

No reader of *The Roman Option* will forget Oddie's poignant description of the group of marooned Anglo-Catholics who, barely tolerated in the new Anglicanism, endeavour to remain true to their version of traditional Western Christianity. But they are called upon, Oddie insists, to recognize that it is better for all of Christianity that Anglicanism has embraced the Protestant tradition. Perhaps under the leadership of Dr. Carey the Church of England will be able to employ its talent for compromise and accommodation to bring together into, not one fold but "one bloc" (p. 15; the phrase is Cardinal Hume's), the numerous branches of Protestantism which could then enter into fruitful dialogue with Catholicism.

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*Witness for the Truth: The Wanderer's 130 Year Adventure in Catholic Journalism* by George A. Kendall (St. Paul, Minn.: The Wanderer Press and Grand Marais, Michigan: St. George Press, c. 1997), 431 pages. \$24.95 in hardback.

Back in the late 1960s or early 70s, several years before I became a Catholic, I read a review of a book entitled *Has the Catholic Church Gone Mad?* In view of what has happened in the Church from about 1963 to the present, the question makes a lot of sense. Unfortunately, many people do not recognize this and, even if they reject the overt

heresies of today, seem timid about calling a spade a spade or accepting that tough measures must be taken before order can be restored within the household of the faith. One source has never been afraid to do these things: *The Wanderer*, a national Catholic newspaper published since 1867 in Saint Paul, Minnesota.

*Witness for the Truth* is the account of this intrepid newspaper's journey during the last thirty or so years, for, despite the subtitle "*The Wanderer's 130 Year Adventure in Catholic Journalism*," it says little about the paper's earlier years. Instead it gives an account of the post-Vatican II era in the Church and *The Wanderer's* response to the many tragic events of this time. The book is arranged by theme, the first part covering the 1975 Call-to-Action conference in Detroit, the second the undermining of *Humanae vitae* by much of the theological establishment, the third abortion, the fourth the controversies about the new Mass and its defective English translation, and the last two parts dealing with assaults on Catholic orthodoxy, including catechesis, and with human sexuality. In each part Kendall covers the principal happenings in the ambiguous years since the Council, adding excerpts from *The Wanderer* which react to and comment on these events.

The section of the book dealing with *Humanae vitae* and its aftermath, including the firing and rehiring of Father Charles Curran in 1967, is most interesting. In this inci-

dent one can see an early example of the capitulation of Church authorities to pressure and the spirit of the age; such examples continue to the present day.

Worth mentioning is the irony of *The Wanderer's* editors who had long supported the liturgical movement—being now generally classified as "liturgical reactionaries." The fact of the matter is that the liturgical movement has changed, not *The Wanderer*. What at present calls itself liturgical renewal is in large part a betrayal of the liturgical movement as it existed before the Council. In recounting the beginnings of vernacular liturgy and the promulgation of the *novus ordo* Mass, Kendall captures well, I think, the spirit of a time when Catholics were often caught by surprise by what was happening. As Kendall says, "the events that took place were so bizarre that anyone who had predicted them a few years before they actually happened would have been regarded as a candidate for a rubber room" (p. 208). At the same time he makes clear by means of quotations from *The Wanderer* that the editors were never opposed to the *novus ordo* as such or necessarily to Mass in the vernacular. But they did oppose an English version that distorted the meaning of the Latin text and a liturgy that was centered on man rather than on God.

No one would deny that *The Wanderer* is controversial and detested by many, but among its enemies are those who reject genuine Catholic doctrine. In an age in which

most Catholics are too polite or too timid to stand up and say that the emperor has no clothes, I admire this feisty newspaper for its guts. Admittedly, *The Wanderer* has at times taken stupid positions and failed to think deeply enough about some topics. Who has not? *The Wanderer* is not perfect, but it is fearless; and fearlessness is a virtue sadly lacking in the Catholic Church today.

There is one area, however, in which I shall criticize *The Wanderer*. In discussing *The Wanderer's* consistent opposition to communism, Kendall states that the paper did not commit itself "to classical economic liberalism or laissez-faire capitalism, an ideology which, in its own way, is equally destructive of human dignity" (pp. 17-18). I accept Kendall's view on the effects of capitalism, but I must disagree with him about *The Wanderer*. More than one writer in its pages has espoused *laissez-faire*, regarding the Catholic Church and the Republican party (at least until recently) as natural allies. Kendall constantly speaks of himself as a conservative or of the Right. But Catholics who label themselves "conservatives" play into the hands of the great liberal assault on Christian civilization that has been going on, not for thirty years, but for over 300 years. Right and Left, conservative and liberal, as we experience them in our society are simply varieties of liberalism. Catholicism simply cannot be located on the political spectrum. It is entirely other and takes its cues from a different philosophy. Catholics who regard them-

selves as merely a subset of the conservative movement will continue to compromise and distort Catholic social and cultural positions.

*Witness for the Truth* is much more than a history of a newspaper. It is rather a view of a sad time in the Church's history through the eyes of one newspaper. One could do worse than look at this period through such eyes.

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*C.S. Lewis In Context*, by Doris Myers (Kent State University Press, 1994). \$28.00.

*A Challenge to C.S. Lewis*, by Peter Milward, S.J. (Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 1995). \$29.50.

One of the hallmarks of Chesterton's thought is the underlying assertion that eternal verities manifest themselves in commonplace settings. This synergy between what Hugh Kenner called "the word and the world" helps explain Chesterton's devotion to journalism, for Chesterton believed that each age articulates the universal human experience in its distinct idiom, and therefore, that to be engaged with the trends of one's time is a duty for all defenders of the permanent things. Such an incarnational, sacramental perspective also shaped C.S. Lewis's attitude toward his era. Despite his claims that he never read newspapers and his professed ignorance of current events, Lewis was highly aware

of the social and cultural milieu in which he lived and was one of its most acute critics; his work, like that of Chesterton, is often a deliberate dissent from modern notions and norms. Sadly, most scholars writing of both authors have ignored this dimension of their careers, preferring to focus on the transcendent wisdom which each transmitted. Although those ultimate principles are the most significant elements of their thought, an appreciation of the specific circumstances in which Chesterton and Lewis expressed such insights is also necessary in order to understand their achievements fully.

As the title of her book indicates, Doris Myers seeks to fill this historiographical gap in the Lewis literature by establishing the context of some of his writing, primarily the fiction. Yet the context that she chooses is finally too narrow and her application of it too procrustean. Ironically, when Myers forgets her main thesis and focuses more intensively on specific texts, she does her best and most valuable work by providing excellent close readings of Lewis's novels and also by suggesting a broader context, one more suitable for assessing as profound a project of cultural criticism as Lewis undertook. Myers maintains that she wishes to direct scholarly attention away from Lewis's life and apologetics to his fiction "as art worthy of serious study" (x). She attempts to reach this goal by locating his novels in the context of early twentieth-cen-