1 A CHURCH DIVIDED AND THE EDUCATIONAL SOLUTION

'The Catholic Church is springing up again', boasted the Archbishop of Westminster, Cardinal Nicholas Patrick Wiseman, before a captive audience of European Catholic leaders in Malines, Belgium, on 21 August 1863. 'It had left its tap root', he continued, 'under the religious soil of England, from which new suckers are now shooting upwards; the sap which was believed to be drained out is rising in them once more. The old plant scents again the waters, and revives, endowed with a marvellous fertility.' As Wiseman regaled his audience with the triumphs of the Catholic faith in England since the restoration of the hierarchy had placed him at the titular head of English Catholicism thirteen years before, he realized he had to step gently around the one matter that he uncharacteristically described in rather blunt, truthful terms which betrayed a certain lack of success. That issue was education. 'Our weak side is the education of our children', he declared, 'whom our poverty prevents us from bringing up as we would desire'.[1]

These statements comprise two of the central messages of this study. The first is the enthusiasm and confidence reflected in Wiseman's portrait of his Church in mid-nineteenth-century Britain. The second is the sober realization that, despite recent advances for Catholics in England and Wales, education, namely education of the Catholic poor, was an issue in need of tireless effort and one that had to be a priority for Catholics. This same feeling was aptly expressed in a notice in the July 1850 issue of the *Rambler*, a notoriously provocative liberal Catholic journal from mid-century.[2] With the paper's characteristically hyperbolic and alarmist tone, the editors wrote, 'Without the Catholic education of the Catholic poor, all our other efforts are something very like a mockery and a self-delusion'.[3] Within this dichotomy of Catholic exuberance and cautious reflection on education lies the heart of this project. This book argues that the English Catholic community evolved in its pursuit of the education question.[4] This pursuit was a long, tiresome and challenging ordeal which left an indelible mark on the Catholic community. As a result, the Catholic community that witnessed the historic Balfour Act in 1902, which removed many of the most troublesome remaining educational grievances for Catholics, bore little resem-

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blance to that which had welcomed the Catholic Emancipation Act in 1829 or even that which restored the Church hierarchy in 1850. Other factors such as a growing Catholic middle class and economic prosperity, the extension of political reform, and changes in Catholic forms of devotion contributed to that evolution in identity. However, education predominated.[5]

Understanding and monitoring the identity of a community, even one as small as the English Catholic community, can be a daunting and arduous task given the intricacies of human behaviour and the dangers of generalization. Yet an understanding of the complexity of the Roman Catholic community in the 1840s is essential to an understanding of how education may have helped change the face of Catholicism in England and Wales. Much like other English denominations in the early nineteenth century, English Catholicism contained disparate identities split along ethnic and socio-economic divisions. Beginning with the first Catholic Acts in the last half of the eighteenth century, a series of events occurred which allowed for gradual changes in the Catholic community. The Emancipation Act followed by the Oxford Movement in the 1830s and its wave of conversions in the following decade and the Irish Famine in the 1840s all exerted pressures on the English Catholic community; these events kept the community in a continual state of flux. The three important groups which comprised the English Catholic community in the first half of the century were the old English Catholic gentry, the Oxford Movement converts and Irish Catholic immigrants.

English Catholic society following the Glorious Revolution was burdened by the onerous penal laws which severely restricted the religious and political rights of Catholics in both Ireland and England. Although enforcement of the penal codes, which connected civil disabilities with religious constraints, was sporadic and often non-existent, the government treated Catholics as second-class citizens, even if they happened to be wealthy members of the gentry or nobility. In 1778, in the midst of the War of American Independence, Lord North's government passed the first Roman Catholic Relief Act which allowed Catholics to serve in the armed forces and also gave them rights of land ownership. Further Acts removed restrictions on the franchise, entrance into the legal profession and the practices of Catholic clergy in England. By the end of the eighteenth century, most of the civil disabilities and religious restrictions on Catholics had been removed, except for the final indignity – the prohibition of Catholics sitting in Parliament. However, the identity of a community that spent the better part of a century under severe penal laws would undoubtedly be reflected in its actions.[6]

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John Bossy's authoritative work *The English Catholic Community 1570–1850* has long provided English Catholic historians with a valuable revisionist interpretation of the nature of the Catholic community just prior to the hier-

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archy's restoration in 1850. His argument detects a healthy, growing Catholic community throughout the penal era. This is an argument that may be used to temper somewhat the ebullience of Cardinal Wiseman's remarks on the recent growth of the Church in England. Bossy's work did the same to that strain of historiography that used John Henry Newman's famous Second Spring sermon as its starting point, which Bossy argues was not grounded in historical evidence.[7] Since Bossy traces the English Catholic community from its Elizabethan roots, he paints the most complete portrait of the early nineteenth-century Catholic gentry, who had dominated recusant Catholic history. Gentry families were losing their control over the faith in England, due mainly to behavioural changes brought on by the Industrial Revolution. One of those behavioural changes was rural to urban flight which led to their separation from fellow rural Catholics of a lesser economic status. This occurrence was accompanied by a renewed clerical mission chiefly to those same rural Catholics who had relied upon the gentry for leadership. Both of these phenomena lessened gentry influence so that by 1820, Bossy contends, the gentry were no longer a significant contributor to the Catholic community.[8]

Nonetheless, Mary Heimann has shown more recently that Catholic devotional practices of the gentry-dominated recusant period did not disappear when the gentry lost their pre-eminence. In her examination of devotional literature in the nineteenth century, Heimann concludes that it was popular recusant devotions such as benediction and the rosary that dominated the faith of Catholics in the nineteenth century, even after the restoration of the hierarchy. Her strongest piece of evidence that English Catholicism did not become 'more Roman than Rome' was the continued use of Bishop Challoner's *Garden of the Soul* prayer book, first published in 1740 and thereafter until 1899.[9] If we are to accept her thesis, we might clarify some details here. The political and social influence of the old Catholic gentry may have diminished, but the religious traditions from the period in which they dominated with their quieter spirituality did not, even under the glaring light of late nineteenth-century hierarchical ultramontanism in England.[10] Yet the question remains, what would happen to that identity, which was held together for so long by political disabilities, once those disabilities were removed?

Part of the answer is found in Bossy's description of the gentry's waning influence. As the gentry's leadership role declined, Catholic identity evolved as a whole, a process that Bossy explains 'managed to combine fidelity to its tradition and openness to its environment with a rare ... measure of success'.[11] Another part of the answer is found in the gentry's contribution to the education question, along with other members of Catholic society, after their power as a social class had been eclipsed. This part is most relevant to the present book since education played the most important role in the evolution of the Catholic identity because

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it dominated Catholic interests from the restoration of the hierarchy until the end of the nineteenth century and beyond. A survey of the Catholic press in that period bears witness to its thematic dominance. Whereas Bossy concludes that between 1780 and 1850 English Catholicism experienced several 'processes', all working towards the 'creation of a complicated whole',[12] this book will build upon and extend his conclusion. It will be argued that education was *the* major change mechanism or agent in the evolution of that 'complicated whole' – that new late nineteenth-century Catholic identity. The education question continued to transform the Catholic community fifty years beyond where Bossy ends his study, becoming the dominant issue of the last half of the century for the English Catholic Church. This was especially so for the hierarchy which picked up the mantle of leadership from the Catholic gentry and made education their top priority.

Since the decline of the gentry's influence opened the door to other Catholic leaders and other Catholic influences, it is important to examine the other two dominant components of the Catholic population. The Oxford Movement converts who began to enter the ranks of English Catholicism in the 1840s can be viewed as one of the more obvious examples of the 'Catholic advance' in the nineteenth century. Emerging from the internal conflicts that plagued the Church of England in the early nineteenth century, Oxford converts were a diverse group. Many were men and women of education, public schooling and university, who held diverse religious and political opinions. They included eventual ultramontanes like Henry Edward Manning, William George Ward and Frederick Faber, as well as men like Newman and Ambrose Phillips de Lisle, both of whom exuded a less Roman, more independent style of Catholicism.[13] Interestingly, women played a more substantial role in convert Catholicism compared with old English Catholicism, especially considering the many who funded, founded and joined the numerous religious orders that flourished in the century and added so much to the Catholic educational effort.[14] One historian has interpreted the Oxford conversions as coming in two distinct waves. Earlier waves of converts associated with Newman consisted of those more closely tied into the Oxford intellectual nexus and were clergymen or had very close ties to that world. The later wave brought a wider variety of converts, from clergymen to business professionals to aristocratic women, all of whom converted for a myriad of reasons.[15] It has also been argued that this later wave tended to draw more converts from nonconformity than from Anglicanism.[16]

While the converts were a small group, their contributions were significant, including social and intellectual standing and financial means. The initial wave of conversions convinced emerging ultramontanes like Wiseman that the conversion of England was a possibility, albeit a remote one. However, the energy they infused into the faith contributed to that overall confidence Catholicism began

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to exhibit after the restoration of the hierarchy in 1850, a confidence represented by their public call for that conversion. Lastly, converts also brought a high level of educational expectations from their Oxbridge experiences that, when applied to the current condition of Catholic education, caused them to question the seriousness and ability of English Catholicism to wage an effective battle for education. This was just one of the issues that led to the profound antagonism that developed between converts and old Catholics, a conflict, for example, carried out publicly in the pages of the *Rambler.* This vehicle of convert ideology consistently violated what old Catholics and burgeoning ultramontanes deemed acceptable. There is no question that consistent points of dissension about education existed between old Catholics and new from the middle until the last two decades of the century, plaguing the educational efforts of the Church. But afterwards, Catholics ended the century with a significant degree of unity, a significant result of the arduous struggle over education.

The Irish Catholics who emigrated to England are the final group.[17] They began moving to Britain late in the eighteenth century in small but steady numbers. Three waves of Irish immigration occurred: around 1790, in the 1820s and in the 1840s. The 'point of equilibrium' between Irish and English Catholics throughout England occurred around 1818, with the percentage of native English Catholics dropping to 20 per cent by 1851.[18] Irish immigrants to Britain tended to settle in three main areas – London, western Scotland and Lancashire – and, by 1851, were a predominantly urban phenomenon, with over 80 per cent living in towns with populations above 10,000.[19] Much has been written about the immigrant Irish Catholics in England during the nineteenth century, which has helped to create a portrait of Irish Catholic identity. Generally, the Irish Catholic immigrants arrived poor, uneducated and unskilled in the labour market. Large numbers of Irish lived in squalid conditions in the industrial towns ridden with disease, overcrowding, alcoholism and a host of other social ills. Lynn Hollen Lees's excellent urban history of the Irish community in London argues that the Irish practised self-segregation and existed in a sub-culture that resisted assimilation into English and English Catholic society. This occurred despite the wishes of the hierarchy, which wanted assimilation and the severing of their cultural attachment to the Irish countryside. Lees concludes that some practices, such as the use of the Irish language, were discarded but others, such as the wake, were continued, even against the wishes of the hierarchy, thus creating a unique community premised on pre-famine tradition as well as the changes that an alien, industrial and urban society forced upon them.[20] M. A. G. O'Tuathaigh also writes convincingly of Irish resistance to assimilation into English society, a resistance based on factors such as lack of education, proximity to home, disappointment of not making it to America, suspicion of the British and the belief that British meddling in Irish affairs caused them to leave in the

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first place. The Irish segregated themselves from the remainder of society, even Catholic society, purposely, and in this separation were likewise viewed with suspicion and disdain by not only their English Protestant neighbours, but their English Catholic co-religionists as well.[21]

Another more interesting attribute of Irish Catholic immigrants that has also received ample study is the nature of their Catholicism. The idea is a myth that all Irish Catholics regularly practised a robust, orthodox faith by virtue of their having come from a country that had remained Catholic after the tumult of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. As Bossy argues, to assume that all Irish Catholic immigrants were assiduous churchgoers before they arrived and only fell into non-practice after experiencing the degradations of the English industrial town is to buy into the myth. His estimates put the rate of consistent religious practice at about 50 per cent for all Irish Catholic immigrants, no matter where they settled.[22] Lees places this number at around 30 per cent in metropolitan London at mid-century.[23] The kind of Catholicism practised by immigrants relates to this argument. Both Bossy and Gerard Connolly dismiss the notion that Irish Catholicism in the form of Irish immigration inspired and saved a dispirited English Catholicism in the nineteenth century. Connolly argues that the opposite was true; Irish Catholic immigration actually weakened a thriving English Catholicism on account of Irish non-practice of many of the sacraments and non-attendance at chapel.[24] Bossy adds that Irish Catholicism bordered on the nature of being a 'folk religion, barely touched by the counter-Reformation … and unfamiliar with the obligations of regular religious observance and sacramental practice', a thesis first developed by Emmet Larkin, who argued that Irish Catholicism did not begin its 'devotional revolution' until after the famine and under the direction of Archbishop Paul Cullen.[25] Larkin's thesis, however, has been judiciously countered by Thomas McGrath, who saw in Ireland not a post-famine 'devotional revolution', but the last stages of Tridentine reforms that had been delayed in Ireland due to the penal laws.[26] Into this heady historiographical mix is added the notion that although regular attendance at Mass and adherence to the sacraments were lacking, one cannot discount the Irish immigrants' strong psychological attachment to the Catholic Church, even if that attachment was loose enough to cause a decline in religiosity.[27] Clearly, the Irish dimension presented an enigmatic challenge to Church leaders in England, especially since their sheer numbers, most in dire poverty, required the greatest attention and use of Church resources.

If the Roman Catholic communities had little in common with one another besides their faith, the challenge for the Church would be to unite these disparate groups so that English Catholicism could benefit from their collective strength rather than be hindered by their respective differences. The one issue that drew interest from each of these Catholic communities was education. No

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other issue but education could have possibly served to bring together Catholics, rich and poor, cradle and convert, liberal and ultramontane, English and Irish. The evidence will reveal that support for education crossed ethnic and socio-economic barriers, although contemporary commentators like William Bernard Ullathorne, Bishop of Birmingham from 1850 to 1888, highlighted the notion that poor Irish parents were not as interested in the education of their children as they should have been: 'it is impossible to deny that ... the Irish poor have not, as a body, the same zeal for the education of their children that they have for their religion'.[28] Perhaps Ullathorne's condemnation was not simply a case of blind generalization springing from his experiences in the Midlands, since Catholic primary school logbooks from Lancashire also reveal a certain lack of urgency on the part of parents in getting their children to school with school pence in hand. Even if there was some truth in Ullathorne's accusation, it is fair to say that the importance of education still crossed those barriers. Tens of thousands of poor Irish parents did send their children to school, and the average attendance figures in Catholic elementary schools across the country prove it. Perhaps the singularity of the education struggle was enough to raise the issue above the jealousies and misunderstandings that plagued the different communities within English Catholicism. Evidence of this internal antagonism is seen by the consistent denunciations of Catholic intellectual sophistication by the liberal convert editor of the *Rambler*, John Moore Capes, who offended both the recusant-minded Ullathorne and the ultramontane Wiseman.[29] The one issue, however, that could mollify those divisions and bring some sense of agreement and unity, even if only temporarily, was education, especially of the poor.

Education was one of a few focal points where Church and government were drawn into more frequent contact with one another. As Catholics recognized the need to build, among other social wants, more schools, they saw in that effort the necessity to enter into negotiations with a central government in the process of becoming more collectivist and present in the ordinary lives of its citizens.[30] Contact with the government had not been a priority of old Catholic recusant society so it was just as well that control over English Catholic affairs had passed from the gentry to the more activist vicars apostolic whose positions were replaced by diocesan bishoprics with the restored hierarchy in 1850. The bishops recognized education as the way to prepare Catholics for this world and the next, while also realizing that the effort could possibly have a unifying effect by bringing English Catholics, including the recent Irish arrivals, together for a common goal. O'Tuathaigh argues that the Church in England actively tried to bring unity to its Catholic flock as witnessed by its multitude of educational and social organizations, the object of which was the 'creation, as far as possible, of a self-contained Catholic community of sobriety and solid good behaviour'.[31] This analysis, if broadened beyond the Irish factor to the entire Catholic commu-

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nity, requires repositioning. The hierarchy wanted more than sobriety and good behaviour, even for its most downtrodden. It wanted to prepare its flock spiritually for the challenges of temporal existence and for the glory of eternal life.

Another historiographical argument that has relevance here comes again from Heimann. In her work on Victorian Catholic devotion, she suspects that it was through practices of Catholic devotion, such as the rosary, Stations of the Cross and prayers taken from *The Garden of the Soul*, that Catholics transcended their differences and accepted their faith as a unifying factor. She writes, 'Catholics of all classes, intellectual abilities, and ethnic origins were encouraged to join together in a distinctively Catholic experience which became increasingly accessible in order that it should become more widespread'.[32] My argument, however, comes at this unification from a different angle. Yes, devotional practices may have led to a new spiritual identity, one marked by greater homogeneity that helped break ethnic and socio-economic barriers between English Catholics. Yet, perhaps part of that new Catholic identity to which she points came from the increasingly assertive and self-confident, some might even say aggressive, position on education that dominated the writings and agendas of the hierarchy and the Catholic press in the last half of the century. It could be that neither argument reaches fulfilment without the complementary effects of the other, but the real-life brick and mortar effects of school-building and the high-stakes political manoeuvring involved in the pursuit of the education question cannot be discounted in the transformation of the Catholic identity. In fact, these manifestations led the way.

The examination of nineteenth-century Roman Catholicism in England and Wales continues to be an active field, as witnessed by a number of recent studies beyond those already mentioned, although a comprehensive study of Catholicism and elementary education has been conspicuously absent. In addition to the general overviews by Bossy, Edward Norman and J. Derek Holmes, which touch upon education intermittently, there are other volumes in which education has comprised chapters of larger general examinations of English Catholicism.[33] V. Alan McClelland began nearly half a century of research on English Catholicism and education with his revisionist account of Cardinal Manning, whose reputation had been so damaged by his late Victorian biographer E. S. Purcell.[34] Further important examinations of Manning but not necessarily education have come from D. E. Selby, Robert Gray, Dermot Quinn, James Pereiro and Jeffrey von Arx.[35] Other useful but narrower examinations of the topic that have added to our understanding of the community but have not traced the transformation of English Roman Catholicism into the bolder, more militant, politically active community as this book does have been written by Josef Altholz, Mary Griset Holland, Dermot Quinn and Mary J. Hickman.[36] More recently, Maurice Whitehead has augmented the earlier work of McClelland by stressing the

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hierarchy's emphasis on education as being one of self-defence, meaning that if Catholics did not educate their own poor, someone else would.[37] John T. Smith has recently provided a valuable comparative examination of late nineteenth-century clergy and the schools by investigating the overlooked educational motivations of Anglican, Catholic and Wesleyan Methodist clergy and the relationships they had with schoolteachers in Victorian Britain.[38]

Kester Aspden's recent analysis of Roman Catholicism in the twentieth century argues that by 1903, the year with which he begins his study, the Church, while still retaining some of its historical defensiveness, had become more confident and assertive in the fight against secularism, and that the twentieth-century bishops often obsessed over the education issue.[39] This book will bridge the gap between Bossy's and Aspden's studies by explaining how the Church and Catholic community evolved while pursuing the schools question into one that was confident, assertive and perhaps even aggressive and obsessional. This educational obsession of the twentieth century was born in the challenging post-restoration period when the Church was simply trying to get its footing amidst a besieged Church of England, an energized nonconformity and the ascendancy of secularism.

The tendency when examining this kind of movement is to focus on the individuals who were the community's leaders. Sometimes that focus can provide a warped image that does not accurately reflect historical reality. In this case, such an exclusive focus would highlight the work of the Catholic episcopacy, while neglecting the important educational struggle waged at the parochial level by lesser members of the clergy and local laity. However, since the bishops took the issue of education and pursued it as their most important goal, a large focus on the bishops is essential. That focus will highlight the efforts of the second and third Archbishops of Westminster – Manning, who served from 1865 to 1892, and Herbert Alfred Vaughan, who served from 1892 to 1903 – to whom improved education seemed essential to the survival of the English Catholic community. It will also reflect the great care and labour of Bishops William Ullathorne, William Turner, Robert Cornthwaite, Alexander Goss, Bernard O'Reilly, Edward Bagshawe and others towards education of the poor in their dioceses. As a result, most of the primary sources for this work consist of books, pamphlets, sermons, pastoral letters, speeches, correspondence and other writings from the pens of the Catholic leadership, some of which were published in the voluminous Catholic press or reported in the mainstream newspapers like *The Times* and the *Manchester Guardian*. Within these tracts, one can discern a distinctive philosophy of education that stood in clear opposition to the centralizing and secular currents pushing for a state-sponsored resolution to the social and educational problems that plagued Britain in the mid-nineteenth century.

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To provide a more complete picture of Roman Catholic educational efforts, however, this work will also examine efforts at the regional level, primarily in the dioceses of Salford, Liverpool, Leeds, Birmingham and Nottingham. Other than central London, no part of nineteenth-century Britain had a greater population of Catholics than Lancashire, due to its history as a recusant enclave for old Catholic families and its proximity to Ireland from which immigrants funnelled into the port of Liverpool.[40] With the large Irish population in these dioceses, the Church retained its missionary focus as it had to administer to the great needs of the poor living in areas of Lancashire where

> the cottages are old, dirty and of the smallest sort … masses of refuse, offal and sickening filth lie among standing pools in all directions; [and] the atmosphere is poisoned by the effluvia from these, and laden and darkened by the smoke of … factory chimneys.[41]

Improving educational provision for Catholics in areas such as these proved a daunting challenge, but the evidence reveals that the local Catholic clergy and laity in these areas, in part at the direction of the bishops, were actively involved in the struggle for the schools. Local parish communication, including but not limited to a great amount of primary materials related to the educational efforts of religious orders, helps to provide balance to our glimpse of nineteenth-century Roman Catholicism in England and Wales. Most helpful in providing insight into the everyday complexities and impediments of the classroom are the numerous poor school logbooks from the two northern dioceses which open our twenty-first-century eyes to the educational laboratories where policy and rhetoric encountered and often clashed with reality. Finally, this study acknowledges the recommendations and evaluations of Her Majesty's inspectors of schools, many of whose reports were copied into the school logbooks or quoted extensively in the annual reports of the official Catholic school organization.

The reader also needs a solid understanding of Roman Catholic educational philosophy in order to grasp this work's arguments concerning Catholic education and identity. This will add much depth of understanding to the actions taken beginning in the 1840s and continuing to the 1902 passage of the Balfour Act. The next chapter will examine the state of Catholic education at mid-century and the underlying tenets that supported the Catholic position on education to provide a basis from which to validate the central argument: that the struggle for education helped to transform the Catholic identity towards one marked by obstinacy, defensiveness, tenacity and, occasionally, aggression.

Towards the close of Cardinal Wiseman's lengthy speech in Malines, the Cardinal turned reflective about the future. Acknowledging that Catholics, especially in England and Wales, often did not share opinions on political or social issues, he offered to his listeners the maxim that, when problems concern-

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ing justice surfaced, those divisions must melt away: '[we must] all unite as in one common cause, and concur in one uniform course of action'. Hitting a note that could have been identified specifically with the education struggle, he continued with hopefulness: 'when the Church has need of our services, especially on behalf of her poor, the same unanimity will prevail, without any admixture of political contention'. He ended on an inspirational note: 'Be united in loyalty, fidelity, and community of interests ... be one in faith, in charity, in zeal, and in adhesion to the centre of unity; and you will carry all your just claims, and attain all your sacred ends'.[42] In reality, Wiseman was trying to inspire Belgian Catholics to overcome their own difficulties. He may as well have been speaking to his own flock.

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