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Lingard's Hornby

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From 1811 to 1851, Hornby was the home of John Lingard, historian, Cisalpine, and priest. His reputation rested on his work as an historian and on his leadership of the Cisalpines. However, for most of his life he was the priest of the small and declining Catholic congregation in Lonsdale.¹

Lingard was an heir of Douai and a founder of Ushaw. Born at Winchester on 5 February 1771, he entered Douai in 1782. When the College was seized during the French Revolution, he returned to England in 1793, and was ordained at York in 1795. The English secular college, driven from Douai, found refuge at Crook Hall, County Durham, and finally at Ushaw, and Lingard became its first vice-president. In 1811, he took up residence as priest in the mission of Hornby, where he remained until his death on 17 July 1851, and was buried at Ushaw.²

Before he left Ushaw he made his reputation as a historian with his *Antiquities of the Anglo-Saxon Church* (1806), and his duties at Hornby left him the leisure to devote the rest of his life to his masterpiece, *The History of England*. The first edition appeared in the years 1819-30, but he was continually revising it, correcting it, and taking account of new material, until 1849.³

Apparently isolated in Catholic Lancashire, on the geographical and cultural periphery of England, he worked within the centre of European scholarly tradition. As an alumnus of Douai, he drew on the French school, represented by Fleury, the Bollandists and the Maurists, of the scientific criticism of sources. As an English historian he also had before

him the models of Hume and of Gibbon, whose house at Geneva he visited, and he had the satisfaction of superseding Hume's *History of England*. Moreover, Lingard's concern with the sources gave him, unlike the other writers of the Enlightenment, a respect for the Middle Ages, even if he could not share the enthusiasm of Romantic historians, like Turner, Hallam, and his acquaintance Southey.⁴

Lingard's achievement as a scholar was to write English history from the sources. He thus anticipated von Ranke's aim of writing history 'as it had really been -wie es eigentlich gewesen' and Acton's attempt to introduce German standards of scholarship to English Catholics.'

He had, however, set himself a virtually impossible task in applying this principle to writing the whole of English history. Even though he restricted himself to the important events of national history, he was obliged continually to revise his work to take account of newly-discovered sources. He found himself like Lewis Carroll's Red Queen constantly running to stay in the same place, and doomed in the end to be superseded.'

Nevertheless, he did leave behind a lasting historical heritage: his objectivity. It was this impartiality, as much as his use of the sources, which raised him above Hume and explains his contempt for Macauley. Consider only his careful comparison of Anglican and Catholic belief, or of the Gallican and Ultramontane positions, or his clarification of Jesuit opinion on the temporal power of the papacy.' In history, as in everything else, Lingard believed that 'In medio stat veritas -Truth stands in the middle'.⁸ It was a very English position, in the tradition of Douai as the Catholic offshoot of Oxford.

Lingard's *History* won international acclaim. In 1821 he was awarded a triple doctorate by Pope Pius VII, and in 1839 he was elected to the Academie Francaise. It was widely believed that he was the scholar, who drew 'ex nativis fontibus -from the native fountains', declared a cardinal *in petto* by Leo XII in 1826.⁹

This prestige, combined with the knowledge, acquired at Ushaw, of the secular clergy, including the vicars apostolic, made Lingard the acknowledged leader of the Cisapines. The Cisapine school was the enlightened manifestation of the AngloGallican tradition of Catholicism, cherishing the autonomy of national churches, adjusting the Church to the religious pluralism of modern society, and addressing its teaching to the development of scientific method. Lingard, as the heir of the Gallican tradition of the English secular clergy embodied in Douai, was active in the attempts to secure toleration, in the restoration of the English college at Rome to the seculars under the rectorship of his friend Gradwell, in the English mission's response to

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the restoration of the Jesuits, and in the defence of the independence of Ushaw. He was the friend of Charles Butler, the lay leader of the Cisalpines, he helped Tierney to prepare his edition of Dodd's *Gallican Church History*, and he corresponded with Dollinger, the leader of the German Liberal Catholics and the mentor of Acton, the leader of the English Liberal Catholics.' By the time he was sixty and had completed the first edition of his *History*, he was 'the sole systematic proponent of the Catholic Enlightenment in England', and the intellectual centre of gravity of English Catholicism rested in Hornby. By that time, Catholic emancipation, for which the Cisalpines had striven for so long to no avail, had been won by the Irish. However, the attempt to bring the Church to terms with the State had raised the wider issues of its relationship with society and of the role of the papacy.

The fundamental tenet of the Cisalpines was that religion consisted of St. Paul's 'rationabile obsequium -a reasonable service'." It was a position that accorded with the rationalism of the Enlightenment and the reasonableness of the English. It was the basis of the Gallican defence of the rights of the national episcopate and of the supremacy of a general council, as against the Ultramontane doctrine of Papal absolutism. It was also the foundation of the Enlightened Catholic insistence on concentrating on the essentials of religion and of expressing them with clarity. Hence Lingard disliked antiquarian revivals in liturgy and 'newfangled devotion' which gave 'an air of novelty to Catholicism'." For Hornby this meant a revised catechism and an English service devised by Lingard. It also led him to produce by far his most popular, enduring and bestloved work, his hymn 'Hail, Queen of Heaven'.¹⁴ Equally opposed to antiquarian revivals and to modern innovations, Lingard stood in the middle, and declared 'Let us endeavour to make our religion appear venerable and heavenly to those around us'.¹⁵

Acknowledged as the outstanding intellect of English Catholicism, Lingard chose to remain at Hornby. This was partly because of his dislike of administrative responsibility. Despite his love of Ushaw, to which he bequeathed his estate, his year as acting president was for him a time of anxiety. Accordingly he declined the presidency of Ware, the office of coadjutor bishop of the Western District, and a place at the papal court."¹⁶

Moreover for "the vicar of Hornby" as he referred to himself,¹⁷ 'here everything, every place is endeared to me after thirty years' habitation'.¹⁸ The village of Hornby is dominated by the Anglican parish church with its two-tier octagonal tower. Its rector, Mr. Proctor, was Lingard's friend, and a tablet was erected in the church to commemorate Lingard by his Protestant friends. The building of its

`picture book' Castle, as illustrated in Roby's *Traditions of Lancashire*, in front of its medieval pele tower, was only begun in 1849 by Lingard's friend Pudsey Dawson. Next to Hornby Hall was Lingard's presbytery, built in 1762, thanks to the generosity of Mrs. Anne Fenwick. It included Mrs. Fenwick's furniture and a portrait of her in a blue dress. The care of its walled garden, with its sundial and its pear trees against the south wall, was Lingard's hobby. There he planted the oak which he brought from Lake Trasimene. On Easter Sunday 1851 he gave away some young oaks, which he had grown from it, to be planted as memorials, and the next day went down with his last illness. There he would walk with his big Sicilian Poodle, Etna, and there he kept his tortoise, Moses, which survived him by fifty years and which is preserved in the presbytery. This fondness for a tortoise was something he shared with Gilbert White. Beyond the garden a paddock stretched to the River Wenning, a trout stream that ran down to the Lune. Next to the presbytery is the chapel Lingard built in 1820 (partly from the materials of the old chapel at Claughton) with its Venetian doorway (flanked by busts of Constantine and Oswio) echoing the presbytery windows, and the altar piece he purchased in Rome. The chapel also contains a tablet, erected by the Lancashire secular clergy, in memory of Lingard. From the presbytery to the Hall, Lingard trod a path for his daily game of whist with his friend the Protestant squire, David Murray. It was with these Protestant friends, the parson and the squire, that Lingard shared the gifts of lobsters sent from Scarborough by his friend John Walker, the Catholic priest there. Amongst his own congregation he left the tradition of "th'ould doctor" who turned none "empty away from his door" and whose Sunday afternoon catechism lessons left an indelible impression.'

The Catholic Parish at Hornby was typical, in that it began as a seigneurial congregation, centred on a gentry household, and was transformed into an independent clerical mission. In the late sixteenth century Robert Hall in Tatham Parish was the seat of the Catholic Cansfield family, who inherited Claughton Hall in the seventeenth century. The Cansfields were served by priests who ministered to the Catholics in the district. In the eighteenth century, the Cansfield properties were inherited by the Gerards of Bryn who did not reside in the locality. Nevertheless, the local Catholics continued to be served from Robert Hall by a priest, maintained by a fund established by Cuthbert Morley of Thurnham in 1712. Then in the 1730s, Thomas Benison, a Lancaster attorney, whose family came from Hornby, built Hornby Hall, which was inherited by his daughter, Anne. Anne was educated as a Catholic by her Catholic mother, but she married the Protestant John Fenwick of Burrow Hall. However, when he died childless in 1757, her estate was claimed by her Protestant brother-in-

law, Thomas Fenwick. In the end, it took a private act of parliament to secure Anne Fenwick's life interest in the estate, which would eventually pass to her brother-in-law's family.'

Meanwhile, she established a permanent independent clerical mission at Hornby. In 1757 she applied to the vicar apostolic of the North for a chaplain at Hornby. Aware that the Hall would pass to her Protestant relatives, she also applied to the vicar apostolic for the Morley trust fund to be applied to the permanent maintenance of this mission, and, before her death in 1777, she herself provided funds to build a chapel-house at Hornby in 1762 and a chapel at Claughton in 1763. The first priest was the Rev. Thomas Butler, who served there from 1762 to 1793. His successors, and Lingard's predecessors, were the French emigre Abbe Bachelier (1793-1808), and the Rev. Arthur Story (1808-11).²¹

The independent clerical congregation at Hornby, like many others in the North, increased in numbers throughout the later eighteenth century. There were ninety-eight Catholics at Hornby in 1767, a hundred in the district about 1773, 110 communicants in 1774, and 110 in 1783. However, the congregation centred on Robert Hall was in decline. There were only fourteen Catholics in Tatham in 1767, and, though there were supposed to be sixty communicants there in 1783, there were only seven in 1784. Accordingly, after 1811, when Lingard took up residence at Hornby, the mission at Robert Hall was closed, and the congregation was served from Hornby. In effect, the Hornby mission served the whole of Lonsdale, and the total number of Catholics in the Anglican deanery of Lonsdale, excluding the fifty-eight at Clapham in the West Riding of Yorkshire, was 172. It is possible to estimate the Catholic population by averaging the annual number of baptisms at ten-year intervals and then multiplying this average by thirty. If this calculation is applied to the Catholic baptisms at Hornby, and until 1811 at Robert Hall, then the estimated Catholic population of Lonsdale in the 1760s was 183, a figure close to the 172 Catholics returned in 1767. The estimated Catholic population of Lonsdale, therefore, increased steadily, until the closure of the Robert Hall mission and the arrival of Lingard, from 183 in the 1760s, to 201 in the 1770s, to 255 in the 1780s, to 261 in the 1790s, and 345 in the 1800s.²²

Although this rural congregation contained no Catholic gentry, it was socially diverse. Inevitably the agricultural classes figured highly, but there was none of that alienation of the poor that characterised some rural parishes, for both farmers and labourers were well represented. Moreover, there was a significant proportion of artisans, as well as a scattering of other social groups. Thus farmers were 24% of the Catholic congregation, compared with 14% of the national population and only 5% of the national adherents of Protestant

Nonconformity; labourers were 32%, compared with 17% of the nation and 11% of Nonconformity; artisans, mainly hatters and weavers, were 27% compared with 24% of the nation and 59% of Nonconformity; whilst tradesmen were 5%, compared with 6% of the nation and 7% of Nonconformity; and other occupations were 12%, compared with 33% of the nation and 9% of Nonconformity. This, then, was a rural parish, but not an exclusively agrarian congregation. Here, as elsewhere, Catholicism shared many of the characteristics and constituency of Protestant Nonconformity.'

The Catholic population, as part of the total population of Lonsdale, was distributed in a linear pattern. In the middle was, of course, the village of Hornby, but the main concentrations of Catholics were pre-eminently at nearby Wray and Millhouses, and further up the valley of the Wenning at Tatham and Bentham, and along the valley of the Lune itself at Caton, Aughton, Gressingham, and Arkholme, near Tunstall, Charlotte Bronte's 'Brocklebridge', whence on winter Sundays Jane Eyre returned to Cowan Bridge, her 'Lowood', by 'an exposed and hilly road, where the bitter winter wind, blowing over a range of snowy summits to the north, almost flayed the skin from our faces!'

In the 1810s, the congregation began to decline, a process which continued throughout the 1820s and 1830s, although there was a slight recovery in the 1840s. Thus the estimated Catholic population was 255 in the 1810s, 216 in the 1820s, 153 in the 1830s, and 171 in the 1840s. This decline bore no apparent relation to fluctuations in the total population of Hornby which increased from 420 in 1811 to 477 in 1821, but then declined to 383 in 1831. The Catholic decline was only partly caused by lapsing or leakage, which Lingard considered to be great, partly because children lost their Catholicism in workhouses and as apprentices. In Hornby it was mainly caused by emigration, for, although the parish was rural, it was not isolated. Hornby itself lay less than ten miles from Lancaster, to which it was connected by a turnpike, and a railway was built in 1849, which even brought with it some additions to the congregation amongst its builders. At the same time, this was a period of economic and social disruption and unrest, increased in the countryside by the postwar agricultural depression and exacerbated by the New Poor Law of 1834. In all, between 1811 and 1850, 133 Catholics emigrated, and sixty told Lingard whither. Six went to America, one to London, four elsewhere in the British Isles, nine to local villages, and forty-two to the towns of the North-West: twelve to Lancaster, nine to Preston, eight to Kendal, five to Blackburn, four to Manchester, three to Liverpool, and one to Ashton-under-Lyne. However, despite emigration from the area, the Congregationalists at Caton suffered little decline.'

Thus, despite a priest of outstanding intellect and learning, employing all the best liturgical and catechetical techniques of evangelisation, in a congregation that contained the most responsive range of its social constituency, Catholicism could not hold its own against overwhelming economic forces, which certainly require closer investigation. Compared with the neighbouring coastal, nuclear Catholic community at Yealand, which possessed not only the advantage of an independent clerical mission but also that of a seigneurial Catholic household, Hornby demonstrates the geography of religious dimorphism. It also exhibits the localisation of culture characteristic of rural society as a whole. This superficial study at least indicates the need for a thorough examination of modern Catholicism in rural Lancashire.²⁶

Lingard's career at Hornby, therefore, apparently ended in failure. His congregation had suffered decline, and the Cisalpinism he embodied was about to be overwhelmed by the rise of Ultramontaniam. Nevertheless, Catholicism did survive at Hornby in the chapel he built, and his Cisalpinism has been rediscovered. In the triumph of liberalism, perhaps Lingard's conservatism will be recognised and his Anglo-Gallican respect for tradition, for the 'venerable and heavenly', for religion as a 'reasonable service'.²⁷

NOTES

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2. G. Anstruther, *The Seminary Priests* (4 vols, Great Wakering, 196877), IV, 173.
3. M. Haile and E. Bonney, *Life and Letters of Lingard* (London, 1911), passim.
4. N. J. Abercrombie, 'The English Enlightenment', *North West Catholic History*, IX (1982), 26-29; J. P. Chinnici, *The English Catholic Enlightenment: John Lingard and the Cisalpine Movement 1780-1850*, (Shepherdstown, U.S.A., 1980), 10947; Haile and Bonney, 154, 177.
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6. Lingard, I, v, xix; L. Carroll, *Alice in Wonderland and Alice through the Looking-Glass* (Puffin edition, Harmondsworth, 1962), 216.
7. Lingard, I, xiiiiv, xvi, VI, 67678, VII, 55152, IX, 3436; Haile & Bonney, 343; J. Lingard, *The English Catholics* (Wigan, 1981), 13, 1213, 16.

8. Chinnici, 62.
9. Haile and Bonney, 193, 22023, 272.
10. Aveling, 34244; Chinnici, vvi, 314, 27; Haile & Bonney, 15052, 17576, 254, 27377, 28890; 281.
11. Chinnici, 13435.
12. *Romans*, 12, 1; Chinnici, 7678.
13. Haile & Bonney, 306308.
14. J. Bossy, *The English Catholic Community* (London, 1975), 37477; Haile & Bonney, 360.
15. Haile & Bonney, 306307.
16. Haile & Bonney, 111, 155, 211; Anstruther, IV, 174.
17. Haile & Bonney, 196.
18. Haile & Bonney, 293.
19. N. Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: North Lancashire* (Harmondsworth, 1969), 14647; J. Roby, *Traditions of Lancashire*. 2 vols, London, 1871) I, 247; *Miscellanea IV* (London, Catholic Record Society, IV, 1907), 32223; B. Foley, *Anne Fenwick of Hornby* (Preston, 1977), 21; Haile & Bonney, 112415, 214, 296, 321, 36668; Aveling, 34244; G. White, *The Natural History of Selborne* (Everyman ed., London, 1949), 24546.
20. Misc IV, 31920; Foley, 68.
21. Misc IV, 31920; Foley, passim.
22. J. A. Hilton, 'The Cumbrian Catholics', *Northern History*, XVI (1980), 5657; Hilton, 'The Catholic North East', *Durham County Local History Society Bulletin* XXIV (1980), 3744; Hilton, *The Catholic Revival in Yealand* (Preston, 1982), passim; Bossy, 'Catholic Lancashire in the Eighteenth Century' in J. Bossy and P. Jupp, *Essays Presented to Michael Roberts* (Belfast, 1975), 5469; E. S. Worrall, *Returns of Papists, 1767, Diocese of Chester* (Oxford, C.R.S. occasional publications, I, 1980), 15253; Foley, 6; C. A. Bolton, *Salford Diocese and its Catholic Past* (Manchester, 1950), 243; *Misc IV*, 31952.
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26. Hilton, *Yealand*, passim; J. Delumeau, *Catholicism between Luther and Voltaire* (London, 1977), 14651, 179202; McLeod, 5474.
27. J. D. Holmes, *More Roman Than Rome* (London, 1978), passim; Chinnici, passim.