

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.*

MISSIONARY SPIRIT OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

King Henry was succeeded by his son, Edward the sixth, who, on ascending the throne, was only nine years of age; and there was great danger that the enemies of the Reformation would avail themselves of his minority, to distract the government and overpower the protestants. Edward was soon discovered to be a very extraordinary child, both for quick learning, sweetness of temper, and genuine piety. His uncle, the Duke of Somerset, was made Lord Protector; and he, with Archbishop Cranmer and others, proceeded vigorously with the reformation of religion. The images of Christ and the saints were soon removed from all the churches, as abominable instruments of superstition and idolatry. The papists say that they do not worship the images. Be that as it may, the second commandment says, "Thou shalt not bow down to them," and therefore protestants, at all events, by removing them from their places of worship, adhere strictly both to the letter and the spirit of the commandment in this respect. King Henry had in his will left six hundred pounds a year for ever, for two priests to say mass for him daily, at his tomb at Windsor chapel. This extravagant sum led to an enquiry into the utility of prayers for the dead. Both scripture and right reason were soon found to be decidedly against them, and they were consequently abolished by law.

Good old Bishop Latimer, who had been imprisoned, was now released, and promoted the good cause by his diligent preaching. The reformers, to supply the defect of preaching, composed our excellent homilies, in which men are taught to depend for salvation solely on the sufferings and death of Christ, as their atoning sacrifice; and to abound in good works as the only satisfactory evidence of a right faith. As the poor are now so generally able to read for themselves, and as these homilies can everywhere be had very cheap, and even for nothing, they must be totally without excuse if they remain ignorant of the doctrines of the Church of England, which are indeed no other than the doctrines of salvation. The laity were now permitted, with the clergy, to drink the wine as well as eat the bread at the sacrament, in commemoration of our Lord's death and of the benefits we receive thereby. Can any thing be more silly than the distinction which the papists make between the clergy and laity in this respect? If our Lord commanded that all who were present should both eat and drink; how dare any man make a distinction that no where is even hinted at in the scriptures?

The next step Cranmer took was to compile the church catechism, which, as a sound system of instruction for children has never been surpassed, perhaps never equalled. Our incomparable liturgy was soon after established by law; and exhibits to this day such a luminous system of evangelical truth, both in doctrine and precept, as is not to be found in any other human composition. It is not only "a form of sound words," which the spiritual worshipper can use with benefit to his soul, but is really "a standing Christian sermon," so full of the gospel, that any man who daily attends to it, with an humble and praying spirit, may easily come to the knowledge of the truth. The growing attachment of the community to our scriptural formularies is a good sign, that God is indeed pouring out His Spirit upon our church, and will revive and perpetuate her to the latest posterity.

About this time Ridley was made Bishop of London, and Hooper, Bishop of Gloucester. Latimer, who had been deprived of the bishoprick of Worcester, when he was imprisoned, refused to take it again, and it was also given to Bishop Hooper. Dr. Oglethorpe and many other papists in Oxford, shamefully dissembled in order to retain their preferments. Although the conduct of Edward's government was on the whole moderate towards the papists, yet such were the violence and hypocrisy of Bonner, the popish Bishop of London, and of Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester, that they were shut up in the tower to prevent them from doing any more mischief. The bishops being now most of them protestants, they lost no time in preparing articles explanatory of the doc-

trines which were held by the Church of England to be fundamental. These in the main were the same as now appear in our prayer-books, under the name of the thirty-nine articles, which ought to be read and studied by all consistent churchmen.

The king had two sisters, Mary, a bigotted papist, and Elizabeth, who was educated a protestant. On the 22nd of Jan. 1552, the Duke of Somerset, the king's uncle, was beheaded on Tower-Hill, on political charges, and died exclaiming, "Lord Jesus, save me." In him the reformation lost one of her greatest champions; and all further progress in it was for the present suspended by the sickness and death of the young king; who expired at Greenwich, on the 6th of July, 1553, in the 16th year of his age. He had spent much of his time in prayer; and near his end was heard to say, "Lord, not my will but Thine be done. I commit my spirit to Thee O Lord, bless my people and save Thine inheritance. Defend this realm from popery, and maintain Thy true religion, that I and my people may praise Thy holy name for Jesus Christ's sake. Lord, have mercy upon me, and receive my spirit." What blessings may we not expect when kings thus pray for their subjects; and when their subjects, knowing whose authority they have, intercede for them! "I exhort you," says the apostle, "that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men: for kings and for all in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty." In difficult times, whatever may be the cause of them, a poor man will daily fall on his knees and pray heartily for his king and all in authority, and give thanks for the mercies he does receive from the protection of lawful government; he will be preserved from sedition and rebellion. He will thus be kept from plunging his family into greater distress and difficulties, and save himself from the gallows. Remember that rioters, in destroying the property of their neighbours, never enrich themselves, and are sure in the end to be crushed by the power of the law.

The princess Mary, the king's eldest sister, succeeded to the throne, notwithstanding an illegal attempt to set the Lady Jane Grey upon it. For which she and several other distinguished persons were put to death, as traitors against Queen Mary's lawful authority. The zeal of the protestants to keep out popery had led them to take unlawful measures, and therefore no wonder that many of them suffered for their folly. We must not in any case, at any time, nor under any pretence, do evil that good may come. The Bible is peculiarly the book of protestants, and therefore they of all men are expected to regulate the whole conduct by its godly maxims. The crafty Bishop Gardiner was now made Lord Chancellor, and his counsels were principally followed. Bonner and the other popish bishops were restored to their sees, and by a proclamation all preaching was prohibited, under a pretence that it promoted sedition and strife.

The cruelty of Mary's government soon began to manifest itself. The venerable Judge Hales, who had stood alone in defence of Mary's just title to the crown, was so cruelly treated in prison as to become deranged. Upwards of a thousand English protestants fled beyond sea to avoid the storm which they saw gathering fast around them.

A law was passed abolishing all the laws relating to religion that had been enacted in King Edward's reign, and restoring the public worship as left in the last year of Henry the eighth. All were now to be punished who should affront the priests, abuse the mass, or break the images or crosses. Queen Mary became reconciled to the pope, which caused great rejoicings in Rome for three days; and his holiness distributed a profusion of indulgences. In the year 1554, the Queen was married to Philip, King of Spain, which filled the nation with the dread of the horrible inquisition, and the most arbitrary government. This caused a weak rebellion, the blame of which was laid upon the protestants. The next step the Queen took, was to announce her ecclesiastical supremacy; and to order all the married clergy to be dispossessed of their preferments. The mass was everywhere set up, and all the other superstitions re-

It is cheering, in looking over the periodicals of the Church of England, to observe the zeal manifested by her members in founding and endowing Churches establishing schools for the religious education of the poor, and generally in diffusing both at home and abroad, the knowledge of that Gospel, of which she had so long been at once the ornament and defence. The brief notices which our Summary from time to time contains, do not include the hundredth part of what is done, and there is abundant reason to think that the good work is not only in its commencement. Individually, and collectively, Churchmen are awakening to a juster sense of their responsibilities, and putting forth exertions for the promotion of the Redeemer's kingdom which place them far in advance of all others. We alluded on a recent occasion to the liberality of Bishop Barrington, who is reported while he filled the see of Durham, to have expended in acts of benevolence, more than £200,000; his successor, the late Bishop Van Mildert, appropriated annually to the same purposes between £6000 and £7000; and the munificence of the Bishop of London, and the Archbishop of Canterbury and Armagh, is exercised on a like extended scale of Christian philanthropy. A large proportion of the revenues of many of the other bishops is similarly applied; the inferior clergy generally imitate their example; and we are glad to find that the laity also are coming forward to do their part. We have published repeated accounts of the exertions made in behalf of the National Society for educating the children of the poor, in the principles of the Church of England, whose schools contain at the present moment upwards of 600,000 pupils; but as they are not yet concluded, have no data on which to form an estimate of the money contributed for this purpose. Meetings have been held in different parts of the kingdom, remarkable for the Christian spirit and resolute determination which they evinced; at one of them the subscriptions of eleven individuals only, amounted to £1485; and we shall doubtless be within the mark in assigning £150,000 or 200,000 as the probable aggregate result. The incorporated Society for building Churches has been the medium of producing inappreciable good; and the additions which have lately been made to its funds, will greatly increase its efficiency. During the twenty-one years which have elapsed since its formation, this invaluable Society has expended £262,616, in promoting the erection of 217 new churches and chapels, and the enlargement or increase of accommodation in 1589 others; thus providing 438,382 new sittings; of which 317,869 are free and unappropriated. The magnificent project of the Bishop of London to raise £300,000 for the erection of fifty churches in that metropolis, is in successful progress, and the last advices stated that nearly one half of that immense sum had already been contributed. Besides all this, many churches are built and endowed by private generosity; and the grants made by government for the same purpose are largely aided by local subscriptions. The eighteenth report of the Commissioners under whose authority these grants are disbursed, is dated August 9th 1839, and we learn from it that eighteen churches were erected during the year affording accommodation for 18,500 persons. Since the issuing of the Commission 213 churches and chapels have been built through its instrumentality, and provision made for the accommodation of 314,412 individuals, including 147,270 free seats for the use of the poor. The income of her three great Societies alone—the Society for Promoting Christian knowledge, the Church Missionary Society, and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, is £243,408, equal to \$1,217,040 of our currency; and a multitude of smaller ones, among which are the Society for the conversion of the Jews with a revenue of £16,720, and the Pall Mall Aid Society, whose grants now amount to £15,153 a year,—would probably swell the sum to an aggregate of £400,000, or \$2,000,000. The extent of the operations of these Societies, which include almost every branch of Christian benevolence, may be inferred from a few brief details respecting two of them only. The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel supports in America, the West Indies, the Cape of Good Hope, India, and Australia, 251 missionaries

* Continued from our last number.