

The Papal System: From Its Origin To The Present Time – I. The Ancient British Church



THE
PAPAL SYSTEM:
FROM ITS ORIGIN TO THE PRESENT TIME.
A HISTORICAL SKETCH
OF
EVERY DOCTRINE, CLAIM AND PRACTICE
OF THE CHURCH OF ROME.
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TO
THE FRIENDS OF PROTESTANT CHRISTIANITY,
AND
THE CANDID MEMBERS OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH,
THIS WORK
IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED
BY
THEIR OBEDIENT SERVANT,
THE AUTHOR.

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PREFACE.

The objects aimed at in this work are to sketch the birth, growth, and maturity of every Romish belief and practice; to furnish a contrast between papal and ancient Christianity, to present all decrees, canons, and other testimonies in their original languages and in translations; to show the bearings of popery upon some of our cherished institutions; to describe the present observances of the Catholic Church; and to give reliable, and generally, *Romish authorities for every important statement; together with the pages, or the books and chapters, by which quotations can be verified.* This treatise is entirely undenominational.

It is not intended for the learned, but for the mass of English readers; and the extracts in Latin and Greek are designed to furnish proofs of the truth of all leading declarations, which can be easily translated in every village, and in most rural districts of our highly favored land.

Not a few atrocious transactions have been entirely omitted, because, while they may be perfectly true, the evidence seemed insufficient to support them.

The Author has never been in the communion of the Church of Rome, but he hopes that the information which he conveys to the reader from credible witnesses will not be less valuable on that account.

Eusebius, Socrates, Sozomen, Theodoret, and Evagrius wrote their Ecclesiastical Histories inside the first six centuries; they belonged to the Church universal, and enjoy the confidence of the Christian world. The same statement applies to Ireneus, Clemens Alexandrinus, Cyprian, Jerome, Ambrose, Augustine, Chrysostom, Hilary, and in the main to Tertullian and Origen.

Venerable Bede, William of Malmesbury, Matthew of Westminster, Matthew Paris, and Ingulph of Croyland were English monks, who wrote histories from the eighth to the middle of the thirteenth century which are held in very high and deserved estimation.

Du Pin was "a priest and doctor of divinity" of the faculty of Paris in 1688; his History, issued in parts, bears two certificates of approval from the Sorbonne, for centuries the most celebrated Catholic School in Europe.

The work called "*Canones et Decreta Concilii Tridentini*"—Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent—was published at Leipsic with the approbation of the Catholic authorities of Saxony, and is the most important book in the Roman Church.

The "Catechism of the Council of Trent," issued under the same sanction and in the same city, can receive no higher favor from popes and ecclesiastics than for centuries it has enjoyed.

Father Paul Sarpi, who wrote "The History of the Council of Trent," lived and died a Roman Catholic, was secretary of the first president of that Synod, and was, perhaps, among the ablest men of the age.

The Vulgate which furnished our quotations has the text approved by Clement

VII. and Sixtus V. The edition of the Councils by Labbe and Cossart, which we have frequently used, has the highest reputation in and out of the papal Church.

May this volume in some humble measure serve the interests of liberty, education, and true religion.

Philadelphia, December 13th, 1871.

I. The Ancient British Church

PAPAL SUPREMACY OVER THE CHURCHES.

WHEN IT BEGAN,

AND THE MEANS BY WHICH IT SUCCEEDED.

The Bishop of Rome claims absolute and lasting kingship over all the churches of Christ on earth; and he presumes to assert that he has exercised this authority by the gift of Christ from the first planting of Christianity.

Before tracing the outlines of that marvellous history in which Roman pontiffs are seen marching from victory to victory, until they waved their spiritual swords in undisputed triumph over the prostrate form of western Christianity, and sat down as conquerors in the throne of the Church designed for her Heavenly Head, we shall first show by unimpeachable witnesses that no papal king reigned over the earthly spouse of Christ for many ages after his ascension into Paradise. We shall appeal to the ancient churches of Britain and Ireland; to the great councils of the first seven centuries; and to the admissions of eminent fathers about the equality of presbyters and bishops at the beginning, and of all bishops a little later for infallible testimony, to prove that the bishops of Rome had no dominion over the universal Church for hundreds of years after Peter's supposed presence in the city of the Caesars.

THE POPES HAD NO JURISDICTION OVER THE ANCIENT BRITISH CHURCH FOR THE FIRST SEVEN CENTURIES.

The authorities differ about the men who first planted the Gospel in Britain. Some hold that Joseph of Arimathea and twelve others, about A. D. 63, introduced salvation among the islanders. Others declare that Paul preached the glad tidings in England. And others affirm that Britain was converted by missionaries sent from Rome, A. D. 176, by Pope Eleutherius, at the request of Lucius, an imaginary English king. (Geoffrey's British History, lib. iv. cap. 19.)

According to Matthew Paris, the faith of Jesus was first preached to his countrymen in A. D. 167. Neander declares that the Gospel reached the Britons as early as the end of the second century; that it came to them, not from Rome, but from the East; and that in very early times the Britons were a Christian nation. They differed widely on some points from the Roman Church, and were in perfect harmony on these questions with the Eastern Churches.

This latter circumstance renders it all but certain that some Greek missionary, like Irenaeus of Lyons, was their first Christian teacher.

After the invasion of Britain, in the middle of the fifth century, by the Anglo-Saxons, the churches were plundered, burned, or turned into heathen temples by these idolaters, and the Christian religion was threatened with extinction in every section of their future home. They might be described as rivalling the fiercest monsters of persecution of any age. They destroyed the temples of Christ; they slew the priests at the altars; they gave the Holy Scriptures to the flames; they showed their contempt for the venerated tombs of the martyrs by covering them with mounds of earth; and the clergy who escaped had to hide in woods, and deserts, and mountain retreats, And after seizing and wasting the whole land, they compelled the wretched remnant of the ancient Britons to fly from their ruined churches and blood-stained homes, and to settle in "Cornubia, or, as it is called by some, Cornwall; Demeeia, or South Wales; Venedocia, or North Wales." And there they clung to the faith of Jesus.

St. Augustine lands in England.

And as he and his forty brethren are soon enriched with a large list of converts among the Anglo-Saxons, he learns something of the ancient Christian inhabitants of England; and, being a man of considerable self-importance, he demands a conference with them, that he may compel them to change their religious customs, and recognise the pope and himself as their masters. The bishops and teachers of the ancient Britons meet him at Augustine's Oak, on the Severn; he there proposes that they shall give up their time of keeping Easter, and adopt the pope's; that they shall administer baptism according to the custom of the holy Roman Church, and preach the word of God to the Anglo-Saxons; and if they will yield on these three points, he offers to tolerate patiently their other customs, though contrary to his. Augustine strongly urges these demands. He insists, too, that they shall receive him as their archbishop, and the pope and Church of Rome as authorities to be respected and obeyed. Deynoch, abbot of the celebrated monastery of Bangor, whose opinion in the ancient British Church was most influential, replied:

"We are all ready to listen to the Church of God, to the pope at Rome, and to every pious Christian, that so we may show to each, according to his station, perfect love, and uphold him by word and deed. We know not that any other obedience can be required of us towards him whom you call the pope, or the father of fathers. But this obedience we are prepared constantly to render to him, and to every Christian."

When neither Augustine's prayers nor arguments could secure compliance, Augustine proposed a miracle to decide which is the true way to the heavenly kingdom. A blind man is brought forward, whose sight the bishops of the Britons could not restore. Augustine, however, had better success; for, on bowing the knees and begging the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ that sight might be given to the eyes of one, that thereby the grace of spiritual light might illumine the hearts of many believers, immediately the eyes of the blind were opened. But the Britons, either supposing that the healing was no miracle, or that it was not from God, obstinately refused to give up their

customs, Some time after, a larger number of the British clergy met Augustine in conference about the same controversy; and before entering the council the British priests took advice from a "holy and discreet man," who led the life of a hermit, and who told them to follow Augustine if he should prove himself to be a man of God, and he informed them that they would discover this by his humility. "If," said he, "the words of the Lord mark his spirit and life; 'Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart, it is to be believed that he bears Christ's yoke himself, and offers the same to you.'" And he told them that they should let him reach the place of meeting first, and if he arose to greet them on entering, he had the Saviour's humility; but if he sat still, he was proud, and they must have nothing to do with him.

Augustine did not arise, and they rejected himself for their archbishop, and his Romish traditions. "The servant of the Lord,"(?)as Matthew Paris says, then threatened that if they would not have peace from the Anglo-Saxons as friends, they must have war from them as enemies; and soon after, at the instigation, it is judged, of Augustine, Ethelfrid, a powerful king of the Northumbrians, assembled a large army at the city of Legions; and, just as he was about to make an attack on the Britons, he observed their priests in large numbers, standing apart, engaged in prayer for the success of their brethren; and on learning the object at which they were aiming, he said: "If, then, they cry unto their God against us, in truth they fight against us, though they do not bear arms; for they assail us with their prayers." He, therefore, attacked them first, and slew 1200 of them; then he destroyed the army of the Britons, called "*impious*" by Matthew Paris; but an army not unworthy of the name of holy patriots, when viewed in the light of liberty and an open Bible.

Most of the priests came from Bangor, an institution which, according to Paris, was divided into seven parts, with a ruler over each, and in which no section had less than three hundred monks.

Bede gives precisely the same account about the meeting with Augustine; the three propositions; the blind man whose eyes were opened, who, he says, was of the Saxon race, not of the British; about the meeting of another synod; about the hermit's advice in reference to Augustine's humility; about Augustine's sitting posture; and finally about the rejection of Augustine's religious innovations; and his insolent claims to authority over British churches.

He also describes the slaughter, by Ethelfrid, of the British army, soon after; and of the twelve hundred priests who prayed for its success, most of whom were from the monastery of Bangor, with its seven departments, each division containing more than three hundred monks, who all lived by the labor of their own hands, And good old Bede actually thought this slaughter a mark of the vengeance of heaven against "perfidious men, because they had despised the offer of eternal salvation," when, in reality, they only despised the insolent usurpations of Augustine, and the pope who sent him, and maintained the rights of a nation's Church, which, in the language of Neander, "withstood for a long time the authority of the Romish papacy." For seven hundred years, the British Church maintained its independence of the See of Rome, and some portions of it most probably till a much later period.

Geoffrey of Monmouth states that when Augustine came, he found in Britain seven bishoprics, and an archbishopric, all filled with devout prelates, and a great number of abbeys, by which the flock of Christ was kept in order. He describes, in glowing terms, the most noble Church of Bangor, with the seven divisions, of which Bede and Paris speak, each section with more than three hundred members; he pays a generous tribute to the learning and piety of the celebrated Deynoch, their abbot, "who answered Augustine with several arguments, that they owed no subjection to him, since they had their own archbishop; neither would they preach to their enemies (the Saxons), because the Saxon nation persisted in depriving them of their country. For this reason they esteemed them their mortal enemies; reckoned their faith and religion as nothing, and would no more communicate with the Angles than with dogs." In the next chapter, Geoffrey gives an account of the battle in which the priests of Bangor were slaughtered. He says that "Ethelbert, king of Kent (the earliest patron of Augustine, whose wife wrote to Pope Gregory to send Catholic missionaries into England), when he saw that the Britons disdained subjection to Augustine, and despised his preaching, was highly provoked, and stirred up Ethelfrid and the other petty kings of the Saxons to raise a great army, and march to the city of Bangor, and destroy the Abbot Deynoch, and the rest of the clergy who held them in contempt." Geoffrey agrees with Bede and Paris in everything about the battle, except in the number of ecclesiastics slain. He places it at two hundred.

William of Malmesbury is less minute, but he is careful to state that Ethelfrid vented his fury upon the priests first, and that their number must have been incredible for those times. He states that the ruins remaining were vast, such as were to be seen nowhere else; that their monastery was mighty even in its desolations.

Bangor was the university for the education of the British clergy, as Iona was for the Scotch; it was the divinity school; it was the headquarters of ancient British missions; it was the seat of Deynoch, the master-mind of the British Church. And as that Church had never recognized the headship of any pope, and had recently and decidedly declined to receive the pope's authority in changing their customs, or in imposing an archbishop upon them, Bangor must be blotted out. The British Church must be extinguished, if it will not be enslaved. After this butchery, the success of Augustine and his friends among the Saxons becomes unexampled; all the race in Britain submits to the missionaries of Gregory the Great, and the ancient British Christians pass into obscurity; but their principles live in Scotland, and spread over the whole Saxon settlements in the North of England. There is discord in families, and anger in sacerdotal hearts, and unhappiness in the Eternal City itself, because Scotch priests in England will not wear a circular tonsure, nor keep Easter on the Roman day, nor obey the popes.

A council is called at Streaneshalch—Whitby. It met in 664. Whitby Abbey at this time contained a large number of men and women. It was a seat of learning for the entire region around; it was a school of divinity, out of which in a little time five bishops were graduated, men of distinguished ability and piety: Bosa, Hedda, Oftfor, John, and Wilfrid. Hilda taught the inmates of her monastery justice, piety, chastity, and other virtues, and

particularly peace and charity. Her wisdom and zeal extended her reputation to distant localities; and not only the obscure, but princes and kings asked her advice. She compelled the inmates of her house to study the Holy Scriptures, and become thoroughly acquainted with the will of God. She was, undoubtedly, a woman of distinguished piety, and of a vigorous intellect, and eminently fitted to direct the studies and toils of the great male and female community over which she presided.

To her house the advocates of papal supremacy and of the non-Roman Church of North Britain came. Among the distinguished persons present were King Oswy, Bishop Coleman, with his Scottish clerks, Bishop Agilbert, with the priests Agatho and Wilfrid, James and Romanus. The Abbess Hilda, with her troops of followers, the venerable Bishop Cedd, ordained many years before among the Scots, were on the anti-papal side. King Oswy seems to preside in the council. The discussion is chiefly in the hands of Coleman and Wilfrid. Coleman, on behalf of the Free Church, defended his observance of Easter by the facts that, "he received the time of keeping Easter from his forefathers, men beloved of God, from the custom of John the Evangelist, the disciple beloved of our Lord, and of all the churches over which he presided." Wilfrid maintained the popish time of keeping Easter, because all Rome, where mighty Peter and Paul taught, must be right; because the same time was observed in Italy, France, Africa, Asia, Greece, Egypt, and all the world, "except only these and their accomplices in obstinacy ('I mean the Picts (Scots) and the Britons'), who foolishly, in those two remote islands of the world, and only in part even of them, oppose all the rest of the universe."

As the discussion progressed with much Christian courtesy and gentleness by Coleman, with decided ability and insolent derision-by Wilfrid, he quoted Christ's words to Peter: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it; and to thee I will give the keys of the kingdom of heaven;" and then he inquired if any of the fathers who had taught Coleman his customs could be compared to that first bishop of Rome? The king demanded from Coleman, if it was true, that our Lord had spoken these words to Peter? Coleman admitted the fact. The king then asked if he could show such power given to the great Scottish father, St. Columba? Coleman replied, "No." Then said the king: "He is the doorkeeper, whom I will not contradict; but I will, as far as I know and am able, in all things obey his decrees, lest when I come to the gates of the kingdom of heaven, there should be none to open them, he being my adversary who is proved to have the keys." Oswy's decision was difficult to dispute; he had a sharp sword, a strong arm and a violent temper: and as he imagined that everything pledged to Peter was promised to all Roman bishops, from that moment he became the most obsequious servant of the pontiff, and under his influence the Council of Whitby enthroned Romanism in the North of England.

Coleman very wisely went into Scotland among his own brethren. The other advocates of his opinions were silenced. But these opinions, embracing an anti-popish Easter and tonsure, had their principal strength from opposition to papal supremacy over the government of the Church; and this idea could not be easily destroyed. It worked in men's minds, and another council was convoked at Hertford.

Archbishop Theodore convened the synod A. p. 673. It was composed of bishops and other teachers of the Church, who loved and were acquainted with the canonical statutes of the fathers. It adopted ten chapters, and signed them. And then it was voted that every offender should be excluded from sacerdotal functions, and from "our society." The very first of these "chapters " reads: "That we all in common keep the holy day of Easter on the Sunday after the fourteenth moon of the first month." This anti-papal leaven was still disturbing the Roman bishops. Theodore, who called this synod, was a Greek by birth, a mere dependent of the Bishop of Rome, who had sent him into England to fill its highest ecclesiastical office, and to do the bidding of the successor of Peter. Doubtless, at Hertford he was carrying out his orders.

Theodore was the first Roman prelate who could carry out his primacy over all England. He banished the usages of the Scotch Free Church out of the Anglo-Saxon nations. The Council at Hertford was a potent agent in accomplishing this task. The ancient Britons retained their church independence for a longer period, and it is not definitely known when it became extinct.

Here, then, is a lofty monument, rearing its head for at least seven centuries into the heavens, upon which is written in great letters, "THE EARLY CHRISTIANS KNEW NOTHING OF THE POPE'S SUPREMACY OVER THE CHURCHES."

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