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The Trudge To Rome. II.

The Centenary of the Oxford Movement will be celebrated in England this summer. Already there are repercussions of the strife between the Protestant and Catholic divisions of the Anglican Church. Out of deference to the Low Church, the Bishop of London has forbidden the "Pontifical Mass" and the "Requiem Mass" announced as part of the program. Keble and Pusey will be exalted, for there is comfort in the thought that they stopped half-way. But the stronger position of Newman and Manning, who didn't stop, will stand out in contrast - and the real issue, the supreme authority of the Papacy, will once more compel attention.

It is our pious hope that two other centenaries of this year will not be forgotten in the enthusiasm for the Oxford Movement. The Holy Father has declared this a Holy Year in commemoration of the nineteenth Centenary of the Crucifixion. It is also the four-hundredth anniversary of the marriage of Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn, which marked the beginning of the English Schism. What a wonderful year for a reunion with the mystical Body of Christ!

The Oxford Manifesto gives one hope. On October 1, 1932, fifty Anglican clergymen issued this remarkable plea for reunion; (several hundred signatures have since been added). Its statement of faith contains utter repudiation of modernism and rejection of "State control of the Church in spiritual matters and the Erastian philosophy which attempts to justify it." It affirms in Catholic terms the principal doctrines of Catholic faith and condemns the departure of the Anglican bishops from "Catholic standards in faith, practice or morals;" and it adds: "As a grave instance of the last-named, it is incumbent upon us to reprobate the toleration and even positive support by certain Anglo-Catholics of the immoral sanction of artificial contraception given by many Bishops at Lambeth."

The shadow cast by the last obstacle in the way of unity is found in the fifth of the seven points in the declaration of faith, which reads as follows: "We affirm that the claim of the Church of England to continuity with the Church of St. Augustine and St. Theodore, consistently maintained by the Oxford Fathers, involves oneness of Faith and Practice with the historic Church of the past, which was in unquestioned communion with the whole Catholic Church and which held the common Faith of Christendom. That essential continuity is not satisfied with mere succession in property, nor by revival of ceremony, nor by use of words, but only by complete identity of Faith, the possessions of which is the sole justification of her existence."

When these earnest men can see that "complete identity of Faith" means acceptance of Pope Leo XIII's decision that Anglican Orders are invalid they will also see that "Reunion" means "Submission." That they see the need of authority is unquestioned. Their third point states: "We proclaim that the Catholic Religion is divinely revealed and essentially a religion of authority, and that therefore the Faith is not at the mercy of the speculation or imagination of any individual teacher. The ultimate and absolute authority to explain and define that Faith belongs to the visible, historic, Catholic Church, founded by our Lord...." Even further they "declare that the real and essential goal is Reunion with the Apostolic See of Rome."

What can Notre Dame do to help? We can do this: Every day during Lent, when we use our privilege of Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament throughout the day, we can pray that God will give these men the light to see the whole truth, and the strength of will to follow that light. Through them England, which was once as Catholic as Notre Dame and was called "Our Lady's Dowry," may be restored to her pristine glory as a sanctuary of the Faith.

BOOKS: Please return Msgr. D'Hulst's "Life of Mother Mary Theresa." It is needed for an interesting episode in the early spiritual life of Notre Dame. "Best British Short Stories for 1923," left in the Dining Hall, should be returned to the Library.