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A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php

George Browne, Archbishop of Dublin.

BY THE REV. WILLIAM COWAN, M.A.

IN the sixteenth century the condition of Ireland was supremely deplorable. Faction had torn society into shreds. Chieftain fiercely fought with chieftain. The great lords were rough and uncultivated. Many of them could not write their own names. Intellectual thralldom reigned. Beggars, vagabonds, and thieves wandered over the country in large numbers. They robbed and assaulted inoffensive travellers, and created terror wherever they appeared. The moral tone of the community was grievously low. "The Annals of the Four Masters" record no less than 116 battles and depredations between the years 1500 and 1534, not reckoning the wars in which the English Government was engaged. The clergy of the time exhibited in their lives the race-feud between Anglo-Norman and Celt. The Anglo-Irish clergy and the native Irish clergy, though both holding the same creed, had no more dealings with each other than Jews and Samaritans in the days of our Lord. Ireland was divided religiously by a practical schism of race. The clergy were divided, as was the case all over Europe, into secular and regular, and both orders grievously neglected their duties. Ignorance, superstition, and irreligion prevailed everywhere. The Word of God was not preached. The Scriptures were almost a dead-letter. This was the general state of things in Ireland at the dawn of the Reformation.

Henry VIII. set himself to overthrow the authority of the Roman Pontiff in England, and to establish the supremacy of the Crown in ecclesiastical as well as civil affairs—a policy which was not incompatible with attachment to the Romish faith, as seen in his life and acts. He claimed that the King should be acknowledged as "supreme head" of the Church; and he succeeded in effecting this object. The royal supremacy was "recognized by the clergy and authorized by Parliament."

And "forasmuch as Ireland was depending and belonging justly and rightfully to the Imperial Crown of England," the King asserted his right to the undivided dominion over all his subjects, lay and clerical, in that country. And, accordingly, early in the year 1535, he resolved to send over to Ireland some English ecclesiastic of eminence, who would in that kingdom act the part which Cranmer had performed for the Sovereign in England, and support by every means in his power the measures which it might be thought expedient to adopt.

The man chosen—at the recommendation, it was said, of Thomas Cromwell—was George Browne, the subject of this paper. Browne was originally an Augustinian friar, and received his education in the house of his Order at Holywell, in Oxford. Earnest, faithful, and learned, he became Provincial of the Order in England, and having taken the degree of Doctor of Divinity in some foreign University, he was admitted to the same degree at Oxford in 1534, and soon afterwards at Cambridge. At this time some of Luther's writings came into Browne's hand, and were carefully studied by him; and as the result he "advised the people to make their application for aid to Christ alone," and not to the Virgin Mary and other saints—for which doctrine, Ware tells us, he was much taken notice of. A vacancy in the See of Dublin gave the King the opportunity he desired. Browne was chosen for the post, and on March 19, 1535, he was consecrated Archbishop of Dublin by the English Primate, Cranmer, assisted by two Suffragan Bishops, Fisher of Rochester and Shaxton of Salisbury.

The Archbishop found his new seat of dignity to be no bed of roses. The question of the King's supremacy, of which he was a powerful advocate, brought him into conflict with nearly all the clergy. And amongst the most energetic of his opponents was Cromer, Archbishop of Armagh. It may be well to observe here that, while on the continent of Europe the Reformation was a revolt of the laity against the clergy, in Ireland clergy and laity combined together, and went hand in hand in uncompromising opposition to the new opinions. The iron of

the Papal system had entered into their blood. The Anglo-Irish had no quarrel with Rome, because her thunderbolts had always been conveniently launched, at their behest, against the "mere" Irishry. And as to these, they naturally regarded the Reformation with disfavour, because it was promoted by their oppressors. Archbishop Browne points out the difficulties of the situation in a letter to Cromwell, September 6, 1535. After referring to the opposition from his "brother Armagh," he goes on to say: "This island hath been for a long time held in ignorance by the Romish Orders. And as for their secular orders, they be in a manner as ignorant as the people, being not able to say Mass, or pronounce the words, they not knowing what they themselves say in the Roman tongue. The common people of this island are more zealous in their blindness than the saints and martyrs were in the truth at the beginning of the Gospel." The letter is interesting from the light which it throws upon the illiteracy of the clergy and the superstitious zeal of the people.

In the following year the "Supremacy Act," as it was called, was passed in a Parliament held in Dublin. These are its chief provisions: The King was declared the supreme head of the Church on earth; the authority of the Pope was solemnly renounced; the supporters of the Papal supremacy were adjudged guilty of high treason; all appeals to Rome were strictly forbidden, together with the payment of dues and the purchase of dispensations; several religious houses were dissolved, and their revenues vested in the Crown; and the projected alteration was completed by the enactment of severe penalties against those who should slander the King, or, on account of these innovations, style him usurper or tyrant, heretic or schismatic.

It will thus be seen that the Reformation began well in Ireland, but the step gained was not followed up, and was therefore productive of little real benefit. Secret discontent grew, and outside the pale the partisans of Rome became more zealous and energetic in her cause.

It would appear that Cromwell, at the beginning of the year 1538, had given express directions for the removal of the images and relics from the cathedral and other churches of the Archbishop's province; but the task was by no means easy to carry out. The use of images in worship had been a cherished characteristic of Romanism for eight centuries. "The Romish reliques and images of both my cathedrals in Dublin," says Browne, in a letter to Cromwell, "took off the common people from the true worship, but the prior and the dean find them so sweet for their gain that they heed not my words." And he prayed for more support from England.

Notwithstanding the opposition of the Papal party, the Archbishop of Dublin succeeded in his cherished purpose of removing the images and relics from his two cathedrals, as well as from the rest of the churches in his diocese; and in their room he substituted the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments—an object-lesson which would be likely to do good. Further, the Archbishop himself, both by precept and example, enjoined upon his clergy diligence in preaching, as a means of making known the truth and advancing the cause of the Reformation.

In the latter part of the year 1538, most of the members of the Privy Council, including the Archbishop, made a visitation of some of the southern counties with a view of "setting forth of the Word of God, abolishing of the Bishop of Rome's usurped authority, and extinguishing of idolatry." The Archbishop seems to have preached in all the towns which they visited—Kilkenny, Ross, Wexford, Waterford, Clonmel, and other places. In a letter to Cromwell setting forth the circumstances of their tour, the Council express a desire that it may please the Lord Privy Seal "to give thanks to my lord of Dublin for his pains and diligence he has used in this journey with us in the setting forth of the Word of God." And in another letter, after their return to Dublin, and signed by the Archbishop as well as his three companions, it is reported: "At Clonmel was with us two Archbishops and eight Bishops, in

whose presence my lord of Dublin preached, in advancing the King's supremacy and the extinguishment of the Bishop of Rome. And his sermon finished, all the said Bishops in all the open audience took the oath mentioned in the Acts of Parliament, both touching the King's succession and supremacy, before me, the King's Chancellor; and divers others there present did the like."

All through the reign of Henry efforts had not ceased to be made to conciliate the Irish and Anglo-Irish chieftains who had hitherto stood apart from the King's government. Peerages were conferred upon some, and Desmond, a powerful Anglo-Irish noble, was placed upon the Council. The great O'Neill himself solemnly renounced the Pope's supremacy. His words are: "I entirely renounce obedience to the Roman Pontiff and his usurped authority, and recognize the King to be supreme head of the Church of England and Ireland under Christ, and I will compel all living under my rule to do the same." His example was followed by O'Brien, the first chieftain of Munster; by MacWilliam, the head of the De Burgos; by O'Donnell, O'More, O'Rorke, and many others.

But while the Irish chiefs generally accepted the royal supremacy, the mass of the people utterly refused it. It was enough in their eyes to condemn it that it was propagated by English statesmen and English Bishops, whom they regarded as heretics. This caused them to contend more earnestly for what they called the old faith, and to cling more loyally and passionately to their priests. The cause of the priesthood became the cause of the nation; their nationality was bound up with their faith. And thus it has continued to this day. Henry's hope was that, by severing the connection between Ireland and the Pope, he should find that kingdom more manageable and obedient. But his hope proved a vain dream. Still, it must be said that, in spite of popular opposition, the influence of the Crown grew, and at the time of Henry's death there appeared a general acquiescence in his authority.

If this circumstance had been wisely made use of, it might

have facilitated the promotion of the principles of the Reformation among the Irish. But in the measures taken for the advancement of religion, the fatal mistake was made of neglecting the language of the people. Archbishop Browne endeavoured at one time to remedy the mistake, and he deserves the highest credit for it. He could not speak the Irish language himself, but his sympathies were with the policy of using that language in the spiritual instruction of the people.

In the year 1539 the King converted the priory of the Holy Trinity into a cathedral church, consisting of a dean and chapter ; and our Archbishop founded in it three years after the prebends of St. Michael's, St. John's, and St. Michan's, from which time it has taken the name of *Christ Church*. Archbishop Browne laboured diligently to promote the principles of the Reformation, and in sympathy with him were Staples, Bishop of Meath ; Sanders, Bishop of Leighlin ; and Miagh, Bishop of Kildare. These men did much in their various dioceses to correct abuses and prepare the way for further improvements. But the current of opinion and practice was too strong for them, for most of the clergy were hostile to the new movement. Moreover, the system pursued in Ireland was not the same as that followed in the sister country. In England the Reformation was a success ; in Ireland it was a failure. To what is the difference to be ascribed ? "The Reformation," says Dean Church, "sprang from an idea, a great and solid one, even though dimly comprehended, but not from a theory or a system." The idea was to take the existing historical Church, to release it from usurpations and corruptions, to set it in touch with the new forces, national, intellectual, and spiritual, which were arising, and so to give it freedom to develop. This was not done in Ireland, for the great bulk of the people and the clergy were, as we have stated, steadily averse to reform ; and there were no forces, intellectual or spiritual, to work upon. The "idea" never got a chance to grow and develop in Ireland.

Moreover, there was no man of prominence and power, governed by the spirit of religion, eager, earnest, passionate,

zealous, with high moral character and wide sympathies, to regulate and push the movement, like Wycliffe in England, Luther in Germany, Zwingli in Switzerland, or Knox in Scotland. The Irish Bishops of the time who adopted the Reforming opinions were mediocre. Some of them were pious, some of them learned, and some of them hard-working, but they were not made of the stuff by which religious reform, in the face of tremendous odds, is carried out. They were not single-eyed, resolute, brave. The fire of enthusiasm burned low in their breasts, or had never been kindled at all. They belonged to a Church which does not encourage enthusiasm in its laity or clergy. Browne and Staples and Bale were the most respectable men on the Bench in those days, but they had not the indomitable courage and strength of character which distinguished the Saxon Reformer or the Scotch Reformer.

The accession of Edward VI. made little change in the prospects or position of the two great parties in this country. In England the Reformation was zealously promoted, whereas in the first four years of his reign no steps were taken to carry on the good work in Ireland.

On February 6, 1551, King Edward issued a proclamation to the Lord Deputy, Sir Anthony St. Leger, requiring the English Common Prayer-Book to be used throughout the kingdom in the celebration of Divine worship. On receiving this order, the Viceroy summoned an assembly of the Archbishops and Bishops and of the clergy of Ireland in order to submit it for their consideration, and to induce them to act in conformity with its directions. The ecclesiastics met on the first day of March. The Primacy was then filled by Dowdall, who was a zealous partisan of the Romish Church. He at once opposed the adoption of the Prayer-Book, contemptuously observing: "Then shall every illiterate fellow say Mass?" "No," promptly replied the Lord Deputy, "your grace is mistaken, for we have too many illiterate priests among us already who can neither pronounce the Latin, nor know what it means, no more than the common people that hear them; but

when the people hear the Liturgy in English, they and the priests with them understand what they pray for." Upon this the Primate used threats, and bade the Viceroy "beware of the clergy's curse." "Anathema" has ever been a favourite weapon with the Church of Rome. She will allow no independence of judgment to her children. "Hear the Church or come under the ban of the Church"—that is the principle on which she has always acted.

The English Liturgy was first used in Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin, on Easter Day, 1551, in the presence of the Lord Deputy and the Mayor and bailiffs of the city. The Archbishop preached from the words, "Open mine eyes, that I may see the wonders of Thy law" (Ps. cxix. 18). Later in the year an edition of the English Prayer-Book was published in Dublin, being the first book printed in Ireland. Much had been hoped for from the ecclesiastical policy pursued by Edward's government in Ireland, but, unhappily, his early death put a stop to the good work. No doubt more would have been done in favour of reform had not timid counsels prevailed among those in authority, arising probably from the resolute refusal of the people to be drawn away from the faith in which they had been brought up. However, the foundation for future improvement had been laid, in the establishment of the King's supremacy, the appointment of men in sympathy with the Reformation to the episcopal office, and the introduction of the English Liturgy.

Edward VI. was succeeded by his sister Mary, and she came to the throne resolved to establish the power and influence of Rome in all her dominions. Our Archbishop was at once deprived of his See, as were also Staples, Bishop of Meath; Lancaster, Bishop of Kildare; Travers, Bishop of Leighlin; and Casey, Bishop of Limerick. Shortly after his deprivation Browne died. "He was unquestionably the most able agent concerned in the introduction of the Reformation into Ireland." He had, indeed, his faults. Steadfastness of mind was not a strong point with him. The "native hue" of his resolution was apt to be "sicklied o'er" with an infirmity of

purpose, which, in its results, was as disastrous as cowardice itself. He was reproved, though, as we think, without reason, by Henry VIII. for negligence of duty and "elation of mind and pride." He has been charged with dissipating the property of his See in favour of his family. Basnet, the Dean of St. Patrick's, complained that Browne refused to confirm his election unless he received a fee of £200. The Archbishop does not seem to have been a stranger to what the poet calls

"The sober majesties
Of settled, sweet, epicurean life."

Bale calls him "a great epicure." No doubt he had imperfections, but taking him all round, and considering the times in which he lived, he was a good man and generous to many. One has said: "He was to the poor merciful and compassionate, pitying the state and condition of the souls of the people." His powers as a preacher were considerable, and he seems not to have spared himself in the exercise of the gift; and he strove with all his might to promote spiritual religion in the land.



Studies in Texts.

SUGGESTIONS FOR SERMONS FROM CURRENT LITERATURE.

BY THE REV. HARRINGTON C. LEES, M.A.

[Suggestive book: "The Magi, and how they recognized Christ's Star," by Mackinlay (=My.); see also Ramsay's "Luke the Physician" (=R.); Macmillan's "Bible Teachings in Nature" (=M.); Sanday's article, "Jesus Christ," in Hastings' "Dict. Bible" (=H.)]

I. COMING TO CHRIST. "*Him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out*" (St. John vi. 37).

THE study of contexts in St. John's Gospel illuminates many familiar verses. This frequent evangelistic text is seldom studied in the light of the miracle of the loaves, its original and symbolic setting. John vi. is both a dissertation and a demonstration on the subject of coming to Christ.

1. *Christ never fails the seeking soul*: "unto ME."—It was early spring, indicated, for Palestine, by the word "grass" (Matt. xiv. 19; Mark vi. 39;