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claims, but Spanish statesmen are too modern and too enlightened to admit its demands. The attempt to force Spain to accept the Papal view of its Constitution has raised a spirit of revolt that is bearing everything before it, and no step back is possible for any Cabinet that wishes to remain in office. The King has boldly thrown his influence on the side of freedom. The great demonstrations in public have shown the world what Spain thinks. Party differences have disappeared in the national assertion of its right to govern as it desires, in a purely domestic matter, without regard to the interference of the Pope. The beginning of the end is in sight, and the national will is finding expression, not in the policy "a free Church in a free State," but in the more drastic movement in favour of "a free Church in a Sovereign State." The pity of it is that there is the gravest danger of the Sovereign State being a godless and non-Christian State. Such is the nemesis of history. Christianity killed by the unchristian policy of those who arrogate to themselves the right to be intolerant in forcing on others medieval accretions to the faith and the dogma and discipline of infallibility.



## Some Chapters in the History of the Early English Church.

BY THE REV. ALFRED PLUMMER, D.D.

### IV. WILFRID AND THEODORE.

**I**T is an historical fact of great importance, which still, however, needs to be often repeated, that the English Church was not created by the State. On the contrary, the English State was created by the English Church. There was a united Church of England before there was a united Kingdom of England; and it was the union of the dioceses of England under one Archbishop which was the main cause of the union of the kingdoms of England under one King. But we have not yet

reached the time when this important fact can be regarded as a truism which everyone knows and no one would dispute.

But if the new-born Church of the English was to become a model of unity to the English nation, it must first become united in itself, and when Aidan died in 651 this was far from being the case. Two influences had been at work in converting the English, one issuing from Rome and one from Iona; and, although these two were in agreement as to the essentials of the Christian faith, yet they differed considerably in externals—in liturgy, in the time for keeping Easter, and in the form of the tonsure. Some of these differences, and especially the last, seem to us to be very trivial, and to belong to those things which Gregory had told Augustine need not be in all Churches the same. But all experience shows that great religious bitterness may be generated by differences about usages which in themselves are unimportant; and there was real inconvenience when Christians of the same locality differed about some of these things. It was destructive of Christian sympathy and decency that, at the same Court, the King (Oswy) and his followers should be keeping Easter according to the Iona system, while the Queen (Eanfled), who had lived in Kent under the Roman system, was still keeping the fast of Holy Week. The differences throughout the English nation ran somewhat as follows. Kent and East Anglia followed Rome. Wessex, which had been largely converted by the Roman missionary Birinus, for the most part did the same. The two Northumbrian kingdoms were decidedly Scottish, although, owing to the earlier influence of Paulinus, which had been kept alive since his departure by James the Deacon, the Roman system was not unknown there. Mercia and Essex, owing to the work of Northumbrian missionaries, was to some extent Keltic in its Christianity.

King Oswy could not fail to be impressed by the divergence between his Queen and himself as to the time for keeping Easter. Both could not be right, and the question ought to be settled. So in 664 he summoned a synod to meet at Whitby, where the Abbess Hilda presided over a religious house for both monks

and nuns. She had been baptized at York by Paulinus in 627, but had come under the influence of Aidan, and at Whitby she gave her support to the Keltic side of the controversy. The leading advocate on that side in pleading before King Oswy was Colman, third Bishop of Lindisfarne. The leading advocate on the other side was the presbyter Wilfrid. Like Hilda, he had been under both influences, but in the reverse order. He had been a novice at Lindisfarne, and had gone to Rome with Benedict Biscop in 653, and had returned to England in 658. He was an enthusiastic supporter of the Roman system. Bishop Agilbert of Dorchester was present on the same side. But he was a Frank, and could not easily make himself understood to the English, so greatly had the two languages diverged since Augustine had used Franks as interpreters about seventy years earlier. So the conducting of the Roman case was left to the presbyter Wilfrid.

It is worth while to understand the question at issue. Both sides agreed that Easter Day must be kept on a Sunday, and that the Sunday must be so many days after a particular new moon. The Keltic usage was to take the first Sunday on or after the fourteenth day of the moon. The Roman usage was to take the first Sunday on or after the fifteenth day. Thus the Keltic usage allowed Easter Day to fall on the fourteenth day, and excluded the twenty-first day; while the Roman excluded the fourteenth day and admitted the twenty-first.

Colman appealed to St. John and the Quarto-decimans, who were supposed to have had his authority. But the Quarto-decimans' practice was really quite different from the Keltic. They had kept the fourteenth day, whether it was a Sunday or not, and this had been universally condemned. Wilfrid appealed to St. Peter, from whom, he said, Rome had received its custom, which had never varied. This plea was as futile as the other. It is not very probable that St. Peter ever laid down any rule about Easter, and it is quite certain that the Roman usage had changed. Experience had proved that the Roman cycle was a vicious one, and a better one had been adopted. The one solid

argument that was used was on Wilfrid's side—viz., that it was unreasonable that two tiny islands like Iona and Lindisfarne should set up customs at variance with the rest of Christendom. But it was not this argument which decided the case. What proved decisive with Oswy was that both advocates admitted that Christ had given the keys of the kingdom to Peter. "Then," said the King, "I cannot have him against me who is admitted to have the keys." The majority agreed with the King, and the Roman rule was adopted. Hilda loyally accepted the decision, and her influence smoothed the general adoption of the rule; but Colman and the clergy who held to his view returned to Iona. The decision respecting Easter carried with it a similar decision respecting the tonsure and other matters, and in a comparatively short time conformity with the Whitby decision was established in all English dioceses, although a few even of the English clergy preferred to migrate to Iona. In 710 the northern Picts conformed, and Iona itself in 716. The Britons in Wales, with characteristic unwillingness to agree with the English, were the last to give way; but they yielded in 768. Meanwhile an important development in the history of the English Church had taken place some years before the synod at Whitby. Paulinus, who had left Northumbria in 633, and had been made Bishop of Dorchester, died in 644, and was succeeded in that See by Ithamar. Hitherto all the Bishops of the English nation had been outsiders, either from the Continent or from Scotland. Ithamar was an Englishman, and the English now began to have Bishops of their own race.

When Colman resigned the See of Lindisfarne after his defeat at Whitby, Tuda, an Irishman, who accepted the Roman Easter, was consecrated as his successor. Tuda was soon carried off by the yellow pest; and then the Northumbrian Kings, with their council of wise men, chose Wilfrid, the victor at Whitby, to succeed him. Wilfrid begged to be allowed to go to Gaul for consecration, in order that none of his consecrators should have any of the taint of Iona. He was consecrated, with the magnificent ceremonial that was so dear to him, at

Compiègne. Twelve Bishops were present, among them Agilbert, formerly of Dorchester, who had allowed Wilfrid to take the lead at Whitby, and who was now Bishop of Paris. Wilfrid made the grave mistake of lingering for many months in Gaul, perhaps attracted by fine churches, vestments, and music, and did not start for England till the spring of 666. He had to contend with wreckers on the coast of heathen Sussex, and when he at last reached Northumbria he found troubles of another kind awaiting him. Although the party whom he had defeated at Whitby had accepted the Roman Easter, they had not been eager to accept as Bishop the man who had deprived them of their old usages. His long absence gave them an opportunity of getting rid of them, and Wilfrid found that another man had been elected and consecrated. This was Chad, one of the most beautiful characters in early English history. The see had been moved from Lindisfarne to York, and Chad, consecrated by Wini of Winchester and two British Bishops, was established as Bishop of York. Wilfrid went off to Ripon, and both there and at Hexham he spent much time in building a fine basilica. At both places crypts, which may be his, remain, but nothing of his work survives above the ground.

We have now reached the spring of 668. On the Fifth Sunday in Lent, March 26, Pope Vitalian consecrated Theodore of Tarsus to be Archbishop of Canterbury. Both Deusdedit, the late Archbishop, and Earconbert, the Kentish King, had been carried off by the yellow pest on the same day (July 14, 664), and the man elected to succeed Deusdedit had also succumbed to the plague. But at last, on the Second Sunday after Pentecost, 669, this very capable Oriental, brought from the Eastern Church to Rome, and sent from Rome to the extreme limits of Western Christendom, was enthroned on the seat of Augustine. It was a momentous day for England. Tarsus had produced a St. Paul to found Churches at the extreme East of Europe, and it produced a Theodore to consolidate newly-founded Churches at the extreme West. The Apostle of the Gentiles and the organizer of the English were

very unlike one another in many things, but both of them were alike in this—they were both endowed with great gifts for the work which God required them to do, and they both used the gifts with which they were endowed.

Theodore was sixty-six, and he knew that, in the rough climate to which he was so unused, the night in which no man can work might come very soon. If he was to accomplish the great commission which had been entrusted to him, he must work strenuously; and he began his labours at once. As it proved, he had a Primacy of twenty-one years before him, but no one could have expected that when he arrived.

It was an excellent omen that, in spite of his foreign origin, he was heartily welcomed by both the people and their rulers. It may have increased their interest in him that he came from the East. It was certainly an advantage in their eyes that he had been consecrated by the Bishop of Rome himself. But the greatest advantage of all had to be discovered by experience, for it lay in his own strong personal character. He was masterful and determined, perhaps we may say despotic; he had a clear head and a strong will—and these were just the qualities which were needed for the work which he had to do, for he came to regulate a Church which, to a disastrous extent, lacked unity, organization, and culture.

The English nation had been converted piecemeal from a variety of centres, and by missionaries whose ecclesiastical systems did not agree. Five years had elapsed since the Roman system had been preferred to the Keltic system in the Synod at Whitby in 664, but general uniformity had not been reached. With just one Bishop to each kingdom, the dioceses were far too large, and the work could not be efficiently done. There were still heathen scattered up and down the kingdoms; and Sussex and the Isle of Wight, separated from the rest of England, the one by its belt of forests and the other by its belt of sea, were still mainly heathen. Moreover, in spite of the learning which some missionaries had brought from Iona, or Ireland, or Rome, there was a very low condition of education

among the clergy. Many were too busy to study, and very few had opportunities of obtaining instruction. This great need appealed to Theodore at once.

After going through the dioceses and regulating what called for immediate attention, he developed a great school at Canterbury, where Latin and Greek were taught to such purpose that, as Bede says, some came to know these languages as well as their native tongue. Not only theology and other ecclesiastical subjects were taught, but astronomy, music, and medicine. Theodore was himself a teacher, and was aided by Hadrian, whom Vitalian had at first selected as Archbishop, but who had begged that Theodore might be chosen instead. He did not want to shirk; he was quite willing to go to England and work, but he did not feel equal to going as Archbishop. He was Theodore's very competent helper in many things.

Then came the question of unity and organization, and Theodore made a great advance towards this in summoning a Synod to meet at Hertford in 673. Of his six suffragans, four came; and Wilfrid, who was now established as Bishop of York, Chad having retired to Lichfield, sent persons to represent him. Many teachers came with the Bishops, but only the Bishops were regarded as members of the Synod. It was a notable assembly. The English Parliament is often called "the mother of Parliaments," other nations having copied us in having such. But the Synod at Hertford was the mother of the English Parliament. In it the English Church met for the first time as a single body, and at that time the English Church was the only representative of the English nation. The Synod at Hertford, therefore, was the first of our national assemblies, and it decreed that a Synod should be held annually at Clovesho. Theodore proposed that the unwieldy dioceses should be divided, but there was so much opposition to this that he did not insist upon it. He was able, however, to bring this about in particular cases, first in East Anglia and then in Mercia.

Then, in a high-handed way, without consulting Wilfrid, he divided Northumbria into four dioceses, leaving Wilfrid at



York, but taking Bernicia, Deira, and Lindsey from that see. Wilfrid protested; Theodore persisted; and then Wilfrid appealed to Rome, and left the country to plead his own cause there—the first instance of an appeal to Rome in the history of the English Church. In his absence Theodore, without assistant Bishops, consecrated three Bishops for the three new sees. Pope Agatho called a council to consider the matter. Fifty Bishops assembled in the great basilica of the Lateran, and their decision was a wise one. Wilfrid had been irregularly deprived of the greater part of his diocese, and the Bishops who had been intruded must retire. But the division of the huge diocese was necessary. Wilfrid must hold a council at York, and, with the council's concurrence, must select Bishops to assist him. He must choose men with whom he could work peaceably, and then present them to Theodore to be consecrated. Thus each side got what was essential—Wilfrid that his rights as Bishop of York should be respected, and Theodore that so large a diocese should have more than one Bishop.

Wilfrid regarded the decision as a triumph, and he found Rome so attractive that he repeated his error of 665, and stayed away from his diocese for months. He remained in Rome till the next Easter (680), and was delighted at being asked to take part in a council to consider the case of the Monothelites. But his satisfaction received a rude shock when at last he did reach home. He had forgotten that not only Theodore, his Metropolitan, but Egfrid, his King, had been committed to the arrangement which Rome had condemned. And he had, perhaps, never known that by no means all Englishmen had the love for Roman decrees that he had. They revered the Bishop of Rome, and regarded him as the leader of the Church. But they had the dislike, which Englishmen have shown all through history, of having the affairs of the nation settled by a power outside the nation by "outlandish" jurisdiction. It did not matter whether the outside power was a Pope, or a King of Denmark, or a Duke of Normandy, or a King of Spain, or a King of Hanover. What they thought fair and fitting was

that English affairs should be determined by English rulers in Church and State. And when Wilfrid waved in their faces the decree of a Roman Bishop, upsetting the arrangements of their own Archbishop and King, they concluded that such a decree must have been either forged or obtained by bribery. Unless swayed by evil influences, the Bishop of Rome would never have issued such a decision. The question of his right to decide the case seems not to have been raised. Wilfrid was put in prison as an impostor.

When at last he was released he went off to convert his old assailants, the heathen savages of Sussex. As Bede says, though Wilfrid's own diocese was closed to him, "he could not be restrained from the ministry of preaching the Gospel." There was a famine in Sussex, and Wilfrid taught the people to catch fish, before himself becoming a fisher of men. The King gave him two hundred and fifty slaves. He taught them, baptized them, and set them free. This is the most beautiful part of Wilfrid's work, and we will leave him at it. He lived to be restored to Northumbria, to be again expelled, to appeal again to Rome, and to walk across Europe at the age of seventy in order to plead once more in person. The result was a compromise. He lived five years longer, and in the autumn of 709 he passed peacefully away, just as the monks in the choir of his minster of St. Andrew, at Oundle, were chanting the 104th Psalm. He ceased to breathe when they reached the verses: "When Thou hidest Thy face, they shall be troubled; Thou shalt take away their spirit, and they shall die, and shall return again to their dust. Thou shalt send forth Thy Spirit, and they shall be created, and Thou shalt renew the face of the earth."

