

BIOGRAPHY.

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THE LIFE OF THE REV. BERNARD GILPIN.

Mere names are worthless things; but when they describe qualities, which really adorned the individual on whom those names are bestowed, they become honorable titles. The subject of this memoir obtained the titles of the "Apostle of the North," and the "Father of the Poor;" how abundantly he deserved them, the facts of his history will show.

Bernard Gilpin was born in the year 1517; he was the youngest son of Edwin Gilpin, of an ancient and honorable family in Westmoreland. His early youth was passed at a grammar-school, where he exhibited much talent and industry. Hence he was removed by his parents to Oxford; and, at the age of sixteen, was entered on the foundation at Queen's College, in that University. He was led to direct his attention particularly to the writings of Erasmus, who, at this time, was notorious for his bold exposure of popish errors and priestly usurpation.

At this early period of his career, Mr. Gilpin gave evidence of the independence of his mind, by examining the arguments of Erasmus for himself; an inquiry which ended in his great admiration of that writer, and his ultimate adoption, in their fullest extent, of Protestant principles. He applied himself principally to the study of divinity, read the Scriptures with great delight, and gained a thorough acquaintance with the Greek and Hebrew languages, in which he was much assisted by Mr. Neal, a fellow of New College, and afterwards professor of Hebrew at Oxford.

He was soon much noticed by the leading men of his college as a young man of much ability and great promise; and, after taking the degree of M. A., was elected fellow of his college. Mr. Gilpin had been bred up in the Romish faith, and to this period continued steady to it: in defence of it, while he resided at Oxford, he held a disputation against Bishop Hooper, but soon after King Edward had ascended the throne, Peter Martyr having come to Oxford, and having read some divinity lectures there, Gilpin was induced to encounter him in argument; but soon found the arguments of his opponent too strong for him; he generously confessed that he could not stand his ground, and resolved to dispute no more until he had gained sufficient materials with which to skirmish. Peter Martyr was much struck with this ingenuousness in Gilpin, and used to say, that he was not much troubled for Weston, Morgan, and Chedsey (Gilpin's fellow-disputants) and the rest of those hot-headed zealots; but "as for that Gilpin," said he, "I am very much moved concerning him; for he doeth and speaketh all things with an upright heart. The rest seem to me to be men who regard their bellies most of all, and, being inconsistent, are carried away with every blast of ambition and covetousness. But Gilpin, resting firmly upon gravity of manners, and the testimony of a most laudable life, seemeth to honor with his own goodness the cause which he undertaketh." He sincerely prayed that Gilpin might "come to the knowledge of the truth; and the prayer was heard: for his heart was gradually brought nearer and nearer to the full perception of Protestant truth.

Having taken holy orders, he remained a resident at Oxford until the thirty-fifth year of his age: about which time he was prevailed on by his friends to accept the living of Norton, in the diocese of Durham, contrary to his own will; for he wished not to be involved in the cure of souls while his mind remained in that undecided state. Before he went to reside, he was appointed to preach before the king, who was then at Greenwich. "The reigning vice of that age," as its historians inform us, "was avarice, or, more properly, rapine. Accordingly, Mr. Gilpin made the avarice of the times the subject of his sermon before the king; resolving, with an honest freedom, to censure corruption in whatever rank of men he observed it. He therefore very pointedly and faithfully addressed the clergy, the king, and the magistrates, on this subject." This sermon, uncompromising as it was, was highly approved of; and Secretary Cecil, afterwards Lord Burleigh, obtained

for him the king's license to become a general preacher during his majesty's life.

To procure a license of this kind was then by no means an easy thing: to none but men of tried ability and excellence were they granted. Not more than twenty-three clergy throughout the whole kingdom obtained "the general license" during the king's reign; among these were Jewel, Grindal, and Coverdale. Mr. Gilpin's mind, however, remained uneasy; and in this state he applied to Cuthbert Tostal, bishop of Durham, who was his uncle, and well disposed towards him. The bishop, who was no bigot, and who felt well pleased with the conscientious uneasiness of his nephew, advised him to do nothing until he had arrived at a settled state of religious sentiment: he urged him, therefore, to entrust the interests of his parish to some competent persons, and pass one or two years in Germany, France, and Holland; in which countries he would have an opportunity of meeting and conversing with the most distinguished advocates of both views of the question which disturbed his mind. Mr. Gilpin resolved to go, but not until he had resigned his living: after doing this he embarked for Holland, and proceeded immediately to Malines to visit his brother, who was studying there. The object of this visit was probably a religious one: his brother was a papist at that time; but he soon proved a most earnest champion of the reformation, as was evinced by his taking the pains to translate from Dutch into English a satirical treatise against popery, called "the Beehive of the Romish Church." From this place he went to Louvain where he took up his abode for some time, and for which he always expressed a great affection. It was a place that afforded the very best opportunities for pursuing his objects, being full of divinity students and eminent theologians on both sides of the question.

About this time, when his mind was gaining increased light on the doctrines of the reformers, a proposal reached him from Bishop Tostal (through his brother George, at Malines) to accept a valuable benefice that had just become vacant. The bishop hoped that he might, by this time, have got the better of his religious difficulties: he had done so, but in a direction that placed him much farther off than before from the possibility of holding preferment on the principles on which alone his uncle could bestow it. He declined the offer therefore, and wrote the following letter to the bishop:—

"My very honorable good lord, and most worthy ever to be honored by me,—I thought it not fitting to conceal from your lordship that my brother hath written to me of late, that, setting all excuse aside, I should give him a meeting at Malines, because he had something to say unto me touching very necessary affairs, which would not be despatched by letters. When we were met, I understood that his business with me was nothing else but to try me if I could take upon me a living, while I myself, in the meantime, should remain a student in the University. But had I known beforehand that this was the cause of my journey, I should not have thought it necessary to interrupt my studies with going to Malines. For now, I confess, I have discussed it with all the learned—but especially with the holy prophets—and with the most ancient and most godly writers since the time of our Saviour; so that I am fully resolved, so long as I live, never to burden my conscience in this case, nor to keep a living in mine own charge with condition to live from it. He answered, that your lordship had written unto him, that you would gladly confer a living upon me, and that your lordship and other friends, whereof himself was one, judged me too scrupulous in conscience in this case. Whereunto I answered, if I be somewhat too scrupulous (as I think I am not); yet it is a matter of that nature, that I had rather be a little too strict than to give my conscience too much scope therein. Forasmuch as I am once persuaded that I shall not offend God in refusing such a living as I cannot be resident upon, so long as I do not censure evil of other men, as I hope I never shall; yea, I pray daily for all those who have the care of souls, that they may be able to give an account unto God of the charge committed unto them, as may be most for the glory of God and the edification of his Church.

"He told me also, that your lordship would not con-

fer any charge upon me but such a one as should be served as well, or perhaps better, in my absence than if I were there myself. Whereunto I answered, that I doubted not but there might be in England a great number of men far more able than myself to take the care upon them; and therefore I wish that they may retain both the place and the benefit, and feed both the bodies and the souls, as I suppose all good pastors cannot in conscience reap benefit from that place wherein another man bestows his endeavors. For though any other should teach and preach for me as constantly and industriously as ever St. Augustine did, yet cannot I think myself discharged by another man's pains-taking. But if I yet should be persuaded thus to offer violence to my conscience, upon condition to remain here or in any other university, my disquiet conscience would never permit me to profit in my study.

"At the present, I praise God I have obtained a comfortable privacy in my studies; near to a monastery of Minorite friars; so that I have opportunity to make use of an excellent library of theirs as often as I will. I frequent the company of the best scholars; nor was I ever more desirous to learn. Hereupon, being given to understand by my brother George that your lordship had some thoughts of bestowing a living upon me, which thing might interrupt the course of my studies, I emboldened myself (upon the experience which I have had of your lordship's love towards me) to unlock the closet of my thoughts unto your goodness, freely humbly beseeching that your lordship will be pleased to permit me to live free from a pastoral charge, that I may the more quietly apply to my studies. And, forasmuch as I understand that your lordship is solicitous how I should be provided for, if God should call your lordship (who are now well in years) out of this world, I beseech you that the thought thereof may no more disturb you. For if I shall be brought low in means, I doubt not but in a short time to be able to obtain some lectures either in this university or elsewhere, where I shall not lose my time: a course which is much more pleasing unto me, than if I should take upon me a pastoral charge. I beseech Christ preserve your lordship. From Louvain, the 22d November 1554."

After two years residence in Flanders, Mr. Gilpin went to Paris to superintend the printing of the Bishop of Durham's book. He met, at Paris, his former acquaintance, Mr. Neal, of New College, whose attachment to the popish system was now much increased. He held a conversation with Neal on many subjects connected with that creed, and particularly on idol-worship, with reference to which Neal attempted to draw many of those refined distinctions which the Romantics of the present day affect to make, saying "that the images of the saints were not idols, and consequently that the worshipping of their images was no idolatry." Gilpin argued that the words of the commandment were express,—"Thou shalt no bow down unto them." "Church ordinances must not be altered without mature deliberation," said the other. "It is not in your power to alter Church ordinances," replied Gilpin; "but as this cannot be done, it remaineth that I especially endeavor to charge myself, and to draw near to the sincere worship of God as he shall enable me."

To be concluded next week.

For the Colonial Churchman.

Thou shalt not afflict any widow or fatherless child. If thou afflict them in any wise, and they cry at all unto me, I will surely hear their cry: 22 Exod. 23. To whom else, O our Father, should we cry, when in any affliction of mind, body, or estate?

A very ancient and most veritable record furnishes the following affecting, though brief account, of the death bed of an holy man, 3526 years ago—"And Jacob gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people."—If, reader, your memory or your faith fail, refer to 49 Gen. 33, to see how thus readily and cheerfully the righteous man dieth when he is weary and his work is done. May the guidance of the Holy Spirit throughout our life, and the mercy of Christ ever until death, enable you and me thus to die.