

A HISTORY OF THE CONVERSION OF THE MONKS OF CALDEY ISLAND

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Looking back thirty years I have the feeling that we were living in a water tight compartment and could not see the wood for the trees. Then one day - EX TENEBRIS LUX - the motto of our community with the Caldey lighthouse became a reality. As we look back today we wonder how we could ever have remained so long without realising what is now so obvious.

Peter F. Anson

FORWARD

With a roll of drums, the sound of hoofbeats and the reading of a royal proclamation, Benedictine monasticism in England was no more. In one swift blow Henry, the wily monarch of a great nation, seemingly put an end to all monastic life in England. But was it really as simple as all that - could one man in a moment of insanity destroy what thousands of men had constructed throughout the centuries?

Monasticism meant much to the English people - they had been born, raised and buried in the shadow of the great Benedictine houses. They looked to the monks for instruction, education, spiritual consolation and protection. The great abbeys may have fallen by royal decree but the spirit of monasticism lived on in the hearts of the people through all those empty years, then.....

Then in the shadow of the ruins of Battle Abbey, Saint Mary's York, Bury Saint Edmunds, Fountains and Furness new vigorous families of monks grew up to renew the life of old. Such a family are the monks of Prinknash Abbey about whom this story tells. That these brave bold "knights of the new order" were able to regain their place in modern society is due in most part to their simple, yet sublime way of life. They are no longer the outcasts of society, hunted and searched after in all quarters, but rather they are the leavening power in the new

life of a nation.

The last fifty years of our era have seen an increase in these families beyond all expectation. Young men crowd to their welcoming arms there to find a new way of life - the way of love and peace - the way of Benedict.

I

FROM LITTLE ACORNS

Mighty oaks from little acorns spring. So goes the ancient saying, and Aelred Carlyle was just such a little acorn from which would spring a great and glorious family of monks. The real story of this family begins in the year 1874. In that year Benjamin Fearnley Carlyle was born in an obscure little village called Badgeworth, and his birth was hailed with joy for he was the first son born to this family and hence would some day carry on in his father's footsteps.

Carlyle's grandfather, whom the lad was named after, had been a village parson while at the same time his own father was "inclined to the High Anglican theory and practice of the Church."¹ Considering these two factors it is not at all surprising that Benjamin himself eventually turned towards the Church, although in a way quite different than either his father or his grandfather.

Before Ben entered any school for formal training, and while living with his parents at Campana, near Buenos Aires, South America, he one day chanced upon a book, insignificant enough in its outward appearance yet a book which would have a great influence on his future life as well as the lives of many other Englishmen. This book was an old volume which had belonged to his grandfather, the name of it was Monks and Monasteries and the editor was an English clergyman, the Reverend S. Fox.

He pored over its pages, and from them received the first impulse to what afterwards became the master-motive of his Anglican life - to restore

monasticism in the Church of England.²

It was this moment in Carlyle's life that Peter F. Anson notes in the following manner:

The foundation of the once Anglican community of Benedictines, now at Prinknash Abbey in Gloucestershire, may be said, historically, to have been the work of one man. It was the work of a lifetime, the carrying out to completion of a clear cut aspiration that took possession of Aelred Carlyle at the age of 19, and continued till his resignation of the completed work into other hands at the age of 47.³

Ben had always had a great love for "playing church" and his parents were fond of recalling how he held services and preached in his nightgown at the age of 8 or 9. His first actual encounter with the High Church group came when he returned to England with his brother in order to be enrolled as a student at Saint Christopher's, a preparatory school for the sons of gentlemen. The school was located on Blackheath near London. Here he became greatly attached to the school chapel where services were held according to High Church ritual. This was the first contact he had with the High Church service but, fortunately for him, it was not the last.

After a short period of training at Saint Christopher's, Ben was permitted to enroll as a student in the higher forms at Blundells. At this South Devon school, Ben progressed very well, that is, until his love for High Church ritual came to the notice of the Masters. Ben being a very popular fellow at Blundells was able to influence about 30 of his friends to join together in a group. This was a natural

tendency for such high spirited youths, and nothing could be half so exciting as a "secret society." The society in the course of time and according to the plan of Ben Carlyle, developed into a religious group which became fearless enough to rent an old barn on an adjacent farm. There they, in boy like fashion, had built a simple altar, and there they gathered at various times to hold devotions and ceremonial rites. These ceremonies were probably carried out according to the High Church rites.

Luckily for the boys the society remained a secret for quite some time, and it would seem that during this time the authorities were unaware that anything unusual was in the air. Be that as it may, such a group could not remain unknown very long in those completely protestant surroundings. After some months the inevitable happened. It seems that at this period in his life young Carlyle had become quite fond of the Imitation of Christ, and it was in this book that he kept the carefully penned list of members of the brotherhood. The protestant chaplain, a stuffy fellow and one definitely opposed to any form of Romanizing, found the little book containing the membership list in Ben's pew in the Blundell Chapel.

Blundells was stirred by the news, and Ben was forced to undergo much antagonism from the teachers and the pupils who desired nothing more than to torment this young upstart who dared to introduce the practices of Rome into a highly

respectable protestant school. Often he was forced to fight openly for that which he believed to be right.

The summer of 1890 brought peace to the tormented soul of Ben Carlyle, although this peace came in a very unexpected way. It was at this time that the Carlyle family returned to South Devon for a reunion and during this visit Ben's father died. With the news of this death all hate for Ben passed from the minds of his fellow students and with it Ben himself passed on to Oxford. What became of the Brotherhood? There seems to be no answer; probably it broke up at the time of the discovery of the names, and undoubtedly no one was willing to become further involved in the affair.

SUCCESSFUL FAILURE

Successful failure may sound like a paradox, but that was exactly what Aelred Carlyle's next venture turned out to be, a successful failure. At this period in his life young Carlyle chose the medical profession as his future work and after a tutored preparation for the examination of entrance into Oxford, he was accepted by that noted school. In the same year, 1892, he began hospital work at Saint Bartholomew in London. It was at this very time as a student for medicine that he came across the Benedictine Oblates quite by chance.

During his years at college he had been living with friends of his family at Ealing and by chance made a visit to the then almost unknown group of nuns living the Benedictine life at Twickenham under the authority of the Archbishop of Canterbury.

The visit was great in its consequences, for it made him realize that as the Benedictine life had already been revived for women, so it might be for men.⁴

The clergyman who ministered to these nuns held the position of Superior to a group of six young men forming a band of Secular Oblates of Saint Benedict. They were young men living in the world but living as much as possible according to the Rule of Saint Benedict. These young men had hopes of forming an Anglican community of men

when the time presented itself. Of course Carlyle was immediately taken up with the idea and thought that perhaps this would be the solution to his desire to found a community built along the lines of the ancient English monasteries. He was accepted into the group by the Superior, and it was at the time of his admission to this group of Oblates that he chose the name Aelred, a saint whose life he was reading at the time. This name, Aelred, by which he was called at the beginning of this section, he kept for the rest of his life.

Soon thereafter the Superior of the group decided that the society must be disbanded due to the fact that no definite progress was being made. Brother Aelred on the other hand, had other plans in mind and with the tacit consent of the Superior he gathered together ten young men (whether part of them belonged to the original band is not known) who rented a room at Ealing in which they said as much of the Office in common as they were able. Peter Anson in his book Roving Recluse says:

In 1894, having gathered round him a small group of like-minded young men and youths, he took a house at Ealing, and thus began community life.⁵

However, Dom Ambrose Holly, O.S.B., in his article "Our Oblate Confraternity" tells "how the little band of social workers became a Confraternity of Oblates meeting in hired rooms at Ealing."⁶ Still another opinion of this early

venture is given by a monk of the present community of Prinknash. He claims that the Oblate band could afford nothing better than a few rented rooms above an Ealing fish-market, and not until the first phase had passed and the first elementary group came into being did the Oblates come to rent an entire house. Quoting Peter Anson again, this time from a statement in Pax, we read:

The brothers at Ealing had at first rented a room over a fish market which may therefore claim to be the first monastic foundation made by this youthful pioneer, still in his teens.⁷

It would seem that most probably the first home of the Oblates was then a little house in Ealing, where they lived the common life as much as possible while doing social work in the neighboring parishes. Here also the "mass" was often celebrated by Anglican ministers.

The whole structure of the group was somewhat unplanned and in this state could not long remain on the right path. In time the Brothers must either give up all and become true monks or give up this imitation monastic life and return to their place in the world. The decision was to be made on Whitsuntide 1895, when the Oblates would gather for their annual Chapter. That meeting would truly be the parting of the ways.

III

PAINT YOUR PICTURE IN STRONG COLOURS

Paint your picture in strong colours,
 keep it ever before you, and strive to
 live up to it, if you do this conscientiously
 you will not find yourself very much out
 in the end.⁸

Such was the advice given young Carlyle by his very dear friend the well-known Father Maturin. It was advice that Brother Aelred lived up to all his life. In later years when the going became difficult, he was to put these words of Father Maturin before his community, the same as he had put them before the little band of Oblates at Ealing.

Up until this time, Whitsuntide, 1895, the guiding principle of the Oblates had been, as stated in their Constitution,

There is in the English Church of today, as all must agree, a sad want of general discipline and individual austerity of life. Among all the manifold guilds and parochial societies there are very few, if any, which set before their members as their primary objects, the mortification of self, the giving up of everything that is of the world, the shortness of life, and the endless happiness or woe of eternity.⁹

With this idea in mind, the mortification of self, the giving up of all worldly pleasures and keeping death before the eyes, the Oblates met for their Annual Chapter which was to be held that year at Malling Abbey at the

gracious request of Mother Hilda, the Abbess of that community of nuns. At this meeting Brother Aelred outlined his plans for the future to the Oblates. They, if they saw fit, would take up residence on the Isle of Dogs, located in the east end section of London. A friend of Carlyle's who was also interested in the monastic life had previously begun to do social work on the Isle under the close supervision of the vicar of this section of London, the Reverend D.G. Cowan. Brother Aelred had talked over the idea of an Anglican Benedictine community with this young man and they came to the conclusion that this life and work on the Isle would be the test to see whether or not they would be able to live the monastic life as they felt it should be lived according to the Rule of Saint Benedict.

Thus Brother Aelred laid out his plan before the Brothers. The answer to it would be their own personal decision. The answer?

The austerity of the life absolutely yielded up to God, the solemn reality of entire renunciation for the love of Christ, and the opportunity then opening out, had been plainly and simply put before the Brothers. They listened with deep interest feeling the urgency of the claims. But they could not bring themselves to make such an utter surrender of all they were and all they had, and to lie without reserve at the feet of Christ, that He might do with them what He would. The address was received in grave silence. But not one of those who heard it found himself able to respond to its appeal.¹⁰

In 1946, Prinknash monks recalled the very dissappointing decision of the Oblates with the following words,

Young as he was, Father Aelred had already been engaged for three or four years in trying to revive Benedictine monastic life in the Church of England, but his ideals had proved too drastic for the group of "Benedictine Oblates" whose leader he had become, and at Whitsuntide, 1895, he had found himself left quite alone to carry out his projects.¹¹

The group of Oblates built up and loved so deeply by Brother Aelred, seemed to have dissolved into thin air over night and with its dissolution, the house at Ealing was given up as there were no longer any young men to occupy it. This no doubt, crushed young Carlyle who now had only one choice, to go to the Isle of Dogs alone.

Here should be mentioned an interesting fact discovered in the book Roving Recluse by Peter Anson. Mr. Anson himself joined the community of Caldey only about three years before its conversion. Therefore all credit should be given to his words concerning the Brothers. However, in one place in the book he makes a statement to the fact that the Brothers migrated to the Isle of Dogs. This would not seem to correspond to the other opinions that the group disbanded leaving Carlyle to go to the Isle alone. Where Mr. Anson received his information is not known, but there seems to be a false impression. If this were the case, that Brother Aelred went to the Isle at once, then he would have begun his monastic life immediately; as it actually was however, he continued his medical studies at Oxford for about one year.

As the reader will recall, the breakup of the Ealing group came on Whitsuntide in 1895. This was probably early spring, leaving all summer for Carlyle to continue his studies. It was a most anxious time for the youth, he had joined his family in London and whether or not they approved of his "tendencies" is not known. Nevertheless, he spent most of his free time and all of his weekends on the Isle of Dogs where he street preached, taught catechism, did social work and became acquainted with those in authority who would be able to assist him if and when he made the move to the Isle. The spiritual and mental emotion and interior disturbance caused by this work, finally forced him to seek the advice of his spiritual director, Father Bingold, a priest of the Order located at Cowley. He it was who advised the youth to give up his studies and trust in God for the success of the undertaking on the Isle of Dogs. Father Bingold was wise enough to see that Carlyle would never be happy until he had tried his plan and found it to be a success or a failure.

And so it was with the entrance of the new year of 1896 that Carlyle entered upon his new life, the life of a social worker on the Isle of Dogs, the life which would eventually lead to the foundation of his cherished monastic group in the Anglican communion. His companion in this experiment was a certain Theodore Witherby, who had preceded Carlyle to the Isle by some several months and had acquired a house which was appropriately dubbed "the Priory." Those persons on the Isle who considered themselves Church People were very happy at the prospect of having a religious community in their midst. They extended a warm welcome to the two young men due no doubt in part to the fact that

they had become acquainted with them through their previous social work.

Life on the Isle was plain and simple, full of ups and downs, but a young man like Aelred Carlyle, so intensely interested in the restoration of the monastic family, saw only the ups. Having given a serious study to the Rule of Saint Benedict for the length of three months, Brother Aelred was permitted to be clothed as a novice on Easter day in the year 1896. The simple ceremony took place (as did the memorable Whitsuntide Chapter) at Malling Abbey. This according to the "Prinknash Notes" of Spring, 1946, was the real beginning of the community:

The present year (1946) has good claims to be considered the jubilee year of the foundation of our community for it was in Lent 1896, that our founder, Father Aelred Carlyle first left his home to lead the religious life in earnest. At that time he joined a friend who had acquired a small house on the Isle of Dogs, and the two began what may be called community life together.¹²

It was also at this time that Brother Aelred pledged himself to keep the Rule of Saint Benedict for one year, and this was what might be termed his simple profession. He would renew this pledge each year. During the two memorable years that followed, he was joined by another novice who wished to live according to the Rule of Saint Benedict under the Anglican authorities. This must have been a great joy to Brother Aelred who had been laughed at so often because of his high ideals. A new novice meant the first sign that God was evidently pleased with his intentions.

Would more follow in time, if so, what would the Anglican authorities say then?

At the close of the year 1897, Brother Aelred realized that it would be impossible to continue the social work on the Isle and at the same time live according to what he considered the ideals of the monastic life. He spoke of this to the Reverend D. Cowan and asked him to obtain permission from the Archbishop of Canterbury, the supreme Anglican authority, to pronounce his vows solemnly as a Benedictine monk in the Anglican Church. Brother Aelred requested Mr. Cowan to write to Archbishop Temple, and secure an interview for him at Lambeth Palace.

Cowan accordingly wrote the letter, but the reply was slow in coming to the Isle; perhaps Doctor Temple had an idea of the trouble which would result from such an arrangement. Also he may have been considering what reaction this would have on the Anglican authorities to whom he himself was more or less responsible. Nonetheless, on the Feast of Our Lady of the Sabbath, December first of that same year, an interview was granted; to the great consternation of young Carlyle, however, it was postponed due to the illness of the Archbishop. Then on the eleventh of February in the following year, he was called to Lambeth Palace for the long awaited conference.

Doctor Temple, the Archbishop of Canterbury, was most gracious and very much in agreement with Brother Aelred's plan for restoring religious life in the Anglican Church according to the Rule of Saint Benedict. The good Doctor was acquainted with the nuns of Mallory Abbey and had granted the renewal of the license of their

chaplain. He also explained to Brother Aelred how he himself had attempted to found a religious community with little success, and of his consequent interest in the communities of nuns under his supervision as Bishop of London.

To Carlyle's delight, Doctor Temple gave him written permission to pronounce his solemn vows and also promised to canonically sanction the new foundation if it had sufficiently advanced in number and virtue after two years. Was it just by chance that Carlyle had chosen this time to approach the Archbishop with his requests? No matter, the time to be sure was an opportune one, for the Lambeth Conference of Anglican Bishops had but a few months before openly applauded and recognised officially my means of a formal resolution the founding and good works of such communities as Carlyle had in mind.

Following this interview Brother Aelred pronounced his solemn vows at Malling Abbey before the high altar. The nun's Chaplain acted as the official representative of the Archbishop of Canterbury. From now on Carlyle will be referred to as Father Aelred in respect to his religious profession, not being an ordained minister at this time.

Was this profession really such an important step in the restoration of Benedictine life in the Church of England? Let us see what the Guildsman, an English paper, had to say on the subject.

There is one point about this revival of the Benedictine life which ought to gain for it a great deal of interest which would otherwise be withheld - its relation to Authority. When its work was really established its founder sought the sanction of the authorities of our Communion, and received it. This authorization of the Benedictine life amongst us is not without meaning. It means that much failure in the

past has been forgotten, and that humility and patience have won a reward which other virtues might not have gained. It seems that another link in our chain of claims to continuity with the Church of Saint Augustine has been forged. It is a link¹³ which we shall not undervalue if we are wise.

The action of restoring the Benedictine life under the authority of the Anglican Church did not take place without much complaining and name calling on the part of some of the members of that Church. In the months of March and May in that memorable year of 1896 and only one month after the approval of the Brothers by the Archbishop was made known publicly, Doctor Temple was attacked by letter for giving official sanction to the restoration of that odious religious group called the Benedictines. Being a gentleman of the first order Doctor Temple merely acknowledged the letter with all humility and courtesy; but to the further complaints the good Archbishop remained silent even in the face of threats and taunts of a more serious nature. He had acted only after mature deliberation and what he had done he had done in good faith and with an open mind. Who could have done more?

The profession of Father Aelred stirred up the most intense interest both among high church groups and also among the persons with whom he had come into contact during his work on the Isle of Dogs. Peter Anson says of the profession:

The notes of the history of the community which were appearing in serial form also told me that Brother Aelred Carlyle had been solemnly professed in 1897 on the written authority of Archbishop Temple of Canterbury; a notable even as being the first officially recognised profession of a monk in the restored Order of Saint Benedict in the Church of England.¹⁴

Now that the Brothers had official sanction it would no longer be possible or satisfactory for them to remain on the Isle. So it was with sincere regret that they said their farewells to old friends and acquaintances and directed their footsteps to a lonely little village.

SILENCE AND SOLITUDE

It must have been a forlorn but happy twosome that left London Station that February morning in 1898 - headed for the country and solitude away from the big city. They were forlorn because uncertain of what lay ahead of them in the world; happy because they felt that they were doing God's will and that His goodness would protect them.

The destination of the tiny monastic band was an obscure village in the Diocese of Gloucester by the name of Lower Guiting. Archbishop Temple felt sure that in this lonely spot the Brothers would find the peace and quiet they so needed in their type of life. What befell them in this village, however, surprised even the good Archbishop.

The village of Lower Guiting, situated as it was far from outside influences, had long before lapsed into serious moral disorders. For many years previous to 1898 each succeeding pastor fell into the carelessness of his flock. The church property from lack of care long before had fallen into decay.

Thus it was in such an atmosphere the Brothers sought that necessity of contemplative life "being left alone and not harried."¹⁵ The vicarage house, except for the few rooms used by the vicar then in town, was given over to the use of the Brothers. They were also permitted the use of the coach house which was converted into a sacristy and chapel. Here mass was said as often as a priest was able to make the trip from another parish.

Two days after their arrival, life began in earnest, following

no doubt, rather much the same schedule which Father Aelred had outlined to his Oblates at the eventful Whitsuntide Chapter. The life was uneventful but it gave a promise of stability and to the joy of the Brothers, the villagers were not openly opposed although some of them could not imagine why grown men wished to live such an austere life. The story was in circulation at that time that when the Brothers first came to the village to inspect the house and grounds, the vicar, who was their guide, introduced them to the villagers as the Bishop of Jerusalem and the Pope of Rome. Such nonsense could have had a bad effect on the villagers if they had not been such an indolent group.

The situation thus far was ideal, no one bothered the group and they were allowed to lead their contemplative life in peace. The situation was too good to last and soon the trouble began. On Easter Monday, 1898, when the vicar was removed from the parish and the Bishops and Lords of the surrounding country sequestered the property of the parish. Argument followed argument and the papers were quick to seize upon this church scandal which involved such a reckless group as the villagers of Lower Guiting. Of course this notoriety greatly displeased the Brothers who wished nothing more than to be left alone. With the sequestration of the church and vicarage, the monks' home was taken from them. They did, however, remain in the vicarage for a short time until they were attacked at night by a group of armed villagers.

Therefore having dwelt in Lower Guiting for only about six months, the community gathered up its possessions as quietly as

possible and left the village in the month of July. They were followed all the way out of town by a tin ban and curses and maledictions.

For their part the Brothers do not seem to have held a grudge against the town, for in 1938 we read a notice in Pax:

On the way we stopped at Lower Guiting, a little village where the community had lived for a time in its infancy, and visited the Church where the monks as Anglicans, had been used to say their office.¹⁶

Having lost or rather having given up their home at Lower Guiting, the brethren were faced with the problem of seeking a temporary refuge; this they found at the friendly convent at West Malling. This convent was the scene of Father Aelred's solemn profession only a few months previous. Without a doubt this visit to West Malling redoubled his fervour, though no prospect of a permanent home for the community came into sight.

There being no possibility of obtaining a permanent home the Brothers accepted the invitation of the Reverend Father Page, Superior of the Society of Saint John the Evangelist, and took up quarters at their beautiful country home, Cowley. In this group of men the monks found real advisers and renewed their old desire to have just such a community. The Cowley Fathers were a group of religious minded men who wished to live the common life in the Anglican Church. They were not a monastic or cloistered group and ministered to the various churches in the area. They were definitely not opposed to high church practices although it is doubtful if they themselves were high church.

After having lived for some months at Cowley with Father Page, it was suggested that the Brothers join the group of the Society stationed at London. Here they would take care of the house and the Fathers who made their residence there. This new home on Great Titchfield Street proved ideal, being beyond all expectations, a real home. Here once again the conventual life was led, they were given the use of a private chapel and the recitation of the office was instituted along strictly liturgical lines. It was also at this period of their history that the Brothers gained many new and influential friends. Some were persons interested in the novelty of the community, others were pleased with its high church tendencies, still others were young men interested in just such a simple life under the Rule of Saint Benedict. Some of these men today are members of the community.

After the excitement of becoming established in their London home had subsided, the community was invited to spend a month on the Isle of Iona. The Brothers deeply appreciated the monastic heritage of this lonely isle, which still held captive the memory of the Blessed Columbanus. Even after centuries of neglect, the ruin and decay of the old monastery still breathed forth the spirit of the monks who once prayed and chanted in the now roofless church, and walked the great grass grown courts. This lonely isle was just the kind of retreat the monks desired for their own monastery, a quiet place hidden in some unknown corner of England - away from the noise and bustle of the big city.

Peter F. Anson writing forty-one years later of this visit to Iona says,

Forty-one years ago two or three Anglican monks, who then formed the Benedictine community which eventually settled on Caldey Island, spent a month on Iona. During the fortnight I spent on Iona this summer my thoughts often went back to the now far off days when the Benedictines of Caldey were still members of the Church of England. In certain respects there is much in common with the aims and ideals of the Iona community (a Presbyterian group which now lives a type of religious life on the Isle) and the Anglican monks of Caldey.¹⁷

The carefree days of July came to a sudden halt when the monks returned to London. Once again they must make a move. Once again the home they had come to love was to be taken from them. The lease on the London house had expired and a new home was taken by the Cowley men as a temporary house until their Westminster residence could be completed. Although the monks were invited to the new home they felt the time had come to secure their own monastery, poor though it might be. At the offer of the Vicar of Milton Abbas they undertook the renting of a small cottage in that Dorsetshire village.

V

THE WORK OF GOD

While still living in the London house of the Cowley Fathers, Father Aelred had the great joy of receiving the vows of a novice and of clothing a postulant in the habit of a novice. Brother Henry was the Novice professed in Simple Vows and Brother George was the candidate clothed in the habit. This was the young community's first profession and a sign that more blessings and responsibilities were in store for the Brothers.

The first day of October, 1899, found the Brothers once again taking up the common life in a small house (so small there was no room for a chapel) in the Dorset village of Milton Abbas. The community was very proud of the "Retreat" as the Milton Abbas house had been dubbed. As the daily round of monastic life was begun and ended with the choir service, it became imperative to build a small wooden chapel. Here they were able to chant the canonical hours without interruption; here also Mass was offered at least once a week. Without a doubt this love for the work of God shows that the Brothers took Saint Benedict's words, "Prefer nothing to the Work of God" to heart.

The people of the district were not a hostile group indeed much to the contrary. They would spend whole Sunday afternoons standing in the lane before the house hoping to catch a glimpse of a robed Brother. Some realizing that the diet of the Brothers was quite light, brought eggs, meats and jellies on these Sunday

visits.

The most colorful and romantic experience the Brothers underwent while at Milton Abbas took place on Christmas Eve, 1899.

"Prinknash Notes" of 1932 speaks of the group at Milton Abbas and the Christmas service in the Abbey Church in this way.

The news that Milton Abbey, Dorset, may shortly come into Benedictine hands had a special interest to us as Milton Abbas was one of the earliest homes of our community. It was in 1899 that the community then in its infancy, and consisting of only three Brothers and a postulant, occupied for about a year a gamekeeper's cottage some two miles from Milton Abbey Church. The cottage was planted on the edge of a thick beech wood, very secluded, two miles from the nearest habitation, and ten from the nearest railway station; it was appropriately known as the Retreat. Occasionally the little band of Anglican monks were allowed to hold services in the Abbey and in Pax for December, 1911, is a picturesque account by one present of the carrying out in this way of the midnight office of Christmas...in 1899.¹⁸

It must have been quite a beautiful occasion to be recalled twice in Pax.

At 10:30 in the evening the Brothers left the Retreat carrying bags of office books, candles and incense to Milton Abbey Church, where they were to celebrate the Christmas office. Psalmody had not been heard here for four centuries and people no longer worshipped God in this once hallowed spot. Present for the services were but a handful of devout villagers and probably Sir Everard Hambro the Lord of the Manor which adjoined the Abbey. Matins were chanted followed by Mass and Lauds.

Once again a cloud of incense rose up above the altar in this ancient home of Benedictine monks where for more than four centuries the divine praises had been silent.¹⁹

Here we would like to insert an interesting fact gleaned from "Prinknash Notes" of 1929, telling of the wearing of the white habit by the Brothers.

The history of the community has been full of what the world calls coincidences. Long ago we adopted the white habit - long before we went to Milton Abbas in Dorsetshire, where the magnificent old Abbey Church is dedicated to Saint Samson of Dol. It was only after the Providence of God brought the Community to Caldey that we discovered that in Celtic days it had been the home of the same Saint Samson, and that our medieval predecessors on the Island, the Benedictines²⁰ of Tiron, wore the white habit like ourselves.

Now it will be not only interesting but also necessary to insert something concerning the Anglo-Catholic question which was so much to the fore at this period and so pertinent to the Brothers themselves.

In 1898, certain London churches which were known for their ritualistic practices were stormed by agitated protestants who considered such practices popish and an undoing of the work of the reformation. Parliament was requested to pass a law to stop such things as the ceremonial use of incense, reservation of the sacrament, use of confessionals and the mass of the presanctified on Good Friday. Certain members of Parliament went so far as to draw up a private bill, but it proved so stringent that it failed to draw the support of even the well disposed churchmen. Finally, to appease the upstarts without angering the Anglo-Catholics, an

"Opinion" was drawn up by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York. The main substance of the opinion was the condemnation of candles and incense in church ritual. It is amazing, at least from a Roman Catholic outlook, to consider just how little power the Archbishop of Canterbury had over his Anglican subjects. He made a statement, but very few Anglicans carried out his wishes. In many English churches, services were carried out in the usual full ritual. In fact the Anglo-Catholic party went so far as to draw up a set of resolutions declaring that the clergy need not obey the law when it infringed upon the prevailing customs.

One very learned Anglo-Catholic, Doctor Sanday, gave his opinion thus when the question of whether or not the Lambeth Opinion had to be obeyed, came up:

Looking back over the history of the Catholicising Party, its greatest gains have been won really by disobedience. The most effective weapons in the hands of the party has been the willingness of its members to go to prison.²¹

Around this time two groups of Anglo-Catholics were in action. The first group only externally imitated to a certain degree the practices of Roman Catholic worship. Whereas the second group strove to worship according to Pre- and Post-Reformation Church of England ritual. The group living at Milton Abbas had always striven for the golden mean, using a Latin Roman Ritual in their own chapel for private devotions, but strictly following the Book of Common Prayer for public services.

In the autumn of 1900, further events took place which might effect the Brothers not a little. Due to the open scorn shown the Lambeth Opinion, several clergymen were to be prosecuted at public trials. A conference of learned Anglicans was called in October. Among those present was Lord Halifax, a future benefactor of the community; and also Doctor Gore the Anglican Bishop who would make the conversion of the Brothers a "must." The conference discussed the doctrine of the Eucharist in regard to the Church of England. The conference closed without any definite decision other than that the above mentioned prosecutions would not take place. It might be interesting to note that in later years the Brothers reserved the Eucharist as much as possible. Consequently Bishop Gore, who in 1900 had given a favorable opinion concerning the reservation of the Eucharist, equalling that of the Council of Trent, made one of the stipulations of a favorable approval of the monks at Caldey that they no longer reserve the Eucharist. Already we can see the different forces which will eventually play such an important part in the conversion of the monks of Caldey, coming into view.

The daily round at Milton Abbas continued undisturbed for many months - then - the unhappy news of "move on" arrived for the fifth time. Their little cottage at Milton Abbas had been sold along with the estate on which it was situated, and the new owner wished to make use of the little lodge and surrounding grounds.

The search for new quarters did not last long and to the surprise of the community they were offered the use (temporarily) of a dwelling house and a deserted Pre-Reformation Benedictine Priory located on Caldey Island which at that time was owned by the Reverend W. Done Bushell. Until this time the name Caldey Island was unknown to the Brothers but in the very near future it would become their own property and the scene of their dramatic conversion to Rome.

After discussing the advisability of such a move, it was decided that they had nothing to lose. Penniless, they would soon be homeless; by moving to Caldey they would be assured of a home for the time being - and move they did.

VI

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF SAINT SAMSON

The Island of Caldey located off the Southern Coast of Wales, was first visited by Celtic monks. Among the first monks arriving on the Island were Saints Samson, Dyfrig and David; they built tiny cells of mud and rocks on the site of the present Priory. Henry I allowed Benedictine monks from Saint Dogmael's Abbey (a daughter house of Tiron Abbey, Normandy) to build a permanent monastery on the Island. The Priory Church and the garth of the monastic buildings are still standing. These same buildings were used by the Brothers both as a center for the divine worship and as a home. The weather on the Island proved ideal for monastic living - warm and balmy like an eternal spring. This was the fairyland that greeted the Brothers on January 11, in the year 1901. What a pleasant change from the chill wind-swept heights on which their Milton Abbas home had been located!

Caldey came into Mr. Bushell's possession in 1897, and at once he set himself to restore the Island church and the old monastic buildings. Without doubt he felt himself in an atmosphere of service, doing his best to retain and bring to remembrance all that remained of those who formerly worshipped there.....With this in mind, he heard of the difficulties of the small community at Milton Abbas. He was not able to help them financially in the usual way, that was made clear from the start. But he conceived they might welcome residence at Caldey, maintaining themselves by work on the estate, and renewing the ancient Offices which had daily resounded on the island for a millenium before the Reformation.²²

Loyal to their Rule, the Brothers arriving on the Island just as evening was coming on, insisted on singing Vespers in the village church before retiring for a much needed rest. A few days after their arrival Mr. Bushell held a prayer book service in the village church. It seems he was not only the owner of the Island and the manager of all the farm work, but was also the minister of the village church. When he did not find it possible to live on the Island, the people had no spiritual consolations; and at the time of the monks arrival the moral standard was none too high, and in general the people were not at all happy with their lot.

During the above mentioned service Doctor Bushell preached a sermon of welcome to the monks in the name of the villagers. In the course of the sermon he made mention of the fact that the Brothers were a part of that great "family of Our Holy Father Saint Benedict and enjoyed a unique position in relation to the See of Canterbury."²³ One is inclined to wonder whether the Brothers really felt they did belong to the Benedictine family; furthermore, in regard to their relation to the Primatial See, it was unique insofar as they could never be certain from one month to the next that their furtherings of this life in common would meet with the necessary approvals. Father Aelred had determined from the beginning that they would work only as long as they had the approval of Canterbury. They knew full well the failures other communities had undergone due to the lack of authority and they determined to avoid a like disaster.

The situation on the Island was far from satisfactory. Checking the books we find the only point noted on the credit side is the fact that the Brothers had a home in which to carry out the Opus Dei. On the debit side we find that the lodge they used as a monastery was theirs only so long as Mr. Bushell had no immediate need of it. Moreover, their choir work required time which Mr. Bushell felt they should give to work in the garden, for which work the monks were paid on the same scale as the villagers. Two remedies were discussed; the Brothers could build a temporary wooden monastery nearby, or all work done by the monks could be remunerated by the hour. To the dismay of the community the wooden monastery would cost far too much for their slender bank account. Furthermore Mr. Bushell upon paying the monks their salaries declared his dissatisfaction with the amount of work done. This unhappy situation went on until Easter when life became almost unbearable.

At Easter the Brothers moved into the old Priory buildings as the Bushell family were to use the house for a vacation; three months later the Brothers had only one alternative due to the fact that the Priory also was to be used by the Bushells - they must move to the woods. The monastery in the woods was the Brothers' home for eight weeks. True it was summer, but a very cold and damp summer. It was a common thing to go to bed ready for a good nights sleep and wake up next morning soaked to the skin.

by a heavy rain. The cloister consisted of three tents, two fowl houses and a few refectory tables. Inconvenient this must have been but according to one of the Brothers,

.....with all inconveniences this is infinitely preferable to the old Priory with so many seculars and women about. At all events we can at least be sure of something like an enclosure.²⁴

The stay in the woods was not uneventful, for in the community itself, Brother Samson was clothed as a Novice and Brother George made his simple profession which seemed to Father Aelred to be a proof that this rough life was not altogether too difficult for willing souls and happy hearts. Likewise it was rumored that Lord Halifax was thinking of purchasing the Island to insure it as a permanent home for the community (a plan which like so many others, did not materialize until years later.) Outside the monastery the papers were busy telling of the appointment of Doctor Ingram, a great ritualist, as Bishop of London, against the wishes of the Kensit-Anti Ritual Group. Doctor Ingram had known of the Brothers when they lived on the Isle of Dogs, but he never became acquainted with them due to the fact that he believed their way of life and ideals could not possibly be in conformity with the Church of England and were altogether too popish even for the ritualists.

Another bomb-shell dropped at this time was the appointment of Doctor Gore (who will be a prominent figure in the later history of the community) as Bishop of Oxford. The bitter pill

was the fact that before being named Bishop of Oxford Doctor Gore had been one of the founders of a religious community called the Resurrection Fathers.

The Priory once again became home during the fall and winter, but what a sad winter it was. Their slim bank account was running out and it seemed that soon the Island must be given up; furthermore the Brothers felt they had been deserted by most of their former benefactors and were antagonised even more by their adversaries. Just when the professed members of the community were about to don secular clothes in order to go to work to support the novices, Lord Halifax offered the community the use of a Hall near the village of Kirby-Underdale, called Painsthorpe. The Brothers were in such a position that to refuse the offer would have meant the extinction of the community.

The move was made in March, 1902, and it seemed that with this passing all hope of a permanent home on the Island also passed. As the Caldey chronicler stated it: "So ends all our hope of permanency on this Island. In omnibus glorificetur Deus!"²⁵ Before leaving the Island the Brothers drew up a charter to be sent to Doctor Temple requesting that he sanction the election of Father Aelred as Abbot of the community and that an official status be granted to the group as promised a few years before. Four months later the charter was returned bearing the Archbishop's signature. By this stroke of a pen, Doctor Temple had undone in a moment the work which Henry VIII and his descendants had so effectually

carried out three hundred and fifty years previously - without a doubt the reverberations would be loud and long.

With the sanctioning of this group of religious, Doctor Temple had "made one of the worst mistakes in his career"²⁶ but he was a man who felt that the needs of a sincere group of the faithful were more important than cold principles and he did not hesitate to do all in his power to bring the community into what he felt was its rightful place in the Church of England.

The Caldey community at this time did seem to have a definite place in the Anglican communion for as Father Aelred expressed it, young men wishing to serve God would be able to serve Him (if they joined this community) without leaving the Anglican fold. At this time in the history of England Religious life was the topic of conversation in all classes and especially was Caldey the topic of conversation since it seemed to be approved by Canterbury. Ritualists now felt certain that religious life in the Ecclesia Anglicana was not impossible if it had the right approbation.

PAINE'S THORPE HALL

"Whatever might be its faults, the Benedictine Community at Painsthorpe could show that it had the approval of the highest authorities in the Church of England".²⁷ These words of Peter Anson express the whole idea of Father Aelred's concept of the monastic life: nothing unless under obedience. Their life at Painsthorpe proves this fact. But what sort of greeting awaited the Brothers at Painsthorpe Hall; had the people heard of their strange new neighbors; was the Archbishop of York in agreement with their ideals; did the pastor of Kirby-Underdale dislike seeing such strange men move into his parish?

The Archbishop of York was careful not to act over-interested in the arrival of the community; he did not hinder them but he also did not express too much joy about being their Local Ordinary. The pastor of Kirby-Underdale on the other hand was most pleased to have a group of religious in his parish. Writing some years later about the Brothers, Mr. Shepherd says,

During its earlier years, with no settled home, and suffering much privation, it is wonderful that the little band not only kept together, but quietly increased in numbers. It is a strong testimony to the courage and determination of the founder, and the attractive power of the movement.²⁸

Mr. Shepherd was especially pleased because the group was so willing to give instructions, sing in the choir, care for the sick, and instruct the village lads. His parishioners were

no less enthusiastic, for it was not every community that could boast of an Anglican Abbey authorized by Canterbury and ruled by a loving and fatherly Abbot.

But apart from this parochial work, the quiet witness of their lives, the constant round of prayers and praise, their regular attendance at the Sunday services and frequent reception of Holy Communion, have an immeasurable influence for good, not only in the parish merely, but over the whole district where they are now well known and appreciated.²⁹

Some years later the monks made a trip to Kirby-Underdale and

Canon Shepherd is still the Rector - as he was when he greeted the then Anglican community on its arrival there so many years ago....His relations with our Founder and his Brethren were of the happiest kind, and we are particularly glad to think that this friendship with our community has survived.³⁰

But above all it was Lord Halifax who was pleased at the arrival of the Brothers; for him it had always been a cherished dream to people these wolds with the successors of the men of God who chanted the Office here before the Reformation; in fact "Paines Thorpe" had belonged to Saint Mary's, York, from the earliest times, a possession granted the Abbey by William Rufus.

It was Lord Halifax who financed the building of a small chapel for the use of the community, the architect being the now famous Father Jerome Hawes. Lord Halifax took great delight in bringing his house guests to Painsthorpe to view his pet monastery, as he termed it. Among those guests were the Duke and Duchess of Norfolk. Concerning the Duchess of Norfolk Pax of 1945 says:

On September 3rd we sang a Solemn Requiem for the late Dowager Duchess of Norfolk, who had

been a benefactress to our community, in which she always took a keen interest. The Duchess might rank among our very early friends, as with her husband, the fifteenth Duke of Norfolk, she visited the community of Painsthorpe in its far-off Anglican days. After the Duke's death early in 1917....she spent several weeks on Caldey.³¹

In the world outside persons less acquainted with the Brothers continued to hurl insults, and the Record commenting on their presence at the Church Congress of 1903 stated that

....Their get up is painfully like that of the Roman Order, their heads are shaven, they wear beneath their cloaks a vestment of white serge, and suspended from their girdles are strings of beads. They would not be at all flattered if they heard the criticisms passed upon them.³²

Inside the monastery life went on peacefully despite the slander of enemies and the community seemed at last to have taken root in good ground, even though they still desired to return to Caldey - this time as possessors of the Island.

It is interesting to note that it was at this time that the Brothers made the acquaintance of such an influential clergyman as Father Robert Hugh Benson. At the time he was an Anglican clergyman, but he was to enter the church shortly after this visit to Painsthorpe.

The first Easter that the community were at Painsthorpe Father Robert Hugh Benson came over from Mirfield to hear their confessions. It was his first and last visit to Painsthorpe, for not very long afterwards he became a Catholic. He had known the Abbot since they were boys together at Truro.³³

In 1902 an offer came to the community which was most tempting. Father Ignatius Smith wished the group to take up residence at Llanthony Abbey. This Abbey was founded by Father

Ignatius (who was somewhat eccentric) and modeled upon the ancient double monasteries which housed monks and nuns in separate buildings, all ruled by the same Abbot, in this case they were ruled by Father Ignatius. The offer was refused by Abbot Aelred on the grounds that the Brothers felt somewhat secure at Painsthorpe and did not wish to move again unless necessity demanded such a move. A few months later Father Ignatius gave Llanthony Abbey to the monks as a gift, but before the deed could be made out (and learning that the monks would not submit to his rule) Father Ignatius broke off all negotiations. He did, however, continue to give financial support to the community and enjoyed nothing more than to refer to the Brothers as his grandchildren due to the fact that his monastery had been founded before most of the Brothers were born. Llanthony finally became the matter of a law suit between the Abbot of Buckfast and Mother Tudfil, the only surviving member of the community of Llanthony. The Abbot of Buckfast lost the case but some years later a written report by an intimate friend of Father Ignatius stated that Father Ignatius

....had a special affection for the monks of Buckfast. "They keep the original rule there and that is why I would love to have them here." He had failed to find or arouse the true spirit of monasticism in the English Church and thus it was to the "Romans" that he looked for the future of the Abbey.³⁴

Perhaps this was the reason why he so greatly desired Abbot Aelred to send his monks to Llanthony; perhaps he realized

(more than so many others) that they were, at least at heart, Roman, and would eventually go to Rome for recognition.

Now that the Brothers had become stable to at least some degree, they felt it both prudent and financially helpful to publish a magazine which would tell others of their work. A certain

Mr. Rathay Reynolds....has quite a unique connection with Pax in that he both chose its name and wrote the introductory article to the very first number.³⁵

This Mr. Reynolds was an Anglican curate stationed at Saint Alban's Church, Nottingham. He took a great interest in the endeavors of the Brothers at this early stage and in 1940 was still writing articles for the Pax magazine which he had helped to found so many years before.

The publication of the Pax proved a great help to the community in another way. For it seems that the present Abbot of the community was introduced to the group through the reading of it.

In the early days of the community at Painsthorpe in Yorkshire, Pax came into being in order to form a link between the monastery and its widening circle of friends. This was in 1904, and it may be of interest to remark in passing that it was the first number, accidentally seen in proof at the printers, which introduced the monks in those Anglican days to the writer (Dom Wilfrid Upson, Abbot), and so eventually opened up to him the possibility of a response to his religious vocation.³⁶

Unfortunately for the Brothers their stay at the Hall was not without its dark days. Lurid articles continued to roll off the Protestant presses telling of the professions

of the Brothers and the chanting of the Office in Latin, all portrayed very vividly and untruthfully. Mr. Kensit, the anti-ritualist, did his best to stir up hatred against the Brothers, and stated in his magazine, "We have little pity for these gentlemen, for they fully deserve the lash."³⁷

Words of praise were not lacking. James McFall wrote in the Catholic Times:

I was naturally curious to see something of what I considered a "Protestant Monastery" and "Protestant Monks." I was agreeably dissatisfied however to find instead a very anti-protestant one, a community of earnest and enlightened men following the strict letter of Saint Benedict's Rule, wearing his time-honoured habit, and so thoroughly attached to Catholic practices, tradition, ritual, liturgy and monastic usage, that I almost found it difficult at times to remember I was not in a "Roman Catholic" monastery after all. In everything Catholic they are one with us, except that deplorable fact, they are not in communion with the Sovereign Pontiff and the Apostolic See of Rome. By paying allegiance to the Sovereign Pontiff they would be a more independent and happier community.³⁸

Lord Halifax, as always, also added his word of encouragement to the Brothers, and in a letter to the Church Times he says:

....by the Grace of God, Abbot Aelred has been enabled to win a position for the Benedictine Order in the English Church which at one time seemed impossible. It is not a mere question of another community coming into being, it is rather the recovery of a great principle for the lack of which the Catholic revival has been incomplete.³⁹

Thus began a correspondence between Catholics on this topic of the community at Painsthorpe. Some were harsh, others sympathetic. One Mrs. Jeffery wrote:

The well meant effort of Mr. Carlyle and his young brethren (is) nothing more than a somewhat unpleasant species of masquerade. This small ritualistic community who, in playing at monasticism have embarked upon a game, which is not a pastime in which Catholics can express their sympathy or to which they should give any encouragement.⁴⁰

Mrs. Jeffery was soon reprimanded for her harsh words by a young monk of Erdington Abbey, Dom Bede Camm, O.S.B. He it was who eight years later was to receive the message, "Please start for Caldey as soon as possible, we need your help and advice."⁴¹ At this time however his interest in the community went only so far as to defend it from the attacks of those whom he felt were taking unfair advantage of it. His reply to Mrs. Jeffery was as follows:

If only Catholics could realize the immense harm they can do by rash and unkind judgments of those outside the Fold!I know nothing of these good young men at Painsthorpe, save from hearsay, but all I have heard has been edifying and consoling... No doubt they have no real claim to be members of our Holy Order, but yet they do love Saint Benedict to the best of their lights, living lives of self-denial, mortification and prayer, and therefore they ought to be safe from the cheap sneers of those who, through no merit of their own, possess the precious gift of Faith.⁴²

Another Benedictine monk, who, until the articles appeared in the Times, knew nothing about the monks, was Dom John Chapman, O.S.B. also a monk of Erdington Abbey. He too began a campaign against the slanders which were being thrown at the monks by Catholics. His reply to Mrs. Jeffery was most direct:

.....(had Mrs. Jeffery) any idea of the difficulties she is putting in the way of those whose office it is to deal with souls and help them, I am sure she would have cut off her right hand rather than have written such disastrous lines.⁴³

Abbot Aelred was most thankful for the kind words of both monks and also other people who were sympathetic with his cause. This incident between Mrs. Jeffery and Dom Bede Camm might be considered the turning point in the history of the community, for the articles in the Times gave the Brothers so much publicity that it was impossible for them to remain unknown any longer. What was more important was the fact that from this time on they were better known to Roman Catholics than to the members of their own communion. One can be certain that such interested persons as Dom Bede Camm and Dom John Chapman were praying that someday the community would come into its rightful place in the great Benedictine family.

Eleven years later.....they were to find their true spiritual home within the Fold of Peter, but (at Painsthorpe) they were undisturbed by any serious doubts about their ecclesiastical allegiance, and quite content to be equally loyal to their spiritual mother the Church of England and their spiritual father Saint Benedict.⁴⁴

Two events which took place during the stay at the Hall were the Installation and Blessing of Abbot Aelred and his Ordination to the Priesthood. The Installation and Blessing took place on October 30, 1903, with the Bishop of Fond-du-Lac, Wisconsin, a certain Doctor Grafton, officiating. One can easily picture the truly magnificent pageant presented at the blessing, which was carried out with all the pomp and

splendour of pre-reformation days, the only difference being the use of the vernacular in place of Latin.

The Ordination of Abbot Aelred was an event of a more subdued nature, the fact being that very few persons outside the community knew that it was to take place. Archbishop McLagan had given permission for Bishop Grafton to ordain provided the ceremony took place at the Bishop's Cathedral in the United States and provided that there be no publicity whatever connected with the event and provided that Abbot Aelred upon his return to England would be considered a priest in Colonial Orders, not ordained for the Diocese of York, with permission to minister to the community and the village only.

All went well until Abbot Aelred returned to England and began to preach in various high churches. Then the question arose as to why his name did not appear in the Church of England or the Episcopal Protestant Church Register. Did the Bishop of London give him the permission needed before he had been ordained? What was his position in official church circles? This question of official recognition of Abbot Aelred's ordination was one of the problems which started the ball of conversion rolling. But for the time being other and more important things were occupying the attention of the Abbot. For the present he must let tongues wag as they would for he and his family were on the eve of making another change of residence. This time they hoped for good.

VIII

ORA ET LABORA

Headlines of the August issue of Pax (the magazine published by the Brothers while at the Hall) announced in bold print: "Our return to Caldey Island-Permanent Home." Abbot Aelred went on to tell in his letter of the month how this change was made possible. A trust had been formed of the professed members of the community, the initial cost having been loaned by a wealthy friend.

Father Abbot hastened to inform his readers that this did not mean that the financial end of the deal had been brought to a happy completion. By no means was this true. There was still a great deal of necessary building to be done; furnishings had to be supplied for the monastic buildings; the quarry and gardens must be worked by the villagers at the regular salary. With this letter began the begging work of the monks and especially of the Father Abbot, in order to provide livelihood for the community.

What was the reaction of the world at large and Britain in particular to this move to Caldey? Was anyone aware of its significance? Indeed, the news was received on all sides with mixed emotions.

Protestants of every denomination should, in self-defence, demand the suppression of these communities, which are fast becoming a menace to our civil and religious freedom.

The English Churchman

Childish nonsense, absurdity, religious play-acting.

The Universe

Glad to hear that a permanent home has been obtained for the community.

Archbishop of York

You will leave Painsthorpe to the great regret and sorrow of all who have learnt to love the community.

Lord Halifax

The parishioners are, without exception, very sorry, and express their feelings unmistakably.

Mr. Shepherd
Vicar of Kirby-Underdale

With such publicity behind them the group betook themselves a second time to Caldey the Island of Saints. On October 19, 1906, monastic life once again began in earnest, the bell in the old leaning tower of the Priory Church announcing the hours of divine worship. The Islanders seemed pleased to have these kind monks as masters, and it looked as though greater days were ahead, greater than one had dared hope for a few months previous.

Those were happy days for the community, back again on Caldey, singing the divine praises, working, and living lives worthy of their Benedictine ancestors. Mr. Peter Anson recalls the life during those happy days in glowing terms:

One could go on ad infinitum recalling those far-off days, which as we look back seem almost as remote and unreal in some ways as the days of the stage-coach or sailing ships. For those who loved them, they are imperishable years, and their memories are among the things that grow not old.⁴⁵

Soon it was evident that the community could not continue much longer residence in the old lodge, and Abbot Aelred came

to the decision that a new monastery was the only means of relief. With the help of the famous Cardiff architect, Mr. J. Coates Carter, a draft was made for a large Guest House; this was to serve as a temporary monastery, later to be converted into a Guest House for priests and religious desiring to retreat on the Island.

Much assistance was given by

Miss Russell...her friendship goes back to the Anglican days, and it was then that she provided most of the funds for the building of the monastery at Caldey...as foundress Miss Russell was allowed to be shown over the monastery once a year, together with any others she liked to accompany her.⁴⁶

As the need for money came to the attention of the public other well disposed persons like Miss Russell came to the assistance of the community. A row of workmens' cottages were erected on a rise above the village, this augmented until six houses made up the cloister garth, which was brought to completion with the addition of the Abbot's house and private chapel. This group of buildings as well as the Guest House were intended only as temporary shelters, but the monastery proper - a huge pile of pre-reformation style - never progressed beyond paper. "Prinknash Notes" makes mention of the fact that these were only temporary (or meant to be temporary) shelters, in the following way:

.....the case was entirely different with Farnborough, and the goal of those now about to leave the Mother House (Prinknash, 1947) is a beautiful church and a permanent monastery giving a conscienceness of material stability which some might consider almost the essence of the Benedictine vocation, but which had been curiously lacking through the whole of our history since

its earliest Anglican days. For even at Caldey our buildings were always considered as but a stepping stone to the Abbey of which we dreamed. dreams.⁴⁷

So it was the row of low white cottages with the odd spire of the Abbot's house that formed the familiar landmark for the visitors who came to this little bit of heaven in the Welsh Sea.

We should mention here that the construction work, which was always going on somewhere, also aided the villagers. A small school was built and staffed by the monks; a few simple bungalows were built for needy families; the old Island Tower was changed into an oratory and an English altar was erected in the village church.

In 1908 it was imperative that a new chapel be built for the use of the community in its choir work. Once again Mr. J. Coates Carter drew up plans to conform with the already existing cottage monastery. The Abbey Church was finally dedicated on Pentecost Sunday, 1909, and has ever since been a landmark of Caldey Island. (Some years after the monks left the Island, the Church was almost entirely destroyed by fire, leaving only a part of the nave and the sanctuary unharmed.) Dom Wilfrid Upson, O.S.B., recalls the beauty of this little church thus:

We had built....this altar before the conversion of the community to the Catholic Faith. Its stones had been collected from many of the ancient monasteries of England. In spite of the fire it remains an inspiring reminder of the days when England was known throughout the Catholic world as the Island of Saints and the Dowry of Mary.⁴⁸

And still the building continued, and though a rather large debt was mounting against the community, this urge and necessity for building was in a way a blessing. It afforded great numbers of men, carpenters, masons and iron workers with steady employment. In fact for quite some time over one hundred workmen came to the Abbey each day on construction crews. A Station and Chapter House were constructed in connection with the Abbey Church, all going to make up a beautiful group of buildings of Edwardian design. Late in the summer of 1911, electric light was installed on the Island to the joy of the younger generation; with electricity came a set of cathedral chimes, which today ring out the hours of the divine worship over the Cotswold Hills.

The next year Abbot Aelred definitely abandoned all hope of building the Gate House and concentrated money and men on increasing the cottage monastery. This increase included the Abbot's house, a huge oak-paneled refectory, and an eight sided Glastonbury kitchen. The buildings were arranged with the idea that after the completion of the proposed monastery they could be used as the first buildings of an exclusive preparatory school for boys. The proposed abbey never passed beyond blueprint stage and today the site chosen is still a quiet pinewood above the Bay inhabited solely by rabbits and wild flowers.

At the end of the first decade of the 1900's Caldey Abbey formed a strange picture; it was neither Lombardic nor Tyrolean nor Elizabethan, but it formed a style all its

own, being a bit too fussy for the simple needs of the monks. Still, contributions continued to flow in and were used for the improvement of the Abbey and the village.

If a growth in the vocations of a community can be used as a judgment as to whether or not God is pleased with the community, we must admit that He definitely was pleased with Caldey Abbey.

On the Isle of Dogs Brother Aelred had been joined by one other young man whom he had clothed as a novice and it was this novice who accompanied him to Lower Guiting. At Lower Guiting two more prospective members were recieved but unfortunately left shortly after; one was taken to prison as a thief, the other felt he was not really called to the austere life which Brother Aelred lived. We hear nothing more of an increase in the community until September, 1899, before the group was to leave for their new home at Milton Abbas. It was at this time that Brother Henry, to whom we are indebted for a most interesting diary of the community, made his simple profession, while at the same time a candidate, Brother George, was invested as a novice. The first profession in a community is always a happy event.

While dwelling at Caldey the first time, Brother Samson, a newcomer to the community, was clothed as a Novice while the aforementioned Brother George made his profession. Just before leaving the Island to take up residence at Painsthorpe Hall we read from the Charter of Father Aelred's Abbatial Election that there were by this time, 1902, eight members

in the community: Father Aelred, Brothers Henry, George, Augustine, Placidus, Samson, Malachy and David. Only four of these, Father Aelred, Brothers Henry, Placidus and Samson were among the members who "went over to Rome" in 1913. It was around this time that the present Abbot of the community joined the Brothers,

The first Abbot of Prinknash is nearly fifty-eight, having been born in London on 28th June, 1880. He joined the then Anglican Benedictines of Caldey in 1908; before which he had become known as a successful social worker in the east end of London.⁴⁹

Also in 1908 vocations began to increase rapidly; until this time there were never more than one or two professions a year. But about this time, "the great festivals of the church were kept with much outward solemnity by the community now that their numbers were increasing so rapidly."⁵⁰ And a little later we read, "Meanwhile the community continued to grow in numbers, and it became difficult to find room for the postulants and novices."⁵¹

Writing of the community's standing in 1910, Mr. Peter Anson says:

The growth of the community had been one of amazing rapidity, once the preliminary struggles were passed. Ten years before there had been less than half a dozen young men living from hand to mouth in a small cottage in Dorsetshire... ..In ten years how great had been the progress, a community numbering close on forty (monks) with a world-wide circle of friends...⁵²

"Prinknash Notes" of 1943 tells the story of one monk who presented himself to the Abbot at this time as a candidate, his story is just one example of the many young men who joined the Brothers during this time.

Douglas Whitsed came to Caldey as a postulant in 1910 when he was about thirty years of age and so his was definitely a late vocation. Like many another devout Anglo-Catholic young man at that time he felt called to dedicate his life to the service of God in the cloister, while feeling no attraction to the Anglican ministry, and Caldey gave him just what he needed.⁵³

In the March, 1911 edition of Pax, Abbot Aelred writes with pride of the increase of vocations,

Another great cause for joy and thankfulness is that in the growth of the community....has come the opportunity for...the Brothers...(to give) themselves to the strictest and more solitary form of the Benedictine Life.⁵⁴

In 1913, at the time of the conversion of the community the number of monks had increased to an even greater extent numbering close on to thirty members, twenty-four of whom were received into the Church. This is a remarkable growth for a period of only seventeen years (1896-1913) and it is easy to see that such a life could be lived by willing young men even in the Anglican communion.

We have seen that there was a great increase of vocations from the founding of the community until the year

1913, and we have also seen that many new and beautiful buildings were erected during this time. Now this gives us men and buildings - but what did these men do in these buildings? In other words what type of manual and intellectual labor was carried on by the community.

In the very early days of the community on the Isle of Dogs, Brother Aelred and his companion specialized mainly in social and organizing work, that is caring for the sick, organizing youth clubs, starting community projects and serving the poor in particular. At Lower Guiting "...there was plenty of work to do in the house and garden."⁵⁵ At Cowley undoubtedly they lent themselves mostly to the recitation of the Divine Office and the care of the house as they did not take part in the parish work of the Society.

From the earliest times of the community all care had been taken to see that the Divine Office was carried out in the most perfect manner. Above all and before all other work the Office held first place. Someone has expressed this love of the Office in the following way:

.....the chief work of these monks
is corporate prayer, and the carry-
ing out of the church's liturgy with
all possible dignity and solemnity.⁵⁶

At one time, before the monks began Office in the new Abbey Church on Caldey, Brother Wilfrid Upson was sent to Quarr Abbey, on the Isle of Wight, to study the Solesmes method of chant. Some years later Brother Wilfrid, now Abbot,

recalled this visit to mind,

I have just come from the choir of the Abbey of Saint Mary at Quarr. The chanting of the monks at the High Mass sent me back nearly forty years in an attractive distraction, for I found myself in the original old church of corrugated iron, soon after it had been moved from Appuldurcombe to Quarr, and hearing for the first time the "Solesmes" Chant. In those days I was an Anglican monk of Caldey, and had been sent by my Abbot to stay at the nearby village of Fishbourne with Peter Anson to study from the outside the Solesmes method of interpreting the plainsong melodies of the Church's liturgy.⁵⁷

During their first stay on Caldey Island (1901-02) the monks were more or less forced to work on the Island farms which belonged to Mr. Bushell. For this work they received the same salary as the Islanders (probably little enough). This soon led to some disagreement, Mr. Bushell feeling the monks did not spend enough time in the gardens and Father Aelred feeling they did not have enough time to sing the Office properly. This unhappy situation was brought to a happy close when the Brothers migrated to Painsthorpe.

It was at the Hall that the community really began its first practice of the monastic crafts. They spent their work hours, the greater part of each day, in the kitchen or refectory, on the small farm attached to the property or working with the poultry. Some of the Brothers were permitted to work with vestments and in the copper and bronze shops. Concerning the vestments produced by the Brothers,

the English Churchman expressed horror and indignation at such garish vestments, claiming that the Bishop to whom one set had been presented as a gift, would never dare wear them. This craft is still practiced by the Brothers and the community is justly proud of the strictly liturgical vestures produced by these artisans. It might be interesting to mention that Saint Bernard dogs, all pedigreed, were raised by the community while at the Hall and the money received from these pups saw the group through many a dark day. Gardening had always been a favorite work of the Abbot as there was never a limit to the amount of vegetables which could be put to use by the cook, the community observing complete abstinence throughout its Anglican days.

When the Brothers returned to Caldey new fields of work opened up. Often people thought that the Brothers did nothing all day other than walk the shady cloister paths and read Psalms. Rather, the life was rigorous, hard and strict. "Life on the Island was more than a merely picturesque pageant and beneath all this externalism lay hidden a very deep spirituality."⁵⁸ Some of the Brothers were allowed to do social work with the villagers; others were employed on the work crews which did most of the construction work on the Island. Others took part in stained glass

window designing, architecture, the illuminating of manuscripts and last but not least, some worked on the higher theological studies in preparation for the priesthood.

"Prinknash Notes" supply us with further details of other interesting work which the Brothers did on the Island.

Several times attempts had been made to start orchards on the Island with very little success,

In our former home (Caldey Island) much labour was expended on at least two occasions in the last decade of our stay in attempts to make new orchards, and each time failure resulted as the site chosen proved too exposed. The whole Island was in fact too open to the winds of heaven for fruit growing to be possible except on a small scale.⁵⁹

Another project taken up at this time was bookbinding. A certain interested Anglican by the name of Mr. Kenneth W. M. Lott took "a course of lessons in bookbinding and leathercraft in order to teach us the art, and a number of the community profited by his lessons and his endless store of patience."⁶⁰ This leathercraft work along with binding and the illuminating of all types of manuscripts worked out into a wonderful trade in the later days of the community on Caldey Island.

Today it is the practice of the community that each member of the monastery, lay-brother, choir brother, father, goes to his manual labor for a time each day. True, certain

of the fathers are needed for the few classes given the clerics, also the clerics themselves must spend some time each day in higher studies, but this does not keep them from doing their assigned work, although this work may be very light because of the interference of class work.

IX

FROM DARKNESS INTO THE LIGHT

Nominally we are Anglicans....a product of the the Church of England, but in reality the community has been brought up on Roman Catholic food....We have borrowed practically everything we have from the Roman Church, and now it may be 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 principles, can give us.⁶¹

With this saying of a Caldey Benedictine in mind, we enter into the most important phase of the history of the monks. Certainly the early years were important, especially those years when Abbot Aelred was forming the policies of the community, those years devoted to the study and meaning of the Holy Rule as Anglicans could live it, those years of hand to mouth existence when only Providence kept the group together as one community.

But the period we are now entering into, the period of the conversion, was period of doubt, perplexity, desire to do what God wished, and desire to do all things with the permission of authority. The monks had passed their stage of growing up and were just ready to settle down and enjoy the fruits of their labours when (if we may so speak) the Holy Spirit put a bug in their ear that maybe after all this

wasn't the right way to live. And then there was always that terrible question of authority; one Bishop said they were correct in their views, another said such views were incompatible with Anglican communion. Canterbury itself was uncertain what was to be said and consequently said nothing. How simple it would have been if they in their indecision could have had recourse to the Roman Pontiff whose decision once given is never revoked, perhaps in him was contained the answer to their problem.

There had always been talk within the community of the "Roman Question" and what the relation was and should be between the Anglican Church and the See of Rome. One of the first public connections between Rome and the monks of Caldey took place in 1907. The occasion was the visit of Abbot Hildebrand de Hemptinne to England. During his visit a mutual friend introduced the Abbot Primate to Abbot Aelred, and of course tongues began wagging and those who had doubts as to the Roman character of the community wrote public attacks on "those monks on the eve of their going over to Rome." Abbot Aelred writing a public explanation in Pax said, "We believe firmly that Almighty God has called us to live the Benedictine life in the Church of England."⁶² This was the "official attitude"

of the community, but one is inclined to feel that the unofficial attitude was probably closer to the truth and closer to Rome than many imagined. Peter Anson states that even at the time when the community was living at Cowley "It was pointed out to me....that it was certainly doubtful if the Caldey Benedictines had any real status in the Church of England."⁶³

A series of articles defending the community's position in the church appeared in Pax. They were contributed by Claude Kempson and carried the title, "The Church in Modern England, 1833-1908." In 1909 another article appeared along this line with Doctor Atchley attempting to prove "The Catholicity of the Book of Common Prayer," which Book of Prayer, the reader will recall, was used without any interpolations in the village church at Caldey. "Anglican Papalists" in the 1942 Pax says,

Thirty years ago, when the Caldey community was beginning to feel rather uncomfortable about its position in the Church of England, one of the monks tried to discover solid reasons for remaining an Anglican by writing an article which appeared in Pax, entitled, "Negotiations for Reunion Between England and Rome since the Separation of the Sixteenth Century." The result of this literary effort was to quiet his conscience for a month or two. He felt he had sufficient

reasons for believing that "Corporate Reunion" might come about sooner or later, and so he clung rather desperately to what he felt in his inmost heart was really a sinking ship.⁶⁴

In 1910 Abbot Aelred's Mail Box was always filled with letters from persons whom he claimed were very much disturbed about the unrest in the church and were seeking ways and means to bring peace to their soul. The Father Abbot's only suggestion was that all pray for real union within the church. It would seem from his monthly letter in Pax that Abbot Aelred was really the one who had "Roman Fever." The English modernists were at this time saying things which threatened the very foundations of all community life, and Randall Davidson, the captain of the Anglican ship, was incapable of pronouncing against such statements. At this same time the monks felt it their duty to study their actual relation with Rome as Benedictines and as Christians. A large collection of books dealing with Rome, magazines, pamphlets and newspaper clippings were gathered together by the interested community. Although the topic of Rome was a forbidden subject at recreation, the Brothers were permitted to read as much as they wished about the question during their leisure time.

By the end of the year 1910, things were at the place where the question of submitting to Rome was more than an

idea, its possibility was now admitted by Father Abbot in so many words. In a letter to a postulant who felt he should submit to Rome the Father said,

I do not think I need say more now that you have anticipated a great deal of what I was going to say to you, and that by your own researches, you have formed an opinion of the "Anglican position" which is exactly my own.⁶⁵

To a novice who had an attack of "Roman Fever" Father Abbot addressed the following:

I'm not going to try to stop you from making your submission to the Holy See.... but are you quite sure you cannot wait a bit? We may all be forced to take the same step sooner or later.⁶⁶

From the word "forced" one might receive the impression that once Abbot Aelred made the decision for himself he would insist on all the others following his example.

However nothing could be farther from the truth. Monsignor Ronald Knox, a one time friend of the monks of Caldey says,

Unfriendly critics suggested at the time that he (Carlyle) had resolved for himself on submission to Rome, and was anxious to carry his community with him; what better means of securing that object than to stage a conflict in which it would appear that the Anglican authorities were determined either to reform Caldey root and branch, or to cast it out into the exterior light?⁶⁷

Certainly at this time (1911) few members of the community were seriously bothered with the idea of submission and

seldom gave it a second thought. But when the time came for the decision to be made each felt sure that the many little disagreements between Caldey and Canterbury in the past years were really the things which helped them to make a correct decision.

In 1911 the question of episcopal authority really came to the fore for the first time, for it was in that year that a conference was sponsored by Lord Halifax at Hickleton, his ancestral home. Abbot Aelred's notes prove that much of the discussion was centered around the definite lack of authority in the group of Anglican Bishops with regard to their subjects. The notes also show that the tendency of the members of the conference was towards disregarding the leaders if these same leaders did not put their best efforts forward on behalf of the church. At the end of the conference Lord Halifax begged Father Abbot to hold off going over to Rome as possibly a full reunion might soon be brought about. The Abbot's final decision was:

As a community in common with many others at the present moment we are beginning to feel that some clear line of action must be taken: we also feel that no action can be right unless what is done is going to tend towards Catholic unity, i.e., with the Roman Church.⁶⁰

Abbot Aelred also asked point blank if there was any real stable faith without dependence on the Papacy. If the Anglican Church had a Pope with the supreme authority of the Pope of Rome, no doubt there would never have been any question of submission. Peter Anson tells of his own fear of doing things without permission of superiors in the following way.

I think it was largely due to the effect on me of this visit to Llanthony that I was finally convinced of the impossibility of trying to revive Benedictine Monasticism in the Church of England. There was a vital distinction (between Caldey and Llanthony). I was certain that my own Abbot was fast moving on the road to Rome, maybe nearer than he realized, and so I had confidence in what might lie ahead of us. My fear was the danger of drifting into a similar position of pitiful isolation and of losing complete touch with any external authority.⁶⁹

In the last days of 1911, Abbot Aelred wrote a letter which would ultimately be the cause of the community's conversion. It was addressed to Randall Davidson, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and requested that Dom Carlyle be officially recognized as a priest in Colonial Orders, for until such recognition was forthcoming the Abbot needed permission to minister. Such a position was distasteful to the community and harmful to the Abbot insofar as he was not recognized officially as a

minister in the Anglican Church and could not legally be recorded as such in any of the more important registers. Doctor Davidson's only reply was an invitation to a conference at Lambeth Palace. The Abbot on his way to London paid a visit to Doctor Gore, the Bishop of Oxford, to discuss with him the problems facing the community due to his ordination abroad. Doctor Gore admitted that such an irregularity in a superior could easily have most terrible effects on the community. The good Doctor offered the suggestion that an episcopal visitator would be the only solution to the problem. The conference with the Archbishop of Canterbury amounted to practically nothing from the standpoint of the Caldey monks. Abbot Aelred needed the authorization of the Archbishop and the Archbishop needed time - and nothing immediate came of the meeting.

Two months later a letter arrived from Doctor Davidson giving the community an ultimatum; they must conform completely to the Lambeth Conference of 1897 and they must have an episcopal visitator. The Archbishop stressed the fact that unless the community had a competent visitator he would refuse to speak of the authorization of Abbot Aelred's ordination. For a time the Caldey men were held in a certain suspense - a feeling of uncertainty

prevailed in the community and to iron the matter out Abbot Aelred began a correspondence with Bishop Gore whom he wished to have as episcopal visitator to the community.

The early months of 1912 saw a definite state of tension in the community, until this time the Roman Question had affected only a few, the Abbot, the anxious novice mentioned above and one or two others. But by this time most of the Brothers were wondering just how legitimate their position really was, did Canterbury really want them in the Anglican fold? Were they wrong in living as Romans under Anglican authority? Was the Abbot wrong in officiating without the proper sanction? The first question, "Do we belong in the Fold of Peter?" was put to the monks at Easter, 1912; the answer was NO! They had spent the forty days of Lent in preparing to answer this question; the library had provided them with material on the question both pro and con; well known contraversialists had come to the Island in order to lecture to the monks. The community had decided as one man that their position in the Anglican fold was justifiable and that at least for the present there was no need to go to Rome. In order to carry out their original aims more perfectly the community decided that a more perfect observance of the Holy

Rule was necessary and each monk in his own way tried to be as faithful as possible to the common life. By this voluntary special observance the Brothers wished to make it known that it was the will of God and not their own will that they wished to follow. The group had passed successfully through its first real crisis - what of the Future?

The community decided upon Doctor Gore as official visitator provided the Bishop would accept this appointment and accordingly Father Abbot wrote to Doctor Davidson informing him of the decision of the community and requesting that if possible Bishop Gore make a trip to Caldey in the near future for the sake of becoming better acquainted with the Brothers. A letter was also sent to Doctor Gore containing the same information; the answer was curt and to the point: no Bishop, least of all Doctor Gore, could become visitator to a community unless he was convinced beforehand that all their practices and beliefs conformed to the laws of the Church of England. Father Abbot sent a detailed report of the community, its Rule and copies of the various liturgical books used on the Island, and asked Doctor Gore if a committee of two churchmen might be appointed to pay a visit to the Island

and then send a formal report to the Doctor by means of which he could make his decision.

Why Abbot Aelred chose Doctor Gore as visitor is uncertain; he was, to be sure, the only Anglican Bishop who was a member of a religious group before his consecration, but he had definite ideas of such groups and Caldey had overstepped those bounds years before. The committee chosen to study life on Caldey (consisting of Doctor Darwell Stone and Mr. Trevelyan) in due time spent a few days on Caldey and agreed to send Abbot Aelred a copy of their report to the Bishop, which report Abbot Aelred was to check for accuracy and fairness. The report duly corrected by the Abbot was forwarded to Doctor Gore and his answer, awaited with expectancy, arrived shortly thereafter and to say the least ~~it was a bombshell~~ to most of the community.

For seventeen years the monks of Caldey had lived peacefully and happily away from the hustle and bustle of the world, its follies and changes. Those were happy years for the Brothers who were developing a new way of life destroyed so many years before by a heartless tyrant. From the very beginning the Brothers had determined to do nothing without the authorization of episcopal power. They had taken vows with this permission; their community

had been established with this permission and their Father Abbot had been blessed with this permission.

To pray for unity and to seek guidance under authority had been two principles of the foundation of our community. Step by step we had gone on for nearly twenty years, hoping and praying for the one, and doing nothing without the other.⁷⁰

So spoke Abbot Aelred concerning the community's desire for permission to do all things. Two things only yet needed authorization, the ordination of Father Abbot and an official visitator of the community. Every means possible had been taken to secure this permission from the authorities and this latest rebuke from Doctor Gore was heartrending; the end, it seemed, of all dreams and hopes.

Most of the monks were aware that an "Anglo-Catholic" is always being tossed about in the crises, but when Bishop Gore's letter arrived, to a man they were surprised to find that to remain in the Church of England they would of necessity have to relinquish those rites and practices which made up the best part of their life, but "...his (Gore) decision was the providential means of opening our eyes at last to the full significance of our anomalous position."⁷¹

The main points of Doctor Gore's letter were:

- 1) All property and possessions must be secured to the Church of England.
- 2) Priests of the community must

take the Oath and the Book of Common Prayer must be the sole guide for liturgical worship. 3) The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception and the belief in the Assumption must be kept out of worship. 4) Exposition of and benediction of both the Eucharist and relics must cease. These, the Bishop insisted, were merely introductory and surface matters, if these points were accepted, negotiations could be begun, but not before. He also stressed the fact that there could be absolutely no compromise nor could any concessions be made. If he were to be visitator all the points must be accepted unconditionally; otherwise the entire idea must be forgotten.

His (Doctor Gore) conditions involved the surrender by the community of some of their most fundamental and sacred beliefs, and in the face of such demands the falseness of its position became evident. Humanly speaking the community would have continued in the Church of England but for the position taken up by the Bishop of Oxford, which was the means of bringing us into the Catholic Church.⁷²

Abbot Aelred's reply was calm and deliberate, he admitted that these points were the foundation of their way of life, centering as it did around the Eucharist and the Divine Office, and that to take these two things from the monks without any possible concessions was not in his power to do. His main objection to the Bishop's demands was the fact that hundreds of persons in the Anglican

Church were doing what his monks could not do with episcopal sanction. Why was this? Someone was wrong somewhere. The community could not and would not accept the points as they were presented.

February 18, 1913, began as any other normal monastic day on Caldey. But after the conventual mass a notice was posted that a meeting of the entire community was to be held that afternoon in the Abbot's office.

That afternoon as the individual members of the community passed into the Abbot's office almost to a man they felt this was to be their last day as Anglicans. After all had gathered at the appointed time, Father Abbot gave his own answer to the question. He felt certain there was no other thing for him to do but submit to Rome, explaining he could do God's will only by submitting to competent superiors, and as he saw it, these superiors were Rome.

I had said nothing to anyone previously, and when I met the brethren I thought it best to tell them at once the conclusion I had arrived at. I was not in the least prepared for the fact that so many of the community had themselves come to the chapter with their own minds quite made up; and when afterwards I saw their written notes, I found that individually they had reached the same conclusion.⁷³

One by one the others stated their opinion of the matter

and announced their decision to accept Rome along with their Father Abbot; only a few desired more time to consider this most important step.

History had just been made on Caldey Island; Rome had gained a full-fledged Anglican monastic community and Canterbury had just lost its only authorized Abbey. To make the event stand out in its full meaning, Abbot Aelred removed his pectoral cross and ring and refrained from all priestly functions, for he believed that validity of Orders was given only by authority and when such authority was lacking, as in his own case, there could be no Orders.

On the 19th of February, 1913, a letter was dispatched to the Bishop of Oxford signed by twenty-seven members of the community, among them Dom Wilfrid Upson, the present Abbot of the community. The letter was a formal statement to the effect that the Brothers could not before God, submit to the Bishop's demands and that those same demands were contrary to all their ideas of the Catholic Faith. The Bishop's reply was forthcoming and begged the community to think things out more clearly, not to make a hasty decision and regret that decision in the years to come. He tried to convince the Brothers that his demands were not really unreasonable if the community would give in just a little. The Abbot's reply was the answer of a man with an

ideal he would not abandon at this time,

The whole question narrows itself down to that of authority. All throughout the history of the past fifteen years authority has been of paramount importance in the growth of our community life, which we knew to be impossible without it.⁷⁴

Father Abbot went on to explain that it was impossible for the monks to bargain in what they considered to be matters of Faith and if such matters of Faith could not be countenanced by the Anglican Church, the Brothers must go to Rome where such truths were taught. In the eyes of Bishop Gore this letter probably amounted to an open profession of Faith and submission to Rome.

The reason for the conversion in very simple words might be taken from a book review by a certain D.M.:

So far as Caldey is concerned, we believe the primary cause of the conversion was something much deeper and of longer growth than any such outside influence (as exerted by the nuns of Milford Haven, a convent of nuns somewhat under Abbot Aelred's care.)

We think it was a question less of persons than of principles, and that the conversion took place as the culmination of the life and teaching followed in the community for many years previously.⁷⁵

Abbot Wilfrid writing in 1942 says:

I am writing this letter on the Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost, and not a year has passed since I joined the community thirty-four years ago without the special attention of the monks being drawn to the beautiful Gospel for today. Its concluding words are

a concise summing up of the dominant inspiration of the spirit which we strive to animate our lives with, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God...." It was this which enabled us to put all else on one side when the grace of conversion was given, all else being put into the balance, and found wanting.⁷⁶

A wire was sent immediately to Dom Bede Camm, O.S.B. a monk of Maredsous Abbey, Belgium, at that time stationed at Erdington Abbey, England, urging him to come to Caldey immediately. He was the first Catholic priest contacted concerning the conversion, having become acquainted with the community through the Catholic Times as told above.

Members of the community who came into the Church at Caldey....will never forget that, in the words of one of their number, it was Dom Bede Camm who came to their help in that great crisis of their lives and who helped them board the Barque of Peter.⁷⁷

Dom Bede immediately wired his superior, Abbot Columba Marmion, O.S.B. at Maredsous Abbey, relating the facts of this wonderful conversion and telling him that he had presumed permission through Abbot Butler of Downside to go to Caldey. Dom Bede arrived at the Island on a bright sunny morning and was immediately introduced to the monks. It was a strange meeting for the monks because most of them had never before had any contact whatever with a Roman Catholic priest, for Dom Bede because confronted by a group of Protestant Monks. His only remark was a

heritage for all time: "Well! You're a picturesque crowd at all events."⁷⁸

Dom Bede was a monk well fitted for the task in store for him, he at once began a triduum of prayer to the Holy Spirit, the Guide of souls. At the same time he also began a retreat which was to precede the actual admission of the monks. During the following days many great events took place which will never be forgotten by the community. Cardinal Merry del Val on behalf of the Holy Father, Pope Pius X, sent blessings and best wishes to the convert community. This excitement was still new when Abbot Columba Marmion arrived and gave a conference to the Brothers which was followed by a formal retreat.

Dom Bede tells us that he (Abbot Marmion) reached Tenby on the Monday afternoon following, but could not get across in the steamer. However he chartered a sailing boat and came safely. He at once won the hearts of everyone.⁷⁹

Peter Anson remembers,

Never shall I forget that fat old monk (Dom Marmion) giving us conferences during a retreat. It was an experience of the Benedictine Spirit at its best.⁸⁰

The editor of Pax says:

Those readers of Pax who have had the privilege of knowing Abbot Marmion, and also of passing through the throes of conversion, will understand our gratitude to Divine Providence for sending us such a friend at that time. Apart from all else, his wisdom

and love were a wonderful revelation to us neophytes of the spirit of the Catholic Church and of the Benedictine Order.⁸¹

Abbot Marmion's arrival was followed by that of Abbot Cuthbert Butler of Downside and Doctor Moystyn the Bishop of Menevia. Abbot Cuthbert was especially impressed by the wonderful spirit of this strange monastic family.

March 5th, 1913, the feast day of Saint Aelred, was chosen as the day on which the monks would officially make their profession of Faith. Before the High Altar sat the Bishop of Menevia surrounded by Abbots Marmion and Butler. Abbot Aelred knelt holding the Book of Gospels surrounded by twenty-four of his monks. All recited the formula together and were abjured from censures by the Bishop. The road to Rome had been long, but for persons so intent on doing what they felt to be the will of God, it had not been too difficult. True, some felt the change more than others, to some it was the answer to years of prayer while to others it was the gift of God when the right moment came.

It is one of the most important events that has occurred in England since Newman and his Littlemore community joined the Church, and it will have a great effect on many more.⁸²

So spoke the editor of The Missionary magazine upon hearing of the decision of the Brothers; and this sentiment

was voiced by other Catholic writers throughout the whole world.

After submitting to the Holy See, Abbot Aelred Carlyle resigned his Anglican Abbacy and once again became known as Brother Aelred. Shortly after the conversion he made a retreat at the Charterhouse, Parkminster, preparatory for a trip abroad. During the absence of Brother Aelred, Father John Chapman of Erdington was placed in charge of the community. Prinknash Notes of 1929 says,

It is now more than sixteen years since on the reception of our community into the Catholic Church Father John Chapman, then a monk of Maredsous (stationed in England) was appointed superior for a year by the Holy See. He had a difficult position to fill, being placed in charge of a community of men who were alike fresh from a great spiritual uprooting and at the same time quite unknown to him, but he quickly inspired both warm affection and sincere respect.⁸³

Brother Aelred on his journey to Europe was to travel in the company of Abbot Columba Marmion whose guest he was at Maredsous Abbey and who was his guide and promoter in the other Abbeys of Europe and especially at the Papal Court. Writing to his monks at Caldey while a guest at Maredsous, Abbot Aelred said,

I have never for one moment regretted the step: and I have gained an interior peace and an assurance of right-doing that nothing will ever take away.⁸⁴

At Rome Brother Aelred, through the influence of Abbot Marmion, was granted an audience with the Holy Father Pope Pius X. The Holy Father was most interested in the marvelous community conversion at Caldey. When Abbot Marmion explained that Brother Aelred hoped to be ordained after his novitiate the Holy Father said,

We accord the most ample faculties,
and all dispensations in order that
he may be ordained immediately after
his novitiate; and not only for him;
but also for those at Caldey....⁸⁵

How wonderful that the permission sought so fruitlessly from Canterbury down through the years was granted by Rome immediately. Brother Aelred realized that this permission for ordination would never be questioned when once granted by the Holy See; this was the authorized recognition he had hoped for for so many years.

In July, 1913, Brother Aelred returned once more to his beloved community, this time an ordained priest of God according to the Roman Catholic Church. On October 18th of the same year, amidst great jubilation he was officially installed as Abbot of Caldey Abbey by a brief of the Holy See. Caldey Abbey, her Abbot and monks, had at last attained the recognition they desired. Her Abbot was an officially ordained priest, her monks were under the obedience of the Supreme Pontiff who was most zealous for their welfare, and finally they became members of the family of Saint

Benedict when their monastery was erected as a canonical Benedictine Abbey.

The community was now in the place which rightfully belonged to it. Some persons however were very displeased with the outcome of the conversion:

The secession has long been expected, and among those who knew the facts has been completely discounted. Certainly it will not prove, as a member of the community some time ago naively expressed his opinion that it would prove, the greatest blow to the English Church since the secession of Newman.

The Church Times

No honest Englishman will regret that these quondam masquaraders in the Church of England have finally abandoned their discreditable position.

English Churchman

They sulked and refused to play, like so many spoilt children....and that is all that need be said upon the subject.

The Guardian

There is no room for "monkery" in the Church of England.

Record

Friends however, continued to welcome this strange band into the fold of Peter, both clergy and laymen outdid each other in praise of those who were bold enough to strive after and attain the goal they knew to be theirs.

The first part of the Caldey **story** was speedily drawing to a close and the monks were entering into a new era. Canterbury was now nothing more than a dim shadow of the

past and Rome was a beacon of the future.

X

AND THERE ARE GLADES IN PRINKNASH WOODS

By their conversion to Rome the Benedictines of Caldey it would seem had solved all difficulties; but such was not to be the case. By exchanging Canterbury for Rome they also exchanged relative freedom from financial care for a state of nominal bankruptcy. At the moment of conversion, income ordinarily received from subscriptions and donations ceased; the monastery it is true remained community property but there was a lack of income to care for and maintain it as well as the members of the community.

A committee of interested and unbiased laymen and clergy was chosen to decide the financial problem. The money donated for the purchase of the Island and the construction of buildings was not to be returned; all donations sent to the general fund since the conversion of the community were to be returned and one half of the money received for the building fund was to be sent to the Church of England for similar building projects. Finally the community's daughter house to be, Pershore, was returned to Mr. Henry Wise, the kind donor. "Prinknash Notes" of August, 1947, makes the following comment concerning Pershore.

The following paragraph from Nashdom Abbey Notes for last July may interest some of our readers: We have recently been compelled to part with our oldest property and material link with the monasticism of pre-reformation England, the estate of Pershore Abbey which has been requisitioned for a building site by the Pershore RDC.....As those familiar with

the history of our community will remember Pershore was once our own property having been given to us in Anglican days by the late Mr. Henry Wise. After the conversion it was decided to offer to return the property and Mr. Wise accepted it and placed Pershore at the service of the two or three members of the community who had decided to continue the attempt at reviving Benedictine life in the Anglican Church.⁸⁶

Abbot Aelred did all in his power to appease those who were excited as to the return of money and property given the community. Concerning the conference of laymen and clergy mentioned above he remarks:

I shall be glad to agree to any equitable agreement that may be decided upon (by the committee) so that when the opinion of the committee is made public, those who have been anxious and moved in their minds about the property of the Benedictines of Caldey may be satisfied.⁸⁷

The financial difficulties increased as time went on.

Life on the Island was always in a state of crisis during those years, and we never were sure where money was to come from to keep the community going. So many things appeared to be needed to make us self-supporting and so many schemes were drawn up again and again, and launched with every chance of success, none of which functioned very long.⁸⁸

A plan was drawn up to furnish the mainland with stone from the quarry and vegetables from the gardens but the first World War interfered with this plan and the monks were forced to find other means of support. During those days Cardinal Bourne became a great friend of the community; speaking to the Prior one day about the financial difficulties of the Brothers, he said,

"Father Prior, no community has ever failed sheerly through financial difficulties. If your work is a work of God, it will succeed. Go ahead."⁸⁹ It was the kind words of such friends that saw the Brothers through this their dark hour.

True the darkest of dark days were upon the small community in regard to finances, but they were consoled in their trials by a wonderful peace of soul. One of the Brothers writing a personal account of the conversion for Dom Bede Camm made the following statement,

We all felt very sad and miserable, although we could not help remarking (about) the extraordinary sense of peace throughout the house. Everyone was quiet and recollected, and all went about their work cheerfully.⁹⁰

The villagers of Caldey Island also had something to say about the conversion, although some of them did not fully realize of what import it was. One old fisherman who mended the Abbot's lobster pots told a reporter that he didn't agree with the beliefs of the Brothers but he wouldn't trade them as masters for anyone else in the world. Speaking of the community after their conversion, Dom Gregoire writes,

Besides the Office, their life is that of perfect monastic austerity. The abstinence is perpetual save in cases of illness. Nothing has been modified in regards to their community life since their conversion. It is a very real monastic life, following the text of the Holy Rule perhaps more closely than that of any other Benedictine House.⁹¹

Abbot Aelred also had something to say concerning the conversion, which perhaps best expresses his interior peace of mind.

I firmly believe that God led us to our decision because we always tried to be consistent in the expression of our Faith and kept the great desire for Catholic unity continually before us.⁹²

A few years after the conversion Abbot Aelred found it necessary for his own health and for the good of the community to resign as Abbot and let another more capable man fill his position. Father Carlyle then took up residence in Vancouver, Canada where he has done and is doing wonderful work among sailors and especially among the outcasts of society.

During the following years the community was led through many different trials and tribulations under the watchful eye of Dom Wilfrid, at that time Prior of the community. The community was finding it especially difficult to adapt itself to one definite form of Benedictine Life.

During those first years after our reception into the Catholic Church our manner of life was always being shifted from one mode of Benedictines to another, according to what happened to be the ideal current at the moment. In a comparatively brief period we passed through successive phases of Bueron, Cistercian, Solesmes and English Congregation influences.⁹³

It was Prior Wilfrid who finally steered the community into the right path, let us hear what he has to say about this action:

The last time I was there (in Rome) was in May, 1928, when I went to ask for affiliation of our community to the Cassinese congregation. In those days we were still living on Caldey, and as I look back over the intervening years with their....changes there is one impression

which dominates and persists, of the loving care with which God has brought us through all those changes; all things working together for His honour and glory.⁹⁴

Soon the financial position of the community became such that it was necessary to put up for sale the community buildings and the Island. In order to keep the monastery in ecclesiastical hands, Pope Pius X urged the Abbot^v the Cistercian House of Chimay, Belgium, to buy the Island and buildings and establish there a house of Cistercians to carry on the work of the Benedictines of Caldey, and especially to keep the Island from returning to secular hands. Today the Sons of Saint Bernard people that Welsh Island which many centuries before had been peopled by their spiritual ancestors.

It was not easy for the Brothers to leave the Island which had been their home for many happy years.

Looking back to Caldey now that the break has been made, it is no easy matter to make an analysis of ones feelings. There is an inevitable sadness at such a break with the past, but it is more than a sadness of sentiment. Undoubtedly for many our beautiful Island has an almost magic lure, with its Celtic heritage and the romance of centuries of monastic tradition, bound together with the subtle attraction which every island makes, each in its own peculiar way.⁹⁵

The Brothers said their formal farewell to Caldey Island on Saint Luke's Day, October 18th, the anniversary of their home-coming to Caldey Island in 1906.

Just as we embarked on Caldey slip (the last group to leave the Island left on December 20, 1929)...on the morning above mentioned, a beautiful and exceptionally complete rainbow appeared over the water. It was so placed that

the Teresina (their launch) went out to sea framed in its magic arc. To us, and no doubt to others present - both among the departing community and the Islanders who had assembled to bid us farewell - the heavenly sign came as a kindly reminder of God's Providence given us at a trying moment.⁹⁶

The Brothers' new, and they hoped, final home was an old Tudor mansion situated in the beautiful vale of Gloucester on an estate known as Prinknash Park. This beautiful house and grounds though not as well suited to the monastic life as Caldey Island had been, were nonetheless more accessible to the public. However, we should remember that

The Prinknash monks do not go to the world; the world comes to them. There is a Guest House nearly always occupied (by those) who go to there to spend a few days and find renewal of the things that really matter, and to escape, if only for a brief spell, from the materialism and paganism of the day.⁹⁷

In moving to Prinknash Park, the Brothers have not changed the essential things of their life and observance,

On the contrary - strange as it may seem - the strictly enclosed contemplative nature of our life is secured at Prinknash even better than on our former Island home. The monastic estate of Prinknash, in fact, is so secluded, so well enclosed that it forms as it were a little island apart in the midst of the surrounding well populated country near as it is to the busy city of Gloucester.....we are without the external responsibilities that were ours....on Caldey. Thus we are able to give all our energies to the development of our life of prayer and work within the monastic enclosure.⁹⁸

A home more fitting to the monastic life is being planned for the future and the foundations of this beautiful monastery have already been laid.

The community continued to grow to such an extent that a daughter house was begun at the former Cistercian Abbey of Saint Michael at Farnborough, Hants, England. A short time later the ruins of Pluscarden Priory also came into the hands of the Prinknash monks and with the help of the Public Works of Scotland the Brothers have been able to restore this old monastery to a great extent.

Thus ends the story of the Brothers of Caldey Island. It covers relatively few years of history but those years were packed with action and work and love of God. Ideals were conceived and cherished from the Isle of Dogs to the little Island in the Welsh Sea, to the beautiful vale of Gloucester. The story of the conversion ends here but the story of the Brothers goes on and will go on through the years to come.

(Now)....we are monks of Prinknash. Prinknash is our home, and please God it will be till our life's end - and even then we will rest here in Prinknash to await our Resurrection.⁹⁹

And there are glades in Prinknash woods,
And greens that dip to Cranham Down;
And to far eyes in Gloucester Town
Buckholt lifts up her beechen crown;

Oh there are glades in Prinknash woods! 100

FOOTNOTES

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