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## REASONS FOR REJECTING THE ROYAL SUPREMACY.

The following is an extract from Archdeacon Wilberforce's work, in which he explains his motives for resigning his preferments in the Establishment:—

"Of the results of the Anglican system of Church authority I shall say little, because it is painful to bring an accusation against the system in which I have been brought up, and in which I had hoped to die. But it is impossible not to notice shortly the effect of that separation from the rest of Christendom which the acceptance of the royal supremacy involved. I will first observe, how completely the Church of England has taken her character from the three dynasties under which it has been her fortune to live; and then notice the effect of her present position upon the question of Church authority.

"Since England was separated from the successor of St. Peter, the throne has been occupied successively by the Tudor, Stuart, and Hanoverian families. The first asserted absolute authority for themselves; the second recognised the Church as a Divine institution, yet on the condition that it must receive its commission through the Sovereign, whose right was also of Divine origin; the third has allowed the principles of pure private judgment to predominate. These, therefore, have been the systems which have severally prevailed in the Church of England, which, on the whole, has always reflected the principles of the reigning power, and the last of them has the ascendancy at the present moment.

"The circumstances mentioned in the last chapter show the absolute power which was claimed and exercised by the Tudors. Elizabeth, as well as Edward, imposed articles and enacted canons by her own power. She is known to have made important additions to the Thirty-nine Articles after they had been agreed upon by the clergy; and in her 'Injunctions' she claimed the same power which had been possessed by her father and brother. To say, as her 'Injunctions' proceed to do, that this was no more than the ancient supremacy which had originally belonged to the Crown, is an untenable assertion; for what English Sovereign before Henry VIII. had taken upon him to excommunicate, or to decide questions of doctrine on appeal, or to set forth articles of faith? The estimate at that time formed of the Royal supremacy is attested by the declaration of the twelve judges, shortly after Elizabeth's death, that 'the King, without parliament, might make orders and constitutions for the government of the clergy, and might deprive them if they obeyed not.' 'So that independently of the powers acknowledged in the statute, there was yet in reserve within the capacious bosom of the common law an undefined authority, which, being similar in its character, might also be equal in its amount to the omnipotence of Rome.'

"This absolute authority over the Church, which had been secured to Elizabeth by express statute (1 Eliz., c. 2, s. 26), and which the judges determined in *Cawdry's case* to be inherent in the Crown, had been fully admitted both by the Church and the nation. Parliament acknowledged the Queen's right to make such reforms as she pleased 'by her supreme power and authority over the Church of England; and, therefore, Hooker felt himself compelled to deny that which had been maintained by the concurrent judgment of antiquity; that God 'hath appointed' 'the ministry of the Church alone to have' 'principality of judgment in Church matters'; 'therefore, it may not from them be translated to the civil magistrate.'

"This absolute control of the Sovereign over the Church was somewhat modified under the Stuarts. Either the wish to take more defensible ground against Rome, or the growth of juster sentiments in themselves, induced James I., and still more his son, to recognise the Church as a Divine body, which, though incomplete without the Sovereign, yet by his concurrence gained the powers of a substantive whole. This is the principle expressed in Charles I.'s Declaration respecting the Articles, A.D. 1628; and it led to a revival of the powers of Convocation, which had been comparatively inactive during the reign of Elizabeth. This, therefore, was the period at which the Anglican theory of Church authority was developed and defended both against the Puritans and against Rome. Its opposition to the former is exhibited especially in the canons of 1603; and the learning and abilities of Andrews, Laud, Bramhall, Mason, and others were exerted against the latter.

"Now it has been already observed, that the Anglican system of Church authority is open to the very same objections which were alleged against the Donatists. For what right had the Bishops of a single province to legislate independently in matters of faith? The excuse was that, as a chemical solution will crystallise into the same shape when poured into any vessel where its ingredients can act freely, so the

clergy of each nation retained that gift of inerrancy which belonged by God's promise to the Universal Church, because the Royal supremacy consolidated them into a whole, and thus enabled them to speak with authority. On no other principle could it be maintained to be a 'wicked error' to affirm 'that any of the Nine-and-Thirty Articles' is 'in any part erroneous,' or for persons to 'maintain, that there are within this realm other meetings, assemblies, or congregations of the King's born subjects, than such as by the laws of this land are held and allowed, which may rightly challenge to themselves the name of true and lawful Churches.' As the cause of Christendom, then, was vindicated against the Donatists by those internal divisions, which St. Augustin speaks of as a 'judgment' against them, so the Anglican system was overthrown by those domestic dissensions against which the lack of Catholicity rendered it helpless. For how could the British episcopate censure the Puritans for separating from their communion, when they were separated themselves from the communion of Christendom? So that their coercive measures produced the same effect, which the Council of Carthage speaks of, as resulting from the conduct of the Donatists towards their Maximian separatists, 'Where they have a Divine proof, if they chose to attend to it, that they are as censurable themselves for their separation from the unity of the Church as they complain that the Maximians are censurable for making a division from them.'

"The opposition to the High Commission Court, and its destruction by the Long Parliament, were the necessary results, therefore, of that division from the rest of Christendom, which made the attempt to enforce religious agreement unreasonable, as well as oppressive. But the Anglican system did not finally fall till the league between the clergy and the King was dissolved by James II. The last two Stuart Princes were conscious that a claim was made in their names, which they had no right to advance. Their exile on the Continent must have showed the untenableness of a territorial religion; and James refused to live in a system in which his brother had been afraid to die. And now, therefore, it was discovered that the supremacy, as interpreted by the Crown lawyers, was totally different from any authority which the Crown had anciently possessed. Stillington proved the High Commission Court, when restored by James II., to be illegal, and showed the erroneousness of Lord Coke's assertion, that the Crown had exercised the power of excommunication before the Reformation. This was virtually to overthrow the whole system of Anglican Church discipline; for it has never had any real effect upon the nation at large except when backed by that strong-handed associate. But a more important circumstance still was, that the dynasty which succeeded possessed only a parliamentary, not an hereditary title, and ruled, therefore, through such ministers as had the confidence of parliament. Henceforth the supremacy of the Crown meant the supremacy of a parliamentary Sovereign. And parliament consisted in part of dissenters, to whom William of Orange and his successors looked as their most trusted supporters.

"Whereas, Elizabeth, then, had been despotic, and the Stuarts Anglo-Catholic, their successors were essentially Protestant. The Tudors had required all persons to agree with themselves; the Stuarts with their bishops; but William of Orange was indifferent to what men believed, provided they differed from the Pope. The oath of supremacy, under Elizabeth, had affirmed that the Pope neither did, nor ought to possess, any spiritual authority in England; and also that the final authority in spiritual causes belonged exclusively to the Crown. The last of these statements was expunged from the oath, by 1 William and Mary 2, because it interfered with the freedom of judgment which was claimed by dissenters for themselves. So that the Crown gave up that right of judging in spiritual matters which Henry VIII. had won from the Church, and made it over solemnly to his subjects.

"There are reasons, therefore, why the Church of England should choose to retain those engagements which belonged to an earlier stage of her history; for otherwise she must abandon the defences which were raised for her by learned and able men, and renounce her alleged identity with the ancient Church. Yet how is it possible to make these declarations without feeling that if they do not assert falsehood, they at least palter with truth? For how can the Crown be alleged, in any true sense, to be the spiritual head of the nation? Not only does it allow Roman Catholic and Dissenters to teach their several systems; but by their admission into parliament, they have acquired a place in the sovereignty itself. Our gracious Queen may be only of two religions (those which are established in England and Scotland), but of the sects which are represented in parliament the

name is legion. To assert the Sovereign, therefore, to be 'supreme governor' 'in spiritual causes,' when that Sovereign is a parliamentary Sovereign, and parliament represents a divided nation, is to attribute an office to the Crown which it cannot really exercise, and of which it is illusory to speak.

"And hence the practical system of the Church of England is one of pure private judgment. Those whose converse is only with books, and who live in that circle of thoughts which is suggested by our great divines, may imagine that the Church of England has one consistent system of teaching, and inculcates a single body of truth; but experience dissipates the delusion, and shows such hopes to be like those of the Tartar conqueror, who discarded morning and evening prayer, because he imagined himself to have reached the land of eternal sunshine.

"The worst effect of such disappointment is, that it induces men to acquiesce in this state of things as a necessary evil; and thus destroys their belief in the teaching office of the Church. . . . When it was first decided that the validity of Baptism was to be left an open question in the Church of England, many persons expressed their conviction, that to allow an article of faith to be denied was to abandon the principle of authority, and, therefore, to lose that which was so essential to the vitality of the Church. But a few years have accustomed men to this, as to other evils; they observe that if the Church allow error to be taught by her ministers she is equally willing to allow them to teach the truth; and that they are as much at liberty as before to put any interpretation which they please upon her formularies. So that celebrated decision has but given additional support to that principle of private judgment which already prevailed. Indeed, we may be surprised that men were so much agitated when they found that the Church of England would allow error to be taught in respect to one of the two great sacraments; since in respect to the other it has never been alleged, that she does more than tolerate truth. For why should the doctrine of the Real Presence, and of the Eucharistic sacrifice, be a less essential part of Catholic truth than the doctrine of baptismal grace? There was no reason why those who were aware that these momentous doctrines were only tolerated in the Church should be greatly moved when they found that in the case of baptism also she did no more than tolerate the truth. The event, after all, did but disclose, rather than alter her position, by exhibiting a striking and novel instance of her system.

"Now, if it be true, as we believed in early times, that the Primacy was bestowed by our Lord upon His Chief Apostle, with an especial view of enabling His Church to teach as a corporate body, such a state of things must be looked upon as the natural consequences of its denial. Why should we wonder at the uncertainty and division which prevail around us, when we have discarded that provision, which was specifically appointed for their prevention? And it is instructive to observe that exactly the same set of evils were encountered, when the same experiment of isolation from the rest of Christendom was attempted by a single province in ancient days. St. Augustin's language respecting the Donatists, and the manner in which they gradually became accustomed to the spectacle of division, till their consciousness of the necessity of Christian unity was effaced, might be applied directly to many among ourselves. 'How many, as we well know, were already wishing to be Catholics, having been aroused by the obvious call of truth, but out of respect to their friends, put off the giving offence to them from day to day! How many were held, not from truth, to which you never trusted, but by the heavy bond of obdurate custom; so that in them was fulfilled the Divine statement, 'a stubborn servant will not be corrected by words: for though he understands, he will not hearken.' How many, too, thought that the party of Donatus was the true Church, because their security made them torpid, fastidious, and tardy in recognising Catholic truth! How many ears were stopped by the tales of slanderers, who alleged that it was some strange offering that we presented on the altar of God! How many, believing that it did not matter to what body a man belonged provided he were a Christian, remained in the party of Donatus, because they had been borne there, and because no one compelled them to depart thence, and to pass over to the Catholic Church.'

"So completely have the feelings which these last words express become predominant in England, that separation from the rest of Christendom is hardly felt to be an evil, or the absence of Church authority admitted to be a loss.

"And yet it may be said, that to return to the ancient system of Catholic unity is impossible; that nations do not thus retrace their steps, nor the waves of time flow backward. This may be true. Prophecy does not tell us that time will of necessity give

the ascendancy to truth: 'Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.' But the whole objective system of Christianity hangs together, and it may be doubted whether the revolt of the human mind is not as fatal to each particular doctrine, as to the unity of the whole. The difficulty is when these things become realities, which demand belief, and affect men's lives. And then it will be found that baptismal regeneration, and the Real Presence, and the authority of the episcopate, are as hard to maintain as S. Peter's primacy; and that the first are not practically believed by any large body of men, by whom the last is denied. For these doctrines cannot be maintained, unless we recognise the authority of antiquity; and the ancient fathers teach no doctrine of the Church more clearly than the pre-eminence of their chief apostle.

"And now, then, to sum up the results at which we have arrived. It has been shown, by the testimony of those who lived before us, that our Lord not only taught doctrines, but founded a Church.—To this Church He was pleased to commit the special function of interpreting that system which he delivered to mankind. He qualified it for such an office, by rendering it the habitation of that Divine Spirit which had dwelt without measure in the temple of his own humanity, and was pleased to take up its perpetual abode in His body mystical, the Church. Such is the statement of those who have delivered to us an account of our Lord's nature and actions; and unless this capacity of judgment had been possessed by the Church, we could have no evidence of the inspiration of that Sacred Volume, which contains the records of our faith. For it was the Church's judgment which stamped it with authority; and in its turn it confirms that which antiquity had previously witnessed respecting the authority of the Church. The Church's authority, then, depends on that presence of the Spirit which gives it life. This authority had resided first in its completeness in the presence of our Lord, when he was manifest in the flesh. He was pleased to bestow it in a plenary manner on the college of His Apostles. From them it has descended to their successors, the Bishops throughout the world. But to preserve the unity of this widespread commission, our Lord was pleased to give an especial promise to one of His Apostles, and to bestow upon him a name and office derived from Himself. And as the Episcopal College at large succeeded to the Apostles, so was there one Bishop, whom the Universal Church believed from the first to be the successor of S. Peter. Hence was he spoken of in ancient times, as discharging that function among the rulers of the Church-Catholic, which was discharged among his brethren by the chief Apostle.—The successor of S. Peter is declared by those general councils, which are admitted by all Catholics, to be the representative of Him who was the bond of unity and the rock of the Church. And hence, as the circle of Christendom grew wider, and its unity could not be maintained without a stronger principle of centralisation, it was through this influence that the oneness of the Catholic body was perpetuated; and the primacy of S. Peter ripened into the supremacy of the Pope.

"But now comes a change. There arises a powerful monarch in a remote land, who resolves to separate the Church of his nation from the unity of Christendom. He effects his purpose by force or fraud, and bids it recognise a new principle of unity in himself. He passes to his account, and his children rule after him. But this new principle of unity is found in time to be insufficient. No sooner is the grasp of the civil ruler relaxed, than a host of parties divide the land. The vast thought of unity, and hope of concord, is gradually lost. The national Church is surrounded by sects, and torn by dissensions. *Intra muros peccatur et extra.* And can it be doubted what advice would be given to its children by that great Saint who looked forth upon a somewhat similar spectacle in his native land; and whose life was expended in winning back his brethren, one by one to the unity of Christendom? He did not think that the national unity of Africa was any pledge of safety to the Donatists; or that the number and succession of their Bishops entitled them to respect. 'Come, brethren, if you wish to be inserted in the vine; for we grieve, when we see you lie thus cut off from it. Number the Bishops from the very seat of Peter, and in that list of Fathers see what has been the succession; this is the rock, against which the proud gates of hell do not prevail.'

## RUSSIAN ARMS.

Although we have now been for more than six months at war, it is only within the last few weeks that we have found any opportunity of testing the actual military capacities of the enemy; or of ascertaining the value of those improvements lately intro-