

REVIEWS

The Old Enemies: Catholic and Protestant in Nineteenth-Century English Culture by Michael Wheeler. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006. xv, 352 pp. + 31 b/w illus. ISBN 0-521-82810-4. \$80.00; £45.00.

When E.R. Norman's *Anti-Catholicism in Victorian England* was published in 1968, it was a novel topic for scholars of the nineteenth century. As Michael Wheeler readily concedes, in the course of the past four decades, many additional relevant works have appeared; they include John Wolffe's *Protestant Crusade in Great Britain, 1829-1860* (1991), Denis Paz's *Popular Anti-Catholicism in Mid-Victorian England* (1992), and (in part) Owen Chadwick's magisterial *Victorian Church* (2 vols., 1966-70). Such scholars are historians by trade, yet "no literary critic has written a wide-ranging study on the subject and thus brought out its wider cultural implications." Wheeler's professed purpose is to fill that gap.

As the author of *Heaven, Hell and the Victorians* (1994) and *Ruskin's God* (1999), Wheeler demonstrates soon enough that he is well acquainted not only with relevant books but also with the innumerable Victorian treatises, novels, poems, paintings, and cartoons that illuminate his topic. He begins with a bountifully illustrated chapter on the "Papal Aggression" controversy of 1850-51. He follows that study by nine often surprisingly miscellaneous and disparate chapters that take the reader as far back as Victorian controversies about the origins of early Christianity and the genesis of the sixteenth-century Reformation, and as far forward as the 1890s.

In 1850 Pope Pius IX transformed the eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century Roman Catholic "mission church" into a hierarchical structure (overlapping that of the Church of England) divided into Episcopal dioceses and parishes and headed by the new Archbishop of Westminster (later Cardinal) Nicholas Wiseman. For many Englishmen and political leaders of the day, the decision meant an insidious and impertinent attempt to reverse the Protestant Reformation. In place of those very principles that had enabled England to prosper, the Catholics would substitute "the suppression of liberty" and "the tyranny of the priest over his flock and potentially of the Pope, a foreign prince, over the nation." Although Wheeler concedes that Wiseman had initially written in an unduly euphoric and triumphalist manner, he (surprisingly) describes the subsequent torrent of Protestant protest as "one of the strongest misreadings in modern British history." After all, as numerous recent converts (such as John Henry Newman) agreed and as one contemporary pamphleteer insisted, "Catholicism supplies a great want in the human heart, which no agency that is not virtually Catholic can supply."