

THINGS WE OUGHT TO KNOW ABOUT THE CHURCH.

EPOCHS.

All of us have epochs in our lives. There is birth ; the day we first went to work ; the time when we gave ourselves to God ; marriage ; whilst the solemn epoch of death still lies before us.

This Church of ours has her epochs too.

Let us glance through her history and notice some of them.

Of course, her foundation, about the year 62, comes first.

Those were wild times, and the young church had to struggle on as best she could through wars and robbery and bloodshed. In 596 she was strengthened in an unexpected way, for a band of missionaries arrived from Rome, headed by S. Augustine. With this help she made great progress, and before many years had passed she had won her way over all England.

So the landing of the missionaries is a second epoch.

Nearly a thousand years go by before we come to our third epoch—the Reformation.

Now a thousand years is a long time, and we find the Church in a very different position. Nearly all the Cathedrals and Abbeys were built during those ten centuries—and what wonderful settings for beauty and thoroughness they are, any good workmen who examines them can tell. Hosts of Parish Churches too had risen all over the land, and colleges and monasteries besides. Along with all this noble activity for God, serious errors had grown up, and perhaps the one that

caused the most mischief was the vast power a foreign bishop had been allowed to gain in England. This was the Bishop of Rome ; and he claimed to be supreme, not only over the clergy, but also over the king and people.

When the Duke of Normandy came to conquer England in 1066, the Bishop of Rome (or the Pope) had helped him, and from that time the Popes did all they could to increase their power. whilst every now and then the English would try to throw off the yoke.

At last, in the reign of Henry VIII, a decided step was taken for independence. The Church (through Convocation) and the State (through Parliament) refused allegiance to the Pope ; and the taxes he had levied were forbidden to be paid him any longer. Many other changes were made, and the King and great nobles in the general confusion, seized on much Church property, and there was both injustice and cruelty : yet many abuses were got rid of, and, while there were outward losses, in spiritual things, the Church remained the same.

And now we come to the Revival of 1830—an epoch almost in our own times.

At the beginning of this century, from various causes, the Church had sunk to a very low level of life and work.

About 1830 a little band of clergymen at Oxford banded themselves to try to bring about a better state of things. They wrote, preached, taught ; and the pith of all was this—the church was no human institution ; she was the Bride of Christ and must rise to her high calling.

It is sixty years since this Gospel