

For the Colonial Churchman.

ADDITIONAL SOURCES OF CHURCH PROPERTY, DEVELOPED DURING THE MIDDLE AGES.

Essay 8—concluded.

3. Another source of considerable income to individual shrines and monasteries consisted in the voluntary donations of Pilgrims, whose misplaced piety led them to visit the tomb of some celebrated Saint. In the ninth century pilgrimages had grown into considerable vogue, and were considered as the surest and most acceptable mode of shewing obedience to heaven, and reverence for the Church. Jerusalem, Rome, and Canterbury, are the most celebrated places to which the pious resorted for the purposes of devotion. It is recorded of some royal and noble pilgrims, who had gone from England to Rome; that they not only left substantial marks of their piety in the eternal city itself, but liberally distributed their bounty among more indigent communities. Thus the monastery of St. Denys in France enjoyed, through the liberality of an English baron, extensive estates on the coast of Sussex: several churches in Armoria were supported by the bounty of another pilgrim. It is said of King Alfred that he greatly enriched the cathedral of Rheims whilst on a pilgrimage; and of Canute, that, whilst on the same errand he added considerably to the yearly revenue of the two great establishments of St. Omers. But the most benefitted by such donations was Rome itself. Thus, Anastasius tells us that Ethelwulf, an Anglo-saxon king, during a year's residence in that general resort of pious pilgrims: distributed the great treasures which he had brought with him from England. On Benedict III. who then occupied the pontifical chair, he bestowed a crown of pure gold, four pounds in weight, with two cups and two images of the same precious metal, a valuable sword, four silver dishes gilt with gold, several albs, curtains and other costly things.—In the church of St. Peter he made considerable presents of gold to the nobility and clergy, and of silver to the people of Rome. See Stebbing's ch: Hist: Vol. II. 106. and Dunham's Middle Ages vol. III. 322.

4. The Church of Rome moreover received a considerable revenue in the shape of a tax or an imposition of a silver penny upon every family whose yearly rent amounted to thirty of such pence. This tax was peculiar to the English nation, and is called *remescot* or *Peter-pence*. Its origin is wrapped up in some mystery: the Roman Catholic writers maintaining that it was granted by royal authority for the perpetual benefit of St. Peter's Church, and the Protestants asserting that it was originally a provisional contribution for the benefit of such of the English nation as might be at any time sojourning in Rome. The subject is discussed at length by Collier in his Ecclesiastical History vol. I. p. 142. 143. He is of opinion that the tax in question had its origin in the desire of King Ina to found and continue an English school in the Roman Capital. He this as it may, we are certain that the tax of Peter-pence on the English nation was confirmed by law in the reign of King Alfred, about the year 880, and continued to be collected until the time of the reformation. It was due upon the first of August. And in case there was any default in the payment, the Bishops who were charged to pay it to the Pope's collectors might be sued in the court of King's bench. Stone tells us in his annals that King Edward III. in 1365 forbade the payment of the *remescot*: but this was merely a temporary stoppage. In this reign it amounted to an annual sum, equal to about £2000 sterling. By an act of Parliament passed in the reign of Henry the Eighth—25 Hen. 8. cap. 25—this odious tax was abolished, and has never since been claimed. See Dr. Lingard's antiquities P. 89, &c.

5. A further source of church revenue peculiar to the middle ages consisted in the sale of indulgences. The purchase of an indulgence, it was believed, ex-

piated the guilt or atrocity of some contemplated wicked action which was still future, in the same way as a pecuniary compensation was thought to make an atonement for past offences. The belief that the priesthood possessed authority to remit sins, by imposing a tax or penance, is the common origin of both practices. It must be confessed however that the promise of pardon for future sins was a stretch of that authority which only the most illiterate and superstitious ignorance could possibly tolerate.

In a speech which Pope Urban II. delivered before the council of Clermont in France, which was held in 1095, the principle of indulgences is fully recognized. He is urging the members of the assembly to prosecute the Holy war against the saracens, and to find means without delay for furnishing a numerous crusade, and says:—As for us we shall omit nothing on our part to promote so glorious an undertaking; and therefore relying chiefly on the authority of Almighty God, derived upon us through the hands of his holy Apostles St. Peter and St. Paul; in reliance upon this authority, I say, by virtue of which the power of binding and loosing is committed unto us; all those who venture their lives and fortunes in this expedition—upon condition they confess their faults and are heartily sorry for them—shall receive a plenary indulgence at present, and which is more, they will have a comfortable expectation of immortal happiness at the resurrection of the just. Those likewise who being hindered from going themselves, shall either send forces, or contribute towards the charge of the expedition, shall have a share in the same indulgence." *Baronius annal: sub anno 1095 vol. xi.*

Hence Urban II. is considered the inventor of indulgences. The invention was turned to profitable account by some of his successors. Julius II. being in need of funds for building a church at Rome, granted plenary indulgences to all those who contributed towards so laudable an object: and Leo X. a few centuries afterwards, collected funds for enlarging and embellishing the cathedral of St. Peter, by the same means. And it is well known that this is one of the many corruptions against which Luther so successfully inveighed at the Reformation. The amount arising from these sales has not, I believe, been correctly ascertained: although if we may judge from the magnitude of the undertakings for which they were specifically intended, their value must have been enormous. See Robertson's Charles V. vol. II. 93, &c.

The preceding are the principal sources of church property which were developed during the middle ages. Others of less importance are mentioned by church historians, as having been more or less available according to circumstances. Of these I will mention a few, which tended to enrich either the church or individual priests, and which became a permanent custom in many of the English parishes.

6. Among the first of these minor sources may be mentioned the *Plough-alms*. These were exacted within fifteen days after the Festival of Easter, as an acknowledgment on the part of the people that the distribution of the seasons was in the hands of the Almighty, and that his blessing ought to be implored on the future harvest.

7. At the fast of St. Martin a certain quantity of wheat, sometimes of other grain, was offered on the altar as a substitute for the oblations of bread and wine, which were formerly made by the faithful, as often as they assisted or partook in the Sacred mysteries. This was called the *Kirk-shot*.

8. Thrice in the year, at Candlemas, the vigil of Easter, and All Saints was paid into the hands of the priest a certain quantity of wax, of the value of one silver penny for each hide of land in the parish. This import went under the appellation of *Leot-shot*. The object of it was to supply the altar with lights during Divine Service.

"The aggregate amount of all these perquisites," says Dr. Lingard, "comprised in each parish a fund

which was called the patrimony of the minister, and which was devoted to nearly the same purposes as the revenues of the cathedral churches. After two thirds had been deducted for the support of the clergy, and the repairs of the building, the remainder was assigned to the relief of the poor and of strangers. In a country which offered no convenience for the accommodation of travellers, frequent recourse was had to the hospitality of the curate; and in the vicinity of his residence a house was always open for their reception, in which during three days they were provided with board and lodging at the expense of the Church."—*Antiq. 89.*

These various sources of ecclesiastical revenue and the tenets which formed the ground of their exaction are quite sufficient to convince the modern reader of the vast degree of ignorance and superstition on the part of the people, and of cupidity and political cunning on the part of the clergy, which existed in the church during the middle ages. Mental darkness pervaded every class of Society: and hence those gross violations of the natural principles of equity, which had crept into almost all its relations, and which were afterwards speedily dispelled on the introduction of the glorious era of the Reformation.

CRITO.

SKEPTICISM.

*Atheism—the family state.*—There never has been but one government professedly atheistic. The national assembly of France, in the commencement of the revolution, appointed a committee to inquire and report whether there were and ought to be a God, and the committee reported that there could be no liberty on earth while there was a God in Heaven; that there is no God, and that death is an eternal sleep.—The assembly adopted the report, abolished the Sabbath, burned the Bible, instituted the decade, and worshipped the goddess of liberty in the person of a courtesan. But the consequences were too terrible to be endured. It converted the most polished nation in Europe into a nation of fiends and furies, and the theatre of voluptuous refinement into a stall of blood. The mighty Mind who governs the universe, whose being they had denied, whose worship they had abolished, whose protection they had refused, and whose wrath they had defied—withdraw his protection and gave them up; and with the voracity of famished tigers, they fastened on each other's throats, and commenced the work of death, till quickly we were left to tell the tale of woe. And yet this dreadful experiment, these men would repeat upon us. The entire corroborative action of the government of God, with all its stellate institutions, they would abolish, to let out upon society, in wrath without mixture and without measure, the impotent depravity of man.

The family, the foundation of the political edifice, the methodizer of the world's business, and the main-spring of its industry, they would demolish. The family, the sanctuary of the pure and warm affections, where the helpless find protection, the wretched sympathy, and the ward undying affection; while parental hearts live to love and pray and forgive, they would disband and desecrate. The family, that school of indelible early impression and unextinguished affection, that verdant spot in life's dreary waste, about which memory lingers, that centre of attraction which holds back the heady and high-minded, and whose cords bring out of the vortex the shipwrecked mariner, after the strand of every other cable has parted, these political Vandals would dismantle. The fire on its altars they would put out; the cold hand of death they would place on the warm beatings of its heart; to substitute the vagrancy of the desire, the rage of lust, and the solicitude, and disease, and desolation, which follow the footsteps of unregulated nature exhausted by excess.

The possessions of the soil, in fee simple, which to industry is like the action of the sun to movements of