

circumstances might arise which compelled the exercise of this right at the cost of a collision with the State. But no such justification can be found, either in the legalizing of a marriage, forbidden neither in Scripture nor by the unanimous voice of Christendom, or in the interpretation which has been placed by the courts on a rubric of the Prayer-Book. No doubt some will be ready to seize any occasion for a conflict, in order to vindicate the rights of the Church and to hasten the issue which, in their view, cannot long be delayed. They are apocalyptists, and have seen a vision of an impending struggle between Christ and Anti-Christ, in which the State is cast for the less desirable rôle. But others of us are ready, so long as possible, to seek peace and ensue it. We hold that the practical inconveniences of such collisions, whether in an established or disestablished body, are so grave, and that the confusion to which they would lead, if they became at all frequent, would be so intolerable, that they should not be entered upon except under the pressure of absolute necessity. Till such necessity arises we are glad, in England at least, to be able to take a view which is not without good authority, and to believe that the powers that be are, after all, ordained by God.



Some Chapters in the History of the Early English Church.

BY THE REV. ALFRED PLUMMER, D.D.

III. AUGUSTINE AND AIDAN.

THE conversion of the English to Christianity is an epoch in the history of England; it is the beginning of the Church of England. But it also forms an epoch in the history of Christianity; it is the first distinctly *foreign* mission of the Western Church. Hitherto the Gospel in the West had not spread beyond the limits of the Roman Empire. The Teutonic

tribes in North Germany and Scandinavia, which had never been part of the Empire, and in Britain, which had ceased to be part of it, were heathen. One might almost have said that "outside the *Empire* there was no salvation." By the mission of Augustine this condition of things was broken. Probably those who initiated the movement did not see its significance. To them the attempt to convert the heathen English was much the same as the attempt to convert heathen in Spain and in Gaul. But we can see that the coming of Augustine was the first of a series of missionary enterprises, by means of which the whole of Europe was at last won over to Christianity; it was the first act of one of the most glorious movements in history. And it was not only the first act, it was the most important one, the one which led to most of those which followed. England itself became a missionary centre, and through it Germany and Scandinavia became Christian.

Nor was this all. By the conversion of the English an indissoluble bond was created between this island and European civilization. A bond had been created before by the admission of Britain into the Roman Empire; but this bond had been severed by the withdrawal of the legions, and by the extinction of Christianity by the English in just those parts of the island which could most easily keep in touch with the Continent. Since then Britain had been shut off from Europe. Continental writers of the fifth and sixth centuries know little more of the British Isles than that they exist. Any marvellous tale can be told of Britain, because no one has been there.

With the reintroduction of Christianity into Britain, which had now become largely English, all this isolation came to an end. Intercourse between England and the Continent, and between England and the centre of Western civilization, became common. English people went on pilgrimage to Rome, sometimes more than once in a lifetime. Britain was once more an integral part of European life and culture.

The prejudices of some English people may lead them to regret that it was Roman rather than British or Scottish

Christianity which eventually prevailed in England, and that (however we may divide the credit of converting the English between Augustine and Aidan) it was Christianity in the form in which it was introduced by Augustine which eventually swallowed up the work of Aidan and other missionaries of the Keltic Church. But, as Englishmen, we ought to rejoice at this. The Christianity of the Kelts meant the Christianity of an insular and stunted civilization. The Christianity of Rome meant the Christianity of culture, and perhaps the highest culture then known. Literature and organization, arts and manufactures—all came with Christianity from Rome. We must not confound Rome, the enlightener of the nations in the sixth century, with Rome, the corrupter of the nations in the sixteenth.

Christianity landed in England—we are talking of England now, not of Britain—where almost everything of which we know the history made its first landing, in Kent. That Kent was less shut off from the Continent than the rest of the island is marked by the fact that at the close of the sixth century we find the Kentish King married to a Frankish Princess. She was a Christian, and had at least one Bishop, Liudhard, with her. But we read of no efforts made by either of them to convert the English. It would be interesting to know how many Christians came over with Bertha, how long they had been in Kent when Augustine and his companions arrived, and whether they had tried to make known the Christian faith among the heathen in Kent. Pope Gregory, however, seems to have been aware that neither the Keltic clergy of the island, nor the Frankish clergy of the Continent, had acted as missionaries to the English. His letters to the boyish Kings of the Franks, and to their grandmother, Queen Brunichild, show that.¹

Thanks to the good offices of Queen Bertha, and to the open-mindedness of King Ethelbert, Augustine and his companions

¹ These, and much valuable material of various kinds, are given in Mason, "The Mission of St. Augustine to England, according to the Original Documents."

had a generous reception, and were allowed to settle and begin their work. After giving details of it, Bede, who is fond of dwelling upon the efficacious preaching that results from a holy life, sums up thus : "What need to say more? Some believed and were baptized, admiring the simplicity of their blameless life and the sweetness of their heavenly doctrine"; till at last, and fairly soon, the King himself, "influenced by the unspotted life of these holy men and by their delightful promises," professed the faith and was baptized.

It was a providential thing that at the time of the mission of Augustine this friendly King of Kent was Bretwalda, and thus had some kind of supremacy over English Kings and chiefs as far as the Humber; and it was under the protection of a safe-conduct granted by Bretwalda that Augustine was able to travel through heathen Wessex, in order to hold his fateful conference with the British clergy on the confines of Wales. Before going, Augustine returned to Gaul and went as far as Arles, where the Archbishop, acting under Gregory's instructions, consecrated Augustine "Archbishop to the English nation"—*Archiepiscopus genti Anglorum*. It is a magnificent title, and we are not surprised to learn that Augustine quickly found that it involved responsibilities to which he hardly felt equal. A number of questions cropped up which he sent to Rome for Gregory's consideration. They are a curious collection. Some are so simple that we wonder how any fairly educated Christian could be in doubt about them. With regard to others, our wonder is given to Gregory's admirable answer. We have space for only one example of the latter. "Seeing that the faith is one, can there be different customs in different Churches? Can there be one custom in the holy Roman Church, and another in the Gallican?" That kind of question is with us still. How does Gregory deal with it? He was an expert in liturgiology, having revised the "Sacramentary" of his predecessor Gelasius, and he might be expected to have a predilection for his own careful work, and to have replied that the Roman use must be followed. But that is not Gregory's way: he is no ritualistic

pedant. He writes to Augustine: "You know, my brother, the custom of the Roman Church, in which you were brought up. But it is my wish, if you have found anything either in the Roman, or the Gallican, or any other Church, which may be more acceptable to Almighty God, that you carefully select, and sedulously impart to the Church of the English, whatever you have been able to collect from various Churches. For things are not to be loved for the sake of places, but places for the sake of good things. Select, therefore, from each Church whatever things are excellent, and when you have arranged them as a whole, give them to the English to be observed."

It is to the credit of both the missionaries and the chiefs whom they influenced that the Gospel was not preached in England by the sword, and was never offered as the only alternative to death. Unlike the spread of Christianity by the fishermen of Galilee, it spread from above rather than from below. The King was won over, then his chiefs, and then the people followed the lead of those whom they were accustomed to obey. They were converted probably less by argument than by example. But there was not much force used to hasten conversion. Ethelbert expressly abstained from putting pressure upon his subjects; for he said that "he had learned from his teachers that the service of Christ must be a voluntary thing, and not a matter of compulsion." He died A.D. 616, after a reign of about fifty-six years.

Augustine's conference with the British Bishop resulted in failure, and it is sometimes said that the fault was his, because he insisted upon their admitting the supremacy of the Pope, which they refused to do. Those who make this statement should produce the evidence for it: it appears to be baseless conjecture. He may have been less conciliatory than was expedient, but even that is conjecture. What we know is that the British were unwilling to take part in the work of evangelizing the English—in other words, they refused to help Augustine. After consecrating three Bishops for the continuation of his work, Augustine died in May, 604, or possibly 605. He had

established the Gospel in a sure position in the kingdom of Kent, and had secured a firm basis for future extensions. Yet he had had only seven years in which to do all this, from which we must deduct some months for his journey to Arles for consecration (see Mason, pp. 95-104).

Oddly enough, it was at the other extremity of England that the next great work was accomplished by missionaries sent by Rome. This was the establishment of the Gospel in Northumbria by Paulinus. He worked there for nearly as long a time as Augustine had worked in Kent. In 627 King Edwin was baptized, influenced, like Ethelbert, by a Christian wife. But five years later Edwin was slain in battle, and Paulinus, who had escorted the Queen from Kent to marry Edwin, thought that he was bound now to escort her home again. He did so, and was forthwith made Bishop of Rochester. He never returned to Northumbria, and the work there suffered. King Eanfrid apostatized, and there was a considerable revival of heathenism. In 634, Oswald, after defeating the treacherous Britons who had murdered his elder brother Eanfrid, sent to Iona for a Bishop. The first who was sent was not a success, and returned to Iona discouraged. "It is no use," he said, "to try to convert such people." One of the Iona monks remonstrated. "Perhaps you forgot the Apostle's maxim about milk for babes. Perhaps you dealt too severely with untrained hearers, gave them teaching that was too high for them, and expected fruit from them too soon." The speaker was Aidan. The other monks, who had been sitting silent, said: "Let Aidan be sent." And at the end of 635 Aidan set out to be a Bishop to the Northumbrians.

Once more we have a happy union between a Christian missionary and a converted King. Oswald himself acted as interpreter when Aidan preached. And Aidan, true to the traditions of Iona, fixed upon an island near the Northumbrian coast as the place for his Church, and became the first Bishop of Lindisfarne. You may walk across to it at low tide, and therefore it was far more accessible than Iona. It is close to

Bamborough, where Oswald had his court, and therefore Aidan and Oswald could keep in constant touch with one another. They made ample use of this advantage, and the beneficent intercourse between the Keltic missionary Bishop and the English King is among the most beautiful episodes in Church history. Each was so bent on living the Christian life and on making the joys of it known to others. What Aidan advised Oswald endeavoured to carry out. Monks from Iona came over to Lindisfarne, churches were built, and the Christianity which had been introduced by the Roman missionary Paulinus was revived and extended. It spread along the Tweed to Melrose, where Boisil founded a monastery, and there became the trainer of St. Cuthbert.

There is little doubt that the main cause of the success of Oswald and Aidan in restoring the Christian faith in Northumbria was the self-denying simplicity of their own lives. Without ostentatious or morose austerity, they showed that they were indifferent to worldly pleasures, and that they cared for wealth only as a means of spreading the Gospel. Aidan seems to have been one of those energetic men to whom idleness is misery, and who find their recreation in a change of work. He divided his time between study, teaching, and the services of the Church. He travelled about his huge diocese on foot, and would never ride unless driven to do so by necessity. He was eager to do good to rich and poor alike, and, if they were believers, to strengthen them in the faith. He would give entertainment, but not gifts, to the rich, and if they made presents to him, he spent these on the poor, or in ransoming slaves. "It was the highest commendation of his doctrine with all men that he taught no otherwise than he and his followers lived."

Oswald's reign ended, as it began, with a great battle. The first battle was against Cadwalla, the Christian King of the Britons. The last battle was against Cadwalla's heathen ally, Penda, King of the Mercians; and here the pagan conquered. "The most Christian King" (*Christianissimus rex*) Oswald was

surrounded by the heathen and slain, A.D. 642. His head was placed in Cuthbert's coffin, and at last found a resting-place, with Cuthbert's body, in Durham Cathedral. The greater part of the coffin may still be seen there in the Chapter library; and what is believed to be King Oswald's skull was seen by many of us a few years ago, when last the tomb of St. Cuthbert was opened. The skull has a cleft in it, showing where the blow that proved fatal fell.

After Oswald's death Northumbria again became two kingdoms, and Aidan threw in his lot with Oswin in the southern portion, called Deira. King Oswin, Bede tells us, was "a man of wonderful piety, and was beloved by all men. . . . He was of graceful aspect, tall of stature, affable in discourse, courteous in behaviour, and most bountiful to all men." But his special grace was his humility, and Aidan predicted that a King so humble would not live long. Not long afterwards Oswin was treacherously murdered, and Aidan, who was greatly afflicted by his death, survived him by only twelve days. Aidan died August 31, 651, in a hut which he had had built for him against the outer wall of Bamborough Church. About the time that he passed away, Cuthbert, who was tending sheep on the Lammermoor hills, saw some shooting stars. After he heard of Aidan's death he said that what he had seen must have been angels carrying Aidan's soul to heaven. He thereupon entered the monastery of Boisil at Melrose.

It has been claimed for Aidan that he was the apostle of England. A pen of great authority has written that "Augustine was the apostle of Kent, but Aidan was the apostle of England." William Bright, late Regius Professor of Ecclesiastical History at Oxford, who made this early period of English Church History peculiarly his own, has said with truth that this "uncritical antithesis" has done great mischief to "historical proportion," and after what he has written in his Appeal to Bede in "Waymarks of Church History," and in the "Letters of William Bright" (p. 219), which have been

published since his death, to discuss the question further may be, as Mr. Maude says in his "Foundations of the English Church" (p. 40), only "slaying the slain." Nevertheless, a few words may here be added as to the services of these two great missionaries to the English.

No one can deny that Augustine was an apostle; the epigram admits that he was the apostle of Kent. He was the first to preach the gospel throughout Kent; and the conversion of the first English King who became a Christian, and of the first English kingdom that became Christian, was his work. But Aidan was not an apostle at all in this sense, not even the apostle of Northumbria. Let us be overflowing in our gratitude for all that he did for the English, whether Christians or pagans, north of the Humber. He was indefatigable as a restorer of what had been laid waste, and as a winner of souls that had hitherto not been won; and apparently he was more successful in his sphere of work than Augustine was in his. His was perhaps a nobler type of the missionary spirit. He had more sweetness and breadth of character; he was less punctilious, less anxious about details, better able to take a wide and sympathetic view. Moreover, he received far more active help from King Oswald than Augustine received from Ethelbert; and he was not at all hampered, as Augustine may sometimes have been, by wondering whether what he was doing would be approved at Rome. He knew how to be trusting, and even adventurous, without sacrificing discretion. "This grace of discretion," says Bede, "marked him out for the Northumbrian mission; but when the time came, he was found to be adorned with every other excellence;" and, in his untiring activity, he was "a strange contrast to the slothfulness of our own age." Bede, though he strongly disapproved of Aidan's Keltic independence as to the Easter cycle and other ecclesiastical usages, is yet full of sympathetic admiration for Aidan's character and work; and we may readily believe that every word of praise which is bestowed by this English writer, who was devoted to Rome, upon the Keltic missionary, who took no account of

Rome, is as justly as it is generously bestowed. Bede was a Northumbrian, and he spent his life in Northumbria, and therefore, when he praises mission work done in Northumbria just before his own day, he is writing about matters that he knows.

But when all has been said about the greater attractiveness of Aidan as compared with Augustine, and about the wider extent of his work, the fact remains that Augustine was an apostle to the English, and Aidan was not. Aidan did nothing for the English beyond the limits of Northumbria, and to the Northumbrians he was not their first evangelist. In that field he entered upon the labours of Paulinus. That he was a better worker than Paulinus we can well believe. But no such disasters disturbed his work as those which overwhelmed the work of Paulinus, and he had an enormous advantage over his predecessor in having Iona to draw upon. From Aidan's old island-home devoted clergy were always to be had. But, however little we may think of the work of Paulinus when compared with that of Aidan, the fact is incontrovertible that in the mission to the Northumbrians he, and not Aidan, was first in the field. Paulinus is the apostle of Northumbria; and in the end the Keltic form of Christianity, as introduced and established by Aidan, passed away, and the Roman form, as preached by Paulinus, prevailed.

Paulinus, like Augustine, Mellitus, Laurentius, and other missionaries to the English, had been sent by Gregory, and Rome had been the centre from which the impulse had come. But who was the source of influence at the other centre in the West, the centre of Keltic Christianity? It was the Abbot of the monastery of Iona. And the remarkable thing is that the Abbot of Iona was not a Bishop. He was only a presbyter, and yet he seems to have had Bishops under his jurisdiction. In the Keltic Church there were, as a rule, no diocesan Bishops. Bishops were attached to tribes rather than to districts or cities, and when (at a much later time) something like dioceses arose, they were simply the districts occupied by the tribes. To the tribal Bishops of the Keltic Church it may not have seemed at all unnatural that they should receive direction from a

presbyter who was the successor of the intensely revered St. Columba.

Keltic Christianity was very independent, but insular, and therefore narrow. Yet the Scots in Iona were free from the race-hatred which disfigured the Christianity of the British in Wales. While the British Christians stood aloof, these generous Scots came over to help, and brought many of our forefathers to the knowledge of Christ. We are thankful for this ; but we may also be thankful that the form of Christianity which they brought was not the one which ultimately prevailed.



“If the Edge be Blunt—”

A STUDY IN EFFECTIVENESS.

BY THE REV. CHARLES COURTENAY, M.A.,
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THE world is not agreed on many points ; but there is one demand which it makes with one voice—viz., the demand for effectiveness. It measures movements, and it measures men, by the work they turn out—by their output.

And what it insists on for the secular man it insists on, too, for the religious man, for the Church of God.

It is not enough that we move briskly, and that our coat-tails fly, that we have big organizations and large ideas, that our bells are constantly ringing and our organs resounding. It quietly stops us in the midst of all this energy and asks us, when we have got our breath again, “Well, what is coming out of all this ?”

And when we are tempted to reply that our spiritual work is not to be measured, like a carpenter's or a gardener's, we are pulled up short by some memories of the past—when results *did* accrue, when every word seemed to tell, when every visit seemed to lift, and when we waded almost knee-deep in our harvest spoils.