

HISTORY OF THE CHURCH  
AND STATE IN NORWAY.

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# HISTORY OF THE CHURCH AND STATE IN NORWAY

FROM THE TENTH TO THE  
SIXTEENTH CENTURY

BY THOMAS B. WILLSON, M.A.

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## PREFACE.

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ENGLISH readers are more or less familiar with the most striking events in the history of Norway in the heroic days, but so far as I have been able to discover, no English writer has endeavoured to trace the history of the Church in Norway, from its foundation in the time of Olaf Trygvessøn, down to the period of the Reformation. If I am correct in this, the omission seems a strange one, as the Church in Norway was the only daughter of that of England to be found in Europe. Her missionaries, it is true, laboured in many parts of the Continent, but I think that in no country, except Norway, could it be said, that they helped to found and nurture a national Church, where none before existed.

Under these circumstances, I have for a long time wished to supply English readers with a history of this Church; and a close acquaintance with Norway, extending over thirty years, makes it, I hope, not altogether presumptuous to attempt the task. With this object in view, I obtained, some ten years ago (through my friend, the late Pastor Andreas Hansen), the kind permission of Dr. A. Chr. Bang, now Bishop of Christiania, to translate his valuable *Udsigt over den Norske Kirkes Historie under Katholicismen*. Further consideration, however, showed me that this work presupposed an acquaintance with the history of the Norwegian Church, such as few English readers possessed, and which was necessary in order fully to appreciate this valuable survey. I felt, therefore, that a history of the Church on broad lines, and avoiding mere technical details,

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might prove of interest, and so the present work was undertaken.

Further study of the subject led me to call this book a "History of the Church and State in Norway," as I think it will be found that in Norway, Church and State were more closely connected than in any other country in Europe. As the work is indeed primarily a history of Norway from its ecclesiastical side, I have therefore not followed more closely than it seemed necessary, the various purely civil events and the warlike expeditions to other lands in the early days.

The main object I have had in view was to trace the history of the growth, development, vigorous life, and subsequent decline and fall of that Church, of which the foundations were mainly laid by the English fellow-helpers of Olaf Trygvesson and Olaf the Saint, at the end of the tenth and beginning of the eleventh centuries. I have further wished to show the way in which that Church was related to the State, and the struggle which it had for supremacy, closely akin to that carried on about the same time in other countries of Europe.

The story is a deeply interesting one, and in this I hope the reader will agree with me. If not, then the fault is that of the narrator, and not of the events narrated.

Elsewhere will be found a fairly comprehensive list of authorities employed; but I wish to acknowledge fully my obligations to my predecessors who have written on this subject in modern times, especially to the writings of such wonderful learning and research as those of the late Professor Rudolf Keyser in *Den Norske Kirkes Historie under Katholicismen*, Dr. Konrad Maurer in *Die Bekehrung des Norwegischen Stammes zum Christenthume*, and to the more recent works of Bishop Bang, Absalon Taranger, A. D. Jørgensen, and the late Professor Dr. R. T. Nissen.