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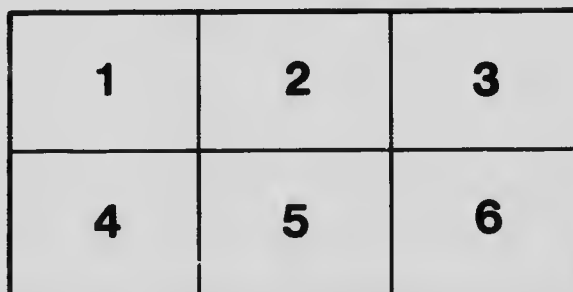
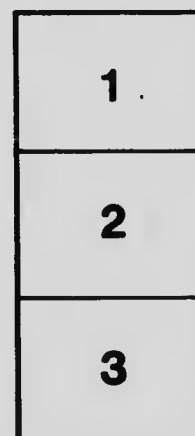
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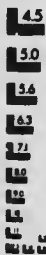
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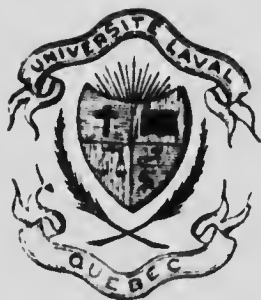
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The Conversion of the Anglican Monks of Caldey

By

Rev. C. Gagnon, D.D.,

Professor of Dogmatic Theology,

Laval University, Quebec.



The Catholic Truth Society of Canada

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1918

Imprimatur.

✠ L. N. BEGIN, CARD., *Archbishop of Quebec*

The Conversion of the Anglican Monks of Caldey

The fifth of March, 1913, on the little island of Caldey, in England, a whole community of Anglican Benedictines passed from Anglicanism to Catholicism; two days later thirty-four Anglican nuns residing at Milford Haven, near Caldey, and under the direction of the monks, took the same step.

This fact, unique in the history of the Church of England, has aroused the keenest interest among Protestants as well as Catholics and we have thought it useful to relate its history.

We shall deal with, first: the stages of this conversion; then we shall investigate its principal factors.

I. THE STAGES OF THE CONVERSION

(1) The Origin of the Community.

It was about the middle of the nineteenth century that the best Anglican spirits first caught the idea of the religious life.

Newman, without precisely having founded a community, had led at Littlemore with several friends, a sort of religious life; they observed faithfully a rather severe rule into which entered abstinence, the strict Lenten fast, that is, a sole meal a day; recited the breviary and even rose at midnight for Matins.

Soon after Oxford saw the beginning of the first community properly so called, that of the Fathers of Caldey.

About 1860 a rather strange personage, known as Father Ignatius, attempted to resurrect Benedictine life. He assembled a few brothers at Llantony Abbey in Wales, but did not succeed in infusing into them a religious spirit, which, moreover, he himself lacked; thus he could not retain more than a few sparse and ineffective groups.

Other communities, however, were formed of men and of women, which still exist, but they are devoted to the active life.

Caldey, with St. Bride, whose history is that of Caldey, was the first serious and authorized attempt at contemplative life, and it ended in the admirable as well as touching conversion which we are about to relate. God, it seems, in bringing back to the fold those sheep involuntarily strayed, wished at the same time to reward their good-will and to make it evident to all that the highest form of religious life is incompatible with heresy, be it purely material.

The founder of Caldey, Dom. Aelred Carlyle, was an Anglican Ritualist of the High Church party, upright, ardent and strong-souled; brought up in a strictly religious atmosphere, he had shown from his early days an eagerness for virtue and a desire for perfection.

At the age of twelve he read, by chance, the book, "Monks and Monasteries," by Rev. S. Fox, and it awakened in his heart an invincible love of the Monastic life; already he feels that he hears in his inmost soul the inviting voice of God calling him to become a Benedictine. From this day, not for an instant did he lose sight of the ideal that had ravished his heart and he set himself to its gradual realization. With succeeding years the conviction that he was called to the Benedictine life strengthened in him. He studied the conditions and the rule of St. Benedict, and in 1892, while yet a medical student, began to conform his life as much as possible to this rule. In 1893 he joined a community of Oblates of St. Benedict, a kind of Third Order, directed by an Anglican monk of London.

From now on his life work is definitely marked out—he is to devote himself wholly to the restoration in the Anglican Church of the Order of St. Benedict, dissolved in the sixteenth century by Henry VIII.

The Order is to be comprised of three degrees: First—that of men who, although living in the world, should keep the three vows, Chastity, Poverty and Obedience; then of men leading a community life and giving themselves up especially to parish work among the poor; finally, a community of contemplative monks living in the country, devoted entirely to prayer, study and work.

Carlyle immediately began the work of recruiting

subjects. At Ealing he succeeded in grouping ten young men, and with them for two years he fulfilled the first part of his programme.

Then he sought to pass to the second degree and thought of establishing in one of the poorer quarters of the east end of London; but no one wished to follow him and he went alone to meet the friend who had invited him to choose "Dog Island" as his field of action. Together they threw themselves with zeal and charity into the different functions of the active ministry, following to the letter the programme of the second degree of Benedictine life traced at the beginning.

Easter Sunday, 1896, Carlyle put on the white habit of St. Benedict and pronounced his religious vows as a novice. A year later, February 11th, 1897, he asked of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Temple, permission to make his profession and to re-establish in England the Order of St. Benedict. Formal permission being given him, February 14th, 1898, Carlyle, now assured of the success of his work, made profession and installed himself in the country to found his premier order of contemplative monks.

With two, then five, seven, and finally ten companions, he established himself successively at different places, and in spite of difficulties of all sorts, immediately put in force the constitutions and rules of the Benedictine Abbeys. In 1902 he was elected Abbot of the Monastery by the small group which he had founded. The election was soon ratified by the Archbishop, and October 30th, 1903, Carlyle was solemnly installed at the head of the community. The following year he was ordained priest—according to the Anglican rite, it goes without saying—and from this moment the little community was self-sufficing and functioned in the same manner as a Catholic community.

In 1906 Carlyle learned that Caldey was offered for sale; he had already made a short sojourn there with his monks, and he sought immediately to acquire it as a place to establish his community in a definite manner. Caldey attracted him especially, because for centuries it had been a monastic seat; during a thousand years, from the sixth to the sixteenth century, generations of monks

had lived there, and it seemed that there, better than anywhere else, religious life could bloom again flourishing and fecund.

Providence favored his plans; he was able to buy the little island, and on October 18th his monks made their formal entrance to the strains of the Catholic hymns, which had resounded there in former years. It was there that God had reserved for them the ineffable grace of conversion.

(2) First Steps Towards Light.

Let us now follow these generous and upright souls in their gradual progress towards "The House of Light," as Newman called it. Their first steps in this direction consisted in the adoption of the prayers, rites and usages of the Catholic Church; in absolute fidelity to all the points of the Benedictine rule; in the really edifying punctuality and fervor which characterized the accomplishment of their minutest religious obligations. While they thought they were simply perfecting the Anglican Church, their mother, they were beginning in fact to recede from her and to approach the Church of Rome. And their co-religionists, of the Low Church especially, did not fail to remark it. "Those imitation Benedictines," said one of their reviews, the *Church Intelligencer* (Dec., 1903), "who play at monks, seem destined to fill an important rôle in the attempt to place the Anglican Church at the service of Rome." The Church Association violently denounced "these petty monks, these traitors who hide themselves as so many Carbonaris and Ecclesiastical Fenians."

In the same review a much scandalized Protestant describes a day at Caldey. He cannot conceive how true Protestants could so servilely copy Roman Catholics. Thus, apropos of the recitation of Matins at midnight, he writes: "This office, as well as all others, is chanted in Latin; no one except the Abbot understands this tongue, but it matters little—there is incense and Gregorian music, that is enough." He mocks at the use of discipline and the "Culpa" (public accusation of breaches of the rule), he reproaches the monks for having given their chapel a strictly Roman appearance, and is indignant with them for this imitation which to his eyes is folly

and blasphemy. The monks, however, who see in this life—accidentally Roman, they say—only a return to old Catholic traditions, had no intention of departing an iota from their observance, while at the same time warding off all Roman faith and obedience; “we will follow you everywhere,” they said one day familiarly to their Abbot—“everywhere, save to Rome.”

They found, moreover, among members of the High Church party, sympathy, encouragement and support, which compensated a thousandfold for the sharp criticism of certain individuals of the Low Church party. Dom. Carlyle counted some friends among the Bishops and the highest personages of the Church of England. At Caldey all the population held him in respect and had recourse to his ministry; a fraternity or a Benedictine Third Order, founded by him, soon numbered nearly a thousand from among the inhabitants of Caldey and its environs. A review, “Pax,” founded in 1912, had in 1915 more than 15,000 subscribers; finally the Fathers had the great consolation of directing, at Milford Haven, not far from Caldey, a community of Benedictine Nuns, formerly founded by Father Ignatius, which had placed itself under their jurisdiction. Truly their situation was most brilliant and most satisfying; they were marvelously realizing the ideal they had always striven for. But no! in the midst of the consolations and advantages of their condition they did not enjoy that happiness of which religious life is ordinarily the source; that peace which their father, St. Benedict, had left, as a heritage to all his children, they experience but incompletely; something was lacking which they felt but could not well define.

Soon doubt creeps into their minds; they begin to realize the anomaly of their situation: sons of St. Benedict they are nevertheless excluded from the great Benedictine family; Romans, indeed, in all the details of their religious life, they are in the eyes of Rome but heretics and schismatics; eager for Unity and Catholicity they belong, nevertheless, to an independent and national church. They pray, they study, they reflect, but the doubt far from dying, grows and takes deeper root in their souls from day to day. The more they scrutinize

the words of the Master: "Ut omnes unum sint"; "that all may be one." the vision of Rome as the sole centre of unity becomes more defined, more precise and more insistent, and each one repeats within himself the words of the blind man of the gospel: "Domine ut videau," "Lord, that I may see."

It is thus that in the Spring of 1912 they are driven to examine to the very bottom their situation with regard to the Catholic Church, and to seek a ray of light for their tortured consciences. They pass the days of Lent in continual prayer, and in studying the difficulties which separated them from Rome, and one of them manifested by letter to the Abbot of the Monastery the sentiments which animate the souls of all: (1) "The questions we are considering, and the desire of the community that some definite decision should be made, have arisen, I believe, from a general conviction that we cannot go on much longer as we are, poised between two religions; we must eventually throw in our lot with the Church of England, or make our submission to the Holy See. Nominally we are Anglicans, or as it was put to us yesterday, we are a product of the Church of England; but in reality the community has been brought up on Roman Catholic food, if I may put it in that way; therefore our Breviary, Missal and devotional books contain doctrines which are not compatible with the teaching of the Church of England; e.g., the doctrine of Papal Supremacy. We have of necessity turned to the Roman Church for our liturgical and devotional books, and their constant use has naturally created feelings of gratitude and sympathy towards that great Communion, where the religious life and all that we hold most dear is found in its perfection; and, above all, it has fostered in us a keener sense of our isolation from the rest of the Catholic Church than most Anglicans can feel or understand, especially now that the Anglican Church is getting more and more self-sufficient and 'national.' . . . We have borrowed practically everything we have from the Roman Church, and it may be that we shall have to look to Rome for that authority and recognition of our faith and practice. which surely no Anglican Bishop true to his

(1) Cf. The Tablet, March 8th, 1913, p. 361.

principles can give us; and so we are brought face to face with the Papal claim: it is a claim which we cannot ignore or put lightly aside; if it is true, it means that we, and millions of souls, are cut off from the visible Church; if it is false, then it means what to my mind is worse, that one-half of Christendom is fundamentally heretical in doctrine, and the other half split up into innumerable antagonistic camps and such a state of anarchy as to make Christianity a by-word among the heathen." These excerpts are significant; they show clearly the state of mind of the monks one year before their conversion and indicate the road they had traveled during ten years; they demonstrate that intense work had been done which could not remain incomplete; and that now was to come from above the clear light which would disperse all their doubts and bring back peace to their souls.

(3) The Crisis and the Decisive Step.

Now comes the light from above. Providence has disposed all things so that the final solution is soon to come. The supreme crisis is at hand, the decisive step is to be taken, now the return to the fold, the entry into the "House of Light."

Dom. Carlyle, authorized by Dr. Temple to found his community, wished to have this first approbation renewed by his successor in the seat of Canterbury, Dr. Davidson. December 13th, 1911, he wrote to him asking permission to preach and exercise the ministry throughout the whole ecclesiastical province. The new Archbishop demanded first that the community should choose an episcopal visitor who would conduct all things in his name and suggested Dr. Gore, of Oxford. Dom. Carlyle, after seeking advice from the community, invited. October, 1913, Dr. Gore to spend a day at Caldey and made known to him that he had the intention of choosing him as visitor. Dr. Gore did not go personally to Caldey, but commissioned two clergymen to make an inquiry into the life that was led there. The two clergymen, the Revs. Stone and Trevelyan, arrived at Caldey January 3rd, 1913, and at the end of the month submitted to the Bishop a detailed report which was in the plan of Providence, to bring about a definite rupture.

The 8th of February the Bishop of Oxford wrote thus to Dom. Carlyle: "I am certain that neither I nor any other Bishop could become visitor of your community without the priests belonging to the community taking the usual oath and making the usual declaration before they were allowed to minister. The result of this would be in my judgment that certainly the Liturgy, that is, the Communion Office of the Prayer Book, would have to become exclusively the rite in use in the chapel or chapels of the community, and the priests, whatever else they said, would be bound to the recitation of the Morning and Evening Prayer." He demands next that the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin and the Corporal Assumption be eliminated from the Breviary and Missal and that the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and Benediction given with the Blessed Sacrament be abandoned. He concludes: "I cannot promise that this list is exclusive. I should have very carefully to attend to a number of details and bear in mind on the one hand the general principle of policy and on the other hand the exceptional position of your community. But what I have stated above are preliminaries that seem to me to be obvious and to lie outside all possibilities of bargaining and concession, and I do not think it is worth while going on until these preliminary points are taken for granted."

Carlyle was thunderstruck; he could not believe that the authorities would demand the abandonment of what constituted the very essence of their religious life. He dared not communicate this letter to his monks, and therefore wrote to the Bishop of Oxford to let him know his apprehensions: (1) "All this being so, I am sure that to read them your letter asking at the outset for the unconditional surrender of what they value so much, will perplex them and cause unnecessary doubt and dismay. The difficulty might, I think, be avoided if you could send me a few words stating your general position, and telling them what, in your opinion, might be allowed by the explicit or implied teaching of the Church of England in regard to dogmatic expressions of our faith. As a community,

(1) Tablet, 1913, page 370.

our faith and practice are identical with those of hundreds of Church of England people; and one of the chief questions that will come up is whether we can, as a community, be allowed to believe, and express with due episcopal sanction, what so many others in ordinary parochial life believe and practise as individuals."

Then the Abbot named the following points, upon which he begged the Bishop to pronounce: The Real Presence, the Public Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, the Invocation of the Blessed Virgin and the Saints, the Benedictine Breviary, Prayers and Mass for the Dead, the use of Latin in the Communion Service, and he concludes: "These are, I think, the essential matters that will at once call for consideration, and I do not think it surprising at the present time that the community should need some assurance on these points, considering the extraordinary diversity of belief" in the Anglican Church.

It is evident that Dom. Carlyle wished to remain in the Anglican Church, and it seems he would have been reassured, and his community with him, should the authorities have approved at least the essentials; i.e., their religious ideal and their mode of life, which was truly Evangelical, being borrowed from the ancient monks. But the Bishop of Oxford insisted in his reply, 14th of February, on the demands of his first letter; he would not oppose positively the doctrines of the Real Presence and of its Adoration, but the public exposition as well as the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament were to be done away with absolutely. The same was affirmed of the Latin, the Liturgy, and other Roman devotions mentioned in his first letter.

The hour of God is at hand. Dom. Carlyle assembled the community and read them the two letters from the Bishop. The monks quickly comprehended the exceptional gravity of the situation and how far-reaching their decision would be; the Anglican authorities put them squarely up against the following dilemma: either to abandon the religious ideal which had banded them together, or to separate from the Church with which they are in formal disagreement. (1) "There is no place for

(1) "Les Etudes," 20 Avril, 1913, p. 271.

them in the Anglican Church, except on condition of their renouncing their ideal or dissimulating its pursuit. Either course would be disloyal and cowardly."

Dom. Carlyle invited his monks to pray and meditate, then to give a written and definite answer, in order that the final decision should be given with the full knowledge and consent of each; and twenty-seven out of thirty-one came to the identical decision—they wished to enter the Catholic Church. The Abbot immediately wrote the following short letter and sent it to the Bishop of Oxford:—

(1) The Abbey, Isle of Caldey, near Tenby,
February 19th, 1913.

To the Right Reverend the Bishop of Oxford:

My Lord Bishop,—We have as a community carefully considered your last two letters, and are agreed that we cannot conscientiously submit to the demands you make of us.

In view of your Lordship's request for the immediate surrender of property, Liturgy and devotions, together with your definite refusal to give any sort of assurance of what you might further require of us, did we accede to your present wishes, we are sure that our life as a contemplative community under the Benedictine Rule would be quite impossible. The preliminaries that seem to your Lordship so obvious as to "lie outside all possibilities of bargaining and concession," concern matters which are vital to our conception of the Catholic faith; and your requirements are so decisive that we are forced to act upon what we believe to be God's will for us.

With great respect, we are, my Lord Bishop,
Your faithful servants,

(Signed) DOM. AELRED CARLYLE, Abbot.

The letter is signed by the Abbot, nineteen professed Fathers, four Novices and three Oblates.

The Bishop did not expect such a categorical refusal; he thought, no doubt, that the matter would be arranged and that at Caldey, as elsewhere, private beliefs could be, for all practical purposes, conciliated with the official exigencies of the authorities. He wrote, 21st February, to Dom. Carlyle and invited him to reconsider the ques-

(1) Tablet, 1913, page 370.

tion and to have the community withdraw its decision.

Carlyle replied the same day and in a long letter (1) explained to the Bishop that the monks could not come to any other decision than that they had already taken. He thanked the Bishop for his letter, "which has been the means of revealing God's will to the community," and adds, "our conclusion is that we are thrown back upon the strictly Papal basis of authority. . . . we cannot go on as a mere matter of expediency, and we dare not play with what has become clear to us.

"We have faced the question and, having done so, must neglect mere spiritual convenience, and do what we are compelled to do with a single eye to God's glory and the fulfillment of His will. (2) In this great crisis through which as a community we are passing, there is little or no difference of opinion; upon the main question there is none at all—i.e., it is impossible to submit to your requirements. Apart from this there is the question of personal conviction. It is an individual responsibility. I myself have decided that it would be wrong for me to remain where I am; and I have ceased to minister at the altar. Each individual has come to his own conclusion in his own way, and our decision is no corporate act except in the sense that what we do as individuals we have decided to do as a community. . . . Up to this moment I have taken no sort of action, and there have been no negotiations whatsoever with any Roman Catholic. When this letter to you is finished, and I have written a note to the Archbishop of Canterbury, I am going to invite Dom. Bede Camm, O.S.B., who has not the least idea of what has been taking place, to come to Caldey to give us his help and advice. I am asking Dom. Bede Camm as one who is a convert himself and a Benedictine; but I have never seen him. I feel sure there will be misunderstanding upon this point, so that I wish to state emphatically that Dom. Bede will be the first Roman Catholic I have approached on the subject. We have made no plans of any sort, and there is no idea of making terms with the Roman authorities. It is just absolute and unconditional submission for us; such sub-

(1) Tablet, 1913, page 371.

(2) Tablet, 1913, p. 372.

mission that we could not give to you because of the conditions you laid down which were contrary to our faith and conscience. Everything in the future we leave to the good Providence of God. This only is certain, that we can no longer remain in the Church of England." And, in fact, he wrote, the same day, a short note to the Archbishop of Canterbury, to inform him that negotiations with the Bishop of Oxford were broken and that the community was going to solicit admission into the Church of Rome. He wrote also to Dom. Bede Camm, asking him to come to Caldey, "to give us the benefit of your help and advice" with regard to "our reception into the Roman Catholic Church. . . . God has clearly shown us His will and we are prepared to submit to the authority of the Holy See completely and unreservedly."

"What priest," wrote Dom. Bede several days later, "could resist such an appeal?" He left immediately for Caldey.

(4) Supernatural Joys of Conversion.

Henceforth the joys of conversion will occupy our attention in narrating this great event. Dom. Bede Camm arrived on the 25th of February, "with some prejudices and some degree of mistrust," he writes in the Tablet (1). "I can only say, now that I have seen and known them, now that I have beheld the visible and evident marks of God's blessing on the work all around me, that I am amazed at the miracles that God's grace has wrought in these souls."

On 28th February Dom. Bede was authorized to say mass for them; it was the first veritable mass in this chapel, which had for six years been prepared for it. On the 1st March the community began a Triduum to the Holy Ghost; then a short retreat preparatory to the great act of entering the true fold. On the 5th March which, by a providential coincidence was the Feast of St. Aelred, took place the ever memorable solemnity of the reception of the new converts into the Catholic Church.

"After the community had sung Tierce," recounts

(1) Tablet, page 362.

Dom. Bede (1), "the Bishop (2) vested, and, with assistants, entered the sanctuary. The Abbot knelt at a prie-dieu at the entrance to the choir. Before him was laid open a book of the Gospels. After the solemn singing of the "Veni Creator," the whole community, kneeling round their Abbot, made simultaneously their profession of faith, and received from the Bishop absolution from censures. I think those who witnessed this ceremony will never forget it. It was certainly the most moving sight I have ever seen, and it was difficult to restrain one's tears. Those who needed conditional Baptism then received it from his Lordship in the sacristy, and after completing their confessions and receiving absolution, they assembled once more in the choir to sing a solemn "Te Deum" of thanksgiving. The Bishop then said the mass, and gave Holy Communion to the neophytes. It would be difficult to describe or even imagine the joy that filled the hearts of all of us that day." Thus ended in a sort of apotheosis the work of God begun fifteen years before.

Caldey was followed by St. Bride, the monastery of Anglican nuns directed by the Fathers of Caldey. The 7th of March they made, in their turn, before the Bishop of Menevia, Mgr. Mostyn, their abjuration of error and profession of Catholic faith. Thirty-four out of thirty-seven had expressly demanded admission into the true Church and the joys of return were, for them as well as for the monks, unalloyed. A message from Rome came to complete their happiness. Cardinal Merry Del Val sent the following telegram to Dom. Camm: "The Holy Father affectionately blesses the new converts on the occasion of their reception into the fold and prays God to grant them an abundance of His graces. Please convey to all my profound and affectionate sympathy."

EPILOGUE

After this happy beginning, it remained for the converts to prepare for their official admission into the great Benedictine family and to meet and overcome the inconveniences of their exit from the Anglican Church.

The first task was relatively easy: Carlyle went to

(1) Tablet, 1913, page 429.

(2) Mgr. Mostyn, Bishop of Menevia.

Rome, obtained from Pius X the necessary dispensations, and shortly after the house of Caldey was canonically erected as a Benedictine monastery; there the monks passed their novitiate, while Carlyle made his at the Monastery of Maredous. A year later Father Aelred Carlyle made his solemn profession and on the 5th of July was ordained priest; then in August he resumed, with the title of Abbot of the monastery, the direction, duly authorized this time, of the sons of St. Benedict, whom he himself had providentially led back to their Father's house.

In the Anglican Church the conversion of Caldey created an immense stir. "The news," said a correspondent, "has moved all England." The Church Times, the organ of the Ritualists, criticized in bitter terms what it called a defection and a refusal of obedience to the Bishop. Lord Halifax was of the opinion that they ought to have remained in the Anglican Church in spite of the Bishops. "Is it not a fact," he said, "that the whole episcopate, with a few exceptions, began by suppressing this renaissance (referring to the Catholic movement and its varying progress) and only accepted its results when the battle had been waged and won by others?" All the Low Church organs renewed their invectives against "these traitors, these agents of Romanism" whom they had at all times denounced. Then letters began to flow into Caldey, some full of deceit, others blaming them and others still filled with anger and abuse.

Several complained of a misappropriation of the gifts which had been made to Caldey and claims arrived from irritated donors seeking the recovery of the sums they had given. Dom. Carlyle returned to all claimants the gifts they had donated, and, wishing to obviate all criticism, confided to a commission composed of two Catholics and two Anglicans, the work of settling all difficulties of a pecuniary nature raised by the conversion of the community. By the decision of this committee Caldey found itself encumbered with a debt amounting to \$15,000, but the monks had placed themselves above all suspicion—"above board," as Lord Halifax expressed it.

Their magazine, "Pax," lost most of its subscribers,

and their sources of revenue were for the most part closed to them. The monks, however, committed all to the care of Providence which, in fact, did not fail to provide them with other benefactors from among their new Catholic brethren.

The story of the conversion ends with the settlement of these difficulties. The Monastery of Caldey has continued, since that time, the full and peaceful life inaugurated the 5th of March, 1913, and it has perpetuated on this little island the traditions of the Sons of St. Benedict.

In silence and recollection, and with joyful satisfaction the monks have verified every day those words of their Abbot: "Our vocation is to pray, to work and to suffer in order that the sin of schism between England and the Holy See may be pardoned, and the separation come to an end: may God grant that this day be not far off."

SECOND PART

The Factors of the Conversion.

It now remains to determine the elements which have especially concurred in bringing about this admirable conversion and to point out its principal factors. We shall not consider separately the divine factor, that is, Grace, because this factor is practically confounded with the human factors and to it they owe their virtue and their efficacy: "Sine me nihil protestis facere." It is Grace from above which together with the intellect and will begets and ripens in us all the fruits of salvation; and it is to it that the monks of Caldey owe their conversion to the true Faith; for it was Grace that urged them, sustained them and directed their steps towards the "House of Light" of which we have spoken above. Let us add that the mysterious action of Grace always adapts itself—and Caldey is no exception to this rule of Providence—to the needs of each and all, gently attracting the soul to God without in any way interfering with nature, and leaving intact its share of free co-operation. What, then, are the human factors in the conversion of Caldey?

They may be reduced to two classes, according as they refer to the intellect or to the will.

The Intellectual Factors.

The intellectual factors are especially, with study,

reflection and the force of logic, the principles which constantly inspired the monks in the course of their search for truth; these principles, which were the motive of all their actions, are two, the principle of Unity and the principle of Authority in the Church of Christ.

The Principle of Unity.

The authentic exposition of the doctrine of Jesus Christ has taught us Catholics that one mark of His Church is perfect unity (of doctrine, worship and government), with which He Himself has marked it. The Protestants, in virtue of their principle of free interpretation, substitute for the concept of society that of individualism, and for the principle of unity that of division. They admit no other society but the invisible one of souls which believe in Christ, and they leave to each one the work of determining his particular Credo, with the right of interpreting, according to his own pleasure or, at least, according to his own judgment, Divine Scripture, "the sole source," they say, of revelation. Thus they have been led to a veritable Bolshevism in matters of doctrine, the necessary consequence of which is an infinite variety of sects of all styles and colors.

However, it must be affirmed that the Anglican Protestants have, more than any others, safeguarded the concept of the one and visible Church; most of them believe and teach that the Church of Christ, although one and universal, comprises, at the present time, three branches, all living and having a right to the title Catholic; the Anglican branch, the Roman branch, and the Græco-Russian branch.

"The Church of England," wrote Dr. Gore, Bishop of Oxford, in a letter to the clergy of his diocese in 1914, "is Catholic in so far as it is one of the parts or branches of the universal Church, and in so far as it maintains the ancient and fundamental faith of the Catholic Church as represented in the symbols and decisions of the councils of the undivided Church." It is important to note the precise sense which the Anglicans give to the word Catholic. For them the Catholic Church is the union of the three Churches: English, Roman and Orthodox, which have kept, more or less, the primitive faith; and all that these Churches have in common they call Catholic. This

conception is the origin of the ritualistic tendency to approach closer to Rome, and to cement, if Rome would agree, a religious entente cordiale, so eagerly desired by the best among them, by those whom we may call the extreme right of the pro-Roman group, and whom Dr. Gore, himself a member of the High Church party, calls, with an evident bitterness, the Church "too High" and "too Roman." The monks of Caldey belonged to this extreme right; at first they thought, with all the ritualists, that the English Church formed an integral part of the Catholic Church, and had all its privileges and responsibilities—that the English Church, the ancient "Ecclesia Anglicana," was the Catholic Church in England. Then, with the extreme right, they were of the opinion that England had, under Henry VIII, discarded the doctrines and practices which form a part of the Apostolic inheritance, while Rome had preserved them unchanged, and they did not hesitate to return to what they should never have abandoned. The monks, with many others, wished to return to, or rather to bring into use this Catholic inheritance, the greater part of which had been a dead letter since the days of the "reform" in order to show that they are one with the (1) Roman and Oriental Catholics; and it was this idea of a more perfect unity that inspired Carlyle in his plans for the restoration of monastic life. (2) "I saw," said he, "a revival of the spiritual life spreading through England with here and there men . . . who seek the peace and regulated discipline of the cloister. I thought that surely if the need were felt, it would be met; that authority would once more sanction the system which has so abundantly flourished in the past. The revival of external activity in the Church, the increased effectiveness of parochial work, the growing love and appreciation of the Sacraments . . . all showed that a corresponding revival of the interior life was needed. . . . And that as the Catholic Church in all ages has possessed her religious communities, so now, after her long sleep, the Church of England, roused at last to the realization of her Catholic heritage, would

(1) Cf. "Pax," Sept., 1913.

(2) Benedictines of Caldey, page 90.

further awake to the fact that she alone in Catholic Christendom possessed few religious houses for men, and none dedicated solely to the life of prayer."

This, then, is a return to that unity which Carlyle had in view in founding his community, and the whole work of Caldey is an eloquent testimony of it; the chapel, especially, bears, with undeniable evidence, this stamp of unity. Thus, for example, the high altar is entirely formed of stones taken from the ruins of religious houses destroyed at the time of the Reformation, and we read in the review of the monks the following significant lines: (1) "In the stones of the high altar are heard the long silenced voices of a great number of ruined and desolate religious houses, 'vetrum monumenta virorum'."

Thus the religious orders, the Benedictines, the Cistercians, the Carthusians and the Augustinians live again. The primitive altar stones were made of a single block, thus expressing the unity of God, of faith and of the flock of Christ. This assembling of stones at Caldey presages the triumphant reunion of Christendom, and the fusion into one, of its scattered flocks by the healing power of the Catholic Faith. A last mark which is still more explicit: the intention of Tierce at Caldey is "the unity of the Church."

From this we can clearly see the idea the monks had of the unity of the Church and how this conception served to bring about their return to the fold. Jesus Christ, they thought, wished His Church to be one and universal; hence she everywhere should have the same doctrines and the same essential practices.

The Church of England because she is Catholic (according to their idea always), should then possess these essential elements of unity; she has been able, for reasons which they have not wished to look into, to deviate, for a more or less long time, from this rule, but she cannot without offending truth, without renouncing her title to Catholicity, directly deny beliefs and practices which belong, without doubt, to the heritage of Christ.

Thus when they will discover that the Church of England repudiates such doctrines as, for example, that of the Immaculate Conception, and such practices as that

(1) "Pax," March, 1911.

of the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, the veil which they had before their eyes will fall; they will see what until then they had not seen, and they will exclaim: this Church does not belong to Jesus Christ, because it divides Him, according to the words of St. John (1) by rejecting a part of His doctrine.

And this is precisely what happened when the time of the supreme crisis arrived: the principle of Church unity, misunderstood, indeed, by the Anglican religious authorities, forced them to withdraw from Anglicanism: "We can no longer remain in the Church of England," writes Dom. Carlyle in the name of all; "we find ourselves obliged to beg our admission into the Roman Catholic Church."

The Principle of Authority.

But this defect of unity in the Church of England, Dom. Carlyle and his monks had only experienced by coming into contact with a still graver defect, because in itself, it is the destruction of unity that is the defect of authority. (2) "That which menaces our existence and our stability as a community," said one of the monks in 1912, "is the lack of any real principle of authority in the Anglican Church it may happen that we shall have to turn our eyes towards Rome to find there this authority and this recognition of our faith and practices." The principle of authority, which seems to be so well defined in Holy Scripture and which to us is so clear, so natural and so necessary, has been demolished by the Reformation and its false ideas of free interpretation of the Bible. However, by a happy inconsistency, many Protestants accept, in fact, the authority of their ministers, or of their Bishops, if they have any.

In England, particularly, it is not to the head of the Church, the King, but to the Episcopate, that the Anglicans refer all questions of doctrine and of religious practice. For the monks of Caldey, the recognition of Episcopal authority is not only a fact, but an undeniable

(1) "Omnis spiritus qui solvit Jesum, ex Deo non est." John I, iv. 3.

(2) Questions Actuelles, 1914, page 450.

principle: (1) "Religious life," writes Carlyle, "cannot exist apart from the authority which our Lord left with the Bishops of His Church. This principle is fundamental. (2) In a letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury he again writes: "There is, as there always has been from the beginning, on the part of our community, a distinct recognition of the authority of the Episcopate. Without this authority being sought and obtained, we are assured that there can be no true or permanent religious life in the sense that the Catholic Church has always understood it. . . . It is not sufficient that the rule itself should have been approved as a wise and competent directory for the manner of life adopted . . . but it is essential to the canonical existence of the community, the exercise of proper authority by the superiors and the validity of religious profession, that the living authority of the Church should be sought and obtained. . . . We have always steadfastly maintained that there can be no true monastic life apart from Catholic authority." (Catholic here is always taken in the Anglican sense of the word.)

It is, above all, this conception on the part of the intellect which has led the monks of Caldey to Rome. Carlyle in the letter in which he broke away from Anglicanism, clearly expressed it: "It is the principle of authority which, for us, solved the difficulty." Let us then examine briefly, how this principle has been for them the providential factor par excellence of their conversion.

They are, as we have said, firmly convinced of this truth, that in the Church of Christ nothing can be done without the positive authority of the Episcopate. On the other hand, the contemplative life which they have adopted is, beyond dispute, an authentic form, or rather, the truest and highest form of Christian and Evangelical life. They have not borrowed it from "Romanism," that is, from the Roman Church since the separation, but they have drawn it from the pure sources of antiquity which the Church of England claims for itself; they have chosen the Benedictine Rule, because "it alone is Catholic," says Carlyle; "all the others are Roman. The Benedictine Order alone was founded before the

(1) Benedictines of Caldey, page 89.

(2) Cf. Correspondence, pages 23, 24.

division of Christendom and it alone can be restored on the condition that it be sanctioned by the Bishops." This conclusion is established in their minds: The Anglican authorities cannot refuse to sanction their religious life. Besides, at one time, in the establishing of the community, the Archbishop of Canterbury approved of their foundation; fifteen years afterwards, his successor cannot condemn the same work, to-day so flourishing. But the Bishop of Oxford, acting in the name of the Archbishop of Canterbury, absolutely refuses to sanction the Benedictine life unless it be purged of its most precious and most essential elements, as has been said above: the Latin Liturgy, the Exposition and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, devotion to the Blessed Virgin and to the Saints, etc.

Thus the Anglican authorities do not wish, or rather cannot approve of a mode of life manifestly apostolic; they who pretend to be the legitimate heirs of the primitive Church, repudiate the most ancient form of common contemplative life; they who call themselves Catholic, condemn the most venerable of all Catholic traditions. But then we were mistaken, thought the monks, one cannot be at the same time Catholic and reject doctrines and practices essentially Catholic. From this moment they became convinced that the only legitimate authority in the Church of Christ was at Rome and nowhere else.

Carlyle wrote thus to Dr. Gore: (1) "Our conclusion is that we are thrown back upon the 'strictly Papal basis of authority,' and your dealings with us show plainly that our hopes and aspirations have failed, at least so far as the Church of England is concerned. . . . But it is evidently our duty to turn from that authority to which we cannot conscientiously submit, to the Church where the doctrines we believe are taught authoritatively as matters of faith. . . . We shall make our submission to the Roman Church, because we have come to believe that there can be no organized and stable form of Catholic life outside the Communion of that See from which our English forefathers were torn away." And in this way by adhering firmly to the principle of authority, they

(1) Cf. Questions actuelles, page 432.

have come, under the evident action of Grace, to recognize "Our Own" as the One and True Church.

The Moral Factors.

We have demonstrated the part played by the intellect. Let us now say a few words of the role played by the will. From this point of view we may affirm without fear that it is above all by their sincerity, by their spirit of obedience and by prayer that the monks of Caldey procured for themselves the manifold graces of conversion.

(1) **Sincerity.**—It is first to the perfect sincerity, to the good faith of those souls, that we must attribute, in the moral order, their marvelous conversion. If there is one thing which strikes the reader throughout the course of this narrative, it is, indeed, this sincerity, this absolute good faith which characterized the monks; they are, in the strict sense of the word, men of good will, and it seems that God has precisely wished to reward this good will by giving them that peace for which they had sought in vain in the bosom of heresy. Dom. Bede Camm, writing on this subject, says: (1) "All those who have been led to examine closely this attempt of religious life, to penetrate its spirit and methods, have been impressed by the evident sincerity of its founders." This sincerity of the monks appears in the exact observance of the strict rule of St. Benedict: absolute silence, long prayers in Latin, midnight office, constant work and the keeping of this strict observance during the fifteen years which preceded their conversion, all this going to show the sincerity of their souls. This also plainly appears throughout the correspondence exchanged with the Anglican authorities.

From the beginning they did not even think that the adoption of the Benedictine life could provoke a rupture or even simple contention with their religious chiefs; they had embraced this life to satisfy a craving of their souls and to restore to Anglicanism the contemplative life which it lacked; they had no further aim. But man proposes and God disposes; with the succeeding years, and under the influence of grace, the monks felt that they were more and more drawn to the Church of Rome, and

(1) *La Revue Liturgique et Benedictine*, 1913.

in the uprightness of their souls they followed where the light guided them: "We have never made a step which did not seem right, nor an advance that did not seem just," wrote Dom. Carlyle to Dr. Gore; or to use the words of Newman, "they had never sinned against light." A few extracts from the many will readily convince us of this. "We have honestly submitted," wrote the Abbot to the Bishop of Oxford, "an account of our Doctrine and Practices for your decision as an official teacher of the English Church. We have told you without any sort of evasion exactly, what to us are matters of the first importance, and we have done this for the sole purpose of obtaining what has become necessary to the existence of our life and status as a community; i.e., the appointment of a visitor whom we could trust to help us to remain faithful to our rule and observance in the vocation God had given us." Further on, in the same letter(1) he adds, "in connection with our present action people will at once think of our decision arrived at last year about the Roman question; I can only say that our present circumstances are totally different. . . . There was no sufficient evidence of God's will for us, and so we made our decision, and were prepared to remain in the Church of England. For the reasons which I have stated at length we now find that the whole aspect of our life has changed, and we are no longer in doubt as to what we must do. From the beginning of my correspondence with the Archbishop of Canterbury I can see now that the matter has been taken out of my hands, and I had only to follow step by step to this present conclusion. . . . I am sure you cannot blame us for doing what we believe to be right. . . . It seems to be often counted a great crime for a man to follow his conscience when it calls him into the fold of the Roman Church. I wish to act honestly and straightforwardly, and I cannot make any controversial self-defence. . . . I do thank you most gratefully for all your kind trouble and the desire I know you have had to help us; and while the uprooting must mean much personal sorrow I am sure we can never regret that God has led us into the wider and fuller life of the Catholic and Roman Church. We

(1) Questions Actuelles, page 130, T. 115.

have now come to a time of quiet, waiting to gather full strength and to learn the further revelation of His will."

Such is the first disposition of the will which gained for the monks the grace of conversion: sincerity, a staunch and unswerving uprightness of soul.

(2) Spirit of Obedience.—To this indefectible sincerity which characterized the monks we must add the admirable spirit of obedience which animated them all and which was an important moral factor in their conversion: "Two things especially," wrote *La Revue Pratique D'Apologétique* on the morrow of this event, "are to be pointed out in this struggle for monastic existence: its mark of sincerity and of submission. As long as the light does not show clearly and fully to their minds the falsity of Anglicanism, they remain faithful to it, they consult the authorities and they do not advance a single step without asking for approbation."

Before founding the community which he had in view, Carlyle consulted the Archbishop: "Do you wish," he asks, "that I establish the Order of St. Benedict in the English Church? Will you authorize my solemn profession as a monk? Will you permit me to found a community, and will you give it your official sanction when formed?"

The authorization is given him, the little community progresses. In 1901 it numbers eight members; now comes the time to elect a regular Abbot, and naturally the unanimous choice falls on Dom. Carlyle. But immediately the community informs the Archbishop, and demands his sanction for the election, and that he give to the Abbot the Abbatial benediction. In the formation of his religious, Carlyle has nothing more at heart than the development of the spirit of obedience. After having spoken of prayer, of study and of manual work in the community, he writes, "This threefold work of spirit, body and mind is carried out, not according to the whim or choice of the individual, but under that obedience which is the great monastic virtue and the bond of the religious life—marking off as it does those in the world who are their own masters from those in the cloister who give up their own will for the love of Christ, 'who was obedient unto death.'" In the estimation of St. Benedict

this table of obedience is the essential characteristic of a monk, for without it he can never be truly that which he is called. It is with this spirit that he formed the souls which he had grouped at Caldey. And when his work is firmly established, when the foundation is entirely accomplished, he renews his demand for approbation from the proper authority: "From the beginning of our community," he writes, "we have always taken care to be obedient to the principle of Catholic authority. We have never once disobeyed either the commands or the known wishes of the Bishop of the diocese in which we happen to be(1)." And all his correspondence bears this characteristic of submission and obedience.

Finally, during the negotiations which brought about the rupture, the same spirit permeates all their proceedings and decisions.

In his first reply to Dr. Gore, Carlyle writes: "I can assure you that all the Fathers heartily desire loyally to submit themselves to authority . . . in order to do this they are ready to make considerable sacrifices." The reply of Dr. Gore is of such a nature as to open the eyes of the monks and to make them clearly see that the sole legitimate authority in the Church of Christ is found at Rome; from now on they decided, "we shall make our submission to the Roman Church . . . it will be an absolute and unconditional submission, that submission which we have not been able to give to you."

Thus the spirit of obedience, which they had so faithfully cultivated for fifteen years, had already prepared them for absolute submission to the henceforth uncontested authority of the Holy See, and their duty and their conversion were thus made easier.

(3) Prayer.—To solve all difficulties they had an infallible means which had already helped them throughout their journey, prayer, the humble and confident prayer, (2) "which penetrates the clouds." They knew that man left to himself can do nothing, and that only prayer brings down from Heaven the graces necessary for any work of salvation. Consequently prayer occu

(1) Cf. Correspondence, page 2.

(2) Eccl. Cap. XXXV. 21.

pied the first place at Caldey; to give an idea of this it will suffice to cite a few extracts of an article entitled "A Day at Caldey." (1) "If the guest be wakeful," says the author of the article, "he may hear the monastery bell ringing the brethren to Matins at two o'clock this office lasts from one and a half to two and a half hours, according to the season. At five o'clock the bell rings for Prime, after which a Low Mass is said, during which the brethren receive Holy Communion. After mass the fast is broken by 'Pittance,' a simple meal of bread and coffee then manual labor till nine o'clock, then the bells ring out for Tierce, Sung Mass and Sext. Dinner is at half-past eleven, after which None is said in the church. . . . Vespers are sung at five o'clock, followed by the 'Quiet Hour' of private devotion. At half-past seven the monks have spiritual reading; then they recite Compline and the Angelus in the semi-obscurity of the chapel." Thus they end the day, a day filled with prayer. Add to this continual abstinence, fast, privation, penances and sacrifices of all kinds, that the monks direct to Heaven like sweet smelling incense, then you may understand what power they had over the heart of God to know His will and to obtain the grace of conversion.

It is in the rule of St. Benedict that they found this life of prayer. Thus when the Bishop of Oxford demanded that they do away with the Benedictine prayers, they again recognized that the spirit of God was not to be found in the Anglican Church, and the grace of conversion found their hearts prepared: (2) "It seems to me," wrote the Abbot in his private notes for the Chapter, "that the Bishop's straightforward letter is something to be thankful for. . . . The Divine Office, Benediction and Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, the worship of the Blessed Mary and the Saints, all have to be surrendered unconditionally. . . . It means, in fact, a complete change of religion and a dangerous uprooting of the devotional life. I think few people who know Caldey would consider the Benedictine Office and devotio

(1) The Benedictines of Caldey Island, page 182.
(2) Tablet 8, March, 1913.

to the Sacrament mere luxuries and non-essentials to the life; at any rate, we know in our hearts that we dare not surrender them, because the whole life here revolves around them and depends upon them for its very existence. . . . God has shown us His will as plainly as if he had sent an angel from Heaven, so surely we should not be surprised, for we have prayed continually that He would do so."

We must also add that the nuns of St. Bride shared equally, by their prayers, in this work of conversion. Like the Fathers of Caldey, they had a special devotion to the Eucharist and the Blessed Virgin. Incidentally, they were all consecrated to the Immaculate Virgin and took the name of Mary with the one they received when assuming the habit. To the prayers of the future converts were added those of a holy nun, of whom we shall now say a few words, for this is a very interesting page in the history of their conversion.

There lived in France, in the convent of St. Charles d'Angers, a nun by the name of Gertrude Mary, whom God had elevated to a high degree of perfection, and whom He had favored with frequent interior visits.

She relates how, in 1907, that is, a few months before the establishment of the community at Caldey and six years before the conversion, our Lord revealed to her this happy event and urged her to pray for its perfect realization.

A little book published after her death, by her spiritual director, under the title, "Une mystique de nos jours," and containing the narrative of the revelations with which she had been favored, contains the following pages:—

"January 2nd, 1907.—Satan is furious because God has chosen a number of souls in whom He will work marvellous things. . . . I rejoice that God reigns in these souls and I pray for them. . . . For some time I see a community of nuns all dressed in white. Our Lord is pleased with these consecrated souls. Their hands are not always raised towards Heaven, but their souls are. Their thoughts are constantly for God. To me they seem to number about forty.

"January 4th.—I saw a cloud fall on the earth and

it was made known to me that this cloud figured these divine and extraordinary effusions of grace which will take place and have already begun.

“January 16th.—I saw a little portion of land which I shall call an isle, because it is surrounded on all sides by water; it was uncultivated land, somewhat sloping; in the centre there sprang up on a slender stem a beautiful and leafless rose. . . . ‘From here,’ said our Lord, ‘saints will rise up and God will be compensated.’ . . . Our Lord asked me to pray fervently for these souls. My soul was all on fire with the desire to receive Jesus in order to give Him immediately to those unknown souls, whom I already love because Jesus loves them, and they will compensate Him for the indifference of so many Christians, and they will console Him for the ingratitude of so many others.

“January 18th.—If our Lord has some faithful friends there are many others who afflict His heart. They refuse His graces, and Jesus not being able to retain the fulness of His heart, diffuses it on souls who do not know Him but who will love Him some day. I saw a cloud fall on this strange land, which our Lord showed me several days ago. . . . ‘All this,’ said Jesus, ‘are graces which have been refused and spurned.’ I saw this land softened under an abundant rain. . . . It is already prepared. the souls are disposed. . . . They will come out of their ignorance, they will blossom and bring forth fruit. Our Lord was in the midst of this cloud. . . . The Blessed Virgin was there, near her Divine Son. . . . Jesus makes all His graces pass through the hands of His mother.”

Are not all these things truly extraordinary? Sister Gertrude Mary had these visions during the year 1907, without even knowing that at Caldey or at St. Bride there were two Anglican monasteries. She died in 1908, without having further revelations more precise. In 1910 was published the account of the favors she had received from On High. And when in 1913 Caldey and St. Bride were converted, an English sister of the Convent of Angers was the first to notice the concordance of the visions of Sister Gertrude with the happenings at Caldey, and she hastened to write to the Father Abbot

to make him acquainted with the passages which I have cited above and which seem to have such a striking relation with the events of Caldey and St. Bride.

She thus asks him to enlighten her: "A line from you will be considered a great favor, for we often asked ourselves where this unknown isle was and who might be those nuns dressed in white." Dom. Bede Camm replied April 26th, 1913: "I have read your letter with keenest interest, and have communicated its contents to the two communities. It is certainly a marvellous thing that our Lord should have chosen this good sister of your community to prepare the ground for the reception of the graces which it has pleased Him to pour down on Caldey and St. Bride. . . . All that she has seen is perfectly exact. . . . Indeed we cannot doubt that our Divine Saviour has made known to her what was to happen here. Neither is there any doubt but that her prayers had much to do with the miraculous conversion which here fills our hearts with joy."

Such was the role of prayer in this work of God.

CONCLUSION

Such is the history of this conversion which caused so great a stir in England five years ago, the echo of which is still heard on both sides of the ocean. It shows us clearly how much God loves upright minds, sincere hearts and wills docile to His grace. The monks of Caldey sought in the bosom of heresy the will of God; they wished to endow the Anglican Church with the inestimable treasure of contemplative life; they thirsted for perfection and virtue both for themselves and for their Church, which they thought was true and divine. To have left them in heresy would have seemed to confirm them in error. God did not permit it, and heresy cannot boast of possessing religious life in its highest form. But the generous souls who were so ardent in His service God has rewarded by calling them to the pure light of faith; He has introduced them to the true Fold in placing them under the authority of the Supreme Shepherd, to whom He has confided all His sheep. Let us then recognize the worth of our faith and thank God daily for it. Let us also pray that He may enlighten the minds and touch the

hearts of all our separated brethren, in order that all those who recognize Jesus Christ be one, according to His expressed will, "Ut omnes unum Sint." and that soon there may be but "one Fold and one Shepherd."



