

THE COLONIAL CHURCHMAN.

"BUILT UPON THE FOUNDATION OF THE APOSTLES AND PROPHETS, JESUS CHRIST HIMSELF BEING THE CHIEF CORNER STONE. Eph. 2 c. 20 v.

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H Y M N.

I.

From foes that would the land devour;
From guilty pride, and lust of power;
From wild sedition's lawless hour;
From yoke of slavery:
From blinded zeal by faction led;
From giddy change by fancy bred;
From poisonous error's serpent head,
Good Lord, preserve us free!

II.

Defend, oh God! with guardian hand,
The laws and ruler of our land,
And grant our Church Thy grace to stand
In faith and unity!
The Spirit's help of Thee we crave,
That Thou whose blood was shed to save,
May'st at Thy second coming, have
A flock to welcome Thee!

Bishop Heber.

For the Colonial Churchman.

PASTORAL CONVERSATIONS.

ANTIQUITY OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

A day or two after the conversation related in the last number, Mr. G. called again, and said he should like to hear and know something more about the first introduction of Christianity into England.

'You told me the other day, 'he began, of two Ladies, high in rank, who were supposed to be converted in Britain by St. Paul:—I forget their names.'

'You mean,' I replied, 'Claudia, and Pomponia Graccina.'

'The same: would you have the kindness to tell me more particularly about them?'

'Certainly—with very great pleasure. The former,—Claudia,—is, as I already stated to you, mentioned by St. Paul—2 Tim. iv. 21.—and also by Martial a Latin Poet, who proves that she was wife to Pudens, mentioned in the passage just quoted. For he says distinctly that such was the case:—

"Claudia Rufe, meo nubit Peregrina Pudenti
Macte esto taedis, O Hymenæo, tuis."—Martial.
Lib. iv. Epigram, xii.

'Then,' asked Mr. G. 'Pudens and Claudia mentioned in 2 Tim. iv. 21. were man and wife?'

'It appears so. And further, the poet just referred to, tells us that Claudia was of British extraction, as I stated to you the other day. He says of her—

"Claudia cæruleis cum sit Rufina Britannis
Edita, cur Latiao pectora Plebis habet?
Quale decus formæ? Romanam credere Matres
Italidos passint, Athides esse suam."

Martial: Lib. xi. Epigram 54.

Now it is not at all unlikely that she and her husband may have gone to Rome from Britain with St. Paul, and being in the employment of government may be those very persons, designated by the apostle as—"the saints in Caesar's household."—Phil: iv. 22. From all this you will be at no loss to conclude that Christianity must have been very early introduced into Britain.'

'Yes: I see the obvious inference. But then

could not this Claudia have been converted at Rome, long after she had left her native country?'

'No doubt of it. Such a thing is possible. But that the conversion took place in her native land, will appear probable from what we know of the other Lady mentioned above.'

'Was she of British descent likewise?'

'No: she appears to have been born in Rome and to have visited Britain in company with her husband Aulus Plautius, a Lieutenant Governor of the British Provinces in the reign of the Emperor Claudius. And Tacitus the Historian informs us—Annal: Lib. xiii cap 32—"that notwithstanding she was a person of a high character, yet being charged with foreign superstition she was tried for her life before Plautius her husband, who acquitted her. The historian adds—"that though she lived to a great age, she passed her time very uncomfortably, and discovered a deep melancholy, both by her habit and behaviour."—Now the superstition here mentioned is no other than the Christian religion, as we infer from the continual reference to it under that designation by various heathen authors.'

'An odd thing for a man to try his own wife. When did the trial take place?'

'So far as I can learn, it happened in the consulship of Nero and Calpurnius Piso; some short time after Paul's second arrival in Rome. It is therefore no absurdity to suppose that she accompanied the apostle from Britain, and had previously been one of his converts.'

'Certainly; there is no absurdity in the supposition. But is there any evidence that the Christian religion prevailed generally in Britain at an early period?'

'No: there is no evidence that it prevailed generally at the period of which we are speaking—that is—about 60 or 70 An: of our era. But about the middle of the second century there is sufficient proof to establish the fact that Lucius, a British king became a convert to the Christian religion. And a high authority in reference to the times of the king assures us "that Christianity did not gain ground in Britain by degrees, according to the progress of it in other nations, but that the whole island, disengaged from their error by unanimous consent, and were all made happy in their belief as it were in the same moment." Antiq: Britain: vita Poli.—No doubt this assertion must be understood with some modification: but it proves beyond a doubt that there lived many Christians in Britain in the second century.'

'There is one thing more which I particularly wish to ascertain with reference to this subject:—who are the principal divines of our church who think that Christianity was planted in England in the time of the Apostle?'

'Why Mr. G., I replied,—"that is a question that would admit of a long answer: but I will make it as short as I can. First and foremost is Bishop Burgess, whose work on the subject is replete with sound learning and just criticism. After him comes Townsend, the ingenious arranger of the Old and New

Testament in the chronological order. And their opinion is supported by the authority of our most celebrated Divines; such for instance as Parker, Camden, Usher—a host in himself,—Stillingfleet, Gibson, Nelson, Rowland, Collyer, and the profoundly learned Bishop Pearson. These divines—great and shining lights—have proved in works too numerous to be even named, that a regularly organized Church existed in Britain before the arrival of the Roman missionary St. Augustine who, according to the Roman Catholics, was the first who converted the Britons to Christianity. He certainly did convert the Saxons, who had conquered the eastern parts of the island, and driven the christian Britons to the mountains of Wales. And in the progress of this conversion he contrived to establish or rather to lay the foundation for the establishment of the spiritual authority which Rome exercised over England for many centuries afterwards.'

'I understand.'

'Well: we say that in the very act of introducing this foreign authority in contempt of the spiritual power and dignity of the native prelates, St. Augustine went beyond the limits of his mission,—and thus opened the way for all the corruptions that were consequent upon Roman supremacy in England, during the period that is commonly known by the name of the middle ages.'

'He certainly ought at least to have consulted with the native clergy:—observed Mr. G.'

'No doubt of it. Now observe. The gist of the argument between us and the Roman Catholics and modern dissenters with reference to this subject can be comprised in few words.—The Roman Catholics assert, and in this assertion they are joined by modern denominations of various kinds,—that the Church of England had no existence until the Reformation in the fifteenth or sixteenth century. In answer we prove that the Church of Christ existed in England before the see of Rome ever put forth any exclusive claims to the spiritual dominion of Christendom, and assert that its pretensions were nothing better than direct usurpations,—and that the reformation, consisted in a simple return to ancient usages, which were prevalent amongst the British Churches from the times of the Apostles: in the same way as the Jewish church returned to its allegiance under the reign of Josiah. And thus we prove incontrovertibly that the Church of England existed in Britain before any other church even dreamed of exercising spiritual authority over it.'

Frankie.—A friend once asked Mr. Francke, (who built the famous orphan house of Halle) how it came to pass, that he maintained so constant a peace of mind. He replied, "By stirring up my mind a hundred times a day. Wherever I am, whatever I do, I say, 'Blessed Jesus, have I truly a share in thy redemption? Are my sins forgiven? Am I guided by thy Spirit? Thine I am. Wash me again and again. Strengthen me, &c., &c.' By this constant converse with Jesus, I have enjoyed serenity of mind, and a settled peace in my soul."—C. F. Swartz.