

To the Editors of the Colonial Churchman.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF CHRISTIANITY IN BRITAIN.

Messrs. Editors,

In your number of the 5th instant, you casually allude to a letter lately addressed by the present Pope, (Gregory 16th) to the Earl of Shrovsbury—the well known President of a society termed “the Catholic Institute of Great Britain.” It may be as well to add: that in that letter, the Pope makes the following misstatement:—he alludes to himself as “by divine appointment constituted the heir of the name and chair of that Gregory the Great, who by the church of the Catholic Faith, first enlightened Britain, involved in the darkness of idolatry.” A correspondent of the London Times, thus truly exposes the fallacy of one statement at least of this alleged unerring and immutable prelate:—

“I need scarce say, that although the assertion in the extract from the letter, ‘that Gregory the Great was the first who enlightened Britain by the torch of the Catholic faith,’ ought to have been substantiated by some reference to history, it was not; I therefore beg to supply the deficiency by the following extract from ‘The History of Britain, that part especially now called England. From the first Traditional Beginning, continued to the Norman Conquest. Collected out of the Ancientest and Best Authors, by John Milten. London, 1695.’ ‘The Abbot Austin, and his fellows, came safe to the Isle of Tanet, anno 597, and when called to the presence of King Ethelbert, advancing for their standard a silver cross, and the painted image of our Saviour, came slowly forward singing their solemn litanies; and sitting down as the King willed them, they there preached to him, and all in that assembly, the tidings of salvation.’ This is what the historian says was done at the instance of the Gregory of that time. (See page 173.) On consulting page 164, we find that the King ‘allotted them their residence in Doroverne, or Canterbury, his chief city;’ but (and mark this well) ‘there stood without the city, on the east side, an ancient church built in honour of St. Martain, while yet the Romans remained heer, in which Bertha, the queen, went out usually to pray. Heer they also began first to preach, baptize, and openly to exercise divine worship.’ Anno 598. The Romans finally left about anno 423, and in this church ‘Bertha, the queen went out usually to pray,’ but this is all before the arrival of Austin and his fellows.

At page 165, we are told that Austin was ‘ordained Archbishop of the English by the Archbishop of Arles, at the appointment of Pope Gregory.’ Pages 165 and 166 fully define ‘the torch of the Catholic faith,’ for we read that Austin ‘sent to Rome Lawrence and Peter, two of his associates, to acquaint the Pope of his good success in England,’ and ‘Gregory sends the great work of converting that went on so happily a supply of labourers, Mellitus, Justus, Paulinus, Rufinon, and many others. Who and what they were may be guessed by the stuff which they brought with them, vessels and vestments for the altar, coaps, reliques, and for the Archbishop Austin a pall to say mass in. To such a rank superstition that age was grown, though some of them yet retaining an emulation of apostolic zeal. Lastly, to Ethelbert they brought a letter with many presents. Austin, thus exalted to archiepiscopal authority, recovered from the ruins and other profane uses, a Christian church in Canterbury built of old by the Romans’ (‘a Christian church,’ mark well, ‘built of old by the Romans,’) which he dedicated by the name of Christ’s Church, and joining to it built a seat for himself and his successors; a monastery also near the city eastward, where Ethelbert at his motion built St. Peter’s, and enriched it, with great endowments, to be a place of burial for the archbishops and kings of Kent—so quickly they stepped up into fellowship of pomp with kings. Thus we see that Christianity was not introduced to these islands by Pope Gregory, but that Popery was.”

August, 1840.

MORGAN MORGAN.*

The following biographical sketch may serve to show the remarkable manner in which lay-agency has sometimes been blessed in the christian church:—

Morgan Morgan was a native of Wales, whence he emigrated in early life to the province of Pennsylvania. In the year 1728 he removed to what is now the county of Berkley, in Virginia, and built the first cabin which was reared on the south side of the Potomac, between the Blue Ridge and North Mountain. He was a man of exemplary piety, devoted to the church; and in the year 1740, associated with Dr. John Briscoe and Mr. Hite, he erected the first episcopal church in the valley of Virginia. This memorial of his zeal, it is believed, is still standing, and now forms that part of the parish of Winchester which is known as Mill Creek church. But he has left behind him other and more valuable records of his quiet and useful life. ‘He went about doing good,’ and was most frequently to be found by the bedsides of the sick and dying. With no mad zeal, assuming to itself infallibility and superior holiness; but with the soberness of a sound mind and the earnestness of a pious heart, he sought to impress upon others the value of the gospel of Christ. In this good work he forgot not his household, but laboured to train up his children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. The fruit of his labour was abundantly visible in the piety of a son who bore his own name; and who, in the destitution of episcopal clergymen in Western Virginia, officiated at the early age of sixteen as a lay-reader in the church which his father had erected. The father lived on, a pattern of piety, enjoying at times, under the ministrations of an episcopal clergyman, the solemn services and comfortable sacraments of that church which had his heart’s best affections, until, at the advanced age of seventy-eight, he died under the roof of that son, whose piety and filial tenderness smoothed his passage to the grave.

But clergymen were not always to be had; and Morgan Morgan had been taught by his father that the public worship of God was not to be neglected on that account. He officiated himself, but never was known to assume the dignity nor exercise the duties which belong peculiarly to the ministry. He confined himself strictly to that which a lay-man might lawfully do. In the latter years of his life, the wants of the church were greatly increased from the distracted state of the country, and he was consequently often called from home to perform in vacant churches those religious duties which were proper for a lay-man; and, as his circumstances were easy, he determined, in the urgency of the case, to devote himself exclusively to the work of keeping alive and quickening piety in the church of his fathers; and thus did he exhibit the singular spectacle of a lay-man, in his appropriate station, and with due regard to all the peculiarities and regulations of the Church, seeking to keep up her institutions under circumstances of peculiar discouragement. The history of his success is thus related by the writer, to whom we are indebted for our sketch; and it certainly affords abundant encouragement to the zeal and efforts of the pious layman who may be engaged in building up the church. ‘While the church to which he belonged shall have existence in the valley of Virginia, his pious labours must and will be remembered with gratitude. In a dark day, when desolation and death seemed brooding over her interests, he commenced a career of active exertion, which was hoping almost against hope; and, by efforts of the most disinterested nature, revived the attachment of her friends, and kept her from descending to the dust. Though encumbered with the weight of years, and though but a layman, thus precluded from some of the most interesting exercises, yet his labours were abundantly blessed by God, and the spirit of piety was kept alive. Through the counties of Jefferson, Berkeley, and that of Fredrick, Hampshire, and a small portion of Maryland, he exercised the duties of a lay-reader. He was a welcome visitant everywhere, and was beloved by

SIGMA.

* From “Dr. Hawks’s Contributions to the Ecclesiastical History of the United States.”

rich and poor; and, what does not always follow when the services of the church are kept up by man, he had large and attentive audiences. The character of the man was his passport to respect and attention, and his love for the church of his country stimulated the love of others. It is firmly believed that the fruits of his labours will be long traced in the valley of Virginia.

His bones are now resting in the Churchy Mill Creek church; and, though his name was but little known out of the immediate sphere of his usefulness, yet, doubtless, ‘he shall be known at the resurrection of the just.’

WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

“There is hardly a mistake more injurious to the interests of Christian charity, one which has more effectually impeded the progress of the Gospel, than that which has prevented that Gospel from having free course, being glorified as it will be glorified where free course, than that erroneous notion which has prevailed—I would almost say universally, but very generally, and I fear still too widely,—that the Church is the Clergy. The Clergyman, Am I again asked what is the Church? The man at his daily toil; the workmen who ply the shuttle; the artificer in his useful avocation; the tradesman in his shop; the merchant in his counting-house; the scholar in his study; the lawyer in the courts of justice; the senator in the hall of legislation; the monarch on the throne;—these, as well as the clergyman in the walls of the material building which is consecrated to the honour of God; these constitute the Church. The Church, my Lord, as defined in our own Article, is ‘the whole congregation of faithful men, in which the pure word of God is preached, and the sacraments duly administered.’ Therefore, are the Church, as well as we who are called upon to dress you in this language of exhortation, and upon you that we make the call, while we are to be binding upon ourselves; and, therefore, because it is the Church’s duty, that it is the duty of every member of the Church; for the Church is so constituted under its Divine Head, that no member can suffer but the whole body suffers; nay, the great Head himself feels in the remotest member of his body; not the meanest member of the body can make an exertion in favour of the whole, but the blessed effects of it are felt, to the benefit of the whole, which groweth by that which is joint supplieth, to the increase of itself in love. Therefore it is, because I feel that you are a member of that Church, that I venture to point out to you a duty incumbent upon you in that character to use as far as you can, the want which is left unsupplied by those whose duty we think it was to supply to use your best exertions as individuals, to mend for that national deficiency.”

THE WORKHOUSE BOY.*

I HAVE been so much pleased with an event which lately occurred in my parish, that I am induced to set down the particulars of it to paper, believing that they will cause others to share in my feelings. A labourer and his wife, of careless and idle habits, and the wretchedness and contention common to such characters, were separated, fourteen years ago, by the desertion of the husband. The woman, with a young child, took refuge in the work-house. She remained there for four years, and, during her stay, the child was put out to service, with the exception of a son, who was soon after the husband deserted her. On quitting the workhouse, she left her son an inmate of it—the place of his nativity, and went to a neighbouring cottage, where she lived with a single man, with whom she lived, until within the last year. While she followed this miserable course, she won the regard of those set over her by his good character. He was sent to the parish school, and, when the poor law came into force, was removed to the workhouse.

* From the Church of England Magazine.