

From the Catholic Herald.
TO THE REV. W. H. ODENHEIMER, A. M.
RECTOR OF ST. PETER'S CHURCH, PHILADELPHIA.
NO. XIII.

REV. SIR:—Many Catholic doctrines and practices, now rejected by most Protestant Episcopalians, were retained in the first Prayer Book of Edward VI.—Auricular confession was recommended, and the power of giving absolution, in the proper sense of the word, was clearly acknowledged; prayers for the dead were enjoined; oil was used at confirmation; the sick were anointed according to the precept of St. James; altars were retained; and many other Catholic practices,—which, since the prayer book has become 'ripe with experience,' are characterized as superstitions—were enjoined by the English Reformers during their first fervor. Many phrases were also retained which would seem to convey Catholic doctrines, which the Reformers rejected: but these were evidently retained for no other purpose than to satisfy the multitude, and eventually to destroy the belief of them amongst those who would use that book.

The "Prayer Book" in this state, if we believe the Oxford Tract writers, and most others of the high church party, represented fully the views of Cranmer. It is, therefore, in their eyes, the standard of Anglican orthodoxy, and every change since made, has been a retrogradation from the perfect work then accomplished. (1) The Reformers of that age however, did not think so. Bucer declaimed against it as containing "high treason against God." (2) Calvin thundered from Geneva against it; he denounced it as "a mass of Popery." "He had his agents in the (English) court, the country, the universities by whom he drives on his designs in all parts at once."—"He resolved to make his way through (the Calvinistic party) to the mark he aimed at, which was to have the church depend upon his direction, and not to be less estimable here than in other places." (3)—The history of the changes effected by the Calvinistic party, show how far Calvin succeeded in his views, and proves that the "Prayer Book" bears the mark of many hands, from the ancient fathers down to the ultra reformers of the 16th century, not even excepting the Arian Ochinus, and John A. Lasco, whose intimacy with the refugees in Mary's reign, caused them to be regarded with distrust even by the Lutherans of Germany. (4)

Bucer and Peter Martyr, both rank Calvinists, were invited over to England by Cranmer; and so much deference was paid them, that, as they did not understand the English tongue, Latin versions of the "Prayer Book" were prepared expressly for them, (5) that they might suggest whatever improvements they thought necessary. Bucer was exhorted by Calvin to resist openly the remains of Catholicity preserved in that book. (6) Martyr, whose conscience allowed him to accept

a canonry in England, but would never permit him to wear a surplice, (7) being "refreshed" by the assurance which he received from Cheke that "if they themselves (the revisers of the Liturgy) would not change what ought to be changed, the King (Edward VI.) would do it himself, (8)—pressed forward his Calvinistic views. Hooper could not, indeed, co-operate in the beginning in the great work; he would not coincide in the temporising policy of the other Reformers; but, even with a bishopric in view, "denounced in the fiercest language the habits, the council and the ordinal." (9) Cranmer, however, having endeavoured in vain to satisfy him by argument, resorted to his favorite specific, and by imprisoning him in the Fleet, enabled him to reconcile his conscience to be consecrated in the usual vestments, which, moreover, he promised to wear on very solemn occasions. In the mean time, the primate himself was "brought to sounder views by John A. Lasco" (10) the Arian, in which, undoubtedly, he must have been considerably aided by the assurance he received from the King, that unless he proceeded to expunge or alter the obnoxious passages, the task should be assigned to more willing hands, or undertaken by himself. (11)

Preparations for a change being thus made, Hooper began his attacks on altars. A hint was sufficient "to put the thoughts of the alteration into the heads of some great men about the court, who thereby promised themselves no small hopes of profit, by the disfiguring the altars of the hangings, palls, plate, and other rich utensils, which every parish, more or less, had provided for them." (12) Shortly after, an order of council was issued, commanding altars to be taken down.—The order was "signed by seven laymen but only one bishop (Ely,) besides the Archbishop." (13) The order was followed by the usual auxiliary appliances. "Day, bishop of Chichester, was deposed for not pulling down the altars in his diocese." (14) The bishop of Winchester, and Heath of Worcester, were treated in a similar manner, and then imprisoned: the acquiescence, or co-operation, of the other prelates was secured by these measures.

The alterations suggested by Calvin and his agents in England were now introduced into the "Prayer Book"—if not fully—as far, it may be confidently said, as the framers of the book deemed it safe to adopt them.

The Oxford Tract writers, speaking of "the severe shock" men's minds received "through the profanations then carried on, tell us that, "in taking away the tares, they uprooted the wheat also, and in endeavoring with a rude hand to eradicate

Romish misbelief, they went hard to introduce unbelief." (15) They think they can find some traces of the essential features of a Christian liturgy in what yet remains, but they admit that "the whole doctrine of the Eucharist was then altered." (16)

The shock, however, which men's minds received, must not be dated from this step. The reformation itself, as it is called, was the true epoch of unsettling men's minds. When the witness of truth which God has established was despised, when men were found hardy enough to say that the church, which Christ had redeemed with his blood, to which he had taught all truth, and promised that his spirit should abide with it for ever, had, for ages, sanctioned superstition, what barrier could those men place to the wanderings of human fancy?—or what claim could they put forward to respect for their own acts, which did not condemn themselves with infinitely more force in their own revolt against the faith of all Christendom? Their own acts gave an impulse which they could not check; the weak mind of man,—which had been strengthened by Christian faith, resting on an immovable basis,—once placed as the ground work of the new system, imparted its own weakness and instability to the superincumbent structure;—hence religion, which had hitherto beamed with its own light, was made to reflect the fancies and the follies of every passing moment; and the definite form it assumed was necessarily but the effect of the impulse which circumstances impressed on the minds of men, some of whom may have imagined they were following the dictates of heaven.

That the movement by which Cranmer was guided, or which he led, was onward,—that the English church was hurrying on to pure Calvinism or worse, may be collected from the Oxford writers themselves. "Religion," they tell us, "was for the time, made 'a gainful occupation' and God's holy name was blasphemed; bad men (were) supplanting one another and bishops scarcely lifting up one warning voice against the sacrilege, but submitting to enforce it; (so that the days of Queen Mary came as a relief wherein those of our reformation suffered not sinned.)" (17) Courayer, a man evidently in the secrets of the Anglican party, who, though he was ashamed to enrol himself among its members, undertook to defend it in some points, tells us, that "it is but too apparent that the chief aim of these divines and prelates" (Cranmer and Barlow) "was to extinguish episcopacy." (18)

After stating the general character of the alterations of the Prayer Book as resulting from or given in explanations by the most orthodox of your own church, we shall now turn to the book itself, and see what can be learned from the nature of the changes introduced into it. From this examination, information of importance may be acquired, not only regarding

the book and its framers, but also regarding the *animus* of those modern "churchmen," who appear to bewail so bitterly the changes introduced through the agency of foreign reformers." (19)

I have already stated my opinion on this subject; in the beginning those men altered as much as they felt able to alter with safety. To make their views be received more easily, they retained words which seemed to sanction the Catholic doctrine, or retained the doctrine itself when they feared too much opposition; but the way was marked out by which its total removal might be easily effected. The anxiety of modern high churchmen appears to arise entirely from the necessity, that is now felt, to pay some respect to Christian antiquity; this leads them to desire the use of a *phraseology* that would seem to approach the ancients, while they admit very little more of real doctrine than is expressed by the modern forms, they and the natural meaning of the phrases they use. Another object kept in view in the modifications of the Prayer Book, was to amalgamate [I use an Oxford phrase] the most clashing tenets, and reconcile differences by *designedly* using ambiguous words, which each of the combatants could interpret as he pleased.

To give an instance of this, I will confine myself in this letter to the confession and absolution, the history of which in the Protestant Episcopal church, I will trace down to your American edition.

During Henry's reign, a belief in the usefulness and necessity of auricular confession was enforced by the severest measures. It formed the sixth of the famous articles of religion. Cranmer, of course, agreed, or, at least, acted as if he agreed, with the King on this as well as every other point. "The King's Book" and "The Bishop's Book" taught this distinctly.

When the new communion service was framed in Edward's reign, an alteration took place; but the time has not yet come for proclaiming openly the Calvinistic doctrine. The very word "auricular confession" was retained; the priest exhorted those who desired it, to come to him to make their confession; but those who thought it necessary to do so were commanded not to trouble such as, deeming it unnecessary, abstained from the same. (20) This was already a great step; the widening process had now begun. As the communion service was the only thing then changed, and as the royal boy of ten required "all loving subjects to stay and quiet themselves, . . . content to follow authority according to the bounden duty of subjects and not enterprising to run before," (21)—we must believe that this confession was to be practised according to former usage.

In the first book of Edward VI., things remained nearly in the same state, if we except the change that necessarily followed the abolishing of the ancient ritual. In the exhortation to communion, those who required comfort or counsel were exhorted

[1] Oxford Tracts, No. 81.

[2] Wheatly, 112.

[3] Heylin, 107.

[4] Ox. Tr. pp. 15, 22.

[5] Wheatly, p. 72.

[6] Heylin, 79.

(7) Ox. Tr. No. 81, p. 16.

(8) Strype's Cranmer quoted, loc. cit.

(9) Burnett ii. p. 258.

(10) Jonkyn's quoted in the Oxford Tract, p. 248.

(11) Waterworth, p. 221, quoting Soames, p. 595. This statement agrees with what the Oxford Tract quotes from Strype, *supra*.

(12) Heylin, p. 95.

(13) Oxford Tracts, p. 16.

(14) Ibid. p. 21.

[15] Oxford Tracts, p. 20.

[16] Ibid. p. 17.

[17] Ibid. p. 22.

[18] Courayer, Defence of the English Ordinations, p. 147.

[19] Oxford Tracts, loc. cit.

[20] See the Communion Service alluded to, given by Wilkies 17.

[21] See his proclamation in Heylin, p. 26.