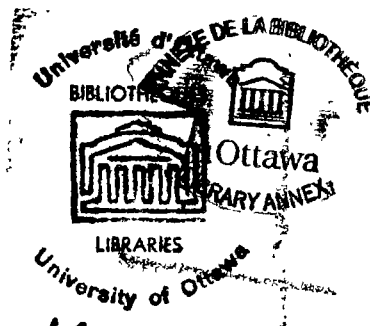


RONALD KNOX AS A SATIRIST
by Sister Saint Agnes, C.N.D.

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Thesis submitted to the Faculty
of Arts of the University of
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of the requirements for the degree
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INTRODUCTION

In the following lines Father Martin D'Arcy has significantly epitomized the quality and importance of Ronald Knox's literary career:

As the years passed he came to be recognized as the representative and defender of English culture, based on the Bible and the humanities, which manifesting itself in St. Thomas More flowed on to define itself again in Ronald Knox.¹

The purpose of this thesis is to study and evaluate Ronald Knox as a satirist and to indicate his place in the satiric tradition. This discussion of his satirical writings will reveal his highly literary and artistic defence of those sacred and human values which constitute the glory of the western heritage. It will be seen that Knox is in very truth a representative and defender of English culture, of that precious culture of the western world based upon Christianity and the Greco-Roman heritage, a culture which has been assaulted from so many directions in modern times.

The Oxford dictionary has defined satire as "a poem, now occasionally a prose composition, in which prevailing vices or follies are held up to ridicule." Northrop Frye, however, has pointed out that though satire was and sometimes still is the name of a form, the word satire

¹ D'Arcy, Martin, "Panegyric," in Tablet, Vol. 210, issue of August 31, 1957, p. 173.

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"now means a tone or quality of art which we may find in any form."² Fowler in his useful tabulation of literary terms has indicated that the province of satire is morals and manners, its end is amendment, its means is accentuation and its audience is the self-satisfied.³

For the purpose of this study, satire shall be considered as holding up human or individual abuses or shortcomings of any kind to reprobation in a distinctly literary manner by means of ridicule, burlesque or any other method of intensifying incongruities with an intention of provoking amendment. For as Louis Bredvold has written:

Satirical indignation is aroused when we discover the incongruity of the comic in a situation which our moral judgment also condemns as unworthy, as indignus. It is this combination of the moral judgment with the comic experience which gives satire its distinctive character.⁴

The purpose of the satirist goes far beyond the mere desire to entertain; while judging of the object of his satire in the light of ultimate standards, he wishes to arouse laughter, but a curative laughter which will lead to amendment of follies and abuses.

² Frye, Northrop, "The Nature of Satire," in University of Toronto Quarterly, Vol. 14, No. 1, issue of October 1944, p. 75.

³ Fowler, H.W., A Dictionary of Modern English Usage, Oxford, Clarendon, 1926, p. 426.

⁴ Bredvold, Louis, "A Note in Defence of Satire," in ELH., Vol. 7, No. 4, issue of December 1940, p. 262.

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The following standards will be used in evaluating Knox as a satirist. These are divided for the sake of clarity into those which concern the satirist, those which concern the manner and technique of the satirist and finally those which concern the object of the satire.

In respect to the satirist certain conditions are essential to writing good satire. It stands to reason that if he is attacking those who have erred against truth whether in the natural or supernatural order, it is necessary that he be in possession of the truth himself. Likewise if he is attacking those who have strayed from moral standards, he must have a firmly founded ethics as a basis for his attack; otherwise there will be no rational meaning in his likes and dislikes. Hamm has written in this regard:

In other words, satire presupposes and requires a firmly founded ethics if it is to be more than vituperation and name-calling. Vivacity, wit, vehemence, violence - these qualities and emotions are convincing and valid only if their object is adequately defined.⁵

It follows that the value of a satirist's contribution depends to a large extent upon his firm adherence to the standards of truth and morality.

The spirit in which the satirist makes his attack is also of great importance in determining the success of his satire. He must not be animated by a spirit of cynicism,

⁵ Hamm, Victor M., The Pattern of Criticism, Milwaukee, Bruce, 1951, p. 108.

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for as Bredvold has truly said: "(...) in the true satirist derision is limited and tempered by moral idealism."⁶ The satirist must therefore be convinced that men can be saved and that they are worth reforming. Another aspect of the spirit in which the satirist should write is pointed out by Chesterton:

To write great satire, to attack a man so that he feels the attack and half acknowledges its justice, it is necessary to have a certain intellectual magnanimity which realises the merits of the opponent as well as his defects.⁷

To this large-hearted generosity capable of recognizing the qualities of an opponent must be added a freedom from pettiness and from personal animosity. Wolfe has pointed out in this connexion that it is the "doom of the satirist"⁸ should he allow himself to be betrayed into spite and personalities.

In regard to the technique of the satirist and the form in which he chooses to launch his satire, certain criteria should be stated. In the first place, unless the satire is written in a good literary style, it has little or no value either as satire or as literature. Richard Garnett recognized this when he commented: "Without literary form, it (satire) is mere fooling."⁹

⁶ Bredvold, Louis, Op. Cit., p. 264.

⁷ Chesterton, G.K., Varied Types, New York, Dood and Mead, 1926, p. 269.

⁸ Wolfe, Humbert, Notes on English Verse Satire, New York, Harcourt Brace, 1929, p. 76.

⁹ Garnett, Richard, "Satire," in The Encyclopedia Britannica, 1947, Vol. 20, p. 5.

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Another requisite of successful satire has been stated by David Worchester who wrote: "Satire, however, is the most rhetorical of all kinds of literature."¹⁰ By rhetoric is meant the art of using language so as to persuade or influence others. This art teaches the writer how to translate his thoughts into an objective form which will be most likely to impress his readers and cause them to share his opinions and sentiments. As Worchester has said concerning the role of rhetoric in satire: "It instructs him (the satirist) in the choice of a vehicle, or literary genre, and guides him to an appropriate style."¹¹ This author adds that the power of persuasion through a rhetorical form "serves as a criterion between good satire and bad."¹²

Satire is generally considered as a subtle art requiring what Edgar Johnson calls "a shrewd campaign aided by all the devices of strategy and every instrument of psychological warfare."¹³ This critic emphasizes the necessity for stating damaging truths forcefully without

¹⁰ Worchester, David, The Art of Satire, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1941, p. 9.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 9.

¹² Ibid., p. 14.

¹³ Johnson, Edgar, A Treasury of Satire, New York, Simon and Schuster, 1945, p. 12.

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arousing resentment. To accomplish this, he states that the satirist must go about his attack indirectly and at the same time employ comic means as a palliative. The means of indirection which he suggests are fiction of some kind, irony, or allegory. The comic measures are wit and humour, whose function he expresses thus: "Wit, then, is the true instrument of satire, but humor only a bait and a lure."¹⁴ Thus through indirection and through curative laughter the good satirist achieves his end without giving offense.

In regard to the object of the satire, certain norms may also be set down. The value of the satirist's work necessarily depends to some extent upon the intrinsic value of the things which he defends through his satire. In this connexion, T. S. Eliot has written:

Literary criticism should be completed by criticism from a definite ethical and theological standpoint. (...) The 'greatness' of literature cannot be determined solely by literary standards; though we must remember that whether it is literature or not can be determined only by literary standards.¹⁵

If the satirist, in addition to writing in a distinctly literary style, is also a champion of truth in the intellectual and the moral order and a defender of the basic principles upon which our civilization rests, then he can

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 33.

¹⁵ Eliot, T. S., "Religion and Literature," in Selected Prose, edited by John Hayward, Middlesex, Penguin Books, 1953, p. 32.

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certainly be said to have made an important contribution both to literature and to society. The importance of the satirist as a defender of culture and civilization is stressed by Northrop Frye: "(...) satire means civilization and a confidence in the invincibility of the intelligence."¹⁶ Moreover if the satirist aims not merely at destroying the evils which infest society, but can also in some manner suggest positive values in his satire, then his contribution is still greater.

From these remarks on the nature of effective satire, it may be concluded that the satirist must possess firmly founded intellectual and moral principles, attack his opponents in a spirit of large-hearted generosity and be animated by moral idealism. Moreover, he ought to have a good literary style, a force of persuasion, subtlety and a power to amuse even while he hurts. He should defend that which is worthwhile and of perennial value and wherever possible he should not merely destroy error but also assert, at least by implication, positive values.

The present study will be confined to Knox's satirical works properly so-called and will not include those in which the satire is incidental. For this reason no analysis will be made of his youthful work, Juxta Salices, in which there is much parody but no serious satirical

¹⁶ Frye, Northrop, Op. cit., p. 79.

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purpose. Moreover, the satire found in his brilliant parody of Trollope, Barchester Pilgrimage, in his detective stories, and in his excellent study of heresy, Enthusiasm, is incidental to his main purpose in these books and will not therefore come within the scope of this thesis.

Knox's satirical writings fall into several categories: verse, essays, allegories, novels and satire in criticism. The first chapter of this thesis will be devoted to an analysis of Absolute and Abitofhell, a Drydenian imitation in verse. His most representative satiric prose essays, with special emphasis on his Swiftian imitation, Reunion All Round, will be studied in the second chapter. His satirical allegories, Memories of the Future and Let Dons Delight will be discussed in the third chapter while in the fourth, a study will be made of his satirical novels, Sanctions: A Frivolity and Other Eyes than Ours. An analysis of Knox's two volumes of satire in criticism, Caliban in Grub Street and Broadcast Minds in the fifth chapter will complete the discussion of his satirical works. The final chapter will be devoted to a general evaluation of Knox as a satirist together with an attempt to indicate his place in the satiric tradition.

Up to the present time no detailed study has been made of Knox as a satirist. Several articles in current periodicals have drawn attention in a general way to the

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quality and significance of his literary works. These writers have paid tribute to Monsignor Knox as a modern apostle and defender of the faith and have spoken of his opus magnum, the translation of the Bible into timeless English, as one of the most important literary and scholarly achievements of modern times. These critics have also referred to his satirical works in terms of commendation. The remarks of D. B. Wyndham Lewis might be considered typical of the praise accorded to them:

And the satire.

It is not everybody's game. Like the composition of a soufflé it requires a sure, practiced and delicate hand. I think it may be said that Knox took up the mantle of Belloc, himself a master, and wore it with consummate elegance.¹⁷

While calling attention to Knox's scholarship, wit and mastery of language, this writer links him with Belloc, implying that they both defended the same eternal verities forcefully and in an artful manner.

It is fitting that closer attention should be given to the satirical works of one who is recognized as an outstanding literary figure of the twentieth century. The importance of this study of Ronald Knox as a satirist arises in part from the intrinsic literary value of his writings, a value which will be revealed in the following discussion

¹⁷ Lewis, D. B. Wyndham, "The Knoxian Bequest," in America, Vol. 97, issue of September 14, 1957, p. 617.

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of the various genres in which he wrote. It springs too from the vital importance of good satire as a corrective to the follies and abuses of the age and from the unfortunate scarcity of good satire at the present time. The political, social and economic abuses of this century together with the intellectual and moral chaos which underlie them must be combatted if the heritage of the western world is to be preserved. As an instrument of correction satire is almost indispensable, for genial ridicule and curative laughter can bring about amendment where other means are unavailing. The unique power of satirical laughter as a corrective is brought out by a modern philosopher in his discussion of freedom and the problem of liberation:

It is in this context that the profound significance of satire and of humour come to light. For the satire breaks in upon the busy day. (...) It enters not by argument but by laughter. For argument would presuppose premises, and premises that would be accepted easily also would be mistaken. But laughter supposes only human nature, and men there are. Moreover, as it is without logical presuppositions, so it occurs with apparent purposelessness; and that too is highly important, for, if men are afraid to think, they may not be afraid to laugh. Yet proofless, purposeless laughter can dissolve honoured pretence; it can disrupt conventional humbug; it can disillusion man of his most cherished illusions, for it is in league with the detached, disinterested, unrestricted desire to know.¹⁸

¹⁸ Lonergan, Bernard J. F., Insight, A Study of Human Understanding, London, Longmans, Green, 1957, pp. 625-626.

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Good satire, however, has become a rare art in modern times for the reason that many contemporary writers do not possess those intellectual and moral certainties which alone can supply the standards and the convictions needed for effective satirical indictment.

The present study of Knox as a satirist fulfils a very timely purpose, that of making better known the satirical works of an author whose profoundly Catholic outlook and scholarly erudition equipped him to strike with conviction, precision and artistic distinction. The significance of his contribution to literature and to society deserves to be more widely recognized. It will be seen in this study that Knox not only exposed to ridicule the basic errors which threaten religion and culture in modern times and gave a profound interpretation of them in terms of their nature and origin but that he also accomplished this in a highly literary manner, wittily and ingeniously, so as to win the applause and good-will even of his opponents. In the light of these considerations this analysis and evaluation of Knox's achievement in the field of satire is fully vindicated.

CHAPTER ONE

VERSE SATIRE

This chapter is devoted to an analysis of Knox's Absolute and Abitofhell, his only significant work in verse satire. The purpose of this study is to discover the characteristics of Knox as a satirist in this poem as well as to inquire into the object of his satire. The discussion will begin with an account of the circumstances which inspired Knox to write this work. Then the poem will be studied as a Drydenian imitation along the lines suggested by this remark of Knox: "It was as faithful as I could make it to Dryden both in spirit and in style."¹ For the purpose of this discussion, it will be assumed that Absolute and Abitofhell is an imitation of Dryden's Absalom and Achitophel. This seems sufficiently clear both from the obvious parody in the title of Knox's poem as well as from his own words:

The multitudinous activities of Mr. Temple suggested a comparison with Dryden's "Zimri" in Absalom and Achitophel, and the first lines I wrote were a close parody of that original; it proved impossible, however, to carry the close parody further.²

The characteristic features of Dryden's poem will be illustrated together with those of Knox's work so that it may be seen to what extent Knox succeeded in imitating

¹ Knox, R.A., A Spiritual Aeneid, London, Longmans, Green, 1919, p. 113.

² Ibid., p. 112.

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Dryden. This analysis will also serve to bring out Knox's characteristics as a satirist. It will be seen in what sense Absolute and Abitofhell can be considered a parody as well as an imitation of Dryden, and finally a study will be made of the object of Knox's satire in this poem.

Quotations from Dryden and from Knox will be used to illustrate Knox's imitation of the great seventeenth century satirist. General conclusions will be drawn on the strength of these quotations which are considered typical of the works as a whole. As Knox used the spelling of the seventeenth century in his Drydenian imitation, this spelling has been retained in quoting the texts of both authors.

I. CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH LED KNOX TO WRITE THIS POEM.

As a young don at Oxford and later as an ordained clergyman of the Church of England, Knox found himself in an atmosphere of incessant religious controversy. The Church to which he belonged was not a static body of fixed ideals but, as he himself expressed it, "a microcosm of conflicting movements"³ of which his own Romanizing tendency was but one of many. The key danger of that period, roughly that of the first two decades of the twentieth century, was the heresy known as Modernism, and the basic

³ Ibid., p. 132.

weakness of the Church of England in its struggle against the inroads of this menace was its lack of a centre of authority which could de jure pronounce upon errors and condemn them. Many of the clergy and laity of the Church of England were deceived by the speciousness of this heresy which held that religious doctrine must keep abreast of the times. Knox sincerely regretted the liberal and anti-traditional theological views of many of his fellow clergymen.

It so happened that in 1912, seven of Knox's immediate friends were engaged in writing a book called Foundations,⁴ a restatement of Christian beliefs in terms of modern thought. The book would be a summary of theological teachings according to the opinions then fashionable at Oxford, and would be for that period what Lux Mundi⁵ had been for an earlier generation. Like its predecessor, it would be liberal but moderate, avoiding the positions held by extremists. The proposed book was a favorite topic of conversation, and Knox soon realized that the opinions of the Foundations symposium were strongly tainted with

⁴ Streeter, B.H., R. Brook et al., Foundations, A Statement of Christian Belief in Terms of Modern Thought by Seven Oxford Men, London, Macmillan, 1912, xi-538 p.

⁵ Gore, C. Editor, Lux Mundi, A Series of Studies in the Religion of the Incarnation, London, Murray, 1892, 395 p.

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Modernism. Out of a desire to confound their views, he conceived the idea of writing a satire on the book and its authors in the manner of Dryden. Over a period of months the poem took shape and was ready for publication at the same time as Foundations. The Drydenian imitation, Absolute and Abitofhell, was more widely read than the volume it attacked, and a year after its publication a contributor to the Church Times complained that if ever he asked a clerical colleague whether he had read Foundations, the answer was, "No, but I've read a poem about it by a man called Knox."⁶

II. ABSOLUTE AND ABITOFHELL AS A DRYDENIAN IMITATION.

1. A Similar Genre for a Different Satirical Purpose.

Absalom and Achitophel is a satirical allegory in the form of a mock epic. The Old Testament story of the conspiracy of Achitophel and Absalom against King David provided Dryden with material for an allegorical description of the conspiracy of the Earl of Shaftesbury and the Duke of Monmouth to have the latter named successor to the throne in place of King Charles II's Catholic brother, James, Duke of York. The formal style of the epic

⁶ Knox, R.A., Op. cit., p. 115.

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which Dryden mimicked provided a witty and powerful medium with which to satirize the Whig traitors.

Knox's satire is also an allegory in the mock epic style. The similarities and differences in their use of the allegory and the mock epic form will now be illustrated.

1) Their use of allegory. - The striking parallel between the story of the Old Testament figures, Absalom and Achitophel, and that of the Earl of Shaftesbury and the Duke of Monmouth furnished Dryden with a ready-made and very ingenious device for launching a satirical attack upon the Whigs without losing the appearance of objectivity. On the literal level, his narrative presented the machinations of Achitophel (Earl of Shaftesbury), his incitement of Absalom (Duke of Monmouth) to betray his father, the activities of several of the other conspirators, then an account of the small but faithful band of the King's loyal followers, and finally the King's vigorous assertion of his authority as sovereign. Beneath their Biblical aliases the Whigs, the Earl of Shaftesbury (Achitophel), the Duke of Monmouth (Absalom), the Duke of Buckingham (Zimri) and others were satirically portrayed. Dryden denounced their plot in terms of an analysis of values. The conspirators are all shown to have been tainted with materialism. They do not set a value upon anything, not even upon kingship, unless it spells out self-interest or gain for themselves. For

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example, Shimei, who represents the Puritan element, finds kings "ufelefs" and "a Clog to Trade".⁷ On the other hand, loyalty to a king is represented as a value which goes beyond materialism. By reason of his kingly office, Charles II is God's vicegerent. Therefore Dryden compares the disobedience of his subjects to Adam's disobedience to God, and Achitophel's temptation of Absalom is represented partly in terms of Satan's temptation of Adam in the Garden and partly in terms of Satan's temptation of Christ. When the King asserts his authority at the end of the poem, the proper values have been vindicated, even though historically the issue was still in doubt at the time when Dryden finished his poem.

In Knox's Absolute and Abitofhell, there is considerably less action than in Dryden's poem. On the literal level of the allegory, seven dauntless Mariners attempt to rescue Noah's Ark which is floundering in stormy seas; instead of manning the pumps or plugging the treacherous leaks, they decide to compose a book. But unfortunately the diversity of opinion among them arouses grave doubts as to the ultimate success of their efforts. The allegorical meaning is obvious: instead of saving the

⁷ Dryden, John, Absalom and Achitophel, in Original Poems and Translations, Vol. II, edited by J. and R. Tonson, London, (no publisher), 1743, p. 169.

bark of the Church which is tossing on the waves of modern disbelief, the Oxford scholars, through their failure to agree on essential points of doctrine, are exposing the Church to even greater perils. The main body of the poem is given over to an ironic account of each scholar's theological fitness for his role in rescuing the ship. Just as Dryden's allegory had presented a criticism of revolt against kingly authority so Knox's allegory presented an indictment of revolt against ecclesiastical authority. The present unhappy confusion of thought and loss of faith, he points out, is the natural outcome of three hundred years of disloyalty to Christ's Vicar on earth. Knox's heroes are not condemned for materialism as Dryden's had been, but rather for misdirected zeal, the result of insubordination to the Church:

So, Freedom reign'd; fo, Priefts, difmay'd by naught,
Thought what they pleaf'd, and mention'd what they
thought.⁸

This so-called "Freedom" attained by revolt against the teaching power of the Church at the time of the Reformation is clearly indicated as the initial disaster whence flowed the long history of ever-deepening scepticism.

From what has been said in regard to their use of allegory, it is clear that Dryden and Knox differed in

⁸ Knox, Ronald A., Absolute and Abitofhell, in Essays in Satire, London, Sheed and Ward, 1928, p. 55.

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regard to their subject-matter and their satirical purpose. Dryden upheld a value in the civil order, Knox, a value in the theological order. However, they both condemned an abuse of freedom: Dryden, that which results in revolt against kingly authority, and Knox that which ends in insubordination to ecclesiastical authority. The allegorical medium enables both satirists to state their criticism vigorously but without giving offence by reason of the indirection which this approach provided.

ii) Their use of the mock epic. - The mock epic while retaining the elevated style of an heroic poem incongruously presents a trivial subject-matter in a mocking tone. How effective a weapon this is in the hands of the satirist can be seen in these lines of Absalom and Achitophel:

Of these the false Achitophel was first;
 A Name to all succeeding Ages curst:
 For close Designs, and crooked Counsels fit;
 Sagacious, Bold and Turbulent of Wit;
 Reftless, unfixed in Principles and Place;
 In Power unpleased, impatient of Disgrace:
 A fiery soul, which, working out its way,
 Fretted the Pigmy-Body to decay,
 And over-informed the Tenement of Clay.⁹

The incongruity of the formal style in relation to the obvious unworthiness of the subject described serves to raise denigrating laughter at the expense of Dryden's enemy.

⁹ Dryden, John, Op. cit., pp. 155-156.

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Similar effects are produced in these mocking lines of Knox in which he portrays one of the members of the Foundations symposium, the Reverend Mr. S.E. Talbot, Fellow of Balliol College, Oxford:

A Balaam, bleffing what he dared not curfe,
 A Scaeva, raifing Powers he could not quell,
 Dragging their Coat-tails, followed ABDIEL.
 In Height magnificent, in Depth profound,
 Bless'd with more Senfe than fome, than all more sound,
 Gifted as if with Tongues, were there but wit
 Among his Audience to interpret it:10

As in Dryden's portrait, the heroic style instead of magnifying the hero merely focuses attention on his incapacity to stand up to heroic stature. Thus the satiric point is driven home on a gust of laughter.

2. Knox and the Spirit of Dryden.

Whether Knox was faithful to the spirit of Dryden as his aim had been is the object of this present inquiry. By the spirit of Dryden is understood the dispositions in which he wrote his satire and which determined the pervading tone of his satiric compositions. To discover his spirit, recourse must be made in the first place to what he wrote concerning the theory of satire.

In his Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire, Dryden discussed the distinctive satiric spirit and art of the two great classic satirists,

¹⁰ Knox, Ronald A., Op. cit., p. 59.

Horace and Juvenal. Horace, he pointed out, was moved to amusement at the follies of men and sought to correct them by raising curative laughter at their expense. Juvenal, on the other hand, was moved to anger by the spectacle of human vice and in this spirit, he indignantly denounced the erring in terms of stern invective. Dryden summed up his indebtedness to each of them in this way: "I owe more to Horace for my instruction and more to Juvenal for my pleasure."¹¹ From this it may be concluded that Dryden aimed at satirizing in a spirit of good-natured jest.

Dryden's preference for the Horatian approach to satire is clearly stated in these lines:

In Satire too the Wife took different ways,
To each deferving its peculiar praise.
Some did all Folly with just sharpness blame,
Whilst others laugh'd and scorn'd them into shame.
But of these two, the last succeeded best,
As Men aim rightest when they shoot in jest.¹²

This practice of laughing men into shame is evident throughout Absalom and Achitophel. The mock heroic tone, the aesthetic distance obtained through the use of allegory, the obvious spirit of good-natured jest are all devices for avoiding any appearance of an invective tone. Perhaps the

¹¹ Dryden, John, Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire, in The Works of John Dryden, Vol. 13, edited by Sir Walter Scott and corr. by George Saintsbury, Edinburgh, W. Paterson, 1882, p. 85.

¹² Dryden, John, "An Essay upon Satire", in Original Poems and Translations, pp. 328-329.

most contemptuous lines which Dryden wrote are these which describe the Puritans for whom he had the least sympathy:

A numerous Hoft of dreaming Saints fucceed,
Of the true old Enthufiaftick Breed:¹³

Though the mocking ironic tone reveals the satirist's meaning, yet his moderation and restraint are evident.

That the Horatian spirit of curative laughter was also Knox's guiding principle can be seen from Absolute and Abitofhell. The following lines are typical of his ability to expose the defects of his opponents in a glaring light while maintaining every appearance of good humour:

With sunnier Faith, with more unclouded Brow,
Brilliant ARCTURUS did the Fates endow;
Who cried, as joyfully he bound his Sheaves,
"What I believe is what the Church believes:"
Yet some might find it matter for Refearch,
Whether the Church taught him, or he the Church.¹⁴

A theologian might become angry when accused of intellectual pride and insubordination to the teaching authority of the Church, but when these same faults are indicated in so indirect and charming a manner, it is impossible to take offence. Yet the good-natured ridicule is none the less effective in blasting the error while it spares the one who is satirized.

It may be concluded that Knox was faithful to the spirit of Dryden. There remains to be seen whether he

¹³ Dryden, John, Original Poems and Translations, Vol. II, p. 167.

¹⁴ Knox, Ronald A., Essays in Satire, p. 59.

of the sentence structure to the metrical pattern, the use of balance between the two halves of a line with a pronounced caesura, and the use of antithesis between the two halves of a line. It is obvious from these two quotations that both authors have achieved a conversational tone and have exploited to good advantage the power of emphasis which the balance and antithesis afford. It should be remarked also that Knox's use of the heroic couplet is not artificial or merely mechanical. His imitation is free from any appearance of constraint. He handles a traditional form with every show of ease and manipulates it to serve his own purposes.

Dryden sometimes permitted himself an interesting deviation from the straight heroic couplet. This was his use of the triplet formed by adding a third line to the couplet, with the same rhyme. Knox also introduced the triplet into his satire. This is one of Dryden's triplets:

He was too warm a Picking-work to dwell,
But Faggotted his Notions as they fell,
And if they Rhim'd and Rattl'd, all was well.¹⁷

Comparable is this triplet of Knox:

Still, like a clumsy Falconer, he'd untie
Tradition's Hood from Reafon's piercing Eye,
And then complain, becaufe she foar'd too high.¹⁸

¹⁷ Dryden, John, Op. cit., p. 185.

¹⁸ Knox, Ronald A., Op. cit., p. 59.

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In both cases the third line serves to strengthen the conversational tone while adding a damaging insinuation against the satirists' respective opponents.

In his choice of words Dryden had been governed by the standard of decorum in vogue during the seventeenth century. In Absalom and Abithofhell his language is inclined to be Latinized, neither high nor low, for the most part, but perfectly adapted to the conversational tone which suited his satirical purpose. These lines show the predominance of words derived from Latin, as well as his characteristic use of polysyllables:

Some things like Vifionary flight appear;
The Spirit caught him up the Lord knows where;
And gave him his Rabinical Degree,
Unknown to Foreign University.¹⁹

On the other hand, Knox shows a preference for words of Anglo-Saxon origin as in these lines:

In Weight not lefs, but more advanc'd in Height,
Gigantic ELIPHAZ next hove in Sight:
Who 'mid the Prophets' Sons his Trade did ply
In teaching Wells to blefs and magnify.
The Pomegranate upon His Helm difplay'd
His prebendarial Dignity betray'd:²⁰

However, Knox has imitated Dryden in the use of polysyllabic words such as Pomegranate, prebendarial, gigantic, and these Latinized words contrast with the short Teutonic words such as hove, helm, height, weight.

¹⁹ Dryden, John, Op. cit., p. 170.

²⁰ Knox, Ronald A., Op. cit., p. 58.

Knox's diction resembles Dryden's on two other interesting points, that is, in the use of colorful adjectives and in the use of transitional words. Some of Dryden's most expressive adjectives between the lines 851 and 951 are "starry," "piercing," "frugal," "dexterous," "hireling," "offending," "haughty." Knox's adjectives such as "queafy," "boisterous," "infidious," "measlieft," "sunnier," are after the manner of Dryden both colorful and expressive and yet free from any suggestion of artificial imitation. Dryden's most characteristic connective whereby he binds together the many parts of his poem are "thus," "not so," "but when," "from hence," "of these," "yet," "then," "now." Knox uses similar words to achieve the same easy flow from one part to the next, "then," "so," "not such," "first," "yet," "still."

To illustrate how Knox used the characteristic rhetorical devices which dignified Dryden's heroic style, pertinent quotations will be made. In each case a selection from Dryden will be followed by one from Knox so that a basis of comparison may be presented.

1) Invocation. -

Indulge one labour more, my weary Mufe,²¹

Sing, Heavenly MUSE, from high Olympus bowing,
Their Names, their Training, and their

Weltanfchauung;²²

²¹ Dryden, John, Op. cit., p. 177.

²² Knox, Ronald A., Op. cit., p. 56.

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ii) Rhetorical Question. -

Our Author fwears it not; but who can know
How far the Devil and the Jebufites may go?²³

Who has not known how pleafant 'tis to figh,
"Others, thank God, are lefs correct than I"?²⁴

iii) Chiasmus. -

Exalts his Enemies, his Friends deftroys,²⁵
Levite by Birth, but not by calling Prieft,²⁶

iv) Alliteration. -

Drawn to the Dregs of a Democracy.²⁷
Soullefs Profeffors gulp difgufted Port.²⁸

v) Metaphor. -

Such were the Tools; but a whole Hydra more
Remains, of fprouting Heads too long to fcore.²⁹

For DANIEL's Blood the Critick Lions roar'd,
And trembling Hands threw JONAH overboard.³⁰

²³ Dryden, John, Op. cit., p. 155.

²⁴ Knox, Ronald A., Op. cit., p. 59.

²⁵ Dryden, John, Op. cit., p. 173.

²⁶ Knox, Ronald A., Op. cit., p. 60.

²⁷ Dryden, John, Op. cit., p. 159.

²⁸ Knox, Ronald A., Op. cit., p. 57.

²⁹ Dryden, John, Op. cit., p. 166.

³⁰ Knox, Ronald A., Op. cit., p. 56.

vi) Simile. -

For, as when raging Fevers boil the Blood,
 The ftanding Lake foam floats into a Flood;
 And ev'ry hostile Humour, which before
 Slept quiet in its Channels, bubbles o'er;
 So feveral Factions, from this firft Ferment,
 Work up to Foam, and threat the Government.³¹

Still, like a clumbfy Falconer, he'd untie
 Tradition's Hood from Reafon's piercing Eye,³²

vii) Personification. -

But wild Ambition loves to flide, not ftand,
 And Fortune's Ice prefers to Virtue's Land.³³

Woo'd coy Philofophy, reluctant Maid,
 To bring her troubl'd Sifter timely aid.³⁴

The similarities between Dryden's and Knox's use of these rhetorical figures is of an external and technical kind. Knox's imitation consists in using a traditional style as a vehicle for his own satirical purposes. Knox has no similes so elaborately worked out as Dryden's epic-like similes. On the other hand, he has a more concentrated use of metaphorical expression throughout his poem and he

³¹ Dryden, John, Op. cit., p. 155.

³² Knox, Ronald A., Op. cit., p. 59.

³³ Dryden, John, Op. cit., p. 158.

³⁴ Knox, Ronald A., Op. cit., p. 60

introduced the rhetorical device of apostrophe which Dryden did not use in Absalom and Achitophel:

Hail, dauntless Mariners, that far outftrip
Previous attempts to undergird the Ship!³⁵

4. Knox and Dryden: Satirical Portraiture.

Knox also imitated another famous device of Drydenian satirical verse, the satirical portrait. Dryden threw light upon this aspect of his art when he wrote: "How easy it is to call rogue and villain, and that wittily! But how hard to make a man appear a fool, a blockhead, or a knave, without using any of these opprobrious terms!"³⁶ In Absalom and Achitophel, Dryden did not resort to invective or name-calling. His was a subtler art which he explains in this manner:

There is still a vast difference betwixt the slovenly butchering of a man, and the finesse of a stroke that separates the head from the body and leaves it standing in its place.³⁷

This finishing off of his victims, Dryden accomplished by means of his satirical characterizations which he composed with succinct and telling detail. However, he reduced his opponents to ridicule by building them into objects of

³⁵ Knox, Ronald A., Op. cit., p. 60.

³⁶ Dryden, John, Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire, p. 98.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 98.

seeming grandeur and then exposing their pettiness.

The following lines illustrate Dryden's satirical characterization:

Yet, Corah, thou fhalt from Oblivion pafs;
Erect thy felf, thou Monumental Brafs,
High as the Serpent of thy Metal made,
While Nations ftand fecure beneath thy fhade.³⁸

In this passage Dryden compares Corah (Titus Oates) to the serpent which Moses raised in the wilderness to save the Israelites. He begins on a note of seeming approbation which at first disposes the reader to sympathy with the one described. But as the passage progresses, the ironic import becomes clear and the encomium explodes into satire.

This portrait from Absolute and Abitofhell shows that Knox has reproduced this same technique of enhancing a person in order to reduce him to ridicule:

In Height magnificent, in Depth profound,
Bless'd with more Senfe than fome, than all more sound,
Gifted as if with Tongues, were there but wit
Among his Audience to interpret it:³⁹

The reader recognizes the mockery beneath the heroic elevation and the hero comes tumbling from his pedestal. This is a good-natured device and much more flattering to its victim than the Hudibrastic portrait which ridicules by

³⁸ Dryden, John, Original Poems and Translations, Vol. II, p. 170.

³⁹ Knox, Ronald A., Op. cit., p. 59.

comparing its object to something lower than itself, yet it is equally effective for exposing the weakness and errors of an opponent. The mock encomium enables Knox to retain an air of geniality even at the moment of disclosing the most damaging details about his victims. Like Dryden, Knox has portrayed his characters with a few vivid strokes in which every word counts. The use of incongruous details and of antithesis as in the lines just quoted brings out the character and activities of the hero so as to make them appear ridiculous.

Though Knox is imitating Dryden's technique, he uses it with an ease and freedom which allows for his own imaginative creativity. He manifests a good deal of skill in the clever manner in which he succinctly highlights the characteristic traits of personality and the particular theological bent of each of his opponents. For example in the following portrait of Mr. Streeter, the argumentative, zealous, suave, broadminded young clergyman is vividly depicted:

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Say, what did STRATO in their company?
 Who, like a Leaven, gave his Tone to all,
 'Mid prophet Bands an unsuspected Saul.
 For he, diferning with nice arguings
 'Twixt non-effential and effential Things,
 Himself believing, could no reafon fee
 Why any other should believe but he.
 (Himself believing, as believing went
 In that wild Heyday of th'Eftablishment,
 When, on his Throne at Lambeth, Solomon
 Uneafy murmur'd, "Something muft be done,"
 When fuave Politenefts, temp'ring bigot Zeal,
 Corrected, "I believe," to "One does feel."⁴⁰

In like manner in each of the portraits, Knox indicates tersely and wittily the distinguishing features of the theologians and their respective viewpoints. The portraits become universal, too, in so far as they represent various forms of false zeal into which men may fall when they lose sight of the supernatural character of religion. This universal quality of the portraits causes them to transcend their period and to remain fresh and meaningful to the present-day reader.

Knox has wielded the principle of magnification in his satiric portraiture with telling effect. It is probably his most powerful weapon in this poem, for while blowing up his heroes to a dignity they cannot sustain, he exposes the weak points in their ethos, and yet maintains the air of perfect good humour. His satire is directed against the false opinions and attitudes of his opponents

⁴⁰ Knox, Ronald A., Op. cit., p. 53.

and at no time does he introduce anything in the nature of a personal attack. In this he is true to the Horatian spirit of Dryden, who in theory, and for the most part in practice as well, spared the person of his opponents.

5. Knox and Dryden: Irony as a Satirical Weapon.

The effective use of irony is another aspect of Knox's imitation of Dryden. Like his seventeenth century master, the irony he uses is that of inversion which has nothing in common with sarcasm, a cruder form, which is allied to satirical invective. This more genial irony invites the reader to reverse the author's statements. It springs spontaneously from the mock epic technique as well as from the satirical portraiture. This form of irony is an important means of indirection by which the satirist retains a certain air of detachment while leaving the reader the burden of changing praise into insults. Not only does it help the satirist to maintain an air of warm humanity but it also makes pleasurable demands upon the reader who is constantly invited to penetrate into the real meaning of the poem, as for instance, in this passage from Absalom and Achitophel where Dryden magnified Corah (Titus Oates) merely to make his debasement all the greater:

What though his Birth were bafe, yet Comets rife
From earthly Vapours ere they shine in Skies.⁴¹

A similar sense of partnership between the reader and the author is created by this selection from Absolute and Abitofhell in which Knox elevates Magdala

(Mr. J.M. Thompson) to heroic stature merely that his pseudo-scholarship in Biblical studies might be exposed:

Say, why did MAGDALA, renown'd in Ships,
Withhold the Tribute of his dauntlefs Lips,
Who, fetting out the Gospel Truths t'explain,
Thought all that was not German, not germane:⁴²

From this passage it can be seen that Knox like Dryden employed irony both as a means of achieving aesthetic distance and as a way of involving the reader in a delightful game of reversal of meaning.

6. Knox and Dryden: Wit as a Satirical Weapon.

There is another way in which Knox imitated Dryden. This is by a play of wit which could amuse even while it hurt. By wit is understood that penetration of thought combined with felicity of expression which Pope meant when he wrote:

True Wit is nature to advantage dress'd;
What oft was thought, but ne'er so well express'd;⁴³

⁴¹ Dryden, John, Op. cit., p. 170.

⁴² Knox, Ronald A., Op. cit., p. 56.

⁴³ Pope, Alexander, "An Essay on Criticism," in Alexander Pope's Collected Poems, edited by Bonamy Dobree, London, Dent, p. 65.

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But when a writer employs wit for satirical purposes, he exposes some damaging truth about his opponent in a manner most calculated to elicit ridicule. This is what Chesterton meant when he wrote: "But wit is a sword; it is meant to make people feel the point as well as see it."⁴⁴

Hazlitt has also thrown light upon that type of wit which is most useful to the satirist in this passage in which he makes a distinction between humour and wit:

Humour, as it is shown in books, is an imitation of the natural or acquired absurdities of mankind, or of the ludicrous in accident, situation, and character; wit is the illustrating and heightening the sense of that absurdity by some sudden and unexpected likeness or opposition of one thing to another, which sets off the quality we laugh at or despise in a still more contemptible or striking point of view.⁴⁵

From this it follows that the satirist uses penetration of thought and aptness of expression to heighten an absurdity, and that he frequently intensifies an effect by the juxtaposition of incongruous ideas.

One of Dryden's favorite devices of wit was this incongruous association such as is found in these lines in which he raises laughter at the expense of Zimri (Duke of Buckingham):

⁴⁴ Chesterton, G.K., A Handful of Authors, London, Sheed and Ward, 1953, p. 11.

⁴⁵ Hazlitt, William, "On Wit and Humour", in Criticism: the Major Texts, edited by Walter Jackson Bate, New York, Harcourt, Brace, 1952, p. 316.

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In squandering Wealth was his peculiar Art:
 Nothing went unrewarded, but Defert.
 Beggar'd by Fools, whom ftill he found too late;
 He had his Jeft, and they had his Eftate.⁴⁶

Dryden's wit is also found in the play of ironic associations. Thus in the following lines he defames Shimei (Slingsby Bethel) by evoking Scriptural connotations:

When two or three were gather'd to declaim
 Againft the Monarch of Jerufalem,
Shimei was always in the midft of them:⁴⁷

Incongruous associations together with antithetical expression provide the basis of this further jest against Shimei:

His Cooks, with long difufe, their Trade forgot;
 Cool was his Kitchen, though his Brains were hot.⁴⁸

Dryden here alludes to the well-known frugality begot of stinginess which kept Bethel from lavishing the hospitality then expected of London Sheriffs.

All the rhetorical devices which Dryden used in his heroic style helped him to state his indictment against the conspirators in a striking manner which charms and yet exposes ruthlessly. An instance of figurative expression which illustrates this power of metaphorical expression for

⁴⁶ Dryden, John, Op. cit., p. 167.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 169.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 169.

satirical purposes is the following which tells of the people's conspiracy against the king:

Thought they might ruin him they could create,
Or melt him to that Golden Calf, a State.⁴⁹

The witty epigram is also a favorite device of Dryden's mockery as in these lines in which he ironically eulogizes Corah (Titus Oates):

Prodigious Actions may as well be done
By Weaver's Iffue, as by Prince's Son.⁵⁰

The statement is pithy and contains a general truth, but it arouses denigrating laughter at the expense of Dryden's enemy because it is meant ironically.

Dryden's wit, then, is an important weapon of his satire. It consists of stating a truth detrimental to his opponents in so charming and striking a manner that the edge of the satire is felt but no resentment is aroused by reason of the delight which results from felicity of expression.

Knox's satirical attack on the Foundations symposium was also "to advantage dress'd." His use of figurative expression, of imaginative associations and of epigrammatic phrases is not dissimilar to that of Dryden though of course the resemblance is that of technique and

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 153.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 170.

not of content.

Instead of accusing Mr. Streeter of betraying the standards of doctrinal orthodoxy, Knox wrote of this gentleman:

Would let into our Ark the verieft Crow,
That had the measlieft Olive-branch to show.⁵¹

The figurative expression spares Mr. Streeter for there is no virulence in this as in a direct attack, but at the same time the illogicality of his theological position is vividly brought out, all the more so, when the reader's imagination conjures up the associations connected with the words "crow," "measlieft," "Ark," and "Olive-branch."

Another example of Knox's wit is found in these lines which exploit the resources of connotation and multiple association:

Seven Men, in Views and Learning near ally'd,
Whom Forms alone and Dogmas did divide,
Their Differences funk, in Conclave met,
And each his Seal (with Refervations) fet:
Each in his Turn fubfcrib'd the fateful Scroll,
And ftamp'd his Nihil Conftat on the whole.⁵²

The words "Forms," "Dogmas," "Conclave," "Seal," "Refervations," have religious and ecclesiastical denotations. By using words connected with traditional Christianity, he calls up in the reader's mind ideas associated with the magisterial power of the Church, with

⁵¹ Knox, Ronald A., Essays in Satire, p. 59.

⁵² Ibid., p. 56.

solemn definitions and the official action of ecclesiastical authorities. The activities and writings of the Seven Men begin to appear as a travesty of genuine Christian teaching. A swift perception of incongruity between dogma and reservations, between dogma and Nihil Conftat convinces the reader in a manner that no direct attack could do that these men are in reality religious sceptics. This enrichment of meaning through play of association is a devastating weapon which in this instance destroys any confidence which one might have had in the ability of these theologians to teach truth.

There are many instances of this ironical play of association against association. Thus perhaps no one ever considered the ironic significance of the title given to the earlier restatement of Christian beliefs, Lux Mundi, until Knox described its influence as Caeli Tenebrae. When Mr. Temple is said to be gifted "as if with Tongues,"⁵³ one thinks of Pentecost and the apostolic mission of the twelve apostles, but the compliment turns to his disadvantage when it becomes clear that his gift is employed in teaching unsound doctrine. In like manner one is invited to ponder upon the real meaning of the term "Freedom" when it is used to describe the emancipation of England from the days when men "in happy Blindnefs ferv'd

⁵³ Ibid., p. 59.

the Pope."⁵⁴ Finally the juxtaposition of the sublime and the trivial in the line, "When Saints were more accounted of than Soap,"⁵⁵ helps to emphasize the change in values which modern "progress" has brought about.

An ability to express an absurdity in the way most likely to bring out its inherent weakness is another aspect of Knox's power of witty expression. Wishing to ridicule the Biblical criticism of the Higher Critics whose destructive influence had been very great he wrote:

Twelve Prophets our unlearn'd forefathers knew,
We are fcarce fatisfy'd with twenty-two:
A fingle Pfalmift was enough for them,
Our lift of Authors rivals A. & M.:
They were content MARK, MATTHEW, LUKE and JOHN
Should blefs th' old-fashion'd Beds they lay upon:
But we, for ev'ry one of theirs, have two,
And truft the Watchfulnefs of bleffed Q.⁵⁶

The incongruity of being watched over by "Q", a favorite term of the Higher Critics to express an unknown source from which St. Mark was supposed to have taken his Gospel narrative, places the whole teaching of this school in a damaging light and leads the reader to reflect that possibly there was more sense in the unlearned faith of his forefathers.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 55.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 55.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 60.

Knox's wit found in epigrammatical expression can be sampled in this quotation from Absolute and Abitofhell:

When fauve Politenefts, temp'ring bigot Zeal
Corrected, "I believe," to "One does feel."⁵⁷

The compression of expression makes these lines highly quotable while the ironic tone emphasizes the abuse of tolerance which the lines imply. Another couplet which has a rapier-like power of satirical expression is this:

What difference, whether black be black or white,
If no officious Hand turn on the Light?⁵⁸

Then, too, the inconsistency of the sceptics' position is vividly expressed in this passage:

Whether our Fact be Fact, no Man can know,
But, Heav'n preferve us, we will treat it fo.⁵⁹

From the passages quoted from Absolute and Abitofhell it is apparent that Knox after the manner of Dryden employed the art of witty expression as a damaging weapon of satire to confound the opinions of his theological opponents. He, too, employed the rhetorical devices of heroic verse to charm the reader while finishing off his victims with neat precision. The art of the two authors is much the same in so far as they both depend upon imaginative and ironical connotations, and upon figurative expression to effect a two-fold end, "to tickle" and "to hurt."

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 58.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 60.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 60.

7. Knox and Dryden: the Problem of Imitation and Originality.

This study of Absolute and Abitofhell as a Drydenian imitation has established the fact that Knox did imitate the great master of satiric art with a good measure of success. In his allegory in mock epic style, in his heroic couplets and rhetorical devices, in his satirical portraiture, his irony and his wit, Knox has been faithful to the technique which Dryden had mastered so well. At the same time, it has been observed that Knox made this well-tested form the vehicle for his own satirical creation which, from the aspect of subject-matter, owed nothing to Dryden.

According to certain standards of literary criticism which stem in large measure from the Romantic Movement of the nineteenth century, a poem such as Absolute and Abitofhell which owes so much to a traditional model would not be viewed favorably. On the other hand, in the Middle Ages it was understood that writers should avail themselves of any and of all the features of the rich cultural heritage. This attitude is best seen in Chaucer who was immensely proud of his indebtedness to "olde bookes" and who borrowed not merely literary forms but thoughts and even whole passages from his sources and never lost any occasion of acknowledging his borrowings. The

ideal of the Neo-classical school to which Dryden belonged was also a strong traditionalism which led writers to adopt known and tested means to the achievement of new ends. The history of Dryden's indebtedness to his literary predecessors forms a long chapter in the history of literature and has been studied by several critics including Mark Van Doren.⁶⁰ The claim which Dryden has to originality is in his adept use of techniques which did not owe their origin to himself.

It was natural for Knox to choose to write in a traditional style for his education was in the tradition of imitation. In the course of his thoroughly classical education, Knox had become acquainted with the subtleties of classical rhetoric not merely through study, but even more so, through original imitations of the classical models. From an early age Knox wrote verse both in Greek and in Latin. Dryden, in fact, had had very much the same exercise at school and university. Such a training inclines a man to have respect for ancient patterns and an awareness of technique which is not nearly so common among students of the present day.

In this connection, it is well to consider what T.S. Eliot has said concerning the indebtedness of authors to their predecessors:

⁶⁰ Van Doren, Mark, John Dryden, A Study of His Poetry, New York, Holt, 1946, pp. 1-30.

We dwell with satisfaction upon the poet's difference from his predecessors, especially his immediate predecessors; we endeavour to find something that can be isolated in order to be enjoyed. Whereas if we approach a poet without this prejudice we shall often find that not only the best, but the most individual parts of his work may be those in which the dead poets, his ancestors, assert their immortality most vigorously.⁶¹

From this it seems clear that an author may borrow from the great writers of the past and yet not destroy his own individuality.

It is understood that imitation can end in mere formalism as it did in the period of the decline of Neoclassicism in the eighteenth century. But to write within the framework of conventional forms would seem to be justified if the form is appropriate to the author's subject-matter and if the author has something to say which is worthwhile. This study of Knox's verse has shown that both conditions are present in Absolute and Abitofhell. The cadence, antithesis, polysyllabic emphasis, figures of speech and aphoristic wit which the heroic couplet provides is very suitable for compelling assent and for striking satirical blows. Since Knox's intention was to defend religious orthodoxy, it must also be admitted that he had a serious purpose to justify his satirical composition.

⁶¹ Eliot, T.S., "Tradition and the Individual Talent" in Selected Prose, Aylesbury, Hunt, Barnard, 1953, p. 22.

What Dryden said of Ben Jonson seems to express very well the relation of Knox to his sources:

But he has done his robberies so openly, that one may see he fears not to be taxed by any law. He invades authors like a monarch; and what would be theft in other poets is only victory in him.⁶²

Certainly Knox did his "robberies" openly, and moreover, he used them to forge something quite new. It may be concluded that Knox's poem has the mechanics of his Drydenian model but that these are wrought into a new synthesis which, though resembling its model, is qualitatively different and genuinely new.

III. ABSOLUTE AND ABITOFHELL AS A DRYDENIAN PARODY.

Absolute and Abitofhell has been studied as an imitation of Dryden's Absalom and Achitophel. It is also a parody of this work though in a limited sense. The Oxford Dictionary has defined parody as a:

composition in which characteristic turns of thought and phrase of an author are mimicked and made to appear ridiculous, especially by applying them to ludicrously inappropriate subjects.

Knox did not mimic Dryden's style in Absalom and Achitophel but rather mimicked the heroic style as Dryden himself had done in this poem. The sense in which Absolute and Abitofhell is a parody has been stated accurately by a

⁶² Dryden, John, "An Essay of Dramatic Poesy", in Criticism; the Major Texts, p. 150.

critic on the subject of parody:

Dryden supplies the idea and the style of these hundred and fifty lines of charming malice; but they are not written to the discredit, as it were, of an earlier poet. The petard is borrowed for the hoisting of a third party; and in so far as this is the case, the poem is no more a strict parody than Mr. Knox claims in his title. None the less, it proves that parody can be still put to use as a controversial weapon, the purpose being not so much to separate true poetry from the false by the touchstone of ridicule, as to add point to a quite unpoetical criticism or quarrel by the ingenuity and allusiveness of parody.⁶³

There is no doubt that Knox meant that the reminiscences of Dryden's style which his own lines conjured up would lend point to his satire as well as give delight to the reader.

As D.B. Wyndham Lewis has pointed out,⁶⁴ to write satire is one thing but to use good parody as a medium is to add a new dimension and additional charm to the composition. Some attention will therefore be given to Absolute and Abitofhell with a view to discovering whether it has the qualities of good parody.

Good parody requires certain conditions on the part of the parodist. The first of these is genuine appreciation and understanding of the original work. As

⁶³ Stone, Christopher, Parody, London, Martin Secker, (no date), p. 61.

⁶⁴ Lewis, D.B. Wyndham, "The Knoxian Bequest," in America, Vol. 97, No. 24, issue of September 14, 1957, p. 617.

one critic has stated concerning the parodist: "He is above all an admirer."⁶⁵ Knox does seem to have approached parody in this spirit of admiration. The very tone of Absolute and Abitofhell leads one to believe that its author had lingered long and lovingly over the heroic couplets of Dryden and that it was with huge delight that he laboured to reproduce his measures. The success of Knox's efforts has been attested by an historian of parody who wrote: "Previous attempts to parody Dryden and Pope had proved miserable failures, when his Absolute and Abitofhell showed how it might be done."⁶⁶

A second condition for successful parody according to Edmund Gosse is the author's ability to efface his own individual peculiarities of style and to convince the reader that had the original author chosen to write on a given subject he would have done so in this manner. Mr. Kitchin was satisfied that Knox had fulfilled this condition when he wrote: "His cleverness is immense. He seems to have been born with an instinct for the idiom of the polemic period of Dryden."⁶⁷ Some passages from Knox will serve to discover the truth of this statement.

⁶⁵ Gosse, Edmund, More Books on the Table, New York, Scribner's, 1923, p. 135.

⁶⁶ Kitchin, George, A Survey of Burlesque and Parody in English, London, Oliver and Boyd, 1931, p. 345.

⁶⁷ Ibid. p. 372.

Dryden described Zimri (Duke of Buckingham) in this manner:

A man fo various, that he feem'd to be
Not one but all Mankind's Epitome.
Stiff in opinions, always, in the wrong,
Was everything by ftarts, and nothing long.⁶⁸

But if Dryden had written of Og (Mr. William Temple), surely he would have done so in this manner:

A man fo broad, to fome he feem'd to be
Not one, but all Mankind in Effigy:
Who, brisk in Term, a Whirlwind in the Long,
Did everything by turns, and nothing wrong.⁶⁹

The parallel is not so close throughout the whole poem, but always it is enough to arouse the delight of recognition which is the chief pleasure of good parody. For example, the opening lines of each poem are comparable. Dryden wrote:

In pious Times, ere Priest-craft did begin,
Before Polygamy was made a Sin;
When Man on many multiply'd his kind,
Ere one to one was, curfedly, confin'd.
When Nature prompted, and no Law deny'd
Promifcuous ufe of Concubine and Bride;
Then Ifrael's Monarch, after Heav'n's own heart,
His vigorous warmth did variously impart
To Wives and Slaves; and wide as his Command,
Scatter'd his Maker's Image through the Land.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Dryden, John, Original Poems and Translations, Vol. II, p. 167.

⁶⁹ Knox, Ronald A., Essays in Satire, p. 57.

⁷⁰ Dryden, John, Op. cit., p. 151.

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Knox wrote:

In former Times, when Ifrael's ancient Creed
Took Root fo widely that it ran to Seed;
When Saints were more accounted of than Soap,
And Men in happy Blindnefs ferv'd the Pope;
Uxorious JEROBOAM, waxen bold,
Tore the Ten Tribes from David's falt'ring Hold,
And, fpurning Threats from Salem's Vatican,
Set gaiter'd Calves in Bethel and in Dan.
So, Freedom reign'd; fo, Priefts, difmay'd by naught,
Thought what they pleaf'd, and mention'd what they
thought.⁷¹

Or again, one might compare these lines of Dryden:

A numerous Hoft of dreaming Saints fucceed,
Of the true old Enthufiaftick Breed:
'Gainst Form and Order they their Pow'r employ,
Nothing to Build, and all things to Defstroy.⁷²

with these of Knox:

Three hundred Years, and ftill the Land was free'd,
And Bishops ftill, and Judges difagree'd,
Till men began for fome Account to call,
What we believ'd, or why believ'd at all?⁷³

The diction, the cadence, the delicate attention to precision and compactness of expression, the perfect control of the heroic couplet characterize both authors. But in the last analysis it is to the ear that one must apply for a final decision in the matter of parody, and a reading aloud of these lines does prove better than anything else the success with which Knox reproduced Dryden's tone and manner.

⁷¹ Knox, Ronald A., Op. cit., p. 55.

⁷² Dryden, John, Op. cit., p. 167.

⁷³ Knox, Ronald A., Op. cit., p. 55.

IV. THE OBJECT OF KNOX'S SATIRE IN THIS POEM.

Knox's satire was directed at the heterodoxy of the authors of Foundations but the errors which he exposed to ridicule are common to all types of Liberal Protestantism which tend to make religion something purely natural and man-made. In so far as the persuasive force of a satire derives largely from the earnestness of the author and the correctness of his own principles, the presence of these two assets in Knox should be established.

A proof of Knox's sincerity is found in the zeal with which he worked to uphold the cause of supernatural religion both in his apostolic ministry as such and in his writings on doctrine. A full account of these is given in the story of his conversion to Catholicism.⁷⁴ As an Anglo-Catholic his own theology was sound even though incomplete, for in becoming a Catholic, he had merely to add to his beliefs rather than give up anything which he already believed. At the time he wrote Absolute and Abitofhell, he held almost all the tenets of the Catholic Faith, even that of Papal Supremacy, though he was still confused over the relation of the Church of England to the true Church, thinking it to be a branch in which the sap still flowed though with diminished vigour. He was, therefore, in

⁷⁴ Knox, R.A., A Spiritual Aeneid, pp. 102-192.

possession of principles with which he could judge the Foundations group.

With succinct precision Knox exposed the theological vagaries of each contributor to Foundations. Beginning with Mr. Thompson, a non-contributor closely allied to this group, whom he satirized for his denial of the authenticity of the New Testament miracles, he proceeded to accuse Mr. Temple and Mr. Streeter of compromising the Church's teaching in order to appeal to the common people. Mr. Rawlinson, he called to task for insubordination to the Church's teaching and for his scepticism, and Mr. Brooks, for his complacent opinion that a Bible jettisoned by the Higher Critics was more valuable than ever before, and finally Mr. Moberley, for wooing coy philosophy. The implication is clear in the light of the latter's chapter in Foundations in which he was at pains to show that religious truths must be constantly restated according as philosophy develops from one period to another in human history.

The principal object of Knox's satire is the tendency of these theologians to diminish the number of Christian dogmas in the hope that a maximum number of men will find them acceptable. He ridicules the idea of a religion which must constantly be restated to suit the modern mentality, and indicates that this attitude is tantamount to admitting that religion is a man-made product.

Not only does he expose error but he also gives an interpretation of the modern crisis in terms of the origin of these errors. Modern disbelief, he shows, is a product of the rejection of religious authority at the time of the Protestant Reformation. Through lack of an authority within the Church of England capable of determining what was de fide, one truth after another has been abandoned, first truths of tradition, then under the influence of Biblical criticism, even Scriptural truths. In this way Knox not merely satirizes but points to the cause of the disorders.

Beyond doubt, Knox's satire treats of a subject of great importance. Modernism has been one of the greatest threats to supernatural religion in modern times, and while the Catholic Church was saved from its inroads by Papal condemnation, the Church of England remained helpless to stay its progress. It is impossible to estimate what positive value Knox's satire may have had in bringing men to a greater realization of the danger of Modernism, but it is clear that Absolute and Abitofhell placed him in the ranks of the defenders of orthodoxy together with other anti-zeitgeist writers such as Chesterton whom he had already chosen as his "oracle."⁷⁵

⁷⁵ Knox, R.A., Ibid., p. 120.

V. CONCLUDING REMARKS.

This study of Absolute and Abitofhell has served to bring out the characteristics of Knox as a satirist in this, his earliest significant satire. His choice of vehicle for his attack on the Oxford proponents of Modernism was a Drydenian imitation. The faithfulness with which he recaptured both the spirit and the complex technique of the great seventeenth century master of satire has been illustrated. It has been seen, too, that Knox's imitation was not without its own measure of creativity and that the allegory, mock heroic style and satirical portraiture together with the play of wit, were directed towards an entirely new and timely object of satire.

It has been discovered that Knox attacked the seven Oxford theologians from the fortress of his own sound convictions which were remarkably close, even at this time, to the complete doctrine of the Catholic Church. The spirit in which he launched his indictment was one of good-natured restraint and detachment which is especially apparent in the satirical portraits which expose the errors of his opponents while sparing them unwarranted humiliation.

The detailed discussion of Knox's skilful use of the heroic couplet with the elaborate devices which characterize it makes it evident that he composed his satire in an excellent literary medium. The rhetorical or

persuasive power of this style is also beyond doubt. The heroic couplet with its cadence, polysyllabic emphasis, antithetical balance, figures of speech and epigrammatical wit is an almost incomparable medium for winning the assent of the reader and for manipulating his reactions.

The other strategies of Knox's satiric technique are also very effective. The aesthetic distance achieved through the allegory and the irony of the mock heroic style enabled him to state his criticisms vigorously but without danger of giving offence. The delightful pleasure of recognition which came from the reminiscences of Dryden's own couplets supplied another form of indirection as well as entertainment. The delightful play of wit was at one and the same time a virile satirical weapon and a source of keenest enjoyment.

In this satire Knox defended supernatural religion against those who would reduce revelation to a collection of man-made precepts subject to constant restatement. In so far as his attack was directed against the seven Oxford theologians, its interest was largely topical. But in so far as it might be applied to the easily recognized prototypes of these heterodox teachers in modern society, it has more enduring interest. It is certain that the enemies of supernatural religion have not ceased their assault on Christian truth and that any effort to confound their views

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is of great service to the Christian Faith.

Knox's satire contains not merely an attack but also contributes a timely interpretation of the causes of the modern dilemma. By tracing Modernism to its roots in the rejection of authority at the time of the Protestant Reformation, Knox asserts an important positive truth. In this manner he has managed to be not only a demolisher of errors but also a teacher of truth.

CHAPTER TWO

SATIRICAL ESSAYS

In this chapter a study will be made of Knox's satirical essays in prose. These were written over a considerable period of time, the first of them, Reunion All Round, as early as 1914, and the last of them, Materials for a Boswellian Problem, in 1923. It will be seen that though the spirit in which these essays were written is much like that which characterizes Absolute and Abitofhell, the satirical devices are quite different. Knox's attack in these essays is not confined to the enemies of religious orthodoxy, but covers a wider field. The discussion of these essays is divided into three sections in this chapter. The first treats of Reunion All Round as a Swiftian imitation, the second studies four essays directed against the Higher Critics, and the third examines a number of his miscellaneous essays in satire.

I. REUNION ALL ROUND.

Theological controversy was the occasion of a fresh attempt at satire on the part of Knox. His essay, Reunion All Round, treats ironically the problem of the reunion of the Christian Churches which was then being heatedly discussed. A major crisis in the Church of England arose in 1913 out of Kikuyu Conference at which two Anglican Bishops of Africa had taken a conciliatory attitude towards

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the Free Churches. As a result they sent to Lambeth a project for an exchange of pulpits among the clergymen of different denominations in Africa, and they also asked permission to admit non-Anglicans to Communion in the Anglican Church. Opinion among the Anglican Clergy in England was divided on the issue. Some espoused the Protestant cause, while others, mainly Anglo-Catholics, came out strongly against what they declared would amount to a grave departure from orthodoxy. Many predicted a schism within the Church of England if a decision were made on the side of the Protestants.

The warm-hearted British public, ignorant for the most part of the religious principle at stake, were sympathetic to the Protestant cause. Oxford reflected this attitude according to Knox's account:

In Oxford itself the academic world of the Senior Common-rooms, which always reflected faithfully the tendencies of the uneducated public, was almost entirely on the side of free speculation about the faith(...)and of "hospitality" to Nonconformists at Anglican altars.¹

Knox, finding that he could not subscribe to this type of "hospitality" to Nonconformists, did all he could both by the spoken and the written word to prevent these concessions. At Easter of 1914, the idea came to him of writing a pamphlet in the satirical vein of Swift. The

¹ Knox, Ronald A., A Spiritual Aeneid, London, Logmanhs, Green, 1919, p.161.

resulting essay was published under the title Reunion All Round and was carefully set forth in the format and spelling of the eighteenth century.

A study of Reunion All Round as a Swiftian imitation and parody will serve to bring out the characteristics which distinguish Knox as a satirist in this work. It will be seen that though Knox employed the elements of Swift's satirical technique, he gave to his own satire a tone quite different from that of Swift. This is because the spirit in which Knox composed Reunion All Round was not the stern indignation of his eighteenth century predecessor but one tempered by a greater tolerance and good humour.

1. Reunion All Round: A Swiftian Imitation.

Of all the many different approaches to satire which characterized the writings of Swift, Knox chose to imitate that of certain short prose essays such as, An Argument against Abolishing Christianity, Mr. Collin's Discourse on Free Thinking and A Modest Proposal. An Argument against Abolishing Christianity will be used as a basis for comparison and contrast between Swift's satirical devices and Knox's use of them in Reunion All Round.

In An Argument against Abolishing Christianity, Swift parodied the typical prose essay which any public-spirited citizen of his day might write. His fictitious

writer, however, upholds a viewpoint entirely opposed to Swift's own. He argues for the retention of nominal Christianity, but not for real Christianity which, as he says, has long since been abandoned by the English people. In the course of his argument, the persona, who is a deist, exposes as though unwittingly all the weak points of those who pay mere lip service to religion. In this way, Swift arouses laughter at the expense of his opponents. Swift's essay, then, has four principal elements, a fictitious writer, a fantastic proposal argued with seeming logic, coruscating irony, and grim jesting.

These same elements are present in Knox's essay. In Reunion All Round, the persona offers a proposal for the reunion of all men, Christian and pagan alike, into one great religious family. In this way Knox exposes the sophistry of those who would reduce the doctrinal beliefs of Christianity to a minimum and thus unite all sects on the principle of the lowest common denominator. In this manner, by ironical reversal and jesting considerably less grim than Swift's, Knox ridicules his opponents.

Each of the four characteristic elements of this satirical technique will be studied in greater detail.

i) The Persona. - Swift's fictitious writer is meant to impress the reader favourably at the outset, and then to reveal his true self as though unwittingly. At

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first he seems wise, prudent, unbiased, ready to seek disinterestedly the public welfare as in this passage:

This perhaps may appear too great a paradox for our wife and paradoxical age to endure; therefore I fhall handle it with all the tendernefs, and with the utmoft deference to that great and profound majority, which is of another fentiment.²

In the fourth paragraph the reader begins to grasp more fully the true nature of the persona;

I hope no reader imagines me fo weak to ftand up in the defence of real chriftianity, fuch as ufed in primitive times (...) to have an influence upon men's belief and actions: to offer at the reftoring of that would indeed be a wild project; it would be to dig up the foundations; to deftroy at one blow all the wit, and half the learning of the kingdom; to break the intire frame and confitution of things; to ruin trade, extinguiſh arts and fcienes, and with the profeffors of them;³

The contrast between the calm, discursive manner of the persona and his vicious reasoning is one of Swift's methods of arousing the indignation of the reader. Then too, by contriving that the projector should give away such damaging information regarding the practices of society, Swift exposes and satirizes the false ideals of his contemporaries.

Similarly, Knox's projector is a Liberal Protestant who expresses the opinions of Knox's opponents. His manner

² Swift, Jonathan, An Argument against Abolishing Christianity, in The Works of Dr. Jonathan Swift, Dean of St. Patrick's, Dublin, Vol. 9, edited by Temple Scott, London, (no publisher), 1765, p. 101.

³ Ibid., p. 102.

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is that of a cool, impartial examiner whom one might instinctively trust. He sounds so fair and judicious in such statements as this:

It is now generally conceded, that those Differences, which were once held to divide the Christian Sects from one another, (as, Whether or no Confirmation were a necessary Ordinance of the Church) can no longer be thought to place any Obstacle against Unity and Charity between Christians;⁴

But while this impartial tone is preserved, the sentiments become more startling:

Further, it has come to be seen that Bishops and Archbishops are not, as was commonly supposed hitherto, the Vehicles of any extraordinary Grace (...) but only another of these Obstacles, which make the Race of Life so agreeable a Pursuit.⁵

The discrepancy between the narrator's dispassionate tone and the sentiments expressed becomes even more apparent as the essay progresses. For instance, the following passage is intended to arouse the reader to a combative mood:

(...) and I would suggest, in the interests of Reunion of Religions, that upon his Conquest of Ireland our great Commander Sir E----- C-----, should put all Papist Children to the Sword, and we should make it a criminal Offence for the Future, that any Papist should be allowed to marry, or have Issue.⁶

Knox's persona like that of Swift also becomes an instrument for the indictment of a materialistic society.

⁴ Knox, Ronald A., Essays in Satire, p. 32.

⁵ Ibid., p. 33.

⁶ Ibid., p. 51.

He is an urbane man of the world who knows modern society and approves of its standards. In this passage he attempts to prove that matter cannot be evil:

For, if Matter be evil, how can it be that among an enlighten'd People like ourfelves, as is very obvioufly the cafe, the Exploits men achieve with their Fifts, their Feet, or their Mufcles are far more anxiously recorded and read than any Activity of their Brains? That we undergo Exercifes every Morning for the perfecting of our Bodies, and never reflect, from one week's end to another, upon the cafe of our Souls?⁷

As it is the persona himself who betrays the secularism of his contemporaries, the condemnation is made by Knox with every appearance of innocence.

From this comparison it is obvious that the projector plays essentially the same role in Knox's essay as in that of Swift. In both cases he speaks for the satirist's opponents. The bland manner of both projectors arouses the reader into disagreement with their respective proposals while their propensity for giving away damaging truths gives rise to denigrating laughter at the expense of the satirists' enemies.

ii) A Fantastic Proposal. - Swift's method is to cause his projector to start off on the false premise which he wishes to condemn, then to have him argue his case with every appearance of logic until he reaches a reductio ad absurdum which shows how false was the original premise.

⁷ Ibid., pp. 46-47.

In this essay, the case is built on the assumption that nominal Christianity is still worth retaining although real Christianity has long since become outmoded. Each argument in favour of the plan reveals something more of the hypocrisy of those who retain merely the name of Christian, until finally Swift's enemies are annihilated by a gust of ridicule.

The expounding of the argument in favour of nominal Christianity is a masterpiece of rhetorical skill. The chief persuasive elements in Swift's essay are those outlined by Aristotle:⁸ the forceful presentation of the argument itself, the appeal directed towards the interests and prejudices of the readers, and finally the authority coming from the reader's estimate of the projector's personality.

The opening paragraphs are a psychological preparation for introducing the proposal. The author expresses great respect for the opinion of the majority and declares that he puts forth his own views with the utmost deference. At first he conditions the reader's mind by lesser shocks such as this: "The fyftem of the gofpel, after the fate of other fyftems, is generally antiquated."⁹ Then when the conditioning is complete, he

⁸ Aristotle, *Rhetorica*, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, edited by Richard McKeon, New York, Random House, 1941, p. 1329.

⁹ Swift, Jonathan, *Op. cit.*, p. 101.

drops his bombshell that he must not be understood as defending real Christianity which is "utterly inconfitent with our prefent fchemes of wealth and power."¹⁰ The stage is set for arguing his case. In the manner of the good logician, he considers in turn all the objections which might be raised from the opposition. He deferentially answers each of these objections, usually managing to turn the objection to his own advantage. For example, some wish to abolish Christianity on the grounds that this would bring about greater unity among men who are now divided on questions of doctrine. To which the projector replies that men must contend over something, and therefore he adds: "If the quiet of a ftate can be bought by only flinging men a few ceremonies to devour, it is a purchafe no wife man would refufe."¹¹ After answering his opponents' objections, he proceeds to enumerate carefully the advantages to be gained by retaining nominal Christianity. In this manner, then, Swift manages to present the argument in a persuasive way.

In answering his opponents' objections as well as in stating his own case, the persona constantly appeals to the interests and the prejudices of his readers. Knowing

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 102.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 112.

that he addresses a materialistically-minded public, he is at pains to point out the advantages of wealth and power which will accrue from his project. For instance, he enumerates all the business transactions and all the pleasures which are obtained from having Sunday a nominal day of rest and worship.¹² One of his potent appeals to the prejudices of the people is his argument that the abolition of nominal Christianity might lead to the introduction of popery: "... the people will never be at ease till they find out some other method of worship; which will as infallibly produce superstition, as superstition will end in popery."¹³

The convincing force of the writer's personality can be seen from the remarks already made on the persona as well as from the passages quoted. His tone is so calm, his thinking so clear and orderly, his desire to be fair so obvious that he readily wins and even retains a certain unwilling acquiescence from the reader.

A study of Reunion All Round reveals that Knox's persona builds up his project in the same manner as Swift's persona had done. He posits a false principle which a warm-hearted but ignorant public accepted, the principle that doctrinal differences should be set aside so as to

¹² Ibid., p. 107.

¹³ Ibid., p. 116.

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receive Nonconformists at Anglican altars and in Anglican pulpits. On this false premise he builds his whole case for the inclusion of Jews, Mahometans and even atheists into Church unity. Thus pushed to its final absurdity, the false principle is exploded with authoritative finality.

Knox's essay is also composed with great regard for the art of rhetorical persuasion. His argument is carefully enunciated and propounded with great attention to logic. He bases his initial principle upon the solid rock of public opinion: "It is now generally conceded," he writes in introducing his plan for the reunion of Churches. Then he takes up each denomination in turn anticipating the possible difficulties to be encountered before receiving it into unity and showing how these obstacles might be overcome. He begins with those denominations, such as the Orthodox, which are likely to cause least difficulty, and then proceeds to more troublesome cases until he shows how even the Papists could be received into unity, and finally the atheists also. With such ease does he pass from a difficult case to one still more difficult, that the reader is lulled into a certain mental acquiescence. The persona takes it for granted that the reader will not perceive the denial of the principle of contradiction which the inclusion of the atheists within the proposed reunion involves:

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I submit it, therefore, with all deference to our Theologians, whether they could not find it possible to allow, that as God is Immanent and yet Transcendent, so we cannot see the whole Truth, but only an Aspect of the Truth, until we have reconcil'd ourselves to the last final Antimony, that God is both Existent and non-Existent?¹⁴

This show of learning coupled with the tone of deference is calculated to deceive a public little given to thinking for itself.

Not only is the argument presented forcibly, but the persona constantly appeals to the interests and prejudices of his readers so as to win them to his side. Knowing how susceptible they are to popular slogans of the day he refers often to the "Progress of Civiliz'd Ideas," to the "new Enlightenment," to the "wider Diffusion of Knowledge," to the "Spirit of Compromise." The proposals he makes are such as would cater to a broad-minded and pleasure-loving people. In presenting his plan he arouses the traditional prejudices of the English against the Irish and the Papists. All the ideals of worship and of discipline which he upholds are such as would win the support of a lax people.

It is evident that the third persuasive element, the authority of the speaker, is also fully exploited in Reunion All Round. His calm, dispassionate manner, his judicial fairness, his exegetical skill, all count strongly

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 53.

in his favour. Finally, his own psychological insight which enables him to say the things which the public want to hear, makes him a competent projector.

It may be concluded that Knox, like Swift, exploited the rhetorical skills in order to give greater persuasive force to his satire.

iii) Coruscating Irony. - The irony in both An Argument against Abolishing Christianity and Reunion All Round arises from the persona presenting a viewpoint directly opposed to what the author himself holds as true. The irony is greatly intensified in both essays by the rhetorical devices which have been used to make the case seem plausible, and also by the bland manner of the projector in stating the most fantastic arguments. Though the projector seems to argue his case well, he always gives himself away to the delight of the reader who enjoys seeing the arguments turn inside out and rebound to his discredit. A typical instance of how the author's real meaning is enforced through ironical statement is this:

To conclude: whatever fome may think of the great advantages to trade by this favourite fcheme, I do very much apprehend, that, in fix months time after the act is paf for the extirpation of the gofpel, the Bank and Eaft-India ftock may fall at leaft one percent. And, fince this is fifty times more than ever the wifdom of our age thought fit to venture for the prefervation of chriftianity, there is no reafon we fhould be at fo great a lofs, merely for the fake of deftroying it.¹⁵

¹⁵ Swift, Jonathan, Op. cit., pp. 117-118.

Ironically the greatest argument Swift could use in defence of Christianity was that its extirpation would cause a slump in trade.

The following passage from Reunion All Round shows how Knox uses irony in much the same way:

As our old quarrel about the Claufe Filioque, it will have difappear'd at the time of which we fpeak: for, as Tradition avers that the Apoftles, when they firft form'd a Creed, did not all profefs it together, but each fupply'd his Contribution, Peter leading the way with I believe in God, fo in this new Church nobody will be expected to recite the whole Creed, but only fuch Claufes as he finds relish in; it being anticipated that, with good Fortune, a large Congregation will ufually manage in this way to recite the whole Formula between them.¹⁶

The author's real meaning is a condemnation of those who call themselves Christian and yet who do not accept the full Christian doctrine. The value of the ironic form of statement arises not merely from the indirection which protects the author from the charge of ill-humour but also from the enjoyment which accrues to the reader who must constantly interpret each passage.

The ironist runs the risk of being misunderstood. Swift himself felt that irony was for an aristocracy of brains and spoke of his desire of "laughing with a few friends in a corner,"¹⁷ He considered it a compliment to be understood only by the more discerning of his readers. It

¹⁶ Knox, Ronald A., Essays in Satire, p. 35.

¹⁷ Swift, Jonathan, Op. cit., p. 318.

is interesting to note that Knox earned this compliment of being misunderstood by several unwary groups, but comprehended by those whose opinion counted. After recording some amusing misreadings of his essay, Knox adds with evident satisfaction: "It won, in cold print, the commendation of my earliest master and model, Mr. G.K. Chesterton."¹⁸ It is safe to conclude that Knox attained the goal of which Swift would have approved, that of being understood by one who really mattered.

iv) Grim Jestings. - There are several ways in which both Swift and Knox stimulate laughter at the expense of their respective enemies. In both authors, one of the primary sources of the ludicrous is the perception of how the persona exposes his sophistries while thinking he is successfully defending his case. This excerpt from An Argument against Abolishing Christianity illustrates this point:

In answer to all which, with deference to wifer judgments, I think this rather fhews the neceffity of a nominal religion among us. Great wits love to be free with the highft objects; and if they cannot be allowed a God to revile or renounce, they will fpeak evil of dignities, abufe the government, and reflect upon the miniftry, which I am fure few will deny to be of much more pernicious confequence, according to the faying of Tiberius, deorum offenfa diis curae.¹⁹

¹⁸ Knox, R.A., A Spiritual Aeneid, p. 169.

¹⁹ Swift, Jonathan, Op. cit., p. 115.

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Knox's enthymemes like those of Swift are constructed in such a way that not only are the arguments seen to be false but also the truth is implied by ironical indirection as in this passage in which he ridicules those who refuse to fight for justice under the pretext that abuses are necessary evils:

How then are to come to any Agreement with thofe, who openly profefs that the Body is fomething to be neglected and mortify'd, and that Matter is an evil? I anfwer (...) we can quite eafily fafeguard ourfelves againft any untoward Confequences that might follow from the Doctrine, by adding, That it is a neceffary Evil. The Horrors of War, Poverty, and ill-paid Labour; the Delays and Expenfe of the Law (...) we all confeff, with one voice, to be evils; but we go on to add, That they are neceffary evils, meaning thereby that the Speaker (for one) has no intention of moving a Finger to amend them. If this were clearly underftood, I cannot fee that we would be much the lofers by the adoption of an Eaftern way of thinking.²⁰

Thus throughout both essays the fun arises from recognizing the different ways in which the air of logical demonstration ends merely in exposing the inherent absurdity of the argument.

Another way in which both Swift and Knox induce laughter is by means of witty expression. The term wit is used here in the same sense as in the discussion on Absolute and Abitofhell.²¹ The texture of Swift's wit almost defies description, but it might be said to consist

²⁰ Knox, Ronald A., Essays in Satire, pp. 47-48.

²¹ Chapter One, p. 23.

of reckless and penetrating energy of thought expressed so aptly that the reader is at once shocked and amused. Knox's wit resembles that of Swift in its penetration of thought and its felicity of expression but has none of the older satirist's asperity. A few instances will show the potency of their respective wit as an instrument of satire as well as the distinctly different spirit and tone which distinguishes their employment of it.

Sometimes Swift's wit is almost playful as in this passage:

I appeal to the breast of any polite free-thinker, whether in the pursuit of gratifying a predominant passion, he hath not always felt a wonderful incitement by reflecting it was a thing forbidden:²²

But more often his wit is fierce as in this excerpt:

And to urge another argument of a parallel nature: if christianity were once abolished, how could the free-thinkers, the strong reasoners, and the men of profound learning, be able to find another subject so calculated in all points whereon to display their abilities?²³

The following instances of a debasing simile to describe his opponents also reveals something of Swift's acrimony:

Let the mastiffs amuse themselves with a sheep's skin stuffed with hay, provided it will keep them from worrying the flock.²⁴

²² Swift, Jonathan, Op. cit., p. 109.

²³ Ibid., p. 112.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 112.

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Knox's wit, on the contrary, is much more high-spirited with none of the asperity of Swift's wit. Whereas Swift's jests are too grim for real enjoyment, springing as they do from saevo indignatio, Knox's jocularly does not make the reader feel ill at ease no matter how pointed the darts of the satire may be. The essential difference seems to be that while Swift's jests are hurled in scorn, Knox is moved only by an outraged sense of truth. His aim, then, is not to express contempt for his opponents but to ridicule their false opinions and attitudes. His wit is directed for the most part towards a play of incongruous associations which lights up some absurdity and destroys it by a gust of laughter as in this passage:

On the other hand, Reciprocity demands, that we should not put any Yolk on the Conscience of the Oriental, by infifting on his taking off his Turban: we should expect him inftead to carry in his Hand a fecond Hat, (preferably a Silk one), fo that when he reach'd his Pew he might not be without fomething to pray into.²⁵

The incongruity of association brings out the emptiness of some men's religion and the obvious embarrassment with which they go through the practice of it.

Typical, too, of Knox's ability to make his opponents' ethos appear fatuous is his suggestion concerning the matrimonial arrangements of the future when the West will have united with the Orient:

²⁵ Knox, Ronald A., Essays in Satire, p. 39.

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Christian Men are accustomed to be content with one Wife, and even in America with one at a time; Whereas in Turkey he would be thought a very chicken-hearted Husband who had not endow'd four Ladies simultaneously with his own Surname(...) Mathematicks provides us with a ready Solution of the Difficulty, by the Method of Averages(...) in the Church of the future we shall all be conscientious Bigamists; thereby avoiding at once the Expence of a Harem, and the Monotony of our present European System.²⁶

In this manner Knox ridicules both the non-Christian practice of divorce and the principle of compromise which is at the heart of the question of reunion of the Churches.

Knox has a variety of witty devices whereby he exposes a falsehood in an unexpected and amusing manner. The debasing simile is used to good effect in this context:

Further, it has come to be seen that Bishops and Archbishops are not, as was commonly supposed hitherto, the Vehicles of extraordinary Grace, which they pass'd on one to another, like a Contagion, by the laying on of hands, but only another of those Obstacles, which make the Race of Life so agreeable a Pursuit.²⁷

This statement of the persona is meant to be reversed, and yet there is a grain of literal truth in it as well, for Knox did believe that the highest ecclesiastics of the Church of England were more intent upon placing obstacles in the way of Anglo-Catholic practice than they were upon defending orthodoxy.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 38

²⁷ Ibid., p. 33.

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Two other instances will serve to illustrate Knox's habitual play of wit. How cleverly he sums up the whole false concept of the movement for reunion in this witty metaphor: "REUNION ALL ROUND OR JAEEL'S HAMMER LAID ASIDE, AND THE MILK OF HUMAN KINDNESS BEATEN UP INTO BUTTER AND SERVED IN A LORDLY DISH."²⁸ His pun on the motto of the Catholic Church is also typical of the intellectuality of his wit. The Church's motto, "Quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus, credendum est," becomes "Quod umquam, quod ufquam, quod ab ullis,"²⁹ in which he expresses with succinct and telling force the difference between the universality of the Catholic Church which embraces all men in one Faith and that of the proposed Church which would unite all men of every creed within its fold. It is a stout opponent who would not fear to have his ideas subjected to such ridicule, and yet it would be hard for him to be angry for the satire is so good-natured.

This study of the various ways in which Swift and Knox excited laughter at the expense of their opponents has shown that they are much alike in the intellectuality of their witticisms and in the remarkable aptness of language in which they convey them, but that they differ sharply in the spirit which animates their ridicule. Beneath the jests

²⁸ Ibid., p. 32.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 54.

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of Swift one feels repressed anger, but behind those of Knox one senses the genial and detached satirist who does not wish to vex men but only to bring them to a saner frame of mind.

This discussion of Reunion All Round as a Swiftian imitation has shown that Knox employed one of Swift's most powerful satirical techniques with a fine measure of success, and that while rejecting Swift's acrid tone, he wrote with no less authority than his master.

The content of Knox's essay has little in common with that of Swift beyond the fact that ultimately both authors were indicting irreligion and materialism. While Swift compelled his readers to see that there was no honest escape from the dilemma he proposed other than a return to the practice of genuine Christianity, Knox compelled his readers to see that unless they were willing to extend their principle of doctrinal toleration to the point of atheism, they could not hold it at all with any degree of consistency. At the end of both satires, the thoughtful reader is bound to be wiser if not better.

The remarks which were made on the question of originality and imitation in the first chapter are equally applicable to Reunion All Round.³⁰ Knox embodied his satire in the form of a Swiftian imitation not merely that he might

³⁰ Chapter One, p. 31.

employ a very potent satirical technique, which because of its sustained irony and rhetorical power has rarely been surpassed, but also that he might exploit the delight which accrues to the reader from the reminiscence of Swift's style and diction. A reader unfamiliar with Swift's writing would miss a good part of the enjoyment to be derived from reading Reunion All Round. Knox's originality is apparent in skilfully applying a traditional satirical technique to a modern problem, and also in preserving his own characteristic spirit of restraint and good humour. Certainly Knox has achieved a fine measure of individuality even while acknowledging an indebtedness to England's greatest prose satirist.

2. Reunion All Round: A Swiftian Parody.

Reunion All Round is a parody of Swift's style and diction in the same limited sense in which Absolute and Abitofhell is a Drydenian parody. Knox's muse has no element of mimicry; rather he is using Swift's masterly technique both to amuse and to confound his opponents. A few excerpts from each author will illustrate the delight of recognition which is everywhere apparent in reading Reunion All Round.

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When one compares this passage from Reunion All

Round:

Thus it may be hop'd that we shall complete the Reunion of all Chrifians: the Confiderations fo far brought forward are fo obvious and plain to all Men of Senfe, that I am well-nigh asham'd to have dwelt fo long upon them: the Queftion to be raif'd in the prefent Treatife is rather, whether we do right to confine thefe beneficent Operations to the Chrifian or Trinitarian Sects only, or whether we cannot advantageoufly extend them to other religious Syftems.³¹

with this passage from Swift:

But here I would not be miftaken, and muft therefore be fo bold as to borrow a diftinction from the writers on the other fide, when they make a difference between nominal and real trinitarians. I hope no reader imagines me fo weak to ftand up in the defence of real chriftianity, fuch as ufed in primivtive times (if we may believe the authors of thofe ages) to have an influence upon mens belief and actions:³²

one cannot fail to be struck by the clever manner in which Knox reproduced the Swiftian turn of phrase, the judicious tone and persuasive manner.

Or again this passage of Knox:

Yet is fomething to be faid for the Practice in general Outline; who has not wished, as he turn'd over in bed at eight of the clock on a Sunday morning, that there were fome lefs noify means of awakening a few devout Women, than making a great Clanging of Bells, as if the whole City were afire?³³

³¹ Knox, Ronald A., Essays in Satire, p. 36.

³² Swift, Jonathan, Op. cit., p. 113.

³³ Knox, Ronald A., Op. cit., pp. 41-42.

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might be compared to this one of Swift:

It is again objected, as a very absurd ridiculous custom, that a fetti of men should be suffered, much less employed and hired, to bawl one day in seven against the lawfulness of those methods most in use towards the pursuit of greatness, riches, and pleasure, which are the constant practice of all men alive on the other fix.³⁴

From these comparisons it is evident that Knox had a genuine appreciation and understanding of the original work and that he made a successful attempt to efface his own peculiarities of expression in favour of the characteristic Swiftian diction and turn of phrase. This opinion is borne out by a critic who made this comment on Reunion All Round:

The entire pamphlet in style, format, etc., is in the late seventeenth century manner, the cleverest hoax imaginable. Its excellence can be fully savoured only by the expert in styles.³⁵

To which this same critic adds: "No writer, with the exception of Thackeray, has come so near the manner, both prose and poetic, of the Restoration and Queen Anne wits."³⁶

Quite naturally the full splendour of the parody comes from the whole impression rather from isolated passages. So that the present study may not become too lengthy, it has been necessary to choose only a few characteristic quotations, but even from these, it is

³⁴ Swift, Jonathan, Op. cit., p. 109.

³⁵ Kitchin, George, A Survey of Burlesque and Parody in English, London, Oliver & Boyd, 1931, p. 373.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 345.

evident that Knox has recaptured the ease and precision of Swift's vigorous, unadorned style.

3. Reunion All Round: The Object of the Satire.

In this prose satire Knox stands once again as a defender of orthodoxy. In the Kikuyu crisis he saw the danger of the Church of England travelling still farther in the direction taken at the time of the Reformation. In Knox's eyes the Reformation was the original wound which had to be healed before the Church of England could regain her full vigour. His intense interest in the Kikuyu debate sprang from his conviction that Reunion was, indeed, the solution to the present problem, however not the Reunion envisioned by the Protestants, but its antithesis, a corporate Reunion with the Church of Rome.

The principal object of Knox's satire in this essay was the false concept that a compromise of doctrinal truth was a justifiable concession for the sake of reunion among Christians. By a reductio ad absurdum, he showed that compromise of this kind would logically end in atheism. Thus by a neat reversal of meaning, Knox indicated that the Christian religion is a revealed religion and that men must adhere to the whole of the deposit of faith.

In this satire Knox strikes out boldly against the Bishops of the Church of England, ridiculing not merely

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their failure to oppose the tide of disbelief but also their own heterodoxy. He attacks, too, the concept of the Erastian state when he speaks of the "moft bleffed Privileges" of having "religious affairs entirely controul'd by the State."³⁷ Still more devastating is the ridicule directed towards the religious faddists, those who dabbled in mystical cults and in spiritism. Finally the Higher Critics of the Sacred Scripture are indicted for undermining the people's faith in the authenticity of Holy Writ.

Many false attitudes and ideals are also exposed to denigrating laughter. The materialism of a pleasure-loving people, their cult of bodily enjoyment, their mercenary pursuits and their inconstancy in marriage are held up to ridicule. Moreover, he mocks at the laxity of Anglicans on matters of religious practice and discipline, and derides them for their shame-faced piety so unlike that of the frank piety of the Mahometans. He ridicules, too, their broad mindedness, their devotion to so-called progress and enlightenment, and above all their acceptance of the principle of compromise which is basic to the whole problem of the reunion of Christians. Such tolerance of doctrinal errors in others is, he shows, not compatible with that true brotherly love which they profess to practise.

³⁷ Knox, Ronald A., Op. cit., p. 35.

The object of Knox's satire in Reunion All Round, though it arose out of a passing crisis in the Church of England, has, none the less, universal import. The loss of a true sense of the supernatural, the falling away from the doctrine and discipline of traditional teaching, are regrettable tendencies which still exist. Knox's warning that the Protestant indifference towards doctrinal truth would eventually lead to widespread agnosticism has unfortunately been fulfilled. Because his satire touches upon the most fundamental lapses of modern man in the intellectual and spiritual order, it has a quality of universality and hence of permanency which a satire on a strictly topical matter would not have.

II. SATIRES ON THE HIGHER CRITICS.

Knox wrote four essays which expose to ridicule the unscientific methods of the Higher Critics. "Studies in the Literature of Sherlock Holmes" discusses ironically the authorship of the Holmes series; "The Identity of the Pseudo-Bunyan" treats of the authorship of Part Two of Pilgrim's Progress; "The Authorship of 'In Memoriam'" purports to show that Queen Victoria was the author of this elegy; and finally "Materials for a Boswellian Problem" breaks down the biography of Johnson into three major divisions each, supposedly, the product of a different

writer. All four essays are ingenious and devastating satires designed to throw doubt upon the scholarship of the Higher Critics. As the satiric technique varies little in each of these essays, a detailed study will be made of only the first two of them.

Knox had occasion to study the methods and the findings of the Higher Critics, whose reputation was so high in Oxford, when he was preparing lectures on the Iliad and the Odyssey in 1910. He made a thorough investigation of the authorities on the Homeric question and checked their findings in relation to the texts of the epics. He found that there was no agreement among critics beyond concurring in the belief that the two epics were composite productions. But they did not in the least agree upon which parts were early and which were late. Moreover, their arguments for multiple authorship rested upon very superficial grounds, mostly upon trifling internal evidence which was by no means so conclusive as they claimed. They set forth their case with great assurance and a show of learning, yet they neglected to consider a large body of objections which had to be answered before their conclusions could be considered final.

This early experience made Knox wary of the scholarship of the Higher Critics on the subject of Holy Scripture. Schweitzer's Quest for the Historical Jesus was

considered the last word with the Liberal Protestant school at this time. A detailed investigation of this work together with other works of a similar nature which tended to throw doubt on the traditional teaching of the Church convinced Knox that the methods of the Higher Critics in regard to Biblical studies were unsound and their conclusions unwarranted. This time Knox's indignation was thoroughly aroused, for the problem of the authenticity of Holy Scripture was no mere academic question but one which affected the fate of immortal souls whose faith was being insidiously undermined by these liberal and unscholarly writings.

1. "Studies in the Literature of Sherlock Holmes."

"Studies in the Literature of Sherlock Holmes" was composed a short time before Knox's indignation had been fully aroused against the Higher Critics, and to some extent, it was merely a jeux d'esprit. He himself confessed that he had "no clear idea of what sort of criticism"³⁸ he was setting out to satirize. But in theological Oxford it was taken as an attack on the methods of the Higher Critics and Knox reported: "I found myself already stamped as an opponent of that tendency."³⁹

³⁸ Knox, R.A., A Spiritual Aeneid, p. 121.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 122.

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This essay appears on the surface to be a scholarly investigation of the literary features of the Holmes canon. There are several divisions within the essay, not all of them satirical. Thus the study of the eleven characteristic parts of a Holmes story each graced with an appropriate Greek name is a mere playful sally. The elaborate study of the philosophy of life of Holmes and of Watson, somewhat after the manner of Dr. A.C. Bradley's psychological study of the men and women of Shakespeare's plays is also a mere jeux d'esprit. On the other hand, the fictitious controversy over the authenticity of the various stories is satirical, together with those sections of the essay which study the symbolic significance of Watson's bowler and the literary affinities of the Holmes literature. The satirical parts of the essay will be discussed under these headings: i) the persona, ii) the fictitious controversy, iii) the irony and wit.

i) The Persona. - In this case Knox created a fictitious persona who is a serious-minded scholar in sympathy with the Higher Criticism. His tone supposes an audience in agreement with him. He speaks authoritatively in a manner which inspires confidence. His approach to the problem of the authorship of the Holmes literature is orderly, his language clear and forceful, his show of learning considerable. The persuasive quality of his

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personality commands a hearing. Since the persona represents the opinions which Knox wishes to confound, he is permitted to build up his case only that its inherent weakness may be exposed.

11) The Fictitious Controversy. - Through his persona, Knox gives a detailed account of an imaginary controversy over the spurious nature of the stories in the Holmes series. In this manner, at least five different errors of the Higher Critics are ridiculed. They start out on the assumption that a certain work is spurious, they support the hypothesis thus arbitrarily assumed upon internal evidence of the most trivial nature, they quote authorities as a kind of deus ex machina, they state their conclusions in pontifical tones, and finally they read into the contents symbols and meanings which the author obviously had not intended. Knox's manner of exposing these errors will be illustrated briefly.

Until there is sufficient evidence to the contrary, the weight of scholarly opinion is normally on the side of tradition, but in Knox's burlesque version of the fictitious controversy, the persona's bias from the beginning is in favour of multiple authorship of the Holmes stories. He records at length the opinions of several fictitious scholars, Backnecke, M. Piff-Pouff and others, each of whom had a different opinion as to which of the

stories were spurious and which were authentic. The evidence upon which each authority built his case is trifling. For example, Backnecke's whole theory of the deutero-Watson is based upon the fact that he is called John H. Watson, M.D., in The Study in Scarlet, while in the Man with the Twisted Lip, his wife addresses him as James. Backnecke, however, did not withdraw his theory when it was proved that this "grave inconsistency" was merely an error of editing. The persona works out an elaborate theory of his own to prove that Watson wrote all the stories but that while some of them were based on fact, others were inventions of his imagination. The ingenious way in which he piles up evidence to support his hypothesis is so superficially plausible that the satirical import is strongly enforced: if someone can build up so convincing a case for something which everyone knows is false, what cannot be foisted on a public ignorant of literary history, under the guise of expert research.

The persona assumes these authorities as though they were infallible. Backnecke, M. Piff-Pouff, Bilgemann, M. Papier-Maché, the ponderous Sauwosch and the indefatigable Ratzegger are quoted with the greatest respect, so as to convey the impression that no one with any intelligence would think of disagreeing with their pronouncements. The pontifical tones of these authorities

is revealed in the persona's quotations as in this passage:
 "'The bull-dog is more at home' he adds 'on the Chapel steps, than this fraudulent imitation among the divine products of the Watsons-genius.'"⁴⁰ The persona uses the same authoritative tones when he sets forth his own views on the proper dating of the Hound of the Baskervilles:

(...) we can show by a method somewhat akin to that of Blunt's Undesigned Coincidences in Holy Scriptures that it was meant to be before 1901. The old crank who wants to have a lawsuit against the police says it will be known as the case of Frankland versus REGINA - King Edward, as we all know, succeeded in 1901.⁴¹

The satirical point is driven home by the contrast between the finality of the tone and the ridiculous inadequacy of the argument presented.

To ridicule the tendency of critics to discover meanings where none were intended, Knox has the persona make this observation with obvious approval: "Thus, if one brings out a book on turnips, the modern scholar tries to discover from it whether the author was on good terms with his wife;"⁴² The persona himself follows this same principle when he studies the symbolism of Watson's bowler:

⁴⁰ Knox, Ronald A., Essays in Satire, p. 101.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 106.

⁴² Ibid., p. 98.

And the seal, and the symbol, and secret of Watson is, of course, his bowler. It is not like other bowlers: it is a priestly vestment, an insigne of office (...) It is his apex of wool, his petasus of invisibility, his mitra pretiosa, his triple tiara, his halo. The bowler stands for all that is immutable and irrefragable, for law and justice, for the established order of things, for the rights of humanity, for the triumph of the man over the brute.⁴³

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle would doubtlessly be greatly surprised by an interpretation so far from his intention. The insignificance of the object extolled makes for exquisite burlesque and denigrating laughter.

In this manner, through a fictitious controversy related with great seriousness and a remarkable show of research, Knox exposes the unscientific methods of the Higher Critics. The essay is remarkably ingenious both in its invention of the literary controversy and in its detailed study of the Holmes canon which betrays a more than cursory knowledge of the stories.

One further element in the fictitious controversy strongly enforces the satirical import. This is the rhetorical or persuasive manner in which the essay is composed. The weight of authority flowing from the persona's personality, the orderly manner of his presentation, the proofs he educes, the rapport which he manages to establish with his audience, all tend to impress the reader forcibly. The persuasive element together with

⁴³ Ibid., p. 112.

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the seeming plausibility of the scholarship intensifies the irony for, while the reader is strongly moved to agree, yet he knows that he must reverse the persona's statements in order to discover the author's real meaning.

iii) Irony and Wit. - Since the viewpoint within the essay is that of Knox's opponent, it follows that irony permeates the whole essay and gives it its particular flavour. The imaginary controversy is so convincing that the reader has to be constantly on guard so as not to mistake the direction of the satirist's cleverness as, for instance, in a typical passage such as this:

Any studies in Sherlock Holmes must be, first and foremost, studies in Dr. Watson. Let us treat at once of the literary and bibliographical aspect of the question. First, as to authenticity. There are grave inconsistencies in the Holmes cycle.⁴⁴

The passage continues with a discussion of the inconsistencies which turn out to be anything but grave. The manner in which this pretense of genuine scholarship is maintained is truly delightful and gives ample scope to Knox's unlimited capacity for wit.

Knox's wit in this essay consists mainly of bringing together incongruous ideas which startle and delight the reader yet never fail to drive home some satirical point. For example, he highlights the artificial structure and ingredients of a typical Sherlock Holmes

⁴⁴ Knox, Ronald A., Ibid., p. 100.

story in these words:

By a sort of Socratic paradox, we might say that the best detective can only catch the best thief. A single blunder on the part of the guilty man would have thrown all Holmes's deductions out of joint.⁴⁵

He undermines the authoritative ethos of the Higher Critics in this passage in which their pontifical tones are applied to insignificant material:

Now let us see Holmes at work (...) We have seen him in the mind's eye prowling round the room with his nose an inch from the ground, on the look-out for cigarette-ends, orange-peel, false teeth, domes of silence, and what not, that may have been left behind by the criminal. 'It is not a man,' says M. Binsk, the great Polish critic, 'it is either a beast or a god.'⁴⁶

Knox's wit, however, is used most effectively in the invented controversy where his ingenuity in finding evidence to support his claims is seemingly limitless. A typical instance of how he raises derisive laughter is the passage in which he states the reason for taking the Final Problem as a faked incident:

(...) thus M. Piff-Pouff represents it as an old dodge of the thaumaturgist, and quotes the example of Salmoxis of Gebeleizis among the Getae, who hid underground for two years, then returned to preach the doctrine of immortality.⁴⁷

In this instance Knox mimics the critics who deceive people by a show of learning, knowing that they will not perceive

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 114.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 118.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 101.

the misapplication and irrelevancy of the learning. He emphasizes this point by a detailed study of the literary affinities of the Holmes cycle with Greek Drama and the Dialogues of Plato, quoting pertinent passages which illustrate the supposed resemblances, and drawing out ingenious parallels.

These are but a few typical instances of Knox's use of wit whereby he speciously imitates the Higher Critics so as to confound them.

2. "The Identity of the Pseudo-Bunyan."

The second essay in this group, "The Identity of the Pseudo-Bunyan," has marked similarities to the preceding essay. However, the satire of this essay is more pointed, no doubt because it was written after Knox's experiences with the Biblical Critics. A short analysis will be made of the principal component parts of this essay: the fictitious scholar, the problem in Higher Criticism, and the irony and wit.

1) The Fictitious Scholar. - The character and personality of this fictitious scholar is very similar to that of the persona of the Holmes controversy, but his role differs on one important point. In addition to presenting a fictitious controversy, this scholar also attempts to solve a problem in Higher Criticism. After quoting proofs

from various imaginary authorities for the spurious nature of Part Two of Pilgrim's Progress, this scholar goes on to offer his own conclusions on the question of who actually wrote this section.

ii) The Problem in Higher Criticism. - The scholar begins by giving a detailed account of the grounds upon which it has been concluded that it is impossible to attribute Part Two of Pilgrim's Progress to Bunyan. He first treats of the inconsistencies between the two stories, giving a long list of these of which the following is typical:

Christian, on page 20, is hastily pulled through the gate for fear he should be wounded by an arrow from Beelzebub's Castle; Christiana and Mercy, on page 211, are in danger, not from long-distance fire, but from a dog, which has never been mentioned in Part One at all.⁴⁸

He then proceeds to discuss the discrepancies in the time-scheme of the two expeditions:

Christiana and the children pass their first night of travel at the Interpreter's house (page 228), and there is no sign that they have done less than a fair day's journey; their second night is similarly spent at the House Beautiful (page 247) (...) Whereas Christian makes a single day's journey of the whole distance to the House Beautiful (page 51), and even so, has only himself to thank for his benighted arrival - he had wasted time by leaving his roll on the Hill Difficulty, and having to go back for it (page 43).⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 138.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 139.

After a long recitation of such discrepancies, the scholar points out that the surface discrepancies are nothing compared to the very different motivation which inspires the conduct of the two chief personages: "The fact is, that whereas Christian goes on a pilgrimage, Christiana goes on a walking-tour."⁵⁰

There follows a full account of the differences of metre employed in the incidental poetry of each section. In Part One, for the twenty-nine instances in which the author breaks into poetry, he invariably uses the heroic line, whereas a variety of metres is used in Part Two. Faced with such evidence the scholar agrees with Canon Wrest-the-Word that: "The genuine Bunyan writes heroics."

Another argument is drawn from the differences in grammar. Such points as this are brought forward:

It is true that whereas "thou" and its derivatives enjoy equal popularity in both parts (52: 53), "you" is more frequent in Part One (81 usages against 64). Canon Wrest-the-Word insists strongly upon the discrepancy; he was trained in an exact school, and for many years held the chair of Dichotomy at Wolverhampton.⁵¹

The scholar goes on to quote from "a striking essay of Dr. Cheese-Paring" in which the latter showed that the pseudo-Bunyan of Part Two actually gave a clue to the

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 140.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 142.

mystery of authorship by attributing his information concerning Christian to Mr. Sagacity:

And why the name, Mr. Sagacity? (...) it is not Mr. Sagacity, but Mr. Saga-City - an appropriate name, as Canon Obvious has pointed out for the author of The Holy War. Mr. Saga-City, then, is simply Bunyan himself, the genuine Bunyan, as opposed to his imitator.⁵²

The scholar, having satisfied himself that he had proved his case for the duality of authorship, then proceeds to establish the identity of the author of Part Two. A lengthy discussion follows concerning the theological import of the contents of the two sections. It is discovered that the various doctrinal references in Part One are all those of a devout Puritan, whereas the author of Part Two:

(...) shows traces of Sacramentalism, not only in reference to Baptism already cited, but in the matter of Matthew's purge, where the prescription is actually in Latin (...) On page 325, the pilgrims are adorned with necklaces, etc., before crossing the river, a very dangerous allusion surely to the doctrine of Merit;⁵³

A careful study is made of the three hundred and thirty-one Biblical references of Part One and of the one hundred and sixty-two references of Part Two. The result, in part, is this:

⁵² Ibid., p. 143.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 146.

If you isolate Romans, Ephesians, Galatians and Hebrews as the Epistles which deal more directly with the theology of Grace and Faith, you will find that they are alluded to fifty-six times in Part One, only nineteen times in Part Two; whereas the Epistle of St. James ("an Epistle of straw," as Luther bluntly called it) is quoted twice in Part One, four times in Part Two.⁵⁴

The conclusion reached is this: Part Two could not have been written by a Puritan at all, but only by one sympathetic to the Catholic Faith, "perhaps one who only waited for the Duke of York's accession to come out as a supporter of the Old Religion."⁵⁵

In a similar manner, though in less detail, the scholar shows that the second part of Pilgrim's Progress must have been written by a woman, for it reveals an interest in match-making and in other preoccupations of the feminine mind.

From this outline of the argument of this essay, it is apparent that Knox has made an ironic study in Higher Criticism with a fine show of pseudo-scholarship. The presentation of the supposed proofs is done with rhetorical skill and manifests a remarkable feat of detailed study of the Bunyan text.

iii) Irony and Wit. - Irony and wit remain Knox's favorite satirical weapons in this essay. The irony is

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 143.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 149.

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more trenchant here than in the Holmes study, as can be seen from this mock encomium of Higher Criticism:

The progress of criticism, which has already had such gratifying results in quickening the wits, dispelling the illusions, and consequently (it need hardly be said) strengthening the faith of the last two generations, may be compared to that of a young and voracious animal, whose appetite food whets but does not satiate, invigorating while it distends. Scarcely had the bones and sinews of Homer been separated, labelled, and hung out to dry, when the Old Testament was called into requisition, Moses being resolved into a whole syndicate of press-cutting agencies, and Isaiah multiplied into a goodly fellowship of prophets.⁵⁶

Since these words are ostensibly those of the persona, the satirist manages to ridicule his opponents with every appearance of innocence. The vigorous and figurative manner of expression in the passage just quoted is typical of the intellectuality of Knox's wit which neatly demolishes the pretensions of the erring.

Another form which Knox's wit takes in this essay is the suggestive manner in which the various imaginary critics are labelled with appropriate names, after the manner of Bunyan himself. Just as one knows in advance what behaviour to expect from Bunyan's Mr. Talkative, so one knows that Mr. Jettison Cargo will be for deleting any parts of the Bunyan canon which do not fit into his theory. In like manner the names of Muckrake, Wrest-the-Word, Cheese-paring, Obvious, While-on-the-one-hand and Book-worm

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 136.

graphically suggest the particular bent of the individual critic.

It may be concluded that the irony and wit enable Knox to achieve an elegant and amusing exposure of error while maintaining an air of perfect good humour.

3. "The Authorship of 'In Memoriam'".

Knox has given the clue to the object of his satire in "The Authorship of 'In Memoriam'" by beginning his essay with a rhetorical question: "Why Shakespeare more than anybody else?"⁵⁷ Knox's inventiveness reaches an even higher level in this third essay in which he ridicules pseudo-scholars, chiefly Baconians, who attempt to establish the authorship of the Shakespearian plays by purporting to discover a concealed cipher. The fictitious scholar of this essay does not advance a literary controversy but rather boldly attempts to establish on the basis of a cryptogram in the form of an anagram that Queen Victoria wrote "In Memoriam" in honour of her favorite Prime Minister, Lord Melbourne. As a reward to Tennyson for allowing the poem to appear under his name, the Queen conferred upon him the laureateship in the same year as the poem was published, 1850.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 151.

With skilful contrivance Knox works out his solution with a great show of superficial plausibility. He commits the usual faults of these sham scholars, faults which a gullible public are slow to discover. Like them he allows himself an unscientific latitude in the choice of lines to be deciphered, and he employs intricate mathematical calculations, "the details of which we spare the reader, giving only the conclusions."⁵⁸ He works on the assumption that the public will not realize that any normal line of poetry can be anagrammatized in a number of ways.

He caters to the people's taste for the sensational by presenting a startling new discovery, deduced with specious logic. In this way Knox ridicules his opponents and warns the public to be wary of the mere appearance of scholarship.

Knox maintains the same ironic pose as in the two preceding essays while his wit and ingenuity show even greater resourcefulness. The reader is constantly amused and amazed at the skill with which the cipher is manipulated and caused to work out right. The author's comments are a delightful source of amusement, as in this passage:

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 153.

We have done our best to find some other anagrammatic equivalent for the words "Thy changes; here upon the ground," but the unfortunate fact defeats us. There can be no doubt that we are to understand it as meaning "Oh hurrah! Nest-egg pouched! TENNY."⁵⁹

The reference is to Tennyson's elevation to the post of poet laureate. The note of regret in the passage intensifies the irony and prepares for the next comment: "Let us pass hastily over this lapse from dignity, pausing only to admire the characteristically keen appreciation of Nature which the metaphor shows."⁶⁰ This ability to make up nonsense and then to make ludicrous comments on it runs through the whole essay, but there is always enough intellectual content to raise it above the commonplace. The wit, every bit as much as the irony, exists for the sake of the satire and is never allowed to run to waste. The adroit mastery of both weapons enables Knox to expose pretensions with hilarious mockery.

4. "Materials for a Boswellian Problem."

In this fourth essay the same basic ingredients, a cleverly contrived problem in literary criticism, a fictitious scholar, irony and wit, go to make up an amusing

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 158..

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 158.

yet thought-provoking object-lesson. The target of his attack is clearly set forth in this ironic statement:

The name of Boswell, like that of Homer, Shakespeare, or Luke, is no doubt a convenient symbol; and to disregard its use altogether would be pedantic, and possibly misleading. But while we are content to use the name, we must not allow the superficial unity of the work to which it is prefixed blind us to the fact that it is a compilation - a compilation from sources widely different in their manner of treatment, and, to some extent in their portrayal of the facts.⁶¹

This time, the persona boldly launches into a treatise intended to prove that Boswell's Life of Johnson is a compilation from three major sources and several minor sources, and also that the Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides is merely a fantasia. The divisions are ingeniously contrived and the evidence cleverly assembled. The irony serves not only to enforce the ridicule but at times to state a correct principle by seeming to condemn it as in this instance:

In such cases it is sometimes urged that (...) the traditional authorship has a prescriptive right, and holds the field until such time as sure arguments can be produced to disprove it. Whatever be the value of such contentions (and they are contentions which have found little favour among scholars these last hundred years), they clearly do not apply to the matter in hand.⁶²

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 161.

⁶² Ibid., pp. 161-162.

Nor is the characteristic Knoxian wit lacking in this essay. It is displayed in the manipulation of the Boswellian materials ludicrously mutilated so as to prove his contentions, and also in such statements as this: "'Facts,' says the Bishop of Much Wenlock in the current number of his Diocesan Magazine, 'are only the steam which obscures the mirror of truth.'"⁶³ Knox's lively perception of the incongruity in his opponents' position is equalled by his ability to size upon the weakness and to expose it mercilessly.

It has been seen in this study of the four essays directed against the Higher Critics that Knox was in command of a clever satirical technique which involved a fictitious scholar, an imaginary literary problem, irony and wit, together with a detailed analysis of the works in question. His was an admirably competent technique to ridicule his opponents even as he entertained them with witty fare. His good humour was unflinching in spite of trenchant indictment of error. This is attested in the following remark:

He reserved his best barbs for the Higher Critics in philosophy or theology. He punctured their pompous balloons with fun and fervor, and yet for these same Critics he had a heart full of compassion and sincere respect for their good will.⁶⁴

⁶³ Ibid., p. 177.

⁶⁴ Sheerin, John B., "Ronald Knox's 'Middle Way'", in The Catholic World, Vol. 186, No. 1,111, issue of Oct. 1957, p. 2.

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This intolerance towards error coupled with sympathy for the erring is certainly one of Knox's distinguishing characteristics.

III. MISCELLANEOUS SATIRICAL ESSAYS.

A brief mention of three other satirical essays will complete this study of Knox's satires in essay form.

1. "A New Cure for Religion."

This essay mimics the type of magazine article which informs the public on current controversial issues. This time Knox assumes the guise of a seemingly impartial reporter relating different views on a given question. In reality an anti-religious bias colours the whole article. By subtle means the journalist implies that one is very stupid, indeed, to adhere to the "old, far-fetched notion of religion" instead of adopting a more reasonable understanding of it. The sly innuendoes and damaging implications of the fictitious reporter are reminiscent of G.B. Shaw's knack of causing the undercurrent of his article to imply more than the surface stated. The tone is revealed in this excerpt:

In these latter days, men of emancipated intelligence have set before us a view of the whole question better accommodated to the enlightenment of our times. We are now assured that religion is nothing more or less than an attitude of mind, or rather not of the mind only but of the whole being, towards it matters not what. We have learned to appreciate the truth that all religiously-minded persons, to whatever sect or philosophy they have given in their names, are all in the last resort at one.⁶⁵

The essay is, in fact, another instance of rhetorical writing. This journalist knows how to influence an unthinking public who like to believe themselves up-to-date. With an air of doing strict justice to those whose opinions he reports, he subtly implies that he is emancipated from the old-fashioned beliefs, and he compliments the reader by assuming that he, too, is broad-minded. Thus he ingratiates himself with his reader while exerting over him an influence of which the latter is unaware. Moreover he increases the weight of his authority by a pretense of learning, quotes Latin excerpts and illustrates his point with exempla, such as the sad case of the young man whose conscience prevented him from executing a clever stroke of business.

The journalist is reporting on the supposed discovery by Dr. Mahu of a gland, the presence of which makes a man religious, the absence of which makes him irreligious. The various reactions of the Church of England, of Parliament and of prominent leaders to this

⁶⁵ Knox, Ronald A., Essays in Satire, p. 63.

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discovery are given in such a way as to expose some common erroneous concepts in regard to religion.

As in the preceding essays the satire is driven to its target by irony and wit the texture of which is very similar to that already illustrated. For instance he uses scriptural connotations in the following passage in which he maintains that the Church and the Government should leave everyone free to undergo the operation for the removal of the glans: Mahui:

(...) and it is better that a few men should learn the lesson of liberty to their cost, than that the whole nation should be subjected for one moment to the execrable odium of a tyranny.⁶⁶

His ironic wit can also be seen in the following typical excerpt:

A very horrible doubt has been proposed by Mr. Clump: Whether the total extirpation of religious feeling will not rob our unlawful pleasures of a great part of their pleasurable-ness?⁶⁷

Modern irreligion is the target of his wit in this cleverly ironical suggestion:

But the generality of men would doubtless prefer to get through their youth and early manhood unimpeded by any such scruples as might allay their pleasures or thwart their ambitions, and submit to Dr. Mahu's operation at some time after their fortieth year, when (other delights palling upon them by this time) they desired to live out the rest of their days in that mellowness of old age to which a chastened sense of religion so powerfully contributes.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 70.

⁶⁷ Ibid., pp. 74-75.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 73.

Knox's satire has several targets in this essay. In the first place, the essay itself mimics a type of magazine article subtly prejudicial to religion. Then by speaking of religion as having its seat in a gland of the human anatomy, Knox ridicules those who regard religion as something purely subjective and merely human, thereby denying to religion its character of being a body of supernatural truths which are permanently valid. Moreover, Knox satirizes the lack of authoritative leadership in the Church of England. The recommendation drafted by their Lordships in the Upper House is also a clever mockery of the vague admonitions which pass muster for the directives which ought to be given. Their inability to take a strong stand even on a matter of principle is brought out in this resolution of the House: "That this House strongly deprecates the excision of the glands Mahui, unless very exceptional circumstances make the step necessary."⁶⁹ In addition to this, Knox also derides the substitution of emotionalism for religious belief, and ridicules those who distrust the power of human reason to attain any truth whatsoever. In a word, this essay is an indictment of modern irreligion and empiricism.

2. "The New Sin."

The satirical technique of "The New Sin" is less complex than that of the essays already discussed. It is a

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 68.

straightforward account of the people's reaction to a lecture scheduled to be given by a Professor Laileb on his discovery of a new sin. There is no persona, no project or controversy in this essay, but another device is employed with particular propriety. The essay is so written as to arouse in the reader the very passion of curiosity which the author is satirizing. Thus an ever-growing suspense sweeps the reader on to the climax. It is only at the end of the essay that the reader realizes the strong spell cast on him when the satirist dispels the illusion by cheerfully breaking in with this:

You blame the public, reader (...) for its inquisitiveness? (...) But, confess now, when you began to read this history, yourself, had you not a faint hope that (...) you would find out what the New Sin was?⁷⁰

Irony and wit still hold a prominent place as satirical weapons. Much of the irony comes from the glowing terms of praise which describe Professor Laileb as a great research student and a public benefactor. There are ironic undertones even in his name which is an anagram of Belial. Moreover, the report of the reactions of the press are satirically witty. The Times published a letter from a correspondent who wrote:

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 97.

The old order (...) yields place to the new, and civilization fulfils itself in many ways. It was not in the nature of human thought to remain stationary, and in the new order of things that was just dawning (...) it was fitting that new sin-forms should replace the old, not by superseding them, but by absorbing them and as it were crowning them with a splendid maturity.⁷¹

Both irony and wit combine to give point to this further report on the newspaper controversy:

People talked of the new sin as a great problem, but there was only one problem in reality, whether our generation would rise to the magnitude of the situation, and strain fearless eyes towards the ever-receding horizon. This notable document was everywhere quoted with approval, and was reprinted (in the Whither? series) by the Uplift Publishing Company of New York.⁷²

The reaction of the public is wittily satirized in this excerpt:

Meanwhile the public naturally talked of nothing else. Statisticians reported that more bets had been laid on this than on any other event within living memory; the Stock Exchange, in particular, had a most popular sweepstake as to which precept in the Decalogue would prove to be the most nearly infringed. Numerous enthusiasts insured themselves at Lloyd's against any possible form of disappointment on September 27th.⁷³

The reactions of the various religious denominations are also cleverly satirized as in this passage:

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 80.

⁷² Ibid., p. 81.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 84.

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It was the very up-to-date religions that were more put on their mettle. The Christian Scientists said, of course, that it could not be a sin, because nothing was; it could only be an illusion. Since, however, there was every prospect that it would be a grateful illusion, many of them showed no reluctance to attend the meeting.⁷⁴

After a detailed report on the opinion of various religious sects and that of several sections of the business and of the political world, the satirist finally leads up to the satisfying climax when Professor Laileb stands before his audience and says:

Gentlemen, the New Sin is not a mere fraud; I could explain it to you in half a dozen sentences. But I am not going to tell you about it. I shall go back to the place I came from, and leave you to go to hell as best you may with the assistance of those dreary, hackneyed sins whose familiarity almost sickens you of them. Gentlemen, good night.⁷⁵

Curiosity is the primary object of Knox's satire in this essay, but he also exposes the limitless credulity and gullibility of a public which has lost its belief in absolutes. Only the Catholic public rejected the possibility of an addition to the Decalogue. In this way Knox indicates how modern men who possess no set standards become a prey to every passing fad. Knox also ridicules in a special manner the failure of the Anglican clergy to take a strong stand on the question. Their organ, the Church Times, manifested the usual inconsistency of their

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 87.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 96.

policy by coming out in the same issue with a large advertisement of the Professor's lecture and a stern warning not to attend it. Some of Knox's sharpest criticism is directed against the daily press. He satirizes its policy of capitalizing on everything which appeals to the public and exposes its power of maligning by subtle innuendo. Thus he points to the insidious manner in which it influences public opinion.

3. "Jottings from a Psycho-analyst's Note-book."

Knox strikes a satirical blow at another enemy of society, the Freudian psycho-analyst, in "Jottings from a Psycho-analyst's Note-book". This time his persona is a German psycho-analyst, Dr. Freud Struwwelpeter, whose note-book is opened to the scrutiny of the public. Knox's ludicrous attempt to reproduce the characteristic language and outlook of the Freudian school is very entertaining. Through the mouth of his fictitious doctor he manages to apply their technical language to absurd cases. For example, the tendency of this school to attribute human behaviour to associations in the subconscious region of man is ridiculed in Dr. Struwwelpeter's diagnosis of "Shock-headed Peter," aged six, who refused to cut either his hair or his nails:

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I have put him down provisionally as a case of shell-shock, which may be compensating itself in this way: the nails, of course, suggesting shells and his long hair the shock.⁷⁶

This passage is typical of the lively incongruity by means of which Knox derides the exaggerations of the Freudian school.

Beneath a deceptively frivolous treatment, however, Knox has managed to bring out some very real mistakes of this school. Their denial of the rational nature of man and their unwarranted generalizations which tend to reduce all men to the category of the abnormal are the points most stressed. It might be said that Knox writes this satire in defence of the traditional concept of man as homo sapiens.

It seems appropriate here to make a comment on Knox's prose style. While in Reunion All Round, he was imitating Swift, in these essays his own mode of expression can be studied. Knox's style is a masterly blend of simplicity, directness, economy and aptness. Felicity is, perhaps, the word which best expresses his turn of phrase and choice of words. A seeming effortlessness and ease, together with precision and ability to find the word exactly suited to the thought are his predominant characteristics. The following comment of D.B. Wyndham Lewis expresses this very well:

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 178.

To touch on a purely technical point, I personally never cease to envy the way words obey the Monsignor. For too many speakers and writers they are objects to be hustled and shoved along like a mob of drunks on Boat-Race Night. For him they behave faultlessly; always stepping into their right place, always doing their right jobs, never putting a foot wrong, never (as I believe once happened to Aristotle, and has happened more than once to me) letting their author down by forgetting to finish a sentence; conveying exactly what the English language intends them to.⁷⁷

Though this critic is referring directly to the style of Knox's non-satirical prose, his comments apply with equal accuracy to Knox's prose satires.

IV. CONCLUDING REMARKS.

The characteristics of Knox in his satirical prose essays are essentially the same as already noted in his verse satire. His satirical criticisms still spring from firmly rooted doctrinal and ethical convictions, while the spirit in which he launches his attacks is still one of contempt for error but of generous respect for the erring. He is entirely free from personal resentment and is inspired solely by an outraged sense of truth.

Knox's essays, whether written in imitation of the direct and forceful language of Swift or in Knox's own vigorous and idiomatic mode of expression, are composed with great attention to style and rhetorical utterance.

⁷⁷ Lewis, Wyndham D.B., "Eucharistic Sermons," in Duckett's Register, Vol. 2, No. 5, issue of May 1956, p. 145.

Knox's shrewd campaign to state his criticisms forcibly without arousing resentment involves a complex satirical technique. The satirical mask, the setting forth rhetorically of the very errors to be annihilated, the use of irony and wit to demolish the enemy's stronghold, all these are employed successfully. The ridicule is without any trace of bitterness and the curative laughter is genial. Artistic skill, tolerance, restraint and good judgement, these are the qualities which predominate in Knox's essays.

The object of Knox's satire in these essays is more extended and more universal than in Absolute and Abitofhell. The questions of the reunion of the Christian Churches is of perennial interest. The influence of the German school of Higher Criticism has wained but Biblical criticism still suffers the evil effects of this pseudo-scholarship. The illogicality of Anglicans, the loss of supernatural values, the danger of agnosticism, are just as pertinent to-day as they were when Knox wrote these essays. The world still needs the satirist's warning against the common human faults of curiosity, credulity, mediocrity and irreligion.

In connection with the object of Knox's satire, it is interesting to consider the comment of D.B. Wyndham Lewis:

Had these biting pieces been attuned to the Zeitgeist, instead of being attacks on it by a reactionary cleric, they would have been ranked by every pundit with the best efforts of the masters long ago. It says something, however, for Knox's charm that even the big-circulation press recognized it and waived his impossible religion.⁷⁸

There is no doubt that Knox's charm and literary talent did win him a much larger audience than his anti-zeitgeist viewpoint would ordinarily reach. It is to his credit that he did not cater to public opinion with its vague, ill-defined principles, but directed his satire against the most basic errors of modern society, principally against those which divert man from his supernatural destiny. In a word he stands as the defender of religious truth and absolute values.

⁷⁸ Lewis, Wyndham D.B., "The Knoxian Bequest," in America, Vol. 97, No. 24, issue of Sept. 14, 1957, p. 618.

CHAPTER III

SATIRIC ALLEGORY

On two occasions Knox projected his satire through the medium of allegory. In Memories of the Future, published in 1923, he held up to ridicule the follies of contemporary society by foreseeing the evil harvest they would produce by the year 1988, the fictitious date of the book. The picture which he painted is very ludicrous, but beneath the deceptively frivolous surface, the reader discovers the serious-minded critic who is far from being merely amused by the follies of the modern world. Let Dons Delight, published in 1939, is an allegory of history in which Knox represented himself as falling asleep in an Oxford common room and dreaming that he overheard the conversations of the Dons at fifty-year intervals since the time of the Protestant Reformation.

Whereas the first allegory can be read by the general public with ease and delight, this second work calls for an intelligent penetration into the history of religious and secular thought during the past three hundred years, and consequently it appeals primarily to an élite group of readers. It is a book in which, according to Waugh, "he completely fulfilled the promise of his youth."¹ Elsewhere,

¹ Waugh, Evelyn, The Life of the Right Reverend Ronald Knox, London, Chapman & Hall, 1959, p. 262.

this same critic refers to it as "that most accomplished of all his satirical writing."²

The discussion of Memories of the Future and of Let Dons Delight as satiric allegories will be prefaced by some clarifying remarks upon the nature and function of allegory and upon the literary affinity between satire and allegory.

1) The nature of allegory. - In current handbooks and dictionaries, allegory is commonly defined as "an extended metaphor." E. D. Leyburn has thrown further light upon its nature in this definition:

We can, then, call allegory the particular method of saying one thing in terms of another in which the two levels of meaning are sustained and in which the two levels correspond in pattern of relationship among details.³

Another critic offers an even more precise description of the relationship between the two levels of meaning:

It presents a group of vehicles (things expressed) corresponding to a group of tenors (things behind the things expressed), and the vehicles stand for a pattern of relationship and (usually) engage in a pattern of activity among the tenors.⁴

² Waugh, Evelyn, "Ronald Knox: The Quintessence of Oxford" in The Tablet, Vo. 213, No. 6206, issue of May 2, 1959, p. 419.

³ Leyburn, Ellen Douglass, Satiric Allegory: Mirror of Man, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1956, p. 6.

⁴ Pickrel, Paul, "Religious Allegory in Medieval England," (Yale Dissertation, 1944, p. 13), quoted by Ellen Douglass Leyburn in Satiric Allegory: Mirror of Man, p. 5.

However, as Tillyard has pointed out,⁵ allegory is not a form but a rhetorical method. It is, therefore, always united to some literary genre, whether drama, prose fiction or poetry.

Traditionally, allegory operates on four levels, the literal, allegorical, moral and anagogical. The literal level is the surface meaning, the allegorical level is the real meaning to which the surface meaning constantly points, the moral level is the meaning in terms of the conduct proper to man as a creature endowed with intelligence and free will, and the anagogical level is the meaning in a spiritual sense, that is, in reference to God's glory and man's eternal destiny. Although every great allegory will open out on these four levels, it is not necessary that they be maintained continuously but they may come and go, thereby offering a challenge to the reader's mental adaptability.

ii) The affinity between satire and allegory. - The affinity between satire and allegory has not always been recognized. A supposed opposition between them has been affirmed by S. M. Tucker who wrote:

⁵ Tillyard, E. M. W., "The English Epic and its Background", London, Chatto and Windus, 1954, p. 145.

The allegorical form is essentially constructive and didactic, and hence unfitted in its very nature for satirical purposes. It is also too abstract, while satire is essentially realistic.⁶

This critic has failed to consider that satire is at least indirectly didactic, for as Dryden has said: "Satire is of the nature of moral philosophy as being instructive."⁷ Moreover, if satire is not essentially constructive, at least it presupposes fixed standards. A distinction can be made between the didactic element which is direct and that which is oblique. If the satirist's indictments are to have any value, they must arise from his own clear perception that the evils he condemns constitute a deviation from the standards of truth and morality. Therefore, indirectly at least, the satirist is bound to be didactic and imply, if not state positively, universal principles. On the other hand, the very nature of allegory is to present the abstract in a concrete way, and therefore, as will be seen in the case of Knox's allegories, the allegory can become the very means whereby the satirist attains to realism.

The error of thinking of allegory as "too abstract" for satirical purposes may arise from the fact that allegorists have often employed personified abstractions

⁶ Tucker, Samuel Marion, Verse Satire in England before the Renaissance, New York, Columbia University Press, 1908, p. 72.

⁷ Dryden, John, A Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire, in The Works of John Dryden, Vol. 13, edited by Sir Walter Scott, Edinburgh, W. Paterson, 1882, p. 77.

especially in the Middle Ages. However, this was by no means a universal practice, and Dante, for one, made only a very limited and special use of personified abstractions. Rather he peopled his Divine Comedy with real men and women, historical or mythological personages, whose characters and lives represented the abstract meaning which he meant to convey. Being real people, these representative characters gave a great sense of reality to Dante's allegory especially as their interests and conversation were not limited to the virtues or vices which they signified. This enlarged role, far from invalidating the imagery added to the allegory an element of dramatic interest, an interest which personified abstractions would be incapable of arousing. Knox's characters in his two satiric allegories are fictitious, but like Dante's they are not conceived on the narrow basis of abstract personifications and therefore, they are sufficiently realistic for satirical purposes.

From these remarks, it may be concluded that there is an affinity between allegory and satire, a fact attested to by E. D. Leyburn who wrote:

Satire always seems to have had a propensity toward allegorical form. The number of satirists from Lucian to Orwell, not to mention those now writing, who have turned to allegory as a mode of expression demonstrates the strength of the affinity.⁸

⁸ Leyburn, Ellen Douglass, Op. cit., p. 8.

There remains to be seen with what success Knox united them in his two satiric allegories.

I. MEMORIES OF THE FUTURE.

1. Memories of the Future: as a Satirical Allegory.

The allegory of Memories of the Future is expressed through an autobiography allegedly written by Lady Porstock in 1988, the seventy-fifth year of her age. By this means, Knox takes the reader on a journey into the future in which the evil seeds of the 1920's have fructified into an alarming harvest. The vehicle of the allegory is this future world which is described in a series of personal and social reminiscences which are extremely entertaining and yet thought-provoking. The tenor to which the vehicle constantly points is the contemporary social, political, intellectual and religious life of England which is ridiculed and satirized through an enlarged likeness of itself produced in futurity.

On the level of literal meaning, Memories of the Future is a picture of future society told by one who was not wholly critical of its ideals and standards. On the allegorical level, the book presents a reductio ad absurdum of trends in early twentieth century society. On the moral level, Memories of the Future presents a degenerate society, indifferent to absolute standards and given over to

pragmatic and materialistic values. On the anagogical level, the allegory presents, in the last analysis, a vision of a world in which men must either turn to the one true Church founded by Jesus Christ or else lose themselves in intellectual and spiritual vacuity. Through the various levels of meaning, Knox as satirist succeeds not merely in painting a ludicrous and satirical picture of contemporary society but also in passing judgement on it in the light of transcendent principles.

There remains to ascertain the success with which Knox has projected his satire through the allegorical medium. To accomplish this, a study will be made of the principal elements in the surface story which carry the satirical import. These are parody, burlesque situations and images, characters, wit and humour, irony, and the use of the reductio ad absurdum.

1) Parody. - There is an element of parody in Memories of the Future though it plays a comparatively minor role in this work. As one critic commented: "In part, of course, it is a parody of the kind of memoir that has been making much noise in the publishers' offices lately."⁹ It is unlikely that Knox had a satirical purpose in his parody; rather he chose it as a convenient mask through

⁹ Kendon, Frank, "Memories of the Future," in London Mercury, Vol. 8, issue of October 1923, p. 662.

which he could project his criticism of society. Knox never deviates from the viewpoint of an elderly woman who is trying to recapture the magic of the days gone by and to interpret them for her younger contemporaries. Perhaps the only element of sustained parody which runs throughout the book is the combination of gravity and humour, of dignity and ingenuousness which suits the character of the teller.

Incidental parody is, however, used for satirical purposes. There are many epigraphs in parody which cleverly ridicule aspects of society. For example the following epigraph satirizes Parliament while conjuring up reminiscences of Gray:

See, where her court an agelong Silence keeps!
Tread softly, Stranger- here a Nation sleeps.
Mainwaring: Elegy on the House of Commons.¹⁰

Knox's parody of the Press is another source of amusement and of satire as in this headline: "PEER'S DAUGHTER HITCHES MILLIONAIRE: ANOTHER AMERICAN COUSIN GETS HIS FROM CUPID."¹¹ This must have seemed greatly exaggerated in 1923, but to-day it has a much more familiar ring to ears attuned to current journalese. Knox also uses parody to satirize the eccentric trends in modern poetry. The

¹⁰ Knox, Ronald A., Memories of the Future, London, Methuen, 1923, p. 159.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 111.

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following lines represent the poetry of the "Page-decorating" group who flourished in 1960:

St. Just-in-Roseland! St. Just-in-Roseland!
All vervein, desirable vervein, and melilot.
Here veined agrimony swoons, with fumes calamitous,
daintily;
Arable fallows assoil sly fingers:12

These lines ridicule the radical departure of modern poets from traditional standards into eccentric by-paths.

According to the theory of this school of poets "(...)neither sense nor grammar nor even sound counted for anything in poetry; an immediate telling effect ought to be produced by the mere look of the letters on the page."¹³ The following parody on Wordsworth is meant to convey the loss of creative talent and the absence of any sense of beauty among the writers of the future:

But still my heart with rapture fills,
And dances with the cotton-mills: 14

The same criticism is implied in the following lines from a poem called "Sky-writing:

My heart leaps up when I behold
An advert in the sky.15

¹² Ibid., p. 200.

¹³ Ibid., p. 200.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 199.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 200.

Knox uses such parodies as these to indicate the results of man's increasing absorption in material things, an absorption which will destroy his aesthetical taste.

ii) Allegorical situations and images. - Through Lady Porstock's many experiences, Knox creates situations which exist not only to bring out the surface story but also to carry an allegorical meaning by disclosing the hidden dangers lurking behind contemporary attitudes and theories. These situations within the context of the book are ludicrously funny in themselves, but they never fail to expose some real trend of the 1920's. For instance, the ideals of Progressive Education were at that time being popularized by John Dewey and other pragmatic educators. Knox strikes a witty blow at the "project method," an important item of Progressive Education in Miss Montrose's school where the pupils learned by doing, but unfortunately did not advance intellectually. Looking back from the vantage point of 1988, the heroine had this comment to make on the "project method":

The lessons themselves, managed on the old high-and-dry lines, were not calculated to arouse any enthusiasm in young minds. Oh, the drudgery of those hours of geography, when we spent our time constructing hills, valleys, and table-lands out of clay in the garden (...) when perched on separate islands in the bathing-pool, we had to launch mechanical boats to one another, freighted with the principal exports of the various countries- it is no wonder that, with these methods, the science took little hold on our imaginations!¹⁶

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 20.

Dr. Tulse's school for boys is an hilarious mockery of self-expression, another tenet of Progressive Education. Dr. Tulse worked on this principle: "the motive-force of the boy-mind is an opposition-loving reaction from the teacher-stimulus."¹⁷ The system worked in this way:

He would go into the class and read out a funny story by Billman or Harcourt Clynes, and his class would sit round him surreptitiously studying Dante or Sophocles under the desk. At least he said they did (...) Sometimes a master would come up to a boy and whisper into his ear Boyle's Law, or the rules for doing conditional clauses in Greek, and tell him to be very careful not to pass the information, as it was strictly private and not quite delicate. The whole institution would talk of nothing else for a week.¹⁸

The discipline of the school was managed on the same lines:

During play-time, no boy was allowed within a radius of half a mile from the school, with the result that no boy ever strayed outside it (...)

I am glad to report that my own boys got very bad reports all the time they were there. Again and again they were "swished" for going into the Chapel, tidying their desks, opening their windows at night, (...) taking books out of the classical library, keeping silence in the dormitory, and otherwise breaking the rules of the establishment.¹⁹

The absurdity of the system suggests that modern educators are in danger of relaxing discipline to the extent of subordinating order, discipline and method to the kaleidoscopic whims of their pupils.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 180.

¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 180-181.

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 181-182.

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The heroine's career at Oxford also reveals a notorious decline in the intellectual standards of this institution, the consequence of the popular democratic notion that a degree should be within reach of everyone, however mediocre his intelligence. The facile introduction of options into the academic schedule is ridiculed in this passage:

When I first looked at the list of subjects which I should need in order to go through Pass Moderations, my heart sank within me. Latin! Greek! Logic! Did they think I had stepped straight out of the Middle Ages (...)? But a reference to Appendix XVIIIc of the Regulations reassured me. I had to take Latin "or some other foreign language" (...) Instead of Greek I could take Mineralogy, Practical Farming, Middle Icelandic, Military Tactics, Geography, Mental Therapeutics, Bookkeeping and Short-hand, Levantine Literature, or Old Testament Anthropology (...) There was a still longer list of substitutes for Logic(...)20

Doubtlessly this passage must have seemed very much more exaggerated in 1923 when the traditional classical content was still widely held as the sine qua non ingredient of a University Arts course.

The heroine's experience with many doctors is another occasion for a comic burlesque on the mind-curing methods prescribed by rival schools of psychiatry. Her travels in Europe and America also provide opportunities for further ludicrous sketches of a society living in luxury and dissipating its energies in profitless pursuits.

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 34-35.

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Lady Porstock's marriage is an occasion for burlesquing the ideals of Feminism, while her career as a Member of Parliament provides an opportunity for mockery at the tyranny of the party system and at the unpatriotic egoism of some of the country's representatives.

Many of the incidents and features of this future world can be taken as allegorical images through which Knox satirizes the false ideals and conduct of contemporary society. The moving sidewalks sweeping people along the busy thoroughfares are an image of a society rushing forward without any controlled purpose. The hilarious campaign in the United States over the "Gum Question" represents the insignificance of the issues which absorb public attention. Ludgate Circus, the controlling centre of Magiria, the giant state of Central Europe, signifies the subordination of social, political and religious ideals to monetary values, while the continuous shows in Bayreuth with the oversize gramophone large enough for a man to stand in, is an image of the modern admiration for sheer quantity and mechanical triumph as opposed to quality and beauty. The teledictaphone and other mechanical contrivances represent the increasing pressure of impersonal forces in a mechanized society.

These burlesque situations and images both conceal and reveal Knox's satirical intention. When the reader has

finished laughing at the incongruities he has witnessed, he cannot but sense the underlying tragedy of a society, not indeed vicious, but simply lost in mediocrity and the enjoyment of comfort. Not all of these situations and images operate on the four levels of allegory. For example, the musical shows at Bayreuth operate only on the first and second levels, since they represent a criticism in the aesthetical order, but not in the moral or anagogical order. On the other hand, Ludgate Circus has a fourfold significance. On the literal level, it represents a part of the heroine's experience during her travels in Europe; on the allegorical level, it satirizes the materialistic motivation of modern society; on the moral level, it represents a perversion of human conduct to serve pragmatic end; on the anagogical level, it represents man's forgetfulness of his true status as creature with a destiny beyond this world.

iii) The character element. - The character element of Memories of the Future is another important ingredient of the allegory which Knox directs towards a satirical end. The characters are vital to the surface story and also perform an important function in the tenor of the allegory where the satiric import is felt.

First on the list of characters is Lady Porstock who is no mere mechanical voice through which Knox speaks

but a charming old lady, an endearing mixture of wisdom and folly. The relation of Lady Porstock to the satirical allegory illustrates something of the rich complexity whereby Knox makes pleasurable demands on the reader's comprehension. Lady Porstock is herself a part of the allegory since she is a member of future society, but since the reader's enlightenment comes through her, she must also convey Knox's viewpoint. This she does in her more astute judgements as when she ridicules the mind-curing clinics of her youth. But she is not always meant to be a reliable interpreter, as when she writes approvingly of her education at Oxford. This failure to perceive many of her own mistakes puts her in a satirical light so that though she is ordinarily an instrument of Knox's satire, she is at times its object as well. But whether wise or mistaken in her judgements, Lady Porstock is uniformly charming in her half-contemptuous, half-patronizing way of recording incidents and expressing opinions.

Among the other characters the most interesting and the most colourful is the heroine's elderly aunt, Miss Linthrop, whose truculent directness of thought and expression is a delight to the reader. She represents the pre-feminist type, having "a dignity which seemed to set upon her of right because she was a woman."²¹ Regrettably

²¹ Ibid., p. 13.

the ideal of womanhood which she represented was being destroyed in the wake of the Feminist Movement.

Lady Porstock's father and mother are good-natured nonentities who lived in an intellectual vacuum. Lord Porstock, the heroine's husband is a mildly satirical portrait of the American youth who is rich in possessions but poor in the things of the mind. The great Hoskyns lecturing at Oxford on "The Whence as an aspect of the Whither, a point Einstein overlooked"²² represents the tendency of certain intellectuals to pursue the eccentric rather than the true.

The portraits of the Anglican clergymen are the most satirical of all, representing as they do, the logical development in the future of the Liberalism and Relativism of the 1920's. Mr. Rowlands, Mrs. Rowlands and Canon Dives are all products of Relativist thinking, yet their reactions are all different. Mr. Rowlands is a somewhat pitiful figure who suffered greatly from the fluctuations of the Anglican Church on doctrinal matters and desperately deplored the failure of the bishops to take a stand. His helplessness to stem the tide of innovations introduced by the extreme branch of the Broad Church is symbolized by his marriage to the aggressive Agape Anderson, his curate, who had a veritable passion for innovations. Canon Dives,

²² Ibid., p. 42.

also a Broad Church cleric, revelled in the intellectual flux and sought to justify philosophically the abandonment of dogmatic belief. Through these three clerical characters, Knox foretells the eventual loss by Broad-Churchmen of any concept of the supernatural character of Revelation.

From this mention of some of the more notable characters in Memories of the Future it is evident that Knox has created vivid characters who exist both for their contribution to the surface story and for their role in representing false theories and attitudes. It should be noted that these characters are not mere abstract personifications, nor mere mouthpieces for the author, but exist first as convincing individuals who also typify some concept which the satirist wishes to convey.

iv) Wit and humour. - In Memories of the Future, Knox has gone on a veritable spree of fun-making, piling up comical situations and humorous remarks until there is not a page which does not have a number of laughs for the reader. However there is a great deal more humour than wit in this work, a distinction based upon the following consideration: "Wit is always intentionally comic while humour may be unintentional; and a humorous saying is not cast in the neat and startling epigrammatic form of wit."²³ This prevalence of humour over wit arises from the necessity of

²³ Abrams, M.H., A Glossary of Literary Terms, New York, Rinehart, 1957, p. 104.

Knox having to accommodate himself to the outlook and mode of expression of his heroine who is incapable of brilliant wit though she has a keen sense of the incongruous. For this reason the stimulation to laughter is of a less intellectual kind than is usual in Knox's satires.

The ludicrous situations in which the heroine finds herself are the chief sources of humour in this work. For instance, when she is about to be married the question of the form of service arises and it is suggested that Mrs. Rowlands' Book of Modern Prayer be used, but the bridesmaid objects:

(...) she declared that she would inevitably get the staggers if I were asked "Wilt thou respect him and show all reasonable deference to him, love, humour, and tolerate him, in sickness (other than permanent insanity) and in health?"²⁴

The humour is at the expense of the Broad Church with its propensity for accommodating its services to the spirit of the times. Similarly the heroine's experience with the mind-curing doctors is typical of the humour in this work. The following passage records her visit to Dr. Tyler "the second-best mind-healer in London":

²⁴ Knox, Ronald A., Op. cit., p. 125.

She was a tall rather sinister-looking woman, and I always felt like a frightened rabbit in her presence. This had the unfortunate effect of making me mix up my words, as I always do when I am nervous, and she regarded this confusion on my part, as clear evidence of an inhibition somewhere in my subconsciousness. For example, one of the first things she did was to ask me about my interview with my own doctor: I said, "He told me to put out my pulse, felt my head, and then shook my tongue" - in a moment Dr. Tyler had rushed to her typewriting-desk and was recording my idiotic remark for future reference.²⁵

The subsequent account of Dr. Tyler's diagnosis and of the treatment prescribed make for very comic reading, as does the later story of the heroine's encounter with the advocates of auto-suggestion and with the Mental Homoeopathists. Though bordering on the farcical, the humour does not fail to point to the exaggerations which may result from the trends which psychoanalysis was taking in the 1920's.

Another instance of the humour arising from the surface story can be seen in this passage taken from the heroine's diary during a visit to the continent in 1939:

²⁵ Ibid., p. 75.

Nuremberg, December 26, 1939. Yesterday, Christmas Day, was solemnly kept by all classes in the town; even the Socialists flying their flags half-mast and in many cases going about in mourning. To church in the morning at St. Sebald's (I find St. Laurence's has been given back to the Catholics); we heard a most eloquent lay sermon from one of the Senators, who is a rich hotel-proprietor in the town. He preached on Home-love, of which instinct he said, rather arbitrarily I thought, that the Christus-myth was an objective becoming. He grew quite eloquent over the lack of accommodation at Bethlehem recorded in the Gospel, and plainly implied that it was the sort of thing which would not be allowed to happen nowadays.²⁶

The passage indicates something of the secularization of religion and of the materialistic motivation which will characterize the world of the future.

In spite of the predominance of humour over wit in this work, there are occasions when the more characteristic Knoxian wit can be discovered. The following excerpt from a sermon by the Relativist clergyman, Canon Dives, is an instance of Knox's witty derision of Subjective Idealism:

We used to say, for example, 'The soul exists after death.' We can no longer say that; we have to reduce our thought, that is our thinkage, to simpler elements. We have to say 'It is thinkworthy that if that thing which we call the soul is thinkworthy at all, then that thinkworthiness is still thinkworthy after death.' (...) in thinking a thing we thing it: our thinkage- wonderful thought! I mean, wonderful thoughtage! thinks thingness into the thing. It cannot be too often repeated, the man who thinks things things things!²⁷

²⁶ Ibid., pp. 59-60.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 216.

This description of man-made religion from the same clergyman is both satirical and witty:

Religion is that realization of the Ego under the stimulus, real or apparent, of the Non-ego, which finds its hyper-egoization in de-egoization and its de-egoization in hyper-egoization.²⁸

In this manner Knox uses the language of the Subjective Idealists and of the Relativists so as to expose serious gaps in their doctrines.

These illustrations which have been chosen as typical of the humour and wit in Memories of the Future lose a good deal of their genuine comic quality when quoted out of context. It might be said that the entire narrative is replete with an unbroken series of details concerning a future world in which the social, intellectual and moral trends of the early twentieth century are ridiculed by a glimpse at their logical outcome.

v) Irony. - A note of sustained irony runs through Memories of the Future resulting mainly from the role of Lady Porstock as ingénue. Though she frequently condemns the follies of her day, she does sometimes praise them or condemn them for the wrong reason. The note of irony intensifies the satire in many passages such as that in which she praises the European state of Magiria where peace was maintained among the various national groups by a

²⁸ Ibid., p. 217.

constant appeal to their lucrative interests:

(...) crime is practically unknown there; the majority of the criminal classes have abandoned theft as being less lucrative than the normal occupations of their fellow-countrymen.²⁹

Throughout this whole section, Knox satirizes the materialistic motivation of his contemporaries by means of the enthusiastic encomium of the new state whose groups lived in perfect harmony: "Once it was realized that the whole nation had only a single aim, viz. the exploitation of the foreigner."³⁰

Another form which the irony takes in this work is understatement or meiosis as in the following comment:

The relativists were men of considerable intellectual force and deeply religious temperament, but hampered, as any religious body must be, by a total absence of belief in the supernatural.³¹

Here the satirist is over-stating what he does not mean, - the intellectual acumen of the Relativists, and understating what he does mean, -the folly and tragedy of natural religion.

When Memories of the Future was published in 1923, the irony would have been more apparent than it is to-day. For instance, the ideals of the Feminists which seemed

²⁹ Ibid., p. 58.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 56.

³¹ Ibid., pp. 235-236.

radical at that time have now been so widely accepted that the reader is apt to miss some of the satiric irony which pervades the heroine's account of her public life, especially that of her political career as a member of the House of Commons. The irony supposes that the reader will accept the viewpoint of the author rather than that of the fictitious narrator. On minor points, though not in regard to the larger issues of morality, there is no longer the same assurance that the reader will see through what Lady Porstock says into what Knox means, -an indirect proof that Knox truly created in his heroine the mental outlook of a future generation.

vi) Reductio ad absurdum. - In a general way, Knox ridicules modern evils by showing the calamitous consequences to which they will lead, and so, his whole satiric allegory is a kind of reductio ad absurdum. However, he also makes a more specialized use of it against the Relativists by exposing their false principles through the absurdity of the conclusions to which these give rise. The following defence of the Relativists' attitude towards the doctrinal teaching of the Church of England could scarcely be stated in a manner more calculated to bring out the incongruity of their case. In this explanation of Canon Dives he compares the Church to an expert tight-rope walker who finds as he becomes more expert that he needs

fewer props:

(...) so the Church finds that with less and less of dogma, less and less of belief, it can walk along the narrow path prescribed for it to tread. Until the Reformation, it was able to steady itself by means of three things, tradition, the Bible, and human reason; the Reformation was the moment at which it decided that it could steady itself without tradition. In the nineteenth century, faced with the important claims of evolutionary doctrine, it found that it could make a further advance still, and it cast aside the Bible as it had cast aside tradition, content to steady itself by human reason alone. It has been left to us in this century to learn that the human reason itself is an untrustworthy thing, on which it is fatal to repose any reliance;³²

The serious reader cannot fail to catch the warning that Relativism logically ends in utter scepticism. Thus with a few deft strokes, Knox manages to confound the enemies of orthodoxy by using one of their number as spokesman.

Further reflection upon the work as a whole discloses the advantages which Knox has derived from employing the rhetorical method of allegory as the medium of his satire. An enriched complexity of meaning is one of these advantages to which should be added indirection, concreteness, conciseness and universality.

1) Complexity of meaning. - The rich complexity of meaning arises from the mutual relation of tenor and vehicle after the manner expressed in this quotation:

³² Ibid., pp. 219-220.

(...) the vehicle is not (...) a mere embellishment of the tenor which is otherwise unchanged but the vehicle and tenor in co-operation give a meaning of more varied powers than can be ascribed to either.³³

How this multiple meaning is achieved by Knox can be seen from the following slight incident which is, however, typical of his method. When Lady Porstock presents a very badly written letter which she sent home from school in 1930 when she was fifteen years of age, she introduces it with this remark:

(...) if nothing else about it arrests attention, the prim, stately language of fifteen-years-old in those days will call for a smile or a blush, which you will, from the precocious, slangy young misses of to-day.³⁴

Now the surface story merely indicates that according to the standards of 1988, this letter, for all its slang could be judged as "refined and stately." Allegorically the letter satirizes the current vulgarity by presenting an exaggerated likeness of it in futurity. In this manner Knox keeps before his readers the abuses of his own day and foretells the outcome of them in future years if they are allowed to grow unchecked. Not only will they grow worse, but, as in the case of Lady Porstock, a future generation will not have the power of judging of them as faulty.

³³ Richards, I.A., The Philosophy of Rhetoric, New York, Harper, 1936, p. 100.

³⁴ Knox, Ronald A., Op. cit., p. 23.

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ii) Indirection. - It is evident that one of the special values of allegory for satirical purposes is that it enables the satirist to make his attack indirectly and therefore with every appearance of innocence. In Memories of the Future the satirical purpose is hidden behind the naive reminiscences of a charming elderly lady of the English aristocracy who describes her world with a touching mixture of nostalgia and good-natured amusement. There is no danger that resentment will be aroused by so genial a narrator.

iii) Concreteness and conciseness. - The force and vividness of the satire in Memories of the Future is very much greater by reason of its being concretized in the life-story of the heroine and in being seen through her eyes. Moreover, Knox achieves artistic economy by making the satire reside in the situations and characters which speak for themselves and require no comment on the part of the author. This direct impact upon the reader's imagination enforces the satirical message much more effectively than any strictures of the satirist could accomplish.

iv) Universality. - Finally the satire is raised to the level of the universal by means of the allegory. As a result of the double line of vision which constantly opens before his eyes, the reader is aware that what unfolds is

not just the life story of Lady Porstock, but the story of his own society. Scarcely a feature of the 1920's is not thus analyzed in futurity. How Knox gave a meaningful interpretation of modern life can be seen in this passage in which the eminently sane Miss Linthrop communicates her reflections on the theory of inevitable progress:

I wish I knew what it all meant. But I think this: I think it is the result of man being born immortal, and thinking (like an ass) that he has only this world to satisfy his immortal instinct with. Despairing of immortality in this world, and forgetting it in the next, he makes the human race the immortal unit, and so endows it with life. And because he has been told that life means growth, he cannot be happy until he believes the world in which he lives is growing from something to something else. This is human vanity's favorite dogma, and there is no atom of proof for it.³⁵

Expressed as a thoughtful person might say it, this analysis compels the reader's attention beyond the action of the surface story and brings out an important universal truth concerning a favorite doctrine of the nineteenth century, a doctrine which still has many supporters in this century.

2. Memories of the Future: The Object of the Satire.

Memories of the Future is a satirical warning against the intellectual and moral evils of the 1920's. What Knox envisions is briefly: in religion, the loss of the supernatural; in culture, the pursuit of the bizarre;

³⁵ Ibid., p. 70.

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in education, the lowering of standards to accommodate mediocre intellects; in society, the breakdown of family life; in politics, a trend in the direction of impersonal mechanization; in medicine, extravagant specialization and wild vagaries into psychiatry and mind-curing. The forces at work are Relativism and Scepticism which threaten to destroy the intellectual virtues, Pragmatism and Materialism which threaten to destroy the moral virtues. The society of the future which he describes is not vicious, but intellectually and spiritually bankrupt.

Some of Knox's most pointed satire is directed at the clergy of the Church of England. He implies that their progressive departure from dogma and traditional belief renders them powerless to stem the rising tide of secularism. Knox presents also the internal struggle within the Church of England between the High Church and the Low Church and indicates that there is no hope for either of them. He predicts that the Liberal and Protestant tendencies of the Low Church will end in Relativism and eventually Scepticism, and that the High Church, after a brief unsatisfactory union with the crumbling relics of the Orthodox Church, will squander its remaining zeal on Church politics. In a word, outside the Catholic Church, the Christian religion will fail to preserve its spiritual identity and will become absorbed in

the secular culture of the modern world.

Unobtrusively Knox points to the Catholic Church as the only remaining bulwark against spiritual and intellectual decay. The heroine finds her way into the Catholic Church when her spirit has grown weary and disillusioned with all that the secular world could offer. But outside the orb of Catholic influence, Knox predicts that not only the traditional tenets of Christian belief but also the very culture of England will be lost in a whirl of purposeless activity. This conclusion is reached from a different angle in the more profound analysis of the modern mind which Knox has given in his second allegory, Let Dons Delight.

II. LET DONS DELIGHT.

1. Let Dons Delight: as a Satiric Allegory.

Whereas Memories of the Future was a journey into the future having for its purpose a satirical interpretation of the evils of modern society in the light of what they would bring about in future decades, Let Dons Delight is a journey into the past having for its purpose a satirical analysis of the modern Oxford mentality in the light of the history of thought which gave it birth. The vehicle of the allegory, or that which is expressed, is a dramatic recreation of certain moments of history in an

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Oxford common room. The tenor, or that which is behind the things expressed, is a satirical exposure of the sterility of the academic mind viewed not merely in its present unhappy condition but also in the gradual process which led to its present rejection of truth.

On the level of literal meaning, Let Dons Delight presents a dream vision in which the author falls asleep in an Oxford common room and thinks he overhears the conversation of the Dons at fifty year intervals since Elizabethan times, and then awakes to hear his contemporary academic associates discuss the same basic problems according to the standards of 1938. In the allegorical sense, the work offers a criticism of the contemporary academic mentality with special emphasis on the process whereby this mentality was shaped in the course of the centuries. On the level of moral meaning, the allegory draws attention to the awful responsibility of upholding truth at whatever cost, and the consequences which accrue to the individual and to society when truth is betrayed. On the anagogical level, the allegory represents the gradual loss of those traditional concepts which regard man as a creature made for God's glory whose destiny is the eternal possession of Him Who is Truth. The modern mentality is seen to be a natural mentality which virtually denies the existence of God and recognizes no transcendental

values of any kind.

Knox's compositional design in this allegory is complex, calling for skill in execution. Before considering the literary qualities of the allegory as a whole, it is revealing to study the principal elements which make up this magnificently coherent work. These will be considered under the following headings: the dream psychology, the telescoping of the culture of each age, the characters, the dialogue, the emotional and lyrical aspects, the wit, humour and irony, and finally the parodies.

1) The Dream Psychology. - Realizing, no doubt, the difficulty of making a dream vision acceptable to modern readers, Knox is at pains to establish the plausibility of the whole adventure. He carefully accounts both for the accident of his falling asleep in the common room as well as for the trend which his dream takes. After describing the timeless atmosphere of the common room whose oak walls and grotesque carvings date back to Elizabethan times, he shows how he fell into the hands of an antiquarian enthusiast who insisted upon pouring into his ears an account of several of the ancient Dons whose portraits hung imposingly upon the walls. What was more likely than that these figures from the past, who seemed to look down reprovingly upon their successors, should haunt his dreams? Having carefully led up to the dream, Knox is concerned

that his dream psychology be true to life. He shows how the impingement of external reality determines some of the details of his dream- how, for example, the conversation about Edison was obviously induced by the blaring of a gramophone, and how he had dreamt of Roberts because Roberts' voice was actually invading his dream. The oddity of seeing the faces of his contemporary academic associates in his dream, yet knowing that the persons were really not contemporaries at all but Dons of the past, as well as his inability to make himself audible to his dream-characters are common phenomena of the dream world. Upon waking, he discovers that he cannot retain any visual impression of how the Dons were dressed, yet he has an accurate remembrance of all that he overheard. With these and similar details Knox creates a willing suspension of disbelief in the reader.

11) Telescoping the culture of the ages. - As the Dons converse in each of the succeeding periods, the culture of that era is brought into focus through the topics discussed and the opinions expressed. The result is a succinct and dramatic recreation of each succeeding age. In 1588, they discuss the martyrdoms of Elizabeth, her excommunication by the Pope, the piracy of Drake, the threat of the Armada and the intrigues of the Jesuits. In 1638, they dispute over Milton and the Puritans; in 1688,

they are interested in the policy of James II, in the conversion of Dryden, and in the dragonnades of Louis XIV. In 1738, their concern is over the philosophy of Locke and the preaching of Wesley; in 1788, they discuss the deism of Chubb and Toland. In 1838, they are taken up with the views of Newman and Pusey; in 1888, with Evolution, Higher Criticism and Modernism. In 1938, the classics are disparaged, Socialism is defended, objective truth is denied and men have grown so far apart intellectually that they have no common grounds even for disagreement. This discussion on literary topics and current events is a background for Knox's careful tracing of the religious, political, philosophical and academic decline in university life from the sixteenth century to the present day. And so, at the core of each conversation is a basic problem having to do with the question of truth and principles. Thus in "Hannibal ad Portas," as the Spanish invasion threatened, the consensus of opinion was that there was no need to worry about a mere point of dogma, Papal Supremacy. In "Cakes and Ale," the Puritans have dispensed with all Ecclesiastical authority and are upholding private interpretation of the Bible. In "The Pigeons Flutter," the return to the old Faith is anticipated. In "Lost Causes," the Anglican bishops themselves are no longer certain as to the source of their authority. "The Unchanged World"

describes the progress of Deism in the new age of enlightenment, but "False Dawn" shows a reaction against the dangerous dilution of dogma caused by Deism. The Oxford Movement is a sign of regeneration, but Kant is thought of as replacing Aristotle. "A Rear-Guard Action" describes the last effort to find continuity within the Church of England. "Chaos" well describes the condition of university life in 1938. Materialism, Pragmatism, Intellectualism are the three positions defended by the contemporary Dons but there is no way for them to attain agreement even on the concept of man's nature and the type of education proper to his status as man. Thus Knox shows that the Elizabethans began by failing to act on principle and the present generation denies the very existence of absolute principles. In the light of the past, the satire in the final chapter is more vigorously enforced. But whereas in Memories of the Future Knox had recourse to exaggeration to raise derisive laughter against modern errors, in Let Dons Delight, he does not exaggerate, - the presentation of the facts is sufficient to achieve his satiric purpose.

Let Dons Delight is a thoughtful interpretation of history, but its success as a satiric allegory rests upon the remarkable verisimilitude, the illusion of real life hovering over these dramatic scenes. Because the surface

story is interesting in itself, it can also convey the larger significance.

iii) The characters. - Knox's recreation of eight different ages called for the portrayal of a large number of characters who would play a dramatic role in the surface story and also be the concrete embodiment of the deeper allegorical meaning. Knox has succeeded in peopling each of his periods with academic figures who create the illusion of reality. There is a surprising wealth of individual portraiture which is accomplished swiftly and expertly through the self-revelation of informal conversation. Each character expresses his views on the great and small issues of his day, but Knox has not fallen into the pitfall of making his characters mere mouthpieces who express what they must. Each states his views in a style and tone expressive of his personality. Moreover, their interests are by no means confined to the topics pertinent to Knox's satirical purpose, but are as wide and varied as they might be in real life. Whether one considers the acidulated Kingsmill, the comfort-loving Lilly, the ardent Bledloe, the quarrelsome Roberts, the aggressive Drechsel, the sophisticated Verey-Massingham or any other of the fictitious Dons, they are all found to be distinguished by a certain individuality which raises them above the level of the mere type.

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There are a number of instances in which Knox has given a more than static portrayal of character. He has done this in one of two ways, either by carrying over one of the Dons into the subsequent fifty-year group and painting him again in old age, or else by relating his career in the appendix of the chapter. It is amusing to discover that in 1788 Mr. Watson is an ardent supporter of the new enlightenment but by 1838 has turned into a disillusioned and crabbed Tory. The most interesting aspect of the character studies in the appendices is that of the growth and deterioration of character. The story of Mr. Lee and Mr. Taverner, two Elizabethans, is a case in point. From the conversation the reader conjectures that Mr. Taverner shares Mr. Lee's belief in the truth of the Catholic claims. Mr. Lee, however, translated his belief into action. Severing himself from Oxford, he completed his studies at Douay, whence he returned to England as a recusant priest and eventually terminated his sacrifice at Tyburn. Mr. Taverner drifted with the times, tried to ingratiate himself with royalty and at last was disappointed even in his temporal ambitions. The sad frustration of Mr. Taverner is in sharp contrast to the heroism of Mr. Lee who went to his death with a smiling countenance. This is a story of dramatic interest, but it points to a larger truth. It signifies the hour of choice in every human life; it shows

that though the heroic life is fraught with sacrifice, it leads to perfect fulfilment; whereas the life of compromise leads to a deterioration of character and to the loss not only of spiritual well-being, but even of those temporal benefits for which the spiritual had been sacrificed. In larger sense Mr. Taverner stands for the apostasy of Oxford, for that initial betrayal of principle which was to have its long chain of consequences, while Mr. Lee stands for the true greatness which might have been hers had more of her sons imitated his example.

Because Knox's personages are so vitally true to character they are also capable of conveying the larger allegorical meaning. The satirist allows the dramatic spectacle to speak for itself while he remains entirely in the background. The reader must read the hidden meaning for himself. From this, it is clear how important is the character element in transmitting the author's message through the medium of artistic indirection.

iv) The Dialogue. - The dialogue is the most important single element in the literary design of Let Dons Delight. Some remarks will be made concerning the literary qualities of the dialogue and then concerning the functions which it performs in this satiric allegory.

Dialogue can be an awkward device but Knox handles it with finesse. He recaptures the very idiom and accent

of the different periods. For example, the following lines have a convincing Elizabethan ring:

DR. HEYWOOD (...) For my part, I would damn all papists and all Puritans, and order everything seemly, but so as shall be to the liking of the common man that has his place on the ale-house bench, and is neither saint nor sinner. Let us all in God's name be content with that, and there shall be neither burnings nor bowellings hereafter.³⁶

The voice of the Puritan sectary of the seventeenth century resounds in these lines in which the reference is to the papists:

MR. KINGSMILL. I would have no man argue with the weasel that spoils his hen-roost, nor no more with a Jesuit; I would root them out. If the law were well enforced, they would have no space for argument.³⁷

The dialogue is lively and animated, the language of the Dons, pungent and witty as can be seen from the excerpts just quoted. The convincing quality of the dialogues has been commented upon in these words:

One of the speakers muses on what might have been recorded by an Elizabethan dictaphone, could one have been hidden behind the panelling. This at least is certain, that it could not have recorded more convincing dialogues than those conjured up by Mgr. Ronald Knox's erudition and lively fancy.³⁸

The functions of the dialogue are many. The contribution it makes to the delineation of character has

³⁶ Knox, Ronald A., Let Dons Delight, London, Sheed & Ward, 1939, pp. 30-31.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 58.

³⁸ Sturge, Sylvia, "And Quiet Flows the Don," in The London Mercury, Vol. 39, No. 234, issue of Apr. 1939, p. 661.

already been noted. Another service which the dialogue performs is to endow abstract questions, such as the place of authority in religion, with the spice of dramatic interest. How much more enjoyable it is to follow a lively discussion than to read an abstract treatise! Then, too, the dialogue permits that the problems be debated from every angle, thus giving the reader a complete view of the issue. More important still is the aesthetic distance which the satirist is able to maintain. The disputants may grow heated, error may be piteously ridiculed, the truth may be enunciated, but the satirist seems to have done nothing.

Knox has effectively exposed many false concepts in the give and take of conversation. For instance, he has brought out the inconsistency of the Anglo-Catholic stand on the question of religious authority in the discussion between Mr. Wayne, an Anglo-Catholic cleric, and Mr. McNairne, an outspoken opponent of the Anglo-Catholic school of thought. Mr. Wayne admits that the Higher Critics have taught him to accept the Old Testament with reservations. When he is later questioned on the final source of appeal on matters of doctrine, he replies that the appeal is to the whole Church and not just to one branch of it. Whereupon his opponent pointedly asks him whether he has ever consulted the whole Church upon the question of the Old Testament criticism. Mr. Wayne can

only reply rather lamely: "Hang it all, McNairne, you really mustn't expect a cut-and-dried answer to everything."³⁹ His explanation which follows shows how really weak is the Anglican claim to apostolic continuity.

Through the dialogue Knox also manages to employ his favourite weapon, the reductio ad absurdum. For example, Mr. Beith, a Pragmatist, holds that man is an inventive animal whose intellect has no function to perform except in the practical order.⁴⁰ This position implies a denial of the validity of inference, yet Mr. Beith would have education train men to discover what is worth inventing, an obvious impossibility, as his companion professor points out, unless he admits the power of the mind to discover permanent values. In this manner the self-contradictory claims of all educators who deny the power of the intellect to discover abstract and universal principles is laid bare.

It may be concluded that the literary quality of the dialogues is excellent and that Knox has used this dramatic device effectively to accomplish his satirical purpose.

v) The emotional and lyrical elements. - There is a deep emotional undercurrent in Let Dons Delight which causes it to open out on a vista of human experience rarely

³⁹ Knox, Ronald A., Op. cit., p. 227.

⁴⁰ Ibid., pp. 260-267.

explored in a work of satire. The theme of Let Dons Delight is the theme of exile. The first Eclogue of Virgil supplies the refrain which runs through the book, "Sitientes ibimus Afros," a refrain which expresses the sorrow of men in every age since the Reformation who found that they had to leave Oxford and all that it held dear to follow a nobler light. The experience of the recusant priest, of the Scholar Gypsy, of the Tractarian convert, of Knox himself, was that at a given moment in the stage of their growth, it became necessary to become an exile from Oxford. Though Knox says nothing of himself, what he must have felt in 1917 when he made his submission to Rome is echoed in the words of the other exiles. Knox retained a deep and abiding affection for Oxford, and though he piteously laid bare the ultimate failure of this great University to inspire in her sons a zest for truth, there is more sorrow than exasperation in his indictment.

In those parts of the book which have to do with the theme of exile, the prose is lyrical and expressive of this bitter-sweet memory of Oxford. One of the most lyrical passages is that in which Mr. Lee, the future recusant priest, takes leave of Oxford. Sorrowfully he declares:

Anyone that will be absolute over a point of doctrine shall find himself a stranger here. And we above all, that will stick to the old religion, shall have no part with you. We shall be men marked down for hatred; why, I know not, unless it be that men hate more where they have done wrong than where they have suffered it, as the philosopher says that he who confers a benefit is afterward more loving than he who hath received it.⁴¹

Poignantly he continues in cadenced prose to speak of his own sorrow at parting, and to prophesy that "he who will seek advancement in the realm must first be false to his own faith, or he will get no hearing among you."⁴² Two hundred and fifty years later, Mr. Savile, the future Tractarian convert, speaks in much the same way:

(...) and we shall remember the greenery of Oxford only as better things, no, not better things, more companionable things, are remembered in dreams.⁴³

As he is about to go into austere exile, he repeats

Mr. Lee's indictment:

The genius which broods over this place is one which bids us reflect, and criticize, and do nothing. To have resolved your mind clearly upon a matter of speculative truth, is to disqualify yourself for its citizenship.⁴⁴

The depth of genuine feeling expressed so poignantly serves to point beyond the surface drama to the universal truth

⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 33-34.

⁴² Ibid., p. 34.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 198.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 198.

which Knox wishes to convey, - the tragedy of three hundred years of apostasy ending in the spiritual and intellectual bankruptcy of the present day.

vi) Wit, humour, and irony. - Let Dons Delight reveals Knox's wit, humour and irony in their most subtle form. These three elements are so woven into the very texture of the work that they seem to elude description and even illustration. Taken out of context, they do not sparkle with the same brilliancy. It might be said that Knox's wit is found in the whole complex design of the work, in the ingenious way in which he created characters, invented lively dialogue, and fabricated biographies so full of circumstantiality. The following is an instance of subtle wit in the repartee of dialogue:

DRECHSEL. Oh, he was perfectly right from his own point of view. I'd hush it up to-morrow if I thought that would get us out of the silly mess our economics are in. Truth - what's truth?

MASSINGHAM. Does your wife dream much, J.D.?⁴⁵

Then, too, this title of a work attributed to Henry Richards, an Elizabethan, seems so cleverly to sum up the whole atmosphere of London, 1589:

The Ungodly cut off as Foam upon the Water, a Thanksgiving to Almighty God for our Deliverance from that frightful Armado which the Spaniard lately sent against us. Lond. 1589.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 271.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 37.

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This perspicacious description of Matthew Arnold is aptly phrased:

MR. BATTERSBY. (...) He looked on civilization with the eyes of a school-inspector, and criticized it in a style only possible to a Professor of Poetry.⁴⁷

Another typical instance of Knoxian wit is this description of a languid young man: "a young man whose languor was such that his chair seemed inconsolable when he rose to his feet."⁴⁸

Apart from the wit, there is a deep undercurrent of humour running through this work. The reader is amused at many things, - at seeing how history repeats itself, how unconventional guests are always turning up in the university common room, how older men always think the younger generation is going to the dogs, how old men defend opinions diametrically opposed to those of their youth, how Oxford men always find Cambridge men inferior.

Some of the irony is on the surface as when Knox speaks in praise of "the existing glories of Simon Magus in this age of fulfilled hopes and of achieved finality."⁴⁹ But the greater part of the irony is less obvious and can be fully savoured only when the book is re-read. For instance, it is ironic to overhear the confident predictions

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 208.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 237.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 12.

of Mr. Watson, an ardent advocate of the new age of enlightenment, to the effect that progress is inevitable, that in fifty years' time "you will not persuade an Englishment to entertain (...) the silly fable of the Mass,"⁵⁰ when one knows that Mr. Watson will be among the Dons in the next fifty-year interval and that by that time he will have turned into a Tory of the old school, and moreover, that he will be made to witness the activities of the tractarians to restore the liturgical worship of pre-Reformation days. In this way, each chapter must be read in connection with the preceding one in order to catch the irony.

There is, besides this, a good deal of dramatic irony which is immediately perceptible to the reader. Much of this irony springs from the false predictions made by the disputants. It is predicted that Raleigh will never get potatoes to grow in Ireland, that the English will never be good colonizers, that the French will never have a revolution, that Wesley will end up as a Roman Catholic, that Samuel Johnson will never amount to anything, that Newton's name will not be remembered by posterity, that Kant will replace Aristotle in the philosophy of the West. It is also amusing in this age of science to come across such remarks as this made in the year 1688:

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 166.

MR. BLEDLOE. I wonder what they will be at next. Our natural philosophers have so wonderfully increased the sum of human learning, as it seems Providence would in a short time from this have no more secrets to hide from us. I hear Mr. Boyle is in great hopes, he will find some way to bring about the transmutation of metals.⁵¹

Another interesting source of irony in Let Dons Delight is Knox's self-mockery. In the dream, try as he would, he could not make himself audible to his dream-characters, but in his waking moments, his attempts to contribute to the conversation are deliberately ignored. The recurrent, tantalizing dots (....) after "MYSELF" are endlessly suggestive. It is left to the reader to fill in the unspoken comments. Sometimes the implications are of a humorous nature as in the conversation concerning Dr. Vicesimus Knox, which takes place in the year 1788. One of the disputants has just remarked that this man was the youngest of a family of twenty children, to which his companion replies:

DR. JENNINGS. It is a pity his parents were not content with nineteen. I hope it will be a hundred years before we see any more Knoxes.⁵²

Ronald Knox was actually born one hundred years later in 1888. But more often the implications are of a serious nature. For instance, Knox makes several attempts to contribute to the heated discussion which takes place in the

⁵¹ Ibid., pp. 83-84.

⁵² Ibid., p. 146.

chapter entitled "Cakes and Ale: 1638", between the Puritans and the Anglicans. Mr. Kingswell, a Puritan extremist, declares that the living voice whose office is to interpret whatever is ambiguous in Holy Scripture is the human heart where the Spirit himself bears witness. Mr. Fulwell, expressing the Anglican viewpoint, holds that the living voice is that of the Church speaking in the person of her lawfully appointed bishops who "do judge and decide in all matters of faith and worship."⁵³ Knox would doubtlessly have liked to point out that the weakness of the Anglican case derived from the uncertainty of the claim of the Church of England to apostolic succession. Nothing less than the validity of this claim could empower its bishops to speak as the living voice of the Church. But Knox is completely ignored by his dream-characters and given no chance to speak his mind.

From these illustrations it can be seen that the wit, humour and irony in Let Dons Delight are employed to convey the satirical import of the allegory as well as to amuse the reader. These elements, often so subtle that they can easily be overlooked, constitute an important part of that strategy whereby Knox contrives to project his satire in a form most palatable to the élite group for which this work was primarily intended.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 66.

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vii) The Parodies. - Biographical details of Knox's dream-characters are fabricated in the appendix to each of the chapters, each appendix being a parody of some well-known biographer of the period. The artistic ingenuity of the parodies provides the reader with another source of enjoyment, while the content of the parodies adds much to the further clarification of the issues to which the satirical allegory points.

Concerning Knox's talent for parody, Waugh had this to say:

In Absolute and Abitofhell Mgr. Knox had already shown a rare genius for pastiche and parody. In Let Dons Delight it is hard to distinguish where one ends and the other starts. He is ruthless with Mark Pattison (a man little read). In the rest of the writing - the notes at the end of each chapter have much of the cream of it - the exaggerations are so delicate as to be barely perceptible. The distinctive flavour of each generation is precisely caught.⁵⁴

A study of the precise and delicate art which Knox employs in these parodies substantiates the truth of this appraisal. In the first place, the variety of the styles which Knox has parodied is a proof of his versatility. With equal ease he spans three centuries, beginning with the harsh, archaic style of Anthony à Wood and finishing with the exquisitely polished style of Harold Nicolson. Bishop Challoner seems to live again in the vivid account of the recusant priest, and Thomas Hearne in the colourful

⁵⁴ Waugh, Evelyn, "The Best and the Worst: V - Mgr. Ronald Knox," in Horizon, Vol. 17, issue of June 1948, p.333.

account of the seventeenth century figures, The clear, flexible style of Boswell, the trenchant wit of Sydney Smith, the ego-centric expositions of Mark Pattison are all recaptured with equal facility.

In each case Knox has high-lighted the salient features of the original author's manner of expression. His subtle accentuation of Harold Nicolson's style can be seen by comparing this passage of Nicolson's with a passage from the parody:

His small size, his untidy clothes, the utter collapse of hat and trousers, the curious contrast between the slow deliberation of his walking stick and the upturned scuffle of his little shoes (...) the gentle wistfulness of those deep blue eyes, aroused delighted feelings (...)⁵⁵

Knox's parody has caught the vivid manner of description, the realistic minutiae, the easy flow of words in this passage:

His features were finely chiselled, except that the chin was a thought too gross; the lips slightly parted, as if in ridicule of the remark you were just going to make; a slight collection of stubble in the cleft of his chin shewed that he had reached the age when men begin to shave a trifle uncertainly.⁵⁶

Not only is Knox able to recapture the salient traits of an author's style, but he also seems to put himself into the mood and mind of his model so as to express even the kind of judgement which this author might express.

⁵⁵ Nicolson, Harold, Dwight Morrow, New York, Harcourt, 1935, p. 310.

⁵⁶ Knox, Ronald A., Op. cit., p. 237.

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For example, if one were reading this passage of Boswell:

At dinner Mrs. Thrale expressed a wish to go and see Scotland. JOHNSON: 'Seeing Scotland, madam, is only seeing a worse England. It is seeing the flower gradually fade away to the naked stalk.⁵⁷

one might pass directly to this other passage without perceiving any change in tone or expression: (Boswell has suggested that a man of ninety-two is a man remarkable for his age)

Such a man might well be felicitated, but only for a privation of unhappiness. A man who lives long is only a man who has not died; which is a mere accident of his state, and not an excellence to be admired in him.⁵⁸

The wholly individual outlook and manner of expression of Dr. Johnson seems to have been caught. One can sense the admiration which Knox has for his original model and the delight with which he strives to parody him.

A comparison between Knox's parodies and the original works of the other authors will be omitted here for the sake of brevity, but it is believed that the examples chosen are typical of Knox's adeptness in the nimble art of parody.

The contents of the parodies, besides lending an air of greater reality to the fictitious characters, serves

⁵⁷ Boswell, James, The Life of Samuel Johnson, LL.D. Edinburgh, Nimmo, 1873, p. 364.

⁵⁸ Knox, Ronald A., Op. cit., p. 140.

to confute false concepts and to state correct views on controversial historical issues. For instance in the appendix to Chapter IV there is an account of the arguments which a seventeenth century convert to Catholicism used in his efforts to persuade a friend to join the Church. But lest the exposition seem too obviously didactic, the biographer is made to comment: "All this is very doating stuff, and I doubt whether the man's wits be not crazed with too much fasting(...)"⁵⁹

It may be concluded that the parodies contribute to the literary form of this work as well as to the thought-content.

viii) The literary quality of the satiric allegory.- The various elements which comprise this work have been studied in detail. The dream psychology, the telescoping of the culture of each age, the characters, the dialogue, the emotional and lyrical aspects, the wit, humour and irony, the parodies, all combine to form a complex but magnificently coherent satiric allegory. This study of the various elements which compose Let Dons Delight has revealed Knox as dramatic narrator, satirist and historian. It would be idle to ask which of these comes first. The story which he narrates through the medium of dialogue cannot be separated either from the interpretation of history which

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 107.

it contains or from the satire which it conveys. The final impression is that of a remarkably organic composition of many parts which are perfectly subordinated to the overall pattern.

In satire projected as allegory, the excellence and the defects of the allegory have a controlling effect upon the success of the satire. Mark Van Doren has indicated that the ultimate criterion of good allegory is that the mutual relations between vehicle and tenor should be "immediate" and "noiseless."⁶⁰ By this he means that the allegorist, who must both tell something and say something, should accomplish the saying through the telling. In Let Dons Delight Knox's thought is actually digested into the imaginative framework. It is concretized, as it were, in the dramatic surface story. At no time does Knox feel the necessity of pausing and pointing to that larger meaning for which the surface story exists. His choice of vehicle could scarcely have been more felicitous. The indirection afforded by his well constructed allegory enables him to offer a penetrating satire on Oxford under the guise of a dramatic recreation of the past. It was both this literary perfection and the significance of the content which Belloc had in mind when he wrote:

⁶⁰ Van Doren, Mark, The Noble Voice, New York, Holt, 1946, p. 183.

I have been sent proofs of R. Knox's book called 'Let Dons Delight'. It is a masterpiece. I was quite bowled over by it. (...) I am telling everyone I know what a revelation it is. It saddens me that, as England is today, the book will probably be little noticed and little read. It is one of the very best things that have been done anywhere in my lifetime, and I remain gasping at it.⁶¹

Waugh comments that Belloc's fears that it would pass unnoticed were not realized:

Almost every respectable paper greeted it with enthusiasm (...) Everyone with an eye for style was dazzled by the brilliance of pastiche and by the superb balance and completeness of its construction.⁶²

Let Dons Delight was Knox's farewell to secular literature and in it he seems to have achieved his most artistic as well as his most significant and timely satiric interpretation of modern society.

2. Let Dons Delight: The Object of the Satire.

In this satire Knox has exposed the contemporary Oxford mentality to the most devastating ridicule. His is a daring condemnation of England's most celebrated seat of learning. However, it is tempered by Knox's undoubted affection for Oxford and his sorrow over the gap between human possibility and human achievement.

Knox's basic criticism of Oxford is expressed in these words of the Tractarian convert:

⁶¹ Belloc, Hilaire, Personal letter to Lady Lovat, quoted by Evelyn Waugh in The Life of Ronald Knox, pp.261-2.

⁶² Waugh, Evelyn, Ibid., p. 262.

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The genius which broods over this place is one which bids us reflect, and criticize, and do nothing. To have resolved your mind clearly upon a matter of speculative truth, is to disqualify yourself for its citizenship.⁶³

Knox is not unaware of all that Oxford has stood for in the line of culture, but he believes that her genius has been wasted in speculation that was idle because it was not founded on respect for truth, and therefore did not lead men to defend truth. In a dramatic recreation of history, he has taken the reader back to the initial hours of decision in which Oxford men failed to defend Papal Supremacy as of divine origin. This failure, seemingly unimportant at the time, was to develop into an evergrowing spirit of liberalism and agnosticism until Oxford men would cease to hold truths of the philosophical order, still less those of revelation.

In his final chapter, "Chaos, 1938," Knox derides an academic world in which the beliefs and values of Christian Humanism no longer operate. The traditional concept of man as a free rational being whose destiny transcends this world is rejected. The Materialist, the Pragmatist, the Intellectualist, each has his own approach to the problem of man and human activity. There is no agreement among these academic men even on fundamentals. Western culture based on Christianity and the Greco-Roman

⁶³ Knox, Ronald A., Let Dons Delight, p. 198.

heritage is explicitly rejected, but what is offered in its place is too negative to merit consideration.

It should be understood that Knox is here exposing one side of the Oxford academic world, the side that has given itself willingly to Liberalism, Modernism, Agnosticism and Pragmatism. There is, of course, the other side which has tenaciously preserved the rich heritage of the past. It was of this other side of Oxford that Evelyn Waugh was thinking when he wrote concerning Knox:

In all his social and intellectual habits - not only when he was speaking at the Union in Eights Week or sitting over the wine in common room or writing his masterly thesis on Enthusiasm, but in any turn of phrase and inflexion of voice - he was the quintessence of Oxford; or at least, of one precious part of her richly diverse tradition.⁶⁴

It was in defence of this rich tradition that Knox wrote his satire on Oxford.

III. CONCLUDING REMARKS.

The characteristics which distinguish Knox as satirist in these two allegorical satires are fundamentally the same as those already noted in the preceding chapters. The criteria for judging the intellectual and moral evils of modern society are taken from Christian Revelation and Scholastic Philosophy. The spirit of magnanimity still

⁶⁴ Waugh, Evelyn, "Ronald Knox: The Quintessence of Oxford," in The Tablet, Vol. 213, No. 6206, issue of May 2, 1959, p. 416.

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animates his attacks. Memories of the Future is written in a spirit of hilarious mockery, while Let Dons Delight is written more in sorrow than in anger. In fact one of the most striking features of this satire on Oxford is the spirit of fairness which broods over his dramatic presentation of historical issues. The exposition of such controversial matters as the continuity of apostolic succession in the Church of England is accomplished through the dialogue in such a way that the Anglican viewpoint is given a fair hearing. It is left to the reader to conclude upon which side truth lies.

In both satiric allegories Knox attains that important requirement of good satire, a literary style. While his handling of the allegory through the vehicle of an autobiography in Memories of the Future is effortless and convincing, the skill with which he manages the diverse elements which comprise Let Dons Delight reveals his ingenuity and literary talent at their highest. Through the rhetorical method of allegory he achieves that artistic removal which allows the reader to enjoy rather than resent his penetrating criticisms. His wit, humour and irony also serve to forestall the anger of those who might feel the attack, for as Dryden has said, "No Man can be heartily angry with Him who pleases him against his will."⁶⁵

⁶⁵ Dryden, John, A Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire, in The Works of John Dryden, Vol. 13, edited by Sir Walter Scott, Edinburgh, W. Paterson, 1882, p. 77.

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In both satiric allegories, Knox remains the defender of truth and morality. In Memories of the Future scarcely an error of modern times is not satirized in some way, while in Let Dons Delight, Knox has given a still more penetrating criticism of the deteriorating forces which threaten to destroy the very foundations of Christian Humanism. Let Dons Delight is a particularly timely satire with a significant and thought-provoking message for contemporary society. Its contents is of universal interest, however, and the depth of its penetration into the progressive deterioration of thought and morality during the past three hundred years promises to be of enduring interest to future generations.

CHAPTER IV

SATIRICAL NOVEL

As the vehicle of two satires Knox chose the novel, the most popular literary genre of the twentieth century. In his two satirical novels, Sanctions: A Frivolity and Other Eyes than Ours, Knox calls attention to the grave consequences which will accrue to the individual and to society from the increasingly prevalent rejection of revelation. In Sanctions: A Frivolity, he presents the dilemma of the natural man, that is, the man who does not recognize supernatural sanctions binding him to a course of action in keeping with his nature and dignity. Such a man, he shows, is a misfit in Nature, an anomaly in a well-ordered universe. Because he does not know his place in the scheme of things, he tends to disrupt that scheme to his own misfortune and to the detriment of society.

Moreover, when man is deprived of the knowledge and certainty which revelation affords him, he tends to fill the void with false forms of spirituality. Knox's second novel, Other Eyes than Ours, is a humorous burlesque of one of the most significant manifestations of false spirituality in modern times, the pseudo-mysticism of the Spiritualists. Through the incidents and characters of this novel, Knox exposes the superstitious character of the beliefs and practices of the Spiritualists and indicates the dangers, both mental and moral, which these practices involve.

The novel genre furnishes the satirist with incomparable resources for depicting the intellectual and moral errors which he wishes to condemn. As will be seen in the course of this discussion, Knox skilfully employs these resources to accomplish his satirical purpose. While he uses the dramatic and realistic elements of the novel to paint vividly the anomaly of the natural man, he employs the emotional and pictorial elements of the novel as palliatives to the salutary wounds which he feels obliged to inflict. The imaginary framework of the novel also supplies him with the indirection so essential to effective satire.

The following study of Knox's two satirical novels will reveal the degree of success with which he embodied his satire within the framework of the novel. This discussion will also indicate the various facets of the object of Knox's satire as well as the spirit and tone which distinguish him as a satirist in these two works.

I. SANCTIONS: A FRIVOLITY.

1. Sanctions: A Frivolity as a Satirical Novel.

i) The relation of this satirical novel to William Hurrell Mallock's New Republic. - Knox took the literary design for Sanctions: A Frivolity from Mallock's

New Republic,¹ a book whose contents and style Knox greatly admired. In his book Mallock presented a fictitious week-end house-party in which he portrayed the leading men of Victorian society under thin disguises. The literary world was represented by Ruskin, Pater and Arnold, the scientific world by Huxley, Tyndall and Clifford, the clerical world by Jowett. These Victorian personages are parodied so cleverly, their characteristic viewpoint and manner of expression are so faithfully reproduced that New Republic remains a remarkably vivid picture of the intellectual and religious thought of that period. In reality, Mallock's novel is a satirical exposure of the growing intellectual and moral chaos of the Victorian era. He showed that Protestantism, already weakened by doctrinal compromise, had no power to combat the mighty threat of rationalism and materialism. He indicated that Catholics alone possessed the moral and spiritual strength to withstand the forces of evil and to safeguard those positive principles upon which all fruitful human activity must be founded.

There are several notable similarities and some differences between the general structure of Knox's satire and that of Mallock. In Sanction: A Frivolity, Knox kept

¹ Mallock, William Hurrell, New Republic, or Culture, Faith and Philosophy in an English Country House, London, Chatto and Windus, 1877, 368 p.

the framework of the house-party as the means of bringing his characters together. These characters, like those of Mallock, discuss religious and philosophical topics of profound import, and in doing so, reveal how much greater is the intellectual and moral chaos of the twentieth century than even that which Mallock regretted in the nineteenth century. Knox's characters are also chosen from the same three circles, the literary, scientific and clerical, but Knox does not attempt to portray the public figures of his day. The reason for this is suggested in an article which Knox wrote in praise of Mallock at the time of the latter's death. After suggesting the temptation that might come to a modern author to repeat Mallock's experiment in a twentieth century setting, he raised this question:

(...) but could you make a collection of public characters that would be recognizable to the more intelligent reading public, without adding far more in the way of introduction and explanation than Mallock ever used, or needed to use?²

There are, however, some parallels among the characters portrayed by these two satirists. In New Republic, the liberal cleric, Jenkinson (Jowett) is the figure most keenly pilloried; the Knoxian counterpart is Canon Oxenhope, a Broad-Church clergyman, whose departure from dogmatic

² Knox, Ronald A., "Mr. Mallock's New Republic," in Dublin Review, Vol. 173, issue of July 1923, p. 54.

belief is made the object of the most pointed satire. Mallock's Herbert (Ruskin) who bitterly rues the loss of religious faith has a Knoxian counterpart in the young writer, Lydiard, whose soul also cries out in anguish for a definite faith. The role of the fictitious Lady Ambrose as expert organizer and instigator in New Republic is played in Sanctions: A Frivolity by Mrs. Chulmleigh. The Catholic viewpoint in Mallock's book is ably upheld by a fictitious character, Miss Merton, and in Knox's book by two intelligent converts, Mr. Chase and Mrs. Donovan. Knox has no close counterpart in his novel for Mallock's Huxley and Tyndall, though Escrick, a rationalist who believes in a mechanical law of human progress, and Dr. Donovan, a Freudian psychologist, might be said to represent two significant scientific viewpoints of the 1920's.

From these comparisons and contrasts, it is evident that Knox freely adapted the literary design of New Republic to serve his own purpose, that is, to show the lamentable development of those same debilitating trends which Mallock condemned in 1877.

ii) Sanctions: A Frivolity as a novel. - Through the voice of one of his characters, Knox forestalled the objections which might be made against his attempt to project a series of philosophical discussions within the fictitious framework of the novel. Lady Denham suggests

to Count Kaloczy that he write his proposed book in the form of a dialogue among a party of friends. He replies:

No, but that would not do at all. Because the philosophers would say, This is flippant stuff. And the novel readers would say, This is not a novel, and the library ought never to have sent it. And that would be a pity, because, you see, I love my book.³

Of course the conversation of Lady Denham's guests is far from being "flippant stuff," and novelreaders can find in Sanctions: A Frivolity the most pleasing features of the novel. Though this work is, in a sense, plotless, there is, none the less, plenty of drama, the drama of intellectual sword-play, together with the more intense drama of the soul's anguished search for truth. It will be seen that by means of an interplay of characters, dialogue and setting, Knox creates the illusion of real life, and not merely provides the reader with stimulating intellectual fare, but also interests him in a dramatic and somewhat tragic picture of human life and struggle.

111) The characters of this novel. - In this discussion of the character element of Sanctions: A Frivolity, the following points will be considered: the function of the characters in conveying the satirical import of the novel, Knox's method of character delineation and the qualities of his portrayal of character.

³ Knox, Ronald A., Sanctions: A Frivolity, London, Methuen, 1924, p. 239.

As might be expected in a work of this kind, Knox chose his characters for the role which they were to play in the lively philosophical discussions. His dramatis personae either expound erroneous views as when Canon Oxenhope argues in favour of private illumination, Escrick upholds the inevitability of human progress and Lady Maud seeks consolation in Spiritualism, or they elucidate a truth as when Mrs. Donovan proves from reason the spirituality of the soul or Mr. Chase sets the disputants right on the Christian attitude towards Eugenics. In this way, through the mouth of his characters, Knox not only gives a comprehensive view of the leading fallacies of the 1920's but also includes a critical analysis of these trends in the light of ultimate principles.

Knox's characters reveal themselves through the opinions they express in the discussions as well as through the part they play in the clever parlor games which absorb some of their leisure moments. A subtle use of character contrast helps to bring out the personalities of the various members of the house-party. This is especially true of the breakfast scene in which Father Grant features. This Scottish priest, with his unaffected manners and calm acceptance of reality, serves to bring out very effectively the artificial behaviour and impractical zeal of the Anglican clerics, Canon Oxenhope and Mr. Barton. Then, too,

in a general way, the less intelligent characters, Lord and Lady Denham, Lord and Lady Riseley, Lady Sanquhar and others whose intellectual tastes are confined mostly to bridge and detective stories, serve to emphasize the brilliancy of the leading figures, Escrick, Chase, Kaloczy and Mrs. Donovan.

In his discussion of English satire, Sutherland pointed out that the satirist's commitment to his satirical purpose sometimes leads him to an unsympathetic and warped interpretation of character:

It may be argued that the satirist is unable to create complete characters who respond freely to events and circumstances, because he is too much committed to his own satirical interpretation. He does not see the man or woman, it may be said, but the particular folly or moral imperfection which is their dominant quality, and which it has become his business to demonstrate every time those characters appear.⁴

This limited vision does not operate in Knox's portrayal of his characters in Sanctions: A Frivolity. He has not conceived his fictitious personages satirically, nor is there in his portrayal of them any absence of sympathy. He directs his satire against the errors held by these typical twentieth century men and women, but he spares the erring. Thus, for instance, in the course of the discussions, Knox brings out clearly the weakness and inconsistency of the High Anglican position as held by Mr. Barton, he shows that

⁴ Sutherland, James, English Satire, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1958, pp. 119-120.

the Broad Church of England, represented by Canon Oxenhope, is actually playing into the hands of the secularists, and he indicates that the man-centered humanism of moderns like Escrick and Sanquhar is in large part responsible for the widespread breakdown of morality in private and public life. Since Knox's satirical effort is directed against fallacies as such, he is free to depict the personality of his characters untrammelled by any satirical bias.

In spite of the limitations for character delineation which the design of this novel imposes, at least six or eight of the leading disputants emerge as very real men and women who might easily slip out of the pages of the book into twentieth century society. It is largely through the highly personalized manner in which each of the characters expresses his opinion that they stand out as individuals. Thus the utterances of Escrick are coloured by a somewhat vitriolic disposition, those of Dr. Donovan by a certain native cautiousness, those of Canon Oxenhope by an odious air of superiority and those of Father Grant by a genial unself-consciousness. Chase's brain is revealed as razor-sharp, that of Count Kaloczy, as penetrating and logical. Mr. Barton, the zealous but slightly stupid High Anglican clergyman, is out of his mental depth during a number of the discussions, though he still insists upon expressing an opinion, often an irrelevant one.

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Mrs. Donovan's highly intelligent contribution to the conversation is stamped by her completely feminine outlook. Lady Chulmleigh, expert trainer of Lady Denham's "lions," is completely charming, while Lady Denham, revelling in brilliant conversation which she confesses not to understand is as convincing as her stolid lawyer husband who prefers fishing to solving the problems of the world.

There is, however, little opportunity for anything more than a static delineation of character. Only in the case of Lydiard does Knox portray a personality in the process of development. This young writer's search for truth is poignantly, though subtly, depicted. By the time Lady Denham's house-guests have left Kingussie Castle, Lydiard has travelled far beyond his initial position of agnosticism and appears to be in a fair way to discover the true Faith whose radiance has beckoned to him from afar. In the process of overcoming a natural tendency to mental lassitude and moral cowardice, he emerges as a much more mature young man.

Knox has also made the characters of this novel very much more interesting and convincing by revealing something of the hidden drama which shaped their lives. The attentive reader can divine the secret of many lives, happy lives like those of Chase and Mrs. Donovan that matured under the glorious light of a newly found faith;

tragic lives like that of Count Kaloczy which floundered on the rocks of moral degeneracy, or like that of Mrs. Chulmleigh which were stranded on the shoals of agnosticism; lives of unfulfilled promise like that of Sanquhar; lives that still held out the hope of fulfilment like that of Lydiard. Knox has, in fact, mastered the difficult art of interweaving dramatic glimpses of life with abstract speculation, to the great advantage and elucidation of both. In the lives of these young intellectuals, the problem of ultimate values is of vital importance, and they argue with an eagerness which suggests both the anguish of the agnostic and the natural thirst of the human soul for certitude.

From these remarks it is evident that Knox has not portrayed his characters merely on the narrow basis of the intellectual opinions which they express. Moreover, in his delineation of character, he has not resorted to the satirist's traditional technique of exaggeration and distortion. His portraiture is sympathetic, for his purpose is to expose the intellectual and moral derangement of modern society rather than to ridicule those who are victims of this disorder.

iv) The dialogue. - The dialogue is Knox's most important instrument of satire in this novel. The function of the dialogue will be illustrated, after which some remarks will be made concerning the literary qualities which

characterize this element of the novel.

Once the house-party has assembled, the guests, many of them writers and all of them interested in the post-war breakdown of moral standards, are forthwith inveigled by Mrs. Chulmleigh into the most animated controversy on such fundamental questions as the norm of morality, the existence of God, the idea of progress and the ideal standard of education. The false contemporary views on all these subjects are expounded by capable exponents of the modern mind. The errors of the 1920's are already so far on the road to absurdity that the satirist gains his satirical purpose merely by giving them accurate expression. These current fallacies are analyzed and refuted very effectively by the two Catholic members of the group, Chase and Mrs. Donovan. But lest he give the impression of weighing the scales in favour of Catholicism, Knox, wherever possible, permits the non-Catholics to disprove the false inferences or to state the correct viewpoint. For instance, when Canon Oxenhope expounds a totally irrational approach to religion and gives full marks to religious emotion, Dr. Donovan, himself a sceptic on matters of religion, discredits this common Protestant postulation by pointing out that in the opinion of modern psychologists, the religious emotions are only a by-product of sex-life, that is, of the erotic urges in human nature.

The principal qualities of the dialogue which make it both an effective and an artistic medium of satire are informality, spontaneity, lucidity and rhetorical forcefulness. To offset any appearance of obvious didacticism, Knox contrives that the conversations appear plausible and convincingly natural. Many of the discussions spring into being accidentally by a chance meeting in the billiard room or elsewhere. The role of Mrs. Chulmleigh as competent organizer makes the staging of the more formal discussions very credible. Her ingenuity for bringing the conversation around to problems of highest importance is seemingly limitless. For instance, when she organizes the brilliant game of ghosts, she knows that this will lead to comparisons between the great men of former times and those of the present day. From there, the conversation can easily be directed to the ultimate question, "By what standards can such matters be decided?"

There is nothing stilted in the manner in which the disputants state their arguments. Each of them argues with characteristic personal nuances, betraying at the same time realistic speech habits. Thus Lydiard, for example, usually breaks in with, "But, good Lord, man," and Count Kaloczy, with, "Ah, but you are wrong." There is, however, no tendency towards caricature. Something of the informality and naturalness of the dialogue can be seen in this excerpt

in which Lydiard wants to know how revelation was transmitted:

Did Adam teach Seth that way, and Seth teach Maher-shalal-hash-baz or whoever his son was, and so on all down the centuries, till you get to John Lydiard?"

"That's condemned," said Chase; "it's Traditionalism (...) It is of faith that the existence of God can be proved from his works."

"Ah, that sounds more sensible. I always thought you Catholics depended entirely on faith: - open your mouth and shut your eyes - that sort of thing."

"You've got the labels mixed. That is Protestantism. It's Protestantism which decries reason, and tells you that your act of faith in God must be a pure act of the will, without argument or motive. Catholic doctrine doesn't want you to take anything on faith until you're intellectually convinced that (for example) the Resurrection was an historical fact."⁵

That the arguments are discussed with convincing fire and earnestness can be conjectured from this excerpt:

"What rot it all is - arguing, I mean," said Lydiard, kicking at a daisy. He was half ashamed of losing his temper. "Here am I, not really believing that the soul is immortal (...) and yet when Oxenhope starts talking as if one man's soul wasn't as important as another's, I fly into a passion immediately. And yet, I suppose, if souls aren't immortal, an archbishop may be more important than a crofter just as a race-horse is more important than a cab-horse."⁶

The lucidity and succinctness with which a point is scored can be seen in this passage:

⁵ Knox, Ronald A., Op. cit., p. 179.

⁶ Ibid., pp. 135-136.

"You see," said Kaloczy to Escrick, "you start by telling us that everything goes from good to better. And then we say, What is good? and you say, I am not quite sure. But that is nonsense; you are sure, or you would not have talked of good and better."⁷

The arguments of Chase and Kaloczy are those in which the power of rhetorical speech is most strongly felt. The clear-headed thinking of these men, together with the quiet assurance with which they uphold their convictions impresses the reader very favourably. The persuasive power of their arguments is sometimes enhanced by an apt figure of speech as when Chase explains the typical difference between the attitude of the Catholic priest and that of the non-Catholic clergyman. The former, who works from solidly established premises, he compares to one who stands on the bank of a river and gives directives to those who are trying to steer their course on the river. The latter, however, he compares to one who is out on the river with the others whom he is directing, and while he strives to steer a direct course and guide his flock, he is all the time being swept along by the tide. Chase is addressing Canon Oxenhope:

With you world-builders, although you don't realize it, it is different. For, as I say, while you are labouring to dam and bank the stream, you are all the while carried with it. The changing fashions of the age sweep you along with them, punt and push as you may;⁸

⁷ Ibid., p. 120.

⁸ Ibid., p. 130.

The penetrating logic of Count Kaloczy is all the more convincing to the modern reader for the reason that the Count is a moral renegade who is cut off from the sacramental life of the Catholic Church, and yet who finds that reason is leading him to the Church's stand on ultimate principles. He is, in fact, engaged in writing a book on sanctions in which the following observation will be included:

That is why the Catholic moves at ease in the world, because he fits into the scheme of things. The law of his Nature has been promulgated to him with a solemnity proportioned to his human dignity, and adequate to his human needs: the sanctions which enforce it bind effectively, because they are external to himself, and not ignominiously, because the Will that is enshrined in them is the transcendent Arbiter of his own. Even when he disobeys the law, and wilfully, he is more at one with the scheme of things than the sceptic who blindly obeys it, for he knows the measure of the Forces he is challenging, and the worth of what he loses.⁹

From these illustrations which are typical of the animated and informative nature of the dialogue it can be seen that Knox has successfully employed this literary element both to effect his satirical purpose and to increase the aesthetic merit of his novel.

v) The setting. - An elaborate setting would probably distract rather than contribute to Knox's purpose in this satirical novel. He is therefore sparing of description, including just enough to give a definite

⁹ Ibid., p. 238.

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impression of place. One is made to feel something of the isolation of a Scottish castle, to appreciate something of the wild magnificence of the landscape in the Highlands, and to experience vicariously the perfect half-tones in the great hall as the guests sit in the glow of pine logs burning in the open grate.

Knox has included some short descriptions of nature of which the following is typical:

They were on a little plateau, from which the river-bank fell suddenly in a deep ravine; heather and bracken fringed its precipitous boulders; a few shrubs hung over, and seemed to shrink away startled from the abyss. Below, if you craned your neck to see it, the river swirled dark over smooth ledges of rock that now made channels for it, now broke it into little waterfalls, and caught it again in fathomless pools.¹⁰

Brief descriptions such as this do not merely anchor the events to real life, but add a dash of beauty as well to the narration.

vi) The wit and humour. - The wit of Sanctions: A Frivolity is found chiefly in the dialogue where it is used effectively either to elucidate a truth or to ridicule a sciolism. For example, the choice of an appropriate concrete illustration serves to bring out an abstract truth in a more striking way:

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 140.

Have you never been told by the dentist that one of your teeth was a dead tooth, and would have to come out sooner or later, but could be left in for the present because it wasn't entirely useless? (...) That is the post-reformation civilization of Europe. The Church had been the life of it. Do you remember the story we were brought up on when we were small, about a little girl who bought one of the bright-coloured bottles in the chemist's window? And then thought she would pour away the water inside, because it was no use anyhow?¹¹

Much of the wit is at the expense of Canon Oxenhope whose modernity is so great that he generally finds himself in disagreement with the rest of the world. This description of him in a letter written by Mrs. Chulmleigh is calculated to make this trait appear ridiculous:

Otherwise, I'm sure Canon Oxenhope would have gone on arguing all the way to Carstairs. We fed him with newspapers as you would feed a bear with buns, and he read them in majestic anger - not snorting over them, you know like an effete colonel, but starting up now and again, looking as if he were going to read us an excerpt, and then after all thinking better of it, as if we'd never understand.¹²

Canon Oxenhope draws down denigrating laughter on himself when he closes a letter to Lady Denham in this way:

I fear that I must end here, for I am due to attend a meeting in five minutes' time, at which one of my clerical colleagues is, I understand, to throw doubt upon the existence of Saint Paul.¹³

Some of the wit has nothing to do with satire but is used merely to increase the reader's enjoyment. For example, this passage from Chase's parody of St. Thomas is

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp.97-98.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 254.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 259.

delightful. He has just been asked during a game of "ghosts" for a ruling on Prohibition:

"It is asked," was the instant reply, "whether that which intoxicates, in so far as it is and in so far as it intoxicates, for to be able follows to be, is of itself evil. And at first sight it appears yes, because the wise man says that wine is a mocker (...) But this is the heresy of the Manicheans, which Pope Clement the Umpteenth has anathematized in the Bull Inexpressibili taedio (...) wherefore drink is good in so far as it exists. But whatever is bible, in so far as it is bible, is to be drunk according to a certain manner and measure."¹⁴

Humour is another source of pleasure in this satirical novel. The following humorous situation is charmingly described:

It is very difficult to know what to do when your host snores. To creep out of the room seems cowardly, to shake him unmannerly. Mr. Barton coughed, but it was a cough that would not have woken a choir-boy. Chase swiftly solved the situation by upsetting a heavy fire-screen, and Sir William came to with a start, to find everybody looking the other way.¹⁵

Then, too, the breakfast scene in which Father Grant figures is typical of the humour at its best in this work. The humour arises in large part from the extreme embarrassment of the worldly members of the group and the refreshing matter-of-fact manner of the Scottish priest who alone of the company is perfectly at ease. It is amusing and slightly ironic to discover that he is not at all interested

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 22.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 65.

in theorizing or speculating on how to set the world to rights, a preoccupation which has absorbed the agnostic members of the group all week. In every case, he fails to swallow the bait:

"But I suppose you find a great deal of infidelity in France," said Lady Denham, inferring (from the rolled r) that Blairs was somewhere in that country. "I'm afraid last time I was in Paris I was too busy seeing the sights to look round for infidelity," said Father Grant. "I expect you know Paris pretty well?"¹⁶

The contrast in attitude between the Catholic priest and the Anglo-Catholic cleric is also amusing and slightly satirical:

Mr. Barton talked about fishing, and found Father Grant an enthusiastic conversationalist, yet somehow you felt that Mr. Barton fished in order to show that it was not wrong for clergymen, while Father Grant fished because he enjoyed it.¹⁷

Though these illustrations are indicative of the wit and humour which characterizes Sanctions: A Frivolity, they give no adequate idea of the almost ubiquitous nature of these elements in this satirical novel. Neither the wit nor the humour is of the kind which draws attention to itself, but each performs its function quietly whether this function is to state a truth in a striking manner, bring out the absurdity of a false attitude or merely to afford the reader pleasurable relief.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 125.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 124.

2. Sanctions: A Frivolity - The Object of the Satire.

The end of Knox's satire in Sanctions: A Frivolity is to alert his contemporaries concerning the intellectual and moral chaos which must inevitably result from the widespread abandonment of belief in those supernatural sanctions which God made known through revelation. So long as man believed in a Law with supernatural sanctions, supernaturally promulgated, he knew his place in the scheme of the universe; he recognized both his dignity and his obligations towards the Creator of his nature. Even when he transgressed against the Law, his situation was less anomalous than that of the modern sceptic who recognizes no Law at all, and who therefore remains in a state of confused bewilderment. The position of the sceptic is exactly that of the ancient pagan:

"(...) man living by a Law which he could not read except in his own heart, and backed only by such sanctions as he must guess at, because he had no certain knowledge."¹⁸

Sanctions: A Frivolity is, then, mainly an exposure of the plight of the natural man whose only guide is reason.

When, however, man not only rejects the truths of the supernatural order but goes a step further and calls into question the reliability of reason itself, then the anomaly is complete. Through such characters as Sanquhar,

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 236.

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Escrick and Canon Oxenhope who might be said to represent the modern mind, Knox brings out very forcibly the absurd inconsistency of those who deny the validity of those principles upon which all judgements of value must be based, and yet who attempt to make positive affirmations in the intellectual and moral order. The only logical position for such as these is utter silence, even mental silence.

In the course of the discussions, Knox points to the chaos which has already resulted from the rejection of absolute sanctions. In the first place, the educator who is ignorant of absolute criteria finds himself in a tragically incongruous position. For if he is in doubt as to what is right and wrong, he has neither the authority nor the right to tell the child what he must do and avoid. The consequences of man's loss of belief in universal moral standards is also apparent in private life where statistics on divorce and the birth rate tell their own sad tale. The loss of absolute standards has also wrought havoc in national and international life. As one of Knox's characters explains, citizens do not expect their national representatives to be guided by the highest principles:

Why should A assume that the Government are serious about wanting to preserve the alliance with France, when A is himself occupied in concocting proceedings for a divorce?¹⁹

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 105.

Knox does not only indicate the tragic results of the loss of supernatural sanctions, but he also points to the underlying causes which led men to reject them. It is, he explains, the result of revolt against authority which occurred at the time of the Reformation. Through the mouth of Mr. Chase, he observes:

What I said was that all our politics have been unreal since the Reformation (...) What I complain of is that since we took to inventing our own religion for ourselves, instead of accepting the authority of the Church, we have lost all sense of supernatural sanction behind our ideas of right and wrong. Each nation and each citizen has a private philosophy and a private code. That's the trouble. And when you've invented the code or the philosophy for yourself, you suddenly find at some moment of emergency that it doesn't bind you. How could it? The stream doesn't rise higher than the source.²⁰

The battle between science and religion in the nineteenth century led many to discredit the remains of dogmatic belief which had been retained at the time of the Protestant revolt. But these dogmatic sceptics kept intact the moral code:

Your generation which grew up at the end of the nineteenth century, after Darwin and Colenso and all the great landslip of your common thought - that generation was virtuous, oh so virtuous, why? (...) 'We will show the world,' they said to themselves, 'that we are very good people, none the worse for having thrown away from us the superstitions of yesterday.'²¹

²⁰ Ibid., p. 101.

²¹ Ibid., p. 105.

The disintegration of traditional morality occurred in the younger generation which grew up in the early 1900's. When the children of these dogmatic sceptics wanted to know why they must be virtuous, their elders could point to no ultimate reason or supernatural sanction. The result was inevitable: "Then the children begin to wonder! And some of them may say to the parents, 'Nonsense! (...) More fools you, to be virtuous,' and they will go their own way."²² This thought-provoking analysis of the progressive departure from religious beliefs and from moral standards helps to clarify the modern anomalous state of man without revelation, and to reveal still further the tragic detour into utter perplexity which it involves.

On the positive side, too, Knox has included in this satirical picture of the natural man a very interesting argument for the suitability and necessity of supernatural revelation in human life. It is an argument which addresses itself to the conscience of man rather than to his speculative intellect. Briefly the point of the argument is this:

²² Ibid., p. 106.

"Then, then," burst out Lydiard, "you mean that man without a divine revelation is out of harmony with his natural environment? (...)"

"That," said Kaloczy, "is what my book is about. I say that man without revelation is quite a fish out of water - he does not fit into the scheme. Perhaps also he is a bull in a china shop, because being outside the scheme his tendency is to wreck the scheme. But with revelation he is a bird on a bough; he is where he ought to be. For the beast, a Law with natural sanctions naturally promulgated. For man, a Law with supernatural sanctions supernaturally promulgated. I do not know whether your theologians, Mrs. Donovan, will approve of all that (...) But that is where my own philosophy leads me."²³

For the beast, the Count argues, instinctive assent is all that is required, but for man who possesses reason, intellectual assent is required, and this means that he must know whose will it is he obeys. Hence comes the need of divine revelation, of a message from Mind to mind. Knowing that the modern mind is prejudiced against metaphysics and against any line of reasoning even remotely connected with formal Scholastic philosophy, Knox has cleverly propounded a moral argument to show the need of divine revelation and has confided the exposition of this argument to a brilliant moral renegade.

There are several other errors which Knox has satirized in this novel. He ridicules the theology of those who, rejecting the teaching authority of the Church, claim to derive their beliefs from private illumination. He also condemns the theology of those who hold that the

²³ Ibid., p. 236.

truths of Natural Theology are wholly inconclusive without the backing of revelation. He derides the exaggerated generalizations of Freudian psychologists and belief in the inevitability of human progress. In the lighter vein, he incites laughter over the crudities of badly written modern verse and ridicules in the person of Mr. Barton the unctimoniousness of the typical non-Catholic clergyman.

This is a term coined by Knox to describe that certain affectation which frequently distinguishes the non-Catholic clerical face and voice, an affectation Knox believed did a disservice to religion by surrounding it with an artificial aurora.

II. OTHER EYES THAN OURS.

1. Other Eyes than Ours as a Satirical Novel.

Other Eyes than Ours is a burlesque on the beliefs and practices of the Spiritualists, those necromancers of modern times whose pseudo-mysticism has found favour even among men of such prominence as William Butler Yeats, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Sir Oliver Lodge. Modern Spiritualism sprang from the occult experiences of the American Fox family which began in 1848. It is neither a religion nor a philosophy, but is, in the main, a sentimental reaction against materialism, a reaction which consists largely in an attempt to make contact with the

spirits of the dead on the grounds that such direct evidence is the only proof of the immortality of the soul. The nature of Spiritualism is very well summed up in this comment of Christopher Dawson: "It is neither a philosophy nor a religion, it is rather agnosticism becoming mystical and acquiring once more a hunger for the infinite."²⁴ From this it is clear that Spiritualism is most likely to flourish in times like the present when men have abandoned their religious beliefs, but have not managed to stifle their yearning for the supernatural.

The incongruity of the beliefs and practices of the Spiritualists offers unlimited opportunities to the satirist. Knox was not so much interested in ridiculing the lower manifestations of Spiritualism such as magic and table-lifting as in pointing out that the Spiritualists create a false ethos which only serves to blind them to reality. He considers that their devotion is merely sentimental and superficial and that they are in reality agnostics, or else they would not dare to search into the mysteries which God has not seen fit to divulge to man.

1) The plot of Other Eyes than Ours. - The sceances of the Spiritualists may have suggested to Knox that the mystery plot would be an ironically appropriate vehicle for his burlesque at their expense. Until the final chapter of

²⁴ Dawson, Christopher, Enquiries into Religion and Culture, New York, Sheed and Ward, 1937, p. 312.

Other Eyes than Ours, the reader has no more clues to the solution of the mystery than the characters of the story. Yet the very purpose of Knox's satire demands that the reader discover the clues and unravel the mystery as it unfolds while the Spiritualists of the story remain in the dark. The dramatic irony which results from this perception by the astute reader is a source of keen delight. When the mystery is finally solved, it turns out that Mr. Minshull, an amateur scientist, wishing to free his friend Mr. Shurmur, an Oxford professor, from the Spiritualists into whose hands he fell by accident, performs in the company of several professed Spiritualists a series of experiments with the wireless, by means of which he appears to establish contact with the spirits of the dead. Several lengthy messages are received supposedly from the dead, much to the satisfaction of the Spiritualists who are entirely deluded by what they declare is a revolutionary discovery in the history of Spiritualism. The incidents move rapidly forward to the climax which comes when the spirits declare their intention of choosing on that very night one of the group for an experiment in dematerialization. Each member of the company is requested to await the hour of the mysterious experiment in separate rooms of the house. Whereupon the Spiritualists betray the superficiality of their devotion to the cult by ignominiously leaving the house one by one

under cover of darkness. Thus when their own efforts are brought to a promise of fulfilment, they show that they are neither so eager nor so brave as they professed to be.

The mystery plot serves Knox well, for through it, he is able to exploit the pleasure which the reader ordinarily finds in this type of fiction. The ludicrous situations of "listening in" are opportunities for him to satirize the weaknesses of the Spiritualists' viewpoint while the dramatic ending gives pungency to the satire.

ii) An ironic burlesque. - One of Knox's principal satirical weapons in Other Eyes than Ours is burlesque shot through with irony. By means of an incongruous imitation of the Spiritualists' attempts to contact the spirits of the next world, Knox brings out vividly the daring and sacrilegious nature of their practices. The following aspects of the burlesque will be studied in this discussion: the mock heroic tone, the setting, the dialogue, the incidents and the parodies, all of which serve to make Knox's burlesque version of the communication with the spirit world highly ludicrous and intensely satirical.

The tone of the burlesque is mock heroic in as much as Knox surrounds the experiment with suitable solemnity:

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For a while the party sat, silent as a Quaker meeting, all eyes glued on the magic box, with the old human misconception that sound is visible (...) Soon they found themselves conversing, but in a low tone as in a room where telephone calls are expected.²⁵

The solemnity is constantly marred by the presence of a very irreverent young lady, Miss Rostead, who was plainly disappointed when she discovered that this was not going to be a regular sceance:

The reason why I like the whole thing is because its a most delicious experience to see things jumping about on the table when nobody's touching them. But wireless! Why, it would be as dull as listening to Scoopy lecturing!²⁶

The delightfully malicious remarks of Mrs. Varley and of the little French priest, Abbe Bréhault, also break in on the solemnity of the "broadcasts." For example, the Abbé fails to understand Mrs. Haltwhistle, an ardent Spiritualist:

"We know now that death is not an end, only the beginning of a chapter. And I think it is so uplifting, don't you? To think, for example, that after I have left this material world I shall still be able to go on with my work for the Dumb Friends' League!"

"Is that what you call this Spiritualist Church of yours," asked the Abbe in perfectly good faith, "the Damned Friends' League?"²⁷

Thus Knox inflates that he may deflate. The deflation is complete when, in the last chapter, it is discovered that

²⁵ Knox, Ronald A., Other Eyes than Ours, London, Methuen, 1926, p. 71.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 48.

²⁷ Ibid., pp. 56-57.

the experiments had been launched with a disconnected wireless set, a child's music box set wrong, and a comic butler who once had his own Punch and Judy Show. The unearthly voice of the "sprints" to which they had been listening was none other than Judy's high treble. In this way Knox ridicules the gullibility of the Spiritualists and points to the possibility of deliberate fraud as a source of many of the so-called messages from the dead.

The setting in a country house in a small English village helps to anchor the story to real life and to form a somewhat ironic background for a daring attempt to contact the spirits of the unseen world. Even nature conspired to create a proper atmosphere of eerie desolation. On the first morning of their experiment, a thick summer mist enshrouded the house "as though the spirits they had come to evoke were besieging it on all sides pointing the way silently to one another behind a barrage of cloud."²⁸

The dialogue is another medium through which Knox pokes fun at the Spiritualists. The ironic humour of the following conversation between Abbé Bréhault and Mrs. Haltwhistle is characteristic of Knox's manner of raising a laugh at the expense of these modern conjurers:

²⁸ Ibid., p. 68.

"Good morning, madame," he said; "is it to-day that we mean to raise the ghosts? It looks" (he pointed down the garden path) "as if on such a day they would not have far to come."

"Don't, M. l'Abbe!" she shuddered. "Of course, I'm not afraid of the spirits (...) It is impossible, you see, to be superstitious and a Spiritualist. But these grey days arouse some of one's primitive instinct - the instinct that fears the unknown."²⁹

The various incidents of the burlesque are carefully chosen to bring out some erroneous belief or attitude of the Spiritualists. When the priest is called out on a sick call, the gross fact of bodily death ironically intrudes itself upon their proceedings and serves to bring out the fatuity of the Spiritualists' attitude towards death, an attitude which leaves them unprepared to face it in all its naked reality. Their superstitious belief in the art of oneiromancy and in the messages received through the Ouija board are also discredited when it is discovered that Mr. Minshull has fraudently used both to further his faked experiment.

One of the most important elements of Knox's burlesque is the series of fictitious broadcasts which are supposedly received from the spirits of the dead. These broadcasts are parodies of messages such as the Spiritualists claim to have received in their scéances. Through these faked broadcasts Knox exposes satirically both the basic flaws in the Spiritualist ethos and the

²⁹ Ibid., p. 68.

underlying current trends which have led to the creation of false forms of spirituality. Thus in the first broadcast which consists of a number of very commonplace quotations, Knox ridicules the platitudinous nature of the messages reported by the Spiritualists. This complete lack of originality is, according to the Abbé, a reason for suspecting the source:

Tell me, Madame, if you have corresponded all this time with the dead, how is it that the dead have said nothing that is worth saying? That Shakespeare has written no more poetry;³⁰

Another false tenet of the Spiritualists is their denial that the immortality of the soul can be proved by reason. This is why they seek to prove the existence of the souls of the departed by direct contact with them. This false line of reasoning is cleverly satirized in a talk by one of the spirits, entitled "Is There a Life Before Ehtel?" in which an hilarious account is given of the spirits' attempt to prove the existence of matter. This turns out to be an amusing parody of the philosophical arguments of the Idealists. Knox introduces this ingenious way of satirizing Idealism to indicate that this false philosophical trend with its discrediting of the power of reason to reach the Creator through the created is in large part responsible for the dilemma of the Spiritualists. The

³⁰ Ibid., p. 52.

Idealists, with their artificial separation of mind and matter, made it seemingly impossible for the mind to verify whether the truths it possessed corresponded to any reality outside itself. And so, not only are the Spiritualists left to labour under the illusion that reason is powerless to prove the immortality of the soul, but countless other men have been led to believe that the existence of God and other truths of faith have no rational proofs to support them. This is the philosophical basis for the totally irrational approach to religion which characterizes Protestantism in general and which will be seen as the distinguishing mark of Mr. Scoop's profession of faith when he sends a message back to the spirits on behalf of the Spiritualists.

This parody of the Idealists is brilliantly witty as can be seen from this excerpt which satirizes Hume's theory of the association of ideas:

As for the argument from "recollections" (...) Pendergast gave it its death-blow when he invented the psychological doctrine known as the "consociation of ideas." When two pictures have been present to the mind in close, albeit accidental conjunction, they are stored together in the unconscious memory; hence when one of the two pictures is brought into the area of consciousness again later on, the second is (so to speak) dragged up with it, but in a blurred and confused form.³¹

The parody is very much more comic by reason of its being an account of disembodied spirits trying to discover whether

³¹ Ibid., p. 88.

matter exists, and for this reason, too, it is all the more damaging as satire.

The satire is even more strongly felt in a later broadcast in which the higher spirits firmly command their inferiors to cease their attempts to communicate with the undead. It is pointed out that the spirits are being contaminated by this contact which is achieved in the realm of man's subconsciousness rather than in the realm of his rational nature. It is also suggested that if man continues to develop this region of his nature at the scéances, his reason will be gravely threatened. A very unflattering picture of life on earth follows in which it is stated that the arts, literature and even religion are proofs that the human intellect is already on the decline:

The literature which sells is the literature which involves a minimum of thought for its digestion; the religion which appears to commend itself to the masses is a sort of pulpy morality from which all intellectual considerations are jealously excluded.³²

Thus with every appearance of innocence, Knox manages to condemn Spiritualism as a false cult which contributes to the intellectual and moral degeneracy already so widespread.

Finally it is decided that Mr. Scoop should broadcast a reply to the spirits, requesting them to reconsider their latest decision and pointing out the reasons why communication between the dead and the undead

³² Ibid., p. 170.

should be fostered. This speech is perhaps the peak of Knox's satirical exposure of the Spiritualists. The reader is made to feel the awesome daring of this officious orator who rejoices that time can now send its echoes into eternity. As the Abbé pointed out, were Mr. Scoop not actually an agnostic, he would need to be a very brave man.

Mr. Scoop's speech is a rhetorical masterpiece in which he unwittingly betrays all the reasons for which Spiritualism ought to be condemned. The irony of false rhetoric is very amusing in such passages as this in which he divulges the anti-rational bias of Spiritualism:

The human reason is a beautiful piece of mechanism; it has done good work in its time. But, it may be asked, is it not perhaps a faculty which our race is destined to outgrow? The nine categories, the unelastic laws of "logic" have been a powerful engine for riveting the priestly superstition on the mind of humanity; we were told that a thing could not be true and at the same time false, and so on; these conceptions have done valuable duty in their time, but the present movement of thought is away from them.³³

That the Spiritualists are pragmatic, holding that anything which consoles or meets a particular need can be considered as true, is brought out in this statement: "We are learning that man does not apprehend Truth - he makes Truth; that is Truth which satisfies his aspirations, the Light that never was on land or sea."³⁴ That the Spiritualists' denial of

³³ Ibid., p. 201.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 202.

universal rational and moral values is contributing to the eclipse of all that is noblest in man is implied in this passage:

We are advancing, it has been recently and fearlessly said, towards a kind of Higher Cretinism. We embrace that destiny cheerfully, and shoulder it manfully; that star guiding us, we go forward we know not whither.³⁵

Thus while Mr. Scoop seems to be defending his case logically, his statements rebound to his own discredit, much to the amusement of the reader.

It has been seen that Knox's principal device in Other Eyes than Ours is a ludicrously comic burlesque, or incongruous imitation of the practices of the Spiritualists. The various elements of his novel, the mock heroic tone, the setting, the dialogue, the incidents and the parodies all contribute to a concrete and vivid exposure of the basic fallacies of the Spiritualists. Their agnosticism, their lack of respect for reason, their gullibility and their debasement of sacred things are all wittily revealed through the imaginary framework of the novel.

iii) The role of the satirist as narrator. - Speaking of the rhetorical force which should characterize good satire, Maynard Mack made this comment:

³⁵ Ibid., p. 202.

For the satirist especially, the establishment of an authoritative ethos is imperative. If he is to be effective in "that delightful teaching," he must be accepted by his audience as a fundamentally virtuous and tolerant man, who challenges the doings of other men not whenever he happens to feel vindictive, but whenever they deserve it.³⁶

Knox's role in Other Eyes than Ours is important, for much of the reader's pleasure will be lost if he feels that the satirist is writing in a spirit of ill humour. Knox's role is that of omniscient novelist, and through it, he manages to establish himself as an intelligent, poised narrator who looks upon the spectacle of life with interest and genial amusement. His manner of recording events is facetious, his descriptions are charming and witty and his observations upon his characters are penetrating but never bitingly satirical. His narrative manner can be seen in this passage:

There was a tiny puff of smoke down in the valley, and a faint but triumphant hoot announced that the afternoon train had once more braved the perils of its long crawl and won through.³⁷

The beguiling charm of his descriptions is revealed in this excerpt:

Nature, you would say, had not as yet committed herself; her scouts, the primroses, peeped out in clusters amid the moss of the forest land, but she made no definite promises; the buds on the tree and hedgerow seemed to say "Spring is coming - if you are good."³⁸

³⁶ Mack, Maynard, "The Muse of Satire," Yale Review, Vol. 41, No. 1, issue of September 1951, p. 86.

³⁷ Knox, Ronald A., Other Eyes than Ours, p. 41.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 36.

The following description of the style of the Latin satirist Persius is typical of his witty expression:

Persius (if my reader should chance to lack information on the point) wrote Latin hexameters with all the lucidity of an acrostic editor trying to convey secret information to his country's enemies;³⁹

Knox's manner of introducing his characters and his attitude towards them can be judged from this passage in which he brings Mrs. Varley, a non-Spiritualist, into the story:

A silver-haired old lady was coming out from one of the garden doors to meet them. She walked with a stick, but there was little infirmity in her tread; it seemed rather as if the stick were a weapon to threaten with, to shake at elderly gentlemen who essayed compliments, or little boys who trespassed in orchards. She radiated force of character; the cynicism which savoured of jaundice in her brother became her delightfully; her malicious comments on people she did not approve of were uttered with the best temper in the world.⁴⁰

Even in regard to those whose cult he is satirizing, Knox shows no ill-will. This can be judged from his remarks on Mrs. Haltwhistle, an ardent Spiritualist:

An Agnostic, born too late to share the agnostic enthusiasm, Mrs. Haltwhistle dabbled, whenever the fashion seemed to dictate it, in strange cults. Spiritualism caught her on the rebound after the war; she had not loved and lost, but she was badly in need of some attraction to make her salon popular again in the rapidly re-filling Colleges.⁴¹

³⁹ Ibid., p. 3.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 38.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 10.

These illustrations indicate something of the manner in which Knox creates a favourable impression in the reader's mind and prepares the way for the extraordinary tale which follows. Once the story is underway, he disappears into the background so that the story seems to tell itself.

In the last chapter when the Spiritualists have all fled, Knox does momentarily abandon his unobrusiveness, and for the first time in this work, speaks directly as a satirist:

It has been a satire; you and I have been like two people in mixed company enjoying a joke together, yet not in a position to signal their common amusement to each other, because the joke is at the company's expense (...); that does not mean that you were being taken in, or that I thought you were being taken in, for a moment.⁴²

It is hard to account for this appearance of the satirist in person. Whenever a satirist interrupts his narration to pause and point to the significance of what has just been narrated, it usually indicates some failure on the part of his fiction to convey the meaning. Now, as has already been seen, the burlesque carried Knox's indictment of the Spiritualists directly and vividly. His appearance on the scene seems, therefore, to be not only unnecessary, but an inartistic intrusion as well. At most, however, it constitutes a minor flaw which is saved from doing any great harm by the friendly rapport which Knox had earlier

⁴² Ibid., p. 233.

established with the reader. The appearance of a less genial satirist would most certainly have given rise to a feeling of resentment which would destroy in part at least the effectiveness of the satire.

iv) The character element. - In this satirical novel Knox portrayed seven main characters who are all colourful and somewhat eccentric personalities. His portrait of Mrs. Haltwhistle is a satirical masterpiece. She is no mere type but an individual of forceful, though unattractive, personality. Because she is so unmistakably an individual in her own right, she can also stand as a satirical prototype of that class of women whom the French call les dévotées, that is, women pious by nature, who because they are without any religious beliefs, must dabble in whatever strange cults happen to be fashionable at the moment. In her person, Knox satirizes the false sentimentality, the misdirected zeal and the gullibility of the Spiritualists. Her platitudinous mind, her dreadful affectation of sympathy, her activities on behalf of the Dumb Friends' League, her determination to believe only what is comforting, are all targets of Knox's satire. His method of portraiture is, however, completely objective as he allows her to reveal her personality through her words and behaviour.

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Miss Rostead is attracted to Spiritualism by reason of an irrepressible urge to engage in something which will shock others. In her person, the modern conspiracy of the unconventional is perfectly realized. Her vulgar attitudinizings, her breezy manners and her ill-concealed flirtations are aspects of the very up-to-date young lady of the 1920's of whom she is the prototype.

However, Knox's most devastating satire is reserved for his portrait of Mr. Scoop, the professional platform lecturer, who adopted Spiritualism because it provided him with an outlet for his oratorical talents. Shallow and insignificant, dreadfully broad-minded and intolerably tactful, he seeks to impose his views on others, but only for the satisfaction it gives him and not because he really believes in Spiritualism. Completely bereft of theological belief, he represents that section of the modern mind that pictures the universe "as run by a set of advisory committees issuing reports."⁴³

Harold Shurmur, the Persius scholar from Oxford, is not a satirical figure at all, for his connexion with the Spiritualists was accidental and speedily terminated. His clipped manner of speaking, his anguished self-consciousness in the presence of ladies and his monomaniacal urge to triumph over his German literary rival are all a source of

⁴³ Ibid., p. 186.

amusement to the reader. Finally, after suffering with him through a terrifying hour of waiting to be dematerialized, the reader has towards him the synmathetic feeling of shared experience. To have elicited sympathy for so unprepossessing an individual is a small triumph for the author.

The other three characters represent sanity, but each in a highly personal manner. Minshull, the amateur scientist, takes pleasure in exposing fraud and rescuing his friend from the Spiritualists. His hatred of this false cult is genuine, resting as it does on a clear understanding of its demoralizing effects. Human folly had made a cynic of him but had not blurred his sense of values. Mrs. Varley, his sister, is a singularly delightful old lady whose persistent raillery at the expense of the Spiritualists is a handy weapon for the satirist. Just as compelling by reason of his simplicity and grasp of reality is the little French priest, Abbé Bréhault, whose witty remarks, ejected into the solemnity of listening to the broadcasts, are amusing and deadly. Both he and Mrs. Varley are the witty protagonists who stand in loco scriptoris and serve to bring out the absurdity which Knox wishes to indict.

From these remarks on the characters of Other Eyes than Ours, it is evident that Knox has created seven individuals with clearly defined personalities. The

Spiritualists are conceived satirically, but portrayed in a spirit of good-natured raillery rather than in anger. Knox's success in calling into being very convincing characters is a literary adjunct which contributes effectively to the success of his satire.

2. Other Eyes than Ours - The Object of the Satire.

As already noted in the course of this discussion, Knox satirizes many aspects of Spiritualism in this satirical novel. Fundamentally, however, he condemns it as a false substitute for religion which robs life of its moral values and holds out the promise of immortality without the threats. The old-fashioned scruples on the subject of sin and its punishment are abandoned in favour of a vague call to live up to the highest part of one's nature, while belief in a divine revelation is utterly repudiated.

In Other Eyes than Ours, Knox examines the credentials of Spiritualism and indicates that the messages received by the Spiritualists in their sceances are suspect not only because they may have their origin in deliberate fraud or in the subconsciousness of the participants, but above all because of the peculiar nature of the contents of these messages. These latter allow too exactly for the earthly tastes of modern men, they tend to instil into the

credulous a debauched notion of human destiny, or as Knox states in another of his works, they teach "a bargain-basement eschatology which can lull our terrors without for a moment inspiring our consciences."⁴⁴ If preternatural agencies are being contacted, then the low-calibre of the morality and the tawdry view of human destiny would seem to suggest that these agencies are not benevolent as the Spiritualists claim but are actually intent on trying to deceive men by means of elementary devilish psychology.

The object of Knox's satire in this work is much broader and deeper than Spiritualism. It extends to that general state of intellectual and moral debility which renders a large section of modern society susceptible to indulgence in fake cults. This deplorable gullibility of modern men is largely the consequence of separating philosophy and theology, of thinking that religion does not require any rational basis. The initial separation between philosophy and theology occurred at the time of the Reformation when Luther taught that man's only part in securing his salvation was a blind act of faith. Later men began to talk about private illumination, a kind of sixth sense which was above reason. Then when science and biblical criticism had undermined men's faith in divine revelation but had not stamped out men's craving for the infinite, the stage was set for irrational cults of which

Spiritualism is one among several. Bereft of faith and of reason, the modern man tends towards that state which Knox has appropriately called "the Higher Cretinism."⁴⁵

There are other evils of contemporary society to which Knox alludes in passing. Strikes, trade depressions, inadequate housing, traffic congestion, the scramble for money, the worship of the moment, the disregard for the sanctities of the family are all incidental objects of Knox's satire in this work.

III. CONCLUDING REMARKS.

In the course of this study of Knox's two satirical novels, it has been shown that the qualities of restraint, good humour and freedom from cynicism remain the distinguishing marks of his satire. This discussion of the literary qualities of these two works has also revealed that Knox successfully embodied his satire within the rich imaginary framework of the novel, a medium which enabled him to strike forcibly but indirectly, to entertain wittily even while he probed deeply and satirically into the very heart of the modern problem.

In these satires Knox analyzed satirically one of the greatest threats of modern times. His purpose was to

⁴⁵ Knox, Ronald A., Other Eyes than Ours, p. 202.

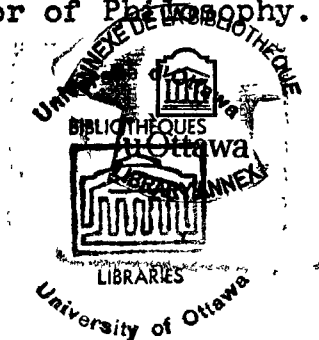
shock his contemporaries into an awareness of how chaotic society was becoming by reason of its rejection of the divine truths given by the Word of God, and of the supratemporal truths reached by metaphysical reasoning. The importance and value of his satire is greatly increased by the fact that he does not merely heap scorn on modern evils but also endeavours to clarify them in terms of their origin and in the light of unchanging principles.

It may be concluded, therefore, that Knox, by attacking the secularism and irrationalism of the early twentieth century in so literary and so entertaining a manner, made a significant contribution towards the preservation within modern civilization of our sacred heritage of human and divine values.

RONALD KNOX AS A SATIRIST
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CHAPTER V

SATIRE IN CRITICISM

In Caliban in Grub Street and in Broadcast Minds Knox departs from the indirection which characterizes his other satires to enter the field of direct controversy. To satirize the philosophical and theological errors of an opponent without arousing resentment is in many ways a more difficult task than to ridicule these same fallacies through the medium of the fictitious mask, the allegory or the novel. Certainly, it is a task which calls for comprehensive knowledge, precise analysis, judicial fairness and exquisite tact. It will be seen that not only does Knox possess these fundamental qualities so necessary for effective satire, but also that he is in command of a complex and many-faceted technique by means of which he thoroughly sifts his opponent's ideas, mercilessly exposes his errors and then sympathetically suggests the road which leads to truth.

Caliban in Grub Street is a satirical analysis of the pseudo-theology propounded by several well-known journalists in a series of symposia launched by the English daily press in 1929. The title of Knox's book suggests its subject matter: Caliban signifies the natural man with his natural theology trying to rebuild a lost faith while rejecting the institutional and doctrinal aspects of Christianity. Caliban's address is given as Grub Street

to indicate that Knox's criticism is not directed against the theological tenets of recognized religious leaders or members of the clergy but against the theological opinions of amateur theologians of the literary world. His analysis in Caliban in Grub Street is based upon some eleven symposia which had appeared in the Daily Express, the Daily News and other current newspapers under such suggestive headings as "My Religion," "Where are the Dead?", "God in These Times," etc. Since "A popular writer, if he is to remain popular, must share the common standards of the world around him,"¹ Knox concludes that the logical utterances of these journalists are indicative of the views held by a large section of the English public. By collating the opinions and negations expressed by these spokesmen of the common man, Knox calls attention to the alarming tendency to depart not only from traditional Christianity but also from the standards of common sense. Among the thirty-four literary writers whose theological opinions Knox criticizes are such well-known literary personalities as Arnold Bennett, J.D. Beresford, Augustine Birrell, James Douglas, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, John Drinkwater, Julian Huxley, Sir Arthur Keith, Max Plowman, H. de Vere Stacpoole, Hugh Walpole and Rebecca West.

¹ Knox, Ronald A., Caliban in Grub Street, London, Sheed & Ward, 1930, p. 14.

Knox's purpose in Broadcast Minds is to expose the aims and methods of certain self-constituted mentors, who, through the various channels of communication, have been carrying on a subtle conspiracy prejudicial to the Christian religion and to the culture which the Christian tradition has fostered and cherished. With precision and skill Knox analyses the teachings of H. G. Wells, Julian Huxley, Bertrand Russell, Henry Mencken, Gerald Heard and John Langdon-Davies, whom he considers typical of a group of publicists camouflaging as experts, whose desire is to create the entirely false impression that the ascertained facts of modern science are at variance with the truths of revealed religion. The danger which Knox points to is "broadcastmindedness" by which he means the uncritical acceptance on the part of the general public of a ready-made, standardized philosophy of life such as reaches them through wireless communication and the printed word. The public, he warns, is being deceived by a group of clever sectarians who are working to replace the religion and culture of the last nineteen hundred years by a secularized culture of their own creation. An exposure of the deceits, stratagems and insidious tactics of these prophets of the new culture is Knox's primary preoccupation in this book. Knox designates these prophets as omniscientists, that is to say

(...) people who select from the little handbooks those statements, those points of view which tell in favour of the thesis they want to establish, concealing any statements or points of view which tell in a contrary direction, and then serve up the whole to us as the best conclusions of modern research, disarming all opposition by appealing to the sacred name of science.²

The object which the omniscientist has in mind is not to enlighten but to darken understanding, to reduce his public to a state of confusion and nescience.

Knox's criticism is directly concerned with the following works: Religion without Revelation and What Dare I Think? by Julian Huxley, The Conquest of Happiness and Scientific Outlook by Bertrand Russell, Treatise on the Gods by Henry Mencken, The Emergence of Man by Gerald Heard, Science and Common Sense by John Langdon-Davies, What Are We to Do with Our Lives? by H.G. Wells. Knox chose these books as representative of the current attack on traditional religion and as suggestive of the secularist culture desired by the omniscientists.

The purpose of this chapter is to study Knox as a satirical critic with reference to his two volumes of satire in criticism, Caliban in Grub Street and Broadcast Minds. It will be seen that his extensive knowledge, his talent for careful and logical analysis, his good-humoured

² Knox, Ronald A., Broadcast Minds, London, Sheed & Ward, 1932, p. 2.

restraint and his command of the satirical weapons of irony, wit and ridicule equip him to confute expertly and scientifically the fallacious teaching of these enemies of faith and reason.

I. KNOX AS A SATIRICAL CRITIC.

1. His Extensive Knowledge: a Basis for His Criticism.

From the citadel of a faith which does not change its teachings to accommodate the spirit of the times, and from the vantage ground of a realistic philosophy based upon common sense, Knox launches his attack upon modern unorthodoxy and contemporary irrationalism. His penetration into the truths of revelation is deep and reverent; his knowledge of Scholastic philosophy is profound. In his polemic works he constantly draws upon these two sources of divine and human knowledge for the confutation of his adversaries.

The errors of the symposiasts whom he attacks in Caliban in Grub Street had been principally in the fields of theology and philosophy. However, his more formidable opponents of Broadcast Minds had written erroneously on matters involving history anthropology, comparative religion, archaeology, astronomy, biology, chemistry, physiology, physics and psychology. As soon as Knox begins to cross swords with these men, it becomes apparent that he is also

prepared to defend truth in any of these fields of knowledge. With an ease which is redolent of wide reading and deep penetration, Knox points to deviations from logical argumentation, and exposes errors of fact and of judgement. Against the unreliable authorities whom they quote, he cites the opinions of recognized scholars. As a controversialist, Knox manifests a sincere reverence for the heritage of tradition, but he is also aware of modern developments. He is not without an honest spirit of inquiry into present-day research and into the possibilities for the future which it implies. He has no fear that true science will ever be detrimental to religious truth.

It is impossible to illustrate fully in this study the extent and depth of learning which Knox reveals in these works of satire in criticism. A brief account of his analysis of Gerald Heard's book, The Emergence of Man, will serve merely to indicate something of the range of knowledge needed to confute these enemies of faith and reason. In this book Heard undertook to show how man's psyche emerged from its unselfconscious stage in the tree-tops to the highly selfconscious stage in the modern psychological laboratory. Knox undermines Heard's whole thesis of materialistic evolution by pointing out that in his explanation of how man emerged from the pre-human condition, Heard made three initial assumptions, two of

which are unsupported by modern scholarly research in biology while the third involves a metaphysical contradiction. Knox then proceeds to cite errors in Heard's anthropology, criticizes his contention that totem magic was the parent of religious belief, and takes him to task for omitting any mention of the Greek Sceptics and of the Idealists of the nineteenth century, an omission obviously motivated by his desire to suppress evidence prejudicial to his thesis. Knox also points to a large number of instances in which Heard falsified history in reference both to pre-Christian and to Christian times. Having discovered a great number of inaccuracies concerned with anthropology, history, psychology and metaphysics, Knox shows also how Heard falsified his whole picture of human history by an artificial perspective designed to weigh the scales on the side of materialism. The supposed conflict between science and religion which Heard introduced is also shown to be entirely unsupported by facts. Finally, Knox neatly demolishes Heard's triumphant conclusion that man is incapable of detached apprehension, in this way:

If man is incapable of detached apprehension, how can he prove anything? And if he cannot prove anything, how can he prove, as Mr. Heard thinks, that he cannot prove anything? A criticism he would have found used, if his reading had gone further, as early as the fifth century B.C. Pitiless in our scepticism, we others are not content to stop short at doubting our own mental processes. We go further, and doubt Mr. Heard's.³

³ Ibid., p. 184.

From this brief account of Knox's criticism of Heard's thesis some idea can be obtained of the quality and extent of the knowledge needed to refute the omniscentists.

2. Knox's Manner of Criticism.

1) The pattern of his criticism. - There is a recognizable pattern in Knox's procedure as a critic, though he varies it considerably to suit the subject-matter in question. Ordinarily, he begins his attack by clarifying the issue of the controversy and explaining precisely the object of his criticism. He gives a sufficiently detailed account of his opponent's thesis, calling attention to what is true and what is false, and even praising any point which he finds to be commendable. He quotes pertinent excerpts and demonstrates his analysis with constant reference to his opponent's words. If there are errors of fact, he cites them and supports his own statements by references to recognized authorities. He also examines his opponent's arguments for transgressions against the principles of logic. As the science of correct thinking is almost unknown to a majority of the symposiasts and the omniscentists, few of his opponents pass this test with any degree of success. After identifying the precise type of fallacy into which his opponent has fallen, Knox proceeds to consider the type of mentality capable of engendering such a welter of misinformation and illogical

argumentation. This part of the discussion terminates in a penetrating diagnosis which he designates wittily in some original descriptive phrase. Frequently he traces the root cause of the error to some distortion of historical truth or to some false system of philosophy. His chapter usually ends on a positive note in which he conveys a message to his opponents and to the general public. Though varying widely according to the topic under discussion, the essence of the message is this: Do not despair; the aspirations of your heart are genuine and your search for truth need not be in vain, if only you place your trust in the validity of reason and re-examine without prejudice the credentials of Christianity. In this way, Knox goes far beyond the satirical task of demolition and expresses a truly Christian optimism, an optimism which is an implicit compliment to the intelligence and good-will of his opponents and of the public in general.

Knox's chapter entitled "Theological Claustrophobia"⁴ will serve to illustrate this basic pattern of his critical approach. In this section of Caliban in Grub Street he analyses the nature of the symposiasts' revolt against the Christian tradition and dogmatic belief. With copious illustrations from statements made by Arnold Bennett, Hugh Walpole, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

⁴ Knox, Ronald A., Caliban in Grub Street, pp. 19-36.

Rebecca West and others, Knox shows that these writers grew out of the religion of their childhood without ever exactly knowing what it was; in later years, feeling the need for religion, they invented a substitute for that of their childhood, not because they had decided that there was nothing in it, but because they assumed that there was nothing in it. The religion which they profess, Knox shows, is an illogical patchwork of distorted doctrine and Scriptural half-texts. Knox proves with many quotations from their writings their great ignorance of genuine Christianity. Then he points to their many transgressions against logic. The basic error of all these writers is to assume, without proof, that traditional Christianity is false. They offer no real arguments against it, and the object of their attack is only a farrago of false theology which they erroneously believe to be Christianity. Even in the course of this attack against a non-existent object, they are discovered to have lacked accuracy in thought, precision in the use of words and to have fallen into elementary fallacies such as that of Many Questions.

Having pointed to the errors of fact and to the transgressions against the laws of reasoning, Knox proceeds to diagnose the mental quirk which has led to this irresponsible rejection of Christianity. On this subject he says:

I would say that we are suffering from a kind of claustrophobia, which breaks away from institutional religions and from the creeds by which institutional religions live, not because it does not believe in them but because it does not want to believe in them.⁵

Hence Knox describes the modern malady of the symposiasts as theological claustrophobia, a term which suggests that the very nature of their disease is an irrational fear of creeds as creeds.

Before finishing his discussion, Knox traces to their historical sources the errors of Mr. Bennett and of Mr. Drinkwater. The religious and philosophical outlook of the former, he says, is conditioned by Kantian thought, that of the latter, by Cartesian errors.

Finally Knox makes his positive contribution by an appeal to reason:

The question which remains for the human intellect to decide is whether it has to go on, generation after generation, making the same limited number of guesses, working up these guesses into a system, and then rejecting them again because they are a system, or whether there exists such a thing as revelation- that is, a series of truths, some of them necessarily obscure to our minds, whose authenticity is guaranteed to us, once for all, on the authority of an Informant more than human.⁶

Thus Knox invites his opponents and the general public to consider the basic problem, Has God spoken? For if He has, then the man-made religions of the symposiasts are

⁵ Ibid., p. 29.

⁶ Ibid., p. 35.

valueless and must be rejected in favour of supernatural truth.

The task of refuting the symposiasts and the omniscientists is more complex than this brief illustration might suggest. Speaking of the difficulty of crossing swords with these modern adversaries, Knox commented:

They do not argue in syllogisms which can be answered with concedo and nego, or with dilemmas which can be rebutted; they assert here, they suggest there, they insinuate there, they intertwine the threads of theory and fact so that no simple answer is possible; you must tap every corner of the edifice to find out where it rings hollow.⁷

Knox does, indeed, tap every corner of the edifice, testing the truth value of their alleged facts, of their judgements, arguments and insinuations. The result of Knox's careful analysis in these two volumes of criticism is a devastating exposure of a vast number of errors of fact, false inferences, fallacious arguments, self-contradictions, and inconsistencies of thought and expression, all of which would be highly amusing were it not for the seriousness of the issues at stake.

ii) The directness of his method. - In spite of the complex welter of errors which Knox must refute, he has a talent for going directly to the heart of the errors and demolishing them in short order. Something of the directness of his attack can be seen in this excerpt:

⁷ Knox, Ronald A., Broadcast Minds, p. 38.

Mr. Arnold Bennett, in the My Religion series, begins at once with the confession: "I do not believe, and never have at any time believed, in the divinity of Christ, the Virgin Birth, the Immaculate Conception, heaven, hell, the immortality of the soul, the divine inspiration of the Bible." The statement lacks, perhaps, scientific precision. Does Mr. Bennett believe in original sin? I imagine not; and if he does not believe in original sin, then he believes in the Immaculate Conception; not merely in the Immaculate Conception of our Lady, but in the immaculate conception of everybody else.⁸

Thus with dexterity and dispatch Knox shows that whatever else Mr. Bennett may have to say regarding his religious beliefs, he has failed to come to grips with a fundamental point of doctrine.

This same directness can be seen in Knox's refutation of Mr. Davies' claim that the discoveries of modern science have discredited the metaphysical proofs for the existence of God:

There are proofs of the existence of God, and they are as valid now as they ever were in the days of St. Thomas Aquinas. There are motives which can be urged for doubting the existence of God, and they were as valid in the days of St. Thomas Aquinas as they are in our own. Neither the proofs nor the doubts ever depended on any particular interpretation of the physical universe. And if Mr. Davies knows any considerations to the contrary, it is a pity he did not incorporate them in his book.⁹

Mr. Davies' case against theism in Science and Common Sense makes for very difficult reading, at least for the ordinary

⁸ Knox, Ronald A., Caliban in Grub Street, p. 19.

⁹ Knox, Ronald A., Broadcast Minds, p. 224.

reader. Knox himself summed up Davies' formula as "simply Agnosticism by Einstein out of Freud."¹⁰ In the excerpt quoted above Knox cuts through the entanglements of Davies' insinuations against theism and comes directly to the point:- Mr. Davies failed to offer any proof for his supposed anti-thesis between science and the rational proofs for the existence of God. The finality of Knox's simple rebuttal is in sharp contrast to the verbosity and confused thinking of his opponent.

iii) Knox's judicial fairness in considering his opponents' case. - Another aspect of Knox's approach to criticism is his willingness to penetrate fully into his opponent's case before offering any criticism of it. Waugh recognized this quality of Knox's criticism when he wrote:

A rare quality in Mgr. Knox's polemic is the fullness with which he accepts the meaning and implication of his opponents' point. Some modern Catholic controversialists assume an arrogant confidence in their cause and are content to turn aside a serious argument with a jolly verbal 'score.' Mgr. Knox never. For all his wit he always engages the heart of the issue.¹¹

One of the reasons for Knox's tolerant consideration of the opinions of his adversaries is doubtlessly the realization derived from his own experience as an Anglican that a man can defend a false position with complete sincerity.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 187.

¹¹ Waugh, Evelyn, "The Best and the Worst: V - Mgr. Ronald Knox," in Horizon, Vol. 17, May 1948, p. 329.

Apart from this, however, Knox's careful attention to his adversaries' viewpoint is an excellent strategic preparation for his rebuttal. Only when the error has been fully exposed can it be most effectively refuted. For this reason Knox sometimes summarizes a false theory more lucidly and plausibly than his opponent had been able to do. For instance, when Knox is sounding out the symposiasts' opinion on the question of God's existence and His Providence in respect to His creatures he attempts to articulate Mr. Bennett's concept:

Once more I feel (perhaps wrongly) that I can interpret the mind of Mr. Bennett; I feel that when he talks about a Creator "who had a clear aim, whatever that may be, in the creation and slow evolution of his universe" he does not mean us to think of a Providence individually interested in the fate of this and that human creature here and now. I should rather be inclined to attribute to him a deistic notion of God's Nature; (...) But whether God is to be held responsible for the way in which this man or that man runs his head up against the eternal laws (...) on that point I fancy that Mr. Bennett, with his unfailing frankness, would at least pronounce himself an agnostic.¹²

In like manner Knox clarifies the concepts of the leading symposiasts on this same question so that a clear idea may be had concerning the extent of their unorthodoxy and the nature of arguments which they educe in support of it. Only then is Knox fully prepared to give his final criticism.

¹² Knox, Ronald A., Caliban in Grub Street, p. 95.

To further clarify a disputed point, Knox sometimes suggests an argument which his opponent has overlooked in the defence of his error. Concerning Mr. Mencken who endeavoured to prove that the New Testament showed unmistakable signs of being tampered with, Knox comments:

He does not even know the points on his own side; in dealing with the great Petrine text he airs his learning by adding "Greek petros" after the word "rock," as if the Protestants had not been shouting at us for four hundred years that the word is not petros but petra!¹³

The effect of suggesting an argument in favour of his opponent's case is to forestall any objections which might be left in the reader's mind. To cite an argument in favour of an adversary can also rebound to the discredit of this adversary as it does in the case of Mr. Mencken who is so inept in his anti-Christian attack that he is not even aware of the arguments on his side.

iv) Regard for the individuality of his adversary.

Anne Brunhumer drew attention to another quality of Knox as a critic when she wrote:

Ronald Knox has an unfortunate habit of looking too closely at the logic of the religious faddists of our time, a quality he combines with the unhappy practice of employing his Catholic theology and Scholastic philosophy as a basis of criticism. The result is a deadly, not a crude kind of mass-extirpation, but the neat dispatching of each victim with a fastidious concern for his individuality.¹⁴

¹³ Knox, Ronald A., Broadcast Minds, p. 144.

¹⁴ Brunhumer, Anne, "The Cheerful Assassin," American Vol. 72, issue of November 4, 1944, p. 92.

Though there is a certain uniformity in his approach, Knox recognizes the individuality of his opponents by varying his method of criticism to suit each one of them. For instance, Mr. Mencken, the American humourist, had been accustomed to cut out extracts on religion from provincial newspapers and to print them with captions of his own, thus perpetuating the anti-Christian joke. In criticizing Mencken's Treatise on the Gods, Knox ingeniously selects rich pieces of unconscious humour from his adversary's book, excerpts resembling schoolboy howlers, and labels them with suitable captions. Mr. Mencken had termed his books of humour, "Americana," and so Knox calls his criticism "Menckiana." Whenever Knox reaches a particularly gross inaccuracy in his analysis of Mencken's thesis, he ironically excuses him with some remark such as this: "Doubtless he would tell us himself that the whole thing was only a leg-pull."¹⁵ In this way Knox repays Mr. Mencken in his own coin, levelling against him the great anti-atheist joke.

Then too, whenever Knox is engaged in controversy with a philosopher such as Bertrand Russell, he meets him on his own grounds of reason. But when his debate is with those who have a superior scorn for reason and deny its validity in favour of intuition and religious experience,

¹⁵ Knox, Ronald A., Broadcast Minds, p. 133.

Knox resorts to the reductio ad absurdum as the method most suited to their non-speculative minds. Through this device he shows the incongruity of religious creeds built upon purely subjective tenets and aspirations.

From these remarks it can be concluded that Knox's criticism was not a mass-extirpation but one which was in keeping with the characteristics of his victim.

3. Knox's Use of Satirical Devices.

1) Irony. - Irony is one of Knox's most effective instruments for exploding the errors of his opponents. There is, in fact, a subtle undercurrent of Socratic irony running through both volumes of criticism. Beneath a cloak of self-depreciation Knox poses as ready to entertain his opponents' point of view, a pose which he maintains right up to the moment when he lays bare the real absurdity of the case in point. For instance Mr. Drinkwater had mistaken the experience of introspection, that is, the directing of the mind back upon itself, to be something supernatural. From this he (Mr. Drinkwater) concluded, Cartesianwise, that he had been in contact with a reality beyond the reach of rational processes. Knox remarks: "The experience to which Mr. Drinkwater refers is certainly an uncanny one,"¹⁶ and sometime later he says: "It is quite

¹⁶ Knox, Ronald A., Caliban in Grub Street, p. 63.

true that this experience has a great deal to do with religion."¹⁷ It is only by degrees that it becomes clear that Knox posed as an admirer of Mr. Drinkwater's natural theology so that he might lead up to a confutation of it. It may be said that this use of Socratic irony is a favorite weapon of Knox's against both the symposiasts and omniscientists.

Having exploded an error, Knox often resorts to another type of irony, understatement or meiosis, by means of which he deliberately represents the error as much less than it really is. Thus for instance, Knox crowns his devastating analysis of Mencken's web of misinformation in Treatise on the Gods by commenting almost as an after-thought: "Incidentally, Mr. Mencken has omitted to consider the question whether a God exists or not."¹⁸ Then he rubs salt into the wound by a pretense of sympathetic understanding: "It is so hard to remember everything."¹⁹

Using another form of understatement known as litotes, Knox sometimes understates what he does mean and overstates what he does not mean. A good illustration of this is found in his discussion of Professor Edman's unorthodox and highly rhetorical article written on hell.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 64.

¹⁸ Knox, Ronald A., Broadcast Minds, p. 153.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 154.

This professor of Columbia University in his contribution to the symposium, "The Reality of Hell," had denied the existence of hell as a place of eternal punishment. But with what Knox terms a Humpty-Dumpty capacity for making words mean exactly what he chooses they shall mean, this professor had expressed the opinion that many people experienced hell in this modern world. To be in hell, he had written, is to know the horror, blank and paralysing, of living without a knowledge of the meaning of life. This is Knox's ironic comment on the pathetic state of the people envisioned by Professor Edman:

Poised uncomfortably between the consolations of an older system, which has ceased to command their intellectual assent, and those more durable ones which a course at Columbia University might have supplied, they experience the dilemma of Tantalus.²⁰

Thus through ironic statement Knox suggests an unpalatable truth in an inoffensive manner, much to the delight of the perceptive reader who recognizes Knox's real meaning.

In these volumes of satiric criticism, Knox also employs verbal irony by implying an evaluation opposed to the literal expression. The following comment on Professor Huxley's explanation of the Blessed Trinity in terms of nature is typical of this type of irony:

²⁰ Knox, Ronald A., Caliban in Grub Street, pp. 170-171.

That, doubtless, is what the early Fathers would have meant if they had had the advantage of a scientific education - three persons in no God (...) It is not everybody who can become a heretic without ceasing to be an atheist.²¹

In this way Knox frequently uses ironic praise as a weapon of satire.

From these illustrations it is evident that irony is an important element in Knox's art of denigration. His irony is all the more effective by reason of its subtlety and freedom from malice. It does, however, call for constant response from the reader who must examine every assertion with care and know when to reverse it. As always, Knox's irony is a delightful demand made upon the reader's intelligence. In the case of his satire in criticism, however, this enjoyment is increased by the knowledge that the irony is above the heads of his brain-shy opponents. Certainly in both Caliban in Grub Street and in Broadcast Minds is verified Fowler's description:

Irony is a form of utterance that postulates a double audience, consisting of one party that hearing shall hear and shall not understand, and another party that, when more is meant than meets the ear, is aware both of that more and of the outsiders' incomprehension.²²

This sense of the "outsiders' incomprehension" is one of the many delights of reading Knox's satires in criticism.

²¹ Knox, Ronald A., Broadcast Minds, pp. 89-90.

²² Fowler, H.W., A Dictionary of Modern English Usage, Oxford, Clarendon, 1926, p. 295.

ii) Use of witty expression. - Knox's talent for witty expression enables him to bring out vividly the ridiculousness of his opponents' opinions and arguments. Thus in commenting upon the opinion of those who think they recognize signs of a great religious awakening in modern times, Knox writes:

Our modern religiosity is not incompatible with an increase in the proportion of registry-marriages, or with a series of Sunday mornings spent on the roads and on the golf-links. It is in the inner core of man's nature that the change is to be found; and those delicate yearnings after higher things, tender buds of spirituality, must not be exposed to the rude blasts of pulpit declamation, or the materialistic test of a collection-plate.²³

Or again, to confute Bertrand Russell's contention that the existence and nature of rational beings can be explained in terms of mechanical evolution, Knox comments:

If, as we went about the world, we occasionally lighted on a rather artistic hyena or a moderately virtuous hippopotamus, then I should agree that the appearance of Man might be reasonably explained by a law of averages.²⁴

Often, too, Knox's wit brings out a truth which is in danger of being overlooked. Wishing to warn the public against the symposiasts who use such terms as Life-Force, Energy, or Activity to designate the Deity, he writes:

²³ Knox, Ronald A., Caliban in Grub Street, p. 1.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 45.

If you are an atheist, you have only to refer to "That Non-Existent Being Whom men call God," and all your reviewers will give you credit for a reverent attitude towards religion.²⁵

One of Knox's most deadly weapons of ridicule, however, is a witty statement which diminishes its object by some degrading comparison or debasing simile. To describe the aim of those modern teachers whom he calls the omniscientists he writes: "Accordingly, they adopt the tactics of the cuttle-fish which emits its ink not to enlighten but to confuse its pursuers."²⁶ To justify his inclusion of Mr. Mencken among the omniscientists, Knox says: "But he has put his rake in the same garbage-heap which gives fuel to his broadcastminded confrères on this side;"²⁷ Wishing to show that Bertrand Russell's philosophy as expounded in The Conquest of Happiness robbed life of its moral values, Knox makes this remark:

Life, as it dwells in Lord Russell's ambitions, is no longer a Pilgrim's Progress; it is only a constitutional, undertaken by a nervous hypochondriac for the benefit of his health.²⁸

Characteristic, too, is Knox's use of a foreign word or of a Latin or Greek phrase to give pungency to his

²⁵ Ibid., p. 78.

²⁶ Knox, Ronald A., Broadcast Minds, p. 32.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 125.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 117.

criticism. For instance, to ridicule Mr. Davies' bias against the truths of the Christian faith, he says: "That is not, of course, the precise way in which he argues. But it is the kind of Stimmung he wants to create in the minds of the kind of people who will read him."²⁹ Knox describes Russell's ideal of peace built upon the denial of sin as, "this ideal of pacata posse omnia mente tueri."³⁰ More devastating still is his picture of Professor Huxley at his naturalistic worship:

Professor Huxley, (...) sits in his expurgated oratory, contemplating, with occasional uprushes from his subconscious, a long row of statues - laws of nature on this side, human values on that. Unseeing, unhearing, they return his gaze,
 ὁμμάτων δ' ἐν ἀληθείᾳ ἑρρεῖ πᾶς Ἀφροδίτη:
 an inverted Pygmalion, he thanks science that they can never come to life.³¹

Finally, one of the most original forms of Knox's wit in these books of satirical criticism is his coining of a succinct and telling epithet to express his diagnosis of his opponents' errors. The instinctive and irresponsible reaction of the symposiasts' against the religion of their childhood he labels "theological claustrophobia,"³² their tendency to overlook the whole Christ in favour of a

²⁹ Ibid., p. 190.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 113.

³¹ Ibid., p. 235.

³² Knox, Ronald A., Caliban in Grub Street, pp. 19-36.

watered-down conception of Him, he calls "the By-Pass to Damascus,"³³ while their method of falsifying Scripture to make it say anything which they want it to say he terms "the Scissors and Paste method."³⁴ He calls the symposiasts' appeal to sentiment in proof of the immortality of the soul a "Tithonus complex."³⁵ Mr. Davies' anathemas against Aristotle in Science and Common Sense are indicted as "the Hegira from Stagira,"³⁶ an appropriately ambiguous phrase which indicates that this omniscientist "flew" from Aristotle in more ways than one - not only did he energetically reject Aristotle's philosophy, but he did so without ever having possessed any adequate knowledge of it. It is evident that this epitomizing of an opponent's error in a neat, suggestive phrase is an effective satirical weapon.

This discussion has served to point out the most significant forms which Knox's wit takes in these books of criticism. The examples cited are typical and do not begin to exhaust the abundant wit of Caliban in Grub Street and Broadcast Minds. In conclusion it may be said that Knox's wit is a clever, amusing and intellectually

³³ Ibid., pp. 54-70.

³⁴ Ibid., pp. 107-123.

³⁵ Ibid., pp. 141-160.

³⁶ Knox, Ronald A., Broadcast Minds, pp. 187-224.

stimulating device for confounding his opponents.

iii) Use of the Reductio ad absurdum. - Knox often brings out the absurdity of an error by viewing it in its logical consequences. His very effective use of the reductio ad absurdum is a consequence of his very logical mind and of his talent for witty expression. It is a device which he employs with evident delight and with deadly effect. Thus to bring out the folly of the symposiasts' theological claustrophobia, that is to say, their automatic rejection of the religion of their childhood, he makes the following reductio:

Are we really reduced to the position of having to conceal from our children the fact that a God exists, lest, hearing the statement in their childhood, they should call it a dogma and revolt from it? Are we to lock up our prayer-books when we come home from church on Sunday, and put away the parish magazine on a high shelf, so that innocent minds shall not be tarnished by its influence? Are we to dismiss the chauffeur when he says "Good God!" in the presence of the family?³⁷

Similarly in another chapter Knox employs the reductio ad absurdum against such writers as Arnold Bennett, Hugh Walpole, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Miss West and others who eulogize Christ as a great moral teacher but deny His Divinity. To bring out the illogicality of their position he rewrites the gospel of St. Matthew according to these

³⁷ Knox, Ronald A., Caliban in Grub Street, p. 35.

new prophets, including only those texts which they find it convenient to remember. In this way Knox drives home the point that had they studied the whole gospel, they would have found that Christ claimed to be God. If He were not really God, then He was a liar. To be logical, then, the symposiasts must either reject the whole gospel and cease to eulogize Christ as a great moral teacher, or they must accept the whole gospel including all those dogmas which hold Christ to be divine.

Another typical instance of Knox's use of the reductio ad absurdum is found in his rebuttal of the central idea of Huxley's book entitled Religion without Revelation. Huxley had defended the value of natural religion in a post-Christian society. Knox points out that his basic mistake had been to identify the sense of mystery or natural ecstasy with the sense of sacredness. Huxley had, for instance, falsely assumed that the ecstatic moments spoken of by Donne in The Ecstasy were of the same nature as those recorded in the writings of the great saint of Avila. Wishing to reveal the inherent absurdity of Huxley's glorification of natural religion, Knox brings his theories down to a concrete application:

Organized worship, so long as you concede the possibility that a God exists, can never be wholly ridiculous; (...) But- worship without a God? I am afraid even those "moments" would not really survive the glare of publicity. Donne and the future Mrs. Donne could afford to enjoy their ecstasy by themselves; but if a small boy had appeared on the next stile, in half a second they would have been five yards apart, picking cowslips. And the churches of Huxleyism - well, I am afraid I shall never be able to pay them a visit for fear of disgracing myself.³⁸

From this and the two other instances already cited, it is evident that Knox finds the reductio ad absurdum a thrifty device for annihilating in a few deft strokes the superficially plausible tenets of his opponents.

4. Characteristics of Knox as a Satirical Critic.

1) Knox's attitude towards his opponents. - Knox's attitude towards his opponents is friendly and respectful. He never questions the right of his adversary to hold his own opinion, but makes it clear that he wishes to attack only what is false and contrary to fact. His attitude towards his opponent can be seen in the following excerpt in which Knox is ridiculing the concept of a religion based wholly upon the witness of a faculty higher than reason, that is to say, intuition. After objecting:

³⁸ Knox, Ronald A., Broadcast Minds, p. 88.

If Mr. Walpole says "Ah, my dear fellow, if you only knew!" to Sir Arthur Keith, why should not I say "Ah, my dear fellow, if you only knew! to Mr. Walpole?

he adds this:

I must apologize for the impertinence of the suggestion, but so far as logic is concerned it seems to me that he has brought the retort on himself.³⁹

Thus as a controversialist, Knox never seeks a personal triumph. He is satisfied with an intellectual victory in which truth is defended and error is demolished. This good will towards his opponents is also revealed in the fact that no sooner has he annihilated a false line of argument than he encourages his adversary to commence his search for truth in sure traditional channels. Characteristic of his attitude is this:

If only Lord Russell would consent to work out his philosophy of Good, is it not conceivable that it might balance out with his philosophy of Evil, and so leave him free to discuss, without prepossession, the major problems of theodicy?⁴⁰

From this it is clear that Knox's sole desire is to disabuse Lord Russell of his prejudice in favour of materialism so that he might be free to discover truth.

³⁹ Knox, Ronald A., Caliban in Grub Street, p. 200.

⁴⁰ Knox, Ronald A., Broadcast Minds, p. 257.

ii) Knox's suitable acerbity. - Knox's never-failing good humour and the respect in which he holds his opponents does not prevent him from stating his criticisms trenchantly and even caustically when the occasion demands it. In this he is certainly justified, for as Sheed has said: "In other words, to treat a man's religion with more respect than it deserves is to treat the man with less respect than he deserves."⁴¹ Knox has, in fact, a superb contempt for any show of illogicality, or of carelessness and irresponsibility in respect to the vitally important and sacred subject of religion. Thus he indicts the inconsistency of those atheists who argued in favour of the power of prayer:

I should not be surprised if, in England, the doctrine that prayer is efficacious were to outlive the doctrine that God is almighty. But if it is to be so, let us not delude ourselves by asking Gigadibs to write on My Religion. Let us call things by their right names, and ask him for two thousand words on My Superstitions.⁴²

Then too, after discovering that Mr. Bennett expressed contradictory opinions in articles contributed to different symposia, Knox sharply condemns such irresponsibility:

⁴¹ Sheed, F.J., Sidelights on the Catholic Revival, London, Sheed and Ward, 1941, p. 84.

⁴² Knox, Ronald A., Caliban in Grub Street, pp. 105-106.

Is it too much to ask that Mr. Bennett should keep his religious convictions filed somewhere on a card-index, so that his secretary may have easy access to them when the occasion arises?⁴³

Moreover, Knox's indignation is invariably aroused by any show of wilful distortion of truth or by ignorance masquerading as learning. For instance, when Mr. Deeping, one of the symposiasts, made it appear that the existence of hell as a place of eternal punishment was invented by the priests of the Middle Ages to keep the people in subjection, Knox expresses his contempt for such prejudice and ignorance of facts in this way:

He did not even read Dante, to see what sort of people Dante sent to hell. It is quite safe, Mr. Deeping felt, to sling what mud you like at the Middle Ages, without verifying your references; nobody minds, except those negligible Roman Catholics.⁴⁴

A similar scorn for pseudo-scientific writings is shown in this comment on Mr. Heard's book, The Emergence of Man:

And the suspicion broadens - for there is plenty more evidence as the book goes on - that all Mr. Heard's pretense of writing a scientific work is fudge. He does not really care a hang about the development of human psychology; he is out, like all the other omniscientists, to impress us and to confuse us. To impress us by throwing startling ideas at us that will leave us gasping and saying, "Well, I never thought of that before!" To confuse us, by blurring all our lines of distinction, and making it appear that one thing is very much the same as another when you start juggling with the labels.⁴⁵

⁴³ Ibid., p. 145.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 165.

⁴⁵ Knox, Ronald A., Broadcast Minds, pp. 164-165.

It should be noticed, however, that Knox's scorn is directed at the pseudo-learning and not at the person of the omniscientist himself.

It may be concluded that Knox, impelled by an ardent love of truth, was frequently aroused to a just indignation at the sight of carelessness or of distortion of facts, in regard to the most sacred subject of all, the Christian religion. To his hatred of error, however, was joined his unflinching respect for the person of his opponents.

iii) Knox's prose style. - The qualities of Knox's prose style undoubtedly contribute much to his success as a satirical critic. The very heart of his style is lucidity, a quality of essential importance to one who wishes to analyse and expose the errors of others. The lucidity of his style has its source in the directness and accuracy of his thinking and in the simplicity and precision of his mode of expression. Something of the directness and simplicity of his manner can be seen in this statement:

Give me the certainty that there is a Person there, and I will do my best to find out what is his will for me, (...) Short of that, I will make no mention of religion in my vocabulary; at the best it is a fad, at the worst a fallacy. (...) I believe I have the ordinary Englishman with me here. He does not want "religion"; he wants God.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Knox, Ronald A., Caliban in Grub Street, p. 204.

So simple and obvious is the fact that religion has no meaning unless God exists, that Knox's reader begins to wonder how so many of the symposiasts could have written two thousand words on their religion without making it clear whether they believed in God. Thus Knox's simplicity serves him well in polemic discussion.

Knox sometimes writes with rhetorical flourish as when he ironically muses on the thoughts of a modern non-Catholic hearing the Pope speak over the wireless:

To such a man, assuming at any rate that he was an Englishman, the Pope is simply a thing that used to happen in history books. A thing far remote in antiquity; a back number. Whereas this new toy science has given us should speak to us (...) of man's spirit fighting (...) subduing now this force of nature, now that; making air his pathway; and the seas his dark tunnel and the winds his messengers; man with no need of a Creator, man enthroned. The Catacombs lie as far behind him, almost, as the Aurignacian caves where he scrawled his schoolboy pictures; Rome is the picturesque capital of a Mediterranean lake, long since thought of as the open sea.⁴⁷

By way of contrast, Knox is sometimes colloquial, as in the following passage in which he ridicules the undue importance placed by the common man upon what he reads in the press or sees in the movies:

"The" paper; as we say "the" pictures; the whole miserable hotch-potch of visual impressions which is dished up in the course of an evening's performance is viewed as a single fact. "The" paper; as we say "the" wireless.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Knox, Ronald A., Broadcast Minds, pp. 15-16.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 13.

In this manner Knox varies his style to produce the whatever effect he wishes to achieve.

Another quality of Knox's style is his talent for exposing an opponent's error or illuminating a truth by a vivid parallel. For instance when Bertrand Russell argues that in a universe caused by the natural operation of the laws of chance it was quite probable that there should result a few organisms capable of intelligence, Knox retorts in this manner:

If the police were to discover a human body in Mr. Russell's Saratoga trunk, he would not be able to satisfy them with the explanation that, among all the innumerable articles of luggage in the world, it is only natural that there should be some few which are large enough to contain a body. They would want to know how it got there.⁴⁹

Similarly, when Mr. Huxley upholds the immortality of the soul by arguing that spiritual and mental activity is not lost but returns after death to a store or pool of spiritual reality, Knox brings out the absurdity of this type of pantheism when he says:

Is this immortality? If so, I suppose I must say that my articles in the Sunday Dispatch achieve immortality when, duly pulped, they reappear in next month's Bradshaw.⁵⁰

It is evident that a graphic parallel serves as a damaging weapon in Knox's annihilation of an opponent's error.

⁴⁹ Knox, Ronald A., Caliban in Grub Street, p. 47.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 154.

Knox has, moreover, a habit of figurative expression which adorns even the most commonplace topics. For example, to explain the symposiasts' attitude towards God he says:

The Supreme Being enjoys in their thoughts, a kind of constitutional Monarchy, limited by the will of those whose thinking lends him Existence; eternal punishment would be an abuse of his Prerogative - they would withdraw their intellectual support rather than admit it.⁵¹

To distinguish between the Freudian and the Huxleyian attitude towards religion, Knox has recourse to the following figure: "Freud wants to have the tooth out by the roots; it is Professor Huxley's chief ambition to perpetuate the functioning of the nerve."⁵² Speaking of the symposiasts' strange fear of some pending religious persecution of the unorthodox by the faithful he poses this rhetorical question: "Why is Lady Jane Grey's head still a King Charles's head to our twentieth-century symposiasts?"⁵³ This use of figurative expression indicates Knox's preference for concrete connotation, a characteristic which tends to make his criticism more vivid and colourful.

Lucidity, versatility, a power of suggestiveness through graphic illustration and figurative expression,

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 164.

⁵² Ibid., p. 30.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 30.

these are the characteristics which distinguish Knox's prose style in his books of satiric criticism. Undoubtedly, it is a style well suited to demolishing errors and stating truths forcibly and convincingly.

iv) Rhetorical skill. - Unless the satirist is able to persuade others to share his views and principles, his satirical criticism will be unavailing. This is what David Worchester had in mind when he declared: "Satire, however, is the most rhetorical of all kinds of literature."⁵⁴

A study of Knox's technique in Caliban in Grub Street and Broadcast Minds reveals how successfully he employed the devices of rhetorical expression. According to Aristotle, the modes of persuasion furnished by a rhetorical composition are threefold: "The first kind depends on the personal character of the speaker; the second on putting the audience into a certain frame of mind; the third on the proof, or apparent proof, provided by the words of the speech itself."⁵⁵ It will be seen that Knox's criticism is characterized by these three elements basic to the art of persuasion.

⁵⁴ Worchester, David, The Art of Satire, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1941, p. 9.

⁵⁵ Aristotle, Rhetorica, in The Basic Works of Aristotle, edited by Richard McKeon, New York, Random House, 1941, p. 1329.

There can be little doubt that Knox does establish himself as a highly credible authority, both in the opinion of his opponents as well as in that of the general reading public. He accomplishes this in large part through his tone and attitude. His objective manner of judging the statements of his opponents indicates that he has no other desire than to see truth prevail. His quiet efficiency and swift, effortless manner of analysing errors and of stating facts and of quoting scholarly authorities betray his extensive knowledge. His righteous indignation in the face of chicanery and deliberate falsification of facts, a quality rare enough in these days of indifferentism, reveals his sincere devotion to truth. His generous praise and his willingness to consider his adversaries' viewpoint together with his talent for expressing truth in a simple, convincing manner can contribute much to establishing him as a fair, judicious critic. In a word, by reason of his scholarship, attachment to truth, and equity, Knox is a critic to whom one willing gives credence.

To achieve the second object of rhetorical composition Knox must seek to put the general reading public, as well as his opponents themselves, into a proper frame of mind. He employs a different approach for each group. To persuade the general public he appeals to their emotions. He is fully aware of the character of the people

to whom he is addressing himself. He knows that though the common man of this century may be indifferent to religious dogma and unaccustomed to intellectual speculation, he retains a deeply rooted sense of fair play, a hatred of dishonesty and at least some respect for truth. Knox, therefore, is at pains to bring home to his readers that they have been the victims of an organized fraud, of a deliberate attempt on the part of anti-religious men to throw into discredit those doctrinal truths which constitute their most precious heritage. He knows that their sense of truth and fair play will be aroused by the disclosure of a conspiracy which has flourished undetected in their midst and that their indignation against their deceivers will cause them to listen responsively to what he has to say.

Obviously Knox must find a very different stratagem for putting his opponents in a receptive mood. He has recourse to Dryden's dictum: "And no Man can be heartily angry with Him, who pleafes him againft his will."⁵⁶ Thus after making it clear that truth is the sole object of his polemics, Knox proceeds to demolish their favourite shibboleths with wit and a mock dignity which palliates

⁵⁶ Dryden, John, Original Poems and Translations, Vol. II, edited by J. and R. Tonson, London, (no publisher), 1743, p. 145.

even as it wounds. When Knox writes:

Miss West has a different recipe; she will save the face of the early Church by allowing that its pretty fables were valuable in their time, but we have outgrown all that sort of business now. Christianity was a pedagogue, to bring us to Miss West.⁵⁷

it is castigatus ad unguem, and yet one suspects that even Miss West herself would be pleased albeit against her will. Similarly, Mr. Wells and Mr. Huxley could scarcely be offended by discovering their secularist religions described in terms of action and contemplation.⁵⁸ In this manner Knox induces even in his opponents a receptive frame of mind.

As for the third of the persuasive measures, the strength of the argument, Aristotle pointed out: "Everyone who effects persuasion through proof does in fact use either Enthymenes or examples there is no other way."⁵⁹ From the earlier part of this discussion it is clear that Knox is the most logical of critics systematically demolishing his opponents' errors with exact attention to the laws of ratiocination, and then setting forth the truth

⁵⁷ Knox, Ronald A., Caliban in Grub Street, p. 119.

⁵⁸ Knox, Ronald A., Broadcast Minds, pp. 225-226.

⁵⁹ Aristotle, Rhetorica, The Basic Works of Aristotle, p. 1330.

in words so simple that one wonders how anyone could have misconstrued realities so plain. As for the examples of which Aristotle speaks, Knox's citing of facts gleaned from scholarly sources together with his talent for finding striking parallels and his preference for concrete connotation would seem to fulfil adequately this requirement.

It may be concluded that by establishing himself as a credible authority, by inducing his readers into a receptive mood, and by building up a convincing argument, Knox has successfully achieved a vital end of satire, rhetorical persuasion.

II. THE OBJECT OF KNOX'S SATIRE.

In Caliban in Grub Street Knox criticizes the amateur theologians for their revolt against tradition and for their unorthodox denial of the omnipotence of God and of the eternal sanctions which bind man to his Creator. He condemns their strange eclecticism in the choice of their religious beliefs, their distrust of the intellect and their consequent reliance on insights and private revelations. He shows that the religious beliefs of this representative group of literary men make up an unnatural theology, an illogical patchwork of half-truths and Scriptural texts quoted out of context. He warns that this departure from orthodoxy seems to herald a period of widespread disbelief

and irrationality, a state of "Higher Cretinism."⁶⁰ He fears that the doctrines of the journalists will become the doctrine of the pulpit a hundred years hence. He believes that the Victorians were wrong in assuming that the religious beliefs of a nation can be obliterated without affecting its standards of morality.

In Broadcast Minds, on the other hand, Knox draws attention to a group of vocal prophets whose aim has been to create a new type of culture diametrically opposed to the traditional culture of the Western world. He attacks the pseudo-learning of these self-constituted mentors and condemns their unfounded postulation of an antithesis between science and religion. He shows that they have deliberately clouded evidence and darkened understanding so as to create the false impression that each augmentation in scientific knowledge has been damaging to Christian beliefs.

The common man, Knox declares, is in danger of being greatly influenced by these prophets of the new culture on account of his unwary habit of accepting the radio as a kind of Delphic Oracle, which furnishes him with neat intellectual parcels of ready-made culture and thus relieves him of the necessity of independent thinking.

⁶⁰ Knox, Ronald A., Caliban in Grub Street, p. 52.

This habit of mental subserviency, which Knox terms broadcastmindedness, is extended not only to the wireless but also to the press and to popular books.

Knox's primary purpose in Broadcast Minds was, therefore, to warn the public against the false culture which they were in grave danger of accepting. By exposing the deliberate attempts by the omniscentists to falsify truth, he greatly diminishes their power to extend their influence.

In Caliban in Grub Street and Broadcast Minds Knox writes in defence of reason, supernatural truth and Christian culture. Against the irrational mysticism of these modern writers he upholds the value of reason as a preliminary to faith. Against the emasculated religiosity of the symposiasts he proposes the infallible dogmas revealed by God Himself. Against the secular culture planned by the omniscentists, he upholds all those natural and supernatural values which constitute the glory of the western heritage.

III. CONCLUSIONS.

This discussion of Knox as a satiric controversialist has shown that he launches his attack upon the enemies of religion and culture from the vantage ground of Catholic truth and Scholastic philosophy. Though

he is often aroused to indignation by irresponsibility and careless in regard to the sacred subject of religion, or by a deliberate falsification of truth, yet he respects the person of his opponent and constantly urges him to commence his search for truth in traditional channels. His magnanimity is revealed in his willingness to recognize any element of truth in his adversary's case. Moreover, he never annihilates a fallacy without first weighing it carefully and then stating fully his reasons for rejecting it. Both his restraint and his detachment are evident in the fact that he does not seek a personal victory but only an intellectual triumph in the cause of truth.

It has been seen that the simplicity and directness of his style, together with his talent for graphic illustration, are admirably suited to analysis and criticism. The rhetorical qualities of his appeal to the reader render his satire more effective and therefore more potent in defence of genuine values. Though Knox was not free to resort to those stratagems of indirection which take the sharp edge from his other satires, none the less he has enlivened his satire in criticism with adroit irony and clever wit which palliates its victims even as it chastizes them. This power to amuse even as he hurts, together with his unfailing good humour, gives a lightness of touch to his satirical criticisms which renders them

much more enjoyable to the general reading public and much more acceptable to Knox's opponents themselves.

The value of Knox's satire in criticism is certainly increased by the topical pertinence of the truths and values which he defends. With rare clarity he has pointed to those deviations from reason and from orthodoxy which characterize the modern threat to Christian humanism. Not content with demolishing errors, he has also stated with eloquent simplicity many of the truths and principles which were in danger of being overlooked. It may be concluded that in these works of satiric criticism, as in his other satires already discussed, Knox is a powerful defender of the Catholic Faith and of Christian culture.

Commenting on Knox as a satirical critic, Evelyn Waugh wrote:

It is not, I am sure, simply because I am in agreement that I find him a master of controversy. (We are often embarrassed by the methods of doughty champions of our own side.)⁶¹

In view of Knox's precise and logical analysis, his fine literary style, force of persuasiveness, good-humoured restraint and witty defence of divine and human truths, Waugh's estimate of Knox as "a master of controversy" seems to be fully justified.

⁶¹ Waugh, Evelyn, "The Best and the Worst: V - Mgr. Ronald Knox," in Horizon, Vol. 17, issue of May 1948, p. 328.

CHAPTER VI

KNOX AND THE SATIRIC TRADITION

In the preceding chapters a detailed study has been made of Knoxian satire. There remains to appraise Knox as a satirist according to the standards outlined in the introduction to this thesis. The following evaluation of Knox will be made on the basis of what has been discovered and illustrated in the detailed analysis of Knox's satirical verse, essays, allegories, novels and satires in criticism. No further attempt will be made to illustrate the conclusions of this chapter. The present evaluation of Knox as a satirist will be completed by a discussion of his place in the satiric tradition.

I. EVALUATION OF KNOX AS A SATIRIST.

1. Standards Concerning the Satirist.

1) The satirist should be in possession of intellectual and moral truth. - The value of a satirist's contribution to literature and to society depends to a large extent upon his firm adherence to the standards of truth and morality. In this respect Knox was particularly well equipped to write effective satire by reason both of his extensive knowledge and of his astute power of judgement. Although Knox was not a specialist in any field of knowledge, he had an exceptionally wide range of

learning which embraced both the traditional and the modern. It must not be supposed, however, that Knox's competency to appraise the intellectual and moral trends of his day rests solely upon his possession of a large number of facts gleaned from wide reading in ancient and modern writers. Rather, it is the fine integration of his knowledge which so admirably equips him to cross swords with the modern enemies of faith and culture. It may be said of Knox what he himself once remarked of Chesterton, that he was "a man of organic culture, who could really absorb what he read and digest it into his own system of thought."¹ Knox's learning is all of one piece, thoroughly synthesized and perfectly integrated. Consequently, Knox the satirist is also Knox the classical scholar, the biblical student, the scholastic philosopher, the theologian and the historian. Certainly, therefore, a primary source of Knox's power as a satirist lies in this excellent intellectual preparation for treating of errors involving revelation, philosophy, morals or history.

To be in possession of the requisite knowledge is not enough for the satirist. He must also be able to judge the errors of others accurately and justly. In his satirical denunciations Knox manifested an impartial and

¹ Knox, Ronald A., "G. K. Chesterton," in Great Catholics, edited by Claude Williamson, London, Nicholson and Watson, 1938, p. 549.

precise judgement of values and a profound devotion not to this or that proposition but to truth itself, qualities which he owed in part at least to his training in scholastic philosophy.

Since Knox's satirical attacks on modern society are launched from the citadel of his admirably integrated fund of knowledge and regulated by his astute power of judgement, it may be concluded that he is in a position to lay bare the evils of modern society, not merely in their superficial aspects but also in their root causes.

ii) The good satirist must be genial, optimistic and magnanimous. - Much of Knox's effectiveness as a satirist derives from the genial and tolerant spirit in which he launched his attacks. Both nature and grace contrived to fit Knox for his role of urbane and kindly satirist. By nature he was friendly and courteous, able to sympathize with the erring even when his keen intellect forced him to condemn their errors. Under the power of grace the natural courtesy of the man was transformed into the supernatural charity of the Christian and the priest so that even in the highly controversial subject-matter of Let Dons Delight and his two satires in criticism he never loses his good humour. He could hit hard without being ungracious and in the midst of the most forcible satirical indictment he was able to maintain an invincible urbanity.

Moreover, Knox as a satirist is untainted by that sense of the futility of life which mars the outlook of so many authors from Hardy to Kingsley Amis. He knows that man by reason of his essential greatness and his supratemporal destiny is worth saving. The contrast between human potentiality and human achievement may make him sad as in the nostalgic passages of Let Dons Delight or astound him as in his criticism of the amateur journalistic theologians of Caliban in Grub Street but it never leads him to bitterness or to cynicism. His is the tempered optimism of the theist who knows that God permits evil but does not will it, and that God's ultimate designs can never be thwarted.

Knox is also generous in his recognition of his opponents' qualities. In 1903 Chesterton had written that political and social satire is a lost art like pottery and stained glass, the reason being: "(...) we are not generous enough to write great satire."² Knox does possess a magnanimity which leads him to a just appraisal of both the faults and qualities of those whom he attacks. This is apparent in all his works, in the mock heroic portraits of the liberal theologians of Absolute and Abitofhell, in the delicately restrained portrayal of former dons in

² Chesterton, G. K., Varied Types, New York, Dodd, Mead, 1903, p. 48.

Let Dons Delight, in the careful avoidance of caricature in his fictitious representations of modern relativists, spiritualists, sceptics and materialists, and above all in the calm detachment with which he exposes the fatuities of the natural man in Caliban in Grub Street and Broadcast Minds. This spirit of fairness which hovers over all he wrote is a quality which no opponent can fail to appreciate, especially when it is joined to a perfect freedom from petty prejudice, personal animosity or aggressive advocacy.

Genial, optimistic and magnanimous, Knox works vigorously and effectively to bring about the true end of satire, the correction of the erring.

2. Standards Concerning the Satirist's Technique.

1) Satire must be written in a literary style. - In judging the literary excellence of Knox's satire, two aspects of his work should be noted, his style as such and his command of a literary media.

Knox is widely recognized as a distinguished stylist, a fact to which Waugh draws attention when he speaks of him as "one of the most considerable living writers."³ He writes a classical English which is rich,

³ Waugh, Evelyn, "The Best and the Worst: V - Mgr. Ronald Knox," in Horizon, Vol. 17, issue of May 1948, p. 327.

strong and cadenced. The qualities of style which serve him best in his satirical works, however, are simplicity, directness, lucidity, rigorous accuracy and precision of language, an ability to expose an error with brevity and point. He invariably suits his style to his subject matter; he can be rhetorical or colloquial, dignified or conversational, detached or lyrical, as occasion demands. Much of the vividness and strength of his style comes from his preference for specific, particularized terms and for a colorful figurative mode of expression. The style of his satires is above all characterized by an unobtrusive distinction and finish, by a remarkable ease which leads the reader to concentrate on the thought expressed rather than on the manner in which it is expressed.

The detailed study of the various forms in which Knox embodied his satire has revealed his skilful handling of his literary media. Whether he writes in polished heroic couplets, in the vigorous ironic vein of Swift, in the fictitious media of allegory and novel or in direct criticism, he does so with great attention to literary execution. The imaginary framework of his allegories and novels conveys the satirical import effectively and noiselessly, requiring no supporting interpretative hints from the author. The compositional excellence of Let Dons Delight is particularly noteworthy by reason of

the expert manner in which he fused so many divergent elements into a magnificently coherent whole.

In his satires in criticism which call for a different approach, Knox shows a talent for logical and detailed analysis, an unerring instinct for laying bare a hidden web of error and for making a difficult matter clear. To his dispassionate analytical faculty and his tight hold on reality is joined a capacity for direct, lucid statement. His figurative mode of expression and his apt and illuminating analogies makes his exposure of the amateur theologians of Caliban in Grub Street and of the anti-Christian pundits of Broadcast Minds highly colourful and convincing.

ii) Good satire is a highly rhetorical form of literature. - Knox's rhetorical skill is revealed in his choice of a literary vehicle and a style most likely to impress his readers and cause them to share his opinions and sentiments. In Absolute and Abitofhell he ridiculed the liberal theologians in heroic couplets, a verse medium which by reason of its cadence, polysyllabic emphasis and epigrammatic wit is a powerful device for manipulating the reader's reactions and winning his assent. In his satirical essays through the fictitious mask of a projector, scholar or journalist, Knox carefully observes the

threefold condition for rhetorical expression as outlined by Aristotle: the authoritative ethos of the speaker, the force of the argument presented and the appeal to the interests and prejudices of the audience. In his satires in direct criticism Knox follows a similar pattern, first establishing himself as a fair-minded, well-intentioned critic, then winning his readers' hearts by exposing the mass-media propaganda of which they were unwitting victims, and finally winning their minds by the clarity and logic of his arguments. Knox effects a like result through the rich imaginary framework of his allegories and novels, which, with their dramatic and emotional elements, make a strong appeal to the mind, imagination and heart of the public. In each of his satires Knox shows an understanding of the psychology of persuasion, for he invariably takes into account that men are never entirely won over to a cause until their reason, their affections and their imaginations are all ardently enlisted.

But of all the persuasive means at his disposal Knox makes the most constant and the most effective use of the reductio ad absurdum, a devastating logical device which enables him to expose the falsity of a case with efficiency and speed. It is an extremely persuasive device for it is concise and conclusive. With an almost

mischievous pleasure Knox exposes the inherent fallacy of some currently popular principle by deriving from it with relentless logic a series of absurd deductions. This is a device which he freely employs in the repartee of dialogue in his allegories and novels, in the ironic proposals of his satirical essays and in the penetrating analysis of his satires in criticism.

iii) The effective satirist must wage a shrewd campaign to outwit the censor. - Speaking of the necessity of winning the reader's support without arousing resentment, Edgar Johnson remarked:

It (satire) is criticism getting around or overcoming an obstacle. Let us call this obstacle the censor. The satirist must say something without saying it.⁴

Knox is particularly adept in this difficult task of conveying the satirical import without arousing the reader's resentment. The principal means whereby he outwits the censor are indirection and comic devices. He achieves and maintains artistic removal by means of fiction and irony, while he raises therapeutic laughter by his scintillating wit, genial humour and skilful use of parody.

⁴ Johnson, Edgar, A Treasury of Satire, New York, Simon and Schuster, 1945, p. 9.

In all his important satires, except his satires in direct criticism, Knox cloaks his attack in some form of fiction. The fictitious medium has the double advantage of vividly concretizing the object of the satire while permitting the satirist to insinuate his indictment with every appearance of detachment and objectivity. Thus the high burlesque of Absolute and Abitofhell with its wealth of ironic portraits in Old Testament disguises, the fictitious masks of Reunion All Round and of the other satirical essays, the hilarious journey into the future in company with the charming Lady Porstock of Memories of the Future, the thought-provoking and nostalgic journey into the past in Let Dons Delight and the entertaining fiction of Sanctions: A Frivolity and Other Eyes than Ours are all so many devices for concealing and yet revealing the satirist's purpose. The impact of the fiction upon the reader's imagination enforces the satirical meaning while relieving the satirist of the burden of direct criticism.

Knox's adroit use of irony also serves him as a means of achieving aesthetic distance. In Absolute and Abitofhell his use of irony is seen in the comic encomiums whereby he inflates the stature of the theologians only to deflate them. In Reunion All Round and the other satirical essays the irony takes the form of an ingeniously contrived argument in favour of a false cause. In Memories of the

Future the irony arises in large part from the role of Lady Porstock as ingénue. In Other Eyes than Ours it resides in the solemn-faced burlesque of a spiritualistic scéance, while in Sanctions: A Frivolity it springs from the tragic anamoly of modern intellectuals attempting to solve ultimate problems without believing in absolute standards. In Let Dons Delight the irony is woven into the very fabric of the various historical periods depicted; it is felt in the conversations of the dons in the different eras and in the ever-growing departure from ultimate principles which marks the unfolding of history. In Caliban in Grub Street and Broadcast Minds an almost constant use of Socratic irony is the means whereby Knox achieves that indirection of statement which takes the edge off the criticism. It should be remarked that Knox's irony is not something superimposed, not a mere ornament, but a very integral part of his campaign to present unpalatable truths in a disarming way. Through his adept use of irony Knox avoids all appearance of virulence by disguising his real intention and throwing upon the discerning reader the onus of drawing the damaging satirical conclusions.

There are many other forms of irony which Knox employs within the framework of the larger ironies: meiosis, litotes, verbal irony, the irony of self-mockery, the irony of false logic, and dramatic irony. In every

case his irony is free from malice, for, even when he writes in the ironic vein of Swift, he avoids the caustic tone of the eighteenth century master.

Moreover, Knoxian irony is free from any taint of frustration such as one finds in Hardy, Housman and others. Knox's irony is built upon the moral integrity and quintessential sanity of the author and is therefore the very antithesis of cosmic irony, the irony of those who believe that all human aspirations are doomed to stultification.

Comic measures constitute the other principal means whereby Knox attacks forcibly but without arousing resentment. The chief comic measures which he employs are wit, humour and parody. Of these, wit is certainly his most brilliant as well as his most damaging weapon of ridicule. The humour which he uses rather sparingly, except in Memories of the Future where it abounds, is more often a palliative than a weapon, while the parody, too, is a measure for delighting the reader.

It has been seen that Knox's wit is remarkably like that of the neo-classical writers, consisting as it does in a swift penetration of thought expressed in a particularly apt and felicitous manner. His wit is, however, as protean and as varied as the literary forms in which he embodies his satire. In Absolute and Abitofhell

it is manifested principally in incongruous associations, witty epigrams and ingenious and damaging figures of speech. In his satirical essays Knox's wit is apparent not merely in imaginative associations, witty and debasing figures of speech and neat suggestive phrases but also in the ingenious way in which he ironically builds up a specious amount of evidence to support the cause which he wishes to explode, whether this be Protestant reunion founded on compromise, the pseudo-scholarship of the Higher Critics or the diagnosis in a Freudian psychologist's note-book. Or again in Let Dons Delight his wit is not confined to exposing the fatuity of a false attitude by a clever turn of phrase, but is apparent in the whole complex design of the work, in the resourceful way in which he creates characters, invents convincing dialogue, fabricates biographies, combines the dream vision with allegory so as to telescope the whole of English history in the past three hundred years. His wit is seen, too, in the subtly exaggerated world of the future in Memories of the Future, and in his remarkably apt burlesque of the Spiritualists in Other Eyes than Ours, ending as it does in a highly satisfactory dénouement. There is wit, too, in the repartee of dialogue in all his works of prose fiction. In his satires in criticism another delightful aspect of Knoxian wit is found in the ease and directness

with which he spots the incongruity in his opponents' case, epitomizes it in a suggestive epithet and ingeniously contrives to repay the enemies of truth in their own coin, employing against them the very measures which they had used against the cause of Christianity.

It may be concluded that Knox's wit is an amusing and intellectually stimulating device for exploding fallacies and for annihilating errors with dispatch and neat precision.

Like his wit, Knox's humour is kept strictly within bounds, never overflowing into wild exaggeration but carefully confined to a depiction of the foibles of human nature. In Memories of the Future, humour of situation is used as a means of satirizing the social, political, religious, moral and intellectual trends of the 1920's by viewing them in futurity. The humour of his other satires is rarely satirical, except where, as in Sanctions: A Frivolity, it serves to poke fun at the unctimoniousness of the Anglican clergy or at some other absurd pattern of behaviour. His humour remains in large part a device for luring the reader and preparing him for the sterner remedies of witty denunciation. It is rarely, if ever, without some intellectual content and has nothing in common with that type of joke which is lamentably known as a wise crack.

The importance of Knoxian parody as a comic measure to entertain the reader and to delight him even against his will can scarcely be exaggerated. The preceding study and illustration of Knox's use of parody not only in Absolute and Abitofhell and Reunion All Round but also in Let Dons Delight, Sanctions: A Frivolity, and Other Eyes than Ours has revealed his skill in this delicate art. It has been seen with what success Knox can put himself into the mood and even into the very mind of his author and so reproduce the features of his style with great understanding and fidelity. Moreover, his versatility as a satirist is immense. Not only did he imitate the style of Dryden and that of Swift with such success that he elicited the following comment from an historian of parody: "No writer, with the exception of Thackeray, has come so near the manner, both prose and poetic, of the Restoration and Queen Anne wits",⁵ but he composed parodies of seven authors with widely different styles in Let Dons Delight with equal success. Interspersed throughout his other satires are incidental parodies such as that of St. Thomas Aquinas in Sanctions: A Frivolity. The charm and skill with which he writes these nimble parodies is not only a source of enjoyment to the reader but also adds another

⁵ Kitchin, George, A Survey of Burlesque and Parody in English, London, Oliver and Boyd, 1931, p. 345.

aesthetical dimension to the literary quality of his satires. As in the case of his use of humour, Knox does not ordinarily employ parody as literary criticism or as a satirical weapon but rather to produce that pleasure of recognition which good parody creates in the reader.

In conclusion it may be said that of Knox's three comic measures, only his wit is strictly speaking a weapon of satire, the other two, humour and parody, remaining elements which provide the reader with entertainment and artistic pleasure.

3. Standards Concerning the Object of the Satire.

It has been seen that though the literary value of a work must be judged solely upon aesthetic criteria, other standards of an ethical and religious character must be considered before the greatness of the work can be estimated. It is fitting, therefore, that in this evaluation of Knox as a satirist some attention be given to the intrinsic value of those things which he defended and to the depth and truth of his interpretation of human life.

This present study of Knox's satires has revealed that he not only condemned the most imminent intellectual and moral vagaries of the twentieth century but that he also gave a penetrating analysis of them in terms of their causes, together with a subtle indication of their positive remedies.

In each of his satires Knox is intent upon exposing the forces which threaten Christian faith and culture. Among the more tangible abuses which he satirizes are strikes, trade depressions, inadequate housing, traffic congestion, the cult of bodily pleasure, the scramble for money, the lowering of academic standards, the breakdown of family life, the pursuit of novelty, the indulgence in false mysticism. But above all else, Knox is a satirist of false ideas and of the false intellectual and moral trends which produce these evils. Thus he attacks and exposes with special vigour Relativism, Scepticism, Pragmatism, Materialism, Hedonism, Freudian psychology, and the philosophy of progress. In Absolute and Abitofhell the primary object of his satire is the heresy of Modernism, a form of relativism which denies the divine and unchanging nature of revelation. In Reunion All Round he ridicules the heterodoxy of Anglican bishops and theologians and warns that the Protestant indifference to doctrinal truth will eventually lead to widespread agnosticism. In Memories of the Future he predicts that the current trends of materialism and relativism will bring about an era of intellectual and spiritual bankruptcy in which Protestant churches will succumb helplessly to the rising tide of secularism. In Sanctions: A Frivolity he brings out the tragedy of modern man bereft not only of belief in the

supernatural sanctions but even of confidence in the validity of human reasoning. Such loss of intellectual certitude, he warns, will lead to moral degeneracy. In Let Dons Delight he exposes ruthlessly, though regretfully, the academic world of Oxford now tightly meshed in the coils of Liberalism, Scepticism and Pragmatism, paying at last after three hundred years the price of its initial failure to stand firmly on the side of truth. In Other Eyes than Ours he derides the general state of intellectual and moral debility which renders a large section of the modern world susceptible to indulgence in false cults. In Caliban in Grub Street he holds us to ridicule the religious beliefs of a representative group of literary men, beliefs which constitute an illogical patchwork of half-truths and scriptural texts quoted out of context. He warns that the doctrine of the journalists may become in the course of the next hundred years the doctrine of the pulpit. In Broadcast Minds he expresses alarm over the habit of mental subserviency evinced by the public, a habit which leads them to accept unthinkingly whatever they read in the daily press or hear over the wireless. In this satire he crosses swords with well-known leaders of the literary world whom he accuses of attempting to establish a secular culture diametrically opposed to the Christian culture of the western world. From this outline of the object of Knox's

satire, it is evident that he deserves the distinction of being called a defender of the sacred as well as of the human values in modern society.

Not content with exposing to ridicule the disastrous lapses from truth and morality which characterize the modern world, Knox also gives a thoughtful interpretation of these evils by tracing them to their root causes. The present widespread rejection of Christian doctrine, he indicates, derives from the denial of the Church's teaching authority at the time of the Reformation. Bereft of the power to state what is de fide, the Protestant churches have been unable to preserve the deposit of the faith. Doubt concerning one doctrine engenders doubt concerning others, and agnosticism is the logical outcome. Loss of doctrinal beliefs entails in the course of time a falling away from moral standards, for without sanctions men see no reason for resisting the lure of hedonism.

Knox also sees the multiplication of pseudo-mystical cults as a result of men's longing for the supernatural, a longing which lingers on in those who have no faith in divine revelation. Pseudo-mysticism, a reliance on insights and intuitions is also closely allied to the Protestant denial of reason as a preamble to faith.

The anti-intellectualism of modern times, Knox indicates, has many roots. The separation of philosophy

from theology for which Luther was in large measure responsible is one of these. As a legacy of this, Protestants tend to consider the act of faith as something which lies outside the sphere of reason. Then, too, modern anti-intellectualism has been engendered by centuries of Cartesianism, Kantianism and Empiricism, systems which, because they deny to the mind its proper mode of knowing, have led to an ever-increasing scepticism.

So that men may recover a sense of the supernatural and overcome the present-day denial of the intellectual powers of man, Knox points to the sources of truth and sanity. The remedy for the spiritual ills of mankind is to be found in the one true Church whose infallibility has been guaranteed by Christ Himself. The remedy for the intellectual vagaries is return to the discipline and common sense basis of Scholastic Philosophy.

From this discussion of Knox as a satirist, it is evident that he does fulfil to a great extent those conditions which are requisite for great satire. It has been seen that Knox as a satirist is erudite and genial, a master strategist in command of a highly literary and richly varied satiric technique. Expert in the art of indirection he can attack forcibly with every appearance of detachment and good humour. While insinuating his ideas through ingenious and witty devices, he succeeds

not only in confounding the enemies of religion and culture but also in exposing the root causes of modern evils and indicating a positive solution as well.

However, in evaluating Knox as a satirist a distinction must be made between the intrinsic greatness of his satirical writings and the extrinsic value which flows from their influence on society. There are certain limitations which hamper his direct influence on his contemporaries, limitations which ought to be considered before any final evaluation of Knox as a satirist can be made.

4. Knox's Limitations as a Satirist.

1) His presuppositions. - In the first place, Knox takes for granted the existence and validity of absolute standards discoverable to human reason. He does sometimes stop, as in Sanctions: A Frivolity, to build up the grounds upon which the certainty of these principles rest, but ordinarily he simply employs them as his yardstick for judging modern fallacies. The drawback is that, in this age of uncertainty, when even fundamentals are called into question, the reader may not share these presuppositions. As Waugh has remarked in this regard:

He makes very large pre-suppositions and, confronted with an apparent anomaly, his method is not to question his principles but to examine the phenomenon to see how it can be reconciled with them. It is in no way a weakness but it weakens his appeal when he comes to address those with contrary principles or with no principles at all.⁶

The presuppositions of which Waugh speaks are, of course, none other than those universal principles discoverable to reason, which every satirist must employ if his satirical attack is to have rational meaning. To build up a defence of these principles is the task of the criteriologist rather than that of the satirist. It follows that Knox is justified in presuming the validity of these absolute principles. On the other hand, the fact remains that Knox may fail to convince those who hold false principles or no principles at all.

ii) Many readers do not share his cultural background. - Even Knox's language is to some extent a barrier between himself and the ordinary reader of the mid-twentieth century. Though his style is simple and direct and free from all obtuseness, yet he does take for granted a great deal of common knowledge which the modern reader may not possess. He writes as one educated in the pre-World War I period in which the Humane Letters

⁶ Waugh, Evelyn, "The Best and the Worst," in Horizon, Vol. 17, issue of May 1948, p. 331.

were the stock in trade of the educated man. Thus when he draws his illustrations from classical literature and talks about a Tithonus complex, about the Hegira from Stagira, about a Nimrod inversion, or inserts witty comments in Latin or Greek, the modern reader may be more puzzled than illuminated. Education has travelled so far from the common store of traditional learning that his apt and clever analogies will be fully understood only by the qualified reader. On the other hand, Knoxian satire would still convey much to the reader even though some of the allusions remained a puzzle.

iii) Knox lacks zest for his own period. - Knox, moreover, lacks zest for the world in general and for his own period in particular, a zest which tends to make a man popular with his contemporaries. The world to him was a place of probation and exile. Not only did he fail to praise his own age but in his satires he deliberately attacked its most cherished fallacies, painting them most vividly in his satirical pictures of modern society. As an anti-zeitgeist writer in reaction against the follies of the day, he attempted to instil a set of values diametrically opposed to the standards currently popular. Such an effort is not likely to elicit the applause of the majority, especially if the author is known to be a clergyman of a Church which they despise or fear.

iv) The intellectuality of his appeal is another obstacle. - The very intellectuality of Knox's appeal in his satires is another obstacle to his influence over a brain-shy public. The subject-matter of his satires is deep and serious, and in many cases calls for a knowledge of theology, philosophy, history or literature. He is primarily a satirist of false ideas and of the underlying intellectual fallacies which produce these disorders. Knox's invitations to constructive criticism are certainly a challenge to intellectual effort, a challenge which not all members of society would care to take up. Even Knoxian wit, the wholly enjoyable sugar-coating on the satirical pill, would not be comprehensible to all, especially as wit presupposes the recognition of certain standards which are too often denied in modern times. Nor would the undoubted excellence of Knox's literary style necessarily make a favourable impression on readers quite content with second-rate composition. As Knox himself remarked:

(...) our critics, in every kind of art, will only let us admire what is flung at us as a smudge, supposedly representing some impression in the artist's mind, all the better for being shapeless. To smell of the midnight oil damns you.⁷

Then, too, it may be supposed that many readers would fail to appreciate his clever parodies, particularly those of

⁷ Knox, R.A., Literary Distractions, London, Sheed and Ward, 1958, p. 200.

Let Dons Delight, for Anthony à Wood, Bishop Challoner, Sydney Smith, Mark Pattison, or even Harold Nicholson are not widely read to-day.

In general, there are three sources of obscurity in literature: the author may fail to make himself clear, the subject-matter may be exceptionally difficult, or the reader may not be sufficiently qualified. Any obscurity in Knox's satires can scarcely be attributed to any obtuseness on the part of the author who is clear and direct in his statements with an exceptional ability for making a difficult subject clear. The topics he treats of do frequently present a challenge to the readers' intellectual penetration but, it must be confessed, the limitations are largely on the side of the readers.

Yet, if the satirist wishes to influence his contemporaries, he must accept them as they are and endeavour to reach them in spite of their shortcomings. Doubtlessly Knox did overcome many of these difficulties. His geniality, warmhearted sympathy, his wit and humour and the originality of his approach to common-place things, together with his insight into the psychology of persuasion, - all of these qualities helped him to win a hearing with a reluctant public. Moreover, he took advantage of the current interest in fiction to embody several of his satires in this popular medium. To this

extent he seems to have combined the scholarly ideal with popular inspiration. That he did reach a fairly wide reading public is proved by the sale of his satires and the number of reprintings.

On the other hand, Knox remains a satirist who is most intelligible to the elite, to those who have enough knowledge to appreciate his references, enough understanding to comprehend his criticisms, and enough aesthetic taste to relish his literary excellence. Waugh's comment on Memories of the Future: "The book was enjoyed by a fair number of cultivated readers; it made no popular sensation, nor was it designed to do so."⁸ might be applied to any of his satires. The appeal of Knox, the classical scholar with his scrupulous artistry, is almost inevitably to the more cultivated members of the reading public.

To complete this evaluation of Knox as a satirist it is fitting that some consideration should be given to his place in the satiric tradition. The value of such a study is brought out in this statement of T. S. Eliot:

⁸ Waugh, Evelyn, The Life of the Right Reverend Ronald Knox, London, Sheed and Ward, 1959, p. 188.

No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists. You cannot value him alone; you must set him for contrast and comparison, among the dead. I mean this as a principle of aesthetic, not merely historical, criticism.⁹

It is appropriate, therefore, to include in this chapter a concise outline of the satiric tradition and some consideration of Knox's place in this tradition. An exhaustive study of this question is outside the scope of this thesis, and so the following study will be confined to those observations which will contribute to a more complete evaluation of Knox as a satirist.

II. THE SATIRIC TRADITION.

The herb of satire has seasoned many an ancient work of literature. Though Homer does not seem to have included it in his heroic epics, the inspired writers of the Old Testament frequently employed it, and Aristophanes owes much of his fame to the adept and stinging remarks which he hurled at his contemporaries through the medium of comedy. Satire, however, remained a condiment of literature until the Romans made it into a distinctive literary genre in the second century B.C. Gaius Lucilius (148-103 B.C.) led the way with the uncouth verses in which

⁹ Eliot, T. S., "Tradition and the Individual Talent," in Selected Prose, edited by John Hayward, Middlesex, Penguin Books, 1953, p. 23.

he virulently played his contemporaries. In the next century the urbane Horace (65-8 B.C.) with his vastly superior poetic powers and his rapier-like wit elevated the satiric form to a perfection which has rarely, if ever, been surpassed. While Horace in his easy conversational style inveighed genially against the follies of his age, Juvenal (c. A.D. 55-130) lashed out against the vices of mankind with stern rhetorical denunciation. The philosophical and obtuse Persius (A.D. 34-61) and the severe Martial (c. A.D. 40-104) carried on the satiric tradition established by Juvenal without making any original contribution. Prose satire, first written by the Cynic philosopher, Menippus of Gadara (fl. 290 B.C.), was later developed by two Roman writers, Varro (116-27 B.C.) and Petronius (d. A.D. 66), and by the Greek writer, Lucian (c. A.D. 120-190).

There was a good deal of satire in the Middle Ages, but it owed neither its form nor its spirit to Roman genius. Goldiardiic satire inveighed against current abuses such as greedy churchmen and immodest women. Into the second part of The Romance of the Rose, Jeun de Meun injected many satirical comments, while in De Contemptu Mundi, Bernard of Morval mixed satire with didacticism. In Reynard the Fox the beast epic was employed for satiric purposes while Langland made allegory the vehicle of a

scathing denunciation of abuses in Church and State. In a more genial spirit Chaucer pointed to many of the same follies and abuses of the day, entertaining the while with his adroit irony and scintillating wit.

In the Renaissance period, Sir Thomas More tilted against his contemporaries in the genial and subtle mockery of Utopia, while his friend Erasmus composed the satiric monologue, The Praise of Folly (Moriae Encomium) which shows the influence of Sebastian Brant's Ship of Fools and of Lucianic dialogue. A few years later, Rabelais in Gargantua and Pantagruel composed one of the world's masterpieces of rollicking satire.

Formal satire reappeared again as a result of the Renaissance interest in classical literature. Several English writers at this period wrote formal satire in the manner of the Roman satirists. In the sixteenth century Joseph Hall, John Donne, John Marston, Everard Guilpin and John Oldham all consciously imitated the tone and the style of Juvenal and Persius. The English prose writers, Thomas Dekker, Sir Thomas Overbury and John Earle included many satirical darts in their character portraits. While Martin Marprelate scourged the Anglicans, Samuel Butler made his Puritan contemporaries smart under the unadulterated satire of Hudibras.

In the seventeenth century, satire in France reached a high point with Boileau while to Dryden goes the credit of diverting English satire into the realm of high burlesque. The influence of both Horace and Juvenal persides over the writings of this greatest of England's political satirists, the influence of the former predominating in Mac Flecknoe and Absalom and Achitophel, the influence of the latter in The Medal. The Horatian spirit lives on in the studied ease and perfect good breeding of Pope's satiric wit as found in The Dunciad and The Rape of the Lock. English verse satire reached its highest peak in the antithetical couplets of Dryden and Pope, which for polish, point and concentration have never been surpassed.

While Dr. Samuel Johnson acknowledged Juvenal his master in London and The Vanity of Human Wishes, the spirit of Horace lived on in the amenity of Addison and in the native kindness of Steele. England's greatest prose satirist, Jonathan Swift, channelled an indignation as great as that of Juvenal into an elaborate satirical technique. A master of irony, he frequently assumed an ironic mask in his shorter prose essays while in The Battle of the Books, he chose the dialogues of Lucian as his model. The latter's fabulous travel-tales may also have influenced him in Gulliver's Travels.

In The Life of Mr. Jonathan Wild the Great, Henry Fielding showed how the novel might be used as a vehicle of satire. The later eighteenth century, however, was not rich in satire except for satirical elements in the writings of Chatterton, Cowper, Crabbe and Burns.

The spirit of Romanticism was not productive of satire and only Byron among the Romantic poets gave proof of a splendid talent for witty attack in the manner of the neo-classical writers. According to Sutherland, "Byron is the last great name in English verse satire."¹⁰

Victorian England did not willingly listen to the satirist, and yet most of the great novelists of this period, particularly Dickens, Thackeray, Trollope, Peacock, Eliot, Meredith and Samuel Butler included a great deal of satirical criticism in their pictures of English life and manners. The spirit of satire was by no means dormant at this same time on the continent and in America as the names of Leopardi, Balzac, Flaubert, Ibsen, Chekov, Heine, Gogol, Anatole France, Marcel Proust, and Mark Twain clearly testify.

The voice of the satirist has been heard again in the twentieth century in such writers as John Galsworthy, E. M. Forster, George Bernard Shaw, H. G. Wells, Max Beerbohm, G. K. Chesterton, Hilaire Belloc,

¹⁰ Sutherland, James, English Satire, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1958, p. 77.

Roy Campbell, Aldous Huxley, Evelyn Waugh, George Orwell, Kingsley Amis, W. H. Auden, Siegfried Sassoon, Wyndham Lewis, and Angus Wilson. Among these writers, Belloc, Chesterton and Roy Campbell attempted to revive the formal satire of the Augustan Age.

In the opinion of Edgar Johnson, satire has been very prevalent in the present century. In this connexion he remarked:

Our comic writers - Donald Ogden Stewart, James Thurber, Roy Campbell, Frank Sullivan, A.P. Herbert, Robert Benchley, to name only a few - are more than two-thirds satirists. Our leading radio and motion-picture comedians - Charlie Chaplin, Fred Allen, Groucho Marx - are all satirists. Even biography has been tinged with satire, in the mordant productions of Lytton Strachey and the flashier efforts of the debunkers. Satire is an active yeast in modern poetry, from the fastidious uncertainties of T. S. Eliot's Prufrock to Ogden Nash's lighthearted verbal gymnastics.¹¹

However, this critic seems to have overlooked a very important consideration, that the true spirit of satire is in danger of being drowned in peals of laughter. Knox himself has suggested this danger when he wrote: "That our habituation to humorous reading has inoculated our systems against the beneficent poison of satire."¹² As a consequence of the abundance of humorous fare the public

¹¹ Johnson, Edgar, A Treasury of Satire, p. 35.

¹² Knox, Ronald A., Essays in Satire, London, Sheed and Ward, 1928, p. 31.

is in danger of not taking ridicule seriously. Should this condition become common, then the result will be tragic for society: "Unhappy the Juvenal whom Rome greets with amusement; unhappier still the Rome, that can be amused by a Juvenal!"¹³ In this twentieth century in which those who might have helped to correct the errors of society were too often intent merely on amusing it, Knox stands as one who took his task of satiric critic very seriously and carefully subordinated his wit and humour to serve his satiric purpose.

III. KNOX'S PLACE IN THE SATIRIC TRADITION.

1) Through his use of several traditional satiric forms, Knox is allied to the satiric tradition. - By reason of the various forms in which Knox embodied his satire, his satirical writings have deep roots in the satiric tradition. For instance, in his use of the mock epic in Absolute and Abitofhell, he followed the example of Dryden who had been the first English writer to divert satire into the channel of high burlesque. Dryden had written under the influence of Horace and Juvenal, but also of Varro who had been the first to use a fable as a medium of satire.

¹³ Ibid., p. 31.

Then, too, in his use of ironic encomiastic portraiture, Knox was also following a very ancient tradition. This was an art elaborated for satiric purposes by Horace and Juvenal, and practised with some variations by Chaucer, the Renaissance writers of character, by Dryden, Pope, Addison and Steele, Fielding, Thackeray and Samuel Butler. Knox may be said to have reproduced with charm and literary distinction the traditional elements of satiric portraiture: terse and telling brevity, antithetical precision of phrasing and ironic approbation which first induces sympathy and then gives rise to denigrating laughter.

Knox's use of the heroic couplet as a satiric medium is another link with the past. Dryden, having inherited the couplet from Chaucer, Waller, Donne and others, forged it into a vehicle both strong and rhythmical. After Pope, who in his turn employed it with competency, the heroic couplet as a satiric medium fell into disuse until Byron once more proved its power as a satiric mode of expression. It may be said that Knox is much closer to the spirit and style of Dryden and Pope than Byron who, while writing in heroic couplets, dispensed with the neat precision and poise of movement characteristic of neo-classical verse, injecting into his lines a recklessness, impudence and irreverence entirely

foreign to the spirit of the Augustan writers. On the other hand, Knox displays more respect for the Augustan ideals of decorum, order, consistency, and not only observes the conventions of this mode of verse with agility and ease, but also appears to have entered wholeheartedly into the spirit of classical restraint so typical of these writers. The classical restraint also seems to be somewhat lacking in Roy Campbell's ambitious attempt to revive the old glory of this verse form in The Wayzgoose and the Georgiad.

In Reunion All Round Knox made another expedition into the past to refurbish the Swiftian device of the fictitious mask. Impersonation had not been new even in the Augustan age, but went back to Theocritus and Virgil who employed fictitious shepherds as spokesmen in their pastorals. Horace, Juvenal and Persius all used the mask as a satirical device. It was not unknown to such sixteenth century authors as Skelton who used it in his attack on Cardinal Wolsey in Colyn Cloute. The writer who came closest to Swift's satirical use of the mask was Defoe who, having used it in The Shortest Way with Dissenters, discovered to his own discomfort how potent and how confusing a satirical weapon it was. The persona became a handy device in the eighteenth century as the names of Sir Isaac Bickerstaff, Scriblerus and H. Scriblerus Secundus testify. Browning adapted it to

the dramatic monologue, and it has been used again in modern times though not in a wholly satirical context by Yeats and T. S. Eliot. In his use of the fictitious mask, Knox follows the tradition of Defoe and Swift by having his persona defend the very case he wishes to denounce. It has been seen that Knox reproduced this technique with literary finesse and rhetorical skill.

In projecting his satire through the medium of allegory in Memories of the Future and Let Dons Delight, Knox was again following a very old tradition. Sebastian Brant, Alexander Barclay and Erasmus all used allegory in the service of satire while Jeun de Meun and Langland united it with the dream vision to make of it an instrument of sharp social criticism. Varro seems to have been the first to show that the travel-tale might be useful to the satirist, but it remained to Swift to forge the journey into a satiric allegory in his Gulliver's Travels. In the nineteenth century the satirical journey began to take the form of a trip in time rather than in space with such writers as William Morris and Edward Bellamy who satirized the Victorian age in News from Nowhere and Looking Backward, respectively. These writers exposed the defects of society by painting a utopian world of the future in which peace, goodwill and flawless happiness prevailed. The trend in the twentieth century has been to satirize

society by presenting an extension of the modern world in which the evil tendencies have fructified into untold evils. Such was the technique of Aldous Huxley in Brave New World and of George Orwell in Nineteen Eighty-Four. Like these twentieth century writers Knox paints a world in which the evils of the 1920's have produced a harvest of further disorders, but his future world is far from being the nightmarish vision which they describe. Avoiding both the outmoded optimism of the Victorian writers and the pessimism of the twentieth century writers, Knox wisely and moderately predicts that materialism, scepticism, mediocrity and the search for the bizarre will flourish in even greater measure in a future world of air-borne travel and matrimonial instability, but also that the Catholic Church will remain a safe harbour for all seekers after truth. From the literary point of view the autobiographical device of Memories of the Future is a much better vehicle for conveying the satirical import than either Morris or Bellamy succeeded in contriving. In News from Nowhere and still more in Looking Backward the imaginary framework is unequal to the task which it should perform, with the result that the satirist is obliged to include some obviously didactic and explanatory sections. In Memories of the Future, on the other hand, the illusion of an elderly lady telling her story naively

and earnestly is never broken and Knox as satirist is completely hidden. Knox, in contrast to Huxley and Orwell, makes a much less vivid appeal to the senses, but while placing less stress on the physical aspects of the future world, he gives a full account of intellectual absurdities, which, because they are only slightly exaggerated are credible as attitudes of a future generation.

Knox's Let Dons Delight seems to be the only significant attempt since the Middle Ages to employ the dream-allegory as a vehicle of satire. This elaborately constructed work which presents a satiric interpretation of contemporary Oxford in the light of a dramatic recreation of the past three hundred years, is probably Knox's most original and most accomplished contribution to the satiric tradition. It has been seen that by reason of its literary excellence, the profundity of its interpretation of the past, and the timeliness of its message, this Knoxian satire is a truly significant contribution to literature and to society.

Speaking of the satirical novel, Sutherland made this comment: "The satirical novel is a comparatively minor genre, and has never, perhaps, had a wide popular appeal."¹⁴ This author cites Fielding's The Life of Jonathan Wild the Great as the first purely satirical

¹⁴ Sutherland, James, English Satire, p. 108.

novel. Its successors have been very few: Thackeray's Barry Lyndon, the novels of Peacock and those of Samuel Butler are among the most significant contributions to this genre. Sutherland suggests¹⁵ that the satirical novel has not been popular for the reason that the sustaining of the satirical note for the length of a novel can become monotonous. Knox avoids this fault by subtly disguising the satire under the outward form of a mystery in Other Eyes than Ours and of the adventures of an oddly assorted party of house-guests in Sanctions: A Frivolity. In both works he directly engages the reader's interest in a number of interesting, life-like characters and in their witty conversation, allowing the imaginative framework of the fiction to convey the satirical import almost imperceptibly. Knox took the literary form of Sanctions: A Frivolity from Mallock's New Republic, but it also resembles the type of novel without story which Peacock wrote. However, there is a marked contrast between Knox and Peacock as satirists in so far as the latter appears to lack any fixed standard against which he measures the ideas and conduct of his contemporaries.

¹⁵ Sutherland, James, English Satire, p. 115.

In the field of satire in criticism, Knox has some literary affinities with the great controversialists, Swift, Dryden, and Pope, and with those of modern times, Belloc and Chesterton. In urbanity and manliness he is close to Dryden and Chesterton; in acuteness, he is like Pope and Belloc, but without the vitriolity which sometimes characterized their controversial writings; in his power of logical argumentation, he is like Swift and Chesterton, without the brutality of the former, and with more scientific directness than the latter. The following comment points to something of the difference between Knox and Belloc as controversialists:

Ronald Knox has been humorously portrayed in drawings as a Catholic apologist who upholds his Church "with both fists flying, laying sundry intellectuals about him with intensive gusto." This is not a true picture of Knox. If Hilaire Belloc's name were substituted, the picture would be more exact, for the latter battled in his defence of things Catholic. Knox is gentle in argumentation. He reasons with his opponent, gives ground for a moment, only to win it back later. His refreshing wit and logical explanation soften even the staunchest adversary, and the debate is won or lost without engendering hard feelings.¹⁶

Another critic has made this pertinent comment concerning Knox: "He is as buoyant - though not so childlike - as Chesterton. He is as analytic - though not so stern - as Belloc."¹⁷ Knox's undoubted literary excellence in his

¹⁶ Barry, John J., "The Cheerful Assassin," in Sign, Vol. 29, issue of December 1949, p. 33.

¹⁷ Brunhumer, Anne, "The Cheerful Assassin," in America, Vol. 72, issue of November 1944, p. 92.

satires in criticism is well expressed by Waugh who wrote:

It is no mere sectarian loyalty (for inept
championship causes much embarrassment) that prompts
the judgement that he won a complete literary
victory.¹⁸

Knox's felicitious skill as a parodist also gives him a place in a great tradition which spans the centuries between Aristophanes and James Joyce and includes some of the most glorious names of world literature: Aristophanes, Lucian, Cervantes, and English writers such as Chaucer, Shakespeare, Fielding, Jane Austen, Thackeray, Horace and James Smith, Shelley, Swinburne, Lewis Carroll, J.K. Stephens, A.C. Hilton, and Charles S. Calverley. Parodists have used parody for different purposes. Aristophanes had used it as an instrument of satire when he ridiculed the ornate and archaic grandeur of Aeschylus' style and the unadorned simplicity of Euripides' style. Fielding used it as an instrument of moral betterment when he exposed to ridicule the false utilitarian morals of Richardson's Pamela. Jane Austen corrected a false view of life popularized by the Gothic novel of her day while Thackeray similarly unmasked the illusions of historical romance. Many of the other writers mentioned above used it as literary criticism, as Shelley did in

¹⁸ Waugh, Evelyn, The Life of the Right Reverend Ronald Knox, p. 235.

"Peter Bell the Third". Knox did not employ parody in his satires as a means of literary criticism but rather as a mode of indirection whereby the satirical import would be conveyed in a manner calculated to tickle the reader even against his will. This is the function which parody performs in Absolute and Abitofhell, in Reunion All Round, in Let Dons Delight and in the other satires where the parody is more incidental. It has been seen that Knox is adept in the delicate and subtle art of parody, that he not only succeeds in entertaining the reader by the delight of recognition which accrues from good parody but that he also achieves a fine measure of artistic excellence.

ii) Knox is a formal satirist in the Horatian tradition. - The majority of English satirists have preferred to ignore the satiric genre and to include incidental satire in a work composed in some other literary genre. Thus while Hall, Donne, Dryden and Pope consciously wrote in the traditional verse model established by Lucilius, Horace and Juvenal, and Swift, in the traditional prose models of Menippean and Varronian satire, other writers retained only the tone and attitude of the satirist and embodied their satirical denunciations in the drama, the novel, the short story or some other literary medium. In this connexion, Frye remarked:

But this idea of a satire form is in English literature a Renaissance and neo-classical idea: it hardly existed in the Middle Ages and it hardly exists now, though we still have our Hilaire Bellocs and Roy Campbells trying to blow up its dying fire with antique bellows.¹⁹

In Absolute and Abitofhell and in Reunion All Round, Knox attempted to revive something of the strength and vigour of formal satire. Even in his other satires, he remains the formal satirist in this sense, that his primary end and purpose is satirical exposure and the literary elements of the allegory or the novel are wholly manipulated to achieve this end. This is true also in his satire in criticism where his didactic purpose is entirely subordinated to his purpose of ridiculing the errors of his opponents by wit and logical analysis. Thus while Dickens is a satirist in so far as this is one of his purposes in his novels, Knox is a formal satirist in as much as this is his primary purpose.

A further distinction can be made between those like Gascoigne, Langland and Dr. Johnson who lashed their contemporaries with Juvenalian anger and those like Dryden, Pope and Chaucer who employed the gentler remedies of Horatian laughter. Knox belongs to this second group of urbane satirists who preferred a rapier to a bludgeon.

¹⁹ Frye, Northrup, "The Nature of Satire," in U.T.Q., Vol. 14, No. 1, issue of October 1944, p. 75.

iii) Knox has strong affinities with the neo-classical writers. - In his literary standards, aims, ideals and tastes, Knox has strong affinities with the English writers of the neo-classical period, that is, with the period which began with Dryden and ended with Dr. Johnson and included such writers as Pope, Addison, Steele and Swift. This affinity is manifested not only in his Drydenian and Swiftian imitations, but also in all his satirical writings.

In the first place he shares their enthusiasm for the classical and humanistic tradition. Educated as they had been at the spring of the classics, he tends, as they did, to derive his standards of literary excellence from established literary forms and precepts. Thus in each of his satires Knox writes in an accepted literary genre. Novelty or formlessness has no lure for him. He prefers to employ ancient forms, striving the while to achieve artistic excellence.

There are several other ideals of the neo-classical school which appear to have governed Knox's literary practice. His satirical writings show that he did not subscribe to the precept of art for art's sake but rather to the ideal of neo-classical humanism that art was for man's sake. Therefore, in his satires he endeavours to correct, to instruct and to give aesthetic pleasure. As a

craftsman, he has, moreover, the true classical spirit, the spirit of conscious art striving for definite effects. Each of his satires has a certain symmetry, directness, and finish which bespeak his preoccupation over literary execution. This attention to detail, this care given to style and diction does not restrict his freedom or result in artificiality. The final impression is one of ease and perfection, the very qualities which distinguish neo-classical literature at its best.

Even in his choice of subject-matter, Knox's affinity with the neo-classical writers is apparent. Pope had written:

True Wit is Nature to advantage dress'd;
What oft was thought, but ne'er so well express'd;²⁰

thereby expressing the preference of the neo-classical school for topics which belonged to the common fund of human wisdom. The task of the artist was to give these perfect expression so that men would recognize truths so commonplace that they tended to be forgotten. In his satires Knox concentrates on fundamental truths, defending the great principles of divine and human wisdom, and endeavouring to ridicule current vagaries so felicitously that his contemporaries might be shocked into a realization

²⁰ Pope, Alexander, "An Essay on Criticism," in Alexander Pope's Collected Poems, edited by Bonamy Dobree, London, Dent, 1924, p. 65.

of the trend towards intellectual and moral chaos.

Knox shared also their basic assumptions, their confidence in the validity of human reason, their respect for institutions, their love of order, their acceptance of things as they are. Like them, he recognized the fallibility of man, but also his greatness, and he shared their distrust of utopias. Even in his aims he was much like them, for he sought to explode platitudes, to destroy loose thinking and to expose false sentimentality.

In many ways Knox defended the same basic values as Dryden, Pope and Swift. Each of these writers had fought against the vulgarizers and popularizers of his day, against those who were threatening to destroy basic humanitarian standards. Each of these writers had also defended supernatural religion against the free-thinkers and atheists of his day. The following lines of The Dunciad express Pope's warning against the enemies of culture:

She comes! She comes! The sable throne behold
Of Night primeval and of Chaos old!

.....
Thus at her felt approach, and secret might
Art after art goes out, and all is night,
See skulking Truth to her old cavern fled,
Mountains of casuistry heaped o'er her head!

.....
For public flame, nor private, dares to shine,
Nor human spark is left, nor glimpse divine!²¹

²¹ Pope, Alexander, "The Dunciad," in Alexander Pope's Collected Poems, pp. 180-181.

These lines express the very similar warning which Knox sounded in Caliban in Grub Street and in Broadcast Minds against the twentieth century enemies of reason and revelation.

Moreover, Knox by temperament as much as by training seems to have possessed that classical spirit of discipline, restraint and tolerance which fitted the neo-classical writers to become such great satirists. Speaking of the qualities necessary for the production of great satire, Root made this remark:

It is no accident that formal satire, first brought to artistic perfection in Augustan Rome, should have chiefly flourished in periods when the classical tradition has been dominant. John Dryden, great satirist and our first great English critic, in his essay on The Original and Progress of Satire insists on the need of that restraint, which his own satiric writing so perfectly exemplifies.²²

Knox seems to possess what this critic calls "the very temper of satire," which he explains as "that curious balance of discipline and tolerance, of clearly defined standards and a certain geniality in the application of them."²³

From these remarks it is evident that Knox is allied to the classical humanitarian tradition, that in his

²² Root, Robert Kilburn, The Poetical Career of Alexander Pope, London, Oxford University Press, 1938, p.197.

²³ Ibid., p. 191.

standards, ideals and tastes he upholds the same basic values as the neo-classical writers. This constitutes a link with Chesterton and Belloc for as Wolfe has remarked: "Mr. Chesterton and Mr. Belloc pointed the way to a new Augustan age of satire."²⁴ From this point of view Knox is also allied to other satirical writers such as Wyndham Lewis and to non-satirical writers such as T. E. Hulme and T. S. Eliot who have proclaimed their dislike of romanticism and their adherence to classical standards.

iv) Knox and the Catholic Literary Revival. - In the post World War I era, according to Alexander,²⁵ the Catholic Literary Revival was in its third phrase. It was a phase distinguished by many brilliant anti-zeitgeist writers, most of them converts, who greatly contributed to augmenting the intellectual and artistic position of the Catholic Church in modern society. Knox is one of these modern Catholic writers who proved that the state of seige in which the Church had languished since the Reformation was over, that its intelligent, articulate children were now prepared to take the offensive and carry the war over into enemy territory. Catholic satirists have contributed much to this new phase of Catholic literary productivity.

²⁴ Wolfe, Humbert, Notes on English Verse Satire, New York, Harcourt Brace, 1929, p. 153.

²⁵ Alexander, Calvert, The Catholic Literary Revival, Milwaukee, Bruce, 1935, p. 4.

Knox belongs to a group of satirists which includes G. K. Chesterton, Hilaire Belloc, Evelyn Waugh, D. B. Wyndham Lewis, J. B. Morton and Douglas Woodruff. In view of the importance of satire as a social corrective and the fact that few except Catholics now hold principles definite enough to serve as a basis for genuine satire, the importance of the satirical writings of these men can scarcely be exaggerated. Resembling Belloc in directness and restraint, resembling Chesterton in tolerance and kindly laughter, resembling Waugh in his brilliant sense of the inane and the absurd, Knox is, in the words of Alexander, "a consummate satirist."²⁶

It should be remarked that Knox's greatest contribution to the Catholic Literary Revival is his one-man translation of the Bible into timeless English. A discussion of the undoubted literary value of this work is outside the scope of the present study. However, on the basis of his satirical works alone, it may be said that he has made a significant contribution to literature and to society.

This short discussion of Knox's place in the satiric tradition has shown that he is closely linked to this tradition by reason of the many satirical forms and techniques which he refurbished for indicting modern

²⁶ Ibid., p. 287.

follies. In particular he has strong affinities with the neo-classical satirists whose aims, ideals and tastes he seems to share. While he stands as a formal satirist in the Horatian tradition, he also merits a significant place among the anti-zeitgeist writers of the Catholic Literary Revival.

Speaking of the relation between a new literary production and the tradition of literature, T. S. Eliot made this remark: "And we do not quite say that the new is more valuable because it fits in; but its fitting in is a test of its value."²⁷ Knox's satirical writings appear to pass this test of fitting into the tradition.

IV. THE PERMANENCE OF HIS CONTRIBUTION TO SATIRE.

As a norm for judging whether a literary composition is likely to become a permanent bequest, T. S. Eliot made this statement: "(...) only good style in conjunction with permanently interesting content can preserve."²⁸ The permanence of Knox's contribution to literature can, therefore, be judged on the grounds of style and of the likelihood of his subject-matter remaining of permanent interest to later generations. Content will always be of

²⁷ Eliot, T. S., "Tradition and the Individual Talent," in Selected Prose, p. 24.

²⁸ Eliot, T. S., "Journalism and Literature," in Selected Prose, p. 46.

interest so long as it is timely and significant. The question is whether Knox's style is of literary value and whether the topics of his satires will remain of significant interest.

There can be no doubt that Knox is a great stylist who has taken particular care to project his satires in a truly artistic medium. His style, so free from any peculiarities which might tend to date it, certainly ought to withstand the test of time. The question of content is less easy to decide. That the satires were of timely significance to the twentieth century cannot be doubted. Knox dealt trenchantly with the most fundamental lapses of man in the intellectual and moral order. Not only did he indict Liberalism, Relativism, Materialism, and Pragmatism, but he also gave a penetrating interpretation of these in terms of their nature and origin. Moreover, he exposed the anomaly of the natural man, the hopeless inadequacy of secular culture and the incongruity of worship in which no sense of the supernatural presided. When society is so thoroughly corrected of these errors that it no longer needs the fulminations of the satirist, then Knox's satires will cease to have a timely significance. But does not the necessity of defending Christian culture, of upholding human values and of asserting the transcendency of the supernatural reoccur in every period? It seems proper to

conclude that by reason of Knox's excellent style and his defence of perennial values, his satire has a claim to a permanent place in English literature.

Though as D. B. Wyndham Lewis has pointed out, "Prophecy is a dangerous hobby,"²⁹ there is good reason for agreeing with this critic in his comment concerning the permanence of Knox's satirical writings:

Humour changes rapidly, wit is evergreen. It may be that as we sweep into the new Dark Ages, more and more of the beneficiaries of a world of increasing terror and ugliness will turn for refreshment to a literary bequest so civilized, and at its gayest so based on eternal verities, as that left us by Ronald Knox, who touched so very little that he did not adorn.³⁰

V. CONCLUDING REMARKS.

This evaluation of Knox as a satirist has revealed that he has fulfilled to a high degree the standards requisite for good satire. Possessing sound intellectual and moral principles and an astute power of judgement, he is in a position to strike forcibly and judiciously. Free from personal animosity and from a debilitating sense of the futility of life, he is genial, optimistic and magnanimous in appraising his opponents' errors. His

²⁹ Lewis, D. B. Wyndham, "The Knoxian Bequest," in America, Vol. 97, issue of September 14, 1957, p. 618.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 618.

satires are written with great attention to literary execution. His satiric technique is richly varied, ingenious and rhetorical. While maintaining aesthetic distance through fiction, allegory and irony, he pleases even his adversaries by his scintillating wit, genial humour and clever parody. In his satires he defends religion and culture, interprets the causes of modern chaos and points subtly to positive remedies.

By reason of his erudition and the depth and seriousness of his subject-matter, however, Knox remains a satirist who is most intelligible to the intellectual elite. He writes with great awareness of the satiric tradition and his satires appear to fit into the tradition. He is a formal satirist in the urbane tradition of Horace, with strong affinities with the neo-classical writers whose tastes, ideals and standards he seems to share. Among twentieth century writers he is an anti-zeitgeist satirist who has made a significant contribution to the Catholic Literary Revival. Because of the excellence of his style and the perennial significance of the values which he defends his satirical writings appear to have a claim to a permanent place in English Literature,

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The purpose of this thesis was to study and evaluate Ronald Knox as a satirist and to indicate his place in the satiric tradition. The first five chapters were devoted respectively to a detailed analysis of his most significant writings in verse, prose essay, allegory, novel and criticism. On the basis of what was discovered and illustrated in these chapters, the sixth chapter presented an evaluation of Knox as a satirist together with a discussion of his place in the satiric tradition.

This evaluation of Knox as a satirist has revealed that he does fulfil to a high degree the requirements for good satire. To successfully combat errors in the intellectual and moral orders, the satirist must be in possession of true facts and principles. In this respect, Knox's classical scholarship, his extensive learning, his wide reading in ancient and modern authors, his knowledge of theology and of scholastic philosophy equip him to attack errors of fact and of principle with conviction and precision. Knox also possesses the qualities of spirit and tone which are most conducive to a satirist's success: geniality, optimism and magnanimity. In all his satirical writings he remains the genial and urbane satirist, sympathetic towards the erring even as he mercilessly blasts their errors. He has the rare quality of being able to hit hard without ceasing to be courteous. Entirely

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untainted by any sense of the futility of life, completely free from bitterness, cynicism and personal animosities, he never loses faith in human nature nor ceases to believe that men are worth saving. Knox also manifests a generosity of spirit which leads him to admit the qualities of his opponents and a sense of fairness which leads him to concede whenever concession is justified.

A distinguished stylist, Knox fulfils the requirement of good satire that the attack should be embodied in a distinctly literary form. The qualities of style which serve him best in his satirical writings are simplicity, directness, lucidity, rigorous accuracy and precision of language, and an ability to expose an error with brevity and pointedness. Whether he writes in the ironic vein of Swift, in polished heroic couplets, in the fictitious media of allegory or novel, or in direct criticism, he shows an expert mastery of his literary media. Each of his satires is distinguished by an unobtrusive distinction and finish which raises his satirical indictment to the level of fine aesthetic achievement.

Moreover, Knox is aware that satire is a highly rhetorical form of literature. He uses the devices of rhetorical utterance and reveals his understanding of the psychology of persuasion. After the manner of the clever

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rhetician he makes a strong appeal to the mind, the imagination and the emotions of the reader, knowing that men are never entirely won to a cause unless their reason, their imagination and their affections are all strongly enlisted.

Satire is a subtle art requiring an elaborate technique on the part of the satirist if he is to succeed in conveying his satirical criticisms without arousing resentment. In this respect Knox has recourse to indirection and to comic measures. He achieves and maintains artistic removal through the high burlesque of Absolute and Abitofhell, through the fictitious mask of the projector in Reunion All Round, and that of the scholar or journalist in other essays, through his hilarious picture of a future world in Memories of the Future, through his re-creation of the past in Let Dons Delight, through the entertaining fiction of Sanctions: A Frivolity and Other Eyes than Ours. The imaginary framework of his allegories and novels conveys his satirical message directly and forcibly while the satirist seems to be doing nothing. An adept use of irony in all of his satires serves as a further means of concealing and yet of revealing his satirical import. In his satire in criticism where fiction is impossible he achieves indirection by means of a pose of Socratic irony. Through

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a use of meiosis, litotes, verbal irony, dramatic irony and the irony of false logic, Knox throws upon the discerning reader the onus of drawing the damaging satirical conclusions. Knox's irony is, moreover, free from malice and from any hint of frustration such as characterizes cosmic irony.

The comic means which Knox employs are wit, humour and parody. Knoxian wit is an amusing and intellectually stimulating devices for exploding fallacies and annihilating errors. Consisting of a swift penetration of thought felicitously expressed, Knox's wit is found in witty epigrams, incongruous associations, ingenious and damaging figures of speech, suggestive epithets, burlesque situations and the clever repartee of dialogue. His humour serves both as a satirical device and as a palliative to the wounds which he feels obliged to inflict. The excellent parody, which is scattered throughout several of his satires and constitutes an integral part of Absolute and Abitofhell and Reunion All Round is not a satirical device but a source of delight and entertainment.

Knox's contribution to literature and to society is all the greater because of the intrinsic worth of the values which he defends. In each of his satires he is the defender of religion and of culture. Among the false intellectual and moral trends which he attacks are

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Modernism, Relativism, Scepticism, Pragmatism, Materialism, Hedonism, anti-intellectualism and natural religion. Not content with exposing these errors to ridicule, he gives a profound interpretation of them in terms of their causes, and with prophetic insight warns his contemporaries of the intellectual and moral bankruptcy which these evils are likely to engender. Subtly he points to the positive remedies which can save society from degeneracy.

In spite of Knox's literary excellence and his clever manipulation of satiric devices and techniques, his influences on his contemporaries has been limited by several factors. In the first place his influence is slight with those who do not share the absolute principles upon which he bases his satiric criticisms. Moreover, his tendency to judge all things sub specie aeternitatis, his manner of borrowing his analogies from classical learning, the depth of his subject-matter and the intellectuality of his wit, all tend to limit his influence over a worldly public, now no longer educated in the tradition of Humane Letters and already too brain-shy to relish the intellectual fare which he has to offer. Undoubtedly Knox did overcome these weaknesses of the public to some extent. His genial, warm-hearted sympathy, his wit and humour, his capacity for making a difficult problem clear, his expert use of the popular medium of fiction did enable him to

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reach a fairly wide public. He remains, however, a satirist who is most intelligible to the élite, to those who have enough knowledge to appreciate his references, enough understanding to comprehend his criticism, and enough aesthetic taste to relish his literary qualities.

Through his adept use of a variety of literary techniques and devices, Knox manifests his awareness of a tradition which goes back to the second century B.C. Knox himself writes in the urbane tradition of formal satire established by Horace. His closest affinities are with the neo-classical writers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, particularly with Dryden and Swift whose literary aims, ideals and tastes he seems to share. Among modern writers he holds a significant place among the anti-zeitgeist writers of the Catholic Literary Revival, sharing with Belloc and Chesterton their defence of Christian faith and culture and uniting in his satirical indictment of modern evils something of the vigour and directness of the former with something of the tolerance and wit of the latter.

The importance of this study of Ronald Knox as a satirist arises in part from the intrinsic literary value of his satirical writings and in part from the vital importance of good satire as a corrective to the follies and abuses of the age, an importance which is augmented at

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the present time by the unfortunate scarcity of good satire. The art of effective satire has been rare for the reason that many contemporaries have lost those intellectual and moral certainties which alone can supply the standards and convictions needed for beneficial satirical attack. Knox is admirably equipped intellectually, morally and aesthetically to attack forcefully and wittily those basic evils which threaten to reduce society to intellectual and moral chaos. He is in very truth a defender of English culture based upon Christianity and the Greco-Roman heritage. Moreover, by reason of his literary excellence and his defence of perennial values, his satirical writings appear to have a claim to a permanent place in English literature.

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_____, What Dare I Think?, London, Chatto & Windus, 1931, x-270 pp.

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A review of Essays in Satire in which the critic describes the book as a biting falchion in which "the fun will creep in" in spite of the seriousness of the themes.

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A satire in criticism studied in this thesis.

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_____, "Mr. Mallock's New Republic," in Dublin Review, Vol. 173, issue of July 1923, pp. 51-59.

A tribute to the author of New Republic on the occasion of his death. Knox's remarks foreshadow his subsequent attempt to bring Mallock's satire up to date in Sanctions: A Frivolity.

_____, Other Eyes than Ours, Methuen, London, 1926, vii-246 pp.

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In this essay Knox gives an account of the motives which led him to the Roman Catholic Church. Useful as a background to Knox's satiric indictment of Modernism.

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A rather light study in which some clarifying remarks are made on the difference between English and American humour.

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Lewis, D. B. Wyndham, "The Knoxian Bequest," in America, Vol. 97, No. 24, issue of September 14, 1957, pp. 616-618.

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Leyburn, Ellen Douglass, Satiric Allegory: Mirror of Man, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1956, vii-142 pp.

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Macdonald, Edward J., "The Satire of Knox has a New Savour," in Duckett's Register, Vol. 13, issue of March 1958, p. 35.

Written on the occasion of the reprinting of Let Dons Delight. Pays tribute to it as a satire on the fads of arguments against the Church and as an interpretation of history.

Mack, Maynard, "The Muse of Satire," in Yale Review, Vol. 41, No. 1, issue of September 1951, pp. 80-92.

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Masse, Benjamin L., "With Caps and Bells," in Catholic World, Vol. 141, issue of May 1935, pp. 177-183.

A short review of the satiric tradition in England up to the present time with particular reference to Catholic authors. Helpful for placing Knox in the satiric tradition.

Maynard, Theodore, "On Satire," in America, Vol. 44, issue of March 7, 1931, pp. 532-533.

An outline of the satiric tradition in England up to modern times. Finds Knox too "amiable to lay on the scourge" and so concludes that his enemies will not be chastised enough.

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A serious discussion in which the author distinguishes between wit and humour.

Pettis, Ashley, "Literary Distractions," in Catholic World, Vol. 188, No. 1, 128, issue of March 1959, p. 517.

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Redman, Ben Roy, "In His Company the Best of Talk", in Saturday Review, Vol. 41, No. 46, issue of November 15, 1958, p. 13.

A review of Literary Distractions. The critic pays tribute to Knox's life-long love of literature which "gave him possession of the best that men have thought and said from the days of Greek glory and Roman grandeur."

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A scholarly study of Pope. Helpful in this thesis for his remarks on the classical influence in the satiric tradition in England.

Russell, Bertrand, The Conquest of Happiness, New York, Garden City Press, 1933, 249 pp.

One of the books which Knox criticizes satirically in Broadcast Minds. He shows that Russell's recipe for happiness reduces life to a "constitutional, undertaken by a nervous hypochondriac, for the benefit of his health."

Russell, Bertrand, Scientific Outlook, New York, Norton, 1931, 279 pp.

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Russell, Frances Theresa, Satire in the Victorian Novel, New York, Macmillan, 1920, xiii-335 pp.

A careful study of the element of satire in the Victorian novels with some literary criticism. Consulted as a background to discussing Knox's satirical novels.

Russell, Leonard, editor, English Wits, London, Hutchison, 1940, xiv-349 pp.

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The author discusses the importance of the satirist's function as admonisher and regrets that so few modern Catholic writers have followed the example of Barclay, Erasmus and Thomas More.

Schofield, J.F., "Battle with Straight Issues," in Ave Maria, Vol. 36, issue of November 26, 1932, pp. 673-677.

A review of Difficulties in which the critic commends the good-humoured battle which Knox waged with Arnold Lunn on questions of faith.

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A scholarly study of irony which was helpful in distinguishing the various uses and forms of irony.

Sheed, Wilfrid, "Monsignor Knox, a Reluctant Legend," in Catholic World, Vol. 184, issue of February 1957, pp. 363-368.

A eulogy of Knox's scholarship, wit and mastery of language together with a tribute to the priest.

Sheed, F.J., Sidelights on the Catholic Revival, London, Sheed & Ward, 1941, v-192 pp.

In his essay "Apostolic Blows and Knox," (pp. 84-86) the author commends Knox for his criticism of modern pundits in Broadcast Minds. He shows how Knox respects the men while scorning their false opinions.

Sheerin, John B., "Ronald Knox's 'Middle Way'", in Catholic World, Vol. 186, issue of October 1957, pp. 1-5.

A tribute to Knox for his moderation, and his talent for avoiding extremes in his opinions and in his criticism of others.

Stone, Christopher, Parody, London, Secker, (no date), 62 pp.

This work was consulted for its study of the art of parody and for the history of parody.

Streeter, B. H., Brook, R. et al., Foundations, A Statement of Christian Belief in Terms of Modern Thought by Seven Oxford Men, London, Macmillan, 1912, xi-538 pp.

This is the work which Knox satirizes in Absolute and Abitofhell. In their treatment of Holy Scripture, the Incarnation, the Resurrection and other dogmas, these authors are obviously tainted with Modernism.

Sturge, Sylvia, "And Quiet Flows the Don," in London Mercury, Vol. 39, No. 234, issue of April 1939, p. 241.

A review of Let Dons Delight in which the critic commends Knox's talent for reproducing the nuances of English speech in various eras.

Sutherland, James, English Satire, London, Cambridge, University Press, 1958, 173 pp.

An excellent study of English satire and satirists according to the various genres, verse, prose essay, novel, drama. The work was used for the study of the satiric tradition.

Swift, Jonathan, The Works of Dr. Jonathan Swift, Dean of St. Patrick's, Dublin, Vol. 3, edited by Temple Scott, London, (no publisher), 1765.

This edition was used for quotations from An Argument against Abolishing Christianity, pp. 101-118, in the discussion of Reunion All Round as a Swiftian imitation.

Tillyard, E. M. W., The English Epic and its Background, London, Chatto & Windus, 1954, x-548 pp.

This excellent study of the epic contains some remarks on the function of allegory which were helpful in discussing Knoxian satiric allegory.

Tucker, Samuel Marion, Verse Satire in English before the Renaissance, Columbia University Press, 1908, x-246 pp.

This author denies any literary affinity between satire and allegory. Reasons contrary to this opinion are stated in the third chapter of this thesis.

Van Doren, Mark, John Dryden, A Study of his Poetry, New York, Holt, 1946, x-298 pp.

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Walker, Hugh, English Satire and Satirists, London, Dent, 1925, viii-325 pp.

A scholarly study which was helpful in outlining the satiric tradition.

Waugh, Evelyn, The Life of the Right Reverend Ronald Knox, London, Chapman & Hall, 1959, 358 pp.

This excellent biography contains some remarks on Knox's literary career which were useful in estimating his literary achievement.

_____, "Ronald Knox: The Quintessence of Oxford," in Tablet, Vol. 213, No. 6206, issue of May 2, 1959, p. 419.

Waugh pays tribute to Knox on the occasion of the unveiling of a memorial bust at Oxford. He finds Knox "the quintessence of Oxford; or at least, of one precious part of her richly diverse tradition."

_____, "The Worst and the Best - V: Monsignor Ronald Knox," in Horizon, Vol. 17, issue of May 1948, pp. 326-338.

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Wells, H(erbert) G(eorge), What Are We to Do with Our Lives?, New York, Doubleday Doran, 1931, vi-143 pp.

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Wolfe, Humbert, Notes on English Verse Satire, New York, Harcourt Brace, 1929, 158 pp.

A scholarly historical outline from medieval period to the twentieth century. Useful in placing Knox in the satiric tradition.

Worchester, David, The Art of Satire, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1940, ii-191 pp.

An excellent study of the techniques and devices of the satirist. Very helpful in distinguishing the various devices used by Knox.

Yelland, H.L., Jones, S.C., et al., Handbook of Literary Terms, New York, Philosophical Library, 1950, 221 pp.

Very helpful in distinguishing between various literary genres.

COMBE FLOREY HOUSE,
COMBE FLOREY,
Nr. TAUNTON.

Saint
Dear Sister Agnes

August 5th 1958

I enclose (a) permission to reproduce Juxta
Salvius in microfilm (b) a copy of the appeal for
the Knox Memorial. The committee would be most
grateful if you would interest Canadians in this
project.

Juxta Salvius is not a book I greatly love. It
has three ingenious & charming English lyrics. The
prose was, no doubt amusing at the time but has
lost its point. The Decalogue Symposium which occupies
many pages is purely topical.

I am not quite sure what you mean by
'fictionality' unless Essays in Satire are concerned.
The most marvellous criticism is that book has no
connection with story-telling. Mr. Knox's best satirical
work was in parody or direct criticism - as in
Caliban in Great Street & Broadcast Heretics. If you

deal only with his story. telling you will give a very incomplete view of his talents.

A posthumous book of recollections is coming out this autumn (Sheel & Ward) under the title 'Literary Distractions' You may find interest there.

A collected edition of his jeux d'esprit, edited by M: Laurence Eyre, will appear next year They are mostly in Greek & Latin

M: Knox took interest in controversy, as therefore in satire, in about 1932 His most accomplished satires were written before 1917 when he was an Anglican.

Yours faithfully

E. Waugh

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis, Ronald Knox as a Satirist, is to study and evaluate Ronald Knox as a satirist and to indicate his place in the satiric tradition. The evaluation is made according to the standards for writing effective satire stated by recognized critics who hold that satire is an art which makes many demands upon the skill and ingenuity of the satirist. In the first place, to successfully destroy errors, the satirist must possess true intellectual and moral principles. To win the respect of his readers he must also launch his attack in a spirit of optimism, geniality and magnanimity. The good satirist must write not only in a distinctly literary style but he must also employ the elements of rhetorical persuasion. Satire is, moreover, a subtle art requiring a shrewd campaign on the part of the satirist if he is to succeed in conveying his criticisms without arousing resentment. Finally, the value of the satirist's contribution depends to some extent upon the intrinsic value of what he defends and also upon the timeliness of his satiric exposures and indictments.

Though Knox's opus magnum, the translation of the Bible into timeless English, has been widely recognized as one of the foremost literary and scholarly achievements of modern times, as yet no study has been made of his satirical writings. The present analysis is confined to

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his satirical works properly so called and does not include those works in which the satire is incidental.

In the first chapter a detailed study is made of Knox's only significant verse satire, Absolute and Abitofhell, which is analysed as a Drydenian imitation and parody. The second chapter is devoted to a study of his prose essays with emphasis on Reunion All Round, a clever Swiftian imitation. A discussion of Memories of the Future and of Let Dons Delight as satiric allegories in chapter three is followed in chapter four by a study of Knox's satirical novels, Sanctions: A Frivolity and Other Eyes than Ours. Chapter five is devoted to an examination of his two volumes of satire in direct criticism, Caliban in Grub Street and Broadcast Minds. On the basis of what is discovered and illustrated in these chapters an evaluation of Knox as a satirist is made in chapter six together with some remarks on his place in the satiric tradition.

This study of Knoxian satire has revealed that Knox did fulfil to a high degree those requirements and qualities for good satire. By reason of his classical scholarship, his extensive learning, his knowledge of theology and of scholastic philosophy, he is well equipped to attack errors of fact and of principle with conviction and precision. Moreover, he has the rare quality of being able to hit hard without appearing discourteous and in all

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his satires he remains sympathetic towards the erring even as he blasts their errors.

Knox is also the distinguished stylist in expert control of his literary media. Through indirection and comic measures he succeeds in conveying the satirical import without arousing resentment. An adept use of fiction or of irony in all his satires conceals and yet reveals his satiric meaning. The comic measures of scintillating wit, refreshing humour and nimble parody which he employs are equally effective devices for pleasing the reader even against his will.

In each of his satires Knox is the defender of religion and culture, exposing to ridicule the false intellectual and moral trends which threaten to destroy the very basis upon which the civilization of the western world is built. Not content with a mere satirical exposure of these evils he also manages to give a profound interpretation of them in terms of their nature and origin, and with prophetic insight, warns his contemporaries of the intellectual and moral bankruptcy which they are likely to engender. Subtly he points to positive remedies which can save society from degeneracy.

However, though Knox does possess the qualities which are needed for good satire a distinction must be made between the intrinsic greatness of his satirical

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writings and the extrinsic value which flows from their influence on society. Several factors tend to hamper his direct influence on his contemporaries. His certitude concerning first principles, his tendency to judge all things sub specie aeternitatis, his habit of borrowing analogies from classical learning, the depth of his subject-matter, the intellectuality of his wit, all tend to limit his influence over a sceptical and worldly public, now no longer educated in the tradition of Human^e Letters and already too brain-shy to relish the intellectual fare which he offers. Knox remains a satirist most intelligible to the qualified reader who has enough learning to appreciate his references, enough understanding to comprehend his criticism, and enough artistic taste to relish his literary qualities.

Through his clever use of a variety of satirical techniques Knox reveals his awareness of a tradition which goes back to the second century B.C. Knox writes in the urbane tradition established by Horace. His closest affinities are with the neo-classical writers especially Dryden and Swift whose literary aims, ideals and tastes he seems to share. Among modern writers he holds a significant place among the anti-zeitgeist writers of the Catholic Literary Revival, sharing with Belloc and Chesterton their high-spirited attack on the enemies of religion and culture.

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The value of this study of Ronald Knox as a satirist rests in part upon the intrinsic literary worth of his satirical writings and their timeliness, and in part upon the vital importance of good satire as a corrective to the follies and abuses of the age. Knox is in very truth a defender of English culture based upon Christianity and the Greco-Roman heritage. Moreover, by reason of his literary excellence and his defence of perennial values, his satirical writings appear to have a claim to a permanent place in English literature.