early death. He was a tireless worker. Father John Ruston has been annually elected prior for the past fifteen years."

"During the twenty years of its existence the Southern Africa College has had it {sic} ups and downs. For a few years during the early sixties the College had as many as six, and one year, seven professed members, but in 1974 only Selby Taylor and Father John Ruston remained. Because of the reduced number of members in 1974 the College lost its independent status and became a Mission College of

the London College, and the Prior became a Sub-Prior. When Father John Salt made his profession, the General Chapter in 1981 agreed that the Southern Africa College might once again enjoy a full status as a College of the Oratory. In 1981 the College was greatly strengthened by the arrival of Father Charles Helms who came to Zambia (formerly Northern Rhodesia) as Warden of the Anglican Theological College. Father Charles' many years of experience in the Oratory in Australia was a great asset to the Southern Africa College. In 1985 the College has five professed brethren and one probationer."

One of the brethren who returned to England was Canon John Kingsnorth. While at Chipili he discussed with the Bishop of Northern Rhodesia the starting of an experimental community at Chipili — the Community of the Transfiguration — and there appeared to be some likely starters, two newly ordained African priests, and a layman in the Government service at Kasama. "I adapted an old classroom to be our common quarters, built four cubicles and a small stone Chapel, and we got going. The rule was more or less the Oratory rule. Breakfast and lunch were silent. The first crisis was when Alf Smith walked out, saying he thought silent meals silly."

The Company, as they decided to call themselves, had corporate life for about half of each month, the remainder of the time being occupied with safari work to out-stations of Chipili. "When in residence, we rise at five, are in Church for meditation, Mattins and Mass from 5.30 to 7.15. We also have Sext and Evensong and Compline together. We eat simply and very economically. We have Chapter twice a month, look after our own rooms, and do part of our washing. We are keeping chickens and rabbits. Except when there are guests we have silent breakfast, vernacular lunch, and English dinner. I am most pleased that none of the prophesied difficulties of living together with Africans seem to have arisen...To my own mind our little set-up is a reform of UMCA, and is the sort of life that the founders of UMCA envisaged we should live. At the moment there is no question of vows. One certainly of the African priests intends later to get married, but the other is strongly attracted to the celibate life. I myself am, of course, already under vows as a member of the Oratory of the Good Shepherd. I hope that the one priest I mentioned may follow suit, and that the layman coming soon may also desire to be under vows. It will be obvious that the Company is very experimental at the moment, and we are 'waiting on God' to show us our work and His will for us. Please pray for us."

It was decided before the start that it was a mistake to speak of a 'Community'. A Religious Community in the proper sense of that phrase should have a distinctive religious life of its own that is prior to its work and independent of that work. There was no possibility of this at Chipili. The old pattern of life under UMCA had broken up, especially in Northern Rhodesia, and two types of missionary were emerging — the married or marriageable priest or layman out for a comparatively short term, and the celibate who desires to live in fellowship with others of his way of thinking under a Common Rule. Another of the problems of the UMCA way of life was that many missionaries were living a community life — unable to contract marriage while members of the Mission — with no vocation to the celibate life — monks and nuns with none of the necessary apparatus and background. This was a major cause of many of the tensions which arose among Mission staff.

In 1962 Canon Kingsnorth became Secretary of UMCA in succession to Dr Gerald Broomfield. He wrote: "I hesitated for two months. The biggest difficulty was what was to happen to the Company of the Transfiguration, and there were {16} doubts about both African priests." The Company came to an end. Canon Kingsnorth resigned from the Oratory in 1965, feeling that the Society failed to provide fellowship in the way he needed.

Before leaving Africa it is necessary to write of two devoted, and comparatively unknown, members of the Oratory who died between 1965 and 1970, and who are examples of holy living by the Oratory Rule.

Reginald Fane had been in Africa for nearly thirty years, and exercised a much loved ministry mainly to coloured people. The Good Shepherd featured prominently in his life. He was a true pastor and shepherd of the congregations whom he had served in many places in Rhodesia and South Africa.

“His life revolved round a pattern of prayer and worship. His preaching was simple, direct and often profound.” These words were written by Eric Kleb after Reginald died of a stroke on 11 July, 1970. “He knew most of the South African-trained clergy, as he had been one of the examiners of the Faculty of Divinity, and was examining Chaplain to a number of bishops who recognised his scholastic ability. He kept abreast with current theological trends, and had a special interest in liturgical reforms and patterns.” The Oratory report for 1970 said of him: “He had been compelled to move out of his flat into a caravan, because his neighbours objected to coloured parishioners visiting him. He was moving into a new flat when he died. For many years he had been Treasurer of the Order of Ethiopia. We are thankful for his faithful ministry to the coloured community, which was in so many ways hidden. As a member of the Oratory he was a tower of strength, a strength which we know will continue through his prayers.”

Canon Keith Adams, the third of the Brethren of the African College to die mentioned by Bishop Taylor, spent most of his long ministry in Rhodesia, and was a member of the Universities Mission to Central Africa for 40 years. The latter period of his work was engaged in locum tenens in various parishes while the parish priest was on furlough. He was a devoted missionary both to white and black people, with a calm and quietly relaxed atmosphere about him, and a delightful sense of humour. He obviously enjoyed life in Africa and was a model member of the Oratory, which he joined late in life. He hated the prospect of retiring to England. His final work, which gave him great pleasure and satisfaction, was to be Rector of Mazabuka in Zambia. “I have my house at Mazabuka which has a European population of about 350, and perhaps 200 Indians. I suppose about 2,000 Africans, very few of whom are Anglicans. Then there are about 70 families all round, some very long established for this country, 40 years or more. They are at all distances up to 30 miles from Mazabuka, so there is a lot of travelling, and visits to 3 farms is a full day. I have services at Mazabuka on the 1st, 2nd, and 4th Sundays. The 3rd I go to Mouza 40 miles away, where I spend the weekend with one of my parishioners. As their farm may be 9 or 10 miles from the township Church, it means a lot of travelling. It will take, I reckon, quite a year before the people get used to regular services and the duties of parishioners. So far they have had a visit from the Railway missionary once in 2 months. So no treasurer, no budget, no rectory, no registers or books. The farmers are most kind to me — fruit, eggs, chickens are continually being left. They are a friendly folk, but very conservative on racial questions. The whole racial set-up keeps reminding me {17} more and more of England since the Industrial Revolution, only colour tends to make things more difficult.”

Keith Adams gave much importance to letter writing in the Oratory. “I should like to see a rule of writing a monthly letter included in the Rule. Now that the Oratory is getting so widespread, and particularly in America and Australia, I think something more should be done. We have a rota in South Africa by which everyone writes to another brother monthly, and this has been regularly followed by us all. It has been a great help to us all.”

In the late spring of 1965, Keith underwent major surgery for cancer, and decided that he would like to die in England. His Mazabuka friends, out of their love and affection, provided him specifically with the means to travel first-class in England as long as he was able to do so. He arrived at the end of June, and had a wonderful fortnight visiting friends, and died on 11 July in Newton Abbot. He is a shining example of that great number of priests who never became important figures, but whose ordinary ministry in unknown corners is full of the splendour of the true servants of God. They are the backbone of the Oratory, and any other Society to which they may belong. {18 blank}.

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Chapter 4

GILLINGHAM & ROCKHAMPTON

At the time of the first World War, the parish of Saint Luke, New Brompton, in the borough of Gillingham in the Medway Towns, consisted chiefly of workers in Chatham Dockyard, and had a population of approximately 10,000. In December, 1914, the Revd William Lutyens was appointed Vicar by the Bishop of Rochester. For several years he had no permanent staff, and in 1918 he asked to join the Oratory. Father Lutyens was a distinguished runner, having won the mile for Cambridge 4 years running, and he had connections with Cambridge. A parochial College of the Oratory seemed to be the answer to the problem of staffing so large a down-town parish.

In March, 1918, Father Lutyens wrote in his parish magazine as follows:

“One of the brothers happens to be a great friend of mine, and from him I heard of the Oratory and its objects. It appealed to me very strongly, as it was such a Society which I have been hoping to find for years, and I suggested to this brother that I should join them and that this parish should become an ‘Oratory’ parish, i.e. where the clergy were members of this Society, living the common rule and the common life as laid down. The end of this proposal was that I joined the Oratory some months ago and have been waiting for the next move. The time for that has come. The other day the Bishop of Rochester met the Superior with myself in London and accepted the idea, and gave the Oratory his sanction to work in this way in the Diocese, and so a start is to be made. In April Father W.H. Britton will come here as a member of the staff to commence the Oratorian life in this parish with me.”

“What difference will it make? Outwardly no difference. In the streets we shall appear the same as ever; but we shall be living, we hope, in our own spiritual life by the rule of the Oratory, more deeply, supporting each other by a life of devotion lived together, and by the fact that we shall have a common purse. This means that all the money we earn or receive will go into one fund, and out of this fund all the expenses of the house and the inmates will be paid, and the brethren will possess no money that they can call their own. This is a test of our willingness to serve without any hope of reward, at least in this world, and also to prove to those whom we serve that we have no other object but our service. It is a form of poverty which will be one of our chief joys.”

“What we would ask you now is to unite your prayers with ours for God’s blessing on the venture, and to keep the Oratory of the Good Shepherd continually in your hearts before the throne of Mercy, so that those brothers who live among you may in their lives reflect the character of Him whose eternal Will is that the lambs should be tended and the sheep fed.”

Hubert Britton stayed as a member of the Oratory on the staff of Saint Luke’s until 3 August, 1923, when he was instituted as Vicar of Saint Wendron in Cornwall. There he made himself responsible for a series of Oratory newsletters, which were a valuable means of keeping brethren in touch with each others’ {20} doings. After two years in Cornwall, Hubert moved to Glatton in Huntingdonshire and resigned from the Oratory.

Between 1919 and 1926 there were a number of curates at Saint Luke’s who joined the Oratory and then, after a year or so went elsewhere, Father Arthur Thompson became a Cowley Father, as did Gerard Pulley — home from Northern Rhodesia. Father Hugh King left to join the Cambridge Mission to Delhi, having served his title at Gillingham. Later he was to become Head of the Cambridge Mission, and there he died at the early age of 35. There was much discussion in the early twenties about a possible amalgamation of the Oratory with the Delhi Mission, but nothing came of it in the end.

The Gillingham College was the chosen place for a new adventure for the Society in Australia. Philip Crick, Bishop of Rockhampton, had been Dean of Clare College, and a friend of the founding Fathers. He was anxious that there should be an Oratory College in his Diocese, and it was agreed that Saint Luke's, Gillingham, should be the training ground for this project.

The Diocese of Rockhampton was created in 1892 and covers central Queensland. In 1921 there were 20 clergy and the work was still in the pioneer stage, and the Diocese could properly be called a missionary Diocese. The first idea was that a Brotherhood should be formed to undertake some definite piece of work, and take up its abode at a central point for the Bush area, and work it on a system of itinerant visitation. The Bishop then thought that such a group should be connected with a body at home — hence the introduction of the Oratory. An appeal for money was launched to meet the initial cost of an Oratory house, with equipment and means of transport.

Leonard Poole, of Clare College, was the leader of the party, with Rex Malden of Trinity. They were both ordained by the Bishop of Rochester to serve their titles at Saint Luke's. There were also Henry Hannaford of Sidney Sussex College, and Donald McClenaghan of Clare. In due course they all arrived in Saint Luke's parish to train for Australia. Harold Budgen arrived in January, 1924. A Mission House was opened in November, 1923, for the members of the proposed Rockhampton College with Leonard Poole in charge. The Revd Arthur Robinson resigned the living of Saint Augustine's, Haggerston, in order to join the company. He had already worked in Australia, and his experience would be of the utmost value to the new College, and he was warmly welcomed as a new member of the Oratory.

The Report for 1924 contained an account of Henry Hannaford's ordination to the diaconate by the Bishop of Rockhampton in Saint Michael's Church, Cambridge, on 30 August. "The sermon at the Ordination was preached by the Master of Sidney Sussex College (G.A. Weekes)...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 are accompanying the new venture and hope in time to proceed to Holy Orders and membership of the Rockhampton College."

On Michaelmas Day, 1925, there was a great dismissal service at Saint Luke's, Gillingham. In addition to the brethren working in Saint Luke's parish, there were present Eric Milner-White, Wilfred Knox, and Gordon Day. "The Bishop of [21] Rochester preached the sermon to a crowded church. The Bishop of Rockhampton was also there and Bishop King, and many visiting clergy from neighbouring parishes, beside the Dean of Glare, Father Telfer". Bishop King was sub-dean of Rochester Cathedral and had been Bishop in Madagascar, and Father Telfer would later become Ely Professor of Divinity at Cambridge. "The service closed with a stately procession, which nearly encircled the Church. On reaching the Chancel the Bishop of Rochester gave his blessing to each of the departing brothers as they knelt at the Altar rails. The whole congregation knelt too, with common consent, and the deep hush which came over the Church at this act of benediction gave a great sense of the solemnity of the occasion. At High Mass the next morning there was a large congregation, 88 of whom made their communion. So closed another chapter in the life of the Oratory, and a new one full of hope and promise was begun."

'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'. The financial difficulty had already led to the closure of the Diocesan School at Barcaldine because parents, hit by the 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, Fortescue Ashe, 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 until the great revival of the fifties and sixties, ‘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 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 Saint 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 80 years old.”

After the excitement and publicity and general euphoria surrounding the Rockhampton adventure, it is sad that it came to an end so soon. As we have seen above, the abnormal drought could not have been forecast, and this was the principal cause of the failure. And of course when it was planned, neither the [22] Bishop nor the Oratory in Cambridge had any idea of Australian conditions or possibilities, Philip Crick had only recently been consecrated, and the Oratory candidates, apart from Arthur Robinson, had not yet been ordained and so had no practical experience of the ministry. Their curacies at Saint Luke’s provided little preparation, for the thrill of the adventure into the unknown overbalanced any other consideration. As far as the parish was concerned, their value was open to question, so intent were they on the future. Donald McClenaghan and Harold Budgen stayed on for a few years, having decided that excitement was not for them! It would not be unfair to say that Saint Luke’s took some time to recover from these events. Listening to conversation among the would-be brethren while still in England, certainly one undergraduate got the strong impression that the school at Barcaldine might well be an English Public School!

The Oratory continued in Gillingham until the autumn of 1931, when George Tibbatts, who had joined the staff in 1926, went to Masasi Diocese. The brethren lived in the Vicarage, which was an admirable house for the purpose, and had a common purse. There was a great deal going on in the parish, much the same as in any normal industrial parish of the period. And the congregations were good.

William Lutyens became seriously ill in 1930 and it became clear that he would not be able to do a full-time job again. As recorded above, he had been a very distinguished athlete both at Cambridge and as a Curate in Portsea. He had ten brothers and three sisters, and he was heard to say that from time to time they had provided a cricket eleven in their home village in Surrey. His god-fathers were Sir Edwin Landseer and Gordon of Khartoum. He came from Sherborne to Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, in October, 1891, and was trained for the ministry at the Clergy Training School — now Westcott House.

After ordination in 1895, William was curate at Portsea Parish Church, where Canon Edgar of responsibility. He was himself to become Bishop of Newcastle and then of Saint Albans, and from him William learned the method of running a parish, and something of mission preaching. From Portsea he went for a second curacy to Basil Wilberforce of Saint John’s, Smith Square, and to Otford in Kent as Vicar in 1907. It was here that he began seriously to consider the Catholic point of view, and to practice it as far as possible.

At Saint Luke’s, an undistinguished brick Church, the work of beautifying it was taken in hand, for his strong artistic sense and good taste knew exactly what was needed. It was part of his genius that he let us get on with the work in our own way without any sort of interference. Nobody was ever allowed to take themselves too seriously, a common fault of both clergy and laity.

Father Lutyens was much given to writing poetry, but it is most unlikely that any of his verse has ever been heard of in 1985. He had a great sense of the dramatic, and his short plays were a great help in teaching the Christian Faith. Much of his spiritual writing is still a help to many people, especially his book of meditations for each day in the year, and his Lenten readings called "The Dying Thief". His sermons were emotional and powerful — also quite unpredictable. One Festival evening, when attendance at the morning Eucharists had been very meagre, he started his sermon thus: "Do you believe in hell? I do, after living in {23} Gillingham for 13 years!"

The last twenty years of his life were spent in semi-retirement, the first ten of them at the Oratory House in Cambridge, and then with Alec Vidler at Saint Deiniol's Library, Hawarden. Increasing infirmity made it necessary for him to move to London, where he was looked after by two old friends at Twickenham. Sadly and regrettably he broke his life profession in the Oratory to marry one of them; he was blind and mentally wandering, and died in December, 1951. But when between 1914 and 1931 he was at the height of his powers, he was an outstanding Oratorian and devoted priest.

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Chapter 5

THE GUILDFORD CHAPTER

Father Brandreth continues: ‘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 circulated 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 assistant 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 be considered most carefully, a call to do the very things to which OGS has always felt particularly drawn.”

‘The parishes were Saint Issey, Saint Ervan, Saint Eval and Saint 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 this offer of Bodmin.’

‘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, co-ordinated and woven into a constitution and rule’ “which could be published as a Manual, which would also contain forms for profession and renewal — and a calendar to have permissive use in the Oratory.”

‘In September, 1919, they met at Saint Nicholas, Guildford, for a spell of community life, including a retreat and the first General Chapter. The retreat was conducted by Father Alfred Kelly, SSM 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 the important task of composing the ‘Seven Notes of the Oratory’ by John How and Eric Milner-White, which expressed the ideals of the Oratory better than anything else could do. The wording has been revised in minor details of English, and sometimes differently expressed, but the meaning has in no way been altered, From the earliest days they have been read before the opening Office of General Chapter by the brethren in seniority of profession.

The Introduction states that “the aim of the Oratory is the adoration of God {26} in the service of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the imitation of his most holy life. Its fellowship and discipline are intended both to direct and to encourage the attempt of its members to achieve this aim. Their membership will remind them that they can carry out their vocation of worship and service only in communion with the Good Shepherd and in the power of the Holy Spirit. They will seek in the Oratory these blessings for themselves, and will order their lives for the strengthening of their brethren in accordance with the Notes that follow.”

The seven Notes that follow are on Fellowship, Liberty, Stewardship, Labour of the Mind, the Love that makes for Peace, Discipline, and Joy. "The individual members will endeavour to merge their lives in the corporate life of the Oratory, so that they will feel incomplete without it and the Oratory incomplete without them... The corporate life of the Oratory will be expressed in the common observance of the Rule, in the sympathy of common work, and in the daily fellowship of prayer and sacrament." At the same time the Oratory will allow "full scope for the development of individual talents while insisting on fellowship as the first note of its life. It will encourage its members to develop their personal gifts and thus to enrich the offering laid at the feet of Christ." Possessions are "a stewardship of wealth to be consecrated to the service of God. Brethren are not required to renounce worldly possessions or to surrender positions of influence or moderate comfort, but they are required to render an account of their stewardship, and if necessary the Oratory will criticise or condemn."

The Oratory has a special duty of thought and study, partly owing to its birth in a University. "Members will endeavour to worship God with their minds as well as with heart and soul. They will be fearless in following truth, and will constantly try to express it, so that Christ may be as fully presented as thought and word allow. They will have a private rule of reading. Each brother will seek according to his ability to bring new thought and knowledge under the discipline of Christ, and to interpret them to a better understanding of the loving purposes of God."

The brethren will "have a concern for living interests and problems in Church and State, and in discussing opinions which differ from their own will avoid harsh judgments. Brethren must try to understand these differing opinions, in the hope that they may help to restore the unity of all Christian people in the spirit of charity and peace."

The sixth Note on Discipline reminds the brethren that they are "men under authority, pledged to assist in maintaining its common discipline. They will be particularly careful in the practice of internal discipline and surrender to the will of God, which it is the purpose of the Oratory to assist them to attain, and in submitting to the degree of corporate control demanded by the Oratory and their College. Each brother will have a share in the formation of that common mind, and will accept it in a spirit of love and loyalty, and in confidence in the combined experience of the whole fellowship."

The concluding note is that of Joy. "Members of the Oratory will regularly make thanksgiving to God for his love till thanksgiving be spontaneous and perpetual. They will be regular in recreation; they will avoid anxiety and fuss; they will disown discouragement and depression, and check all complaint and {27} bitterness as destructive of the brethren's joy as well as of their own. They will accept gladly their share of weariness and sorrow in the joyful spirit of the saints, and the faithful following of him who for the joy that was set before him endured the Cross."

These notes, composed at Guildford by Fathers John and Eric, are the result of the prayers and discussions among the brethren which had started some years before the War, and they express an ideal of Oratory life which has been in the minds of members ever since, however much they may from time to time have failed to attain to the ideal so well expressed.

The other important work at Guildford was to compile the Oratory Manual, of which Eric Milner-White was the editor. This was to be prefaced by the seven Notes of the Oratory and to contain the Constitution and Rule, as well as forms of admission and profession, short Offices for the beginning and ending of Chapters, and a calendar of private memorials. In the course of the years the calendar produced more heated and lengthy discussions than any other aspect of Oratory life! Eric's affection for poets and divines was hotly contested by Wilfred Knox and others! In the end it was given up and no longer printed in the Manual. It has included John and Charles Wesley, Henry Scott Holland, John Keble, John Donne, Frederick Denison Maurice, William Gladstone and many others!

The Society was to be grouped in ‘Colleges’, which were to cover geographical areas where not less than three brethren could meet together regularly and share a corporate life, even though they did not live under the same roof. This was to take into account that the Oratory was spreading outside Cambridge. The College in Northern Rhodesia and the College at Saint Luke’s, Gillingham, were already in existence, and there were a number of enquiries to the Cambridge brethren. Father T.J. Watts, of Saint Mary’s, Wellingborough, wrote to Eric Milner-White as follows: “My idea has started from an incidental survey of local conditions; to relate it to your view will come later. I began with Saint Mary’s as you began with Cambridge. It started to sum up this way. There are priests who, for one reason or another, have not a vocation to religion in the strict sense, e.g. Cowley, Benedictines, etc, who are yet feeling after community of life and goods. I know of two besides myself. Mostly, but not always, they could be older than those you have in view, and men whose domestic and other claims have kept them at parish work, pure and simple, for years. Then there was the Church (Saint Mary’s) — a Church adapted for something bigger in scale and ideal than a mere mission church in an industrial district. We have also to look forward within the near future to an accession of property in money, land and houses. The dream came that it might afford a centre of life on the Oratorian model, of which I knew not much. I may have to be content to ‘view the landscape o’er’ and play the part of founder and then retire, leaving younger, clearer headed, more devoted people to carry out the ideal that has come to me.” Nothing came of this, but it is an example of how the Oratory ideals at the end of the first World War appealed to many clergy, and especially to those who had, as undergraduates at Cambridge, come in contact with the brethren and had shared in discussion about the Catholic life in the University and outside it. At the Guildford Chapter the Constitution, and the Rule to enable the brethren to live in the spirit of the Notes, was decided and has been little changed since. {28}

The representative head of each College was to be called ‘Prior’. Where a College should be constituted in a parish or a school, the incumbent of the parish, or the headmaster of the school, should be ex-officio Prior. This was inserted in the constitution because the young Rockhampton brethren, in the absence of William Lutyens on holiday, had elected one of themselves as Prior of Gillingham! The Prior would be elected annually by the professed members of the College, and be its representative in all external matters, and perform its administrative duties.

No College of the Oratory can be constituted with less than three members, nor can one be created unless it can provide true fellowship for its members — which will be decided by General Chapter. Members of a College responsible for a particular piece of work may be invited to continue in it for a period of years, and can only be released with the approval of the College Chapter and the Superior. This attempt at stability has in fact seldom been called into operation.

Colleges of the Oratory are independent in local government and their rule must conform in general with the standard rule of the Oratory but adapted to their own circumstances, to be approved by General Chapter. College Chapters must meet regularly to receive the reports of the brethren on the keeping of the Rule, and to deal with any other business. In the event of a College being likely to collapse through shortage of members, one or more of the brethren may be invited by General Chapter to consider its claims, though in practice this provision has seldom worked out. Brethren visiting Colleges other than their own are invited to attend Chapter meetings, but may not vote.

It is interesting to compare the present constitution as outlined above with the one formed at Guildford in 1919, though it is the same in principle. That preface states that in no sense does the Oratory claim for its members the title of ‘Religious’, nor has it dared to model itself upon the lines of any Religious Order or Society existing at the present time in our Communion, far less upon the great Religious Orders founded in the past by saints and heroes, to whom, in common with all Catholic Christendom, it owes the deepest gratitude and veneration... Its claim is only this: that it would make a humble venture in the service of Jesus Christ. As the ideal of the Oratory is to create a fruitful and joyous fellowship for the work of God in each College, expressed through the various vocations of its members, so also it aims at creating a similar fellowship between the Colleges in one Oratory. “Lest its title might seem to indicate that it could in some way claim affinity in methods or ideal to the Oratory of Saint Philip Neri, or of the Cardinal de Bérulle, it would at once deny that it dares to make

such claim. Rather it would find support, as indeed it found its first inspiration, for its title in ‘The Oratory of Divine Love.’ Its claim is only this: that it would make a humble venture in the service of Jesus Christ.”

The Colleges are to meet annually in General Chapter, and there is one Superior, who is elected for a period of three years. On several occasions it has been suggested that a Superior may only be elected for two periods of 3 years, but nothing conclusive has been done about this. It should also be noted that by the time the first Manual was printed in 1920, the term ‘novice’ had been exchanged for that of ‘probationer’, and this has become the normal practice of the Oratory.

Father Brandreth comments on the Guildford Chapter thus: ‘There was a {29} discussion whether OGS 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 maybe 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, had 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 Bishop of Winchester — Edward Stuart Talbot — was asked to become Visitor of the new Society. {30 blank}

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Chapter 6

THE ORATORY HOUSE

At Guildford ‘a typescript of the Rule was laid before the Archbishop of Canterbury. Father John was elected as 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 full members of OGS took place in Saint Edward’s Church, Cambridge, on Saturday, October 25th, 1919, at 7a.m. Father W.H. Frere, Superior of Mirfield, sang the Mass and received the brethren’s professions.’ In a diary Father How made clear what ‘profession’ meant:

“It was essentially the profession of intention with annual renewal or otherwise. The expression used and emphasised and advised by Fathers Frere and Figgis was the ‘Oratorian Intention’, as against the ‘threefold vows’ of the full Religious life. And the content of the Intention was to live by the Oratory Rule.”

‘A number of the Oratory’s friends in Cambridge kept the rest of that morning as a time of continuous intercession in Saint Edward’s.’

A Chapter meeting took place at Saint Luke’s, Gillingham, in January, 1920. At this meeting it was decided that John How should give up the Precentorship of Trinity in order to become Warden of an Oratory House. Such a centre had for some time been in the minds of the brethren, and John had been involved in the setting up of Saint Anselm’s House before the War. And so an appeal was made for the necessary funds. In the appeal it was stated that “it had become abundantly clear that there is a great opportunity for developing a great spiritual work if one of the members of the Oratory could be freed from the ties of collegiate duties to give his whole time to its organisation.” A house was quickly found in Lady Margaret Road, easily accessible to the Colleges. It had been the residence of Professor Macalister and would serve as a centre for the Oratory’s work in Cambridge, and as a Mother House for the whole Oratory. The appeal continues:

“with such a house it will be possible for the Oratory to start retreats for members of the University during term, and for others in vacation; classes and instruction on the Faith; and periodical lectures and conferences on matters of vital interest to the life of the Church.

The House and its Chapel will be open for any who may wish to visit it, and a ready welcome will be given to any who may resort there for spiritual counsel, or for study, or prayer. It is expected that one or two graduates engaged in courses of study in the University and keeping an Oratory Rule, will reside in the Oratory House with the Superior. For the funds necessary for the maintenance of the House, the Oratory will depend almost entirely on voluntary contributions. With the assistance of generous contributions from friends it has been possible to realise the greater part of the sum required for the purchase of the house, and further promises have been received sufficient to justify a start being made. It will be necessary to raise {32} a considerable sum to meet the preliminary expenses, and also at least another £300 per annum.”

Promises of assistance could be sent to Mr T. Knox-Shaw at Sidney Sussex College, and the brethren assured contributors that the scheme had the approval of Bishop Gore, Father Frere CR, Lord Halifax, Canon G.A. Weekes, and other distinguished persons.

The Appeal also included a list of the brethren, all of whom have already been mentioned, except Father Basil Churchward, Father Sydney Clarke, Father Arthur Thompson, and Father Ralph Eves.

Basil Churchward was still with H.M. Forces, and later left the Oratory for a stricter life in Religion. Sydney Clarke was Chaplain of Tonbridge School and a mathematical teacher of such distinction that Tonbridge produced for a time more mathematical scholarships than most schools. In 1935 he became headmaster of Saint John's College, Johannesburg, and soon after left the Oratory. In old age he retired to Eastbourne. Arthur Thompson was Curate at Saint Luke's, Gillingham, and was the first Oxford member of the Oratory, just preceding Wilfred Knox. He became a Cowley Father and left behind him a reputation for holiness in Gillingham. Ralph Eves had been a contemporary of Edward Wynn at Trinity Hall and so knew the elder brethren from undergraduate days. He was for a short time Chaplain of Saint John's College, and then went to London to Saint Alban's, Holborn; and finally to Saint Michael's, Beckenham. He was a fascinating character, but confessed to being totally unable to keep the Rule so he left the Oratory!

The House was opened on 24 June, 1920, but not officially blessed until 4 November, when the Bishop of Ely (F.H. Chase) came to perform the ceremony. '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 Hon. Edward Wood, later to be Lord Halifax, presided at the festivities. The 'Church Times' gave a long and enthusiastic account of the proceedings in its next issue, full of euphoria as was common at that period of time, and gave the impression that the conversion of Cambridge was imminent! "The presenting and living of the full Catholic Faith in the Universities of today is so important that the Oratory looks hopefully to the ardour of Catholics everywhere to support this foundation in Cambridge."

The Bishop of Ely, Dr Chase, commended the Oratory to the prayers of the assembled company as a place of Christian living, a home of study, and a house of prayer. He spoke in warm appreciation of the courage of the brethren in naming their house the Oratory. To quote the 'Church Times' report: "His lordship led the people in prayer for the especial needs of the Oratory, and a hymn being sung, the company distributed themselves to inspect the house and gardens, and to partake of tea which was of that sumptuous character that only religious seem adequately to understand."

Later in the afternoon there was a short meeting with the Master of Sidney in the chair. The Bishop of Northern Rhodesia gave an interesting account of the conditions under which the College in Northern Rhodesia did its work. "The Bishop clearly hoped that the College might be the beginning of a form of work analogous to that of the White Fathers, who in his Diocese are able to preserve both *{33}* uniformity and continuity."

John How also spoke and appealed for two or three hundred pounds to enable them to build a Chapel in the garden. The room used at that time in the House was small and unsatisfactory, although beautifully furnished with the altar and some of the fittings which were formerly in Saint Anselm's House Chapel. "All who attended the dedication of the House, and all those who have watched the beginnings and growth of the Oratory, will rejoice that this solid piece of work for the advancement of the Catholic Faith has thus far been so greatly blessed. It would be hazardous to guess what the influence of the Oratory may be in Cambridge and elsewhere. Quite certainly all concerned may feel that they have support and goodwill in the University which a few years ago would have proceeded only from the few, but now comes from all who care for the glory of God and the extension of His Kingdom."

The 'Church Times' went on to describe the Oratory's work in Cambridge:

"The work of the Mother House consists not only in that of its individual members, but in the conduct of a Companionship for priest-companions and lay-companions who follow a simple rule, and a Confraternity which comprises a Company of Saint John for men and boys, and a Company of Our Lady for women. These works are comprised in the fellowship of the Oratory of the Good Shepherd, which is designed to meet the needs of persons endeavouring to live a life of devotion in accordance with traditional Catholic practice, and in fellowship with the ideals and work of the Oratory.

Leaving aside the Companionship, it is extremely interesting to observe that the section of the Confraternity belonging to men and boys has achieved a surprising result — the uniting of undergraduates and town youths in one body. The Company of Saint John meets in solemn Chapter in the Oratory House — Solemn Chapter consisting of the solemn saying of the Office in church, and the Minor Chapter in a convivial sort of ‘squash’. There are also corporate Communion and other special observances in church, and in connection with the Confraternity there is a club intended principally for town members.

Enough will have been said to justify the description of the Oratory as a religious experiment. The Superior is subject to the authority of the General Chapter. Full members who are resident in the Oratory House pay all their earnings from whatever source into the common purse, but the Oratory makes no claim upon the capital of individual members.”

The Chapel in the garden was duly provided, a small hut outside the refectory window. It was designed by a pupil of T.H. Lyon, of Corpus Christi College, who had created the enlargement and decoration of Sidney Sussex Chapel. It was very simple, with some beautiful stalls and benches, though uncomfortable to sit on. It was acquired largely through a donation from Mrs Mary Monica Wills of Bristol, who was a great benefactor of Catholic activities in the Church of England. The Nicholas Ferrar statue was made for it and placed therein. This statue was given by the Oratory in 1957 to the Church of the Good Shepherd in Cambridge, where it stands in the Ferrar memorial Chapel as a reminder that the Oratory was responsible for building the Church and creating the parish.

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In addition to members of the Oratory, it was possible to receive two or three other residents at the House, younger members of the University who were prepared to keep the House rule and way of life. The first two were Philip Strong of Selwyn and Jock Murray of Trinity. Philip Strong became Bishop of New Guinea and then Archbishop of Brisbane and Primate of Australia. He retired there and died in 1984. Jock Murray ultimately became Provost of Glasgow. They were followed by Fred Brittain, Oswin Gibbs-Smith, and Joseph Needham. Fred Brittain spent the rest of his life in Jesus College, of which he was a Fellow. Oswin Gibbs-Smith became Archdeacon of London and finally Dean of Winchester. Joseph Needham wrote the following for the biography of John How:

“I took my first degree in the summer of 1921, and thereafter for two years was a lay-brother at the Oratory of the Good Shepherd... I have vivid recollections of the little wooden Chapel in which we used to say the Offices, and of the quillet where Wilfred Knox used to garden every day. It had been my hope that other young scientists would come forward as lay brothers to form a permanent group, but this never happened.

Naturally during the two and a half years I lived at the Oratory House I got to know the Oratorian Fathers extremely well, and I became very fond of them all. John How was a tower of strength, a man of few words, a ‘tight-lipped’ type, most often with a cigarette in his mouth. From him I learned a certain steadfastness and determination, ‘not blown about by every wind of doctrine’.”

Joseph Needham later took his Sc.D. degree at Cambridge and became a Fellow of the Royal Society, and Master of Gonville and Caius College. ‘Although OGS did not claim to be a religious community in the usual sense, the Oratory House could justly be termed a religious house. The timetable was as follows: 6.15, calling bell: 7.00, Mattins and Mass: 8.00, breakfast, followed by housework in rooms: 9.15, Terce and Meditation: 10-12.45, individual work: 1.00, mid-day intercessions with the brethren in Colleges in Saint Edward’s, (out of term, Sext in the House): 1.30, lunch: 4.20 Nones, followed by tea and individual work until 7.00, Evensong: 7.30, dinner: 10.00, Compline. Silence was kept from Compline until 10a.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 if 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 to look upon.)’

‘No sooner had the plans been made and acted upon for the setting up of the Oratory House than Father How received a cable informing him that he had been elected Bishop of Pretoria in succession to Michael Furse, who had been translated to Saint Albans. The Chapter met and “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.’

John was full of energy and enthusiasm — riding round Cambridge on a bicycle with a cigarette in his mouth, and his cassock tucked up in his belt. He had none of the imaginative brilliance of Eric Milner-White, nor the invigorating gaiety of Edward Wynn — much more interested in sport than the other brethren, and {35} more involved in the outside world and pastoral ministry in the town. He never lost his love for the people of South London, and he worked hard at recruiting for the Cambridge Fruiting Campaign. He left some notes about Saint Edward’s Church as follows:

“It was a very definite bit of pastoral work, and, I believe, had a great influence. It was a mixed congregation — town and gown — senior and junior members of the University — Don’s wives and families (several delightful children). The servers were provided, and the congregational singing largely sustained, by members of the Oratory Club, several of whom were former College choristers. Members of OGS had their regular times for Confession etc, especially at the greater Festivals. The different groups within the Oratory Fellowship met at Saint Edward’s for their periodical gatherings. On the annual commemoration of Nicholas Ferrar (4 December), all the groups met together for a joint service with address. On this occasion the Nicholas Ferrar hymn was sung. Indeed, it was actually written for this purpose, and has frequently been used at Gidding pilgrimages ever since. During Lent and Advent, courses of sermons were preached at Saint Edward’s on week-day evenings as well as Sundays.”

On the Sunday programme at the Oratory House, John How gave the following details:

“Early Mass in the House Chapel. Then at 9.30 the Sung Mass at Saint Edward’s. Then, following the habits of earlier days, members of the Oratory Club would come along to the House for coffee and chat. Then in summertime, following my previous habit, we would get on bicycles and go out to the upper river bathing place and swim. Then later afternoon, open house to Varsity for tea — quite a number used to turn up. My custom was, on Saturday evening, to go down to the cafe on King’s Parade with a suitcase, and buy up at a cheap rate their surplus stock of cakes at the weekend to provide for the tea party! Then, in the evening, Evensong in the House Chapel. Club boys in good numbers (ex-choristers etc). We sang the Office in full — plainsong psalter etc. A lovely service! Quite a feature in House life. Then ‘At Home’ after Hall to members of the University — coffee etc till Compline.

The annual event worth recording was the Ascension Day party. It really was a delightful occasion. Some of our visitors proclaimed it one of the most delightful occasions of the May term! It was just a garden party in the grounds and tea. The tea was provided by Saint John’s College kitchen, as we could not rise to providing for such numbers from our own resources.

The company was definitely mixed — town and gown, young and old, ranging from Divinity Professors (e.g. Burkitt, Bethune-Baker, W.E. Barnes) down to the children of Dons’ families largely, but not entirely, the congregation of the Saint Edward’s Mass and the members of the various groups of the Oratory Fellowship. The kiddies played games, and especially enjoyed rolling down the grass bank from the path to the Lawn (rather to Wilfred’s distress). The garden, thanks to Wilfred, would be looking its best, and we always had a glorious day of sunshine. The hut Chapel was, of {36} course, open to inspection and also the ground floor of the House. I remember Burkitt’s comment to me in the Chapel when he picked up our Plainsong Psalter, to the effect that it was a grave mistake to try to sing the English psalms to ‘Gregorians’ as the English words were entirely unsuited for the chants, which were written for Latin. And I think there is something in that! Especially in regard to some of the cadences.”

The Oratory House was maintained for 19 years, and there were many undergraduates who visited it during their time, and came under the influence of the resident brethren. In addition to this, there were always a few graduates in residence there, either working in the University or preparing for Holy Orders. All through its comparatively brief history, the House was run as a religious house, and this

was partly responsible for the uncertainty in many peoples' minds in Cambridge and elsewhere as to what the Oratory really was. Here in the House were three brethren living lives in complete conformity with the Religious life, while in the University were brethren doing their work as Deans and Chaplains of Colleges, and living in circumstances which looked like luxury when compared with those existing in the House. It would, of course, have been impossible for the University brethren to order their lives outwardly on the same pattern as those living in community, but it did appear as something hard to understand, and confronted the Oratory with the question, regularly asked, as to what it really was — a question that was not really settled till 1938. It then became clear that it would no longer be possible to maintain the Oratory House, and it was handed over to the Society of Saint Francis in 1939, thereby removing one of the causes of the questions asked as to the nature of the Society.

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Chapter 7

CAMBRIDGE 1921-1924

At the end of the first year of the House, the Annual Report for 1920-21 stated as follows:

“The first year of experimental work has been most satisfactory and encouraging. 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 Saint John’s College, was giving lectures and taking class work; the Revd Wilfred Knox was engaged mainly in study and research for a book which he hopes shortly to produce. He also contributed several articles to theological and other periodicals. The Revd Harold Dibben had charge of the club for boys and men, and was Secretary to the C.U. Branch of I.C.F. He also gave temporary assistance at Saint Giles’ Church... During the Long Vacation they took part in mission work amongst fruit-pickers in the district of Wisbech on the Cambridge Fruiting Campaign with between 60 and 70 men from the University.

Six members of the University resided with members of the Oratory during term; and during vacations there were frequent visitors for longer and shorter periods. There was a constant flow of callers throughout the year, especially during term when a large number 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; and also from Dr Frere, Superior of CR, and Father Joseph White, Director of SSM. It was not thought advisable to add to the ever increasing number of meetings in the University during term, but a few special meetings were held, notably those addressed by the Bishops of Corea, Calcutta and Zululand. Father Kelly of SSM, the Revd Harold Ellis of Newcastle, and the Revd A.S. Duncan-Jones.”

This report also announced the appointment of Edward Wynn to be Dean of Pembroke College, in succession to Charles Smith, the new Principal of Ely Theological College, who, although he had been a probationer for a short time, had now become a Priest-Companion. “At present there are three “Colleges”, in Cambridge, Rochester and Africa, with five ‘Mission Brethren’ who, whilst attached to the Mother House (i.e. the College in Cambridge) and keeping its Rule, are engaged in work elsewhere.”

“During the past year over a dozen approaches have been made with a view to forming further Colleges in various quarters, both at home and abroad. It is evident that the need for communities of priests is being widely felt, and that the Oratory method of community life and rule, with its element of flexibility making it adaptable to varying conditions, has great possibilities {38} for meeting such a need. But it is impossible at present even to contemplate expansion in any marked degree. Both men and money are required. At the present time it is impossible to admit any who are not immediately able to earn for the Common Purse at least the cost of their maintenance. It is not too much to hope, however, that in the course of time more men will feel the call to the Oratory life, and many others will feel moved to make liberal contributions of money to assist in making further developments. In the meantime we have a large number of friends to thank for the generous support that has made it possible to proceed this far, and we commend to God for His guidance and direction all developments for the future, giving Him the glory for anything that has been accomplished for His Church hitherto.”

In October, 1922, the Oratory produced a leaflet intended to clarify its methods and ideals, and to answer the question frequently asked: ‘What exactly is the Oratory of the Good Shepherd, and for

what does it stand?' The difficulty of the answer lay in the fact that though the Oratory is in many ways similar to other religious societies or communities, yet in many ways it is different.

"The Oratory is a society of persons; not a place or building for purposes of prayer... All students of the later centuries of Church history are familiar with the foundation and development of the great Oratories of Saint Philip Neri in Rome (1564) and of the Cardinal de Bérulle in France (1611), and they will know that at the present day in the Roman Communion congregations of priests in England and elsewhere, are maintaining the Oratory life as the successors of these earlier foundations. It must not, however, be supposed that the use of the title 'Oratory' by the Cambridge foundation dedicated to the 'Good Shepherd', is to be taken as an indication that it would claim affinity in method or ideal to those earlier Oratories of great name, though its members would acknowledge with deep gratitude an incalculable debt to the inspiring example both of the famous historic Oratories and of the venerable Religious Orders of the Church. They have not dared to model their Constitution and Rule on those of any earlier or contemporary Religious Community, though inspiration for the title was found in that of the "Oratory of Divine Love (1516)."

It is appropriate here to enlarge a little on the 'Oratory of Divine Love'. In the early sixteenth century "the aspirations of scattered individuals for reform first found a nucleus and organisation in the 'Oratory of Divine Love', founded in Rome towards the end of the Pontificate of Leo X. This famous society numbered among its members some of the most learned preachers and upright laymen who were connected with the Court of Rome in that day. They met for prayer and meditation in the little Church of Santi Silvestro e Dorotea in Trastevere and discussed means for the purification of the Church. Almost every tendency of thought and temperament among the Catholic reformers was to be found there. Caraffa and Sadoletto, Caetano da Thiene and Giberti were alike members. The ascetic and the humanist, the practical and the doctrinal reformers met together and worked in harmony. Their numbers were fifty ^{39} or sixty in all. In the last years of the Pagan Renaissance, when its weaker elements were coming to the surface, and when decadence rather than a new interest in life was becoming its key note, there was thus growing in numbers and influence a party full of promise for the future history of the Church. A stern and almost Puritan moral ideal was combined with a belief that there was no essential antagonism between faith and culture, between profane learning and Christian knowledge. As the great medieval theologians and scholastics had interpreted Christianity to their age, and had harmonised the divergent elements in the knowledge of their time, so now in the Oratory of Divine Love the feeling found expression that the work had to be done afresh, and that the new revelation given to men by the Renaissance must be incorporated into the system of Christian thought... That section of the Oratory of Divine Love which wished to spiritualise theology and to deepen the bases of the Christian life found ample support in the accepted theology of the day... The union of scholarship and holiness of life with zeal for practical reform, as exemplified in these men, is rare in the history of the Church."³

The pamphlet continues:

"It is believed that there are many men who seek the discipline and stimulus of a common rule of life and devotion, and have the fellowship of a community, but are not conscious of immediate vocation to any Religious Society whose Rule would require them to give up the work or profession to which they feel God has called them. In the case of the Oratory the attempt has been made to form a Society that is capable of including both priests and laymen who may be engaged in various occupations, and be living in various places. Its plan is to build up in different localities groups of priests and laymen bound together by its Rule, but not necessarily living under the same roof. They should, however, be in sufficiently close proximity to enable them to form a real fellowship. These groups are by the Constitution of the Oratory called 'Colleges'."

³ This extract is from R.V. Lawrence's remarks on the 'Oratory of Divine Love' in the Cambridge Modern History, Vol 2, Chapter 18, p.640, 1934 edition.

There follow details of Oratory Colleges already in existence, and details of membership and Constitution. “The Governing Body is the General Chapter, in which every member has a seat. No change in the Constitution may be made without the sanction of the General Chapter after full and careful deliberation.”

“There is one Superior for the whole Oratory, who is required to be, or become, a member of the Mother House.” That is no longer the case, and the Cambridge continuity was broken when Father Brian Oman succeeded Father George Tibbatts in 1966. Since then there have been Superiors from Scotland, London, and Australia! The Superior’s function is “to represent the Oratory in external affairs, and within the Brotherhood itself to be responsible for the maintenance of its unity, discipline and rule.” The period of service is three years, and may be renewed, and the election by General Chapter after nomination by one or more Colleges. “It is the constant aim of the Oratory rather to cultivate a common ‘spirit’ amongst its members than to bind them to the observance of minute details of obedience.” {40}

“It remains only to be said that in connection with the Oratory there is a ‘Fellowship’, embracing (1) the Companionship — in two divisions, (a) for priests and (b) for laity (men or women), and (2) the Confraternity — with two ‘Companies’, (a) of Saint John, for men and boys, and (b) of Our Lady, for women and girls. Each section has its own Rule of Life, and each plays its part in the furtherance of the purpose to which the Oratory and its Fellowship exists, namely, the strengthening and encouragement by simple discipline and Christian fellowship, of boys and girls, women and men, in the life of fuller Catholic devotion in the service of Jesus Christ.”

In the sixty years that have passed since this pamphlet was written, the Companionship has flourished with a fairly constant number of priests and laity, men and women, but the Confraternity came to an end with the departure of John How from Cambridge, for it had been one of his particular gifts to collect round the Oratory young townsmen and women — wives and families of dons, and the former choristers of Trinity College, who formed the majority of the Oratory Club — the Confraternity’s predecessor.

In spite of the clear statement at the beginning of the pamphlet on the methods and ideals of the Oratory, the questioning as to what the Oratory was continued, and this questioning was not confined to those outside the Society. The House was run as a religious house, with regular hours for the Offices, Eucharist and study. The greater silence was observed from Compline until after meditation and Terce the next morning. This was partly responsible for the uncertainty in many peoples’ minds in Cambridge and elsewhere. Here in the House were three brethren living lives in complete conformity with the Religious life, while in the University were brethren doing their work as Deans and Chaplains of Colleges, and living in circumstances which looked like luxury when compared with those existing in the House. It would, of course, have been impossible for the University brethren to order their lives outwardly on the same pattern as those living in community, but it did appear as something hard to understand.

But the House presented another problem within the Society. Father Harold Leeke, Prior of the College at Chipili, wrote in 1924 as follows, and his letter was discussed at the General Chapter meeting that summer.

“I am conscious that the OGS is attempting to be something which it isn’t, and which it cannot be as it is in practice constituted at the moment. And because of this I realise that we cannot make our proper contribution to OGS, and we suffer disappointment because the centre cannot be to us all that by its written rule it ought to be.

I believe the main reason to be that OGS has on paper developed too far in advance of what was practicable at Cambridge, and has become to us in Africa a different OGS from the one to which we asked admission in 1916. This change of character would have been perfectly in order as regards ourselves had OGS possessed and exercised the authority which effective carrying out of the written rule now demands; OGS ought to have been able to say, ‘if you join us you must come home and live at the Mother House and absorb the character of its life before attempting to be Oratorians of our rule in Africa.’ {41}

Now I contend that experience both in Cambridge and Africa goes to show that in practice OGS is only prepared to go as far as its founders desired to go — to have a rule of life to help its members to carry on effectively their various jobs. It was this idea that attracted Gordon and myself in the beginning, and those sections both in the Cambridge and African rules referring to occasions of conflicting authority support this contention.

The arrival of a House in Cambridge which has assumed the name of “Mother House” has ipso facto dragged OGS out of its original self, and has caused us to pretend to be a recognised Regular Order. But it is noticeable that Cambridge members have shown hesitation to commit themselves in practice to this new character, by carrying on their respective jobs... Cambridge cannot claim to be our Mother until there is free intercourse between her and the various colleges; and by free intercourse I mean a give and take of men between the Mother House and the various colleges wherever they may be.

As a fact all I want is what I believe to be the original intention: to have a rule which will help me in my work. I do not want to be hindered by a lot of machinery which links me up to an ineffective society. The present mutual benefit is the bond of prayer — a benefit which we can get by forming a prayer union with a strict rule of intercession... I have a feeling that OGS has a future for us all, (not as a Religious Order but as originally intended) if only we could evolve some scheme for preserving its character while making each college an absolute unit... A Mother House presupposes the practical knowledge by every member of its life; and our present methods rule that out. And the majority of us are too much ‘called’ to be able or willing to accept a Mother House.

I am led therefore to propose a scheme on the following general lines: — that it be definitely decided at the next General Chapter whether OGS wishes to preserve its original intention, or seriously to work itself into a Regular Order. If the former, then continuance of the Oratory House will depend only on whether such a House has a mission in Cambridge. If the latter, then such members as wish must make their home there and make the life of the Oratory their *first* work. In that case those of us who wish to continue in the Oratory must go and live in Cambridge, and all existing colleges must close down as such.”

This view seems to have been shared by Hubert Britton, who wrote from Saint Wendron that he agreed with Harold, and did not intend to renew his profession if he was to remain in isolation. He felt that his position was neither profitable or possible. “I cannot therefore under the present circumstances renew my intention to keep a Rule which is essentially a community Rule, unless or until some sort of corporate life is possible for me.”

The matter was discussed fully at the meeting of General Chapter in August. There were those who were anxious to take another step towards developing the Oratory into a Religious Community, and who wanted probation and profession to be for periods of three years. This was, of course, impossible in the Oratory as it then was. Centralisation at the Mother House in Cambridge was also an issue. {42} It appeared to some that the House was seeking to exercise too much control, especially where it concerned overseas brethren. Flexibility was necessary. A centralised Society would be responsible for the blunders of individual Colleges, and would therefore have to insist on a strict novitiate, which was impossible for many of those who wanted to join the Oratory. A rule was needed which could be modified to meet an infinite variety of local requirements. It would have to insist on life vows, whereas at that time men wanted to make the experiment, but could not tell how it would work in practice. It was argued that the flexibility of the constitution was a supreme merit to be preserved at all costs, but that brethren must be on their guard continually against undue laxity. The autonomy of the Colleges must be preserved. It was urged against Harold Leeke that the Oratory House might have some value as a meeting-house for the brethren as the Society developed.

Life vows did not come until 1931, but in the Constitution the term ‘Mother House’ was changed to the “college which is constituted the centre of the Oratory.” The Oratory House was, in fact, the centre of the Oratory until its disposal in 1939, and was important for the work of the Society in the University, and for theological study. Mission Colleges or isolated Mission brethren should be attached to a College of the Oratory, but not necessarily to the centre at Cambridge.

But there was another crisis in the life of the Oratory in 1924. John How was invited by William Temple, Bishop of Manchester, to be Diocesan Missioner of that Diocese, and the Cambridge Chapter approved of this move early in the year. The 1924 annual report described this as “the heaviest blow” in the Oratory’s history. In March John went to New York to conduct a Passiontide and Holy Week Mission at Saint Mary the Virgin, New York, and returned to Cambridge in April. He left for Manchester on 4 May, and resigned his membership of OGS on 31 May.

He had been in Cambridge for twenty-two years, broken by two years at Ely Theological College and the Wellington College Mission, and eight months of the War in Egypt and Palestine. He had been a member of the Oratory, and its Superior, for twelve years, the last four of which were spent as Warden of the Oratory House, which was well and firmly established when he left. Father Brandreth’s history reports that there were two reasons which impelled him to leave Cambridge and resign from the Oratory at the same time — first, his pastoral and missionary vocation felt cramped at being overlong confined to young men of student age and type, and secondly, he wanted to marry. The brethren bitterly 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 the marriage ceremony and Edward Wynn said the nuptial Mass. But able Old Testament scholar that he was, his heart was always with missionary work to ordinary people, and he did not sit easily to academic life. He had a profound effect on many undergraduates of his day before the first World War, and happy though he was in Cambridge, he was ready for more congenial work. From Manchester he moved to be Rector of Liverpool, and after nine years there to be {43} Vicar of Brighton. On 16 November, 1938, he was consecrated in Saint Mary’s Cathedral, Glasgow, as Bishop of Glasgow and Galloway, and in 1946 was elected Primus of the Scottish Episcopal Church.

John How died on 22 May, 1961. There were many appreciations of him from a great variety of people. Thomas Hannay, Bishop of Argyle and the Isles, and Primus, wrote of him:

“An Englishman, he came to love Scotland and its Church, and he served it with devotion and pastoral care. He never lowered his colours, but he gained the affection and respect of our separated brethren, and did a great deal to sweeten acerbities and to better relations with them... To his work in Glasgow he brought definite gifts of scholarship, for though not in the front rank of Old Testament scholars, he had behind him a sound academic training in Semitic studies, in which he had been a University lecturer for many years. To this he added a strong devotional strain, as was only to be expected in one who had directed so many souls in the right way and along the higher reaches of the spiritual life... In the Father’s hands we leave him, glad and grateful to have had him among us. God grant him light, rest and peace.”

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Chapter 8

1924 — 1931

The Revd Wilfred Knox resided at the Oratory House for most of its existence, except for a short period when he returned to London to the parish of Saint Saviour, Hoxton. He had joined the Oratory in 1920 as a probationer and was professed in 1921. After John How left Cambridge he was Warden of the Oratory House until its closure in 1939. He made life profession in 1931, and when Edward Wynn resigned from being Superior in 1941, he was elected Superior by the brethren, and held this office until his death on 9 February, 1950. The debt of the Oratory to Father Wilfred is very great. He was a distinguished Pauline scholar, and when the Oratory House came to an end he went to live in a small house in the centre of Cambridge. Soon after the War started he moved into Pembroke College as Chaplain, where he was already well known. When he died the Annual Report of the Oratory said this 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 these *{sic}* 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 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 Dean of York wrote of him:

“In this life, on all four sides, religious, intellectual, recreational, and social, he was utterly and happily at home (the Dean is referring to the Oratory). Quiet the life may have been. Its happiness certainly was unique. There can never have been, for all its austerities, a merrier little community. How much the Knox wit contributed to this can easily be guessed. If Wilfred was an academic of the purest water, if he was through and through a devoted ‘religious’, he had a social side which drew young men to him in deep attachment. His love for them was wholly unsentimental but deep. He had learned — if in his case it needed learning — this love for young men in his London parishes; and he exercised it annually among the fruit pickers in the Wisbech district.”

Wilfred had obtained first class honours in *Litterae Humaniores* at Trinity College, Oxford, and incorporated at Pembroke College, Cambridge in 1935, and was elected a Fellow a few years before his death. He took his B.D. in 1937, D.D. in 1943 and Fellow of the British Academy in 1948.

One important activity in which the Oratory brethren in Cambridge were involved was the Cambridge Fruiting Campaign. This mission to Londoners who {46} came annually to pick strawberries and gooseberries in the Wisbech area had been started by John How in 1912. In 1925 the undergraduate committee invited the Oratory to accept the responsibility of appointing the Senior Chaplain each year, in order to ensure that its Anglo-Catholic tradition was maintained. This work was well organised in the University, and each year about 50 or more students, including Newnham and Girton, went to Wisbech for a period of the picking season.

The responsibility was accepted, and maintained until 1939, when the Oratory House was handed over to the Franciscans. Until 1925 Father Harold Dibben of the Oratory took up the Chaplaincy work

zealously, and when he returned to parish work in South London, and John How left Cambridge for Manchester, Wilfred Knox assumed responsibility.

The conditions under which the pickers lived were primitive. There was no provision for their spiritual welfare, and nothing in the way of healthy amusement and entertainment for their free time and evenings. The idea of a University campaign had been suggested by the son of a Wisbech doctor, who was an undergraduate at Magdalene and attended John How's Hebrew lectures.

During the second World War an offshoot of the Fruiting Campaign developed in Kent for the hop-pickers, and was in the charge of George Tibbatts in its early years. This came to an end when mechanical pickers replaced the Londoners.

Reference has already been made to Hugh King, an early member of the Oratory, who had joined the Cambridge Mission to Delhi from his curacy at Saint Luke's, Gillingham. There had been discussion, and hopes, of starting an Oratory College in conjunction with the Cambridge Mission, and Walter Fitch, of Magdalene, went out to join Hugh as a probationer. A College never materialised, and later Walter Fitch became a Cowley Father.

In 1925 there was more correspondence about the possibility of doing something in Calcutta. Father C.E. Prior wrote to Eric Milner-White on 4 July on the position of the Oxford Mission: — "We know of no one contemplating joining us... from a human point of view our work is in a precarious position. If therefore another community with at least a somewhat similar aim and outlook is contemplating starting work in India, would it not rather be better to back up an existing community rather than to start a new community somewhere else?" Alec Vidler, then curate of Saint Aidan's, Small Heath, Birmingham, and who was a probationer of the Oratory was approached by the Superior, Eric Milner-White. He replied as follows:- "The fact that the future of the Oxford Mission seems precarious is indeed a matter for anxiety. It would seem that the chief reason for their present state is their lack of connection with England, and the fact that they have no house here." Alec goes on to say that if he did go to India, he would wish to be associated more with Indian nationalism and the higher Hinduism, which he believed commended itself to most younger missionaries in that country.

Then there was the Poona scheme. A group of Oxford men had met early in 1926 with a view to working a scheme for an Indian Christian school, rather on the lines of the poet Tagore's school. They were very definitely considering the possibility of Poona for their school, but money was a very serious difficulty. There was also an Indian group at Highgate, led by Algy Robertson of Queen's College {47} who was a Priest-Companion of the Oratory and to become a probationer. These two groups met together, and had with them the Bishop of Bombay and the Revd Jack Winslow, who were able to give facts and figures about Western India.

Father Winslow had started to found an Indian brotherhood at Ahmednagar, which was moving to Poona because he wanted to get in touch with the intelligentsia of that city, and attached to his Ashram (Monastic House) he wished to have a hostel for students. The Bishop of Bombay approved this scheme — once a hostel for students was started it would pay its own way. Bishop Philip Loyd — a King's contemporary and great personal friend of Eric Milner-White — desired to have a small community of men around the Cathedral which was to be built at Ahmednagar, who could give their lives to study and prayer, taking retreats, writing books, teaching theology, and making personal contacts with Hindus. The joint gathering felt that if there were a Brotherhood to work as suggested in Poona and Ahmednagar, they would like Father Winslow to be the Head.

As far as the Oratory was concerned, the meeting felt that it was very important for Winslow to consider the question as to whether he could join the Oratory. They urged him to see Father Milner-White and talk the whole thing over, which he did. He expressed the hope that Algy Robertson would run the student hostel. He also hoped that Alec Vidler would join him in the Ashram. They would value very much the connection with a home base at Cambridge, the opportunity of going to the Oratory House on visits home, the prayer support which would come from it, and the hope of drawing

new recruits from it. On the other hand, they were hoping to include Indians in their Fellowship, and it was likely that Indians would fight shy of joining anything which had its base in England. They would share this feeling to some extent, for they were going out *{sic}* to make India their home, and would feel that they ought to have their roots there.

Father Winslow met Harold Dibben of the Oratory in Walworth, and discussed the matter with him. He advised that they should not be a college of the Oratory at the outset, for as long as they were without experience of the conditions in which they would be working, it would be difficult to frame any rule of life. On the other hand, Harold said, if after living according to some rule successfully for three or four years, they chose to submit it to the Oratory and ask them to recognise it, it might then become a College of the Oratory with far more hope of a sound foundation.

Alec reported to Eric Milner-White that Jack Winslow had passed through Birmingham and spent a night with him in order to discuss the matter further:

“One of the primary notes of his brotherhood is that it is composed of Europeans and Indians, and that it is essentially Indian in character and method of life. This means that the Indian members must have at least an equal hand with the Europeans in forming the rule and drawing up the constitution, and that it should grow up spontaneously on Indian soil. If Winslow were at this stage to join the Oratory and to go out with an embryo college with even a tentative rule and constitution already approved in England, the effect would be disastrous. On the other hand, Winslow realises how valuable and right it might afterwards be that the whole brotherhood should become a College of the OGS... the inclusion of Indian *{48}* members would add to the richness of the Oratory. Winslow is perfectly definite that he would not wish a connection to be formed with the Oratory merely because it would provide a recruiting agency in England.”

“From the Oratory point of view the position seems to be this: here is a brotherhood definitely starting in India, a fresh and independent experiment, probably on such lines as the Oratory might be expected to follow in India, which for very good reasons does not want to start at the outset as an OGS College, but which in two or three years’ time will very possibly wish to become a College. In any case the Oratory stands to lose nothing by encouraging the venture, and perhaps it stands to gain just the sort of Indian College that it has been feeling after.”

In the end the Oratory did not go to Poona or join with what was known as the ‘Christa Prema Seva Sanga’, nor did it go to form a community at Ahmednagar. Philip Loyd became the first Bishop of Nasik, and when weary and nearly worn out, came back to England to retire, but found himself instead — and with much apprehension — Bishop of Saint Albans in succession to Michael Furse. Algy Robertson stayed in India until his health, never robust, broke down, and he returned to England and became head of the Franciscans. Jack Winslow eventually became a Franciscan, and finally on the staff of Lee Abbey in Devon.

Harold Dibben, who lived as a professed brother in the Oratory House in the early twenties, did not take kindly to academic life but felt himself primarily to be a parish priest. In the spring of 1925 a mission college was started at Walworth, where Harold was joined by the Revd 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 Saint Mark, Walworth, and appointing Harold Dibben as Vicar. This made it possible for the Oratory to find an opening for the Revd Charles Bouch and the Revd 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 OGS 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.”

It is not unreasonable to wonder what these incompatible claims were! Harold remained at Staveley for some time, but gradually lost touch with the Oratory and went into some association with the Franciscans. Theodore Godwin ultimately moved onto Mirfield.

Gordon Day came back to Cambridge from Africa in 1925, and his activities have already been noted in the chapter on Africa. When he left Cambridge he was {49} for a time Men Candidate’s Secretary for SPG and then Vicar of Saint Giles’, Norwich, for a very short period. As has been recorded, his main work was in South Africa with students and young men. He was a volatile and enthusiastic person, and laid foundations at Saint Catharine’s College which were to bear much fruit.

On 23 January, 1930, Father Christopher Waddams was admitted to probation in the Oratory in Saint Edward’s Church. He had succeeded Gordon Day as Chaplain of Saint Catharine’s College after his curacy in South London. Christopher remained a member of the Oratory until his death in August, 1965, and was Fellow and Tutor and then Senior Tutor of the College. He was a great strength to the Oratory in the University and on the Fruiting Campaign which he always attended, and where he was a great success. The “Times” said of him:

“He had a unique position — loved and respected by all. There can be no member of the College who did not enjoy his hospitality and few, if any, who did not benefit from his generosity... He was first and foremost a priest. He was a devout Christian, a High Anglican in churchmanship, but in the spiritual life of the College men of all denominations found in him a friend and consulted him freely. His advice was always practical, and often made abundantly clear just what is meant by good work and good works. It gave great pleasure to his family and friends when he was, in 1953, appointed honorary Canon of Ely.”

The Annual Report of the Oratory for 1964-65 said of him:

“We shall always remember Chapter meetings in his rooms and the wonderful hospitality of his lunch parties. He was always ready to help and advise when asked and a very great number of undergraduates and others outside Cambridge have reason to be thankful that they have known him... for thirty-five years he taught the Catholic religion on the basis of the Book of Common Prayer.”

The only thing about Christopher which from time to time caused anxiety to his friends was his handling of his motor-car!

The next important matter to concern the brethren was the consideration of life profession. This took place in 1931. After debate it was decided that a brother could make life profession in the Oratory after he had been a member for 10 years. The vote was not unanimous. There were those who felt that life profession would commit the Oratory to responsibility for elderly or infirm brethren — a commitment for which, in the nature of things, it had not the necessary apparatus — a community without being a technical community in the generally accepted sense of that term. On the other hand it was felt that life profession would give stability to the Society. It was made clear that there was no difference in status between the annually professed and the life professed. In fact there have been three cases of life professed brothers who from age or infirmity have been cared for by the Oratory. William Lutyens has actually been dealt with, and both Kendal Dovey and Henry Brandreth were looked after with loving care by the brethren when they could not longer deal with anything by themselves, and in neither case did they feel insecure because the Oratory had no house for retirement. The whole question has been raised from time to time, and life professions continue to be {50} made. It is not assumed automatically that brethren will take this step, and those who make annual profession, or profession for three to five years, are in the majority.

In 1931 the Gillingham College came to an end and William Lutyens came to Cambridge to live in the Oratory House, and became a familiar figure to University athletes. At the same time Alec Vidler

was able to leave Birmingham and reside in the Oratory House. These two brethren, with Wilfred Knox maintained the life and work of the house in Cambridge until its closure in 1938.

{51}

Chapter 9

CAMBRIDGE 1931 — 1986

Father Brandreth continues: ‘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 Saint 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 Chapter was, from 1919 onwards, a great feature of the Oratory’s life. For many years, except for a break in the second World War when the community was evacuated, this has been held at Saint 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, OGS acted as their Chaplain.’ It is sad that when the Oratory grew in numbers after the second World War, it was no longer possible for the sisters to accommodate the brethren, and they have ever since had to find establishments large enough to hold them all. But the warmth remains, and there is annually an unconduted Retreat after Easter at Malling Abbey for those brethren who wish to attend it.

The question as to what the Oratory really was continued to turn up from time to time, and in 1936 Edward Wynn brought the matter up at General Chapter, and he was asked to prepare a memorandum on the subject for circulation among the brethren. In this document he stated the case for the original conception of the Oratory.

“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’ maybe unprofitable. But scandal is caused, 1. because the life of some of us bears little or 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 {52} 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 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 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 of more members of the OGS 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 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 Eric stating his reasons for disagreeing with both the other documents, and pointing out reasons for regarding OGS as a religious community in the generally accepted sense of the term.' It would be interesting to know what his reasons were, but the record of his memorandum has been lost.

'In the event, the matter was already partly solved. Alec Vidler reported to the brethren that he had been offered the editorship of *Theology*, together with residence at Saint 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-Shields 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 Saint Francis had accepted the invitation of the Cambridge Chapter to take over the {53} House in October, 1939.' It was this decision which caused Gordon Day to leave the Oratory.

'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 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-dispensed, 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.’

Eric’s departure from the Society was a matter of considerable distress to the Cambridge brethren. He was a man of imaginative brilliance and an able historian, and at King’s College as Dean of Chapel he generally managed to get the governing body to do what he wanted. Perhaps it was his imaginative dreaming which convinced him that the Oratory was a community. His friends knew that when he left he continued to live the rest of his life by the Oratory rule, and his Oratory friendships were never broken. He gathered round him in King’s young men who often found their vocations to the priesthood under his guidance and care. Archbishop Davidson expressed a belief that he was responsible for more ordinations than anyone else in the Church of England. In 1941 he left Cambridge to be Dean of York, where he died on 15 June 1963. The King’s College memoir said of him:

“He left a lasting imprint on our Chapel services, and still more on the lives of many Kingsmen — undergraduates, choristers and even other Choir School boys — who came under his spell. In addition, he was a man of remarkably varied gifts and enthusiasms, who found time, without *[54]* becoming merely dilettante, to be a connoisseur of sacred arts and an expert in several practical fields, and yet to keep human relationships in the first place after (or rather as part of) his religion... His character, which remained remarkably the same throughout his happy life, abounded in contrasts and surprises. Abnormally shy and sensitive, he was yet distinguished for physical as well as moral courage; other worldly, yet scheming; naive, yet shrewd in business; deeply rooted in the past, yet alive to what was new, especially in the arts; fastidious in taste, yet liable to strange lapses; idealistic (some would say, sentimental) overall, but with outcrops of tough realism... His optimism and youthful enthusiasm remained unquenchable through eighty years that disillusioned many, so that any enterprise to which he bent himself was apt to prosper.”

Six weeks after the Armistice (1918), he introduced on Christmas Eve a ‘Service of Nine Lessons and Carols’, suggested by a form devised for use at Truro in 1880. But essentially it is Milner’s creation, and the bidding prayer is unmistakably his... The service was first broadcast in 1928, and it now commands a BBC audience second in the year only to the Sovereign’s Christmas message, besides being imitated, and replayed on records, all over the Anglican world.” The interior decoration and fittings of York Minster are a lasting memorial to his work there. He had written in the early years of this century that his ‘noblest aim’ was “to do what would make me remembered and loved in the remembrance.” Though Eric Milner-White was a “controversial figure both for his personality and his actions, there is a cloud of witnesses who could say, that for them at least his ‘noblest aim’ was achieved.”

‘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 OGS and Warden of Saint Deiniol’s Library, there was little sense of loss at the handing over of the Oratory House.’ Wilfred moved to a small house near Addenbrookes Hospital until he went to Pembroke College, and George Tibbatts, back from Africa with a broken ankle, became Chaplain of Magdalene College in January, 1940. So the Cambridge College was able to be maintained with three brethren working in Colleges after Edward Wynn became Bishop of Ely in 1941.

‘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 Cambridge College has continued in existence up to the present, though for a few years it was called the Oxford College when brethren there outnumbered those at Cambridge. George Braund and Eric Simmons joined the Staff at Saint Luke's, Chesterton, where George Tibbatts became Vicar in October, 1952. George had left Magdalene for Sidney Sussex College in 1946, and in 1960 Father Braund became Chaplain of that College, until 1968, when he left Cambridge to {55} work for USPG. Father Simmons left Saint Luke's in 1957 to be the first resident Chaplain of Keele University, and from there he joined the Community of the Resurrection at Mirfield, where he subsequently became Superior. When Wilfred died in 1950, George became Superior until 1966. He was succeeded at Saint Luke's in 1963 by Father Thomas Gresley-Summers, who had joined the Oratory in 1959. From 1968 until he left Cambridge in 1980 to be Vicar of Saint John's, Finsbury Park, Tom was the only resident member of the Oratory in Cambridge.

For eleven years Saint Luke's Vicarage was the 'Centre' of the Cambridge College, and this large parish had three Oratorians on the staff for most of that time. When Father Simmons left for Keele, Robert Waddington came from the Slade School in Queensland, where he was Chaplain, in order to join the Oratory. The district for which he was responsible had been developed by Eric, and he followed this up so that the district Church of Saint Augustine played a full and exciting part in parish affairs. In 1962 Robert went back to Australia to be Headmaster of a boys' boarding school at Ravenshoe in North Queensland where he stayed for nine years. Then, after an education course at Oxford, he became a Canon Residentiary of Carlisle Cathedral and Bishop's Adviser on religious education. There followed a period as Secretary of the National Society, and of the Church of England Board of Education, and in 1984 Robert became Dean of Manchester. The Saint Luke's brethren all resided in the Vicarage, and in 1960 they were joined by Father Tom Akeley from Maryland in USA.

The life of the Oratory at Saint Luke's in many ways resembled that of the Oratory House and of Saint Luke's, Gillingham, some thirty years previously. There was a daily Mass at 7 a.m., preceded by Mattins and followed by meditation. The morning was spent at parish business and reading and preparing work, and the afternoon in visiting. Evensong was said at 6 in Church, and again the brethren dispersed into the parish. Compline was said at 10.30 p.m., which gave brethren a good excuse to get home if they were visiting in the parish, though it was not regarded as compulsory. There was deliberately no common purse.

The Northern half of Saint Luke's parish consisted of a farm and allotments in 1952, to be turned into a new housing estate. The first houses soon went up and Father Braund took charge in 1954. At first Mass was said on a kitchen table, but soon the necessity for a building became obvious. Four sections of an army hut were bought by the Diocese and erected on the site which had been acquired for the new Church. On 31 July, 1957, Princess Margaret laid the foundation stone of the new Church, which was at that time to be dedicated in honour of Nicholas Ferrar of Little Gidding as encouraged by Eric Milner-White, who was present at the ceremony as well as a number of members of the Oratory. This intention did not materialise, and on 24 October, 1964, the completed Church was consecrated by the Bishop of Ely in honour of the Good Shepherd, and as the Nicholas Ferrar memorial Church. This dedication is a permanent reminder that the parish came into being when the parish of Saint Luke's, and therefore the new estate, was in the hands of brethren of the Oratory of the Good Shepherd.

In June, 1950, the Cambridge College was reinforced by the arrival of Dr Robert Casey from America to be Fellow and Dean of Sidney Sussex College. Father Casey had been instrumental in the founding of the Oratory in the United {56} States, and had already studied after the first World War at Jesus College for his Ph.D., which he obtained in 1924. He had been in touch with Wilfred Knox for some years, and was a brilliant scholar. Sadly he did not last long in Cambridge. There were members of the Faculty of Divinity who had been suspicious about his theology, which was not helped by his Irish temperament. He took his B.D. in 1951, and became an honorary Curate of Little Saint Mary's Church. His particular gift was his ability to inspire and encourage promising young men, and to fill them with enthusiasm for scholarship. His health deteriorated and in 1958 he became seriously ill, and

died at Mundesley in Norfolk at Easter, 1959. There will be more to say about him in the recording of the Oratory in North America.

During the years a number of priests joined the Oratory as mission brethren attached to the Cambridge College. As such they were required to report on their keeping of the rule monthly and a financial report to be made monthly — in some cases quarterly. Henry Brandreth was one of these at the beginning of his ministry. He was ordained by Edward Wynn as Curate of Saint Ives in Huntingdonshire, but was transferred to Hawarden when he left that parish. Father Martin Thornton joined OGS when he became Vicar of Swaffham Prior, a few miles from Cambridge, and was a resident member until he moved to the Crewe area and thence to Saint Deiniol's Library.

Robert Symonds was ordained in 1934 as curate to Jock Murray, Vicar of All Saints, Hampton, who had lived for a year at the Oratory House and was a friend of Edward Wynn. After some years and several moves, Robert became temporarily priest-in-charge of Milton, near Cambridge, and was admitted to probation in the Oratory in 1942, and full membership in 1944. After the War he became Tutor of Lincoln Theological College and Chaplain from 1951 to 1956, when he was appointed Vicar of Saint Mary de Castro, Leicester. In 1973 Father Robert was made an honorary Canon of Leicester and the next year moved to Saint Deiniol's Library, Hawarden, where he stayed until 1978. Many students at Lincoln have benefitted from his kind and spiritual ministry. He now lives at Retford, where he is Chaplain of Holy Trinity Hospital. The Cambridge brethren have enjoyed his unique way of self-expression.

Richard Seymour joined the Society in 1950, and from that time until his death on 7 March, 1979, was a mission brother of the Cambridge Chapter. He never became well-known or held prominent positions in the Church of England as some of our departed brethren have done — there was no public obituary notice when he died — but he was typical of many members of the Oratory who have laboured faithfully and with love in their pastoral work, and whose inspiration had been the Oratory rule emerging from the Notes. He truly belonged to the holy and humble of heart. Richard was educated at Queens' College, Cambridge, and Cuddesdon Theological College, and it is typical of him that he spent 32 years of his ministry as a Curate, 21 of them at the Ascension, Victoria Docks in East London. He came from an old county family with very ancient roots, but the only outward sign that he allowed of this was the possession of a horse in the country for riding on days off, and a Bassett hound! At the Requiem at Saint Paul's, Goodmayes, where he had been Vicar for 16 years, the Bishop of Barking said this of him:

“Today we thank God for Richard Seymour; for the humanity which he {57} brought to his priesthood; and for the blessings his priesthood brought to the people whose lives were touched by his ministry... His discipline and devotion were reinforced through his membership of the Oratory of the Good Shepherd... In the spirit of thanksgiving and gratitude for his ministry, we commend him to that life which true priesthood foreshadows — that life which we share with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ.”

Father Seymour was made an honorary Canon of Chelmsford Cathedral to celebrate his jubilee in the priesthood in 1977.

Another unknown priest was Guy Carleton, who joined the Oratory on his expulsion from Malawi when that country became independent in 1963. After Keble College, Oxford, and Ely Theological College, and a curacy at Saint Columba's, Sunderland, Guy spent 27 years in Nyasaland, latterly as Archdeacon of Nkhota Kota. His outspoken comments and criticisms of some aspects of African life leading up to independence were unacceptable, and he had to go. He was made an Honorary Canon of Likoma Cathedral, and finally arrived in Anguilla in the West Indies as Rector during the storms of independence and the controversy with Saint Kitts. He was a dedicated priest above all things. His strong convictions made him a good missionary and he gave a large part of his life to the young Church in Africa. He was also a man of great courage, and prepared to be unpopular for what he felt was right, sometimes causing embarrassment to his friends. In his last years in retirement in Norwich,

increasing physical infirmity and pain caused much discomfort, but he battled on regardless until a bicycle accident hastened his death on 26 August, 1979.

The Oratory thanks God for the example of these two brethren, and others to be mentioned later, who have contributed so much to our fellowship and family life as a Society — one a parish priest, and the other a missionary.

Since 1980 the Cambridge Chapter has consisted of six brethren, one of whom is in Tanzania, and four are in retirement. The Chapter meets four times a year in different places, and the essential fellowship of the Oratory is maintained.

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Chapter 10

HAWARDEN - NORTHOLT PARK, FAREHAM

‘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.’ Alec Vidler and William Lutyens were much in demand for Retreats, Conferences and sermons in various places. This Mission-Chapter was also joined by Brian Oman, who was Curate of the parish of Our Lady of Mercy and Saint Thomas of Canterbury, Gorton, Manchester. Subsequent members were Basil de Winton, Ian Carrick, Kenneth Young, Kendal Dovey and Ramsdale Whalley; Gordon Phillips, Rector of Northolt at the time, never proceeded beyond probation. Mission brethren attached to Hawarden were Selby Taylor and George Briggs from Africa, and Kenneth Young, who went to work in Guiana and left the Oratory while there. Also Henry Brandreth was transferred to Hawarden when he left Saint Ives in 1945, and Basil Daniell, Michael Daubuz, David Campbell and Joseph Porteus were non-resident members of the College. John Nias came from his Portsea curacy to be resident in the Library and to act as Alec’s Secretary for several years.

The Mission College at Hawarden became a fully constituted College on 11 September 1939, after the annual General Chapter of the Oratory. Its rule was based on the standard rule of the Society, with a new feature, that “brethren, who are not resident at Hawarden, shall consult the Chapter as to the obligation to pay regular visits there. They shall make an annual report on this subject.” At that time Saint Deiniol’s Library had plenty of room for visitors, and Alec had become Warden in 1939. Fourteen days a year was the period set down, but this was not always practicable in one piece, and was modified according to the circumstances of the brethren.

The College presented great variety, and with its mission brethren covered a large area of the country until its centre was moved to the Northolt Park district when Alec became a Canon of Windsor in 1948, and the Hawarden College was dissolved. During the War years there were many comings and goings. Brian moved from Manchester to be Chaplain of the Benedictine Community of Sisters evacuated from West Malling to Fownhope, Hereford, for the duration of the War, and in 1943 Alec Vidler was the only resident Oratorian at Hawarden. However, the other members of the Chapter were near enough to make monthly meetings possible. Father Ian Carrick was Curate at Staveley, the former Oratory parish, and had made his first profession in July, 1940. In 1943 he became Senior Chaplain at a munitions factory at Swynnerton in the Midlands, and priest-in-charge of the local country parish. Father Kendal Dovey was headmaster of Prestfelde Preparatory School at Shrewsbury, and honorary Curate of Saint Giles’ Church. He made his first profession in the Oratory in September, 1944. These three found no difficulty in getting together, and Hawarden was easily accessible, which was an important consideration in wartime.

As mentioned above, Father Brandreth joined Ian Carrick at Swynnerton when he left Saint Ives in May, 1945. He and Ian were able to hold regular local chapter meetings as well as attending the monthly gatherings at Hawarden. When the {60} Malling Sisters moved back to their Abbey at the end of the War, Brian went with them as Chaplain until he became Curate of Saint Barnabas, Tunbridge Wells, in 1946. Dale Whalley entered probation in October, 1945, and at that time became Curate of Broadstairs, where he remained for several years. In 1948 he did not renew his probation. For the short time that he was in the Oratory, he and Brian were also able to have regular meetings.

Basil Daniell was Vicar of Fareham in the Diocese of Portsmouth. In August, 1945, he was made a probationer and continued in the Oratory after profession — and ultimately life profession — until his

death in January, 1971. In retirement he was first of all sub-warden to the Nun's Community at Clewer — not a happy period — and then took charge as honorary priest-in-charge of Saint Lawrence, Upton, in the parish of Slough. Basil was a wise and compassionate priest, devoted always to his people, and totally without any worldly ambition. He was entirely satisfied with being a good priest in the Oratory which became the centre of his life after he joined. He was one of many brethren whose faithful ministry within the Oratory never hit the headlines, but whose steadfast service fulfils the aim of the Society — “the adoration of God in the service of the Lord Jesus Christ.” Michael Daubuz was Father Daniell's curate at Fareham and admitted to probation at the same time. Soon after he left Fareham, he was advised by medical authority not to continue in the Oratory, much to the brethren's regret. He and Basil were able to have local chapter meetings at regular intervals.

David Campbell was a priest-companion and Curate of Portsea, and was made a probationer at the same time as Basil Daniell and Michael Daubuz. David hoped to be able to join Ian Carrick at Swynnerton, but was drafted in the Navy as a Chaplain before that could come about. He was later to be first Vicar of Saint Mary's, Isleworth, Middlesex, and be responsible for building a new and original-looking Church which was consecrated on 12 June, 1954. Father Campbell left Isleworth to test his vocation to the Religious Life with the Cowley Fathers, where he eventually became Superior-General, which gave much pleasure to his former brethren.

The last priest from a distance to join the Hawarden Chapter was Father Joseph Porteus. After Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, and Westcott House, he had been made Deacon at Newcastle-upon-Tyne in 1922 but within a year went to North China under the auspices of SPG, where he was ordained priest in 1924. For eight years he was Lecturer in the Central Theological School at Nanking. His wife died in China leaving him with an infant daughter, and he returned to England to be Vicar of Cockerton, Co. Durham, in 1934 and stayed there for 18 years. In 1952 he became Vicar of Bishop Middleham in County Durham, from which he retired owing to ill health in 1967. His daughter had married a priest who was Vicar of Monkseaton and then of Embleton, near Alnwick, and there Joseph went to live until his death on 31 October, 1976.

When he died the Oratory said this of him: “For many years he was isolated, being the only brother in the North of England. But the Northern College gradually evolved, with Joseph as the natural leader... He was very much a father to the younger members and took great trouble over training them in the spirit and traditions of the Oratory. Always inclined to austerity in his private life, he {61} clearly enjoyed the College fellowship and relaxed much of his reserves... We learnt much from his tolerance, his determination to see good in everyone, and his unwillingness ever to make a harsh judgment, except in the case of another car driver, or a bungling cricketer! Cricket was one of his great loves, and it was not uncommon for a College Chapter to be interrupted for the Test Match commentary!” It was clear that he was a quiet and gentle person. His whole method of speech showed this. He would listen to what you had to say, and you felt that all the time he was weighing it up, and his gentle comments conveyed very clearly what he thought. And behind this quiet and gentle exterior was the solid rock of the Catholic Faith, from which he never moved and which he never watered down.

As a motorist Joseph applied his solid principles of behaviour, and woe betide the lorry driver who held him up when he thought he should be allowed to pass. His Morris Minor 1000 obstinately refused to go into bottom gear, in rebellion at Joseph's attempts to make it do so! He was not temperamentally a top-rank motorist! At the end of his life he was obviously frail and not able to do much, but there was no complaint, just the quiet acceptance of things as they were. The goodness of his life and the gentle power of his prayers have benefitted the Oratory more than any of us will ever know.

Basil Daniell and Joseph Porteus, very different men and with different temperaments, are a shining example of Oratorian priests who were quite happy to be unimportant and unknown outside the Society, but who form the solid foundation on which the whole Oratory is built — men of self-effacing tranquillity and a warmth of affection, and inspiration from the Notes and Rule. And there are plenty more cast in the same basic mould.

'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 be 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."

This memorandum was sent to bishops who might be interested in having a parish or a district in their diocese staffed by a group of Oratorians when the war *{62}* was over. '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 the 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."'

Ian Carrick and Henry Brandreth were both interested in such a project when the War should be over. In July, 1944, the Bishop of Chester, and in October, the Bishop of London, were approached and both had suggestions to make. The memorandum had been discussed at General Chapter and revised, and had been sent to the Bishops from the whole Oratory. After full discussion it was decided that the Bishop of London's offer of the Home Diocesan Mission district of Saint Barnabas, Northolt Park, should be accepted. This decision was made at a joint Chapter meeting on 28 December, 1944, at which Wilfred was present as Superior of the Oratory, and also Alec, Ian, and Henry. The letter of acceptance was sent to the Bishop of Kensington.

The revised memorandum started by stating what the Oratory was, and expressed the brethren's desire to start within six months of the end of the War.

"A parish staffed by the Oratory would be run on the same lines as a normal parish with one of its members as incumbent with the usual pastoral, legal and financial responsibilities of an incumbent. The members of the staff would in normal times be either members or probationers of the Oratory. Together they would form a College of the Oratory living under the same roof, and as such would seek to develop a common spiritual life under the inspiration of the Rule, with the aim of promoting the welfare of the parish. In the matter of Churchmanship the members would be loyal to the Book of Common Prayer and would interpret it in the English Catholic tradition. In regard to finance the members would not be committed to the poverty of a religious order. They would aim at a life of reasonable simplicity, sharing their combined means by some form of combined common purse. None of the resources of the parish, however, would be controlled by any outside body, such as the General Chapter of the Oratory."

“Whilst the Oratory ideal would fit in with almost any type of parish or group of parishes which would give work to at least three priests, the members now available have a strong preference for a small industrial town, market town, or new housing area. They feel that their training and ability best equip them for these types of parish. In any case the area served should provide pastoral and evangelistic work for three full-time priests working from one centre, and it might with advantage be increased if more priests became available.”

“Whatever parish(es) an Oratory College might serve, its members would endeavour to respect the local traditions and customs, both ecclesiastical and secular, of the people. If they ministered to more than one parish, they would aim at giving each parish the sense that one of the priests belonged to it.”

“We should desire that the Diocesan Bishop should be closely interested in the whole project, sensible that it meets a need of a district in his Diocese, and prepared {63} to give it the necessary backing and facilities both at the outset and onwards.”

“We are confident that if this College were given a favourable start, it would through its links with the Oratory in Cambridge and Hawarden, provide a centre of keen theological interest, where all clergy of the district would be welcome, where Quiet Days could be held, and where a good library would be built up. Moreover ordinands might well be attracted to serve the Church in this sort of parish, and if even after two or three years they did not wish to continue as members of the Oratory, they would be able to go elsewhere well equipped for future work. It is possible that if this experiment proved successful, some priests would become available to repeat it in other parishes.”

“We therefore make this offer in the hope that it may be of some help in facing the tasks that confront the Church during the coming years of reconstruction. This memorandum has been prepared by the General Chapter of the OGS. Communications concerning it should be addressed either to the Superior, Canon Wilfred Knox, D.D., Pembroke College, Cambridge, or the Secretary General, the Revd A.R. Vidler, B.D., at Saint Deiniol’s Library, Hawarden, Chester.”

Ian and Henry were licensed by the Bishop of Kensington on Advent Sunday. There were two halls in different parts of the district which were in temporary use for Church services, and the foundations and a few walls of the permanent Church, where building had been stopped by the War. There was no Vicarage or Clergy House available, so Ian lived in a small house in the same street as the Church, and Henry was to be found in an even smaller dwelling near the hall where he was to officiate. The district consisted of rows and rows of semi-detached houses and terraces, halfway up the slope from the river Brent which culminates in Harrow Hill. The vast parish of Holy Cross, Greenford, was next door. The Oratory report for 1944-5 stated — “At its annual meeting the General Chapter constituted an Oratory College at Northolt Park, to begin when the brethren go into residence there. It has long been the desire of the Oratory to have once more a parochial College, and the prayers of all our friends are asked for this new venture.”

John Nias had been Curate of Portsea for two years when he came to be Chaplain of the Nautical School at Heswall, near Hawarden. John became a priest-companion of the Oratory in February, 1944, and admitted to probation on 29 December, 1945. He had intended to go to West Africa, but that fell through, and in March, 1946, he joined Ian and Henry at Northolt.

This new Oratory College started off full of hope and enthusiasm, but for a period this was not fulfilled. This was not the fault of any particular brother, but the three of them were temperamentally unsuited for each other. Ian was full of enthusiasm for pastoral work in the parish and was also given to considering new ideas for a more effective ministry. Henry was already involved in three committees of the Church of England Council on Foreign Relations, and was a member of the Executive Committee of the Fellowship of Saint Alban and Saint Sergius. He had also been appointed Review Editor of *Sobornost*. He was deeply involved in the search for Unity of the Churches, and had published a bibliography called ‘*Unity and Reunion*’, and *The American Reunion Scheme*, and a *Manual of Prayer for Christian Unity*. Henry’s particular and considerable gifts in these fields did not

incline him greatly to suburban parochial work, for his time was already well {64} occupied. John, a younger man and inevitably with less experience than the other two brethren, found it difficult to cope. In 1947 he was offered, and accepted, the living of Blandford Saint Mary, Dorset, in the gift of Worcester College, Oxford, his own College. For two years he was Secretary-General of the Oratory, and left the Society when he moved to Uttoxeter in 1954 and became a Priest-Companion. In 1949 Henry was appointed priest-in-charge of Saint George's, Paris, where he stayed until 1965. This was very much the right work for him, with his involvement in ecumenical activities.

Father Carrick remained the only resident member of the Oratory at Saint Barnabas, Northolt Park, and was priest-in-charge of the District for nine years. In 1954 he became the first Vicar of the newly constituted parish. On 8 May, 1954, the Bishop of London consecrated the completed Church. The Oratory Report for 1953-4 said of it: "Saint Barnabas is a singularly beautiful church designed by Mr Harold Gibbons, and its consecration was a fitting climax to the patient and devoted pastoral work of a series of missionaries in this great housing estate, of whom Father Carrick was the last missionary and first Vicar of the newly-constituted parish." The Bishop of Kensington sang the consecration Mass. In 1958 Ian resigned Saint Barnabas to work in the Diocese of Pretoria, where the Oratorian Selby Taylor was now Bishop of the Diocese, and where he spent the rest of his active ministry. He left the Oratory for marriage in 1967.

At the dissolution of the Hawarden College, its members were distributed amongst the other Colleges. Selby Taylor and George Briggs became mission brothers of the Cambridge College, together with Donald Weston and John Kingsnorth. Brian Oman had already been transferred to the Northolt Park Chapter when he moved to West Malling; also Dale Whalley and David Campbell, and Joseph Porteus. Father Frederick Perkins, priest-in-charge of Saint Peter and Saint Paul, Enfield, was admitted to probation in December, 1948. He also taught classics in East Barnet Grammar School and Stagenham Park Preparatory School, and was a prominent figure in the Scout Movement. Alec Vidler had become Canon and Librarian of Saint George's, Windsor, and had five or six ordinands living with him — to be trained for the Anglican ministry in the pattern of Lightfoot's and Vaughan's "Doves" of earlier years.

Soon after the creation of the Northolt Park College it was possible to found a new College centred on Fareham, where Basil Daniell was Vicar. This venture was encouraged by the fact that John Nias was not too far away at Blandford Saint Mary, and David Campbell was Curate at Fareham until he was appointed priest-in-charge of Saint Mary the Virgin Conventual District, Isleworth, and transferred back to Northolt Park. Kendal Dovey resigned the Headmastership of Prestfelde in 1948 on his appointment as Rector of Holy Trinity, Winchester. He had transferred the school to the Woodard Foundation, and although he did not remain long at Holy Trinity, he continued to live in Winchester until he moved to Alton. His health deteriorated sadly after his sister died in Alton, and he was never able to do a full-time job again. He died at Knutsford on 24 February, 1973.

Father Alun Jones, assistant Curate of Portmadoc in North Wales, joined the Oratory in 1947 and was attached to the Fareham College as a mission brother. He spent the whole of his ministry in North Wales, and did much to organise {65} Retreats and Quiet Days in the Principality. In 1954 he left Portmadoc to be Rector of Llanberis in the Diocese of Bangor, where he was to stay for the remainder of his life, and was an example of stability to all his brethren. He was brutally murdered in his Rectory by two boys on 4 October, 1982. In the Annual Report for 1982-3 the Oratory said this of him:

"The death of Father Alun was a tremendous shock to all of us in the Oratory of the Good Shepherd. He had been with us at General Chapter in Oxford only a few weeks previously, at which he had as usual presented modestly, but with great care and lucidity, the accounts of the Oratory Trust Fund, which with the trustees he had administered for a number of years. He was never to the fore in our discussions in Chapter but when he spoke it was with a quiet authority of one who carefully considered his contribution. In private conversation he was much the same; a good listener with ready sympathy and perception, expressed with gentle wit, never unkind but transparently honest.

We knew of his extensive work in the Church in Wales. The image of the Good Shepherd inspired him to use his quiet personality supportively... His parish was his first care, and disciplined by the faithful observation of our rule, he loved and tended his flock. As a Canon of the Diocese of Bangor he exercised a wider ministry and in the Church of the Province he was of immense value to those who selected ordinands. Many he supported in their vocation benefitted from his wisdom and priestly spirituality.

Llanberis was deeply wounded that in October, 1982, two of the boys living in the parish where Alun was so loved and respected had plotted to assault and rob him. Their vicious scheme became the murder of one who had opened his home generously to them and others of their generation. We of the Oratory share their sorrow and honour the memory of a dearly loved brother of our Society.”

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Chapter 11

NORTH AMERICA

It is now necessary to go back a few years to the foundation of the Oratory in North America. Henry Brandreth states: '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 OGS 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.'

At the beginning of the last War in September, 1939, Dr Casey was a passenger on the liner "Athenia", on his way back to the United States after one of his regular visits to England and Europe. He had with him the results of his very specialised research, all valuable documents. The "Athenia" had no sooner reached the Atlantic than she was torpedoed. Dr Casey was rescued, as were most of the passengers, but all his papers were lost. He landed up in Glasgow as the guest of Bishop John How, and then came down to Cambridge to stay at the Oratory House, and in later years he used to say that this was the time when he decided to try and start an Oratory College in North America, where there were like-minded people as himself.

Father Carlson Gerdau writes:

"On his return to the United States Casey sought a permanent association with the Oratory and in 1942 made his first profession to James de Wolfe Perry, Bishop of Rhode Island, at the request of the then Superior, Wilfred Knox. The first professed member of the Oratory in the United States was a person of eminence and scholarship who after early education at Harvard University and at Harvard Divinity School, was Professor of Biblical Literature at the University of Cincinnati and then at Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island. A life-long scholar, after his return from England in 1939, he sought and received ordination to the priesthood in the Episcopal Church."

One of the priests interested in the Oratory was Dr Norman Pittenger, Professor on the staff of General Theological Seminary, New York City, a man of liberal Catholic conviction, well known for his understanding of young ordinands and his determination to make them think about what they believed. He had the ability of great personal persuasion and powerful conversation. He did not in the end join the Oratory, but continued as a Companion to the present day, where he exercises his gifts in retirement at King's College, Cambridge.

Then there was Father Martin Davidson, Chaplain of Saint George's School, Newport, Rhode Island, and a friend of Bob Casey, and endowed with much shrewd wisdom and compassion. He made his first profession in 1944. Carlson Gerdau continues:

"Martin Davidson was born on the Eastern shore of Maryland where he {68} gained the gentle hint of a southern accent which was always present when he spoke his true wisdom, shared his profound knowledge and understanding of Anglicanism at its best, or laughed at the pomposity that is always so near the surface in so many people. Educated at the Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland, and at the Virginia Theological Seminary, he was ordained priest in 1926 and spent the first twenty five years of ordained ministry as a master, teacher and chaplain at two Eastern Coast Episcopal boarding schools. The first ten years were spent at the formidable Saint Paul's School in Concord, New Hampshire, while the last fifteen years, until 1951, were spent at

Saint George's School, Newport, Rhode Island, where he helped to form and was beloved by a generation of school boys."

There is a long and detailed correspondence in the Oratory archives between Edward Wynn and Wilfred Knox in Cambridge, concerning the setting up of an Oratory College in the States and how the details of the Rule and Constitution were to be applied to the very different conditions of the Episcopal Church, and the vast distances involved when meetings were arranged. The first meeting of brethren, Postulants, and Companions took place at Sakonnet Point, Rhode Island, in July, 1942, and a News Letter for members and Companions was planned, and they hoped to issue two or three a year. This letter had two purposes: first, to keep the American brethren informed of each others activities, and secondly, to exchange news with the English Colleges. It was not possible in War conditions to do more than that, but the letter would achieve some measure of solidarity.

The first letter illustrates the diversity of activities of the brethren. Norman Pittenger, in addition to his teaching at General Seminary, was assisting the Chaplain of Columbia University and doing some writing. One priest Companion was by 1942 a full-fledged Navy Chaplain stationed at Great Lakes, while a priest enquirer was widely used as a lecturer on pastoral counselling in a number of Chaplains' Training Schools, both Army and Navy. One priest who was testing his vocation as a probationer was at a Church in the Diocese of Massachusetts. Father Davidson's work as Chaplain of Saint George's School, Newport, continued under a new Head, and he wrote that the chapel and its services awaited changes for the better. "Educating masters who have been exposed to the liberal or no Church influences is a much harder job than educating the boys. They want the fruits of the Christian religion but they would rather not worry about cultivation of the roots, nor even concern themselves with a spraying operation, by which I don't mean incense either."

When Martin Davidson was professed in 1944, he and Robert Casey became a Mission College of Cambridge. This continued until October, 1945, when the American College was established. This was made possible by the desire of Father Bill Chalmers, Headmaster of Kent School, Connecticut, to transfer from his profession in the Order of the Holy Cross to life profession in the Oratory. Carlson Gerdau writes: "The request for transfer occurred because Holy Cross felt that it could no longer supply one of its members as Headmaster while William Chalmers felt that he had a call to both a professed life in a community and a call {69} to continue in his present position." This was debated at General Chapter, and, the transfer agreed to, accepted by the Order of the Holy Cross. Bill attended the meeting of General Chapter in 1946 and was warmly welcomed by the brethren. The Report for 1945-46 states that since October, 1945, "monthly meetings were held until June; this gave the brethren an opportunity for Chapter and an evening together, and the Holy Eucharist on the following morning. An effort has been made to have one or two of the Companions who are attached to the American College present at the time of the monthly meetings." It should be noted that in the early days of the Oratory in America, it was possible for regular meetings to take place as everyone concerned lived in the same area on the Eastern Seaboard.

Father Chalmers was professed in 1945 in Kent School Chapel and Robert Casey received his profession. Another member of the Staff of Kent School and two Brown University undergraduates began to test their vocation to the Oratory. They were joined by Father Peter Lambert of the Appalachian School, North Carolina.

In his report for 1949 Martin Davidson wrote: "great progress had been made so far, but in 1948 Father Chalmers asked to be released, and in 1949 was allowed to do so, proper procedures having been followed." After so promising a beginning and much publicity, his departure from the Oratory was a great shock and distressed the Society. The Superior, Wilfred Knox, tried hard to persuade Bill to reconsider his decision, but to no avail. This withdrawal was completely unexpected, for the Society had become very optimistic about its future in America. The annual Report for 1945-46 had stated: "It was a great pleasure to the brethren that the Revd Bill Chalmers, Headmaster of Kent School, Connecticut, was able to be present at both Retreat and Chapter. The development of the Oratory in the USA during the past year has been one of the most encouraging features of its life." In

1950 the American College was further depleted by the election of Robert Casey to a Fellowship at Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, where he spent the rest of his life, as has been already recorded.

Peter Lambert's application to join the Oratory was the first to come from a distance from the Eastern Seaboard. His school at Penland in the Appalachian Mountains in North Carolina was in beautiful country and very isolated, and he tended the slightly retarded children with loving care and complete dedication. The American minute book says that "he actually began the life of probation on 16 January, 1947, but was not formally received until the summer." He became the first Mission brother of the American College. In a long letter written in April, 1949, Peter reminded the Prior that Bill's withdrawal "will necessarily make us conscious of a more serious understanding of the aims of the Oratory, our need for stability and perseverance in our common Vocation, and emerge the stronger for the trial."

In July, 1952, Peter wrote to the Bishop of Western North Carolina about the situation in, and the future of, the Appalachian School. Over a period of years members of the staff had hoped that "if the work could be carried on by a community of Sisters, it would not be subject to so many possible fluctuations... Isolated Deaconesses, or even groups not bound together by rule, may not answer for the purpose... there are many women, and frequently older women or widows [70] who do not find the answer to their aspirations in the other established orders, but could accept this idea. An auxiliary group of women not under the full rule, but living in a convent under as much of the rule as applicable is in existence in New Jersey." In fact, Peter was proposing a society of women similar to the Oratory, but with no further work suggested than the running of the Appalachian School, and in August reported progress to the Superior before General Chapter. The Bishop had authorised him to draw up a draft rule and constitution for such a community of Deaconess-Sisters, and to determine if the General Chapter of the Oratory would consider "whether it would accept such a group of women (a) as associated with the Oratory, or (b) as a counterpart and women's Oratory, or (c) whether it would want it associated with it officially at all?"

After General Chapter the Superior wrote as follows: "Thank you very much for your letter and memorandum. We discussed the business at Chapter yesterday, and the brethren ask me to say that, although we do not feel that we can hold out any hope of the ladies becoming an associate Society of the Oratory, yet we will gladly help you with any advice you feel we can give you in your enterprise, and we shall have you constantly in our prayers." A small group came into existence and worked devotedly at the Appalachian School, but the financial situation was always acute, and Father Lambert continued the struggle to maintain it with love and total dedication until its closure in 1964. It was not the sort of school which received publicity from the official Church. Peter moved to Asheville and took charge of the episcopally sponsored Retirement Home there, though, as the annual report for 1967-68 reported: "he is not the least retired or retiring! One might almost say he was a venerable figure in ecclesiastical circles in Asheville."

A few years later there was a new voice from Chicago, the voice of Father Richard Young. Richard was Head of Bishop Anderson House in Saint Luke's Medical Centre of the city, a social and Christian gathering place for doctors, nurses and students, including a Nursing Training School, and he approached the Oratory about membership. Dick Young hoped that the Oratory in England would be able to send brethren to work with him in Chicago. For a time there were two priests on the staff of the Medical Centre who became probationers, and also Father Victor Preller, who joined Richard Young in 1957.

The extreme activism of the life at Bishop Anderson House was not conducive to a regular Oratory life, there was little connection with the Diocese of Chicago, and the financial system was both irregular and precarious. The brethren wished to be a Mission College of Cambridge and this was an impossible situation. In the end the two priests on the staff resigned, and as no reports were received, it was assumed that Father Young's membership had also lapsed. Father Preller left for the Church of Rome when he returned to Princeton University in 1964, but the Oratory was delighted that he returned to the Anglican Communion and the Society in 1981.

Carlson writes:

“One of the very positive developments of the 1950’s that has continued to this present day has been the increasing personal contact of the American College with the overseas colleges in the United Kingdom, Africa and Australia. With the disruption of the War past, not only was it possible for {71} the Americans to go to Chapter but there were visits to the USA by brethren from Africa, Australia and the United Kingdom.”

Alec Vidler attended one Chapter meeting and Bishop Edward Wynn spent time visiting all the American brethren. Martin Thornton spent some months at General Theological Seminary lecturing, and was able to get as far as Peter’s Appalachian School. George Braund took charge of Martin’s parish of Frostburg in Maryland, so that Martin could come to England and attend General Chapter. George Tibbatts came as Superior in 1959 and visited all the brethren, and again three times in the sixties when he worked for USPG. Father Christopher Dormer spent several months in Frostburg between his work in Sheffield and his curacy at Holy Cross, Greenford, with Brian Oman.

The Anglican Congress at Toronto in 1963 provided an opportunity for reunion in the Oratory. Selby Taylor and Edward Knapp-Fisher were present from South Africa; Martin Davidson was a delegate from the Diocese of Maryland; Father Gilbert Keithly, who was shortly to become a probationer, was present as Youth Delegate from the Diocese of Idaho.

“Another phenomenon that began to develop in the late fifties and continued through the sixties was the association with the American Oratory by persons who had first come to know the Oratory in England.” Father Henry Hill, a Canadian priest from Ontario, joined the Oratory while he was in England as an undergraduate, and later Chaplain, of Saint John’s College, Cambridge. On his return to Canada he tried his vocation with the Cowley Fathers, but returned to the Oratory for a few years when he became a history lecturer at Canterbury College, Windsor University, Ontario. The Society was sorry when he left us. He became Bishop of Ontario a few years later.

As the years went by there were a number of changes in the membership of the American College. Father Graham Butler-Nixon came from Australia to do research at General Theological Seminary, and joined the American College in 1964, after being present at General Chapter in England. He had some interesting comments to make on his impressions of the English brethren! “The Cambridge Chapter was stuffy, but I put it down to their being English, and academic English at that... I can’t feel that the yearly renewal is regarded generally, as anything more than a necessary formality, with the occasional unusual spectacle of a brother not carrying it out. The general attitude to renewal procedures at General Chapter indicated this. For me, the annual event of renewal is not just a kind of solemn recollection of what has already been done, but a positive and complete new constituent, every whit as serious and fundamental as the original act of profession. I can’t feel that this is the Oratory’s view... I wish I’d been told to wait around for a bit longer. They all too readily swept me into the full stream without making any attempt to find out whether I was ready for it. I didn’t know either, and was merely acting on the recommendations, by letter, of those who thought it ‘would be a good thing to do before going overseas’.” In due course it did become clear to him and he resigned from the Oratory while in America.

Tom Akeley, also from Maryland, who had joined the Oratory while a curate at Saint Luke’s, Chesterton, Cambridge, and had then researched for his Ph.D. at Pembroke College, arrived at Canterbury College in Windsor University in {72} 1965 as assistant professor, where Henry Hill was already established. He withdrew from the Oratory on account of the isolation he felt from the rest of the brethren. In 1985 he resigned his University work on account of ill health, and died in 1986. Father John Steele from Brisbane was professed at Windsor while on a period of research in physics at Stanford University, California.

While Martin was in Frostburg, Charles Morrow, rector of a neighbouring parish, and a graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy of the 1930's, joined the Oratory and attended General Chapter. After a few years he resigned on account of age and some isolation.

In 1967 Martin left his parish of Frostburg to open a Retreat House in Baltimore, and the annual North American Chapter was held there in 1967. This Chapter was also attended by Father John Catlin, who was working in the Bahamas, and by Father Christopher Dormer, who had come from England to take over Martin's parish for six months. Eric Mascall was also present for one night. Guy Carleton was a member of the American College during his period of work in the Bahamas.

The retreat house opened by Martin Davidson in Baltimore was never properly used, and after several years Martin became Chaplain to the All Saints Community of Sisters at Catonsville, on the outskirts of Baltimore. In 1972 the North American College held their Retreat and Chapter there, and it was at this Chapter that Edward Schmidt and George Rutler became probationers. Both of these new brethren attended General Chapter on more than one occasion. Father Schmidt left the Oratory to test his vocation as a Benedictine at Three Rivers, but returned in a couple of years, though he finally left the Society in 1983 when he was himself Chaplain at Catonsville, to found an Anglican Cistercian Community in the Episcopal Church. He had succeeded Martin as Chaplain at Catonsville.

Father Carlson Gerdau became a probationer in 1964, and was Archdeacon of Munising in Northern Michigan Diocese on the shores of Lake Superior for 20 years, until in 1979 he became Archdeacon of Missouri Diocese. He was professed in 1968. He graduated from Harvard University and General Theological Seminary and has eight times been a delegate to the General Convention. He has recently resigned his post in Saint Louis to look into the possibilities of ministering to the large influx of Spanish-speaking immigrants in the USA. He holds strong and liberal views of much that goes on in the Church.

While Father Carlson was in favour of the ordination of women to the priesthood, George Rutler was so strongly against it that he resigned his parish in the Philadelphia area to join the breakaway body of the "Anglican Church in North America" as it called itself. He became prominent in propaganda work. When the question of his renewal of profession came up at General Chapter, it provoked much discussion as was to be expected. But permission was not refused. This caused some heart-searching, and Peter Lambert, who was in life profession, asked to be released by the Visitor on the application of General Chapter. The whole Oratory was distressed at the loss of a brother long professed and with a devoted loyalty to the Society, but there was no alternative but to accept. George Rutler eventually joined the Roman Church: it would have helped had he been present at General Chapter, but he was advised not to come. [73] Victor Preller returned to the Episcopal Church and the Oratory in 1981. As a Roman Catholic he had been Professor of the Department of Philosophy at Princeton University and had published in 1968 a book entitled "Divine Science and Science of God: A Reformation of Thomas Aquinas." He is now Professor in the Department of Religion in Princeton, and Master of the Graduate College, as well as counsellor and adviser of several hundreds of doctoral candidates at the university. Father Jesse Parker, the American Oratory's newest and youngest member, works in the parish of Old Saint Paul's in Baltimore, where he adds to his experience. He is Secretary of the American College, and has twice been to General Chapter.

Tom Rowland had been a Companion for years, and made his first profession in 1982. "He became acquainted with the Oratory through Martin when the latter was in Princeton, New Jersey, as assistant at Trinity Church. The Rowlands were among the most devoted members of the parish," Martin writes. "After Mrs Rowland's death, Tom asked to become a member of the Oratory and was admitted to probation and then professed. Sadly he contracted cancer and died on 13 February, 1984. He was truly devoted to the Society, and attended every General Chapter during his brief membership. He also left a substantial sum to the Oratory upon his death to support the work with the Companions."

The story of the Oratory in North America is the story of great difficulties of communication in so vast an area, with brethren seldom meeting more than once a year. But the College has been an outstanding example of faithful determination to overcome their difficulties by men unknown in the seats of the mighty. The Society rejoiced when Martin was given the honorary degree of D.D. after fifty years in the priesthood — a fitting tribute to one to whom OGS owes so much. The American College in 1986 was delighted to join Martin Davidson in celebrating his 60th anniversary in the priesthood.

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Chapter 12

OXFORD AND THE NORTH

When Eric Mascall left his curacy parish in South London to be Sub-Warden of the Bishop's Hostel at Lincoln in 1937, he became a probationer of the Oratory and was attached as a Mission brother to the Cambridge College. Here he continued until 1945, when he moved to Oxford as Clerical Student of Christ Church. Father Leslie Arnold was already there as Vicar of Saint Mary and Saint John, Cowley, and from his time at Cambridge as an undergraduate of Christ's College, he knew about the Oratory and was interested in its life and work. He had been an active member of the Cambridge Fruiting Campaign and the Society of the Holy Trinity, and was deeply concerned with Dorchester Missionary College. He became a probationer in 1952 and was professed in 1953. Father Edward Knapp-Fisher had joined the Society before becoming Chaplain of Saint John's College, Cambridge, and arrived in the Oxford area as Principal of Cuddesdon Theological College and Vicar of Cuddesdon in the autumn of 1952, where he was to stay until his election as Bishop of Pretoria in 1960.

With this strong nucleus living and working in the same area, it was possible to form an Oxford College of the Oratory, and General Chapter in 1952 voted for its foundation. Eric was elected Prior, and continued in that office until his move to London as Professor of Historical Theology at King's College in 1962. The College came to an end for a few years in 1962, but was revived when there were two students at Saint Stephen's House who became probationers, one of them from Australia. There was also an Australian priest researching under Eric's supervision at Christ Church. It is interesting to note that the three original members of the Oxford College represented the width of the Oratorian appeal — a scholar of distinction — a pastoral head of a Theological College — a noted parish priest, who ministered to his people for over a quarter of a century. For 8 years they met for Chapter once a fortnight in Christ Church, Cuddesdon, or Cowley.

There were a number of additions to the Oxford Chapter in subsequent years. Kendal Dovey was transferred from Fareham when it closed and Alun Jones from North Wales in 1953. These were mission brothers and were later joined by Brian Oman, who was Vicar of Saint Mary's, Bute Street, Cardiff.

It was reported at a Chapter meeting on 21 November, 1956, that a priest from Australia, Father Graham Walden, was enquiring about the Oratory, and he was admitted to probation on 18 December. He returned to Australia in 1959 and was active in the promotion of the Society in that continent. Graham left the Oratory a few years later to get married, much to the regret of his brethren, for the rule about getting engaged before a year's membership was completed had been broken. At the same time the Oratory was greatly indebted to his enthusiasm. He became Suffragan Bishop of Hamilton in Victoria, and a Companion of the Oratory. There will be more about Australia to follow.

The fact that Edward was Principal of Cuddesdon meant that there were a number of enquiries from students who were interested in the discipline of a rule of life, and a number of them became Companions of the Oratory, and a few of those who did so commit themselves have remained throughout their ministry. {76} One or two went further and applied for probation, but for a variety of reasons decided not to go on for more than a few years. It was customary at the Oxford Chapter meetings for Companions to be present when possible and convenient, as was done in the Cambridge College when Wilfred was Prior. It was a great blessing for the Oratory when there were brethren working in or near the Universities and Theological Colleges, for its presence provoked questions.

Father John Ruston became a member of the Oxford Chapter when he joined the staff of Cuddesdon in the autumn of 1957 after his curacy in Leicester with another Oratorian, Father Bernard Badger. When Edward Knapp-Fisher left in 1960 to be Bishop of Pretoria, John Ruston followed him, and in 1984 was consecrated as Suffragan Bishop of Pretoria. Brian's curates in Cardiff — John Bradley and Jacob Lewis, both joined the Oratory. Father Bradley resigned in 1962, but Father Lewis continued for a number of years. In 1961 he went to work in South Africa and later became Vicar of Saint Francis, Gladstone Park, in North London, where Frederick Perkins had been Vicar. When the College came to an end in September, 1962, four of the brethren were transferred to the London College, and Father Arnold to Cambridge, where he remained until the College was re-established in 1964. This was possible because Jacob Lewis had returned to England and for the time being became Leslie's Curate. Geoffrey Stephens from Australia was at Saint Stephen's House, and Basil Daniell was living in Slough. Alun Jones returned from the London College to the Oxford fold. In 1970 the College was dissolved as there was then only one professed member and one mission brother.

For a year or two there was a College at Hawarden once more, but its members were dispersed to other Colleges, and for a short period in the seventies the Cambridge College became the Oxford College on the grounds that Oxford was more central than Cambridge, which had only two members of the Oratory near the city. This aberration was corrected in 1980, and the Cambridge College resumed its normal course.

Over the years there were a number of men interested in the Oratory at Oxford. Some became Companions, but ultimately disappeared, and a few got as far as probationership for a year or so. The life of the Society and its disciplined example were expressed by the three original members, Eric Mascall, Leslie Arnold and Edward Knapp-Fisher. It was an ideal combination, and many young men benefitted greatly from the wise counsel and godly affection of these Oratorians. Fathers Mascall and Knapp-Fisher moved away from Oxford, as has been recorded above, but Leslie Arnold remained as Vicar of Saint Mary and Saint John until his tragic death as a result of a motor accident in January, 1975. He had been Vicar of this Cowley district of Oxford for over a quarter of a century, and was an example to us all of how an Oratorian parish priest should express the aims of the Society — “the adoration of God in the service of the Lord Jesus Christ and the imitation of his most holy life.” He was an honorary Canon of Christ Church and for some years Rural Dean of Cowley. More than a hundred clergy attended the funeral, not only from Oxford Diocese but also from places as far away as Ardwick, Manchester, and including five bishops. Lord Ramsey of Canterbury said the Absolutions of the Dead. One of his servers at Saint Mary {77} and Saint John. Simon Richards, wrote thus of him: “As I grew up he took a great interest in my education, as he had in my two brothers before me, and his wish was to see me at Cambridge... Although he had no hobby outside his work, he loved the countryside and rural villages. He was able to say that he had visited every village in Oxfordshire, and every Cathedral in England and Wales... I am grateful for knowing such a kind and friendly person because he gave us an idea of what our lives should be about. He was always striving to do his work better, and he set a fine example in my adult life.”

When Joseph Porteus became Vicar of Bishop Middleham, County Durham at the end of 1952, he was the only Oratorian in the North of England, and a Mission brother of Northolt Park, and so he remained until Sidney Howard moved from Cambridge to be priest-in-charge of the Marden Estate in North Shields in the Diocese of Newcastle. In the intervening years the Northolt Park College had changed its name to ‘the London College’, and at General Chapter in July, 1959, it was resolved that there should be a Northern Mission College attached to London. Eric Jones, a student at Ely Theological College, was made Deacon by the Bishop of Blackburn in September, to serve his title at Holy Trinity, Blackpool. He was already a probationer of the Oratory, so there were three of them in the Northern Province. There was also Father Harry Lucas, but he did not renew his probation in 1960.

For the first two years most of the Chapter meetings took place at Marden or Bishop Middleham, and all of them were attended by both Joseph and Sidney. Eric Jones found it difficult to get away from Blackpool, and in 1964 he withdrew from the Oratory. In 1961 Sidney moved to be Vicar of

Hackenthorpe on the outskirts of Sheffield, but in the Diocese of Derby, where he stayed for several years. He was indefatigable in the regularity of his correspondence and his organisation of meetings. In August, 1962, Father Ronald Matheson, Vicar of South Hylton, County Durham, became a postulant of the Oratory, and in February 1963, Father David Jowitt, Vicar of Kirkby Fleetham in Ripon Diocese, did the same. When he was admitted to probation in the Oratory, Father Roy Kingston, curate of Saint Aidan's, Leeds, was accepted as a postulant, and in 1964 his fellow-curate, John Furness, joined the Mission College. Father Christopher Dormer, a member of the staff of Parson Cross, Sheffield, had entered postulancy in 1963.

As a result of these entries into the Society, the stage was set for the Northern Mission College to become *{sic}* a fully constituted College, and this was approved by the London Chapter. There was a fair amount of movement over the years — Ronald Matheson went to Glenrothes in the Scottish Episcopal Church and so did Sidney Howard a little later on. Christopher Dormer moved to Greenford for a year after a short period in Frostburg, Maryland to allow Father Davidson to come to England, and subsequently went to North Queensland. David Jowitt also moved to Scotland, where he became Vice-provost of Saint Mary's Episcopal Cathedral, Edinburgh, in 1975 after a period in a city parish in that city, and from 1975 to 1981 was Superior of the Oratory.

The Northern College was approved at General Chapter in 1965, and its Rule accepted. The brethren were scattered over Northern England and Scotland, a *{78}* pattern of things to come, and weekly or fortnightly Chapter meetings were impossible. For many years the College met regularly once a month, but now meets quarterly and encourages local chapters in between. This has meant a considerable amount of travelling at all times of the year, but no matter what happened, Joseph and Sidney were always there. They had a strict rule about letter writing, which maintained the fellowship, not only among themselves, but also with distant members of the Oratory. Two Quiet Days were held in the early days and local clergy invited to attend. Companions frequently came to Chapter meetings, of whom Peter Ford was one and subsequently joined the Oratory. All his ministry has been in the Northern Province and he was elected Archivist of the Oratory in 1985. The College welcomed Father David Woodhouse when he became a Canon Residentiary of Wakefield Cathedral and Director of Religious Education in the Diocese, though he never actually joined the Northern Chapter. Brethren have always been free to choose their College when they are isolated from their centre, and it is recorded in the Minute Book of the Northern College that "it was resolved that David Woodhouse should be invited to make all possible use of the fellowship of the Northern College." David had joined the Oratory while a curate at Saint Gabriel's with All Saints, Pimlico, in 1964, and was Chaplain of Woodbridge School before becoming Vicar of Heap Bridge, Bury, in 1973. The whole Oratory benefitted greatly from his production for several years of a periodical Oratory magazine.

In December, 1968, there was a discussion on the agenda for General Chapter. It was felt that much of the material present could be circulated beforehand, and the treatment of Companions' lists called for special attention. "Do we really care for our Companions? 'Has anyone heard of such-and-such a Companion during the year?' does seem a bit careless. Do we have to have the mannequin parade of members for profession and renewal? Perhaps, yes. We could possibly prune the time spent on business, and make more time for fellowship: but, given that time, how could we use it? But what of the Superior's report? It tends to be merely a reading of reports sent in by the Colleges. Could not this be an opportunity for a Presidential address on some theme of concern to the Church?" This sort of discussion had occurred from time to time, and after one General Chapter a young brother from overseas felt disillusioned and bored with the proceedings, and the clergy have a firm idea that they are indispensable! And so there is a tendency to shorten the time spent together rather than to extend it.

In September, 1972, Robert Waddington, who had been for a year at Oxford after returning from Australia, was appointed Canon Residentiary of Carlisle Cathedral and Bishop's adviser on Education in the Diocese, and was invited to join the Northern College. He remained a member of it until his appointment as Secretary of the National Society and General Secretary of the General Synod Board of Education in 1977, when he transferred to London. But in 1984 Robert became Dean of

Manchester and returned to the Northern College. William Ledwich, still in Deacon's Orders, was admitted to probation in 1974 when he was Curate of Oldham in the Diocese of Manchester, and moved to Blyth in Northumberland in June, 1975. He was later to be Chaplain of the King's School, Hereford, and a member of the Cambridge Chapter. In July, 1984, William left {79} the Oratory and the Church of England on the consecration of Professor David Jenkins as Bishop of Durham, after collecting a good number of signatures to help his protest. In August, 1975, Father Peter Baldwin, Curate of Holy Trinity, Darlington, joined the Oratory as a probationer, and from 1978 to 1982 was in charge of Woodhouse Close Conventional District, Bishop Auckland, which was shared with the Methodists on an ecumenical basis. In 1982 he became Vicar of Ferryhill, County Durham, which required a lot of hard work. After working in education in Kenya, David Johnson was ordained in 1981 as Curate of Saint Thomas, Stockport, and moved to Stockton Heath, Warrington, in 1984, and has been admitted to the Oratory, and a layman male nurse, Paul Witts is also a member, and works in Sheffield. Paul has not renewed his profession.

The minutes of a Chapter meeting on 27 August, 1974 contained a report of a discussion on the proposed foundation of a new College centering on Hawarden, as three brethren had indicated they wished to form an independent College, and hoped that one or more of the more southerly brethren of the Northern College might transfer to them. "The Chapter expressed a unanimous reluctance to lose any of its members... the Northern College would wish to see how the life of the new College developed before recommending any of its members to transfer." A strong point of reluctance was that they had brought a probationer into the Oratory life, and had a special responsibility to him. In fact the new Hawarden College did not last very long, and no one transferred.

In April, 1975, another discussion took place on the life and functioning of the Northern College:

"The decision last year to meet on a bi-monthly basis because of the increased cost of travelling had led to an observable loss of fellowship and some slackening of discipline — e.g. in the observance of the Rule about making monthly reports. When a meeting was not possible reports should be sent to the Prior (Sidney)... In discussion it emerged that the brethren felt strongly that the regular monthly meetings of Chapter should be resumed. The need for fellowship was more important than a saving in travelling expenses, and it was felt that the life of the College, and its vitality, depended on the brethren coming together as much as possible. This was agreed by all."

The Northern College of the Oratory illustrates the way in which the Society has developed in England. From a group of Dons in Cambridge University 70 years ago, the Society has moved into dispersion, and consists largely of parish priests quietly doing their pastoral work under the inspiration of the Notes and Rule of life, and it is in this that its strength lies. Sidney had a clear vision of what was involved and was assiduous in his care of the brethren and communicating with them by visits and correspondence over the years as Prior until his sudden death in April, 1986. At his funeral the Oratory said this of him:

"In the Oratory we have known him for about twenty years as our Almoner, and his financial reports at General Chapter have developed a character of their own. Many brethren, dealing privately with him about dues, loans and expenses have known what a charitable and kindly nature he had. He was always courteous and encouraging and never hard in his judgments. The {80} Oratory meant everything to Sidney. He was an assiduous letter writer, and he looked to the Oratory for friendship and support and gave generously to it of his time and care. The Northern College was very much of his creation in the nineteen-sixties, first in his encouragement of Joseph Porteus, and later in building up a tradition of regular monthly chapters over a wide area of the North of England and Southern Scotland. He took the training of probationers very seriously. Generous with his time for others, and careless about himself, Sidney was essentially a giver. May he rest in eternal joy and peace."

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Chapter 13

AUSTRALIA

The annual report of the Oratory for 1959-60 had the following statement about the development of the Society in Australia:

“It has been a year of steady progress in the Australian Mission College of Oxford which was started this year. As in Africa, the great distances which separate the brethren make it very difficult to get any common life, and frequently the Rule has to be modified according to particular circumstances.

Father Graham Walden was granted the B. Litt. degree by Oxford last summer, and sailed for Australia in August. Soon after his arrival, and the admission to probation of three priests, he had to undergo an operation in Brisbane, which delayed his beginning work in the Brotherhood of the Good Shepherd. From the beginning of February Father Graham has been priest-in-charge of the northern part of the parish of Gilgandra, New South Wales, where he shares the work of the town with seven country centres. This necessitates a lot of travelling not only for services, but also for visiting and school instructions.

Father John Vockler was admitted to probation in November and consecrated Bishop Co-adjutor of Adelaide, with the title of Bishop of Mount Gambier, on Saint Andrew's day. Since then he has been engaged in the endless round of activities which fall to a Bishop's lot. Father John represented the Diocese of Adelaide at the first Australian National Conference of Churches, and he has been taking classes for lay people doing L.Th. in Doctrine and Prayer Book. He is responsible for the Postulants' Guild, and as service examining Chaplain, for the interviewing of candidates for Holy Orders.

Father Barry Marshall was admitted to probation at the end of September in Sydney, and has been able to meet Father Graham regularly for local Chapter. He is Rector of Bourke in New South Wales and a member of the Brotherhood of the Good Shepherd.

Father Edmond Dungalison *{sic – Dungalison}* was admitted to probation in December. Since February he has been in charge of the parish of Mitchell in the west of Brisbane Diocese, with four main bush centres. His parish has embarked on a Planned Giving Scheme to provide maintenance costs, to build two new churches, and to extend the hostel for bush children attending the state school in Mitchell.”

During the next two years there was a spate of correspondence from enquirers in Australia, many of them students who had been in contact with Barry Marshall. Some years before, Barry had been a research student at Christ Church, Oxford, where he obtained his D. Phil. degree with a thesis on “The Theology of Church and State with special reference to the Controversies over the Control of Education, 1800 to 1870.”

Barry had a charisma in dealing with young men. He moved to Trinity College, Melbourne, as Tutor in Theology and Chaplain in 1962, where he carried out a {82} distinguished ministry. In the summer of 1970 he was appointed Principal of Pusey House, Oxford, which was very warmly received by the brethren in England. But this was not to be. On 10 August 1970, he fell from a ladder on a staircase in Pusey House while replacing a light bulb, and died two days later. This was a very great loss to all concerned with the work of Pusey House in Oxford and the life of the Oratory. At his funeral in the House Chapel on 18 August, Dr V.A. Demant said this of him:

“We have lost someone we never really had. Many who did not know him during his infrequent stays in Oxford have heard of his pastoral and intellectual gifts exercised as a Bush Brother, as a member of the Oratory of the Good Shepherd, and as Chaplain at Trinity College, Melbourne.

His was a most engaging personality... I recall his winning smile, a sign that he possessed something of the joy of the saints. I also recall the sudden eagerness in his eyes when a serious problem caught his attention; and he certainly knew the darker and tragic side of life. Above all, there was his zest, whether cooking a meal or doing a repair job like the one which led to his fatal accident. I knew something of his intellectual zest, for he was a friend and pupil — but a pupil only in the sense that I supervised his work for his doctoral thesis about twelve years ago. Like many a superior, I soon found that he knew more than I did... We have to live with the burden of not knowing why this “darling man” has been snatched away from us. He will see what we cannot see, and he will know of that burden of ours and he will be helping us to shoulder it. To God’s gracious mercy we commit him.”

Many of the young men whom Barry introduced to the Oratory and its Companionship did not survive many years, but a number did persevere and have remained in OGS through the years.

In the summer of 1961, John Vockler was elected Bishop in Polynesia, and so became the youngest Diocesan in the Anglican Communion. While he was Bishop of that Diocese, there was for a time a Polynesian priest who came to the Oratory, Kaliopasi Tevi. He had a large parish of very poor people. Later on he left the Oratory for the Franciscan life. In 1970 Bishop John decided to test his vocation to the Society of Saint Francis, and resigned the Bishopric. He remained a member of the Oratory during his novitiate, and left us on profession. He published an autobiography a year or two later, in which he discussed his spiritual pilgrimage, but the Oratory was not included in this, though friendly relations have been maintained!

At the end of 1961 there were four postulants and two priests interested in Melbourne, and Robert Waddington had arrived from Cambridge to be headmaster of Saint Barnabas’ School, Ravenshoe, in North Queensland. Father Ivor Church, Principal of Saint Francis’ College, Brisbane, became a probationer, as did Father Graham Butler-Nixon, Curate of Griffith, New South Wales. Bishop Edward Knapp-Fisher admitted Ivor in the Cathedral at New Delhi in November, 1961, during the World Council Assembly at which they were both present, permission having been obtained from the Superior. In April, 1962, Paul Harvie became a probationer, being newly ordained Deacon in Melbourne. Paul was later to spend some time in England, first at Saint Luke’s, Cambridge, and then in {83} London. He left the Oratory on his return to Australia. Father Ken Mason became a postulant in 1962 when he was temporarily in charge of Alice Springs in the Northern Territory. Ken had been in Holy Orders for eight years and was in 1968 to be consecrated Bishop of the Northern Territory. He resigned the Diocese in 1984 to be Chairman of the Australian Board of Missions, and Oratory history was made when in 1981 he was elected Superior of the Society — the first overseas brother to be chosen for that office.

Michael Wentzell and Keith Edwards were postulants, and under the care of Ivor Church at Saint Francis’ College, Brisbane. Michael was a distinguished musician and organist, and a few years after ordination came to England to Magdalen College, Oxford, where he was singing Chaplain. He returned to Australia to be organist of Perth Cathedral, and resigned from the Oratory at that time. He died in 1973, and his early death was a sad loss, as he was making his mark as an up and coming Church musician in Australia. Keith Edwards was professed in 1964, and ordained Deacon on 2nd February, to work in the suburban parish of Chermside, Brisbane. Keith has twice visited England, and has been a parish priest since his ordination. He was previously a telephone engineer.

Geoffrey Stephens came to Saint Stephen’s House, Oxford, for his training for the ministry and during that time was attached to the Oxford College. After ordination in Australia he came back to Oxford as Chaplain of Keble College, and was in the University at the same time as Michael Wentzell. When he returned to Australia he decided not to renew his profession in the Oratory.

When Graham Walden announced his engagement to be married there was a good deal of discussion among the Australian brethren. Robert Waddington, who had joined the Oratory in England, produced a memorandum in which he urged caution in “setting up a full Oratory system in Australia whilst the

bulk of the probationers and postulants are still only students or deacons — newly ordained priests or still in their twenties.” Robert went on to say that the pressure of society towards marriage bore more heavily on a young priest than in Britain, working on his own without the warmth and security of married life. The brethren must ask themselves whether they had enough stability among themselves to ask permission to form two Colleges “within which there will be sufficient real fellowship and local discipline to minimise the inevitable social pressures towards the security of the married state.” Were the young probationers and postulants “facing squarely the acceptance of a profession with due hope of persevering permanently in its life?”

Young men, “especially students, should normally be introduced in the Oratory via the Companionship. Only after some time out of College in the main stream of ordinary Australian life should they be allowed to proceed to postulancy. This is in no way a criticism of the men. Quite the reverse. I am convinced that the Oratory will grow here. This provision safeguards the idea of ‘profession’ as laid down in the Manual and legislates for what I consider extraordinary circumstances of our way of life here. In the standard rule, it is necessary for a probationer to prove to himself that he is able to cope with the social pressures regarding the married state; his first profession can then be made in the ‘hope’ of life-long profession.” {84}

Barry Marshall produced a memorandum in reply to Robert. In it he stated that he did not think that the joys of marriage were any greater in Australia than in England.

“As to our own particular stabilities it needs to be said that Ivor is certainly fifty or very close, Bishop John is hard up on forty and I am exactly forty. Five brethren meet regularly in Melbourne for Mass, breakfast and Chapter, and as many as seven do the same in Brisbane. In Melbourne one can only say that the fellowship of the Oratory has already made a tremendous difference to us all. We have shared a number of very difficult personal decisions and we are united in prayer with one another, and by letter with the life of the Oratory all over the world. ‘Letter time’ is a great feature of our meetings. From the recent letter of the Brisbane brethren it seems to be the same with them. The probationers and the postulants with whom I am in contact are certainly facing squarely the whole problem and challenge of profession and are not worried about the longer probationary periods. I do not think the Companionship is adequate for them. They seem to benefit from the fullest possible Oratory fellowship in times of re-adjustment and re-settlement. I think the time of probation is excellent in that regard... In the name of the Melbourne brethren I ask that favourable consideration be given to the Australian memorandum of January, 1963. We are needless to say unreservedly ready to accept whatever modification or further direction the General Chapter cares to make.”

At the January meeting it had been decided to ask General Chapter to erect two Colleges in Australia to be known as the Colleges of Northern and Southern Australia, the latter based on Melbourne and the former on Brisbane. Subject to the approval of General Chapter the brethren of these Australian Colleges would elect two Priors, and an Almoner would be appointed to collect dues from the brethren according to the assessments determined by General Chapter. The Prior of each College would be empowered to admit probationers, and to act with the permission of the Superior in admitting brethren, who have sought profession and have been approved by the College and the Superior, to that status. It was also proposed that each College should have a secretary who would report to the Secretary-General quarterly on the activities of the brethren in the College, and that the renewals of both probation and profession occur at the combined Retreat and Conference in January, and that the Priors report to the General Chapter in England on the activities of the Australian brethren before the General Chapter.

The Australian request, made in fact before the departure of Graham Walden, was granted at the meeting of General Chapter in the summer of 1963, where understanding of the Australian situation was greatly helped by the presence of Barry Greaves. It was agreed that two mission Colleges, at Melbourne and Brisbane, should be constituted and attached to the College of which the Superior was a member, each of them with an acting Prior. The acting Priors or the Secretaries should report to the Superior after each meeting about who was present. Various other provisions were made, and it was

resolved that “when either mission College shall have three professed members of whom two are resident, General Chapter will consider its becoming a fully constituted College of the Oratory.” {85}

At the meeting of General Chapter in 1965 it was resolved that the Melbourne and Brisbane Mission Colleges

“be encouraged to consider whether they should ask to become fully constituted Colleges of the Oratory, and that if either or both of them make this request, it may be granted by the acting Superior, provided he is satisfied that the necessary conditions are met.”

They considered it in January, 1966, and presented a memorandum to General Chapter for the next meeting.

“The growth and stabilisation of the Oratory in Australia has created certain problems at least for the Australian brethren and possibly for the Oratory as a whole. The background of our problem is largely geographical. The centres of the two Colleges are at present 1,200 miles apart, and both Colleges are about 12,000 miles from Cambridge. The first geographical fact makes chance encounters between brethren very rare and argues for an annual meeting of all brethren for the sake of the Oratory in this country... The second geographical fact makes for certain administrative difficulties which lead sometimes to duplication of work or even to its total omission which naturally creates misunderstandings... We believe that there is need for an Australian Provincial General Chapter. Such a Chapter would have community with General Chapter through the Superior, and would act in a number of matters which at present are done directly with the Secretary- General and others... Such a Chapter could then act in its own right in a number of areas of concern such as Mission brethren and permission of renewals of probation and profession.”

It was therefore unanimously proposed to ask General Chapter to agree to the formation of an Australian province of the Oratory. This was passed in 1967, and a new section added to the Constitution:

“In a country where there are two or more fully constituted Colleges of the Oratory, it shall be permitted, with the approval of General Chapter, for these to meet annually in a Provincial Chapter with the power to elect every three years a Provincial Prior and annually a Secretary and other executive officers, (an Almoner, a Secretary of the Companions and an Archivist). The Provincial Prior and Secretary shall exercise, in that country, the duties assigned to the Superior and Secretary-General... The Provincial Chapter shall consider and approve applications for first professions and annual renewals of profession. The exercise of the responsibilities of the Superior and General Chapter (renewals for a term of years) shall devolve on the Provincial Prior and annual Provincial Chapter, except in the case of life profession. Provincial Priors shall report to the Superior at least four weeks before General Chapter on the life of the Province, and in particular on the professions, renewals, and resignations during the year.”

The Australian Archivist is Father John Steele, now a Companion, but for some years a member of the Oratory. While a member John spent a year at Stanford University in California, and also in Kingston, Ontario. He is a Ph.D. of the University of Queensland, and a lecturer in physics in that University. While on a visit to England after his American work he displayed great interest in Churches of Victorian architecture! He attended General Chapter in 1967. {86}

There were a number of priests who joined the Oratory for a few years, before deciding that this was not their vocation. The Society is always sorry when brethren resign, but at any rate we hope that the experience has been valuable to them in their work. Max Timbrell was one of these, and worked in London for a time before going back to Australia as a Bush Brother. And there were a number of other young men. But some have remained, and the two Australian Colleges flourish. Father Robert Braun is Precentor of Brisbane Cathedral after two years as Anglican Chaplain at Bucharest — the first member of the Oratory to work behind the Iron Curtain. Before that he was Vicar of Cunnamulla in the Queensland outback. Father Charles Helms was Warden of Newton Theological College at Dogura in Papua New Guinea, and after a time in Wangaratta, accepted Bishop Selby Taylor's

invitation to train ordination candidates at Kitwe in Zambia, where several Africans have showed interest in the Oratory. Charles made his life profession in Australia while on leave in 1984.

Father John Beiers, who holds a Ph.D. degree in Engineering, is the first member of the Oratory to have a pilot's licence for aircraft — on a visit to England to recruit for the Bush Brotherhood he was allowed to sit in the pilot's seat from Exeter to Cardiff! — He became a member of the Oratory in 1973 and worked in the Bush Brotherhood of Saint Paul at Saint George in the Queensland outback. He resigned from the Oratory on becoming Head of the Brotherhood, but when this was disbanded in 1982, John returned to the Oratory, and is parish priest at Port Adelaide. The ability to fly light aircraft is a great help to those who have to cope with the great distances between settlements in Australia.

Father Ronald Henderson was a Companion for a number of years, and in 1978 came to Oriol College, Oxford, to read for a degree in Theology. Ron did a great deal of cycling while in England, and visited the Community at Little Gidding. On returning to Australia he became Chaplain of Saint John's College in the University of Queensland and was admitted to probation in the Oratory in 1982.

Barry Greaves made his first profession in 1966 when he was Chaplain of Saint John's College, Brisbane, and in 1968 joined the Bush Brotherhood of Saint Paul, which no longer functions. When Robert Waddington returned to England in 1972, Barry was for a year Headmaster of Saint Barnabas' School, Ravenshoe, before becoming Rector of Chermside, a suburb of Brisbane. From there he moved to Boonah, and is a Residentiary Canon of Brisbane Cathedral.

Father Richard Waddell is a graduate of Sydney University and a Barrister-at-law. He practiced for a time, but had always hoped to be ordained — a hope recently fulfilled. Richard spent a year as assistant Chaplain of Trinity College, Melbourne, and then moved on to be in charge of Merewether. He spent some months in England in 1979 when he was a Companion of the Oratory. Father Trevor Bulled was admitted to probation in 1982 and professed the next year. He had been for some years a member of the Brotherhood of Saint Paul, and in 1982 became Rector of Camp Hill in Brisbane Diocese. Father Keith Dean-Jones came for a year to England in 1983 and spent a term at Cuddesdon and the rest of the year as a Curate in a Leicester parish. He got in touch with the Oratory while in England and attended meetings of the Cambridge Chapter. When he returned to Australia he was admitted to probation and the following year to profession. {87} Keith is Rector of Gloucester, New South Wales.

The Australian Colleges maintain a sound fellowship and whenever possible visit each other. Their letter writing is an example to all the brethren, and they are in fact a quarter of the whole Oratory in 1986. This augurs well for the future of the Society in Australia.

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Chapter 14

LONDON 1953 — 1986

In 1953 Father John Thorold made his first profession. He had become Vicar of Mitcham in Surrey the previous year, and remained there for the remainder of his active ministry. He became a member of the Northolt Park Chapter. In 1953 Father David Kee visited the Superior in Cambridge to enquire about the Oratory and was admitted to probation in 1954 and profession the following year. David had been for some years in the Church Army, and was Vicar of a mining parish, New Clipstone, in Nottinghamshire. He was shortly to become metropolitan secretary of SPG and later Vicar of Podington in Saint Alban's Diocese. He has lived in Winchester since retirement, and has always been a good member of the Chapter.

Henry Brandreth was appointed Chaplain of Saint George's, Paris, in 1949 and remained there until 1965. This was an ideal centre for Henry's ecumenical work, which he carried out with distinction. Eric Mascall, speaking at the Requiem for him at Saint Dunstan-in-the-West on 4 December, 1984, said that Henry was "a priest who, although he possessed and exercised great gifts in both the academic and the ecclesiastical sphere, was granted no official recognition in either. When he died, the only letters after his name were the simple triad OGS, indicating his membership of the Oratory of the Good Shepherd... Returning to England in 1964, Henry continued his ecumenical studies and contacts from the small and declining parish which was found for him in North London. But in 1970 he became Associate Secretary of the Council on Foreign Relations and Guild-Vicar of this historic church in which we now are. Here his contacts with Orthodoxy had full scope and the Romanian parish found a foothold and set up the splendid ikonostasis which is such an embellishment in its classical simplicity. It was only appropriate that Henry should become Chairman of the committee of the Anglican and Eastern Churches Association... the content of his experience, whether recorded or merely memorised, was immense and his reminiscences, usually flavoured with a touch of pungency, were fascinating to hear." His last years witnessed a sad decline in health and spirit, and he lived in a retirement flat in Islington, very close to Saint Silas' Church. He was lovingly looked after by his London brethren, especially by a young lay-brother probationer, Graham Wills. He celebrated the 40th anniversary of his priesthood at Saint Silas in late 1983, but, as the Oratory Report states, "in July, 1984, was taken into hospital, where it became clear that he would need hospital care for the rest of his life. He moved to Twyford Abbey Hospital at the end of August, but towards the end of October his health deteriorated rapidly, and he died on the 31st." His most important work was the volume "Episcopi Vagantes and the Anglican Church", published in 1948, and in 1956 he produced the first Oratory history, on which much of the earlier part of this record is based.

At the meeting of General Chapter in 1958 it was decided to change the name of the Northolt Park College from Northolt Park to London, which was in every {90} way more suitable. During the years the College has grown steadily, until, in 1986, its total membership equals the rest of the Oratory in England added together. There is a large concentration on the South Coast in the Brighton area. There have, of course, been changes, and some brethren have decided not to renew their profession as the years have gone by. It is encouraging that there are a fair sprinkling of younger men in the London Chapter, including Michael Bartlett who had worked in South Africa and is a layman at present occupied in Portsmouth. He worked in Insurance in Canterbury, but in 1984 became Sacristan and Caretaker at Saint Faith's Church, Havant.

Eric Mascall has continued in London since he left Oxford in 1962 to be Professor at King's College. He has lived at Saint Mary's Presbytery, Bourne Street, where he frequently helps, and over the years has produced a great number of theological books. From time to time Eric has introduced important

subjects for discussion within the Oratory and at General Chapter. In 1966 he produced a memorandum on life profession in the Oratory:

“My primary reason for raising the question is whether it is wise for the Oratory to allow its members to make Life-profession is simply that any form of profession sets up mutual obligations between the Society and the professed member. We rightly emphasise the serious nature of the member’s obligation and we have always expressed its correlative obligation to the member... I do suggest that it is wrong for us to accept life-profession, with the stigma that attaches to its abandonment, unless we can offer the brethren concerned much more support, both material and fraternal, than we are in fact in a position to give... I have always felt, when we have accepted an application for life-profession, that we were accepting a great deal from a brother and giving him much less than we owed him in return.”

After discussing this memorandum, the Southern African College stated that they felt that life vows gave an added stability to the Oratory and would therefore deprecate the removal of this possibility from the Constitution. They agreed that there was some incompatibility between life vows and the support which the Oratory can give the brethren. The London College produced a memorandum to which most of the brethren contributed. It was agreed that the Oratory was not a “religious community, and therefore what appertains to a religious community does not necessarily have relevance for us. As the Oratorians of Saint Philip Neri lived in community, it is hard to see a very helpful parallel between their Oratory and our own.” Whatever the Oratory was, or has become, it owed its growth, present form and rich experience to members who, since its origin, have endeavoured “under the special direction to live a life of devotion, and service.” Some of these members have been professed for life “on the understanding that the profession was made within a Society which accepted such profession as part of its life.” There was no alternative society comparable with the Oratory. “We are not a religious community, and those who are members of the Oratory are members, presumably, because they have been called, not to be a religious community, but to the Oratory. If the practice of life-profession is abandoned, many life members may be convinced that ‘some other such fellowship will have to be formed,’ for they may conclude that they need that help which the proposal *{91}* to abandon life-profession would deny them.” The view was strongly expressed that the presence within the Oratory of a number of brethren in life-profession gives a stability to the whole which would be gravely weakened if such profession were abandoned.

No alteration in the provision for life-profession in the Oratory was made as a result of this discussion, but it was proposed that any member desirous of renewing profession for life must give written notice of at least a year beforehand to the Superior, who would then inform all the brethren.

It fell to the lot of Frederick Perkins to make the arrangements for the jubilee celebrations of the Oratory, he being Prior at that time of the London College, and this was done with characteristic efficiency. A Solemn Eucharist was celebrated on 28 January, 1964, in Lambeth Palace Chapel in the presence of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Visitor of the Oratory. All the brethren in England were present, as well as a number of Companions and friends, and the sermon was preached by the Archbishop. His Grace and Mrs Ramsey very kindly gave us a buffet lunch after the service. It was a very happy and inspiring day for the Society.

Frederick had become Warden of Selwyn College in the University of Otago, New Zealand, in 1949, soon after joining the Oratory. He returned to England in 1955 and was Vicar of Saint Francis’, Gladstone Park in North-West London for 12 years. Frederick’s main work has been as Lecturer in the Divinity Institute of Education in the University of London, and then at the College of All Saints, Tottenham, for 22 years. His work in the Scout Movement was an important department of his life, and he has been at different times Prior of the London College and Secretary-General of the Oratory.

Another brother who has been Secretary-General for many years is Father Michael Bootes, Rector of Saint Wulfran’s, Ovingdean, Brighton since 1984. Michael became a member of the Oratory after leaving a teaching post at an American School in Switzerland in 1967 to be Headmaster of All Saints, Margaret Street Choir School. Sadly the Choir School was shortly to close, and after a short period in

Poplar, Michael moved to be Chaplain of the Convent of Saint Margaret and of the School of Saint Agnes and Saint Michael, East Grinstead. He was for a short time Vicar of Brandon in Durham Diocese before moving back to the South Coast at Hassocks, and becoming Religious Programmes Producer for BBC Radio Sussex. Michael became Secretary-General of the Oratory in 1972.

Father Robert Gould made his first profession in 1962 while Curate at Saint Michael, Wood Green, in the Diocese of London. Before ordination Robert had been a Major in the regular Army. He left this parish to test his vocation at Mirfield, but returned to London as Vicar of Saint Matthew's, Upper Clapton in 1968. To this was added the parish of Saint Thomas, Clapton Common, in 1970. In 1975 Saint Matthew's Church was almost destroyed by fire, and Robert was inevitably involved in raising funds for a new church. In 1979 he moved to Windsor on his appointment as Chaplain to the Sisters of Saint John the Baptist at Clewer, where he stayed until his retirement. He is Prior of the London College.

The London College reflects very much the life of the Oratory as it is in the latter part of the 1980's. It has the advantage of being concentrated geographically in two areas, — London and the South Coast. And there is a great variety of ministry {92} among the brethren, as well as a range of ages and experience from 80 years downwards. Eric Mascall has been there longest — scholar of international reputation and pastor conveying much wisdom and humour. He is one of the few clergymen to be a Doctor of Divinity of both Oxford and Cambridge, and has been a member of the Oratory since 1937. Frederick Perkins has also spent most of his life teaching Divinity, as well as having conducted a long stream of parish missions and sermon courses.

John Thorold, David Kee and Thomas Gresley-Summers are all parish priests of experience, and all three have been satisfied to spend many years in the same place. This is in contrast to the tendency in recent years for the clergy to move much more frequently — sometimes to the detriment of pastoral ministry in the parish. We are reminded of our late brother, Richard Seymour, who was content to be a Curate for 21 years in his first parish.

But the London College is not confined to the elderly, for there has been an infusion of new blood in the last few years which is most encouraging for the future of the Society. Michael Bartlett has already been mentioned, but in 1984 Father Ronald Partridge made his first profession when he was Vicar of All Hallows, Easton, Bristol, and personal tutor in the Bristol Diocesan School of Ministry which trains non-stipendiary ministers. Ronald moved to Brighton in 1986 as Team Vicar of Saint Nicholas' parish in the Brighton Team Ministry.

Father Dominic Walker was a member of the Community of the Glorious Ascension until 1983 and became Rector of Saint Mary's, Newington, in the Southwark Diocese in 1976. He made his first profession in the Oratory in 1984 and in 1985 was appointed Vicar of Brighton (Team Rector of the Brighton Team Ministry). Dominic is also Rural Dean of Brighton and Canon and Prebendary of Chichester Cathedral. It is very good that once more there should be a group of parishes with Oratorians in charge.

Another young layman admitted to probation was Clive McCleester, who is the Canon's Verger at Southwark Cathedral. Father John Inge has become a postulant; he is assistant Chaplain at Lancing College. Finally the College has accepted as probationer Father Timothy Bavin, who is Bishop of Portsmouth and was translated from Johannesburg in 1985. John Inge, however, has not continued his postulancy owing to another commitment. Both Clive McCleester and Timothy Bavin are now, happily, professed brothers.

This catalogue of members augurs well for the life of the Oratory in England — a group of priests and laymen of great variety, bound together by the Rule emanating from the Notes.

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Chapter 15

SUMMARY

The Oratory of the Good Shepherd is now approaching 75 years of life and during that period much has changed in many ways. In a Society which has gone more and more into dispersion, the vital importance of the rule of prayer and the practice of correspondence between Colleges and individual brethren needs to be emphasised, and the need to be together as long as possible at the time of General Chapter. Life appeared to be more leisurely in the early days, perhaps because most of the brethren were dons or school-masters, and Cambridge University life was the backcloth of the Society. When there were more clergy it was easier to get time off for Chapter meetings and living in community. The reduction of the numbers of priests and the amalgamation of parishes has put pressure on those who now work in the stipendiary ministry. This inevitably has affected the Oratory, and it is no longer easy to arrange time away from work. So when Retreat and Chapter meetings are discussed for the future, there is a tendency to see how we can possibly reduce the time we spend together in community. This is not good for a society in dispersion such as we have now become. Nostalgic memory goes back to the days of Gillingham and Saint Luke's, Cambridge, when Retreat and Chapter were regarded as work, and not part of the brethren's holiday.

There were two valuable features of the Oratory for a period in the sixties and seventies, and both were organised by David Woodhouse. The first of these was a holiday party for a few days after Christmas at Leiston Abbey in Suffolk, which was not far from Woodbridge School where David was Chaplain. Not many brethren were able to come, but those who did greatly enjoyed it. The second activity was more ambitious. It was the production of an Oratory magazine containing articles by the brethren on subjects either connected with their work or of general interest. David edited and produced this magazine at such intervals as he had material to circulate. This production is greatly missed for it contained interesting and thought-provoking essays, and this is illustrated by taking up three issues at random. In one there is a talk on the Christian conception of God given to the North London Council for Christians and Jews by Robert Gould — an address by Deaconess Wright of Leiston Abbey on Evelyn Underhill — a long and fascinating account of the Archbishop of Canterbury's visit to France by Henry Brandreth — a paper on 'Retirement' by Leslie Arnold — and a searching article on 'Management by Objectives' applied to a rule of life by George Braund. The second issue contains an article by Guy Carleton on 'a great gulf' as experienced in Africa, e.g. the gulf between priest and people, and between Christians and the world — 'an Alternative Prayer for Votives of Good Shepherd', translated from the French by Peter Lambert — and an account of the Church in Wales up to disestablishment by Alun Jones. The third Issue has an article by Eric Mascall on 'The Marian Mosaics of Rome' — Robert Symonds writes in his inimitable style on the new Vicarage of Saint Mary de Castro, Leicester — and David Woodhouse surveys the changing aims of R.E. in schools, and recent curriculum developments.

For several years the custom in the Oratory was started of using Oratory names {94} instead of baptismal ones, but there were in fact only three brethren who did this — Edward became 'Nicholas', Robert became 'Peter' and Peter became 'Philip'. This was in accordance with the custom in Religious Communities. General Chapter in 1952 decided that in future baptismal names would be used. Father Walker has kept 'Dominic', as that was his name in CGA.

The value of the Oratory's connection with Nicholas Ferrar of Little Gidding has been questioned, though in fact the Australian brethren keep his day each year with acclamation, as do the Southern African Chapter. Nicholas Ferrar is in the Province of Southern Africa Calendar. And in England there are those Oratorians, not brought up in Cambridge by our founding Fathers, who also have a

reverence for what was done at Little Gidding between 1628 and 1637. It was surely the disciplined life of this community which inspired our founding Fathers to take Nicholas Ferrar as Patron of the Oratory.

Much more is now known about the Oratory of Divine Love than at the time Vere Lawrence wrote in the Cambridge Modern History, and it may well be that our founders conflated the Oratory of Divine Love with the Theatine Order. They clearly said that they were not modelling the Oratory on the lives of Saint Philip Neri's Oratory, though it is interesting that in the library that the Oratory House inherited from Saint Anselm's House there was a copy of Saint Philip's Rule.

The standard of letter-writing in the Oratory has declined during the years, with the notable exceptions of the Northern College and the Australian Province. The Australian brethren have written letters from the beginning, and the archives are full of their very lively and descriptive writing. This is, of course, partly the result of the great distances that separate them from each other and the rest of the Society. Their correspondence reveals their caring for each other and their spiritual satisfaction in being Oratorians. The Northern brethren not only write letters but also manage regular chapter meetings, in spite of the expense, and sometimes the inconvenience of travelling long distances in all weathers. The rule of prayer and letter-writing provide fellowship for most of the brethren in dispersion, although some have left the Oratory because they have felt that there was not sufficient fellowship. Nevertheless 'fellowship' is an emotive word, and can become simply sentimental. There is one brother who has lived all of his ministry overseas after a curacy, and there has never been any question of lack of fellowship.

In 1975 George Braund, who was then Superior of the Oratory, started a discussion about the 'Oratory in the Eighties', and this was discussed during two General Chapters. In 1980, David Jowitt, then Superior, produced a document on 'Varieties of Oratory Life'.

"The history of the Oratory shows that Oratory life has been worked out in practice in many different ways: in a University, in the mission field, in parishes, and so on. In many of these cases there has been a certain amount of common work, or at least such a closeness of fellowship that one's daily work was consciously part of one's life as an Oratorian.

Our founders were young men, with the imagination and enthusiasm of the young to envisage great variety in the growth of the Oratory. But in the last twenty years or so, we seem to have settled down into a Society whose members have no common work, live quite separate lives, and turn to the Oratory as to some {95} background family whose claims must not conflict with one's daily work more than can be helped.

What does the Oratory life offer? Three things principally. (1) A *Rule* which is not only a personal strength but a bond between us all. (2) A *Fellowship*, experienced in meeting in College and General Chapters, in visiting, in letter-writing, and in daily intercession. (3) An *Outlook*, embodied in the Seven Notes which are as fresh and necessary as when they were first composed. Given these things, the life of the Oratory can take many forms."

Robert Waddington answered this memorandum with one of his own:

"The Oratory seems to me to be trapped with a model of ministry *to a sector*. Assumptions are made about the *control* a priest can exercise over his work and time so that standardisation of a rule is not only possible but considered desirable... I see the need for a disciplined spirituality. What is impossible is the dictates of a rule which assumes my sphere of work to be a *narrow* sector and is therefore *prescriptive* rather than *descriptive* of the areas of life where discipline is expected.

Just as, historically, the Oratory once had to face whether fixed residential community life of a traditional 'religious' pattern was what the future held, but chose rather a more open pattern, so now I believe it faces decisions regarding the nature of its life... Is it possible to suggest an adventure to the Oratory, one which:

1. explores more deeply the nature of celibacy and so contributes to the general debate in the Church on sexuality and the place of men and women in the Church;

2. discovers ‘catholic renewal’ as an affirmative and positive use of the world’s structures in the sense of *intersection*, rather than ministry to a ‘sector’;

3. finds a relative *descriptive* discipline for brethren rather than a *prescription* which ties the Oratory to a particular view of ministry;

4. makes more positive use of the separateness of brethren and their particular work to exemplify the need for a ministry across the social structures. The future of the Oratory, I believe, does not lie in seeking more commonalty, more ways of being or working together, but in fact capitalising on the separateness (emotionally, theologically, professionally) of the brethren and seeking ways through the Colleges and Chapters of exhibiting as an Oratory the intersection of many ministries, many theologies, many professional tasks. In some ways the Oratory could, by admitting the plurality of Christianity, show that such pluralism is not divisive but in fact yet another expression of the richness of life in Christ. Is it now our vocation to show diversities of ministries without tying the brethren through manual or prescriptive rule to a particular model of priesthood?”

From time to time this debate continues and there will always be some tension between the different points of view. The Society contains enormous contrasts, as illustrated by a glance at the Cambridge and London Chapters. Cambridge contains no brother under 60 years old, one is over 80, and three in their seventies. London has a broad basis and includes all ages and outlooks from old age {96} downwards, and more than one type of ministry.

Mention should be made of Father William Ledwich, who was a member of the Oratory for 8 years, and resigned from it and the Church of England over the appointment of David Jenkins to be Bishop of Durham. William was Chaplain of the King’s School at Hereford until his resignation, and has joined the Greek Orthodox Church. Also there was Father Martin Thornton who joined the Oratory while Vicar of Swaffham Prior. Martin left the Society while at Saint Deiniol’s Library, Hawarden, and ultimately become Canon and Chancellor of Truro Cathedral. He contributed much to the Oratory, and produced books on Pastoralia. He died in 1986.

And so the Oratory of the Good Shepherd continues on its way. No matter what the problems have been — nor the differences of opinion on important questions — it quietly pursues its ideal of ‘the adoration of God in the service of the Lord Jesus Christ’ as expressed in the Notes.

Build we each the other up:
Pray we for our faith’s increase,
Lasting comfort, steadfast hope,
Solid joy and settled peace.
More and more let love abound:
Never, never may we rest,
Till we are in Jesus found,
Of our paradise possessed.

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APPENDIX A

Provisions of Little Gidding, December 1913.

A. Economy

1. That each brother shall set aside a sum proportioned to his income to purposes definitely bounden upon every professing member of Christ's Church.
2. Under this head shall be reckoned money given to Home Missions, Foreign Missions, and Church collections only.
3. Each brother shall present an account of how he proposes to spend this money to the Oratory.
4. The proportion shall be at least for incomes of £200 — £350, 5%; while on incomes exceeding that amount 7.5% shall be paid on the sum in excess of £350.
5. It is certain that no brother shall give altogether in alms less than a tithe.
6. Since it appears that any rule as to personal expenses is impracticable at present, it is resolved that each brother should declare to the Oratory his special temptations to luxury and extravagance, and the Oratory should legislate on these points.
7. That each brother shall present to the Oratory a yearly account of this expenditure, this to be prepared and in readiness for the annual retreat.

B. Obedience.

1. It was determined that no brother should undertake any work whatsoever, whether in term or vacation, outside his official duties, without the sanction of the Oratory. This rule does not apply to occasional sermons, and incidental and temporary assistance in emergencies.
2. The times and seasons of Oratory retreats, life in community and quiet days are to be fixed as a general rule nine months beforehand at least, and such dates are to be kept inviolable.

C. Property.

Leaving the possibility of the Oratory possessing property open, it is desirable:

1. That all property should be of as simple a character as is convenient.
2. That any costly gift or loan from outside should be refused. Except such as may be required by the Oratory for bare existence or inevitable development.

D. Membership.

1. The Oratory attempt to come to no decision at present as to whether it is, or is not, 'in religion'.
2. That a postulant is one that is endeavouring to live under rule with a view to attempting to live by the rule of the Oratory.
3. That a Novice on his admission implies thereby his determination to test his vocation to the life of the Oratory. The Novitiate may be a permanent grade.
4. That a member when he takes full vows implies thereby his belief that he has a vocation to the life of the Oratory, and binds himself for the space of one year to its fulfillment.

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APPENDIX B

The Oratory of France.

There seem to be few direct links between the Oratory of France and our Oratory, but there appear to me to be some similarities, and I am of the opinion that the French Oratory even in its present reduced circumstances has an understanding of the church and its priestly ministry from which our small and disparate community could learn.

Brandreth, in his history of the Oratory of the Good Shepherd, records the only direct connection of which I am aware between the Anglican foundation and the French Oratory. The name 'Oratory', he says, was due to Eric Milner-White, one of the founders of the Oratory of the Good Shepherd. Milner-White 'not only had a great knowledge of the French Oratory of Cardinal de Bérulle, but was able to take the brethren further back to an earlier Oratory for their ideal — the *Oratorio del divino amore*, founded in Rome in 1516 by Ettore Vernazza, a disciple of Saint Cajetan. This was the inspiration, though not the model, of the brethren, and they pretended no kinship with that Oratory, or with Saint Philip Neri's, or de Bérulle's later foundation.'

Our Oratory Constitution and Rule has every appearance of a home-grown product, bearing out Brandreth's judgement that there was no continental model for its composition. Milner-White's donnish prose shapes the 'Notes' and a constitution which is characteristically Anglican in its balance, tolerance and comprehension. It allows, unlike the other Oratories, for those of more individual temperaments and who wish to live alone. It gives freedom of choice, limited by referral to the Oratory for advice, to each member in the matter of his work and its setting.

It should be said also that we have never claimed a particular kinship with Saint Philip Neri. Saint Philip, citizen of decadent Rome, striding its thoroughfares, washing the feet of the pilgrims and nursing their sick, leading his young followers on all-night peregrinations and vigils, teaching them and hearing their confessions, he of the miraculous inner warmth; he was not chosen or commemorated as patron by the brethren of our society. We tell rather the story of a scholarly celibate gentleman who retires with his family to a country manor, who orders the details of his community with a strict and regular asceticism, following the formularies of the *Book of Common Prayer*, obedient to his bishop and his king.

Despite these differences of pattern and temperament, what similarities might we discern between the French and the Anglican Oratories? We might look to the purpose of their foundation, their attitude to individual liberty, their theology of the Incarnation, their relationship to theological and secular learning.

The French Oratory was founded in 1611 at a time when many of the benefices were in the hands of people who appropriated the wealth and paid a small stipend to others to do the work. Many of the priests were ignorant and lazy, sometimes retained by rich families solely for the purpose of offering masses for the departed. Saint Francis de Sales, who had known the Oratory in Padua, suggested to Pierre de Bérulle that he undertake the reform of the French clergy on similar lines, as a means for the renewal of the whole Church. The Anglican Oratory, conceived {99} in Cambridge in the early twentieth century, helped to continue the reforms of the Catholic movement of the nineteenth century. It was, in the words of cofounder John How, an association of 'Catholic-minded priest-dons', and its purpose was to enliven the somewhat perfunctory religion of the University of their day. While the Oratory has always allowed for the profession of lay brothers, the overwhelming majority of its

members, and its continuing emphasis has been on the pastoral work of the clergy and on their spiritual development.

The writings of Cardinal de Bérulle are a *locus classicus* for the spirituality of what came to be known as the 'French School', which was exemplified not only in the Oratory, but in other societies which came into being around this time — the Sulpicians, the Eudists and the Lazarists. The doctrines of the Trinity, the Incarnation and the Church were there expounded as systematically bound together; the Trinity, the source of all that exists, moves towards humanity in love in the Incarnate Lord, who leads his Church to the life of the Godhead. One is reminded of the *Lux Mundi* school of theology of the eighties and nineties in England. There, to borrow Ruth Kenyon's summary, "only the Incarnation, together with its extension in the Church and the Sacraments, is adequate to interpret and validate the life of the individual and of society."

For both the Cambridge brethren and for the French School the theology of the Incarnation informs an understanding and deep love of the Church. Bossuet spoke of de Bérulle's "immense love for the Church, which inspired him to form a company to which he desired to give no spirit but that of the Church, no other rules apart from its canons, no other superiors except its bishops, no other wealth than its charity, no other solemn vows than those of baptism and the priesthood." Herein is the source of the freedom of the Oratory life. *Statuisti in loco spatioso pedes meos*. Our Form of a Profession of a Member requires the candidate to renew "the solemn promise made in your name at your baptism" and, if a priest, "those solemn promises which you, with your own lips, did make when you were admitted to the Holy Office of Priesthood". Like the French Oratory, the Anglican Oratory has never imposed any system of thought or action on its members apart from those which the church as a whole required, or which were necessary for the maintenance of its fellowship: "It will encourage its members to develop their personal gifts and thus to enrich the offering laid at the feet of Christ".

Throughout its history the French Oratory has been closely associated with education and research. Nicholas Malebranche, Richard Simon, Pierre Lebrun, Lucien Laberthonnière, Pierre Dabosville were great Oratorian scholars. With a much shorter history and with far fewer members, the Oratory of the Good Shepherd has counted among its members some of the leading theologians and philosophers of the English Church - Wilfred Knox, Alec Vidler, Eric Mascall — along with other lesser known scholars whose contribution has been influential in their own circles.

The May, 1986, issue of the French religious monthly *Fêtes et Saisons* was devoted to the Oratory of France. After an appraisal of its history and spirituality, the magazine turns to its aspirations for the future. (C)ontemporary western society is seen to be characterized by unbelief, materialism and indifference, and as needing Christians who will 'live with' the world; it needs Christians who recognize the *{100}* problems of bringing church and world together and the failure of much 'religious' language to communicate with the world; it needs people who can be open to the world's cries for help and who do not trust any spirituality which does not confront the world's injustices. This apostolate involves both priests and laity: "in the past, any time the church has been confronted with serious difficulties it has renewed itself by reinforcing the clergy. Perhaps today's renewal will be effected by a renewal of the sacerdotal conscience of the entire church in the service of the world."

The French Oratory has shared in the general decline of the number of vocations to religious communities, and in 1984-5 was further weakened by the deaths of five members, of whom four were still young. It is now beginning with a wider gathering of lay friends of the Oratory to talk and pray together. In February 1985 about fifty laypeople and the twenty eight Oratorians met first in separate workshops and then in plenary session. It proved to be, according to the Superior- General, a 'spiritual event', experienced as such by all people present, both priest and lay. There have been a number of subsequent meetings for prayer and reflection. One guiding principle in the development of these gatherings is expressed in Vatican II's Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*): "The common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial or hierarchical priesthood, which are differentiated in essence and not simply by degree, are nevertheless ordained for each other; each in its own way participates in the unique priesthood of Christ."

For our part there have long been attempts to develop cooperation and mutual enrichment between professed members, on the one hand, and companions, associates and friends on the other. I hope that this might grow as together we explore the meaning of our various priestly ministries.

Ronald Henderson, OGS

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