

## CHURCH THOUGHTS BY A LAYMAN

## THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND BEFORE THE REFORMATION.

THE letter, on a later page, from Dr. Withrow, was placed in our hands on Shrove Tuesday, with a request for a reply. After a most arduous and lengthy day at business, we took up this task, late at night, and in two hours had culled the following extracts from what scanty resources our modest library affords. We submit that if a Church layman, leading a hard life in business, can promptly furnish such a variety of evidence on behalf of the continuity of the Church of England, that a Wesleyan Doctor of Divinity, a professional literary man, should have produced some evidence to prove his assertion more conclusive than the three doubtful references that Dr. W. gives, after several weeks' preparation. Especially, we submit, *he ought not to have referred us to Bishop Short, who flatly contradicts the story of his church being born at the Reformation*, by alluding to its existence before the Conquest, and speaking of its protests against Rome "one hundred and forty years before Luther." Of course, historians are to be judged by *quality* as well as quantity, and we confidently affirm that Haddan, Freeman, Hallam, Stubbs, Green, Proctor, Creighton, Phillimore, Hook, Elliot, Short and Cutts—the entire bench of English bishops in 1851—the present Archbishop of Canterbury—are far higher authorities as ecclesiastical historians than Macaulay or any mere encyclopædia. Macaulay, indeed, has utterly lost his reputation for accuracy, and, in this instance, blunders more than usual. The literary world is familiar with the non-reliability of Macaulay. Those who know how his blunders, in regard to the Church of England, have been exposed by Dr. Babington and Dr. Luckock, will be only tempted to indulge in a smile of derision at Macaulay being regarded as an authority on church history. The *Church Quarterly*, for January, convicts Macaulay of gross blunders as to facts, it accuses him of neglecting straightforward and obvious evidence, such as we furnish below, in favor of indirect and inconclusive, and adds that if Macaulay had to write the Church's history of this generation, he would base it upon popular novels and dramas!

We now call our witnesses into the box and ask them to testify to this question: "Was the Church of England in existence before the Reformation settlement?"

"In tracing the origin of our native church, are two sharply contrasted periods." "Turn to the pages of Gildas, who wrote in the 6th century, and we find plain traces of a national church, unconscious of any submission to the Bishops of Rome." Haddan's Remains, pages 216, 218, 219.

"In England alone, in the west, a purely native church arose, the English Church reverencing Rome, but not slavishly bowing down to her." Freeman's Norman Conquest, Am. ed., vol. i, page 22.

"The internal development of the English

Church." "If England could not find a national life in the supremacy of any of its States, it found such life in the Church. It was the Church which expressed this national consciousness." Green's Making of England, pages 369 and 371.

"We must never forget that Christianity was introduced into England in the first ages; that for more than two centuries it flourished here, and had a liturgy differing from that of Rome, as is clear from the correspondence between Augustine and Pope Gregory." "British Christianity did not derive its first life from Rome, but was Oriental in origin." Sir Gilbert Scott, Eng. Ch. Arch., p. p. 44-48.

"The Church of our forefathers grew from its own roots; a Church beyond all others national." Haddan's Remains, page 295.

"The Anglo-Saxon Church had, to a certain extent, maintained its independence of the Roman See." Student's Hume, page 85.

Dr. Bright, Regius Professor of Ecclesiastical History, Oxford, entitles his work, "Chapters of Early English History," and on page 366 says: "Owing to the peculiarly close union of Church and State in the old English Christian Kingdoms, it was natural to describe the Witenagemot (or parliament) as a synod."

"The relation of the Church to the State," of England, "was then close." Stubbs's Cons. Hist., vol. i, p. 234.

"The English Church and nation." "So passed away St. Wilfred, A.D. 709, whose conduct had results prejudicial to his native Church." "The antipathy of the British to the English Church." "The progress of the English Church." A. D. 704. Bright, p. p. 421-446.

"Wilfred was the star of the Anglo-Saxon Church." Raine, vol. i, p. 77.

"Bede connects the British and Saxon Churches." Westcott's Bible in the Ch., p. 208.

"The English Church, A. D. 696 to 700, spread and flourished." Creighton. The Papacy During the Reformation, vol. i, page 8.

"Anselm (A. D. 1060) said the Church of England was a plough which ought to be drawn by two oxen, &c., &c." Southey's Book of the Church, p. 78.

"This was no other than William's great scheme for remodeling the Church of England." A. D. 1070. Freeman's Norman Conquest, vol. iv., p. 220.

"The preamble to a statute of Edward I (A. D. 1292) recites that the *Church of England* was founded by the kings and nobles of the realm for their instruction and that of the people. Down to the Reformation the supreme legislative authority was disputed between the State, the king, and parliament, the Pope, and the *Church of England* speaking through its constituted authorities." The State and the Church, Hon. Arthur Elliot, M. P., page 8.

The statute of provisors of 25, Henry III, stat. 4, describes the Holy Church of England as founded in the estate of prelaty within the real of England. Magna Charta, (A.D. 1215) the basis of English laws and liberties, commences with a declaration of the freedom of the Church of England, "*Ecclesia Anglicana*."

"With the reign of Henry III, (A.D. 1250) we reach the lowest point of the degradation of the Church of England." Cuff's Hist. C. of Eng., p. 172.

"The policy of King John made it easy to bribe the Church by the intervention of the Papacy." "When the resistance of an archbishop of York to Papal demands was met by excommunication, the people blessed him the more the Pope cursed him. The noblest of English prelates, Grosseteste, of Lincoln, died at feud with the Roman court. The same loss of spiritual power, the same severance from national feeling, in the 13th century, was seen in the *English Church* itself." Green's History of the English People, chap. iii, sec. vi.

"Under Edward I, the nation, England, and the king were at one, and the claims of Pope Boniface VIII were met by a dignified assertion of national rights." A. D. 1343. Creighton, The Papacy During Reformation, vol. i, p. 47. Speaking of a demand for tribute made by Pope Urban V, Creighton says: "Lords, prelates and commons unanimously placed at the king's disposal all the power and resources of the nation, to protect the national honour against such a demand. Pope Urban V withdrew the demand in silence. A. D. 1366." Creighton, p. 102.

"Wyclif, in all things, was equally earnest, whether it was to maintain the constitutional rights of the English Church, &c." Creighton, page 107. A. D. 1380. In the *Petitiones quoad Reformationem Ecclesie Militantis* of Richard Ullerston, Professor of Theology at Oxford, a work written in 1408, sixteen points are drawn up for consideration, not, as he is careful to explain, in the interests of the English Church alone, but of the universal church." Creighton, page 450. "The machinery, in A. D. 1430, of the English Church." Creighton, vol. ii, p. 28.

We ask Dr. Withrow's special attention to the following because he has referred to Dr. Short as one of his authorities for denying that there was a Church of England prior to 1534. "The decree in A.D. 1384 is probably the first formal determination of the Church of England in the case, so that this opinion of transubstantiation had not with us," *i.e.*, of the Church of England, "a 140 years prescription before Luther." Short's History of the Church of England, chap. III, page 54.

"As late as 1520, among the higher and lower classes, there were materials for giving continuance and stability to any movement which might arise in the Church of England" in the way of shaking herself free from the shackles of the old superstition. Perry's Student's Ch. Hist., page 10. Again on page 11, "Had there arisen in England such a Reformer as John Knox, the liturgy, the sacraments, the orders of the English Church might have been lost." "So great a revolution as the withdrawal from the pope of all allegiance on the part of the Church of England." Perry's Ch. Hist., page 108.

"The rules of the pre-Reformation Church." Ornsby's Diocese of York, p. 212. The great events of the time leave no trace behind them

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