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# Historical Papers.

EDITED BY THE REV. SYDNEY F. SMITH, S.J.

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No. XXIV.

## THE LANDING OF ST. AUGUSTINE.

BY THE REV. SYDNEY F. SMITH, S.J.



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## The Landing of St. Augustine.

BY THE REV. SYDNEY F. SMITH, S.J.

THE thirteen hundredth anniversary of the landing of St. Augustine falls in the present year (1897), and preparations for celebrating it with due honour are in the course of making. It is fitting, therefore, that the Historical Series should contribute its quota towards interesting the Catholics of England in so impressive an occasion.

The work of St. Augustine, it must always be remembered, was not the introduction of Christianity into the country now called England, but its introduction among the English people. There was a previous British race of inhabitants of the land, the predecessors of the present Welsh, Cornish, and Breton populations. It was they whom the Romans conquered, and to them the Christian religion had been announced long before. What the first origins of British Christianity were cannot now be ascertained with certainty, although there is abundance of evidence to show that they had been reclaimed from heathenism several centuries before the coming of St. Augustine. But about the middle of the fifth century the Anglian tribes, which had for long previously been a constant terror, commenced their more systematic invasions, and from that time onwards for more than a hundred years the land was delivered over to the horrors of a most barbarous war, which ended apparently only by practically

clearing the country of its British occupants, vast numbers of them being cruelly massacred, and the remainder betaking themselves westwards to the territories of their present occupation.

Gildas, a writer of the next century, has left us an account of these terrible times, distinct, not indeed in any record of definite facts, but in its portrayal of the general character of what was then happening. Canon Bright has condensed this almost contemporary description in a graphic summary, from which we may avail ourselves of a small portion.

The blow was struck, at intervals through a century, by invaders as ferocious as they were energetic, of whom a contemporary Gallic Bishop says that the Saxon pirates were "the most truculent of all enemies," and that they made it a point of religion "to torture their captives rather than to put them to ransom," and to sacrifice the tenth part of them to their gods. The idolatry which had its centre in the worship of Woden and of Thunor was sure to render its votaries doubly terrible to a Christian population. Hence it is that we have to read of devastations which Gildas cannot relate without being reminded of the Psalms of the captivity. In his declamatory verbiage we see, clearly enough, a grim picture of flashing swords and crackling flames, of ruined walls, fallen towers, altars shattered, priests and Bishops and people slain "in the midst of the streets," and corpses clotted with blood and left without burial; of the "miserable remnant" slaughtered in the mountains, or selling themselves as slaves to the invader, or flying beyond the sea, or finding a precarious shelter in the forests.<sup>1</sup>

In this way the land became once more a pagan land, for its former altars were all either thrown down or converted into pagan temples, and its new

<sup>1</sup> *Early English Church History*, pp. 22, 23.

occupants were not only pagans, but the bitterest enemies of the Christian name. That such a people, almost before the blood of their British foes had dried upon their swords, should bow the neck in willing obedience beneath the Christian yoke, and that, before another half-century was over, their country should become a home of faith and a nursery of sanctity, exciting the admiration of the entire Christian world, was nothing less than a miracle of grace, and we may well ask how it was wrought.

Three men stand out among the rest as the chosen instruments which God employed in laying the foundations of English faith—Gregory, Augustine, Ethelbert; but of these three St. Gregory is the one whose personality, in the records left behind, is by far the most distinct. Indeed, of all the Popes there is perhaps no single one who has portrayed himself so much to the life as he has done in his multitudinous letters. These letters reveal him to us as a man of vast energy and enterprise, a born ruler, whose eye was attentive to every quarter of his world-wide jurisdiction, and who knew well how to watch over its varied spiritual interests. But they reveal him to us also—and this is what was so distinctive in him—as a man of the largest and tenderest heart. His was just the kind of heart which the spectacle of the British boys in the Roman slave-market, viewed doubtless with unconcern by the many, could not fail to stir deeply, leaving on it an abiding impression. The story has been often told, but this account would be incomplete without it. Let it be told therefore in the words of its earliest relator, Venerable Bede.



It is said that, on a certain day, when, in consequence of the recent arrival of some merchants, a great store of things were offered for sale in the forum, and large numbers had gathered there to buy, Gregory himself came amongst the rest, and perceived amongst the goods for sale some boys, noticeable by their white skins, fair countenances, and the beauty of their (flaxen) hair. Gazing on them he asked, so it is said, from what land or region they had been brought, and he was told that they were from the island of Britain, where the inhabitants were all of this type. Again he asked if these islanders were Christians, or still infected with the errors of paganism. It was answered that they were pagans. Then, drawing a long sigh, he exclaimed: "Alas! that the author of darkness should possess men with such bright faces, and that such grace of front should bear within minds destitute of internal grace." Again he asked for the name of this people, and was told that they were called Anglians. "It is well," he rejoined, "for they have the face of angels, and it behoves such as they to be the co-heirs of angels in Heaven. What is the name of the province from which they come?" "The people of their province," was the answer, "are called Deirians." "That too is well," he said—"Deirians, snatched from the ire of God (*de ira Dei*) and called to the mercy of Christ. And how is the King of that province named?" He was told that he was named Ella, and, playing upon the word, he exclaimed, "Alleluia (*Ella-luia*), for the praise of God our Creator must be sung in those parts."

This event may possibly have happened before 578, when Gregory was sent to Constantinople as *Apocrisiarius*, or Papal representative at the Imperial Court, but most probably it happened after his return, and therefore between 583 and 588, this latter being the recorded date of the death of Ella of Deira. Gregory was at the time Abbot of the Monastery of St. Andrew, on the Coelian Hill, a monastery which he had formed out of his own family palace, for he was of senatorial rank. His first impulse,

after seeing the English boys in the market-place, was to petition the reigning Pope (who, if the incident was after 583, must have been Pelagius II.), that he might himself be sent to the distant island. Pelagius acceded to his pressing desire, and he took his departure at once, but with the utmost secrecy, fearing lest that should happen which did, in spite of his precautions, thwart his purpose for the time. The Romans were indignant at the loss of one in whom so many hopes were reposed, and they constrained the Pope to have the fugitive brought back.

Shortly afterwards (in 590) Gregory himself succeeded to the Pontificate, and we may be sure that even from the first he was mindful of his cherished purpose. Yet it was not till about 595 that he found himself able to select a little band of Benedictine monks, whom he took from his own Monastery of St. Andrew, and despatched on the mission which he would have gladly undertaken himself. A sufficient explanation of this delay might be sought in the disturbed state of civil and ecclesiastical affairs nearer home, but Gregory may also have been waiting for an opportune moment, which, until 595, did not offer itself. Ethelfrid, the "Devastator," as Nennius calls him, the fierce invader who, some twelve years later, defeated and massacred the Britons at Bangor Iscoed, was then reigning in the northern district, from which the Anglian boys had been taken. Whilst he lived, the hopes of a successful apostolate in those parts might well have seemed poor, but in the Jute kingdom of Cantia, or Kent, a spontaneous desire to learn something of the religion of Jesus Christ had been felt, and apparently an

application had been made to the neighbouring priests either of Gaul or of the Britons, and the knowledge of it reached the ears of Gregory. It is possible he may have learnt it from St. Gregory of Tours, who, if we can trust his non-contemporary biographer, visited his Roman namesake about this time. This Saint was well acquainted with Queen Bertha's mother, and may have been the instructor of her own youth. But in any case Pope Gregory did learn the good news, for he tells us so himself in his letter to the Frankish Queen Brunehild, and likewise, in almost the same terms, in his letters to the boy Kings of Burgundy and Austrasia. To Queen Brunehild he writes: "We make known to you the news which has reached Us, that the English race, by the permission of God, desires to become Christian, but that the priests who are their neighbours show no solicitude for them." It is not difficult to infer what had happened. Ethelbert had married a Frankish Princess, Queen Bertha, who, herself a Christian, had taken with her as chaplain a Bishop named Luidhard, and probably also some Christian attendants. The request for aid doubtless proceeded from these two, supported by some, few or more, whom they had succeeded in winning over to a desire to know more of a religion which so edified them in its adherents. To the pre-existence of this desire to hear we may ascribe much of the ease with which the missionaries gained their entrance into the country.

The man whom Gregory chose to be the leader of his missionary band was the Prior of his Monastery of St. Andrew's. Augustine's personality is not, as



has been acknowledged, very distinctly portrayed to us in the records which have been preserved to us, and the same must be said of St. Ethelbert. But this is very different from saying that there was no strong personality in them. No one indeed has supposed otherwise of St. Ethelbert, who could hardly have attained to the overlordship of the island unless he had possessed a considerable force of character. The same argument is obviously applicable to St. Augustine, whom, however, in their reluctance to recognize anything good in an "Italian emissary," Anglican writers are never tired of running down. Thus the late Mr. Haddan, in a passage the unfairness of which is a serious blot on his otherwise high reputation as an historian, permits himself to write thus :<sup>1</sup>

If any man ever had greatness thrust upon him, with which, Malvolio-like, he did not know how to deal, that man was Augustine of Canterbury. The Pope and his missionary remind us of nothing more forcibly than of some Arnold or Moberly trying by mingled rebukes, advice, and warning, to get a timid and awkward boy to act his part properly in the semi-independent sphere of prefect or monitor. "Scarcely able to tear himself from the side of the truly great man on whom he leaned—shrinking back from exaggerated difficulties the moment he found himself alone—delaying on the threshold of his enterprise an unreasonable time, yet strangely ignorant, at the end of this delay, of the true position of the Celtic Churches,<sup>2</sup> already in the land to which he was sent, and still needing interpreters to enable him to preach to his future flock—asking with solemnity the simplest of questions, such as a novice might have settled without troubling the Pope, a thousand miles off, about the matter<sup>3</sup>—catching too readily at

<sup>1</sup> *Remains*, p. 42.

<sup>2</sup> It is rather Mr. Haddan who was ignorant of it.

<sup>3</sup> What St. Augustine sought was not so much information, as authority to act.

immediate and worldly aids to success<sup>1</sup>—ignoring altogether the pioneers whom he found at work before him<sup>2</sup>—and sensitively proud and unconciliatory towards supposed rivals<sup>3</sup>—Augustine has one claim to our respect, that of a blameless and self-denying Christian life.”

Mr. Haddan continues in the same unwarrantable strain, for which Canon Bright does well to condemn him. He forgets that had St. Augustine been such as he imagines, he could never have achieved so striking a success or have acquired the reputation which he bore among his contemporaries, who handed it down to future ages.

St. Augustine and his companions started on their journey somewhere about the opening of 596, and soon got as far as Provence. Here, however, they heard a description of the character of those to whom they were sent which filled them with consternation. “Smitten with a sluggish fear [says Bede], they bethought themselves of returning home instead of approaching a barbarous, cruel, and unbelieving race, whose language even they did not know.” They were not slow in determining to beg for a release from their charge, and sent back Augustine, their leader, to seek it of the Pope. But Gregory was not prepared thus at the very outset to forego the execution of his purpose, and he knew how to communicate his own burning zeal to his disciple. Augustine returned to Provence with a revived courage, which

<sup>1</sup> It was only common sense to avail himself of Ethelbert's influence with his subjects, and Bede tells us that the missionaries had exhorted the King to be careful not to force them into embracing Christianity.

<sup>2</sup> Bishop Luidhard, to whom this criticism refers, may have been dead for aught we know.

<sup>3</sup> That is, the British Bishops, but here also Mr. Haddan is drawing from his imagination, not from the facts.

he was able in his turn to communicate to his companions. In this he was powerfully aided by the letter which he bore with him :

It were better (wrote St. Gregory) not to enter upon good deeds than to turn back from them when begun. Let not then the fatigue of the journey, nor the tongues of evil-speaking men affright you ; but with all earnestness and fervour continue, under the Divine directions, what you have begun, knowing that if the labour is great the glory of the eternal reward will be greater still. . . . May the Almighty God protect you by His grace, and permit me to see the fruit of your labours in our everlasting country ; so that, as I cannot toil with you, I may at least share with you the joy of the reward, for I do indeed wish that I could share the toil. God keep you safe, most dear sons.

We have seen how an arm-chair critic can make light of the dangers which struck a momentary terror into the hearts of the missionaries. If, however, we bear in mind what Gildas has told us of the ferocity of the Saxon tribes, and the way in which they had raged against the British priests and their altars ; if we reflect also how exactly it resembled that of the various barbarian races which had overrun and devastated the southern regions through which the missionaries were then passing, we can realize how fearful must have seemed the prospect before them, and how calculated to make even stout hearts quail. We ought also never to forget that what has enabled the Christian heroes of all time to surmount obstacles terrible to flesh and blood, is not mere natural courage, but the strength from on high which is often best "perfected in weakness." It was in this strength that the apostles of England picked up their courage once more and resumed their journey.

It was in the summer of 596 that they made their second start, for the letter from St. Gregory just quoted is dated July 23, 596. It was necessary, however, to winter in Gaul, where they had letters to deliver to the princes and prelates whose aid would be of value, and thus their arrival in England was not till the spring of 597. Bede's account of the landing places it in the Isle of Thanet: "On the east coast of Kent there is an island called Thanet, of considerable size, containing, according to the customary computation of the English, six hundred families; it is separated from the mainland by the Wantsum, a river some third of a mile broad, which is fordable only in two places, for it has two outlets into the sea. At this spot landed the servant of the Lord, Augustine." It is well to have a distinct idea of the place, where, according to a very probable theory, the landing took place. The River Stour, rising near Ashford, and flowing through Canterbury, eventually passes under Richborough Castle and by the outskirts of Sandwich, in the neighbourhood of which town it discharges its waters into Pegwell Bay. In old times it had also an outlet dividing off a few miles to the west of Minster, and running northwards into the sea just to the east of Reculvers. This second outlet, which together with the first makes Thanet into an island, is now represented only by a small brook, but in former days the two outlets broadened into a wide channel called the Wantsum. Richborough and Reculvers were the two Roman fortresses guarding its southern and northern entrances. On the Thanet side of the channel, a little to the east of Minster, is a farm on somewhat higher ground than the sur-

rounding marsh, which is still called Ebbs Fleet Farm. In the days of St. Augustine it must have been the end of a low promontory, forming on its western side a small cove. It is here that, according to the most accepted theory, Augustine and his party landed.<sup>1</sup>

Having landed, the missionaries at once sent messengers to King Ethelbert, to announce that they "had come from Rome, and had brought good news, which offered to all who would listen an assurance of eternal joys in Heaven and a kingdom without end in fellowship with God, the Living and the True." The answer was that for the time being "they should remain where they were in the island, and that all their needs should be supplied until he could resolve what he should do with them." This further resolution was not long delayed. "After some days [says Bede] the King came over to the island, and taking his seat in the open air, bade Augustine and his companions to come there to meet him." He chose the open air, in the superstitious belief that, if the visitors were intending to practise upon him by magic arts, their intentions might by this means be frustrated. Presently they came, as Bede beautifully puts it, "trusting not in the power of evil spirits, but in the power of God, carrying a silver cross as their standard, and a picture of our Lord and Saviour painted on a wooden tablet, whilst they sang

<sup>1</sup> Thorne, however, a Canterbury chronicler of the fourteenth century, tells us the landing was at Richborough itself, which he speaks of as "in Thanet;" telling us that the spot was yearly visited by pilgrims on St. Augustine's feast. To this, as the Canterbury tradition, some weight must attach, though it is not so easy to see how Richborough could have been in Thanet.



processional litanies, supplicating God for the salvation both of themselves and of those for whom and to whom they had come." Bede does not mention it, but a later writer, on the faith of an account professing to come from an old man whose grandfather had been baptized by the Saint, tells us that he was a man of tall stature, towering head and shoulders over the people. The same account also speaks of the impression made by his mild and reverend countenance. We can understand, then, how lively an impression was made upon Ethelbert and his attendants by the solemn and heart-elevating spectacle. Ethelbert was a prudent man, however, and wished to yield only to the conviction which is born of careful consideration. "Your words are fair," he said, "and so too are the promises you announce; but they are new and uncertain, and I cannot therefore assent to them to the abandonment of the beliefs which I and all the English have held for so long." He added that he well understood the kind intentions which had brought them from so far, and that he would see therefore to their hospitable entertainment, and would be glad to let them receive into their Church all whom they could convert.

The scene of this interesting meeting, perhaps the most interesting that has ever taken place on English soil, cannot be identified with absolute certainty. If the landing was at Richborough, the meeting must have been there too. If it was, as we have supposed, at Ebbs Fleet, there is high probability to recommend the spot where the late Lord Granville recently erected a memorial cross. This is in a field

not half a mile north-east of Ebbs Fleet Farm, and just in front of the Cliff End Farm. By one walking from Minster to Ramsgate by the lower road, it will be found on his right hand, just after he has passed under the railway-arch, and it is quite close to the line, so as to be easily visible from the train. In the days of St. Augustine it must have been just at the water's edge, and therefore quite where we should expect such an interview to have taken place. The field seems formerly to have been named Cotmanfeld ("Field of the Man of God"), a name which in part survives in that of the neighbouring farm, which is called Cottington.

Quickly after the meeting at Ebbs Fleet the missionaries responded to the royal invitation, and took their departure for Canterbury. They must have gone along the old Roman road, which started from near Richborough, and have thus approached the royal city from the hill on which still stands St. Martin's Church. There were as yet none of the later glories of the city for their eyes to admire, but they saw it before them as the city which the Divine will had confided to their zeal, and, lifting up the emblem of salvation once more, they entered it with a chanted prayer, to the efficacy of which its later glories may surely in large measure be attributed: "We beseech Thee, O Lord, in Thy mercy to take away Thy wrath and Thine indignation from this city and from Thy holy house, for we have sinned. Alleluia."

The little Church of St. Martin just mentioned is a still more interesting topographical link between us and our first Apostle than the place of his confer-

ence on the sea-shore. How far the present structure can be referred to the Roman period, and so be identified with the building which St. Augustine found standing, is a point which has been much disputed. But there can be no doubt, especially after the quite recent discovery of a Roman arch and window in the west wall, that some portions go back as far. With what feelings then must we ever regard the venerable little church when we read in the pages of Bede a passage like the following :

Near the city (of Canterbury), on its eastern side, was a church dedicated to St. Martin, which had been built long before, whilst the Romans still occupied Britain, and in which the Queen, who, as we have said, was a Christian, was accustomed to pray. It was in this church that they too (Augustine and his companions) began in the first instance to meet together, to sing, to pray, to say Masses, to preach, and to baptize ; until, after the conversion of the King, a fuller liberty was allowed them to preach everywhere, and build or restore churches.

The happy event alluded to in this last clause followed soon upon the arrival of the missionaries, for Bede himself assigns it to the same year,<sup>1</sup> and the Canterbury tradition says he was baptized on Whit Sunday (June 1st).

The scope of this paper is confined to the landing of St. Augustine ; nor is it necessary to repeat the well-known story of the rapid spread of the true faith throughout the Kentish kingdom. The foundations though speedily were solidly laid, and so when, in the next reign, the temporary apostacy of the Sovereign caused the falling off of many of his subjects, the recovery was very rapid, and also proved lasting. To

<sup>1</sup> ii. 5.

sum up, then, the extent and significance of St. Augustine's work during the short period of his eight years' episcopate. His personal successes were confined to Kent, where he founded two sees, those of Canterbury and Rochester ; but he made efforts to extend the faith to other parts of the country, and these efforts, if not at the time successful, ought at all events to be regarded as seeds of which the fruit was gathered in later years. He had made efforts which, had they not been met with an unreasoning and disedifying perversity, would have secured him the co-operation of the British clergy, and the directions given him by Pope Gregory as to the character of the destined Hierarchy show what plans he must have been forming for the conversion of the other English tribes, particularly those of the north. He was thus the man who gave the first impulse towards the Christianizing, not of Kent only, but of the entire island, an impulse which we may be sure exercised its influence over the subsequent sending of Paulinus to York, and thereby over the summoning of Aidan and his companions to take up the work from which Paulinus had been driven off. To the self-same impulse we must likewise allow a causality in stirring up Felix and Birinus to undertake the evangelization of East Anglia and Wessex. It is on this ground that St. Augustine is entitled to be regarded as the Apostle of England, as Canon Bright has clearly shown.

If the title (of Apostle) belongs to the man who first brings home to any part of a given people the knowledge of Christ and the ordinances of His religion, then it is enough to remark that Augustine came into Kent when all the "Saxon" kingdoms were still heathen. He came to confront

risks which Aidan, for instance, had never to reckon with on appearing in Northumbria at the express invitation of St. Oswald. . . . His long precedency in the mission-field is a simple matter of chronology : it means that he threw open the pathway, that he set the example, and that a generation had passed away before "Scotic" zeal had followed in his steps.<sup>1</sup>

This obviously sound reasoning is nevertheless displeasing to many of Canon Bright's co-religionists. If Augustine was the Apostle of England, with what face, they anxiously ask themselves, can we claim the inheritance of his succession without acknowledging ourselves to be an Italian Mission? Accordingly, there has been a division of opinion among Anglican divines, some taking the rational view of Canon Bright, others repeating the watchword of Bishop Lightfoot : "Augustine was the Apostle of Kent, but Aidan was the Apostle of England." It will be interesting to see how this division of opinion will be affected by the pilgrimages of the coming season, for on the memorial cross those who visit it will find inscribed :

Augustine at length brought to Ebbs Fleet in the Isle of Thanet, after so many labours on land and at sea, at a conference with King Ethelbert on this spot, delivered his first discourse to our people, and auspiciously *founded the Christian faith*, which with wonderful rapidity was diffused throughout the whole of England.

It is the traditional judgment which these words express, and indeed they almost seem to have been suggested by the words of the Council of Clovesho, in 747 :

*Waymarks in Church History*, p. 309.



That the birthday of the Blessed Pope Gregory, as also the day of death falling on May 26, of St. Augustine, Archbishop and Confessor, who, sent by the aforesaid Pope, our Father St. Gregory, *brought to the English race* the knowledge of faith, the Sacrament of Baptism, and the knowledge of the heavenly country, be honoured and venerated by all as is becoming.

What is there in either of these two utterances to consist with the contention which would set up Aidan as a rival to Augustine, and confer upon him a title which he would have been the first to disown and which is offered him only under the stress of controversial necessities?

“But with what commission did Augustine come?” It is the Bishop of Stepney<sup>1</sup> who puts the question, and, in view of the pretensions of the Anglican Archbishops of Canterbury, a few words on the subject will be of service.

The Bishop of Stepney enlarges the question, and in so doing indicates the nature of his own answer.

Did he come in the interests of Rome to enlarge the area of the claims of the Papacy? Did he come to demand allegiance, homage to St. Peter, to an infallibly-inspired successor of St. Peter, to the Vicar of Christ on earth, to whom all appeals must come, from whose unerring decision no appeal lay on earth or in heaven? From first to last, in all Gregory's letters, no word of the kind. . . . His business was to create an English Church, not to build up an outwork of Rome.

The phrases which the Bishop thus piles up one upon another are of his own choice, and are none of ours. Let us venture to substitute some others which less misleadingly enunciate the doctrine of the

<sup>1</sup> Op. cit., p. 37.

Catholic Church. "Did he come (let us ask) to found a Church which should be independent of the See of Peter or one which should look up to it as the necessary centre of unity and the necessary source of all lawful ecclesiastical authority?" If the question is thus put, let us see if it be true that, "from first to last, in all Gregory's letters (there is) no word of the kind."

Of one of these letters the Bishop of Stepney himself allows that "it was clearly intended to be the Charter of the English Church."<sup>1</sup> It is the letter, written in 601, which accompanied the gift of the pallium, and is marked by a tone of authority throughout.

Since the new Church of the English has been brought to the grace of Almighty God, through the favour of the same Lord and your labours, we grant you the use of the pallium, to be used in it [the English Church] exclusively at the solemn celebration of the Mass; in order that you may ordain for as many places twelve Bishops, who shall be subject to your rule, but so that the Bishop of the city of London may in future be consecrated by his own Synod and receive the pallium of office (*honoris*) from this Holy and Apostolic See, to which, by God's ordinance, I minister. And we wish you to send a Bishop to the city of York, having ordained one who may seem to you suitable for the purpose; but so that if the same city, with the neighbouring districts, shall receive the Word of God, he also may ordain twelve Bishops and enjoy the dignity of metropolitan; for, if spared, we propose, with the Divine permission, to give him also the pallium, wishing nevertheless that he be subject to the orders of your Paternity. But, after your death, let him govern the Bishops whom he has ordained, and not be subject in any way to the Bishop of London. . . . But let your fraternity have, subject to itself, by the

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 84.

ordinance of our Lord Jesus Christ, not only the Bishops which it has ordained, nor only those ordained by the Bishop of York, but also the priests of Britain.<sup>1</sup>

And in the previous letter,<sup>2</sup> in which he answers certain questions put to him by Augustine, he makes, in reference to the last point, a distinction between the Bishops of Gaul, and the British Bishops in the west of England. "Over the Bishops of the Gauls we give you no authority, because the Bishops of Arles have received the pallium from my predecessors in ancient times, and it is not right that we should deprive them of their authority;" but "as for all the Bishops of the Britons, we confide them to your fraternity that the unlearned may be taught, the weak strengthened by persuasion, and the perverse corrected by authority."

Could anything be clearer than that the man who wrote thus, regarded every Bishop in Britain, and in Gaul also, as his own subjects? His letter reminds us of the *Universalis Ecclesiæ*, by which Pius IX. reconstituted the English Hierarchy in 1850. He marks out dioceses as he thinks best, determines the order of subordination which shall prevail among the prelates to be set over them, and imparts to each the authority which such an order will require. He directs that the other Archbishops shall be under Augustine during the latter's lifetime, but independent of his successors and of one another after his death. He subjects to his authority other Bishops not sent by himself but found already existing in the country, and declines to place in the same subjection the Bishops of Gaul, not on the ground that to do

<sup>1</sup> Bede, i. xxix.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* xxvii.

so would exceed his power, but only on the ground that it would be unjust to withdraw authority from one to whom it had been communicated by his predecessors, and who had not misused it. He sends one pallium and promises others, and expressly states that in sending it he is imparting authority to consecrate suffragans. Nor does he hesitate to describe the injunctions he is giving as, "the ordinances of our Lord Jesus Christ," clearly in the consciousness that he is using authority which our Lord had bestowed and had sanctioned with the assurance that whosoever hears the successors of His chief Apostle hears Him.

Only trifling, in short, can seek to extract out of language such as this, any meaning short of a distinct assertion of Papal claims in the full sense in which Catholics now understand them, and it is trifling to argue, as some have done, that Gregory intended the English Church to be independent of the authority of his own See, from the mere fact that he gave directions for the consecration of future English prelates by prelates in their own land. It may be suitable that an Archbishop should receive his consecration from his highest ecclesiastical superior, but obviously there are practical inconveniences in such a course when the archiepiscopal sees are far removed from the city of Rome. Nor is consecration by the Pope himself in any sense necessary, for it is not consecration which assigns to a prelate either his degree of authority over those placed under him, or his degree of subjection under those placed over him. Jurisdiction is imparted by an expression of will on the part of the superior, and is independent of con-

secration, though the two are intended to combine in the same person ; and that this was Gregory's own doctrine is sufficiently clear, from his placing the British Bishops, by such an expression of will, under the authority of St. Augustine, although he had not consecrated or sent into the country a single one of them.

If the letters of Gregory to Augustine are sufficient of themselves to prove that he conceived of his authority over the English Church precisely as Leo XIII. does now, it may be thought unnecessary to appeal to his other letters. Why, however, is it that our Anglican writers, like the Bishop of Stepney, in the little book already several times mentioned, appear to know nothing of the many similar and confirmatory passages in Gregory's other letters, but know only of the one passage in which he reprov'd John the Faster, even then in a tone of authority, for calling himself a Universal Bishop? The meaning which Gregory attached to this designation and for which he condemned it, is one which is perfectly ascertainable and has no bearing on the question of Papal authority. The Bishop of Stepney is himself, by the title which he uses, an illustration of the incongruity which Gregory thought so improper. For a man to call himself Bishop of Stepney is to imply that there can be no other lawful Bishop of Stepney, and is therefore by implication to claim that Stepney lies outside the sphere of episcopal jurisdiction of the Bishop of London. It is something very different from taking such a title as Archbishop of Canterbury, with the understanding that it involves authority of a higher order over other sees such as London. So Gregory's objection was that John, by



calling himself Universal Bishop, was implying that the entire world was his diocese, and that there was no part of the world left for another Bishop to govern. In no sense did he blame him for pretending to exercise superior authority over other Bishops.

Had Gregory meant otherwise, he would have been contradicting in the most egregious way both the tenour of his own active and authoritative interposition in the ecclesiastical difficulties of every part of the world, and the many distinct expressions in which he asserts the world-wide character of the government confided to him. As regards the former, let any one in doubt read carefully through his many interesting letters, and ask if the various administrative measures which they either take or imply, do not amount to that very exercise of Papal authority in which the Popes engage now. As regards the latter, what other construction can we put on such a passage as this, in which he says of the Bishop of Bizacium: "As for his saying that he is subject to the Apostolic See, whenever any fault is found in Bishops, I do not know what Bishop is not subject to it;"<sup>1</sup> or this, in which he repeats the same with special reference to the see of Constantinople: "As for what they say of the Church of Constantinople, who is there that doubts but that it is subject to the Apostolic See, as indeed the most pious Emperor and our brother, the Bishop of that see, assiduously profess;"<sup>2</sup> or this, in which he gives practical effect to the claim by entertaining the appeal of an Oriental priest, John by name, who had been condemned by the judges appointed to try him at

<sup>1</sup> Ep. ix. n. 59.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* n. 12.

Constantinople in a case of heresy, and reversing the decision of that see: "Wherefore, reprobating the decision of the aforesaid judges, we, by our definitive sentence, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ enlightening us, have declared him (John) to be Catholic and acquitted of all charges of heresy;"<sup>1</sup> or this, in which, referring back to the last-mentioned incident, he writes to the Bishop of Ravenna, who claimed an exemption barring appeals from his judgment to that of Rome: "Do you not know that the cause which arose between John the Presbyter and John of Constantinople, our brother and fellow-Bishop, was brought, in accordance with the Canons, to the Apostolic See and was decided by our sentence. If then a cause coming even from the city where the Sovereign resides is brought under our cognizance, how much more must the matter which has arisen among you be decided here by a discovery of the truth;"<sup>2</sup> or this, in which he declares that a Synod held at Constantinople, "without the knowledge and consent of the Apostolic See, is null and void in whatsoever it may enact," and therefore bids his representative at the Court, should any one attempt to hold such a Synod, "relying on the Apostolic authority, to turn the robber and ravening wolf out."<sup>3</sup> Similar citations might be multiplied almost indefinitely from the Letters of St. Gregory, and surely they should suffice to disillusion any candid reader who has been led to think that the beliefs on which the first English hierarchy were established, are in any way different from those on which our present Catholic Hierarchy rests.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* iv. 15.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* vi. 24.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* ix. 68.

The faith, then, which St. Augustine brought was the same faith which is ours now. He is our Apostle, therefore, and we must feel deeply grateful that his work should have proved so splendid and enduring. Of the splendour of our pre-Reformation Church, of the purity of its faith, and of its strong attachment to the See of Peter, there can be no real controversy, and as we measure the thirteen centuries which have rolled by since Augustine landed on our shores, we are struck by the comparative length of the Catholic period when set side by side with the Protestant period which succeeded it. Nine hundred and fifty years of unbroken unity, held together by the links forged by Gregory and Augustine between England and the Apostolic See, against three hundred and fifty years of wide-spread and progressive division growing out of the schism initiated by Henry and Elizabeth—for it was reserved for this country, in the day when it departed from the unity into which Gregory had led it, to present to the world the saddest of all illustrations of the sad truth in which, nevertheless, Gregory could find a crumb of consolation: “It is a signal grace of Almighty God, that there is no unity amongst those who are separated from the doctrine of Holy Church, no kingdom divided against itself being able to stand.”<sup>1</sup> And Gregory is right. It is indeed a consolation that division should dog the footsteps of schism, nor is there anything so much as these present hopeless divisions which attracts English minds towards that principle of Catholic unity which Augustine brought with him from Gregory thirteen hundred years ago.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* viii. 2.

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