

to embrace the Gospel very readily, offered to them under such unfavourable circumstances. With the same national feelings as their Christian brethren, Augustin found in dealing with them the further obstacle of pagan ignorance and superstition, fostered probably by the influence of the more enlightened and nominally Christian portion of the nation. This statement may be thought almost uncharitable, but seems warranted by the fact that about a quarter of a century after Augustin's death* we find a Christian combining with a heathen king for the extirpation of the Angles, whose religion he held in no honour, insomuch that he would as readily have held communion with a pagan as with an Angle. The foregoing instance shews, at all events, how far, in some cases, national could outweigh religious feelings, and the slow progress made in the work of conversion during Augustin's lifetime, and that of his immediate successor, is, in part, due to this cause. The methods adopted to conciliate pagan opposition, whether British or English, are noticeable as exhibiting a spirit of compromise with the enemy which would seem likely to annul opposition by yielding the points contended for, rather than quell it by the force of conviction. For in his epistle to Mellitus, Gregory not only directed† that the heathen temples should not immediately be destroyed but converted to Christian uses; but he also sanctioned the continuance, for a time, of heathen sacrifices amongst the English converts, changing only the object of adoration from idols to the true God. The former concession would, in an age so little capable of separating the spiritual from the material, be likely to cause great offence to the Christian portion of the community; whilst the evil effects of the latter are seen in the abuses to which it subsequently gave rise. For pagan practices in the Church became so rife that it was considered necessary to suppress them by royal edict in the reign of Erconbert of Kent, A.D. 640‡. This king carried his zeal so far as to include in the same edict a clause rendering compulsory the observance of the forty days of Lent, and however unlikely it was that Church discipline could be really furthered by such means, yet the application of so violent a remedy is at least an index of the laxity which had crept into the Church, either through a desire to conciliate the heathen or in way of concession to the self-indulgent members of her own body.

Such, roughly stated, were the discordant elements which Augustin had taken upon himself to harmonize, and where opposed to it, to reconcile to the Catholic faith. It remains to enquire how far he was able to carry out the ecclesiastical scheme proposed by Gregory.

(To be continued.)

* Bede, Eccl. Hist. ii. 20. † Bede, Eccl. Hist. i. 30. ‡ Bede, Eccl. Hist. iii. 8.