

From the London and Dublin Orthodox Journal.

ORIGIN OF THE ENGLISH CHURCH.

The Articles, Treated on in Tract 90 reconsidered, and their Interpretation indicted in a Letter to the Rev. R. W. Jeff, D. D., Canon of Christ Church, by the Rev. E. B. Pusey, D. D., &c.

In 1537, to probe the sincerity of the bishops, a royal inhibition was issued, suspending the spiritual jurisdiction of all the bishops in England, and these having submitted with due humility during a month petitioned to be restored to the exercise of their usual authority. This was granted to be exercised during the King's pleasure, and as his deputy, since his vicar-general on account of the multiplicity of his business, could not be every where present. Bonner's commission, issued 12th November, 1539, declares that all jurisdiction, ecclesiastical and secular emanates from the king; and an act of parliament, passed towards the close of his reign, addresses him as the "only and undoubted supreme head of the church of England, and also of Ireland," to whom by holy scripture all authority and power is wholly given to hear and determine all manner of causes ecclesiastical, to correct all vice and sin whatsoever, and to all such persons as your majesty shall appoint.*

In the face of these facts, Dr. Pusey coolly asserts that these acts merely deny to the Bishop of Rome "a temporal jurisdiction as to spiritual causes or persons." † Unfortunately he illustrates his point by the oath of supremacy. "Both," says he, "deny to the people what they claim for the king." Precisely; and they claim for the king jurisdiction and supremacy, and the headship of the English church. Bramhall, whom he quotes in support of his opinion, freely allows "that dispensations of all kinds confirmations, licenses, faculties, suspensions, appeals, reservations palliums, indulgences," &c. were taken from the pope. Truly, with these taken away, there must have been left but a shadow of supremacy, to discover which would be hopeless without a portion of that brilliant and fruitful imagination which distinguishes the new school. If to deprive the bishops of all their ordinary powers, and to compel them to sue the crown for their restoration, which was granted to last only during the king's pleasure, be not an act of spiritual supremacy, I know not what is. Even this boon was granted them, not that the government of bishops is necessary for the church, but that the king's vicar-general had too great a load of business on his hands. For the acknowledgement of this supremacy in the pope and the denial of it in the king the venerable Bishop Fisher and the upright Moore perished on the scaffold. If the act of supremacy had contained a mere denial in the pope of such jurisdiction as "shall interfere with the authority of the sovereign," Catholics would never have refused to take it. When questioned, they uniformly acknowledged that the pope possessed a

temporal authority in these realms, they professed their readiness to defend the king against foreign aggression, and they were ever foremost in the armies of their country.* Yet this could not save them; the king was too jealous of his supremacy, and they expiated their refusal with their blood. But facts are stubborn things, and they cannot be made to bend, even by the theological juggling of that curious phenomenon, Mr. Palmer, to suit the caprice of the Oxford school. Henry was jealous of his newly acquired powers. To his theological wisdom the nation was indebted for the six articles, which defined the bounds of English orthodoxy. Soon afterwards, "of his bountiful clemency he appointed a commission of bishops and doctors to declare the articles of faith, and such other expedient points as, with his grace's advice and consent, should be thought needful." An act of parliament in the next session declared that all definitions and ordinances which should be set forth by them with his majesty's advice and confirmed by his letters patent, should be fully believed, obeyed and observed, under the penalties of imprisonment, banishment, forfeiture of goods, and being burnt as a heretic, according as the offence was repeated or the party refused to recant. This requires no comment: it supposes in the king the plenitude of no infallibility, and makes no creed orthodox unless confirmed by his letters patent. To the book of the six articles the convocation wrote a species of preface, entitled "The Godly and Pious Institution of a Christian man." In it they confess that they have no authority to assemble together for any pretence or purpose, or to publish anything by them agreed on or compiled, without his grace's power and license. And after declaring that the book is agreeable to holy scripture, they humbly submit it to his most excellent wisdom and exact judgment, to be recognized, overseen, and corrected, if his grace should find in it any word or sentence to be changed qualified, or further explained, whereunto they would in that case conform themselves, as in duty bound, to God and his royal highness †

* In 1663 the Catholics petitioned the parliament of Charles II. for repeal of the sanguinary laws against them. It was objected to them that the acknowledgment of the spiritual supremacy of the pope implied the admission of his temporal superiority. The petitioners so far from admitting this offered to bind themselves by oath "to oppose with their lives and fortunes the pontiff himself, if he should ever attempt to execute that pretended power, and to obey their sovereign in opposition to all foreign and domestic powers whatsoever without restriction."—Ling. Hist., vol. xi. p. 220.

† Dub. Rev., May, 1840 p. 154.—It is no difficult matter to ascertain who formed the creed of the infant church of England. Cranmer, speaking of the enactment of the six articles asserted to the Devonshire insurgents that "if the king's majesty had not come personally into the parliament house; those laws had never passed." The archbishop was conscious that himself and others of the reformed school had sacrificed their convictions to the will of the king. he had good reason to doubt, though he dare not dispute, the orthodoxy of the articles, for the fourth subjected priest living carnally with women to imprisonment and forfeiture on the first conviction, and to death on the second. Knowing the slippery ground on which he stood, he despatched his wife and children to her friends in Germany.—Ling. Hist., vi. p. 292.

It is not difficult in this passage to discern who is the head that guides and the hand that rules. Mr. Palmer thinks that the king submits to convocation: the reader will be of opinion that convocation obeys the king. Indeed, Henry was not the man to obey; he had not abolished the papal supremacy to introduce in its stead that of convocation. During the whole of his reign the creed of the church of England depended on his theological caprice.

On the demise of Henry the crown, with which was now united the headship of the church, with all its duties and cares, all its powers and prerogatives, devolved on his son Edward, a boy little more than nine years old. Under him the work of reformation progressed apace. Cranmer, on the ground that his episcopal commission had expired with the late king, so headed and obtained from Edward another commission within a week from the proclamation of the new sovereign. His colleagues followed his example, acknowledging, as their leader had done, that the king was "the only source of all manner of temporal and spiritual jurisdiction within the realm." In a short time the doctrines and form of worship were entirely remodelled to suit the reformed notions of Cranmer and his German auxiliaries. A Book of Common Prayer was composed by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and sanctioned by the royal signature. Yet within four years it was utterly changed, great care having been taken to exclude from it all mention of a real presence in the eucharist. The amended form received the sanction of the legislature.* Mary succeeded Edward. Under her the new church was utterly swept away. The enactments of her father in derogation of the papal supremacy, and the acts sanctioning the reformed service were repealed, so that the church was restored to the state in which it had been on the accession of Henry VIII. Under her successor, Elizabeth, the enactments of Mary on religious matters were repealed, and the statutes of Henry in derogation of the papal authority, and of Edward in favor of the reformed service, were recalled into force. The Book of Common Prayer was again used in all churches; the jurisdiction for the correction of heresies, errors, schisms, and abuses was to be annexed to the crown and all clergymen taking orders or in possession of livings, all magistrates and officers having fees from the crown, all laymen suing for the livery of their lands, or about to do homage to the queen, were bound to take an oath, under pain of deprivation or incapacity, declaring her to be supreme governor in all ecclesiastical or spiritual things or cases as well as temporal, and renouncing all foreign ecclesiasti-

* Ling. Hist., vii. p. 27. Dub. Rev. 1840, p. 359. Without ecclesiastical sanction it became the standard of English worship in the new church and so it continued during the reigns of Elizabeth, James I., and Charles I., till it was superseded by the directory under the commonwealth. At the restoration it recovered its ascendancy; but it was again subjected to the ordeal of revision, with the vain hope of conciliating the Presbyterian divines; and then, about a century after it had been enforced by lay authority, it obtained for the first time the approbation of the church assembled in convocation. Dub. Rev., Aug., 1841, page 184.

cal or spiritual jurisdiction or authority whatsoever within the realm. It is further worthy of remark, as shewing in whom the authority of deciding in controversies of faith was vested, that the royal delegates had not power to adjudge any matter to be heresy which had not been so adjudged by some general council, or the express words of scripture, or should afterwards be adjudged to be so by the high court of parliament, with the assent of the clergy in convocation.*

Such are the foundations on which the present law church of England was built. The work of reformation was begun by royal proclamations and acts of parliament: it was continued by them, and it was completed by them. The voice of the church was seldom heard; if it were, it was the mere echo of the royal will. That this has hitherto been considered the constitution of the new church there can be no doubt. To go step by step through the succeeding reigns, to trace the connexion between royal head and religious members would be tedious; a few examples, therefore shall suffice. When Dr. George Abbot, Archbishop of Salterbury, was supposed to have incurred irregularity by having shot Peter Hawkins, the keeper of Lord Trough's park, King James, the then head of the church, appointed a commission of bishops, judges, and lawyers, to examine the case. They finally came to the conclusion that the primate should be absolved conditionally *ad majorem cautelam*. As there was no instance on record of a layman having absolved ecclesiastical from canonical censures, a certain number of clergymen were appointed to pronounce sentence of absolution in the king's name, conceiving that the authority of a layman might derive something of a spiritual character by passing through the mouth of an ecclesiastic. Their sentence received the king's confirmation, and passed the seals about six months after the death of Peter Hawkins. †

In 1653, the barebone parliament enacted that for the validity of marriage, if the parties were minors, was required the consent of the parents or guardians, the age of sixteen in the male, and of fourteen in the female. ‡ In 1660 Charles II. issued a royal declaration limiting the jurisdiction of bishops, regulating subscriptions to the thirty-nine articles, and dispensing, in certain cases, with the reading of the established liturgy. This declaration was prevented from becoming law by the sanction of parliament only through the intrigues of the court. § We find no churchmen in this instance complaining of the king for having dispensed with the law in ecclesiastical matters. Even within the last year Lord Denman, in the Court of Queen's Bench, reversed the decision of the Bishop of York, who, at his visitation, had deprived Dr. Cockburn on the charge of simony. His lordship significantly observed that the church discipline bill seemed to have been forgotten

* Ling. Hist., vii., p. 260.

† Ling. Tract. p. 177. This event occurred in the year 1621.

‡ Ling. Hist., xi, p. 10.

§ Ling. Hist., xi, 209.

* "Dub. Rev.," 1840, p. 352 and 353.
† Page 136.