

From the U. S. Catholic Miscellany.

THOUGHTS ON THE ANGLICAN CHURCH.

More than once, my dear—, you have called my attention to the peculiar phraseology lately adopted by some of our friends of the Protestant Episcopal Church, in speaking of themselves as "the Catholics," while they affect to call us "Romanists;" and a few days since you also put into my hands, as having a bearing on this subject, a Pamphlet which they profess to hold in high admiration entitled "Catholic Truths and Roman Fallacies." My views upon these matters I have expressed to you fully in conversation; but for the purpose of enabling you to consider them more thoroughly you request that I would commit them, or at least the substance of them, to writing. With this request I feel a duty to comply.

In the beginning of the 16th century it may be said that there was but one visible Church in the civilized World. The Greek division of Christians was not to be found out of the Russian and Turkish Dominions. In Asia there were scattered Armenian, Nestorian, and Eutychian Christians; in the South of Europe there was a small sect called Waldenses, and in England there yet remained some of the followers of Wickliffe, or of the sect called Lollards. But the great body of Christendom was thoroughly united in the profession of the same faith, in the administration of the same sacraments, and in the observance of the same rites, and all acknowledged the same form of Church Government ever which presided as the visible head on Earth the Bishop of Rome. In the year 1517 was published in Wittenburg in Germany, a book written by Martin Luther containing 95 short theses on the nature of Indulgences and the errors of the Questors, that is to say, of the persons employed to dispose of Indulgences. This book gave rise to angry disputations, and the combatants becoming excessively heated, the dispute extended itself to other topics connected with Religion and doctrines, were then broached on the part of Luther, avowedly new, but alleged to be founded on the true interpretation of the Scriptures. The consequence was a severance from the main body of a considerable portion who at first called themselves Gospellers and Reformers, but who afterwards, however split amongst themselves into different subdivisions under different appellations, took the distinctive name of "Protestants." The main body retained the ancient name of Catholics.

For some time after these dissensions the Protestant doctrines made little progress in England. Indeed the English King (Henry the Sixth) entered into the controversy as a champion of the ancient faith against Luther, and obtained from the Pope, in acknowledgment of his Catholic ardour and zeal, the title of "Defender of the Faith"—a title still claimed by the English Monarchs. But a violent quarrel took place afterwards between the King and the Pope, because of the refusal of the latter to sanction Henry's divorce from his queen Catherine, and Henry contrived to obtain in 1531 from the Convocation of the English Clergy an acknow-

ledgment that he was "the chief Protector, the only and supreme Lord, and as far as Christ would allow the supreme head of the church." The submission of the English church to the King's dominion was afterwards, and without any regard to the remarkable qualification with which it was accompanied, treated as absolute, unconditional, and complete. On the 3rd of November, 1534, by an act of Parliament (Statute 26, Hen. 8, ch. 1,) it was enacted and declared "that the King our sovereign Lord his heirs and successors kings of this realm, shall be taken, accepted, and reported, the only supreme head on Earth of the Church of England, called *Anglicana Ecclesia*, and shall have and enjoy annexed and united to the Imperial Crown of this Realm as well the title and style thereof as all honours, dignities, pre-eminences, jurisdictions, privileges, authorities, immunities, profits and commodities to the said dignity of Supreme Head of the same Church belonging and appertaining; and that our said sovereign Lord, his heirs and successors, shall have full power and authority from time to time to visit, repress, reform, order, restrain, and amend all such errors, heresies, abuses, offences, contempts and enormities, whatever they be, which by any manner of spiritual authority or jurisdiction might or may lawfully be reformed, repressed, corrected, restrained or amended, most to the pleasure of Almighty God, the increase of virtue in Christ's kingdom, and for the conservation of the peace, unity and tranquillity of this realm, any usage, custom, foreign law, foreign authority, prescription or any other thing or things to the contrary notwithstanding."

By this statute "the church of England" was necessarily severed from all other Christian churches, and converted to all intents and purposes into a political establishment—its faith, its rites, its discipline, were surrendered to the dominion of the King. He was authorized from time to time to define and to decide what was true doctrine, and what heresy or error—to correct and reform as his judgment or caprice should dictate whatever might be deemed abuses—to exercise every and "any manner" of spiritual authority and jurisdiction—any thing whether in Christ's law, or any where else to the contrary notwithstanding. The Church was impiously given unto Cæsar. It was not expected, nor intended, that any persons other than British subjects, should be affected by this delegation of ecclesiastical power. The objects of the Statute were first to make the church of England a separate and distinct establishment from the great church of Christendom, and secondly, to subject this separate establishment to the absolute rule of the English Monarch.

Upon the doctrinal points which had severed the Protestants from the Catholic world, the King took part against the Protestant teachers, and he caused many who espoused and preached their doctrines to be put to death as impious heretics. In May, 1539, he caused to be enacted the statute 'for abolishing diversity of opinions in certain articles concerning Christian Religion,' the Statute commonly known as the Statute of the Six articles (Stat. 32

Hen. 8, ch. 14.) in which the Catholic doctrine respecting the Real Presence in the Eucharist, the Catholic discipline of receiving the Sacrament under one form, the celibacy of the clergy, and the sanctity of vows of charity, the celebration of the Mass, and the practice of special or auricular confession, are all sanctioned as parts of the faith or discipline of "the church of England," and severe punishment denounced against all who shall dare to gainsay them. Afterwards, while Henry lived, the Book put forth by his authority, under the title of "a necessary doctrine and erudition for a Christian man," but more usually styled "the King's Book," was the standard of orthodox faith in England.

Henry died in 1546, and the crown, and with it as an inseparable appendage, the supreme dominion of the English church, descended to Edward his son, then a child of 9 years of age. His uncle Somerset, who acted as the Protector of the Realm, and guardian of the infant King, was attached to the Protestant doctrines. Under his influence, and that of his associates, a liturgy for the use of the English church, was established by act of Parliament in January, 1549 (Stat. 2 and 3, Edw. 6 ch. 1) called "The Book of Common Prayer, and administration of the Sacraments, and other rites and ceremonies of the church of England," and it was ordained that all ministers of the church within the realm, should use the same, and no other in this divine service. The changes in this book from the ancient liturgy, conformed in many respects to the views of the reformers. In 1552, in the name and by the authority of the young king, this book was reformed, amended, and explained, and by Act of Parliament, Stat. 5 and 6, Edw. 6, ch. 1) the new book of Common Prayer, and administration of the Sacraments, was commanded to be accepted, received, used, and esteemed in like sort and manner, and with the same penalties as had been enacted with respect to that established four years before, and which was now superseded. In the same year, by the authority of the king, was published "a collection of the articles of Religion," forty two in number, which had been compiled by archbishop Cranmer, then laid before a committee of bishops and divines, and after approval by them, sanctioned by the king. Edward died in 1553, at the age of sixteen years, and at the time of his death, this book of the 42 articles was the standard of English orthodoxy.

Mary, who ascended the throne in July 1553, was a Catholic, and in less than six months after she began to reign by act of Parliament (Stat. 1, Mary Session 2nd) all the statutes on the subject of religion passed since the death of her father, were repealed, the first and second books of the "Common Prayer" were prohibited to be used, and in lieu thereof it was enacted that such forms of divine worship and administration of the Sacraments should be received and practised as had commonly been used in the last year of the reign of Henry the Eighth. In the next year all the articles and provisions of every kind, made in his reign for severing the church of En-

gland from the See of Rome, were repealed, and the church of England was readmitted into the unity and bosom of the great Christian church (See Stat. 1 and 2, Phil. and Mary ch. 8.) This was the state of Religion in England when Mary died in November, 1558.

Elizabeth, her successor, either hesitated or affected to hesitate between the Catholic and the Protestant Religions. This however, did not continue long, for in February, 1559, by Statute 1, Eliz. ch. 1, all the laws made in the preceding reign on the subject of Religion, were repealed and those in the reign of Henry the Eighth, and Edward the Sixth, were re-enacted, and it was required that all bishops, ministers, &c., should take an oath "that the Queen's Highness is the only supreme governor of this realm, as well in all spiritual or ecclesiastical things or causes as temporal; and by the second chapter of the same statute, the Book of Common Prayer is again modified and commanded to be used in all the churches and chapels throughout the kingdom; and every person was bound on Sundays and holidays to attend during the time of common prayer, preaching, or other service of God, there to be used and ministered. All the bishops but one—and a large portion of the clergy refused to take this oath, and for that cause all who refused were ejected from office, and others more compliant, were, by royal authority, appointed in their stead. The power of parliament was then resorted to in order to cure all defects and irregularities in this violent course, and by Stat. 5th. Elizabeth, ch. 1, the substituted bishops were declared to be bishops rightfully made, any statute, law, canon, or other thing to the contrary, notwithstanding. In January, 1562, the 42 articles of Religion, established under Edward, were revived and amended, and what have since been termed the 39 articles, were promulgated in lieu of them, as the creed for the nation.—Thus—and by the authority of the king and of the parliament, was ultimately fashioned, "The church of England, as by law established," and this is its proper style and title as given to it by its authors. With the exception of the New England colonies, "the church of England, as by law established," was upheld by law in all the English colleges and plantations on this side of the Atlantic. The king was its supreme head, and under him the government of it was vested in its Archbishops, Bishops, and Priests, and the American colonies were for all ecclesiastical purposes declared to be a part of the diocese of the Bishop of London. The church was an integral part and parcel of the State, and when the dominion of England and of the English king was thrown off, the church also fell with it. It ceased to have existence here. But many of those who had been accustomed to the worship and rites observed in the church of England, felt a natural attachment thereto. Under the influence of this attachment, a convention was held of certain clerical and lay delegates from different congregations, and a plan of religious union agreed upon, whereby they associated under the name of "The Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States." The name they themselves chose, and by this in their prayer books, and in their public acts, they have ever since been designed.

(To be Continued.)