

3. Ordination and First Steps in Priesthood

Advance to Orders, apologetics, and animadversions of a liturgical kind

Fortescue was of course getting ready for Major Orders. The locations selected for his Ordination are rather surprising: Darmstadt, in the grand duchy of Hessen-Darmstadt, for the diaconate, and the south Tyrolean city of Brixen (now Bressanone, in the Italian region of Alto Adige) for the priesthood. The probable explanation is factors of convenience, based on the circumstance that his fellow-seminarians included candidates for the dioceses concerned. His diaconal ordination took place in July 1897, when he marked the date in Greek with the words *Megalê Hêmera* ('great day!');¹ his priesting followed on Passion Sunday, 1898, which that year fell on 27 March. Home to celebrate his first Mass, he received from his aunt a fine chalice that, having learned the expression from German-speaking Catholics, he called a *Primizgeschenk*.² This would doubtless have been used in his first Masses — at the Jesuit church in Wimbledon, his aunt's parish, and in the Fortescue chapel in the Dominican priory on Haverstock Hill.

On a visit to the Oxford Fortescues, he argued with an Anglican Ritualist to whom he presented the choice of *either* the living voice of the Catholic Church *or* private judgment, a foreshadowing of his later polemics, plotted through the pages of various London periodicals, not least the *Tablet*, then in its strongly orthodox phase under the long editorship (1884–1920) of J.G. Snead-Cox (at the time, the weekly was the personal property of two successive archbishops of Westminster).

In May he received faculties from the bishop of Brixen to hear confessions, and, presumably as a 'thank you' for the training and sacramental ordination received, presented to the 'Convict', i.e. the student residence of the *Canisianum*, 'a red chasuble that I have given . . . it is made by Anglican nuns of East Grinstead according to my own design'.³ Passionate commitment to

1 Downside Archives, IX AF, Box D, 'Diary 1897', entry for 22 July, 1897.

2 Downside Archives, IX AF, Box D, 'Diary 1898', entry for 1 April, 1898.

3 Downside Archives, IX AF, Box D, 'Diary 1899', entry for 21 May, 1899.

excellence in everything concerned with the Liturgy of the Church went hand in hand with acerbic criticism of what did not meet his own high standards.

Fortescue's criticisms of much in the setting and the performance of the Liturgy, as he saw it on his travels in Italy, Austria-Hungary and elsewhere, discourage us from thinking all was necessarily well in this period in the worshipping life of these countries, at any rate so far as externals were concerned (and for the liturgical signs, externals count). On holiday in Tuscany in the spring of 1899, he noted of Easter at Fiesole 'all the holy week ceremonies here unspeakably badly done',⁴ and as for some of the Baroque churches visited in Hungary in the summer of that year, they were 'full of tawdry, broken and very dirty gild (sic) woodwork'.⁵ His diaries themselves are not always a work of literary art (they were not intended for publication), but vivid descriptions of Romany villages in Slavonia show he had not lost the capacity for writing evocative English prose.

Whitechapel, Arts and Crafts, and commitment to scholarship

The usual leisurely summertime return to England (in 1899 via Ulm, Strassburg, still a part of the German Empire, and Paris), and lazy days spent cycling around the Oxfordshire countryside (in many ways, Fortescue's manner of life was that of a moneyed and cultured undergraduate), came to an abrupt if hardly unexpected end when Cardinal Vaughan informed him in the closing days of September of his first appointment in the archdiocese. The first of a number of 'fill-ins', he was to be the chaplain of the German church in Whitechapel (Sankt Bonifatius, in Union Street), until such time as a German priest could be found. Originally linked to the Bavarian embassy, the church was now supported — at any rate in theory — by the German imperial government together with the Austro-Hungarian emperor. It was not a typical charge, but neither was it atypical in facing Fortescue with some of the practical problems of maintaining a church or chapel and a priest's house where, on both counts, things had been allowed to slide. He noted that the dire financial condition of the place (in a letter of 15 February 1900 he reports 'the creditors were about to sell up the mission'⁶) was only equalled by the fearful dirt. It cannot have been a terribly encouraging start to the exercise of priesthood (in more recent years, ecclesiastical superiors have usually given greater thought to immediately post-Ordination assignments), and the entries for the last months of the dying year show a variety of reactions on Fortescue's part.

4 Ibid., entry for Easter, 1899.

5 Ibid., entry for 19 July, 1899.

6 Westminster Diocesan Archives, Box AGD, Letter to Hamilton Macdonald of 15 February 1900.

The first response was a kind of grieving, chiefly for his lost Innsbruck friends. The second (no chronological order, or order of priority, is implied) was prayer, of a kind that would keep alive, in an immigrant setting, his basic apostolic orientation as an English Catholic priest. On St Edward's day he went to Westminster Abbey (where he reported many Catholics as present) in order to make a 'prayer for the conversion of England to the faith, for the Catholic hierarchy in England, and for myself'.⁷ The third response to Whitechapel's Germany-in-exile was commitment to creative, or at any rate craftsmanly, work, and something more can be said about this.

Beginning on 10 November 1899, when he attended an evening exhibition about the (rather recent) Arts and Crafts movement,⁸ he would devote a good deal of time to skills he considered should be at the service of the contemporary Church as they had been of its mediaeval predecessor. These included calligraphy, design of clothes, and architectural design for modest buildings. These skills not only gave him recreational pleasure. He also built them up against the day when he could deploy them in the service of a parish of his own. At the end of November he records what is apparently his first visit to the London County Council's 'Central School of Arts and Crafts': the School had opened its doors, in Southampton Row, in 1896. He attended along with his friend Douglas Cockerell (1870–1945), who was to be a leader of the associated movement for quality book production. Two weeks later, he enrolled in the writing class of the School's master calligrapher, Edward Johnston (1872–1944).⁹ And it is probably no coincidence that in the Christmas Octave we find him reading J.W. Mackail's life of William Morris the hero (1834–1896), along with Ruskin, of 'Arts and Crafts'

7 Downside Archives, IX AF, Box D, 'Diary 1899', entry for 13 October, 1899.

8 The term 'Arts and Crafts' had been coined by the book-designer and binder T.J. Cobden-Sanderson (1840–1922). The exhibitions, at the New Gallery in Regent Street, put on by the 'Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society', began in 1888, at first annually, though after 1890 they were held every three or four years. Thus E. Cumming and W. Kaplan, *The Arts and Crafts Movement* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1991), p. 26.

9 P. Holliday, *Edward Johnston, Master Calligrapher* (London: British Library Publishing, 2007). In 1912, Johnston would follow his friend Eric Gill, who shared his passion for lettering, to the Sussex village of Ditchling where Gill co-founded the 'Guild of St Joseph and St Dominic' for Catholic craftsmen, but though he stayed in the village until his death, he never made an approach to the Church: 'Johnston's wife Greta was coldly anti-Catholic and Johnston himself was perhaps a creature too solitary by temperament for organized religion', F. MacCarthy, *Eric Gill* (London: Faber and Faber, 1989), p. 141.

generally.¹⁰ The same day, 29 December, as if to reinforce the suggestion that this advanced hobby of his was solace, he had buried his maternal grandmother, the last living link with his direct family line.

Not that his execution of priestly duties was undermined. Even when a German-born rector was found he was kept busy enough. As he explained to a priest contemporary from Rome and Innsbruck days, '[M]y Rector is the most charming old gentleman on earth; but he speaks no word of the English tongue, so I have to answer all enq[uiry] letters, and either myself travel about London, or lead him whither he would not go. This means doing much of his work as well as mine own.'¹¹ His diary records pastoral visits to the sick and dying among German-speaking Catholics in London at large, and the care of German Sisters settled at Walthamstow and Hendon, as well as Whitechapel. He lectured to the *Gesellenverein* ('Guild of Associates') on English Reformation history and the lives and deaths of Fisher and More. He made ready to act as a Catholic apologist vis-à-vis a strongly resurgent Church of England, acquiring for the purpose Anglican polemical literature in the SPCK bookshop in Great Victoria Street. In mid February 1900 he was reading a classic of the genre, Bishop Charles Gore's *The Roman Catholic Claims*.¹² He would parry Gore's arguments in the course of his controversial writing — to be considered in this study under the title 'Anglo-Roman debates'.

At Oxford again in June, Fortescue knocked on the door of Pusey House, the Palm Court of Tractarianism' with its well-stocked theological library (Dr Pusey's personal collection had been acquired as its nucleus) and its corps of resident celibate chaplains serving the impressive chapel by Temple Lushington Moore (1856–1920) whom a competent judge has declared 'the best church architect of his generation'.¹³ (The justly celebrated altar, baldacchino and east window in the retro-choir, a late work of the unsurpassable Sir John Ninian Comper, were added only after Fortescue's death.) Fortescue found the Principal, Stuckey Coles (1845–1929), 'extraordinarily sympathetic', accepting from him a copy of his Advent meditations.¹⁴ He also called on the

10 J.W. Mackail, *Life of William Morris* (London: Longmans, Green, 1901).

11 Westminster Diocesan Archives, Series 20, Box AGD, Letter to Hamilton Macdonald of 15 February 1900.

12 Downside Archives, IX AF, Box D, 'Diary 1900', entry for 15 February, 1900. Gore's book had appeared in a second edition in 1899.

13 A. Symondson and S. Bucknall, *Sir Ninian Comper. An Introduction to his Life and Work with Complete Gazetteer* (Reading: Spire Books, 2006), p. 171.

14 Downside Archives, IX AF, Box D, 'Diary 1900', entry for 8 June, 1900. Vincent Stuckey Stratton Coles (1845–1929), Principal from 1897 to 1905, made an honorary canon of Christ Church by Gore in 1912, and a noted hymn-writer and Retreat-giver.

distinguished Anglican liturgiologist Frank Edward Brightman (1856–1932), one of the original Pusey ‘priest-librarians’, and picked his brains about the history of the Liturgy on which he was equipping himself to write.¹⁵ His own liturgical practice at the German church was enhanced by ongoing discovery of the Solesmes school: someone had given him a Solesmes *Liber graduale*, for the Mass chants, in April,¹⁶ and in July he began to read *Les mélodies grégoriennes d’après la Tradition* by Dom Joseph Pothier (1935–1923). Pothier emphasized that plainsong rhythm should take its cue from the text the music accompanied. His book was a turning point in persuading musicians, and eventually the Vatican, to abandon the so-called ‘measured’ chant introduced in the post-mediaeval period to keep abreast of developments in non-Gregorian music.¹⁷ Meanwhile, Fortescue made good use of his membership of the British Museum library, continuing with the Arabic studies which would be necessary for the kind of doctorate — the *doctoratus completus* — he hoped eventually to gain from Innsbruck. (His half-brother George was Keeper of Printed Books.) He also delved into Magyar, Turkish, and Persian: all languages that in one way or another might conceivably be helpful to him as a student of Oriental Christianity, though one suspects he found a delight in comparative grammar for its own sake.

Walthamstow and iron in the soul

At the end of October 1900, the Westminster auxiliary, Bishop Robert Brindle (1937–1916),¹⁸ informed him he would be leaving the German mission for an industrial school — nefarious invention of the nineteenth century Swedes — at Walthamstow, where he was to be chaplain not just to the Brothers who presided over that doubtless Dickensian establishment, but also to Sisters who ran an orphanage at the adjacent ‘Walthamstow House’. Oddly, enough, Walthamstow had been the birthplace of Morris, of Arts and Crafts fame, but by the start of the twentieth century what had been Essex countryside at the time of Morris’ birth was virtually unrecognizable (Mackail,

15 Brightman was already well-known for his *Eastern Liturgies: Being the Texts Original or Translated of the Principal Liturgies of the Church* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1896). See on this figure B. Nichols, ‘F.E. Brightman’, in C. Irvine (ed.), *They Shaped our Worship. Essays on Anglican Liturgists* (London: Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, 1998, pp. 35–41.

16 By 1900 Solesmes had produced two versions of the *Graduale*, 1883 and 1895: presumably this was the latter.

17 J. Pothier, *Les mélodies grégoriennes d’après la Tradition* (Tournai: Desclée Lefebvre, 1881).

18 Only briefly in that office (1899–1901): the following year Brindle became Bishop of Nottingham.

his first biographer, was just in time to take a party to Morris's family home, Elm House, before its demolition in 1898).¹⁹ On 10 November, Fortescue's 'new life' began, but it would not prove to be much of a Dantesque *vita nuova*. Already in the January of 1901 there was some inconsequential negotiation with the archdiocese about a possible return to Whitechapel, and by May he was desperate to be relieved of the post. Looking back, he wrote to his (half-) sister-in-law: 'Walthamstow was not a success: my Rector was a raving Irishman of the most offensive type and so towards the end of June I asked for a move'.²⁰

In his own mind he sought to mitigate its asperities by referring to it in mock-Latin: his charges were the *Frates apud S. Joannem in schola dicta industriali*, while Walthamstow itself morphed into *Silvopagium*. As if to transfer into craft the creativity for which he could find no outlet in the pastoral setting, he began to illuminate his diary entries for the great feasts of the Church. For Easter Sunday, he produced a superbly gilded 'S' for the *Surrexit* of the Easter proclamation, against a background of lilies in white, orange, and gold,²¹ and continued the practice at Pentecost, when another gold 'S', this time for the opening word of the Introit of the Whitsun Mass, *Spiritus*, was framed by carnations in red and green.²²

It should not be thought that these strategies were entered upon so as to save himself from an utterly inhuman existence. He retained friends from all periods of his life, and always made more, women (especially) as well as men. And he never rationed himself on holiday. But he needed — more, perhaps, than most people — satisfaction in the circumstances of his work. He communicated his unhappiness to the archdiocesan authorities, asking the vicar-general on 24 May to be moved from a situation he found intolerable.

Ongar: natural beauty and the gift of friendship

On 5 June he was assigned instead to the mission of St Helen's, Chipping Ongar, Essex, where, so it was explained, he could expect to remain for five years (in fact, he would spend scarcely eighteen months in the place soon dubbed *Angrae ad Castrum inter Orientales Saxones*). Church music was not St Helen's strong point (Fortescue suffered from a lady who sang badly while — so he wrote in Latin — 'beating on that kind of instrument whose altogether inappropriate name is "Harmonium"').²³ But the setting was charming.

19 F. MacCarthy, *William Morris. A Life for our Time* (London: Faber and Faber, 1994), p. 4.

20 Westminster Archive, Series 20, Box 22, Letter of 23 July, 1901 to Alice Fortescue.

21 Downside Archives, IX AF, Box D, 'Diary 1901', entry for 7 April, 1901.

22 *Ibid.*, entry for 26 May, 1901.

23 *Ibid.*, entry for 23 June, 1901.

Ongar has one little irregular street and all around are fields and hedges covered with dog roses, huge elm trees and brooms, corn and barley up and down the slopes on every side. It is a horrid calumny to call Essex flat or dull: Here it is simply ripping. In my walks and bicycle rides I find xiii and xiv cent[ury] churches, redroofed farms among the trees, gorgeous old manor houses in every side. And I have a jolly little George I house with purple flowers growing all over the front and behind a long garden sloping down to a brook and full of apples, pear and plum trees, gooseberries, currants and raspberries, vegetables of every kind and a lawn under the limes with banks of great white lilies.²⁴

The affection the place aroused in him is patent, as he indicated in expansive form to Alice Fortescue, explaining how,

plain living costs me no pang when I can lie in a hammock under my lime trees with a pipe and watch the yellow waning light poured across field after field, lighting the wavy wheat and gilding the great green clouds of elm trees and I see the shadow of hedge and bank getting longer, the dark mass of the forest purple against a sky of shining gold, broken by torn lines of crimson and scarlet.²⁵

The same affection is suggested, if more laconically, in a letter to a fellow priest — in this case, Harold Burton, author of brief lives of Challenor and Milner and subsequently a Professor at St Cuthbert's College, Ushaw, who would in time become a close friend. Fortescue looked forward to a visit from Burton when 'we shall be able to continue the violent altercations about the government of our Lord the Pope in the midst of wild rushes at wasps which you will no doubt remember as the special characteristic of breakfast in the house with the blue chair'.²⁶ Contemplation of the abundant wild flowers in the surrounding meadowland, described in sumptuous Latin, led him to a Bonaventurian outburst of praise of their Creator as the 'sapient *Artifex* who infinitely exceeds all created beauty'.²⁷ He was sufficiently inspired to take up gardening, a practice which continued, as did the seeking out of helpful academics — notably, in early 1902, Edward Granville Browne (1862–1926), a Cambridge professor,²⁸ whom he consulted on 'Babism',

24 Westminster Diocesan Archive, Series 20, Box 22, Letter to Alice Fortescue of 23 July, 1901.

25 Ibid.

26 Westminster Diocesan Archives, Series 20, Box 22: Letter to Harold Burton of 17 September, 1901.

27 Downside Archives, IX AF, Box D, 'Diary 1901', entry for 23 June 1901.

28 Fortescue refers to Edward Granville Browne as 'Professor of Persian'. He had been University Lecturer in Persian until that year, but was then made the Sir Thomas Adams Professor of Arabic.

an early version of the Baha'i faith, later to be one of Fortescue's numerous specialties.²⁹ Unfortunately, the Ongar stay was too brief for him to see the results of his horticultural labours. Their fruits were to be enjoyed instead by the returning rector, as he complained in a letter to Burton from his next posting: 'alas for the crocuses and daffodils which are now coming up in my Ongar garden — think of their disgust when they come out and find the apocalyptick beast there!'³⁰

His Ongar period was notable for the development of the friendship with Burton whose letters from Fortescue constitute by far the most quotable portion of the Westminster Archdiocesan holdings. With Burton he was able to let his humour run riot, to the point of surreality, as in his reference to the local nuns (the 'Little Pink Daughters of the Penitent Thief'), singing Vespers in 'what purports to be the Latin tongue', with a Sister Philipina Cananina (her *titulus devotionis*, as given by Fortescue, was 'of the Way to Jericho') 'wearing a cope and a Roman missal, from which she tells me that she always sings Vespers'. The nuns informed him (so he claimed to Burton) that a framed card of 'Pontifical Blessing' from Leo XIII would confer just such a benediction if suitably approached, and this he described as

a striking sight which I am naturally anxious to enjoy. Hitherto I have not succeeded in convincing it of my spiritual propriety. I have told it all the things that I think it would like to hear, that I am dead nuts on Encyclicals, that *ubi Petrus ibi* the whole show, that *Roma locuta est* (she never stops), *nulla salus est* (I hope I haven't got this mixed); I have even said polite things about its predecessors of the X and XV centuries: alas, in vain! it hasn't once burst into: *Sit nome[sic] Domini benedictumme[sic]*.³¹

He wrote to Burton a few months later, 'Ongar has not gone by without leaving what I am always grateful for — the result of the fortunate combination of accidents that led to a friendship which has changed all the lonely and sullen feeling with which I thought of our clergy in England'.³² And he added in the same letter, 'Please do not ever think me too heretical or undesirable to keep up with', evidently a reference (as the penultimate chapter of this book will show) to Fortescue's sympathy for Liberal Catholicism.

29 Babism was a pantheistic Persian sect founded in 1844 by Mirza Ali Muhammad (1819–1850), who called himself the 'Bab', i.e. 'Gate', (to divine truth, q.v.), and was executed as an apostate from Islam. His disciple Mirza Husayn Ali Nuri founded Baha'ism in 1863.

30 Westminster Diocesan Archives, Series 20, Box 22, Letter of 5 March, 1903.

31 Westminster Diocesan Archives, Series 20, Box 22, Letter of 20 September, 1902.

32 Westminster Diocesan Archives, Series 20, Box 22, Letter of 5 March, 1903.

Otherwise the Ongar interlude was chiefly dominated by the start of preparations for the Innsbruck doctorate, which entailed satisfying the examiners in Hebrew and Arabic as well as Church history and canon law. The diaries make it plain that, even before winning his second, theological, doctorate, he was expecting to be made Professor of Church History at St Mary's College, Oscott, the old seminary of the Midland District and, in the wake of its first Rector, Nicholas Wiseman, a real centre of Catholic intellectual life. As if to prepare for this, he had been giving public lectures on Church-historical topics at Brentwood throughout August and September. These hopes were dashed by the announcement on 10 October that another candidate had been selected. He wrote, 'My whole Oscottian scheme is annihilated'.³³ This precipitated another crisis. Three days later he asked the vicar-general for a more suitable posting — more suited, that is, to his particular combination of gifts.

Colchester with clerical clashes, and the German church again

The upshot was not especially encouraging: transfer, at the end of November 1902, to Colchester, for which, as possibly the oldest Roman settlement in Britain, a perfectly good Latin name already existed: *Camulodunum*, but Fortescue signalled what he thought of its backwoods status by adding the phrase 'in the farthest fields of the East Saxons'.³⁴ His name was becoming known among the metropolitan elite: in January Methuen commissioned from him an edition of the *Imitation of Christ* based on the 1471 Augsburg *editio princeps*. It was, he noted proudly, to be something 'splendid'.³⁵ Long prepared, *Thomae a Kempis, De Imitatione Christi* would appear only in 1919.³⁶ Under an unsympathetic parish priest, caricatured in the correspondence to Burton as 'Scroggs', Colchester was the shortest of his curacies, lasting just under four months. Fortescue fantasized to Burton that 'Scroggs' had an unclean spirit named 'Smufkin'. He certainly had a housekeeper, whom Fortescue unchivalrously denominated the 'last surviving Gadarene Swine', promising Burton stories to come concerning the household quartet: Scroggs, Smufkin, Swine and 'the Latin Clerk' (namely, himself, and thus the title of this book).³⁷

33 Downside Archives, IX AF, Box D, 'Diary 1902', entry for 10 October, 1902.

34 Ibid., entry for 19 November, 1902.

35 Downside Archives, IX AF, Box D, 'Diary 1903', entry for 15 January, 1903.

36 As *Thomae a Kempis, De Imitatione Christi, libri quattuor quos denuo recognouit, Adrianis a Fortiscuto Presbyter ritus Latini* (London: Methuen, 1919).

37 Westminster Diocesan Archives, Series 20, Box 22, Letter of 1 January, 1903.

However much Fortescue may have pestered the diocesan authorities to liberate him from the house of Scroggs, it is only fair to say he was genuinely needed at the German church to where, if briefly, he now returned. He explained to Burton, communicating his news.

Mr Bernhard Schaefer, my rector, is an ex-Jesuit, the founder of an order (our friends the little pink daughters) and a raving maniac, also a seer of visions and dreamer of dreams, lastly an exceedingly pious person of the modern Gallo-Roman type (the sort who count special devotion to St Joseph and adulation of the illustrious incumbent of the Roman bishoprick as better than ethical righteousness, who don't play the normal game but take endless trouble over extras; e.g. He doesn't fast in Lent but he does scourge his old flesh so that it sounds like carpet-beating all down the passage.

In which letter numerous other instances of Schaefer's lack of judgment followed,³⁸ yet all in all it was not so bad. '[O]ld Schaefer's lunacy does not really hurt me', while:

[a]ll day I have schools and clubs and hospitals and sick calls and then far into the night when the roar outside stops I shut myself in my little room (all white like at Ongar) and draw my Morris curtains, light my lamp and sit among my books and pictures and read my work for the next and last exam — about Babylon and Assyria, Marduk the great god and Tigaltapilassara [Tiglath-pileser] the King who swept across Asia like a blazing tornado, and I peg away at Hebrew and Cuneiform, and think of palm trees and the great desert, and Babylon the huge city, Ninive and Sargon's gorgeous palace, and I forget the howling wilderness of slums outside.³⁹

As for the slums, he declared he loved them 'and all the German beggars'. 'I tramp down through the slush of Whitechapel Road, and sit in the awful filth of the rooms in which a whole family sleeps and eats and lives (and never a window open) and talk the most beautiful tongue on earth (save Greek) and have a real joy in knowing that I am doing something for Christ'. He found himself interviewing beggars from every nation in (Eastern or Southern) Europe, but best of all he enjoyed encounters with 'the Chosen People', i.e. East End Jews.

though they are the poorest and dirtiest of all they always have that superb scorn for the Gentile that suggests Mount Zion and the glory of the things that are gone. Even when I give them alms,

38 Westminster Diocesan Archives, Series 20, Box 22, Letter of 5 March, 1903.

39 Ibid.

in their souls they know that I am only ‘Goyi’ [sic] and unclean (unclean! My word, if you could see them!), but they bless me with a beautiful Hebrew blessing that again suggests the holy city and the Dead Sea, Isaiah and Ezekiel and the Waters of Babylon where their fathers sat and wept — and all the while the roar of the dray-carts and trams, yelling hawkers and shrieking children goes on in Whitechapel Road outside.⁴⁰

It need not be supposed that Fortescue’s evocation of the poverty of Whitechapel was exaggerated. It was in Whitechapel in the last quarter of Victoria’s reign that William Booth had hit upon the plan of founding The Salvation Army to bring religion to the poorest of the poor.

Moving into the light

In the half-year he was back in Whitechapel, Herbert Vaughan died, as did Leo XIII, and while the Holy See experienced an interregnum of only a fortnight, Westminster had to wait for two and a half months. By the time Francis Bourne (1861–1935) of Southwark was appointed, Fortescue was on the move again, this time with some hopes (soon dashed) of being a rector, at Enfield, or, less bathetically, *Pratis Oeneis*. (He toyed with an alternative translation, *Oenopratum*.) Apart from embarking on gymnastic exercises — superfluous had he known how much cycling he would need to do at his next posting, the main distinctive feature of the Enfield stay was that for the first time he was able to orchestrate the great ceremonies as he wished. ‘But what’, he wondered, ‘of next year?’⁴¹

Inconveniently returning rectors were a feature of this period of his life. In February 1904, he had confided in a letter: ‘Since I have been in England I have had bad luck in my intercourse with our priests and am more and more getting suspicious and sulky and generally disinclined to be even civil to my own kind — all of which is very bad for the character’.⁴² Plainly, the friendship with Burton had not eased all the pain. In the following month he learned that he was to stand in once again, this time at Witham, *Aquae Separatoriae*. This time, however, we do not hear the cry of lament that sounded from Walthamstow, or even the sardonic tones prompted by dealings with his immediate ecclesiastical superior at Colchester.

In a happy interlude, and at the request of Bourne, he designed heraldic arms for the archbishop (he had developed a real gift for this skill, which requires a fund of knowledge for its correct execution, as well as good taste). He wrote to Bourne on 8 March, ‘I have tried not to make them too mediaeval-

40 Ibid.

41 Downside Archives, IX AF, Box D, ‘Diary 1903’, entry for 25 December.

42 Westminster Diocesan Archives, Box AGD, Letter to Hamilton Macdonald of 13 February, 1904.

looking. Sham mediaevalism is, I think, as silly and almost as ugly as sham cinque-cento'. Though remarking humbly 'I hardly foresee that I have any use for these little drawings except perhaps as bookmarkers', he was actually sufficiently confident in their quality to ask if he 'might have the honour of offering you a block made from my drawing — Walker and Cockerell are the right people to do it, I think'.⁴³ (He would repeat the experiment with other applicants, including, much later in his career, another metropolitan, Frederick William Keating of Liverpool, whom he described as 'in a bit of a hurry. You see, he is already appointed and palliomed and recognized by his brother of Rome, and yet he cannot even excommunicate a Canon till he has the proper note-paper on which to do it'.⁴⁴)

Fortescue's own transition from Enfield to Witham was gentle — he did not begin till 6 April — and the diary illumination for Pentecost strikes an exultant note, with red tulips on a white-starred crimson ground surrounding a golden 'S', the initial for some lines of his own composition: *Splendente aestivo sole*, an evocation of how multi-coloured flowers mirror the dispersed glittering flames of Pentecost as the Son of God renews the face of the earth.⁴⁵ It must have helped his spirits that he liked the rector, declaring him (in German) 'a loveable old gentleman' to his priest-friend Hamilton Macdonald who had just become archdiocesan chancellor, an elevation which, jesting, Fortescue describes as leaving him overwhelmed at his own audacity in writing to him at all.⁴⁶ In June he had the pleasure of translating Pius X's *motu proprio* on the revival of the Chant, *Tra le sollicitudini*, which vindicated the effort he had put into both learning and teaching this, the preferred music of the Latin church. He was also preparing the outline of a book — it would become in due course three — on the Eastern churches. On 21 September, he was given for the first time a mission entirely his own, as rector of the church of the Assumption, at Maldon (*Meldun*), in Essex.

Fortescue was moving into the sunlight where his great gifts could coruscate at last. In a burst of concentrated effort in the spring, he produced the thesis on the authenticity of St John's Gospel which would be the written component to the coveted degree. He acquired a new organ in time for his first Easter at Maldon, and was pleased with the way the Holy Week ceremonies unfolded under his direction. He learned to deal with trouble-makers in decisive fashion, telling a man who had sought to extract money in compensation for an invented grievance that 'unless he straightway left

43 Ibid., Letter to the Archbishop of Westminster of 8 March, 1904.

44 Cambridge University Library, MSAdd 9812/D/90, Letter to S. Morison of 26 July, 1921.

45 Downside Archives, IX AF, Box D, 'Diary 1904', entry for 22 May, 1904.

46 Westminster Diocesan Archives, Box AGD, Letter to Hamilton Macdonald of 7 June, 1904.

my house, I would do sharp violence to his person, which person I no less accurately than succinctly described as ill-liking and displeasing. He tarried not at all, but silent went'.⁴⁷ On Easter Monday he wrote (in German, as was usual in this correspondence) to Hamilton Macdonald, sharing his joy in the Easter ceremonies — as celebrated at Maldon, finely, so he claimed, and with the music 'entirely Solesmes'.⁴⁸ In June he made his way via Basle and Zurich to Innsbruck for the *ultimum rigorosum in doctoratu*, and was rewarded on 10 June with the qualification which made him forever after, in Westminster parlance, 'the Doctor'.

Buying a Turkish grammar in the New Year paved the way for a truly extraordinary sabbatical for it consisted in a Levantine 'grand tour'. Though we have no diary entries for the period concerned, some 'Rough Biographical Notes', possibly in the hand of his executrix, Miss Elmes, record that on 22 October 1906 he left for the University of Beirut, to improve his Arabic and study at first hand the Oriental liturgies.⁴⁹ It was to be a landmark in his life.

47 Westminster Diocesan Archives, Box AGD, Letter to 'the Chancellor, Archbishop's House, Westminster', of 7 February, 1905.

48 Westminster Diocesan Archives, Box AGD, Letter to Hamilton Macdonald of 16 April, 1906.

49 Downside Archives, IX AF, Box B, 'Notebook'. See footnote 1 above.