

From the Catholic Herald.

TO THE REV. W. H. ODENHEIMER, A.M.  
Rector of St. Peter's Church, Philadelphia.

No. VI.

REV. SIR:—The Protestant church historian, Milner, says:—"It is curious to observe how different writers can find in the features of the British church the very figure of their own denomination." It cannot, then, be a matter of surprise, that Protestant Episcopalians, as well as all the members of other sects, should endeavor to prove, that it was constituted on the same principles as their own. Fanciful theorists delight to wander where documentary evidence is scanty; the vacuum is easily filled up by their own imaginings. The little that we know with certainty, regarding the ecclesiastical affairs of Britain, before the arrival of St. Augustine, can be easily compressed into very few pages. It principally regards the establishment of the Christian church in Britain, under King Lucius; the sufferings of some martyrs; and the efforts made by St. Germanus, Lupus, and Severus, in opposing the inroads of the Pelagian heresy. Almost every thing else that is known regarding that country is taken from some incidental remarks of continental writers. It should not, then, excite astonishment, if we possessed no direct evidence of the principles of that church regarding the authority of the bishop of Rome. The natural course of investigation would then lead us to inquire—what were the principles of the other portions of the church; and we would conclude, that the same must have been those of the British church which was in communion with them. But we are not restricted to this line of argument; in addition to what may be thus concluded, enough direct evidence exists to show that the faith of the British Church on this point was the same as that of the other portions of the church. Whether our arguments expose us to some reproach which Milner made against the sectaries, can only be decided by a candid examination of their force.

The mere fact that Lucius the King of the Britons, wrote to the bishop of Rome, to request that missionaries would be sent "to make him a Christian," no insignificant proof, that the bishop of that city was known even to enjoy a pre-eminence over the other churches. The dignity of the Imperial city to which Protestant writers attribute the pre-eminence of her bishops, could have shed no lustre on that church during the early ages, but what was derived from the myriads of her children, whose blood flowed through her streets in testimony of her faith. The post which her bishop occupied, was not one of honor, on account of its vicinity to the place of the Cæsars, but one that placed him in the very front of the battle. We can imagine, therefore, no reason, why a Briton should send to him, in preference to the bishop of Gaul and Spain, unless we admit, that he was known to enjoy a pre-eminence over them. Setting aside the legends, which, in latter times, were connected with it, the fact itself, that a British King made this request, and obtained what he asked, cannot be called in question, as it is attested by a host of ancient writers. This, then, is no slight indication, that, even at that time, the authority of the bishop of Rome, was known in England. It certainly proves what I remarked in a former letter, that you must go to Rome to find a mission even for the British Church, as well as for the church established in 597, amidst the Anglo-Saxons, by the labors of Augustine.

But, be this as it may, a conclusive argument is derived from what you yourself tell us at page 58. British bishops sat, and voted at the council of Arles, in

314, and at that of Sardica in 347. It is not pretended, that they differed from the other fathers of these councils; we may, therefore, take their doctrines as a sure index of the doctrines of the British Church of that period. Let us begin with that of Arles.

This council was called together to decide, in a more solemn manner, on the accusations made against Cecilian, bishop of Carthage, by the Donatists; but the bishops availed themselves of the occasion to make other useful regulations.—There were present bishops from almost all the provinces of the West; amongst those who signed the decrees, we have the names of three British bishops. Now what was the doctrine of that council regarding the authority of the bishop of Rome? It is alluded to only in an indirect manner, but enough is gleaned from their proceedings, to show that it extended over Britain. They directed a letter to Sylvester, who then occupied the Roman See, and communicated their proceedings to him. They regret that his occupations prevented him from being with them in person, but they feel satisfied that he could not absent himself from the "place where the Apostles daily sit in judgment." They think it important that the regulations which they made should be diligently observed by all in the provinces from which they had come; and therefore that "it should be intimated to all, by him who had held the greater dioceses." "What we have decreed," they add, "we have communicated to you, that all may know what they should observe. In the first place that Easter be celebrated on the same day, and at the same time, by us all, throughout the extent of our regions, and that you address your letters to all according to usage." A law is made here, which is to serve as a rule for all the provinces from which they had come—among others, therefore, for Britain.—To secure uniformity they think it necessary that the bishop of Rome should intimate the decree to ALL; because the council, however unanimously attended, did not include all the bishops of the various provinces: on the other hand, they ask him to write to these places, only in consequence of the authority which he possessed over them. Moreover, it is here recognized as an established usage, that these provinces should receive letters from the bishop of Rome, on similar subjects, and conform thereto. I will admit that what is said here, refers principally to his patriarchal authority; but to this, the British Church, in common with the other churches of the west, was evidently subject. Let us now pass to the council of Sardica.

Bishops from Britain attended this council, also, as we learn from St. Athanasius. This council was in every respect an œcumenical, or general council; but not having treated of any other points of faith than those already decided at the council of Nice, and having been principally engaged in carrying out the definitions of that council, it has been considered by the ancients as an appendage of the same, rather than a distinct council. The third canon of this council runs as follows:—"Osius said, if any bishop be condemned in any cause, and thinks that his cause is good, and that a trial should again take place, if it meet your approbation, let us honor the memory of the Holy Apostle Peter, and let those who investigated the case write to the Roman bishop, and if he judge that a new trial be granted, let it be granted, and let him appoint judges.—But if he judge that the cause is such that the proceedings should not be called in question, they shall be confirmed. Is this the will of all? The synod answered: It is our will." Gaudentius another bishop then proposed an amendment, that,

should an appeal be lodged to Rome, no bishop should be ordained in place of the deposed prelate: which was agreed to. In the seventh canon they declare that in case an appeal, the Pope may either refer the cause for a rehearing to the bishops of a neighboring province, or send a priest from amongst his own clergy, or other persons, who being invested with his authority, may be associated to the other bishops. Either of these things they say he can do at his option, as he thinks most advisable.

The fathers of this council reported the whole of their proceedings to Julius, then Bishop of Rome. In their letter they say, this will seem to be excellent and most suitable, if the priest of the Lord report the HEAD, that is, to the Sec of the Apostle Peter, from the several provinces." Julius is requested to admonish, by his letters, all bishops not to communicate with those whom the council condemned. The equity of his judgment in the case of Athanasius is lauded, and they can find no other reason that could have induced the Eusebians to refuse to attend the trial at Rome, than a consciousness of guilt. It must be remarked that neither St. Athanasius, nor the Eusebians, lived within the district that was subject to the patriarchal authority of the bishop of Rome: he could have no right to take cognizance of their affairs, unless his authority extended to the whole church.—Still the enemies of Athanasius were the first to lodge a complaint against him at Rome; Athanasius immediately repaired to that city, with witnesses to answer the charges; Julius summoned others to appear, even from places beyond his patriarchate, he prosecuted the case, though those who first provoked it did not dare to come forward, and finally pronounced sentence in favor of Athanasius. Were not the bishops of Rome invested with jurisdiction over the whole church, this proceeding would have been manifestly an usurpation. The fathers of Sardica, however, speak of it with praise, and do not seem to imagine, that any one doubted his right to take on himself the judgment of the case. In this the British bishops, as well as the other bishops who assisted, must have agreed; and we have thus a splendid proof that they, in common with the rest of the church, admitted the primacy of the bishop of Rome.

The mission of St. Germanus, bishop of Auxerre in France, accompanied by Lupus, bishop of Troyes, in 429, and by Severus, bishop of Treves, in 446, are also instances of the authority of the Pope having been acknowledged in Britain.—Though they were invited by the orthodox bishops of Britain, to aid them in repressing the Pelagian heresy, they came invested with authority from the Pope. St. Prosper says, that Pope Celestine sent St. Germanus as his vicar, and the British records represent him as exercising high acts of jurisdiction, which he never could have done, but in virtue of powers derived from the Papal supremacy.

A passage of Gildas is another clear proof, that the Britons of his time, admitted the authority of Rome. Amongst the other abuses with which he reproaches the British clergy, he complains that many of them who could not procure benefices at home, passed beyond the sea, and travelled over vast tracts of country, to obtain what they desired: that by this means they succeeded, and returned to their own country, having become unworthy possessors of their sacred offices.—This can be understood only of Rome.—Whatever may be thought of the practice itself—it clearly shows, that an authority was admitted abroad, competent even to confer the sacred offices on persons in Britain.

The anxiety of Augustine to engage

the Britons to co-operate with him in preaching the Gospel to the Angles, and his readiness to admit them, on the conditions mentioned in a former letter, is another proof that their principles regarding the authority of the bishop of Rome, were not different from his own. Notwithstanding his anxiety for their assistance, he would not admit them, unless they adopted the Roman method of celebrating Easter, and of administering baptism; because a difference of discipline on these two points would have caused confusion, and scandal in the infant Church. Would he have admitted them had they denied the authority of the bishop of Rome, whom he, beyond all doubt, believed to be the supreme head of the Church?

Giraldus Cambrensis, in his life of St. David, mentions two synods of the British clergy, at which St. David assisted; that of Brevy, and another which he calls of Victoria. Both were held before the arrival of St. Augustine. He says that "all the churches of Wales were guided by the decrees of these two synods, the Roman Church adding her authority thereto and confirming them." This statement is taken almost *verbatim* from Rycemarch, a more ancient writer, and also bishop of St. David's; and he tells us that he received it, not from oral tradition, but from the very hand-writing of St. David himself. It was in the first of these synods that the archiepiscopal see of Wales, already transferred to Landaff, was removed again from that place to Menevia.

We find also that Hoel Dha, King of Wales, went himself to Rome, accompanied by the bishops of St. David, of Bangor, of St. Asaph, and of Landaff, to obtain from the Pope the confirmation of the ecclesiastical laws, which were made in a general assembly of the clergy of Wales, with many of the nobles, at a place called Gvin in the year 928. Some place this council a few years later when the monarchs of England had obtained a nominal authority over Wales; but, even were this the case, the King and clergy of Wales would never have paid so much deference to the authority of the Pope, if they had not known that his authority was always recognized by their ancestors.

I will follow up this subject in another point of view in my next communication.

I remain, Rev. Sir, respectfully

Your obedient servant,

CATHOLICUS.

#### BARTHOLOMEW DE LAS CASAS.

Bartholomew de las Casas, originally a gentleman of Seville, emigrated to America in 1502, being then 28 years old.—Scarcely had he set foot on land, when his soul was filled with compassion and disgust, at the spectacles he witnessed.—Instead of seeking to make his fortune, he resolved to devote himself to the defence of America; and he prepared himself for this high destiny, by initiating himself through the reception of priests' orders, into the mysteries of human redemption. To his 77th year, he continued to labour indefatigably in this holy cause. Eight times he crossed the ocean, going from America to the court of Spain, and from the court of Spain to America,—bearing fruitless complaints and inefficient decrees. In presence of a council, which designed the establishment of a universal monarchy, he was heard to cry out: "All nations are equally free, and it is not lawful for one to injure the liberties of others." He presented to Charles V. a memoir, entitled, "The destruction of Indians by the Spaniards," in which he portrays the crimes of his countrymen in lively colours,—thus sacrificing to justice his own personal safety and the honour of his country. Charles V. named him "Protector Gene-