

**THOUGHTS
ON THE ANGLICAN CHURCH.**
[CONTINUED.]

Recently there have been extraordinary movements among some of the most pious and learned of the church of England, on the subject of Religion. Believing that in the innovations on the ancient faith, and still more in the changes from the ancient rites, ceremonies, and observances, their predecessors, in many instances, instead of reforming errors and correcting abuses had perverted the truth, and weakened almost unto death the spirit of devotion, have zealously and industriously sought to restore what they believed had been rashly if not impiously taken away. In the course of their animated discussions some of them have protested against the name of "Protestant," as a term significant of nothing but dissent, or opposition, or separation, and claimed to be called English Catholics, as being a branch of the great Catholic church. These agitations and discussions have reached this shore of the Atlantic, and several among "the Protestant Episcopalians of the United States," following this example, now set up their title to the name of "Catholic" also.

These pretensions or claims are of very modern date. True, both in the English and American churches, the ancient formularies of the apostles and Nicene creeds, were recited in divine worship, wherein a faith as solemnly professed in "The Holy Catholic church," but without being able to ascertain what precise idea was supposed thereby, I hazard nothing in asserting that *in pais*, out of the church, no member of either until within a few years back, called himself or his church, Catholic.—All of them gloried in the appellation of "Protestant," and the term Catholic was exclusively applied as the more respectful designation of the church which they were accustomed to deride by the nick-name of "Popish."

The professors of the ancient faith have certainly no cause to regret this new-born zeal for the name of Catholic. Names are by no means unimportant. The attachment now avowed for the appellation of Catholic, and the solicitude on the part of these, our separated brethren, to appropriate it to themselves, may be, and probably is, in the order of God's Providence one of the means to bring them back to the Catholic faith. But while we do not regret that the claim is preferred, they ought not to be surprised that we cannot admit it to be well founded.

The word Catholic has a precise and undisputed signification. It means "universal," or "general." Is there any ground upon which "The Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States" can claim to be the universal or general church of Christendom? Their numbers are understood to range between six and eight hundred thousand, while the whole Christian population far exceeds two hundred millions. As compared with the Christian body they do not constitute one in three hundred. But they do not assert this claim in behalf of themselves exclusively, but insist that they constitute one church with

fact? That there is a near affinity, a striking family resemblance between the two churches, is not to be disputed, but it seems impossible to maintain that they two make but one church. In so grave a concert as that of religion, care should be taken not to confound similarity with identity, and *there* emphatically the rule applies that *no like is the same*. Do the two churches profess the *same faith*? There is one essential and marked difference in their profession of Religious belief. It is a fundamental — indeed the very primary principle of the English church, that the supreme power is of right in the King, his heirs and successors. It belongs to his indisputable right to reform, repress, and correct errors, heresies, and abuses in the church, as fully as they can be reformed, repressed, or corrected by any manner of spiritual jurisdiction or authority—that is to say, to remodel the creed, to regulate the administration of the Sacraments, to prescribe the forms of public worship, and to control the conduct of its teachers in all spiritual matters. This is indeed, sometimes complained of as an usurpation of the crown, but has it not been submitted to by the church of England, and is it not embodied into the creed of that church?—The 37th article of religion, as contained in the book of common prayer, declares "that unto the King's Majesty the chief government of all the estates of this realm, whether they be ecclesiastical or civil in *all causes* doth appertain," and the only explanation or even seeming qualification of this acknowledgment of dominion over the ecclesiastical estate in *all causes*, is, "that the *ministering* of God's word or of the sacraments is not given to the *princes*." We have seen in what sense the supreme power over the church was asserted by Parliament, and the oath acknowledging that supreme power in the king required to be taken, and this article must be understood, so far as it does not contravene or qualify this claim thus avowed, and thus enforced by oath, as an explicit sanction and recognition of it.—What is the creed of "the Protestant Episcopal church of the United States" on this very important article? Far from adopting, it expressly repudiates the *principle* therein asserted. The 37th article in the American book of common prayer declares—"that the power of the civil magistrate extendeth to all men, as well clergy as laity in all things temporal, but *hath no authority in things purely spiritual*."—The question is not which of these be right—but whether the church which holds as an article of religion that the civil magistrates hath supreme power in all causes, as well spiritual as temporal, can be the same with that church which holds as an article of religion that the civil Magistrates hath no authority in spiritual causes?

In the 8th article of the English confession of faith, it is declared that "the three creeds, Nicene Creed, Athanasius's Creed, and that which is commonly called the Apostle's creed, ought thoroughly to be received and believed, for they may be proved by most certain warrants of Scripture." But the 8th article of the Ameri-

can Episcopal Confession, evidently copied, or reform, purposely omits the Athanasian creed. It declares that "the Nicene creed & that which is commonly called the Apostles' creed ought thoroughly to be received and believed, for they may be proved by most certain warrants of Scripture."—One, therefore, of the symbols of faith in the English church—one which it declares ought *thoroughly* to be received and believed, is wholly thrown aside by the American Church.

In the catechism, contained in the English book of common prayer, the doctrine of the church with respect to the Lord's Supper is laid down in the form of questions and answers, thus—"Ques. What is the outward part or sign of the Lord's Supper? Ans. Bread and wine which the Lord hath commanded to be received. Ques. What is the inward part or thing signified? Ans. The body and blood of Christ which are *verily and in deed* taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper." In the Catechism contained in the American book of common prayer, the answer to the first question is the same, but the answer to the second, and only important question, most materially modifies the doctrine thus, "Ans. The body and blood of Christ which are *spiritually* taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper."

There is an essential difference in the rites commanded to be observed. In the English book of common prayer, it is directed in the visitation of the sick as follows. "Here shall the sick person be moved to make a *special* confession of his sins, if he be his conscience troubled with any weighty matter. After which confession, the priest shall absolve him (if he humbly and heartily desire it,) after this sort. "Our Lord Jesus Christ, who had left power to his church to absolve all sinners who truly repent and believe in him, of his great mercy forgive thee thy offences, and by his authority committed to me *I absolve thee from all thy sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Ghost. Amen!*" In the American book of common prayer, there is to be found no injunction for a special confession of sins, and no absolution directed to be pronounced as of authority. We believe, indeed, that such a confession and such an absolution would be *generally* regarded by them as superstitious, if not impious observances.

In the forms of Church Government there is a very great difference. In England there is an established Hierarchy of King, Archbishops, Bishops and Priests, and in Ecclesiastical matters there is a regular order of appeals from the lowest up to the highest jurisdiction. In this country the Episcopalians have (it is believed) no common supreme Ecclesiastical Tribunal. They have no visible Head of the Church, and no Archbishops; and the Bishops of each Diocese is the highest tribunal for that Diocese.

Before the Reformation or Religious Revolution in England the legislative authority in all ecclesiastical matters belonged, subject to the approbation of the Holy See, to the Clergy of the Realm, that is, to the Archbishops, Bishops and Priests in

Convocation assembled. For some years after the Reformation such convocations were in fact assembled. But by statute 25 Henry 8th Chapter 19, it was enacted that the Convocation should not make or execute any canons or ordinances without his Majesty's licence and assent to make and execute the same, and that the King should have power to appoint 32 Commissioners, of whom half should be clergymen and half of the *Upper or Lower House of Parliament*, and these were empowered to abrogate and frustrate such of the existing canons and ordinances as they by his assent should deem proper.

By this and subsequent Statutes, the authority of the convocation was so effectually transferred to the crown, that the convocation itself became wholly impotent and useless, and for more than a century has never transacted any business. The last which did act was in the year 1717, in the reign of George I., when the proceedings turned chiefly upon two publications of Bishop Hoadley, the one entitled, "a preservative against the principles and practices of the non-jurors," and the other a Sermon "on the nature of the kingdom of Christ." While the convocation was engaged in discussing the report of a committee censuring these publications as "tending to impeach the royal supremacy in causes Ecclesiastical, and the authority of the Legislature to enforce obedience in matters of religion by civil sanctions," the discussion was silenced by a Royal Prerogative, and those ecclesiastical synods for all practical purposes have since ceased to exist. In the U. States, according to the discipline of the Protestant Episcopal Church, the legislative authority over all ecclesiastical matters, is exercised in each diocese by a diocesan synod or convention, constituted of the bishop, the clergy, and certain lay delegates of the respective congregations of that diocese.—A convention is also held, which is called National, consisting of the bishops, clergy and lay delegates from the different dioceses, but its authority is understood to be consultatory or recommendatory merely. Its decrees or decisions do not bind *per se*, but bind only through the sanction of the conventions of the several dioceses.

But if the church of England, and the Protestant Episcopal church of the United States could be regarded as constituting but *one church*—what would be their united claim to be termed the Catholic church of Christendom? The former is exclusively confined to the subjects of Great Britain, and the latter comprehends only American citizens. Neither is in communion with the church of any other country. It cannot be stated with precision, what is the number of persons who belong, or claim to belong to them, but it may be sufficiently ascertained, for the purpose of testing their right to this distinctive appellation. The population of England and Wales, according to the latest statistical accounts that have fallen into my hands, was stated at about 16 millions. In a report of the British reformation Society held at London in 1830, it was set forth that upwards of 1 million of Catholics were to be found in England. They probably