

Thirteen Sunday after Trinity

September 18, 2011

“FORGOTTEN TRUTHS”

**(“We are conscious of no intention but that of recalling to the minds
of such of our brethren as we may, forgotten truths”**

Edward Bouverie Pusey [1800-1882])

*Lead, kindly light, amidst the encircling gloom,
Lead thou me on;
The night is dark and I am far from home,
Lead thou me on.*

This hymn/poem, sung a few minutes ago, was written by John Henry Newman, as most of you know, and written shortly after a nearly fatal illness in Sicily. He was now on his way back to England, where trouble had long been brewing for the Church. The orange boat on which he was a passenger was lulled for a whole week in the Straits of Bonifacio, and there with thoughts of the illness from which he had just been delivered and of the battle for the faith that awaited in Oxford, he penned these words. Three weeks later he was home. The following Sunday, July 14, 1833, John Keble preached from the University Pulpit the famous sermon on “National Apostasy” that was ever to mark the beginning of the Oxford Movement. This is of vital interest to us because those times parallel our own in so many ways. In that sermon Keble vied against “the growing indifference in which men indulge themselves,” “the guise of charity and toleration” that had brought the nation to the place that “no difference in matters of faith, is to disqualify for our approbation and confidence.” It was “I’m Ok; You’re Ok” long before its time and signaled “the encircling gloom” that threatened to obliterate the light of God’s truth in “his Holy Church, established among us,” Keble reminded them, “for the salvation of our souls.” His text was I Samuel 12:23 where Samuel the priest called the people of Israel from their apostasy and the cloud of God’s judgment hanging over them, and said to them “God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way.”

Newman and Keble and others immediately sought to teach “the good and right way” through the publication of what they called *The Tracts for the Times*. The first ones were short pamphlets, leaflets really, sounding a warning to recall the apostolicity and catholicity of the

Church, its divine authority and truth, and defending its liturgy. Twenty of these tracts were published before the end of the year and another thirty the year following. Large bundles of the tracts were carried all over the countryside, delivered by horseback to the various churches and churchmen.

Tract 67, “On the Benefits of Fasting,” was written by Edward Bouverie Pusey, the Regius Professor of Hebrew at Christ’s Church, Oxford, who is honored on September 18th (today) in our Anglican Ordo Kalendar, which is the occasion for this sermon. At his entry into the fight Newman noted, “Dr. Pusey gave us at once a position and a name. Without him we should have had no chance . . . of making any serious resistance to the Liberal aggression.” Pusey was a heavy weight, whose exacting scholarship and deep piety earned him great respect. His next contribution to the Tracts was a treatise on Holy Baptism, some 400 pages in length! R.W. Church, the Dean of St. Paul’s, said that the appearance of this Tract “was like the advance of a battery of heavy artillery on a field where the battle had been hitherto carried on by skirmishing and musketry. It altered the look of things and the conditions of the fighting.”

From that point on Pusey was heavily involved in the movement, contributing not only to the Tracts, but guiding students in the study of theology, founding a Theological Society of Graduates, planning and editing “A Library of the Fathers of the Holy Catholic Church, anterior to the Division of East and West,” making a translation of St. Augustine’s *Confessions* that is still among the best, as well as major contributions to the understanding of the presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist. Dean Church wrote, “His position, his dignified office, his solidity and seriousness of character, his high standard of religious life, the charm of his charity, and the sweetness of his temper, naturally gave him the first place in the Movement in Oxford and the world.” Pusey’s was a moderating voice in the movement. He told Newman that he was too hard on the ‘Peculiars,’ their term for the Evangelicals. Such was the extent of his contribution that the Tractarians soon began to be called ‘Puseyites.’ Pusey did not like the term and said (in another context), “It has seemed to me for some years, the great blessing of our Reformation that we are not (as the Lutherans and Calvinists are) connected with any human founder, or bound up with his human infirmities: We are neither Cranmerites nor Ridleyites, but an Apostolic branch of the Church Catholic.” To those who, nonetheless, asked him what a Puseyite was, that is, what was important to him and the others in the movement, he summed it up under six heads:

- (1) High thoughts of the two Sacraments.
- (2) High estimate of the Episcopacy, as God's ordinance.
- (3) High estimate of the visible Church as the Body wherein we are made and continue to be members of Christ.
- (4) Regard for ordinances, as directing our devotions and disciplining us, such as daily public prayers, fasts and feasts.
- (5) Regard for the visible part of devotion, such as the decoration of the house of God, which acts insensibly on the mind.
- (6) Reverence for and deference to the Ancient Church, of which our own Church is looked upon as the representative to us, and by whose views and doctrines we interpret our own Church when her meaning is questioned or doubtful.

The Oxford Movement was a rigorous effort for the recovery of the true faith and worship of the Church, but it failed ultimately to receive that full support of the Bishops for which both Newman and Pusey hoped. Long story, short—too short—Newman converted to the Roman Church in 1845, and a number of his friends soon followed. Pusey and Keble did not. It was a painful time for all concerned. Pusey was ever the conciliator. Shortly before Newman departed, while things were still up in the air, Pusey responded to some harsh words about the Roman Church spoken by Archdeacon Manning in a charge to the clergy, “Thank you for your Charge,” Pusey wrote. “While it is in a cheering tone, is there quite enough love for the Roman Church? . . . I only desiderate more love for Rome. When the battle with infidelity and rebellion comes, we must be on the same side.” (We should note that much later Manning himself went to Rome and ultimately became the second Archbishop of Westminster.)

After Newman was received into the Roman Church on October 31st, 1845, Pusey dared to hope that that act itself might be a means for bringing Rome and Canterbury closer together. He emphasized the need for each Church to grow in holiness.

As each, by God's grace, grows in holiness, each Church will recognize, more and more, the Presence of God's Holy Spirit in the other; and what now hinders the union of the Western Church will fall off. As the contest with unbelief increases, the Churches which have received and transmitted the substance of the Faith as deposited in our common creeds must be on the same side with it. . . . If anything could open their eyes to what is good in us, or soften in us any wrong prejudices against them, it would be the presence of such a one [Newman], nurtured and grown to such ripeness in our Church, and now removed to theirs.

It was with thoughts very much along these lines that Pusey, twenty years later in 1865, picked up his pen and wrote an Open Letter [of 409 pages!] to the Author of “The Christian Year” [John Keble] entitled *An Eirenicon: The Church of England: A Portion of Christ's One*

Holy Catholic Church and a Means of Restoring Visible Unity. He vindicated “on grounds of history, theology, and present experience the claim of the English Church to be a part of Christ’s One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church” (Russell), cited a similar stance of the Eastern Orthodox Church on critical issues, and then pointed only to certain devotional practices in the Roman Church, *not* endorsed by her as *de fide* (as “of the Faith,” that is, explicit and essential teaching of the Church), which were an obstacle to unity. He pleaded in conclusion,

The strife with unbelief stretches and strains the powers of the Church every where; Satan’s armies are united, at least in their warfare against “the truth as it is in Jesus.” Are those who maintain the faith in Him alone to be at variance? On the terms which Bossuet [a noted French apologist for Rome], we hope would have sanctioned, we long to see the Church united; to all who, in East or West, desire to see intercommunion restored among those who hold the faith of the undivided Church, we say, “This is not our longing only; this is impressed on our Liturgy by those who were before us; for this, whenever we celebrate the Holy Eucharist, we are bound to pray, that God ‘would inspire continually the Universal Church with the Spirit of truth, unity, and concord.’” For this I pray daily. For this I would gladly die. “O Lord, tarry not.” (Pp. 334-335)

Pusey’s *Eirenicon* was well received by many, but, alas, not by Newman, who regarded it as too critical of Roman devotional practices. “There was one of old time who wreathed his sword in myrtle,” wrote Newman. “Excuse me—you discharge your olive-branch as if from a catapult.” Happy endings are hard to come by, and the conflicts and charges and mistrust continue to our day!

We give thanks today for Edward Bouverie Pusey, honor him and join our prayers with his and that of our Lord for the unity of his Holy Church. We give thanks also for the Oxford Movement to which he and Newman and Keble contributed, and to which we especially in the Anglican Catholic Church are so deeply indebted. Pusey gave good expression to its purpose early on when he wrote,

We are conscious of no intention but that of recalling to the minds of such of our brethren as we may[,] forgotten truths; we wish to introduce no new doctrine, we appeal . . . to standard divines of our own Church, as well as to the Fathers; we do not wish to supersede, but to uphold the authority of our Church, by pointing to its agreement with the primitive Catholic Church. We teach nothing but what has been taught before us.

Pusey wrote his *Eirenicon* in the form of an Open Letter to “The Author of ‘The Christian Year,’” for it was John Keble who, in that book of devotional poetry published a half-dozen years before the movement began, planted the seeds from which it grew. One early poem seemed to say it all:

One only Way to life;
 One Faith, deliver’d once for all;
 One holy Band, endowed with Heaven’s high call;
 One earnest, endless strife; --
 This is the Church, th’ eternal framed of old.

Smooth open ways, good store;
 A Creed for every clime and age,
 By Mammon’s touch new moulded o’er and o’er;
 No cross, no war to wage;
 This is the Church our earth-dimm’d eyes behold.

But ways must have an end,
 Creeds undergo the trial-flame,
 Nor with the impure the Saints for ever blend,
 Heaven’s glory with our shame: --
 Think on that hour, and choose ‘twixt soft and bold.

Yes, and it is also for us to discern the difference between what is and what should be, and to “choose ‘twixt soft and bold.”

Sermon preached by the Rev’d Fr. Voris G. Brookshire at the Anglican Catholic Church of Saint John the Theologian, Pompano Beach, FL, on the Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity, September 18, 2011. Copyright © 2011.