

## THE CHAIR OF PETER OR THE CHAIR OF CHRIST.—IV.

(Irish Ecclesiastical Gazette.)

One further argument might be adduced, taken from the contradictory opinions of Roman authorities themselves. One would suppose that the language of the Roman Missal, in the Collect for the Vigil of St. Peter and St. Paul, would by itself be sufficient to decide the matter: "Grant, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, that thou wouldest not suffer us, whom thou hast established on the Rock of the Apostolic Confession [and not Peter, be it observed] to be shaken by any disturbances." There are five other great commemorations of Peter in the Roman Missal, but none of the collects refer to him as the Rock.\*

Of all the Churches in the first ages of the Christian era the Church of Rome has the least claim to an Apostolic origin. We read of Churches in the Acts of the Apostles founded by apostles in various places, but no apostle had ever visited Rome when Paul wrote his Epistle to the Roman Christians. The Church in the first instance was certainly of Greek rather than of Latin extraction. It appears, so far as we can learn, to have grown up spontaneously under the influence of Greek Christian immigration. "For some considerable part of the first three centuries the Church of Rome, and most, if not all, the Churches of the West, were if we may so speak, Greek religious colonies. Their language was Greek, their organization Greek, their writers Greek, their Scriptures Greek, and many vestiges and traditions show that their ritual and their liturgy was Greek. . . . All the Christian writings which appeared in Rome and in the West are Greek; the Epistles of Clement, the Shepherd of Hermas; the Clementine Recognitions and Homilies; the works of Justin Martyr down to Caius and Hippolytus."—(*Milman's Lat. Christianity*, Vol. I., 32, 33)

But supposing that it was all true and provable with regard to the alleged primacy of Peter, and that our Lord had really constituted him to have supreme jurisdiction over the other apostles and over the entire Church, that would have been after all but a personal right, and not an official one. Not a word is said about the delegation or transmission of such authority to others as his successors. Peter was sole in the matter. To him alone were the words spoken, "Thou art Peter." To the present day the Bishops of Rome do not appoint their successors or delegate any office to them. A personal privilege, according to Roman ecclesiastical law, dies with the decease of the person or persons originally named in the grant. Judged by this principle, therefore, the claim of the Bishop of Rome to universal supremacy must fall to the ground.

And in what a position does this monstrous claim place all the other Churches of Christendom? What of the Greek Church with its millions of people? What of the great Anglican Church, scattered throughout the world? What of the vast bodies of professing Christians known as Nonconformists? Are all to be cut off from the true faith because they find no shelter under the shadowy and apocryphal claims of "the Chair of Peter?"

The Ultramontane theory of to-day is that the Roman Church is the only Church in the world; and that the mere fact of having separated from it has *ipso facto* unchurched all other Christian communions, so that, for example, the Eastern Church is now only the "Photian Schism." But Rome has in former days, as we know from the history of the Council of Flor-

ence, confessed that the Church is divided, and therefore she is not consistent with herself in this matter.

We may here observe that another Council, the General of Chalcedon, declared the Roman Primacy to be merely of ecclesiastical appointment and not of Divine right. While Pope Leo refused to be bound by the canon, it must be remembered that he did so only on the ground that it interfered with the rights secured to the Sees of Antioch and Alexandria by the canons of the Council of Nicaea, and that he did not complain of any injury done to his own claims. Pope Leo strongly maintained the orthodoxy of the Council of Chalcedon.

One would think that a Church that makes so high a claim to universal supremacy as the Church of Rome would be able to vindicate it by her theological learning and guidance, by which the whole Church had benefitted; but what is the fact? The Bishops of Rome as a class, have never been distinguished for their theological learning; no great School of Divinity ever flourished there; and the city long ago earned a name for itself as a centre of demoralization, ignorance, and superstitions. It is only in these latter days, and under civil in place of ecclesiastical jurisdiction, that Rome has improved.

Mr. R. H. Hutton, a liberal Anglican layman, in his Theological Essays, points how for nigh one thousand five hundred years Rome has exhibited a striking example of the permanency of type—of a bad moral type—disregardful of truth and unscrupulous in its efforts after universal supremacy. The following is a striking evidence to the corruption of Roman ecclesiasticism from the writings of another great liberal thinker, the late Dean Stanley:—

"No one would say that the occupants of the Papal Chair have been the chief intellectual or moral oracles of mankind: with the exception of Leo the Great and Gregory the Great in early times, and of Benedict XIV. in later times, there is hardly a single Pontiff who ranks with the luminaries whose writings have enlightened the Church. But it is unnecessary to refute a claim which is not maintained except with so many reservations as to deprive it of any meaning. It is enough to state the well-known fact that whilst some brilliant examples of courage, generosity, and tolerance have been placed before the world on the pontifical throne, these have been counterbalanced by an average of mediocrity, and by excesses of wickedness not surpassed in any European monarchy. It is enough to ask whether, whilst there have been many bulls giving the pontifical sanction to the pernicious doctrine of the unlawfulness of usury, and the belief in witchcraft, there have been any repudiating those doctrines?"—*Essays on Church and State*, p. 384.

Now let us take an Ultramontane authority Cardinal Baronius, in his Annals, writes of the Roman Church in the tenth century:—

"What was then the semblance of the Holy Roman Church? As foul as it could be: when harlots, superior in power as in profligacy, governed at Rome, at whose will sees were transferred, Bishops were appointed, and, what is horrible and awful to say, their paramours were intruded into the See of Peter; false pontiffs who are set down in the catalogue of Roman Pontiffs merely for chronological purposes; for who can say that persons thus basely introduced by such courtizans were legitimate Roman pontiffs? No mention can be found of election or subsequent consent on the part of the clergy; all the Canons were buried in oblivion, the decrees of the Popes stifled, the ancient traditions put under the ban, and the old customs, sacred rites, and former usages in the election of the Chief Pontiff were quite abolished. Mad lust, relying on worldly power, thus claimed all as its own, goaded on by the sting of ambition. Christ was then in a deep sleep in the ship, when this ship itself was covered by the waves and these great tempests

were blowing. . . . And what seemed worse, there were no disciples to wake Him with their cries as He slept, for all were snoring. You can imagine as you please what sort of presbyters and deacons were chosen as cardinals by these monsters."—*Baron, "Ann."* 912, viii.

Finally, here is the testimony of an Irish Roman Catholic as to the moral failure of the Church of Rome in Ireland:—

"The system is one, though multiform in character; and so regarded it is a repudiation of the Decalogue, an outrage on the fundamental principles of morality, and a negation of the dogmas of Christianity. . . . One of the most eminent Catholic divines in Europe, contemplating the spectacle which Ireland presented lately, is reported—and I believe correctly—to have said that the Catholic Church had failed as a moral teacher in Ireland."—*The Priest in Politics*, by the late P. J. Smyth, M.P.

## THE CHURCH IN THE U.S.

The history of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States may be said to date from the preliminary convention held in New York, October 6th, 1784, consisting of fifteen clergymen and eleven laymen. Previous to that time there was no organization separate from the Church of England. In the limited space we have we can only give a chronological outline of the leading events of the formation and growth of the Church to its present position. The main facts embodied are derived from Bishop Perry's history of the American Episcopal Church. The first service of the English Church in America of which we have any record was held by Master Wolfall, Chaplain of Frobisher's fleet, on the shores of Hudson Bay, in 1578. The next year the adventurous mariner, Francis Drake, sailing up the Pacific coast, landed for repairs, and gathering his crew, in the presence of the assembled natives, held a service of prayer and thanksgiving. This service probably at, or near San Francisco, the first within the territory of the United States, was conducted by Rev. Francis Fletcher, Sunday, June 21st, 1579. Services were also held on the coast of North Carolina as early as 1584 by the expedition under Sir Walter Raleigh. In the year 1607 an attempt was made to establish an English colony at the mouth of the Kennebec. Two ships landed there, under the command of Captain Gilbert and Captain Popham, and as the record says, 'Sunday, the 9th of August, in the morning the most part of our whole company of both our ships landed on this island, the which we call the St. George's Island, where the cross standeth, and there we heard a sermon delivered unto us by our preacher, giving God thanks for our happy meeting and safe arrival into the country, and so returned aboard again.' The officiating minister was the Rev. Richard Seymour, and this was the first service of the Church in New England. While in none of the places mentioned was either the colony or the Church perpetuated. Virginia holds the honor of planting the Church on these shores and making a beginning that has a continuous history. This was the establishment of the colony at Jamestown. The following quaint description by a chronicler of the time gives an interesting picture of the primitive church:— 'When I first went to Virginia, I well remember. We did hang an awning (which is an old sail) to three or four trees to shadow us from the Sunne, our walls were railes of wood, our seats unhewed trees; till we cut planks: our pulpit a bar of wood nailed to two neighboring trees; in foule weather we shifted into an old rotten tent, for wee had few better, and this came by the way of adventure for new. This was our church till we bault a homely thing like a barn, set upon cratchets, covered with rafts, sedge and earth; so was also the walls;

\*The first Session of the Council of Trent decreed that the symbol of faith of the Holy Roman Church was the firm and only Foundation, against which the gates of hell should not prevail.