

# BLACKFRIARS

(With which is incorporated *The Catholic Review*.)

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## EDITORIAL NOTES

IT has seemed just that the centenary of the Oxford Movement should have recognition as an event of outstanding importance. As to the exact date for its beginning there are a variety of answers. Perhaps that day was the first of its effective beginning on which Newman and Hurrell Froude met. Between them the fires were lighted that exploded the old Church of England. They were the true begetters of the movement as a movement. But for them little actual stirring had taken place. Newman, it is remembered, dated it from the Assize Sermon on July 14th, 1833; an anniversary of another sort, too, for on July 14th, 1789, the Bastille had been taken and destroyed, and the Revolution begun. But in spite of Newman's distinct statement to that effect the trend of writers now is to point to the unimportance of that sermon in the eyes of contemporaries. Perhaps contemporaries are no exact judges of the beginnings of new epochs. Perhaps dates are always artificial or arbitrary symbols. Let us take it that they are symbols and accept them as such.

Again who was the real leader of the Movement? The Anglo-Catholic to-day naturally says Keble or Pusey. To Dean Church, who lived through it and whose account of it is still the best, most paintaking, least prejudiced, there is only one leader. Indeed Newman through the book

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figures under the name of the leader; often he is called nothing else. But again perhaps it does not matter very much. At least Newman was quite vigorous in his repudiation of it: 'For myself I was not the person to take the lead of a party; I never was from first to last more than a leading author of the school nor did I ever wish to be anything else. This is my own account of the matter and I say it neither as intending to disown the responsibility of what was done nor as ungrateful to those who at that time made more of me than I deserved and did more for my sake and at my bidding than I realised myself.' Newman then refused to accept any account of the Movement that attributed the leadership of it to him. Yet it is possible to think that he underestimated his place in it: 'To the last I never recognised the hold I had over young men.' Still it hardly matters who the leader was, since what matters most is where the Movement led.

Where did it lead? Again to read the books lately produced on the Movement is to be left in uncertainty. Was it or was it not Rome? It will be remembered that in his painstaking account of his own ideas when the Movement began and of their progress during it Newman says his certainties at first were three. He was certain of the principle of dogma, of definite religious teaching based on that dogma (the visible Church, the sacraments as channels of grace, etc.), and on the wrongness of Rome. Gradually as the Movement continued he tried to draw out a theological system to express 'in a substantive form a living Church of England in a position proper to herself and founded on distinct principles.' In this 'tentative work' as he called it then and after, he was led by his study of the Laudian divines to base the definite position of the Anglican Church in its relation to the other Churches of the West on its clear and continuous and unique witness to 'the Church of Antiquity.' In his view the Anglican Church with whatever defects it might have was of all the Christian bodies the nearest to the Church of the Fathers in belief, ritual, and temper. He was willing to allow that Rome had done much to foster the idea of unity (somehow unity with him is almost always inclusive of catholicity), but antiquity or apostolicity was the peculiar note of Anglicanism. This was important, for he had from the beginning seen clearly

that 'antiquity was the true exponent of the doctrines of Christianity.'

To antiquity then he went, nothing fearing. It was antiquity that drove him to the Faith. Note that it was not the Papacy but the Church of Rome that drew him; the Church of Rome as the Church of the Fathers. 'Our strong point is the argument from primitiveness' was an earlier saying of his. But primitiveness showed him no parallel with Anglicanism other than heresy and schism. Only Rome emerged from the past as the centre of unity. Rome had always been in evidence as the court of appeal. Rome had defended the truth always. Rome alone had been proved right. If in the primitive days Rome had been right always, what were their grounds for supposing she was wrong now? Moreover if the appeal to antiquity was all that Anglicanism had that was distinctive, and if this appeal was far stronger, when tested, in the case of Rome than of England, why did he halt between the two any longer? What held him back? There were the hereditary prejudices against Rome's errors. But was it quite clear that these were errors or that they had been taught by Rome?

In the midst of his confused state of mind when he had become resentful of the false witness of the Anglican divines, a sentence of St. Augustine's reached him quoted by Dr. Wiseman, who was then following the Movement with acumen and careful argument. He had already brought out the very point that Newman himself had been hurt to discover, namely that Donatists and Monophysites were Anglicans of an earlier day, or at least that this was as plausible an explanation of the position of Anglicanism as Newman's own. How was he to decide whether his theory or the Roman theory fitted better to the facts? Development was certainly possible as the Romans claimed. Had it taken place? That would need to be worked out in detail. The position was too critical to be settled except by an appeal to the facts of Antiquity. But even then was it not the very crux of the controversy that besides the facts which were indeed after much labour possibly ascertainable, the hypothesis by which the facts were best interpreted would still be in dispute? That was true. England was

no judge nor Rome, since they were the parties in dispute. Who, then, should decide?

Hesitant, disconcerted, annoyed by the paper logic of his unsought pupils, hoping to find his *via media* that would justify him staying where he was, he read and forgot and read again and was at last stung by the great saying of Augustine: *securus judicat orbis terrarum*. This was not an argument but a tribunal. Let the arguments go on, let the advocates plead, let counsel cross-examine as carefully and brutally as they would: at least the Supreme Court was already known, it was listening, it was unprejudiced, it was venerable, it was above passion, above nationality, above race or age or culture, above the littlenesses of all men, above cajolery or threat or flattery: 'By those great words of the ancient father the theory of the *via media* was absolutely pulverised.' The Court was clear and unanimous. Its findings beyond challenge. The *orbis terrarum* could in no wise be said to have anything to say in defence of England. The world at large had already decided that if either party was right it must be Rome. From that verdict the religious world of to-day has not removed. If either is right, no one supposes that Rome has defaulted. If England is right against Rome then the whole Catholic system is wrong beyond redemption. No one now supposes that England is right. No one now would maintain the old position of the earlier Oxford Movement. With Newman's secession it went overboard. Some wait for Corporate Reunion, some think that reliance on dogma is the cause of the original mistake, some have long ago renounced the hope of discovering the original message of Christ: every one who accepts both Rome and England as parts of the same Catholic Church would agree that of the two only England can really alter, of the two only Rome is really right. Does it very much matter who begun the movement that abutted on this? Does it very much matter when exactly it began? Is it very much to the point to urge that Newman was a difficult man to live with? 'His greatness, not his littleness, concerns mankind.' Newman was too much of a realist to have minded these minor quarrels. His line of argument is proved to have been fundamentally right. The Anglo-Catholics have slowly and painfully followed it, not wanting to but compelled thereto by the argu-

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ments he accepted long ago. To them he is the leader whether they will or no. Only the pace at which they will travel is argued over nowadays, only the time when they will arrive. That their movement must follow him is patent to themselves. May the Lord, for the sake of the Elect that be with Him, shorten those days!

We feel that BLACKFRIARS has a special reason for being interested in the Movement. The site of the Priory was once occupied in part by Dr. Ogle's house. His title-deeds we have, stretching from 1823 to 1856. They are our title-deeds to the claim of being the last house Newman entered before he left Oxford for good. 'I left Oxford for good on Monday, February 23rd, 1846. On the Saturday and Sunday before, I was in my house in Littlemore, simply by myself, as I had been for the first day or two when I had originally taken possession of it. I slept on Sunday night at my dear friend's, Mr. Johnson's, at the Observatory. Various friends came to see the last of me; Mr. Copeland, Mr. Church, Mr. Buckle, Mr. Patterson, and Mr. Lewis. Dr. Pusey too came up to take leave of me; *and I called on Dr. Ogle, one of my very oldest friends*, for he was my private tutor when I was an undergraduate. *In him I took leave of my first college, Trinity*, which was so dear to me. . . .' The rest of the passage many will know by heart.

A quarter of a century ago a little old man in a suit of brown used to waylay passers-by in St. Giles to tell them that he remembered well seeing 'Dr. Newman,' as he called him, coming down the little flight of steps that led from the house to the pavement and holding the hand-rail to steady himself as he descended, so moved was he or distressed or heart-sick at this severing of all his old ties. 'As he stepped down he reeled.' Was it not Disraeli who said that Newman's going had struck a blow at the Church of England from which she still reeled?

The articles that follow tell their own story and point their own moral. They show the sincere and patient labour of many years. Their witness it is not bitter but it is unmistakable. There will one day come the crowning proof that slow though Newman was determined to be, lest he should stumble, he yet took the step that his followers must

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one day take, now in isolation with courage and at a great cost or with others and in comfort or at last in the face of an angry world:

Although the day be ever so long  
At last it ringeth to evensong.

EDITOR.

## OBSERVATIONS

SKETCH. Almost exactly one hundred years ago a small and brilliant group of Oxford dons set out to rouse the Church of England from what appeared a spiritual sleep. The methods they employed were academic: they preached in the University, they wrote tracts which they distributed amongst the country parsonages, and by earnest word and holy life they attracted many of their own sort to their cause: *antiquam exquirite matrem*. Their Church, they said, was no mere sect, not a government department nor an institution offering careers to latitudinarian divines. She was, in spite of the anger and astonishment of her bishops, an integral part of the Catholic Church. They appealed to the Scriptures, to the Fathers, to the ancient liturgies of East and West, and even to the Thirty-Nine Articles.

Driven from Oxford, the Movement made its way among the parishes. The work of revival went on, and now the first centenary has been reached. Much has been accomplished, for there is scarcely a parish in England that has not felt in one way or another the influence of the Oxford Movement. Nor, it would seem, has the Catholic Church in this country lost very much on that account. From the time of Newman onwards the Movement has provided us with a steady stream of converts. If it has deterred many from joining our ranks, as some maintain, it is at least doubtful whether such as are thereby affected might not in any case have remained outside, untouched by our influence.

And the later movement, too, has a lesson to each us— a lesson of enthusiasm for an objective, of single-hearted