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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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-
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.


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-