

HURRELL FROUDE AND THE BEGINNINGS OF
THE MOVEMENT

FROM the days of its foundation in the sixteenth century it has always been possible to trace in the Established Church, side by side with the Puritan and Erastian traditions, a tradition of teaching which approximates very closely to the doctrines of Catholicism; a tradition which lays strong emphasis on the supernatural character of the visible Body of Christ, on the importance of the sacraments in the scheme of salvation and in consequence on the Catholic ideal of holiness. At times in the history of the Church of England this *Catholic* tradition has flourished widely, but never to the complete exclusion of other traditions, and at times these have appeared to squeeze the *Catholic* tradition almost out of existence. The beginning of the nineteenth century was such a time; with the Revolution of 1688 and the consequent schism of the Non-jurors the old *Catholic* High Churchmanship of the Caroline divines, with its solid Patristic learning, its sober but definite exposition of the corporate existence and supernatural basis of the Church of Christ and its insistence on sacramentalism, began to fade into obscurity. Political circumstances had much to do with the gradual disappearance of a school of thought which had almost dominated the Stuart period. The failure of the '45 made Jacobitism for ever a lost cause, and from that date Jacobite Toryism began to make terms with the established order and Jacobite churchmen drank the health of the Hanover kings. It was the hey-day of the moderate men, when Toryism absorbed much of the spirit of Whiggery, and in the process the High Church tradition of Laud and Andrewes, Pearson and Bull, closely linked as it was with the old order, became absorbed and lost in the central body of the Church of England, which as the century advanced continued to lose grip on supernatural ideals and came to look upon itself more and more as a department of State, the nation's representative

in those aspects of life which were touched by duty and morality.¹

It was a religion of common sense, suspicious of everything which savoured of ostentation and enthusiasm, content to lay emphasis on morals rather than on doctrine and to found its claim to guide the conscience of the nation more on its close union with the state than on any direct or supernatural commission from Heaven. It is a far cry from the penetrating holiness of George Herbert and Nicholas Ferrar to the comfortable, commonsense moralism of Parson Woodforde, but that transition represents the change in English religion which the eighteenth century records. The Methodist movement might have turned the tide, but the coldness and suspicion of the authorities and the later tenets of its founders forced it to seek outlets beyond the bounds of the Church of England, and only a few of Wesley's followers remained to make in the Evangelical Revival a deep religious impression on a narrow and isolated section of Church life.

That the main body of the Church of England had sunk, by the year 1800, to a very low level is denied by none, though opinions may differ as to the extent of the prevalent apathy. Apathy, neglect and entrenched abuse there were, however, and the events which followed the end of the long period of war in 1815 were in process of creating

¹ An extract from Lawrence Sterne's answers to the Visitation questions of Archbishop Drummond of York in 1764 is a commentary on this loss of supernatural ideals during the eighteenth century. In reply to the question, 'Have you a residing curate?' Sterne writes: '. . . the curate's name is Kilner, he has served the cure two years and a half. By some mistake or other either on his side or mine, something has ever prevented his obtaining Priest's orders. He shall offer himself to your Grace the next Ordination.' On which Canon Ollard remarks: 'The least pleasant feature of his own Return is his off-hand, almost jaunty way of writing about his curate's ordination to the Priesthood, as if it were a mere compliance with some technical formality which had been forgotten through carelessness.'—*Times Literary Supplement*, May 25th, 1933: Sterne as a Parish Priest, by S. L. Ollard, p. 364.

BLACKFRIARS

a new state of society in which vested interest, prescriptive right and entrenched abuse were liable to be scrutinised and called in question. The Church of England, Tory for the most part and hostile to all reform, was out of sympathy with the new aspirations and felt that her prestige and position were in danger. It was to meet this danger that the Movement began.

It began because Hurrell Froude (and Newman through Froude) saw in the life of one man the embodiment of a spirit and of ideals which they instinctively felt to be the true spirit and ideals of the Church of England. That man was John Keble. The Caroline tradition was by no means dead. Here and there in country parishes and in isolated town churches were men who had continued faithfully preaching the doctrines of the Real Presence, Apostolical Succession and the Visible Church; who inculcated a deep reverence for the 'sacrament' and taught their people to receive it fasting. But this small and scattered group regarded themselves and were regarded by those around them as a survival from former days; they had lost their missionary spirit, the desire to propagate the truths they held beyond the borders of their parishes, and with it, too, they had lost something of the asceticism and personal holiness which had been characteristic of the old High Church tradition; the spirit of the times had got hold of them and had produced in them a state of comfortable acquiescence in the apathy and laxity around them.²

John Keble had been born and brought up in the Caroline tradition. His father, John Keble senior, Rector of

² ' [Mr. Fortescue] is of a non-juring family, and was taught secretly Catholic doctrine and practice from a child. From a child I have heard he has gone to confession. When at Wadham people could not make him out, he lived by himself. After a while, to his surprise he found the things he had been taught to keep secret as being a *disciplina arcani* common talk. He has had a most wonderful influence in his neighbourhood, more than anyone in the Church, I suppose.'—*Letters and Correspondence of J. H. Newman*, Vol. II, p. 435. Newman to Mrs. J. Mozley, August 13th, 1844.

Coln St. Aldwyn in Gloucestershire, himself held and taught his children to believe the doctrines of the Real Presence and of Apostolical Succession. Keble used to say in after life that he had never taught anything that he had not learned as a child. The family was traditionally Jacobite in sympathy and had affinities with the Non-jurors. Deeply religious, Keble combined with great intellectual gifts and attractive sweetness of character an extraordinary humility and self-effacement which led him, in 1823, when at the height of his career at Oxford³ to abandon his position and retire into the country to minister to a few hundred labourers in a village curacy. It is to this singularly characteristic action that the origin of the Movement can be traced, for Hurrell Froude with two other pupils—Isaac Williams and R. I. Wilberforce—joined Keble at Southrop during the Long Vacation to read for their degrees. Here Froude came for the first time completely under Keble's influence. The result was a tremendous change in Froude; his ardent nature, always more inclined to action than to contemplation, found in Keble's ideas and teaching a programme for his crusading instincts. Here was the remedy for the liberalism that was invading the Church and for the ills and abuses that were sapping its life. The principles which Keble believed in and practised so unobtrusively must be brought out and proclaimed from the housetops as the one means of saving the Church of England from herself and from her enemies. 'Froude,' writes Dean Church, 'took in from Keble all he had to communicate—principles, convictions, moral rules and standards of life, hopes, fears, antipathies. And his keenly-tempered intellect, and his determination and high courage gave a point and an impulse of their own to Keble's views and purposes. As things came to look darker, and dangers seemed more serious to the Church, its faith or its rights, the interchange

³ 'I sat next to Keble . . . he is more like an undergraduate than the first man in Oxford; so perfectly unassuming and unaffected in his manner.'—*Letters and Correspondence*, Vol. I, p. 72.

of thought between master and disciple, in talk and in letter, pointed more and more to the coming necessity of action; and Froude at least had no objections to the business of an agitator.⁴ Thus was the first impulse to the Movement given.

Meanwhile Newman, mainly influenced by his study of the Fathers, was moving gradually from his early Evangelicalism and from the Liberalism to which he had inclined during the first years of his Oriel Fellowship towards the religion of the Primitive Church as interpreted by the Caroline divines. In 1826 Froude became a member of the Oriel Common Room and from the next few years dates the strong friendship which grew up between them. It was at this time, too, that Froude did 'the one good thing in his life' by bringing Keble and Newman to know each other. There can be no doubt that Newman was greatly influenced by Froude, though the two men differed widely in character and mental outlook. Froude's was a bold and slashing intellect, leading him to positions which were, for the time, extremely startling.⁵ 'He professed openly his admiration of the Church of Rome, and his hatred of the Reformers. He delighted in the notion of an hierarchical system, of sacerdotal power and of full ecclesiastical liberty. He felt scorn of the maxim, 'The Bible and the Bible only is the religion of Protestants'; and he gloried in accepting Tradition as a main instrument of religious teaching. He had a high, severe idea of the intrinsic excellence of Virginity; and he considered the Blessed Virgin its great pattern. He delighted in thinking of the saints; he had a keen appreciation of the idea of sanctity, its possibility and its heights; and he was more than inclined to believe a large amount of miraculous interference as occurring in

⁴ *The Oxford Movement*, 1833-1845, ch. ij, p. 24.

⁵ 'I am every day becoming a less and less loyal son of the Reformation. It appears to me plain that in all matters that seem to us indifferent or even doubtful we should conform our practices to those of the Church which has preserved its traditional practices unbroken.'—*Remains*, Vol. I, p. 336.

the early and middle ages. He embraced the principle of penance and mortification. He had a deep devotion to the Real Presence, in which he had a firm faith. He was powerfully drawn to the Medieval Church, but not to the Primitive.⁶ Newman, far more subtle and more cautious, though strongly attracted by the personality of Froude, did not give an easy assent to his conclusions. 'It is difficult to enumerate the precise additions to my theological creed which I derived from a friend to whom I owe so much. He made me look with admiration towards the Church of Rome and in the same degree to dislike the Reformation. He fixed deep in me the idea of devotion to the Blessed Virgin, and he led me gradually to believe in the Real Presence.'⁷ But it is easy to discern that Froude's crusading spirit inspired Newman, as it inspired Keble, with a strong feeling of the imperative necessity of action if the Church of England was to be saved and revived.⁸

The Mediterranean voyage undertaken in December 1832 on account of Froude's illness defined and crystallised the visions and ideals of the two friends; what they saw in Rome, Naples and Sicily and still more their discussions about the state of things at home convinced them that they had a mission to make the Church at home a true representative of the wider community, the Church Catholic and Apostolic, in which they had come to believe. Speaking of his reading of the Fathers in connection with the *History of the Arians* in the summer of 1832 Newman writes: 'With the establishment thus divided and threatened, thus ignorant of its true strength, I compared that fresh vigorous power of which I was reading in the first centuries . . . I said to myself, "Look on this picture and

⁶ *Apologia*. History of my Religious Opinions up to 1833, p. 85.

⁷ *Ibidem*. p. 87.

⁸ 'Do keep writing to Keble and stirring his rage,' he writes to Newman on November 17th, 1833, 'he is my fire but I may be his poker.'—*Letters and Correspondence*, Vol. 1, p. 484.

on that"; I felt affection for my own Church but not tenderness; I felt dismay at her prospects, anger and scorn at her do-nothing perplexity. I thought that if Liberalism once got a footing within her, it was sure of the victory in the event. I saw that Reformation principles were powerless to rescue her. As to leaving her, the thought never crossed my imagination; still I ever kept before me that there was something greater than the Established Church, and that that was the Church Catholic and Apostolic, set up from the beginning, of which she was but the local presence and organ. She must be dealt with strongly, or she would be lost. There was need of a second Reformation.⁹

The collection of verses, mostly written during the Mediterranean voyage for the *British Magazine* and afterwards published as *Lyra Apostolica* is filled with this spirit of mission and of zeal. The motto on its title page, a line from Homer chosen by Froude, indicates the feeling of the two friends and their sense of the seriousness of the struggle that lay before them, 'And let them know that I have abstained too long from war.' There is a warlike note of defiance running through the whole book, and below this warlike note an undertone of bold confidence in the ultimate triumph of the cause. This is Froude's spirit and little though he wrote we feel as we read that it is he who has inspired the gentleness of Keble and the delicate sensitiveness of Newman with the eager and impetuous force of his own nature.

The enemy is Liberalism.

But, as for zeal and quick-eyed sanctity
And the dread depths of grace, ye passed them by
And so ye halve the Truth—¹⁰

And the choice must be made.

But ways must have an end,
Creeds undergo the trial flame,

⁹ *Apologia* : ibidem, p. 95.

¹⁰ *Lyra Apostolica* (10th edition), cix, p. 142.

Nor with the impure the Saints for ever blend
Heaven's glory with our shame—
Think on that hour and choose 'twixt soft and bold.¹¹

Confidence is needed.

Faint not, and fret not for threatened woe,
Watchman on Truth's grey height!
Few though the faithful, and fierce though the foe,
Weakness is aye Heaven's might.¹²

The weapons are love through zeal.

And would'st thou reach, rash scholar mine,
Love's high unruffled state?
Awake! thy easy dream resign:
First learn thee how to hate.¹³

And the end must be attained through suffering.

. . . . then welcome, whirlwind, anger, woe,
Welcome the flash that wakes the slumbering fold
Th' Almighty Pastor's arm and eye to know,
And turn their dreamy talk to holy Fear's stern glow.¹⁴
But, should earth-dust, from court or school of men,
Have dimmed thy bridal gear,
When Wrath next walks his rounds, and in Heaven's ken
Thy charge and works appear
Ah! thou must SUFFER then!¹⁵

The Assize Sermon was preached on July 14th, 1833, the Sunday after Newman's return to England from the Mediterranean—he had remained behind in Sicily on account of illness when the Froudes returned. The sermon has become famous, not because it made any stir at the time or caused any special comment, but because in Newman's mind it marked the start of the Movement.¹⁶ It was

¹¹ *Ibid.* c. p. 131.

¹² *Ibid.* lxxxvii, p. 109.

¹³ *Ibid.* lxxxii, p. 102.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* cxxxiv, p. 181.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* cxx, p. 161.

¹⁶ *Vide*, NEWMAN, by F. L. Cross. Appendix iv, the Myth of July 14th, 1833.

BLACKFRIARS

the first sermon he had heard after a long absence from home and it gave expression to thoughts and determinations that had been occupying his mind during the past months. He had returned to familiar surroundings with the feeling strong upon him that he had a special work to do; that he was, as Froude expressed it, to make a row in the world, and Keble's words were a call to him to begin. In the making of that row Froude was prevented by his illness and premature death from taking his proper share; but he had done his work in passing on to Newman the teaching and ideals of Keble from which the whole subsequent movement developed, though in such diverse directions. 'Keble had given the inspiration, Froude had given the impulse, then Newman took up the work and the impulse henceforward and the direction were his.'¹⁷

HENRY ST. JOHN, O.P.

¹⁷ *The Oxford Movement, 1833-1845*, chapter II, p. 28.