

are *unable* to reach. It is out of the very power and disturbance of this confession and its constantly renewed existential problematic that there continually arises the problem of our own human identity and inter-relationships; not the problem of the relationship of contingent and necessary being. Instead of occupying the centre of the stage in speculative theology and apologetics, natural theology within its traditional limits of abstract thinking will have to occupy a more modest and less onerous place.

## Disestablishment: Christianity in Wales

by J. P. Brown

For the older generation of Catholics, 'Welsh Disestablishment' recalls Chesterton's Ode with its climax, 'Chuck it, Smith!' and with its implication that the religious affairs of Wales are not of much interest to the rest of Europe. It often seems that they are of little concern even to those Europeans who have settled in Wales.<sup>1</sup> I have been asked to re-present for *New Blackfriars* readers the nature and origins of our complex denominational situation. I would suggest that 'disestablishment', i.e. separation of Church and secular power (especially the power of the State) is a unifying theme and that this may have the interest of novelty for most of Europe.

### *The political background*

In an earlier article 'By Law Established',<sup>2</sup> I argued that from the beginning Wales has been a nation without a sovereign state, i.e. the highest political power in Wales has usually had its seat outside Wales, in England, in fact. While Welsh nationhood has been based chiefly on the Welsh language, it has generally been reinforced by a type of Christianity distinct from that of England. Since the English State has, of course, been hostile to Welsh nationhood, it follows that Church and State here have often been on opposite sides.

It must be noted, however, that imperialism is always met by a mixture of resistance and collaboration. Although people may be roughly sorted into resisters and collaborators, the division, especially in its subconscious forms, splits each person involved. Thus, a resister may make the rulers' standards the measure of his own

<sup>1</sup>English and Irish mainly. But I was pleasantly surprised at the reception given to the original version of this article at the Menevia Diocesan Conference on Ecumenism at Aberystwyth in April 1970.

<sup>2</sup>*New Blackfriars*, October 1972.

achievement or even try to compete for at least a share in the government which rules both nations. A political collaborator, on the other hand, may make excessive claims for the cultural achievements of his nation (rugby or choral singing) and satirists have often noted how often anti-Nationalist speeches begin with 'I'm as good a Welshman as anyone'. These tensions have, of course, been manifested, in collective forms, in church affairs and their sympathetic recognition is essential, if greater unity among Christians in Wales is to be had.

Since 'establishment' arises from the instinct of secular and church rulers to help each other against rebels, any case of disestablishment should be of interest at a time when many rulers feel so threatened.

### *Early Welsh Christianity*

Ironically, Welsh Christianity began as the result of the very first establishment of Christianity, that throughout the Roman Empire, in the fourth century. The once popular 'independent Celtic Church' theory is sufficiently disproved by the involvement of the Pope, around 430, both in the appointment of the first bishops in Ireland and in plans to keep Britain Christian. Around 443, the rule of Roman Britain passed to the pagan Saxons, but the subordinate Welsh territories of the West and North remained under the immediate control of their long-established and Christian dynasties. Since Saxon paganism was not a missionary religion, the Christianization of the Welsh could be completed. In relative isolation, but not separation, from the rest of Christendom, a distinctive, but not schismatic or heretical, Christianity developed in the Welsh 'Island of Britain' and in Ireland (and in Brittany). Though the Celtic clergy needed the material support of the local ruling classes and indeed seem often to have been recruited from those classes, the hagiographies preserve stories of conflicts between priest and prince. More reliable is the contemporary Open Letter of Gildas, whose denunciation of the personal and political sins of five Welsh kings recalls John the Baptist and the Old Testament prophets rather than the defence of Church rights which has been the usual theme of Church-State disputes. An independent attitude of Celtic clergy towards their king is well seen in Bede's moving tribute to Colman's Northumbrian mission.<sup>1</sup>

### *The First Welsh Disestablishment*

The Augustinian mission eventually resulted in an English Church which, on the one hand, was part of a far more centralized Roman system and, on the other, was closely linked to the Saxon rulers of Britain. This is epitomized in the imposition of the Roman date of

<sup>1</sup>H.E. iii, 26. Bede's generosity here, contrasting with his usual attitude to the Celts, seems to spring partly from the need for a stick to beat his contemporaries, but more from a personal debt of gratitude. Bede, in fact, may have suffered from the divided loyalties of the Celtic 'collaborator'.

Easter by royal decree (Whitby, A.D. 664). The attempts to incorporate the Welsh clergy into this system with 'Augustine as archbishop' had failed, however. The Saxon Bretwaldas did not at this time put much pressure on their nominal Welsh subjects. A century after Whitby, the Welsh accepted the Roman Easter, but they kept local customs and were not subject to Canterbury until the Norman invasion, when a Welsh appeal for their own Archbishopric at St David's was rejected by Rome.

### *The State changes Churches*

At the time of the Reformation, therefore, England and Wales, then known simply as 'England', had a single hierarchy, which accepted (with two exceptions) the non-Roman Church now established by a king of Welsh descent. William Salesbury, an early Anglican enthusiast and the first translator of the New Testament into Welsh, drew attention to the Welsh rejection of Augustine and claimed that the 'Church of England' was a descendant of the supposedly non-Roman British Church. One might now have expected a final, smooth absorption of Wales into the English (British, if you like) State and its established Church. In fact, a process of ecclesiastical fragmentation soon began, whose results are still with us. I shall try to *sketch* the origins of each fragment in turn.

### *The Catholics*<sup>1</sup>

The Tudors, seen by some as Welsh conquerors of England (the return of Arthur), were generally popular in Wales and so was their Act of Union (of England and Wales) which had ended centuries of penal laws against Welshmen. Political collaboration was never greater, but it was realized, and this was resented, that English culture, in particular the English language, was now flooding into Wales. *Crefydd y Sais*, 'the Englishman's religion', was seen to be part of this culture and was generally disliked.<sup>2</sup> But mere dislike could not prevent the decisive destruction of the old system in the crucial first generation. It is true that the reconciliations by the seminary priests were much more numerous here, in proportion, than in England as a whole.<sup>3</sup> For 50 years the numbers and zeal of the recusants in the border counties and along the north coast worried the State, but by the end of the seventeenth century it was nearly all over. Three scattered enclaves held through the eighteenth century but in later lapsing and in mingling with immigrants these districts

<sup>1</sup>'Catholics.' Here and elsewhere, in naming Christian bodies, I use names most familiar to readers. In a Welsh version of this article, I used '*Pabyddion*', literally 'Papists'. All names given to Christian bodies, by members or non-members, offend someone else.

<sup>2</sup>The first Welsh Elizabethan martyr, St Richard Gwyn, was a loyal Englishman politically and translated his surname into White. But the contemporary account of his death, though in English, is directed at Wales and avers: 'As for his knowledge of the Welsh tongue, he was inferior to none in his country'.

<sup>3</sup>The proportion of Welshmen at the seminaries was also very high, making possible an extraordinary English-Welsh dispute at the English College in Rome, settled by the Pope in favour of the English.

have been forgotten and the ordinary Welshman assumes that Catholicism is either a medieval or a foreign thing. Modern converts have been few.

### *The Anglicans*

It seems agreed that there was a spiritual depression in the early years of Anglicanism, but individuals were soon seeking remedies. The old parish system, covering all Wales, was maintained and, even if the clergy were linked to the squires and with them were seen as rather foreign, these parishes survived to our day, even in the most Welsh parts, so that Anglicans can claim roots here which Catholics cannot. Since Disestablishment (in spite of Smith) in 1920, their political balance has tipped towards Wales, which has led to better relations with Nonconformity. Disestablishment was resisted, often for material reasons, but most modern Anglicans see it as a great blessing. As the late Archbishop of Wales has pointed out, unlike the Nonconformists, the Church-in-Wales remains well enough off (not rich) for her work not to be crippled by money worries. Though sharing in the universal numerical decline, her strength relative to Nonconformity has grown substantially, though largely for sociological reasons, and she is much more popular (in both senses).

### *The first Nonconformists (Dissenters)*

Anglicanism never entirely replaced the medieval universal system and I agree with the frank admission of the Anglican Archbishop that, in spite of the present disastrous Nonconformist losses, it never will. Nonconformity, too, arrived from England and its original congregations were in the border counties, small groups who thought that the English reformation had not gone far enough, that the State Church, though it had rejected Rome's authority, was Romanist in worship and belief. The Breconshire man, John Penry ('one of the finest spirits of the age': Fr Philip Hughes), was a Protestant Elizabethan martyr. These groups believed that the centre of earthly authority in the Church is the local congregation, which is not bound by the laws of any centralized Church, whether with Pope and hierarchy, secular ruler or elected (Presbyterian) body as its earthly head. Hence the modern 'Congregationalists', though 'Independents' is the usual Welsh term. They, and the Baptists who appeared a little later in Wales, do now have central bodies, 'Unions', but these organize co-operation on a voluntary basis, no local church is bound by their decisions. The difficulty for Baptists and Independents in any formal reunion is: either they betray their principles by accepting a United Church with a Governing Body or they must persuade that church not to have such a body. Before we dismiss the latter alternative as completely preposterous, we might consider whether, given an ideal situation where all accepted what is of *divine* faith and law, a

Governing Body is necessary and, further, consider how effective are existing Governing Bodies.<sup>1</sup>

Though it could be argued that the absence even of a permanent consultative Union was to blame for the lack of progress of the early Nonconformists, their chief disagreements seem to have been doctrinal. The outsider sees Nonconformists as over-emotional, but these forerunners seem to have been over-intellectual. But the only doctrinal difference which divides a large modern body<sup>2</sup> from the rest is the Baptist belief that baptism is only for adult believers.<sup>3</sup> In all other doctrinal conflicts, individuals from all the Nonconformist bodies will be found on either side. It is not surprising that the Baptists have been even more reluctant than the Independents to discuss reunion schemes and, it seems, to join in any 'ecumenical activity' for, like many Catholics and High Anglicans, most of them doubt that their fellow-Christians are baptized and therefore rule out intercommunion. However, support for recognizing other baptisms and for intercommunion is growing.

### *Methodism*

Observation of the Methodists has produced the common superficial view of Welsh Nonconformity, a view which stresses the negative. Wesley and others began the Methodist movement in England about 1730, preaching an internal religion based on a man's realizing that he was a sinner but that Christ had saved him from his sins. After this 'conversion', he was to live a life of prayer in which Holy Communion took a central place and to refrain not only from sin but from any 'vanities' which came between him and God.<sup>4</sup> It is only this last feature which has been widely noted.

Methodism was, of course, originally an Anglican movement and in Wales it was also helped by the Anglican translation of the Bible<sup>5</sup> which individual clergymen had then used for religious education, in one case founding a widespread school system. The first Welsh Methodists were actually personal friends of some of the educators. But the contribution of the old Dissenters to Methodism was just as important: a supply of manpower in the vital early years, especially

<sup>1</sup>Many Welshmen believed that all Catholic activity conformed to a Roman master-plan but then, after closer study, remarked that they hadn't realized that we had a different Pope in each parish.

<sup>2</sup>A small body of Unitarians, descended from Dissenters who took an anti-Calvinist view in the doctrinal disputes, still flourishes in an isolated country district. They seem very different from some English Unitarians, keeping Christ central, though they would not accept the Creeds on His divinity, cf. the modernists in other bodies.

<sup>3</sup>Baptism by immersion, which Baptists see as an important sign of their distinctive belief, is not in itself the dividing factor.

<sup>4</sup>The vanities did *not* include alcohol, cf. the dictionary: *cwrw'r achos*: 'beer formerly provided for the use of Nonconformist preachers in the chapel-house'. Teetotalism was at first a response to the drinking which attended nineteenth century social misery, cf. the Irish Pioneers.

<sup>5</sup>This translation saved Welsh from the fate of Irish in the nineteenth century. Welsh is not a surviving patois of isolated peasants but is associated with a higher-than-average education. Hence the violent antagonism to it of many Welshman who do not speak it, especially when this is partly by their own choice.

from Carmarthenshire where Dissenters were unusually numerous and unusually Welsh. From the South the Methodist preachers spread all over Wales, again often backed by local Dissenters and opposed by the squires who naturally preferred established religion to fiery sermons by wandering enthusiasts. The squires usually lost and Methodist 'societies' were soon meeting nearly everywhere. After about 80 years, these societies became a new Church: the Calvinistic Methodist Church of Wales, the only defined religious body based solely on Wales. (It is now known as the Presbyterian Church of Wales, for it has an elected Governing Body, but the old name is also used.) Wesley did not preach much here because he could not speak Welsh and in Wesley's dispute with the Calvinist, Whitefield, the Welsh sided with the latter, whose supporters in England soon dwindled. Thus when the final break was made (chiefly because ordained clergy were needed for Communion services and Anglicans would no longer co-operate, so that the Methodists ordained their own) the new Church was a purely Welsh one.

In the early nineteenth century, the Wesleyans, troubled by the Calvinism of Welsh Methodism, began missionary work in Wales. Their success was limited so that they are now much the weakest of the four Nonconformist bodies among the Welsh speakers, although they have many English churches in the towns. It must be exceptional today to make the Wesley-Whitfield dispute decisive in choosing one's denomination and, in my (contested) view, the Methodists (they have dropped the 'Wesleyan') would have already united with the Presbyterian Church of Wales, but for the fact that they are part of the Methodist Church of England and Wales.

#### *Nonconformist unity in diversity*

In spite of the differences noted above, there is a real unity of the four Nonconformist bodies, which also has long roots. They themselves express it by the terms 'The Free Churches' and '*Ymneilltuaeth*' which means roughly 'a retiring to one side'. 'Disestablishment' might have been another collective term.

I noted that many Dissenters became Methodists, but some came back, bringing Methodist missionary fervour, now operating under Independent and Baptist auspices. These opened 'causes' in new parts of Wales, which is why we have so many chapel buildings. The services of the older bodies became like those of the Methodists, with emphasis on hymns and extempore prayer as well as on the sermon. For their part, the Welsh Methodists acquired a strong intellectual tradition (stronger than that of English Methodists, I think) with a detailed theology. This tradition was sustained at the basic level by the Sunday Schools, an elaborate institution in which members of all ages were expected to take part, so that, with morning and evening services, three chapel attendances were usual on Sunday. Many members went to weekday prayer-meetings, too, and the

Methodists had their *seiat* (from 'society'), originally a sort of collective examination of conscience and later an exchange of spiritual experiences. Many foreign missionaries were sent; the Church arising from the Welsh Presbyterian mission to Assam now greatly outnumbers its parent.

On the political plane, the Methodists, originally Conservative, moved towards the radicalism of the older bodies, so that Nonconformity as a whole was in alliance with the English Liberals who eventually disestablished Welsh Anglicans. Of course, Nonconformity as a whole shared a dislike of 'Popery' to which memories of the Marian executions<sup>1</sup> and the persecutions of Protestants abroad, which continued to our day, gave a bitter edge. Moreover, Catholic immigrants into Wales have been unpopular for secular reasons; imperialism usually produces dissensions among its subject peoples, especially when the latter are reluctant to admit their status. Nevertheless, I should argue that Nonconformity in general and Methodism in particular were unconscious steps towards the incorruptible aspects of Catholicism (shall we say disestablished Catholicism?) so that occasionally an acute theologian—or a poet—can pay unexpected explicit tribute.

#### *The strength of Nonconformity*

By popular writers, the strength of Welsh Anglicanism has been always underestimated. But it was largely, I think, the sort of 'silent strength' associated with lack of enthusiasm. Nonconformity certainly succeeded numerically in Wales as it never did in England and it has influenced Welsh affairs (inasmuch as they can be influenced from within Wales) even beyond its numbers, in the two centuries when it has been associated with the native and its rivals with the incomer. Now, however, the membership of the Nonconformists is falling very rapidly and this will continue, for they have few young members. As this is realized, their now disproportionate influence in Wales is also crumbling rapidly. I say that reluctantly for I wish that it were not so. Nor is it an isolated assertion; it is, I think, true of Catholicism with respect to Ireland or Italy and true of Christianity with respect to the whole world . . . and with respect to Wales. For although the strongest Nonconformist body, the Presbyterians, is now outnumbered by both Anglicans (based on Easter communions, the baptism figure is much higher again) and Catholics (known baptized Catholics), the most important fact is that, on the basis of fairly active members, Christians as a whole are merely a sizeable minority. The exact proportion is guesswork, my guess is 20 per cent, of whom a half might be Nonconformists and two-thirds of the rest Anglicans. The general decline

<sup>1</sup>On the other hand, a modern Quaker begins a poem to the Catholic martyrs: 'After the silent centuries . . .' and ends 'Great and outstanding would these be in your legend, Welshmen . . . if you were a nation'.

is partly, and the shift in the relative strengths of the denominations is almost wholly, due to sociological phenomena, in particular the movements of population. This is shown by the situation in the now rapidly shrinking Welsh-speaking districts, where the total percentages of active members are higher, the relative Nonconformist strength much higher and the Catholic strength much lower.<sup>1</sup>

### *The weakness of Christianity*

More serious than decline in numbers is decline in belief and fervour. Explicit belief in the main Christian doctrines, the affirmation of our Lord as God and Saviour, was general in Wales down to the last war. Modernists were rare. Even now, doctrine is rarely denied but the Evangelical Movement allege that it is not often affirmed because of unbelief among Nonconformist ministers. What seems to be certain is a wide degree of unbelief among the laity, even among the over-forties. Are there parallels to this among Catholics everywhere? The Evangelicals, like the Catholic Priests' Association, allege that lay unbelief is the result of a *trahison des clercs*. I think, that as far as the kind of *trahison* which they have in mind is concerned, it is the clergy who are under lay influence.

### *Reunion all round*

A recent attempt to set up a United Free Church of Wales has failed, the Anglican-Methodist Plan failed to secure the necessary 75 per cent majorities on *both* sides in Wales,<sup>2</sup> the Covenanting Movement in which Anglicans are fully involved (we have observers) is doing better, but not, I think, decisively so. The opposition to these plans comes from those who dislike any change, from those who think that a single Church would restrict freedom, from the Evangelicals and from some Anglicans.

The Evangelicals belong to all Protestant bodies, though a few have already set up chapels of their own and they speak of forming their own Church, if, as they put it, the present bodies continue to betray their original principles. They are a minority, but have a number of young members. They work through conferences and publications, marring valuable witness to central doctrines and a surprisingly liberal attitude to social problems with bitter polemic. Catholics have much in common with them doctrinally but they

<sup>1</sup>The headline 'Catholic progress in Wales' which used to be frequent in Catholic publications, referred merely to the erection of buildings (often at the cost of great effort) for Catholic immigrants. At a time when Welsh speakers numbered 26 per cent of the general population, I estimated that less than 1 per cent of the Catholics were Welsh-speaking, clear proof of our foreign origin. But we numbered 5 per cent of the population, which shows how many newcomers are now in Wales. This immigration, too rapid to be absorbed and largely composed of people who consider the Welsh to be the foreigners (Catholics are now better than average in this respect) is the main threat to Welsh nationhood; it is combined with a large emigration from the Welsh-speaking areas where unemployment is rife.

<sup>2</sup>The Bangor district, where there had been Anglican-Methodist contact years before the vote, was an exception.



tend to see this as Satanic bait, i.e. these shared doctrines have in practice less weight for them than the doctrinal disagreements of the Reformation. Like their Catholic counterparts, they often invoke the martyrs of that era. And their main wrath falls not on us, but on their fellow-Protestants who, principally through the detested Ecumenical Movement, are said to be moving towards Rome. Clearly it would be very good for *everybody* if doctrinal talks could be held between Evangelicals and Catholics, so that we might recognize each other as serious followers of our Lord's teaching, even if we still see each other as gravely mistaken in our understanding of it.

Talks are also desirable between the Churches and ourselves. A good start has been made with the Church-in-Wales. Discussions between theologians have begun and two excellent conferences open to all church members have been held, of which the best feature seemed to me to be our presence at each other's Eucharists, almost indistinguishable externally, except that different people received Communion. The closeness in worship and doctrine of ourselves and the Church-in-Wales is not due to her high Anglicans, of whom there are some, but, I think, to her identification with those old anti-Canterbury British bishops, whose doctrine was fully Roman. The Church-in-Wales has also mediated in what we would recognize as increasing orthodoxy in respect to the Church and the Sacraments among the Nonconformists.<sup>1</sup> The general reverence for the Bible—very radical questioning of its authority has not yet spread here—is a constant help in all talks.

### *Established Catholics*

I'm afraid, however, that Catholics have left these things a bit late. In spite of surviving anti-Popery, friendly contacts could have been made fairly generally fifteen to twenty years ago—one or two priests *did* make them—when we were seen as 'strong'. Now our internal troubles make the Evangelical gibe that Ecumenism is weak Churches propping each other up applicable to us, too.

The Catholic Church in the United Kingdom tends to support the Government and in turn receives what is taken for support from the State. As a result we have antagonized the 'resisters' in Wales (without gaining the 'collaborators') because we have, largely unconsciously, shared English hostility to Welsh nationhood. In general, things are now improving, at all levels.

But it is not enough to become Welsh in order to speak to the Welsh, we also have to listen to them. Their complaint against the Catholic Church is that it exists for its own power and glory and that within the Church this power and glory is further concentrated in the clergy and especially in the Pope. John XXIII, who made an immense impression in Wales, shook this belief but, at least as far as

<sup>1</sup>Not only in the new Methodist Communion and Baptismal Services, but, in a less obvious way, in the general atmosphere of the other bodies.

the position of the Pope is concerned, it has recovered ground during the present pontificate and must have been reinforced by recent statements made in Wales itself. The present friendships of all ranks of our clergy with Welsh Protestants must be doing good, however, though the old maxim that Catholics persecute when strong and entice when weak is still kept in mind. It may also be noted that much of our former aloofness came from preoccupation with catering for our own 'successful' organization; now we are starting to realize that our own losses are tending to approach those of the Protestants. We are full members of the 'Wales for Christ' movement, aimed at the growing majority in Wales, recruited from all communions, which ignores or even rejects Christianity. All that this movement has achieved is to make its members aware of the immense difficulty of its task, but recognition of unpleasant truth is a condition of all true progress.

*Welsh Christianity survives*

The central tradition of Welsh poetry is *praise*—G. M. Hopkins well represents that tradition, for I do not mean flattery. It is widely admitted that in Ireland and Brittany, the tenacious religious observance of the people has been accompanied by real benefits in their behaviour and character. English Catholics like myself have tended to see this as a Catholic achievement. Yet something very similar has happened in Wales. (I say nothing of Scotland, because of insufficient knowledge of that complex country.) It is not a racial thing: all the Celtic peoples are very mixed, and I suspect that it exists in other lesser-known parts of Europe. I believe that it is related to Disestablishment, but in any case I will end this somewhat analytical and negative article by praising its past and discerning some hopes for its survival. In Wales (as in Brittany and even Ireland) the nation and its associated religious tradition are in a desperate situation. There are serious tensions in each religious body between those who see their final disappearance as unavoidable, unimportant or even beneficial and the 'resisters'. Yet the minority of political campaigners for Wales have drawn admiration outside their own ranks for their restraint and self-sacrifice. It is not just a question of 'secular saints' in the Guevara tradition. There is some anti-clericalism among the young activists of the Welsh Language Society and I know one prominent member who is a Marxist agnostic (but obsessed with the Catholic Church) but there are more church-going members among its young members than among youth in general.<sup>1</sup> A religious service is quietly held at the prison gates, inside

<sup>1</sup>I am aware of a Bohemian element in the W.L.S. and of some idolizing of politics; these have drawn internal criticism. I am not saying, either, that virtue is found nowhere else in Wales. I trust readers are aware, by the way, in spite of popular English badinage, that explosives are a very uncommon ingredient of Welsh nationalism and their deliberate use against persons almost unknown—I can recall two very dubious cases (and also one appalling accident). The W.L.S. often destroy property, such as signposts, documents or broadcasting equipment, manually. They forbid any violence to persons, even fisticuffs in self-defence.

the prison the special treatment demanded is the right to speak Welsh to visitors and services by a Welsh chaplain. And women political prisoners are thanked by the authorities for their good effect on the general atmosphere. This may be the last Welsh Revival, 'ane end of ane auld song' but I shall end by adapting the Polish National Anthem: 'Wales (and her religious tradition) has not yet perished, while they live'.

## Graham Greene: The Writer by Roderick Strange

In September 1971 Graham Greene published his autobiography, *A Sort of Life*.<sup>1</sup> *The Times Literary Supplement* took the opportunity to feature a leading article on his work in which it stated that the autobiography 'reinforces Greene's theories about the relations between art and life', and at once added, 'that is to say, between *his* art and *his* life'.<sup>2</sup> The debate about the relationship between an author's work and his life recurs constantly, but in Greene's case the questions which are raised are particularly acute, his view of the matter being in marked contrast to that expressed by most of his critics.

The critics frequently affirm that his books are principally about himself. Marie-Béatrice Mesnet, for example, hints at this when she compares his travel book, *The Lawless Roads*, with his novel, *The Power and the Glory*, both of which are set in Mexico. 'His only addition to reality in the novel', she writes, 'lies in the characterization of his human material, in his power to conjure up life and the interior history of a man. The entire background is as close to actual fact as possible.'<sup>3</sup> Still more explicitly, Victor de Pange has claimed: 'L'oeuvre de Greene peut se lire comme une autobiographie à peine transposée'.<sup>4</sup>

No doubt it is this trend in the criticism of Greene's work that explains the reaction of the critics to his autobiography, for while they admire the quality of his writing, they confess to a sense of disappointment. They had hoped to learn his secret. Peter Lewis complained outright in the *Daily Mail* that 'Many of Graham Greene's admirers will be disappointed by *A Sort of Life*, the autobiography which might have thrown light on his secret'. Malcolm

<sup>1</sup>Graham Greene, *A Sort of Life* (London, Bodley Head, 1971). All the references to the autobiography are in the text.

<sup>2</sup>*The Times Literary Supplement*, No. 3, 629, 17th September, 1971, p. 1,102.

<sup>3</sup>Marie-Béatrice Mesnet, *Graham Greene and the Heart of the Matter* (London, 1954), p. 21.

<sup>4</sup>Victor de Pange, *Graham Greene* (Paris, 1953), p. 13.