

religious system for himself, or that each congregation may be a law unto itself.

Of course, to pick and choose is pleasant, whether in religious or other matters. We all like to single out teaching which is to our taste, and to reject that which is not. We like to let our choice be governed solely by our own opinions. Our spiritual pride is fed, and our vanity flattered thereby; but whether the Christlike spirit of humility will be moulded by such methods is quite another thing. Real Christian humility is nowadays as rare as it is hard to acquire; yet how we all admire the man who candidly confesses 'I daresay I am wrong, for I am not deeply versed in the question. I willingly submit my judgment to those who are.' None of us can lay claim to greater wisdom than was possessed by the universal Church of the early Christian centuries. No modern authority whatsoever has the right to set aside its ruling; no denomination may overturn its faith as contained in the Christian creeds.

And here the Church of Rome steps in and says, 'All that you say is very true. A real and visible unity is what we have all along been contending for. And, therefore, we claim your allegiance. We are the one Church which should embrace all Christian people. Moreover, you are occupying churches and receiving endowments in England which originally belonged to us. And you have yourselves been guilty of schism in separating from us.'

This is a serious charge and a great claim. And it deserves a fair and impartial consideration. For our aim is truth. If unity has from the earliest times meant obedience to the voice of the Bishop of Rome—if the Church of England is now occupying the heritage which originally belonged to the Roman Catholic body, then there is no answer to be given but one of sorrow and penitence. In that case we must confess frankly that we are usurpers, and make our peace with the rightful Church of the land as speedily as possible.

But the statement is untrue. The English Church is the old historical Church of the country, having an existence of over

1,000 years before the Reformation. The Roman Church in England at the present time is, on the other hand, a schismatic body, the date of their secession from the Church in this country being 1570.

Let us consider this more carefully. What is the history of Christianity in England? It begins with the story of the British Church. Of such antiquity was this Church that its origin cannot definitely be discovered. That it goes back almost to apostolic days is highly probable. And that the Britons received their Christianity in the first instance either from Gaul or from the Churches of S. John in the east is morally certain.

Now the British Church was evidently vigorous and well-organised. It had its bishops, some of whom are recorded as attending general councils; and it furnished its martyrs. But it was perfectly independent of any foreign control. When Augustine the first Archbishop of Canterbury came with the authority of the Bishop of Rome to invite the British bishops to conform to Roman customs, they refused and replied that 'they would do none of those things nor receive him as their Archbishop.' In the British Church, at any rate, there was clearly no idea of any papal supremacy.

Next we turn to the Saxon Church, founded by Augustine in the year 596. Here at any rate, it is said, you will find an acknowledgment of the Pope's authority. It is true that Augustine received his mission from Gregory I. the Bishop of Rome, that he referred to him when difficult questions arose, and that he strove to fashion the English Church upon the model of the Roman. But what more natural? Augustine was an Italian born, and his sympathies and affections were with the land and Church of his birth. That there was no thought of the supremacy that the Church of Rome now claims we may gather from the lips of Gregory himself. 'This title,' he says, 'of universal bishops was offered during the council of Chalcedon to the Pontiff of the Apostolic See. But no one of my predecessors ever consented to use so profane a title.' 'This title is pro-