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Book 117

STRUGGLES AND TRIUMPHS OF RELIGIOUS LIBERTY.

AN

HISTORICAL SURVEY

OF

CONTROVERSIES PERTAINING TO THE RIGHTS OF CON-
SCIENCE, FROM THE ENGLISH REFORMATION TO
THE SETTLEMENT OF NEW ENGLAND.

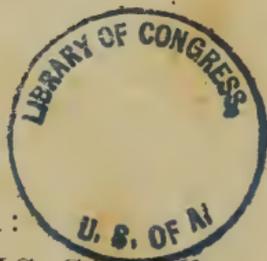
BY

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LONDON.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION

BY SEWALL S. CUTTING.



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P R E F A C E.

A FEW years ago a society was formed in England, called the "Hanserd Knollys Society,"—so named in honor of a distinguished Baptist minister of the 17th century,—“for the Publication of the Works of Early English and other Baptist Writers.” The first volume issued by this society appeared in 1846, under the title, “Tracts on Liberty of Conscience and Persecution, 1614—1661.” The second volume, issued in 1847, contained “the Records of a Church of Christ, meeting in Broadmead, Bristol, 1640—1687.” Since then have appeared successively, a reprint of the first editions of the first and second parts of the “Pilgrim’s Progress,” by John Bunyan, the “Bloody Tenent,” by Roger Williams, and the “Necessitie of Separation,” by John Canne. These works, all of them of great historical interest and value, are thè more valuable for the amount of diligent editorial labor which has been bestowed upon these elegant editions. It is to be regretted, that they have attained no wider circulation in this country. A few copies only have been circulated from the American Baptist Publication Society in Philadelphia. Even our public libraries are generally without them.

The “Tracts,” the “Broadmead Records,” and the “Bloody Tenent,” were edited by Edward B. Underhill, Esq. From the Introductions to these volumes the Historical Survey contained in the following pages has been taken. The introduction to the “Bloody Tenent” is, in strictness, Biographical, but the omission of many personal details not connected with the design of the present publication, gives it sufficiently an historical character, and renders it a fitting conclusion to the volume. It

brings down the survey of controversies to the settlement of New England, from which point a new work should start, illustrating the progress of religious liberty in this country.

The present writer has given some attention to this subject, with a view to such an undertaking. The materials are abundant, and are not wanting in interest. Massachusetts and Virginia furnished the great battle-fields where the contest was most violent, but through nearly all the older states there were strifes sufficiently earnest and significant. The authority of magistrates over the conscience was, both as a doctrine and a practice, too thoroughly a part of English national life, to be expelled from the forming institutions of this Western World, without long debate. Those who suffered for conscience' sake, —who declared steadfastly, through successive generations, the principles of religious liberty which Roger Williams affirmed and illustrated in Rhode Island, and won at last signal and glorious triumphs, most certainly merit a record of their deeds. Such a record, written in a spirit of candor and discrimination, and after a full examination of all available sources of information, it may be believed, would be welcomed by our countrymen, as an important contribution to our history. The present writer is not prepared to pledge himself to such an attempt; but should no abler hand undertake it, and should Divine Providence give him life and leisure, he may, at some future period, present such an offering to the public.

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INTRODUCTION.

WHOEVER looks abroad over these American States observes the workings of institutions such as have never before blessed the world. Not till the darkness of the Middle Ages had yielded to the rising dawn of the new and better Ages succeeding;—not till Feudalism was giving place to doctrines and actual developments in which Human Rights were recognized, did it please God to discover to the civilized world this Western Hemisphere, and to lay here the foundations of new Empires. How marked too was the presence of his guiding Hand in partitioning this Hemisphere among those who struggled for the prize! That portion which lay nearest the Old World was unquestionably the most important;—it had not indeed mountains whose bowels yielded silver, nor streams whose waters washed out gold, but it had a genial clime and a productive soil, capacious harbors and far-reaching inland water-courses, with a broad, unmeasured, and unimagined interior, capable of sustaining the population of Europe five times told. Into whose hands should it fall? By what people should it be settled, and whose institutions should find here opportunities for boundless development? It was a critical period in the history of the world. Suppose for one moment that Spain had won the prize,—Spain, rich, proud, the first of European States in material possessions and in rank, but at the same time most bigoted of all in obsequiousness to Rome,—dry, like Gideon's fleece, amid the dews of the Reformation,*—and sworn to an everlasting war against civil and religious freedom! Or suppose that this portion of the Continent had become the possession of France, which, standing for a while poised between the Reformation and the Roman Apostasy, at length fell back to the latter, and wedded herself anew to the work of human enslavement! Both sought the coveted acquisition. Spain planted her standard amid the luxuriant flowers of the South, and France believed that the lilies of Bourbon would grow on the cold shores of the St. Lawrence. Spain sent her pioneers along the Gulf of Mexico to the Mississippi, and France with equal zeal established posts along the

* Macaulay.

Northern Lakes, and far down the same great river of the West. These powers had belted the Eastern half of the Continent, and its partition between them was the only prospect which opened to the human eye. Alas for the world if such had been the fate of America! But Divine Providence was at this very time training another people to become the possessors of this wide domain. The Reformation had stirred the English mind to its depths. Looking back now upon the history of England for centuries preceding the period of which we are speaking, we are able to see in the commingling of races and of institutions, and specially in the demands for a purer worship which had often sprung from the people, and in the recognition and settlement of great and immutable principles of law which had agitated Parliaments and Courts, the progress of a Providential discipline which prepared England to become Protestant. True, she did not become so without long struggles in Church and State. Parties of the Old Learning and the New contended violently for the mastery, and through successive generations confessors and patriots bore their dying testimonies at the stake and on the scaffold. But the principles of civil and religious liberty had found a place in the English mind from which they could not be dislodged. Every struggle, whatever the immediate issue, was a triumph on the side of freedom. Principles are more powerful than arms, and the contest is never doubtful. When England accepted the Reformation,—and England, as God had trained her, could not do otherwise,—she committed herself to the glorious destiny which she has fulfilled. She became the Mistress of Nations, and under God the Regenerator and Hope of the world.

To England, pledged to such a mission, God gave for the time this Western domain. His purposes, however, could not then be foreseen. Those whom the mother country sent hither, some as exiles and some as adventurers, brought with them the agitations which rent society at home, and out of which were to be eliminated the principles and the institutions of freedom. The scenes amid which they planted themselves, the occupations to which their necessities gave rise, the opportunities for popular government which their Charters secured and their condition rendered indispensable, all conspired to carry forward the developments of freedom more rapidly than was possible in the land which the colonists had left. And now the purposes of Providence became apparent. The Reformation was not more a necessity to England, than was the Revolution to the Colonies. That Revolution lay along the path of inevitable destiny. It gave to a Continent the institutions of which the Reformation in England was the prophecy and the pledge. It consecrated this wide and glorious domain to the illustration of civil and religious liberty.

It requires an effort of attention, and a comparison of our condition with that of the people of other countries, to estimate justly the blessings of our freedom. It is a freedom limited and regulated by law, but the limitations and regulations lie just at those points beyond which freedom becomes anarchy and a curse. It is the inalienable right of every American citizen to seek his own happiness in his own way, provided only that he shall not invade the equal rights of his neighbors. Every sphere of life is open to every man. The largest wealth, the highest stations, are the fair prizes for which all are the equally protected competitors. As matters of fact, our merchant-princes and our Senators and Presidents are often from humble spheres of life, and have worked their way to wealth and rank by the force of talents exercised where opportunities were free. Our institutions are precisely in harmony with man's nature, and meet his conscious wants. They invite him to progress, and have their best illustration when he avails himself most of the privileges which they furnish.

It is not so in the older nations. There are seats of power which it would be treason to attempt to reach even by honorable means. The avenues to wealth and even to knowledge are obstructed by oppressive restrictions, and society is divided into castes by barriers which it is scarcely possible to surmount. And this whole frame-work of oppression is held together by the presence of a military force, which, under the pretext of defending against invasion from abroad, really is maintained to preserve the thrones of tyrants and the ascendancy of privileged classes at home. The foreigner coming to our shores finds it difficult to put himself fully in sympathy with his new condition. Our equality of rights and opportunities is to him a new experience, and amid the absence of a military force he wonders what holds our society together. At length he learns that the conservative forces of American society are spiritual,—that the spirit of freedom is likewise the spirit of law,—that an intelligent and virtuous community of free-men will maintain social quietness and order, by a law WITHIN as un-failing as that law of the material world which holds the planets in their steady pathway around the sun. There may be, there are, crimes against peace and order, and there must be laws and constabulary forces for the lawless and disturbers of the peace, but it is not these laws and forces which maintain the quietness of our great family of free citizens. Never was there a government where so little outward force was seen,—never one where so little was needed. The secret lies in the fact that here man has attained and understands his rights; he has attained true freedom, the very spirit of which is reverential to law.

But it was not our purpose to speak at length of *civil* freedom. Our *religious* freedom is even more our distinction and honor. It is FREEDOM. Other lands may boast of TOLERATION; we boast of FREEDOM. None with us has the right or the power to *tolerate*. There is neither magistrate nor priest of their great clemency to *permit* A to be an Episcopalian, or B to be a Presbyterian, or C to be a Baptist, or D to be a Roman Catholic. They are the one or the other because as FREEMEN they are so persuaded, and because, under responsibility to God only, they so CHOOSE to be. Such is the religious liberty of these States. No denomination is patronized,—none is proscribed. The State confines its jurisdiction to civil affairs only, and so long as its peace is preserved, leaves the domain of Conscience to the unshared supremacy of its rightful Lord. With us the State and the Church have learned respectively their spheres, and each confines itself within its own realm. Our institutions can boast no higher honor than the solution of this problem. To many foreigners it is a marvel that the State can preserve order without the organized alliance of the Church as a moral police, and not less a marvel that the Church can thrive without drawing patronage and aid from the State. To us it is no marvel. The State derives aid from the Church unquestionably, but derives that aid only as the Church untrammelled and free promotes sentiments of piety and virtue among the people. Purer because she is free, she for that reason thrives best and accomplishes most. Her very freedom quickens thought, and awakens energy, and incites to prayer, and her power to conserve the State can be illustrated and known only when the last link which binds her to the State is sundered. She demands the right to declare a free gospel to free consciences, and having that she demands no more. The support of her ministry and worship she will derive from the willing offerings of those whom her teachings bless.

How happy our lot is in respect to religious freedom is seen, as in the former instance, by comparing our condition with that of the people of other, and even the most favored nations. The rising Baptists of Germany, for no other crime than their faith, have been subjected to fines, imprisonment and banishment, and even while we write are enduring these vexations and wrongs. Baptists have shared the same fate in Denmark, and the banishment of a Baptist minister from Sweden is fresh in the recollection of the reader as an item of recent news. France has belied her clamorous boasts of republicanism as much by petty persecutions at home as by crushing the rising liberties of Italy. But it is not necessary to seek out special instances of persecution to illustrate the wide differences between our condition and that of nations where the Church is connected with the State. The

whole system of religious establishments is evil only ; and when it ceases to be a persecution it becomes a bribe. Under such establishments religious freedom in its broadest and truest sense is an impossibility, and the compulsory taxes which wring from Dissenters the stipends with which priests whom they never hear, and whose doctrines they do not believe, are paid, are among the minor evils of such a connection. It is not necessary to allude to Catholic countries where penalties follow the slightest indications of free thought, or to recur to the history of those times when the Inquisition sought victims for the rack, and the souls of martyrs ascended to heaven amid the flames by which their bodies were consumed.

It is perhaps sufficiently plain, and is generally recognized, that our institutions are a growth of many ages,—the fruits of contests carried on through successive generations. It may be doubted, however, whether the stages of the growth, and the histories of particular contests, are as well understood as is desirable,—whether indeed we should not prize far more highly our “goodly heritage,” and render a warmer tribute of gratitude for it, if we more distinctly recognized the actors and the incidents in the Struggles and Triumphs of Religious Liberty. Our special liability is to overlook the earlier struggles, and the noble bravery of the earlier combatants. We venture to say that it is a limited number, of even intelligent readers, who are accustomed to trace the progress of civil freedom farther back than the Revolution of 1688, or at farthest than the period of the contests with Charles I. and the overthrow of the monarchy. True, they carry in their recollection the testimony borne in general phrases, as in Hume, that England is indebted for the liberties of her people, more to the Puritans than to any other class or party, but a search into the grounds on which such testimony is borne,—an inquiry into the circumstances of the rise of the Puritans,—the principles which they affirmed,—the parties into which they themselves were divided,—their relations to the State,—the struggles through which they passed in their earlier collisions with the ruling powers,—their sufferings as patriots of whom the world was not worthy, and the steady triumphs which prepared them for the more notable events of the seventeenth century ; these are matters too often regarded with indifference and overlooked.

It is so likewise in relation to religious liberty. There are multitudes who, though they may have read of earlier demands for the rights of conscience, have nevertheless no distinct apprehension of hard contests for religious freedom previous to those which brought the Pilgrims to Plymouth Rock. The first great shock, in which the inalienable rights of free consciences were fully and distinctly affirmed against the remnants of tyranny which still lingered among the best

of English Protestants, is most generally supposed to have occurred *on these shores*, when Roger Williams confronted the powers of Church and State in Massachusetts. Even Bancroft, in his warm eulogy of the Baptists as the true champions of intellectual freedom, accounts Roger Williams as a discoverer of principles, and writes his name by the side of those of Kepler and Newton.* The truth, however, is that the contest in the colony of Massachusetts Bay was an imported contest; it came, with all its distinctly recognized principles, across the Atlantic in the breasts of men who had fought the same battles in Holland and England. John Cotton and Roger Williams had had their teachers in such men as John Robinson and Thomas Helwys. Indeed, the whole series of struggles in behalf of religious freedom which had occurred in England since the Reformation, had been marked by developments of similar character. While the far greater part of those who claimed for themselves the right to worship God according to the demands of their own consciences, clung still to partial and inconsistent views, there were others, fewer in numbers perhaps and less influential, who had attained to clearer perceptions, and were the true lights of their times. The discussions which sprung up between these parties, and their common resistance to the tyranny of the State, had been steadily preparing the way for the developments of a later period. The course of human events is never accidental—never capricious; it is a connected series, and the men and events of one age are as the excitations and causes of preceding times have made them. The issues of the reign of James I. had been long in course of preparation; and John Robinson and John Cotton, Thomas Helwys and Roger Williams, were but the exponents and representatives of the long progress of opinion. It was the glory of the two last named, that the one gave full form and expression to the rights of conscience as an article of religious belief, and maintained his views with singular personal boldness and magnanimity—and of the other, that he stated and defended the doctrine of “soul-liberty” with great skill and force in his writings, and honorably illustrated it in the planting of a civil State where consciences, however diverse or eccentric, were never oppressed. That small territory, scarcely noticeable upon a map of the great confederacy of States of which it is now a part, has furnished the example of religious freedom which that confederacy has copied; and across this wide continent the millions of our people account it as their highest distinction and happiness to dwell under institutions

* Bancroft says, “He was the first person in modern Christendom to assert in its plenitude the doctrine of the liberty of conscience, the equality of opinions before the law, and in its defence he was the harbinger of Milton, the precursor and the superior of Jeremy Taylor.” [Vol. i., p. 375.]

which had their first illustration around the shores of Narragansett Bay.

The historical contributions herewith presented to the reader will be found of special value in relation to the point under notice. They illustrate those struggles for the rights of conscience which lie back of the more familiar contests of later times, and which had effected the indispensable preparations for the triumphs finally won. They recount the names and the deeds of the men who were in advance of their fellows in recognizing with clearness the principles of religious freedom, as they were likewise in advance in sufferings for their testimony. There will be found in these pages many interesting facts, brought to light by patient investigation, and a thoroughness of historical analysis which will aid in dispensing praise and blame in just measures. The reader will be able both to note with great distinctness the general progress of opinion, and to trace the movements of particular parties down to the time when the English nation was ripe for the Commonwealth, and prepared to plant on these Western shores the germs of those glorious institutions under which we live.

Though we are reluctant to detain the reader from the volume to which these remarks are only introductory, we think it not unsuitable to dwell for a moment upon the period immediately preceding the settlement of Massachusetts and the controversy with Roger Williams, in order to show, as we have before affirmed, that that controversy was no new one, but was essentially the same with that which the same parties, Baptists and Independents, had waged on the other side of the water.*

In the year 1611, the present English version of the Holy Scriptures was given to the world. The event constitutes an era in the world's history. That year has however another distinction which will make it ever memorable. In 1611 the Baptists issued a Confession of Faith in which they say, "that the magistrate is not to meddle with religion, or matters of conscience, nor compel men to this or that form of religion, because Christ is the King and Lawgiver of the Church and Conscience." The gift to the world of that version of the Holy Scriptures which has shed the light of salvation wherever the spirit of Anglo-Saxon adventure has borne the English tongue, and the announcement by a Christian denomination of that true liberty of conscience under which each man, as his inalienable birth-right, interprets that Word for himself and follows freely its biddings, were worthy to be contemporaneous events.

The tyranny of the English Establishment had driven a large num-

* Some of these thoughts were expressed by the writer in the *New York Recorder*, of which he was then editor, in February, 1848.

ber of worthy men into exile in Holland. Some of these were Baptists, some Independents,—fellow-sufferers for their testimony to the truth. Prominent among the former were John Smyth, a learned man, and once a clergyman of the Establishment, many years afterwards, and without any known authority, spoken of in derision by his enemies as a Se-Baptist,—that is, one who had baptized himself,*) and Thomas Helwys;—prominent among the latter was John Robinson, renowned over the world as the “father of the Pilgrims.” Mr. Smyth very soon died,—not however till he had written largely in favor of his new views, and with so much ability, that Bishop Hall tells Mr. Robinson: “There is no remedy; you must go forward to Anabaptism or back to us; all your Rabbins cannot answer the charge of your rebaptized brother. * * * He tells you true,—your station is unsafe; either you must go forward to him or come back to us.” That Mr. Smyth was a man of superior abilities is further indicated by the fact that Bishop Hall spoke of Mr. Robinson as no more than his “shadow.” Mr. Smyth was succeeded by Mr. Helwys. And what then do we hear of this Christian pastor and his brethren? Do they remain in their exile? No. Do they migrate to distant portions of the world to find a spot in the wilderness, where they may both assert and enjoy the rights of conscience in quietness? No. They determine “to challenge king and state to their faces, and not give way to them, no, not a foot.” Accordingly, hanging out their flag in the Confession to which we have referred, THEY RETURN TO THEIR OWN COUNTRY, to assert there their rights of conscience, and to suffer for them if need be. They believed that a conflict for the rights of conscience was imminent, and they were ready to participate in its dangers. Englishmen they were born, and Englishmen they would die. But in this movement they had not the sympathy of Mr. Robinson and his associates. So strong was the opposition from this source which they encountered, that in the year 1612, Mr. Helwys felt called upon to defend the return of the Baptists in a book which he published at that time. Among the considerations put forth in justification of their course, we find the following:—

“1. That fleeing from persecution hath been the overthrow of religion in this island; the best able and greater part being gone, and leaving behind them some few who, by the others’ departure, have had their afflictions and their contempt increased, hath been the cause of many falling back, and of their adversaries rejoicing.

“2. Great help and encouragement would it be to God’s people in affliction, imprisonment, and the like, to have their brethren’s presence to administer to their souls and bodies; and for which cause Christ

* This calumny has been of late successfully refuted by E. B. Underhill, Esq.

will say, 'I was in prison, and ye visited me; in distress, and ye comforted me.'"*

It would be difficult to find heroic conduct justified by more honorable motives.

If now we advance a little further, (1615,) we find these Baptists sending forth a volume entitled, "Objections: Answered by way of Dialogue, wherein is proved, By the Law of God, By the Law of our Land, and By his Majesty's [James I.] many testimonies, That no man ought to be persecuted for his religion, so he testify his allegiance by the Oath, appointed by Law." And what does the reader imagine to have been a special occasion for the production of this work? If not already aware of the fact, he will be surprised to learn that Mr. Robinson had put himself in opposition, not only to the return to England of the Baptists, but likewise to *their sentiments on the rights of conscience*. Though an exile himself for conscience' sake, his mind still held fast the doctrine of the magistrate's jurisdiction over spiritual matters; and he was ready to defend this doctrine against his Baptist brethren who at that very moment were "challenging king and state to their faces."

Let us then leave the Baptists contending for the rights of man, on their own soil, and amid the perils of persecution, and turn to the writings of Mr. Robinson here alluded to, which were sent forth from his more quiet asylum in Holland. His book, published in 1614, is entitled, "Of Religious Communion, Private and Public, With the silencing of the Clamours raised by Mr. Thomas Helwisse against our retaining the Baptism received in England; and administering of Baptism unto Infants. As also, A Survey of the Confession of Faith, published in certain Conclusions, by the remainder of Mr. Smyth's company."

The latter part only of the book concerns our present purpose. We are indebted for the extract to the Hanserd Knollys Society's edition of the "Objections" above named.† Mr. Robinson knows too well the perfect loyalty of his opponents, and their quiet and conscientious demeanor as good subjects and citizens, to indulge in the common calumny which charged them with insubordination and rebellion, but he insists that the Baptists are wrong in denying to the magistrate authority in matters of religion. He says:—

"They add, 'that the magistrate is not to meddle with religion, or matters of conscience, nor compel men to this or that form of religion, because Christ is the King and Lawgiver of the church and conscience, James iv. 12.'"

And will the "father of the Pilgrims" put himself in direct and

* See Benedict's *History of the Baptists*, Colby's ed. p. 330.

† Page 92.

formal opposition to this sound and comprehensive statement of the rights of conscience, and the prerogatives of Christ? He proceeds:—

“I answer, that this indeed proves that he may alter, devise, or establish nothing in religion *otherwise than Christ hath appointed*, but proves not that he may not use his *lawful power lawfully* for the furtherance of Christ’s kingdom and laws. The prophet Isaiah, speaking of the church of Christ, foretells that kings shall be her nursing fathers, and queens her nursing mothers; which, if they meddle not with her, how can they be? And where these men make this the magistrate’s only work, ‘that justice and civility may be preserved amongst men,’ the apostle teaches another end, which is, that we may lead a peaceable life under them in all godliness. It is true they have no power *against* the laws, doctrine, and religion of Christ; but *for* the same, if their power be of God, they may use it lawfully, and *against the contrary*. And so it was in special foretold by John, that the kings of the earth should make the whore desolate, and naked, and eat her flesh, and burn her with fire.

“This Mr. Helwisse frivolously interprets ‘of their spiritual weapons;’ which are no other than the spiritual weapons of all other Christians. Besides that, it is contrary to the clear meaning of the Holy Ghost, which is, that these kings should first use their civil power *for* the beast and whore, and after *against* them to their destruction.”

Thus wrote John Robinson,—not at this time only, for we have before us passages from other works of his in which kindred sentiments are held forth. Will the reader carefully examine what we have quoted? The magistrate may “use his *lawful power lawfully* for the furtherance of Christ’s kingdom and laws.” Magistrates “have no power *against* the laws, doctrine, and religion of Christ; but *for* the same, if their power be of God, they may use it lawfully, and *against the contrary*.” Was ever license for tyranny over souls granted in broader terms? Who but the magistrate himself shall determine the lawful use of power, what are the laws and kingdom of Christ, and what the contrary? And then how significant the illustration which Mr. Robinson cites from “the kings of the earth,” with the protest that “spiritual weapons” are *not* intended! “These kings should first use their civil power *for* the beast and whore, and after *against* them to their destruction.” In other words, if Mr. Robinson’s views of prophecy were such as the use of the illustration would indicate, it was designed and authorized by the Almighty, that as the civil authorities had built up Mohammedanism and the Papacy by persecuting the saints, so now the civil authorities might turn around and burn Mohammedans and Papists, and—which was the doctrine to be deduced

—by a fair inference inflict penalties on all varieties of heresy! The persecutions of New England were but the practical exemplification of these teachings.

Let not the reader, however, imagine that we determine our estimate of the character of John Robinson by his opinions on the authority of magistrates. He was a good man,—an honor to the noble race who hail him as a spiritual father. If it were our purpose to vindicate his character,—as certainly it is not our purpose to defame it,—the materials are abundant. Few men have made a deeper impression on the world; fewer still an impression so largely beneficent. We say only that on the point under notice he was in error, and at a time when the antagonists whom he affected to despise as “ignorant” and “frivolous,” were pouring upon him a flood of light which he strangely failed to recognize. From him we turn to the testimony of those antagonists, referring the reader to a few striking passages in the book which the Baptists sent forth in reply to this animadversion upon their faith. How wide the difference! How honorable to them the contrast!

“The power and authority of the king is earthly, and God hath commanded me to submit to all ordinances of man, and therefore I have faith to submit to what ordinances of man soever the king commands, if it be a human ordinance and not against the manifest word of God; let him require what he will, I must of conscience obey him, with my body, goods, and all that I have. *But my soul*, wherewith I am to worship God, *that* belongeth to ANOTHER KING, whose kingdom is not of this world; whose people must come willingly; whose weapons are not carnal, but spiritual. (Hanserd Knollys Society’s edition, p. 107.)

“I acknowledge unfeignedly that God hath given to magistrates a sword to cut off wicked men, and to reward the well-doers. But this ministry is a worldly ministry, their sword is a worldly sword, their punishments can extend no further than the outward man, they can but kill the body. And therefore this ministry and sword is appointed only to punish the breach of worldly ordinances, WHICH IS ALL THAT GOD HATH GIVEN TO ANY MORTAL MAN TO PUNISH. The king may make laws for the safety and good of his person, state, and subjects, against the which whoever is disloyal or disobedient, he may dispose of at his pleasure. The Lord hath given him this sword of authority, foreseeing in his eternal wisdom, that if this, his ordinance of magistracy were not, there would be no living for men in the world, and especially for the godly; and therefore the godly have particular cause to glorify God for this, his blessed ordinance of magistracy, and to regard it with all reverence.

“But now the breach of Christ’s laws, of the which we all this while speak, which is the only thing I stand upon; his kingdom is spiritual, his laws spiritual, the transgression spiritual, the punishment spiritual, everlasting death of soul, his sword spiritual, NO CARÑAL OR WORLDLY WEAPON IS GIVEN TO THE SUPPORTATION OF HIS KINGDOM. (Ib. pp. 121, 122.)

“Magistracy is God’s blessed ordinance in its right place; but let us not be wiser than God to devise him a means for the publishing of his gospel, which he that had all power had not, nor hath commanded. Magistracy is a power of this world; the kingdom, power, subjects and means of publishing the gospel, are not of this world. (Ib. p. 133.)

“If I do take any authority from the king’s majesty, let me be judged worthy my desert; but if I defend the authority of Christ Jesus over men’s souls, which appertaineth to no mortal man whatsoever, then know you, that whosoever would rob him of the honor which is not of this world, he will tread them under foot. Earthly authority belongeth to earthly kings; but spiritual authority belongeth to that one spiritual King who is KING OF KINGS.” (Ib. p. 134.)

Well spoken all,—and we commend to the special attention of all those who think it necessary to defend the Puritans by decrying the early Baptists as ignorant, fanatical, and disturbers of the civil peace, the unanswerable argumentations by which these positions were supported. We regret to say that Mr. Robinson was not convinced, for we find him at a later day (1625,) affirming still the authority of magistrates in matters of religion.

Such were the relations of the Baptists of that early period to the party which most nearly sympathized with them. They had taken bolder strides,—they had attained the true idea of religious freedom, and had thus clearly and vigorously stated it to the world. But the days of their suffering for conscience’ sake were not yet ended. The followers of John Robinson crossed the Atlantic, and they and the Baptists soon met again on the shores of New-England. The sword of the magistrate was now held by those who held Robinson’s principles, and the Baptists at an early day felt its edge. The struggle was a protracted one, but truth was mightier than the sword, and in the end the principles of religious liberty, which were a part of Baptist faith, triumphed and became the crowning glory of our institutions.

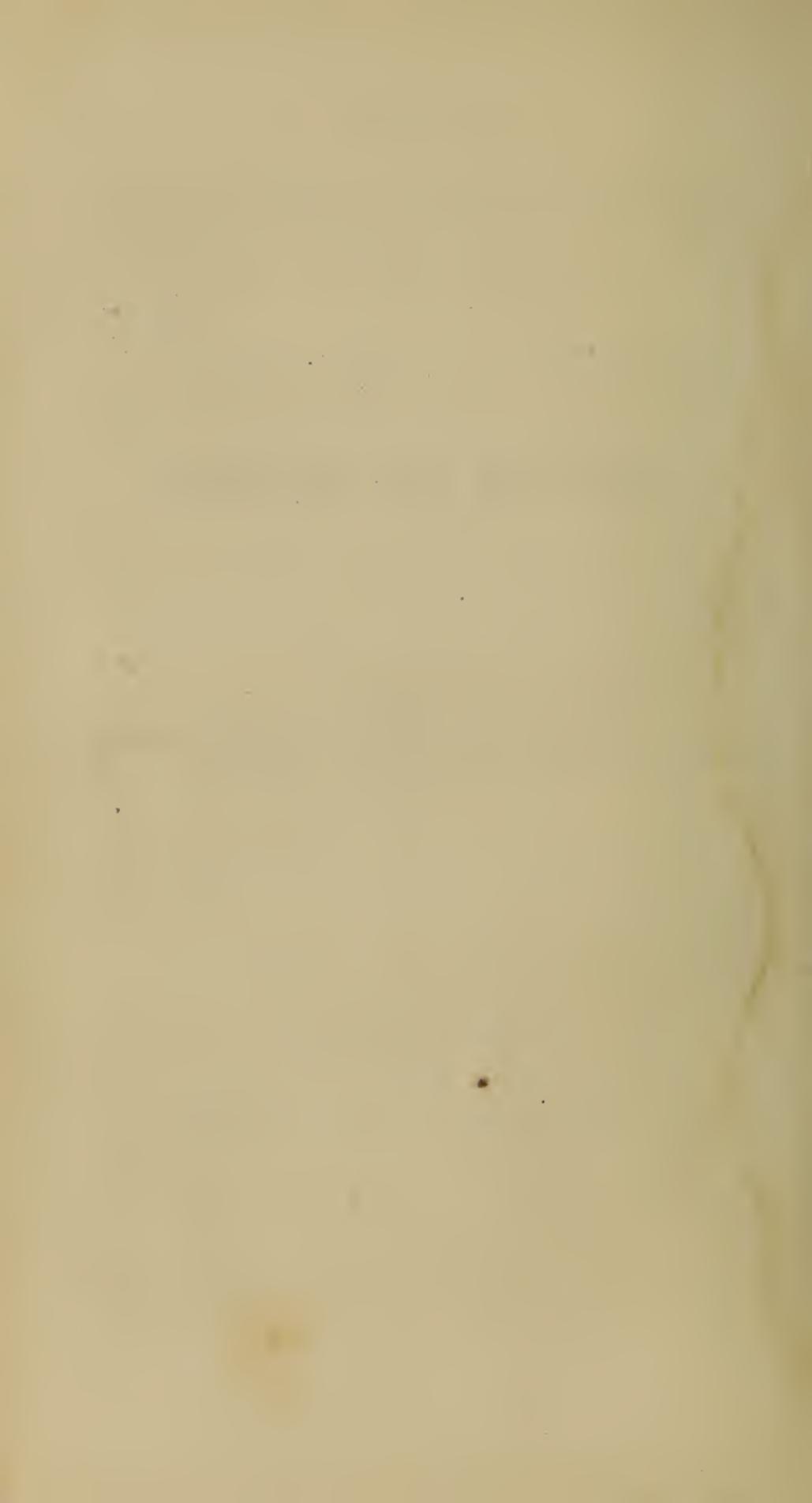
SEWALL S. CUTTING.

NEW YORK, April 1, 1851.

STRUGGLES AND TRIUMPHS

OF

RELIGIOUS LIBERTY.



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SECTION I.

HENRY VIII.

AMIDST the many eminent and remarkable events that signalized the rise and establishment of the Reformation in England—next after the introduction of the word of God, translated, and for the first time printed in the language of the people, in the year 1526, by the martyr Tyndale—there is not one of greater moment, nor so productive of large and continuing results, as the transference to the reigning sovereign of the ecclesiastical authority till then exercised by the pope. The exaltation of the royal prerogative above all ecclesiastical claims, and the imposition of a form of belief, accordant with the convictions or policy of the secular magistrate, were leading features of that great movement. To this, duty, based on a supposed right, sternly called him, even should it lead to the forfeiture of the life of a conscientious opponent. Thus in every country where the Reformation took root, and flourished, the church became subordinate to the civil power. The royalties of Jesus Christ were swallowed up in the *regale* of human potentates.

It is not within our object to relate the tortuous policy unremittingly pursued by noble, priest, and king, during the

early part of the sixteenth century, by which the way was prepared for the bringing in of the reformed doctrines; nor to mark those preliminary steps, which, terminating in the fall of Cardinal Wolsey, who had exercised a more than papal authority over the land, ushered in a complete change in the religious policy of the state.

But taking up at this point our national history, we shall briefly sketch, from its rise to its settlement in 1603, that interference of the secular power in the things of God, which has proved itself to be alike fatal to liberty of conscience, and to the scriptural form and purity of the church of Christ.

It is not improbable that the ambitious cardinal, failing in all his efforts to obtain the triple crown, and foiled at his own weapons by the very parties he was endeavoring to cajole, had at last conceived the idea of erecting an ecclesiastical authority in England which should be free from papal control.* In the matter of the divorce of Henry from Queen Katharine, he had sought to obtain unlimited powers. He wished that the sentence of his legatine court should be final, subject neither to the revision nor to the reversal of the pope.†

But "his last and highest office as vicar-general, had brought into this kingdom a species of authority, altogether unknown; and in doing this, he had put a cup to the lips of his royal master, and afforded him one taste, for the first time, of the sweetness of dominion over all the clergy of the kingdom."‡

In the cardinal's service had been trained Thomas Cromwell. For some time his employment was that of secretary: but he had been particularly useful to his master, in the suppression of certain monasteries, the revenues of which

* Tyndale's Practice of Prelates. Works. vol. i. p. 480. Russell's edit.

† Dodd's Church History, vol. i. p. 103. Tierney's edition.

‡ Anderson's Annals of the English Bible, vol. i. p. 224.

were devoted to the establishment of Wolsey's colleges at Oxford and Ipswich. By and by we shall find him acting as vicar-general also, and following, with no mean results, in the steps of his predecessor.

The authority exercised by the cardinal, as legate *à latere*, especially in the celebrated trial of Queen Katharine, was the proximate cause of his fall. This power, having its existence in the arrogant claims of the papacy, had been often a matter of parliamentary interference, denunciation, and enactment; and was therefore exercised in defiance of the law. But those statutes were inoperative. "Several cardinals before Wolsey had procured, and executed with impunity, a legatine power which was clearly contrary to them;" and, in his case, with the full knowledge and approbation of the king, who had even granted letters patent to Wolsey, freeing him from the legal consequences of this breach of the nation's law.* This, however, mattered not; Wolsey must fall, and with him the papal supremacy. That fall made way for the elevation of his servant Cromwell, the instrument in the hand of God to overthrow the domination of Rome.

Many things also conspired to render the assumption of a regal sovereignty over the church, palatable to all classes of the community. The adherents of the *new* learning, a rapidly increasing section of the people, of course saw without regret the papal tiara trodden in the mire. To them such an event appeared as the "beginning of days," as "life from the dead." Their conviction of the religious errors of Rome, and their attachment to the life-giving truths of the scriptures, just put so providentially into their hands, led them to hail with joy the dethronement of antichrist. Experience had not taught them, as it has their posterity, how bitter are the streams that flow from the fountain of ecclesiastical

* Burnet's Hist. of Reformation, vol. i. p. 204. 8vo. edit. Oxford.

authority and power, when diluted and measured out by regal hands.

Not much less desirable, though for other reasons, did this assumption appear to the adherents of the *old* learning. The nation had through long centuries sighed and groaned, uttering often inarticulate moanings, while suffering the intolerable exactions of the papal see. Its wealth was forever flowing into the coffers of the church, enriching a gorgeous ceremonial, and gloating an idle priesthood. All classes were impoverished by the innumerable levies made upon them. Crowds of cowed monks, barefooted friars, and Sir priests, of innumerable grades,* lined the avenues of heaven and hell, to tax earth's pilgrims, stumbling on their way, to those regions of joy and woe. And again, these publicans and tax-gatherers, were themselves taxed, and their merchandise of souls excised, to sustain the triple crown in its grandeur, and in its pride.† Good Catholics mourned over this, and longed for some relief.

The papacy itself had lost much of its former power and dread. But a few years since, and Rome, the "holy of holies" of Christendom, had been pillaged, and the pope, its high priest, a prisoner. And now its bulls and its briefs, its anathemas and its blessings, were alike unheeded by the nations, except so far as policy dictated their observance, or desired their fragment of influence. Mightier than human words were being uttered with unwonted power, and souls were emancipated from the chains of error and superstition.

The king's cherished project of a divorce from Katharine of Arragon, his queen, seemed also on the point of failing.

* "For there one sort are your grace, your holiness, your fatherhood; another my lord bishop, my lord abbot, my lord prior; another master doctor, father, bachelor, master parson, master vicar, and at the last cometh in simple Sir John."—Tyndale's Pract. of Prelates. Works, vol. i. p. 396.

† Ibid. p. 433

The pope, now subject to the wishes of the emperor Charles the Fifth, the uncle of the queen, dared not pronounce a judgment in Henry's favor. Universities, English and foreign, had in vain determined from scripture and canon law, the unlawfulness of his marriage with his brother's wife, and the invalidity of the pope's dispensation to authorize the same; Rome was silent. That divorce was destined to pluck the fairest jewel of the papal tiara from its gorgeous setting, "*To the intent that the living may know that the MOST HIGH ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the BASEST OF MEN.*"*

The House of Commons, after seven years' repose, was summoned to meet in 1529. It evinced much determination to limit the extortions and immunities, so long, and so profitably to the papacy, submitted to. Their short session of about six weeks, was signalized by a bold and successful attack upon some of the leading sources of clerical wealth. Certain bills for the correction of the abuses of ecclesiastical power, were passed, and soon laid before the Lords; but they left not the hands of the Commons "without severe reflections on the vices and corruptions of the clergy of that time; which were believed to flow from men who favored Luther's doctrine in their hearts."† It was not without much debate, and opposition from the clergy, the conservators of all profitable abuses, that the bills were suffered to pass; Fisher, bishop of Rochester, bitterly complaining, that "the charge of abuses on the hierarchy proceeded from disaffection, and that nothing would content the Commons, but pulling down the church."

This disaffection must have proceeded to some considerable extent, even to something like free-thinking, if a notable

* Dan. iv. 17.

† Burnet, History of Reformation, i. 149. Collier's Eccles. Hist. iv. 131. 8vo. edit.

speech, recorded by Herbert, may be taken as an indication of what was passing in thoughtful minds; "Because the chief business of man's life," says this unnamed member of the Commons, "is to inquire into the means of being happy forever, it is fit he should not resign himself to chance, but carefully compute upon the qualities and conduct of his spiritual guides. . . . Every man may collect the more essential and demonstrative parts of his own religion, and lay them by themselves. Neither ought he to be overruled in his freedom by the discountenance of any other persuasion. Having thus exerted his reason, and implored the assistance of the Supreme Being, his next business will be to find out what inward means Providence has furnished for a test of truth and falsehood. . . . Clear universal truths should be first ascertained; they will never check the progress of our faith, nor weaken the authority of the church. So that whether the eastern or the western Christians, whether my lord of Rochester or Luther, whether Eccius or Zuinglius, Erasmus or Melancthon, are in the right, we of the laity shall suffer nothing by the disagreement."* A sign truly, was such language as this, of a coming change. Superstitions were relaxing their grasp; a new era was about to dawn upon the prostrate religion and liberty of man. For once, the church was verily in danger; it was the distant flash of the approaching storm. Once more parliament prohibited all suits to the court of Rome for dispensations on non-residence and pluralities, and this time not without effect. It is the first successful blow at the papal supremacy in England.

The time is come for its overthrow. Another power, as much opposed to liberty of conscience, will gather up the fragments, and, having fashioned them anew, rule for centuries more in the temple of God. Cromwell's services to

* Collier, iv. 132-134.

Wolsey are nearly at an end, and he must seek another master. Not an unfaithful servant, nor wanting in diligence, he had not failed to profit in the service of ambition, chicanery, and intrigue. He has a secret of state-craft worth communicating; to no one more valuable than to Henry, now styled by papal grace, "Defender of the Faith." . . . "And, forasmuch, as now his majesty had to do with the pope, his great enemy, there was in all England none so apt for the king's purpose, which could say or do more in that matter, than could Thomas Cromwell." The necessity of the case puts the king's hatred of this "apt" man in abeyance; and an interview, the germ of many future things, is had in the king's "garden at Westminster, which was about the year of our Lord 1530."

After his "most loyal obeisance, doing duty to the king," Cromwell proceeds to make especially "manifest unto his highness, how his princely authority was abused, within his own realm, by the pope and his clergy; who, being sworn unto him, were afterwards dispensed the same, and sworn anew unto the pope, so that he was as but half king, and they but half his subjects, in his own land; which was derogatory to his crown, and utterly prejudicial to the common laws of his realm. Declaring therefore how his majesty might accumulate to himself great riches, so much as all the clergy in his realm was worth, if it so pleased him to take the occasion now offered." Advice this, admirably adapted to be "right well liked" by the royal listener; nor was the occasion suffered to pass without its due and profitable improvement.*

With the parliament of 1531, just previous to which this memorable interview took place, the clergy also assembled in convocation. The first subject laid before them was Henry's divorce, which was quickly despatched, the clergy seeming

* Fox's Acts and Monuments, ii. 1076. edit. 1610.

satisfied that the marriage was unlawful. A far more weighty question, one that touched their spiritual gains and immunities, remained behind. At the close of the year preceding, an indictment had been brought into the king's bench against the clergy of England, for breaking the statutes against provisors. A little while before, and cardinal Wolsey had fallen beneath the penalties of a *premunire* for illegally exercising his legatine authority; now, all who had appeared in his courts, or who in any way had acknowledged his unconstitutional power, were involved in his guilt, and its consequent forfeiture.* The king is but "following the vein" of Cromwell's counsel; nor is he slow in availing himself of the aid of his counsellor.

By whom can the rising wrath of the astonished clergy, at this bold invasion of their time-sanctioned immunities and jurisdiction, be sooner calmed, than by the man whose suggestions threatened to evoke a storm of hierarchical indignation, before whose blast princes and potentates had often fled away? Shall ecclesiastical power and assumption again rise superior to royal and parliamentary control? Will the *new ropes* be again broken *like a thread* from off the arms† of this

"Giant of mighty bone, and bold emprise?"—*Milton*.

Nay, its hour is come! "Cromwell entering with the king's signet into the clergy-house, and then placing himself among the bishops, began to make his oration—Declaring unto them the authority of a king, and the office of subjects, and especially the obedience of bishops and churchmen under public laws, necessarily provided for the profit and quiet of the commonwealth. Which laws, notwithstanding, they had all transgressed and highly offended, in derogation of the king's royal estate, falling in the law of *premunire*, in that not only they had consented to the power legatine of the cardinal,

* Burnet. i. 194.

† Judges xvi. 12.

but also in that they had all sworn to the pope, contrary to the fealty of their sovereign lord and king; and therefore had forfeited to the king all their goods, chattels, lands, possessions, and whatsoever livings they had. The bishops hearing this, were not a little annoyed, and first began to excuse and deny the fact; but after that Cromwell had shown them the very copy of their oath, made to the pope at their consecration, and the matter was so plain that they could not deny it, they began to shrink and to fall to entreaty, desiring respite to pause upon the matter.”*

Resistance was in vain—popular feeling was against them—old attachments, the very superstitions on which they had fattened, now availed them nothing—every compassionate emotion for their pitiable condition was swallowed up in the one absorbing idea of their rapacity and licentiousness;—by the one they had exasperated the people, by the other loosened all sense of moral and religious obligation. Submission was the only course open to them, and to save their lands and livings, a grant, by way of composition, was proposed of some hundred and eighteen thousand pounds. “But now a question rose, compared with which, the entire substance of the whole body, their goods and chattels, their lands and livings, were but like the drop of a bucket, or the small dust of the balance; a question which was to affect not England alone, but Great Britain and Ireland, with all their dependencies in other quarters of the world, for many generations. The anticipated moment had now arrived when it was convenient to divulge that no subsidy would be accepted, unless his majesty were acknowledged in the petition or address as ‘Head of the Church.’”†

The immediate concurrence of the clergy could not be expected to this important and far-reaching measure. They

* Fox's Acts and Mon. ii. 1066.

† Anderson, Annals, &c. i. 292, 293.

demurred as to the meaning of the words. Misunderstandings, they said, might arise in future years, of a phrase so general, and dangerous consequences would probably result. For three days, in secret conclave, they debated the matter, with hot words and strife. To hasten their decision, further penalties were freely threatened by Lord Rochford, Cromwell, and others of the king's council. The sense of the house was at last called for by archbishop Warham—the last of Catholic archbishops. Most were silent. He told them, "Silence implied consent." "Then we are all silent," was the reply. A more explicit resolution was ultimately agreed upon, the king was acknowledged to be "Supreme Lord and Protector," and also, as far as is consistent with the laws of the gospel, "Supreme Head of the Church of England."*

Yet were they extremely unwilling to acknowledge, to themselves or others, the true character of this fatal concession. They avoided all recognition of the compulsory nature of the subsidy, so reluctantly granted to the king. It was only a benevolence or gratuity, an evidence of their gratitude, particularly for the king's book against Luther, his active suppression of heresies, and his gracious interference in checking the insults of the Lutheran party. As for their submission, it was "not only penned with a salvo, but thrown into a parenthesis, as if it came in only by the by." Any reference to the *premunire*, or to the legatine authority of Wolsey, their submission to which had prepared the way for this sore humiliation, was most carefully eschewed. Nine bishops, sixty-two abbots and priors, with eighty-four of the clergy of the province of Canterbury, carried this obnoxious measure.†

The convocation at York, led by Tunstal, the bishop of Durham, the archbishopric being then vacant, yielded not so soon to the king's demand. This prelate protests against the

* Collier, iv. 178.

† Ibid. iv. 179.

measure. He intimates that some heretics had already questioned the jurisdiction of their ordinaries, and sought to escape the censures of the church, by appealing to the supposed higher authority of the king. The words should be therefore more precise. They might mean that the king was supreme head in his dominions, under Christ, only in temporal matters, which he would most willingly acknowledge; or they might be made to mean, that the king's lordship, by the laws of the gospel, related to both spirituals and temporals, than which, nothing could be more contrary to the teaching of the Catholic church. To the former he would most cheerfully subscribe, but against the latter he must protest, and would enter his protest on the journals of the convocation. These views of the bishop met with a no less distinguished opponent than the king himself. "The bishop," says the royal polemic, "had proved our Saviour the head of the church, that he lodged the branches of his spiritual and temporal jurisdiction in different subjects, that he made a grant of the latter to princes, and that bishops were commissioned for the other. But then the text cited, to prove obedience due to princes, comprehends all persons, both clergy and laity, and no order of the hierarchy is exempted. It is true, you restrain this submission to temporal matters, but the scripture expressions are general and without reserve. For you do not stick to confess, that whatever power is necessary for the peace of civil society, is included in the chief magistrates' commission. From hence we infer, that the prince is authorized to animadvert upon those who outrage religion, and are guilty of the breach of the divine precepts. For certainly we are not bound to give our own laws a preference over those of God Almighty, nor punish the violation of the one, and connive at the other. All spiritual things, therefore, in which liberty or property is concerned, are necessarily included in the prince's power. Our

Saviour himself had a sacerdotal character, and yet submitted to Pilate's jurisdiction. And St. Paul, though a priest of apostolical distinction, makes no scruple to say, 'I stand at Cæsar's judgment-seat, where I ought to be judged.'**

Such are the most important of the arguments advanced in this valuable document; sufficient to evince the ignorance of the high parties engaged, of the true nature of the church of Christ. It also exhibits their unacquaintance with the Christian laws of liberty and of obedience; by the one of which the church is free from secular control, and by the other bound to the observance of the statutes of the King of kings, to whom alone belongs the power and the right to punish all breaches of his precepts, in that community of which he is the rightful and only Head. It is the priest and the prince in conflict, for the exercise of an usurped power over the consciences and souls of men. But the star of princely power was in the ascendant, and York, in spite of some other similar protests, must bend, with Canterbury, to the yoke.

The step thus successfully gained, did not however amount to the entire rejection of the papal authority; it was not a complete, nor an irrevocable separation of the kingdom from the Roman obedience. A series of minor measures were necessary before the end could come. All hope of compromise with Rome was not yet abandoned, nor were the king's projects yet ripe for the full assertion of the nation's ecclesiastical independence. It was, however, a golden opportunity for the Commons to endeavor the destruction of the many oppressive burdens under which the people groaned—efforts which subserved the schemes of Henry, in his intercourse with the Romish see.

At an early period of the parliamentary session of 1532, which began upon the 15th of January, the Commons pre-

* Collier, iv. 183.

sented to the king an address, praying for reformation of the many grievances occasioned by the immunities and privileges of the clergy.* Though the supplication was well received, two years elapsed before these grievances were entirely redressed. The people were, however, gratified that their complaints were at length listened to, and the hierarchy, with the pope, kept in awe.

But the clergy deserved some recompense for their submission to the supreme head of the church, constrained as it was. The abolition of the payment of annates, or first-fruits, a year's value of ecclesiastical benefices, demanded by the see of Rome, was their reward. The convocation resolved upon an address to their head concerning the matter; to him not unwelcome. Was it not a practical acknowledgment of his supremacy? "May it please the king's most noble grace," say they, "having tender compassion to the wealth of this his realm, which hath been so greatly extenuate and hindered by the payments of the said annates, and by other exactions and slights, by which the thesaure of this land hath been carried and conveyed beyond the mountains to the court of Rome, that the subjects of this realm be brought to great penury, and by necessity be forced to make their most humble complaint for stopping and restraining the said annates, and other exactions and expilations, taking for indulgencies and dispensations, legacies and delegacies, and other feats,

* Rapin, i. p. 795. "Unto the laymen, whom they have falsely robbed, and from which they have divided themselves, and made them a several kingdom of themselves, they leave the paying of toll, custom, tribute; for unto all the charges of the realm will they not pay one mite; and the finding of all the poor, the repairing of the highways and bridges, the building and reparations of their abbies and cathedral churches, chapels, colleges; for which they send out their pardons daily by heaps, and gather a thousand pounds for every hundred that they bestow truly." Tyndale, Pract. of Prel. Works, i. 423. Many curious particulars are to be found of the "practices" of the clergy, in this remarkable production.

which were too long to remember; to cause the said unjust exactions of annates to cease, and to be foredoen forever, by acts of this his grace's high court of parliament."* It was calculated that upwards of two millions and a half had passed from the country since the second year of Henry VII.; on this account alone parliament was not backward to fulfil their desires. It was also an uprooting of one great branch of papal prerogative. They accordingly resolved that annates should cease to be levied, and that if his holiness would not accept a composition of five per cent. for his trouble in drawing up bulls, sealing them in lead, &c.,† he should be opposed altogether in his demands. Should he attempt to enforce their payment by excommunications, interdict, or other censures, the clergy were to be at liberty to disregard them, and to perform the divine services "of holy church, or any other thing necessary for the health of the souls of mankind as heretofore."‡

Anti-papal principles must have been widely held, and alienation of feeling from Rome very prevalent among all classes of the people, that this provision against the papal ban should be made at the clergy's own request! For thus runs their prayer—"Forasmuch as all good Christian men be more bound to obey God than any man, it may please the king's most noble grace to ordain in this present parliament, that then the obedience of him and the people be withdrawn from the see of Rome."§ Such a check to Romish exactions was too consonant with the desires of the king and nation to

* Strype's Memorial's, I. ii. 160, 8vo. edit.

† "And as bishops pay for their bulls, even so do an infinite number of abbats in Christendome. And other abbats and priors send after the same ensample daily unto Rome, to purchase licence to wear a mitre and a cross, and gay ornaments, to be as glorious as the best." Tyndale, Works, i. 434.

‡ Dodd's Ch. Hist. i. 236. Collier, iv. 187.

§ Strype's Memor. I. ii. 161

allow any delay in granting their request; yet with a provision, that the king might confirm, or disannul the statute, or any part of it, within two years. In the following year, however, it became by the king's letters patent, the law of the land. And thus another link, and that no unimportant one, was broken, in the chain of the pope's supremacy.

Gratifying as was this affair to the avarice of the clergy, it is manifestly but another step in furtherance of the king's designs. He was not indifferent to the favorable opportunity presented to him by the temper of the Commons, to proceed in his "advised" course. In all former periods, the sovereign had encountered a clergy sustained by popular religious feeling, but that had been outraged by their rapacity and unrestrained license through a long series of years. The clergy now stood alone, to meet as they could the attack of a monarch whom the people regarded as their friend and savior. For "the Commons, being resolutely bent to humble the clergy to the very ground, remonstrated against them in several articles, which all terminate in this;—that an independent power in the clergy to make laws, though entirely spiritual, was prejudicial to the civil magistrates, and derogatory to the royal prerogative."*

In the formation and execution of ecclesiastical laws, exempt from secular control, lay the great strength of the papal hierarchy. As between it and the state there was no difference of opinion upon the right of some party to impose forms of belief, and to enjoin by a law, binding upon the conscience, whether assenting or dissenting, the profession of some religious faith, then called the Catholic faith. Thus the ground of conflict was narrowed to the question, whether the privilege of making laws to bind the conscience should vest in the church, or in the chief magistrate. This privilege the clergy had most disgracefully abused, if indeed it

* Dodd, i. 238.

can exist without abuse, and the European mind had arisen in revolt against it. But such was the very partial prevalence of a purely religious purpose among the secular authorities in the various stages of the reformation, that it soon became evident that either party must fail of attaining its object, or of preserving its immunities, if left dependent on its own strength alone. Hence, the universal fusion of the regal with the popular power in every country where the reformation prevailed, the conflicts which arose between Rome and its hitherto dependent sovereigns, and the recognition by the reformers of the supremacy of the civil magistrate in matters of faith;—a supremacy as fatal to liberty of conscience as was that of Rome, though perhaps, on the whole, not so liable to perversion. Temporal interests, varying in character and power, may clash or coalesce with the religious views of the secular authority, to the production of a more moderate and vacillating treatment of spiritual concerns. But to the attainment of the one object of ecclesiastical rulers, the government of man's soul, all interests, of every kind, are made subservient, and it is carried out with a singleness of aim and purpose, not to be acquired by the state. To the secular arm, however, the reformers trusted for their superiority over Rome. That alone, they supposed, could or would assure the final triumph of the gospel. This union was fatal to their object, and jeopardized very early the existence of the reformed churches. Less than half a century witnessed the almost entire banishment of a pure and simple piety from the communities thus allied.

The complaint of the Commons coincided with the views, and met with the entire acquiescence of the king. Full of alarm, the bishops and abbots returned distinct answers to every part of the complaint. The time for defiance was passed. Their independent action, their canonical authority, their right to consecrate and administer the sacraments, to

censure erroneous opinions, and issue precepts concerning faith and morals, were in peril; but they will not abandon them without a struggle.

Had not the king sufficiently humbled them? Had they not already submitted to a headship, questionable by scripture and canon law? What then will be their position, if they yield their prescript, and hitherto uncontrolled privileges, into the hands of the civil magistrate?

Has the inanity of age, or the darkening shadow of their coming fate, paralyzed the uplifted arm, at which nations and mighty monarchs have often trembled, that *words* of persuasion and entreaty must suffice to screen their feebleness?

Verily their glory has waned; it is ready to vanish away; the magic spell of centuries is broken.

Such pleas, however, as can be found, shall be employed. Humility, a stranger to these priestly men, and flattery, not unknown to them, are heard once more to speak, perhaps somewhat mechanically, from priestly lips; "After our most humble wise, with our most bounden duty of honor and reverence to your most excellent majesty, endued of God with most incomparable wisdom and goodness; pleaseth it the same to understand that we, your orators, and daily bounden bedesmen, the ordinaries, have read and perused a certain supplication, which the Commons of your grace's most honorable parliament now assembled, have offered unto your highness, and by your command delivered to us, to make thereunto answer." And what, if they have fallen foul of the constitution, and made canons contradictory to the laws of the realm; and passed ecclesiastical regulations without the assent of the laity or the crown; and trespassed somewhat upon the royal prerogative; and oppressed liberty and property, interdicting lands and estates; and menaced with excommunication every breach of their spiritual injunctions. Is not their authority founded upon the holy scripture, and

the resolutions of holy church?—on grounds and principles unquestionable, proper to test and try the reasonableness of all other laws, both temporal and spiritual? By this rule, therefore, they profess themselves willing to amend all that is amiss, and hope his highness will not be backward to alter such laws of the state as deviate from the inspired writings, or clash with the privileges of the church, so that harmony may prevail between both societies.

Displeasure appears upon the brow of their supreme head. Their humility and flattery are alike unavailing to move his determination, or to repress his scornful refusal of their prayer. Their scribe, Gardiner, of late made bishop of Winchester, must even write a letter of excuse; "Did not his highness's book against Luther concede the legislative authority of the clergy in matters spiritual? But he hopes his majesty will excuse his mistakes, and ignorance of the strength of those proofs his majesty can produce. Still, bishops have their authority by divine right, nor can it be resigned to the secular magistrate; such a surrender would be dangerous both to giver and receiver." His wriggling apology is offered in vain, the king is inexorable. A strange and unusual sight is this. Since St. Ambrose bowed the stubbornness of an emperor, bishops and abbots have not been wont to be thus treated by kings. Day after day, the upper house of convocation is agitated, and in great commotion with the anxious debate. "The defects and reservations in the answer," are at last thought too perplexing to be removed or amended by episcopal acumen, and the lower house must now try its hand.

The king's "most humble chaplains are sorry that the answer of the clergy" does not please, nor satisfy "his highness;" and for his "better contentation in that behalf," they do now more specially reply.

All Christian princes, say they, have hitherto recognized

themselves bound to suffer the prelates to exercise their authority, in making laws in matters concerning faith and good manners, necessary to the soul's health; nor have they required the prelates to seek their consent or license. The spiritual jurisdiction of the clergy "proceeds immediately from God, and from no power or consent authorizable of any secular prince." Moreover, it "is right well founded in many places of holy scripture," as in his highness's book against Luther, "with most vehement and inexpugnable reasons and authorities," is proved. Notwithstanding, "we your most humble chaplains and bedesmen, considering your high wisdom, great learning, and infinite goodness towards us and the church, and having special trust in the same, and not minding to fall into contention or disputations with your highness,—promise—that in all laws we shall hereafter make by the reason of our spiritual jurisdiction and judicial power, we shall not publish, nor put them forth, except first we require your highness to give your consent and authority unto them;—except such as shall concern the maintenance of the faith and good manners in Christ's church, and such as shall be for the reformation and correction of sin, after the commandments of Almighty God, according unto such laws of the church, and laudable customs as have been heretofore made." And for the rest, such laws as are contrary to the prerogative and statutes of the realm, shall be "right gladly" revoked.

Will not this pacify the king? No. There is too much ambiguity and subterfuge in it. Their fawning humility and ill-disguised sense of weakness, excite his arrogance and cupidity. His claims become more urgent and exorbitant. They are required to sign a form of submission prepared by himself, that not only shall all new laws have his approval and royal assent previous to their promulgation, but also that all the old constitutions shall be revised by a mixed commis-

sion of the laity and clergy, appointed by himself, and such as they please be abrogated and annulled. And now perplexities thicken around them. They are in the hunter's toils, and there is no escape. Is there no experienced pilot at hand, to steer them safely through the breakers, foaming on every side? Let that fast friend of the Catholic faith, bishop Fisher, of Rochester, advise them, and all may yet be well. "And to wait for this prelate's resolution, they adjourn for three days."*

Such a step bodes not well for the king's designs: it must be prevented. The speaker and twelve of the Commons' house are sent for, and to them the sovereign thus addresses himself: "Well, beloved subjects, we had thought the clergy of our realm had been our subjects wholly; but now we have well perceived that they be but half our subjects. For all the prelates at their consecration, make an oath to the pope clean contrary to the oath that they make unto us, so that they seem to be his subjects and not ours."—"And so the king delivering to them the copy of both the oaths, required them to invent some order that he might not be thus deluded of his spiritual subjects."† The appearance of the plague alone prevented some grave parliamentary censure; for on this account the house rose in three days after this message of the king. Yet it was not without its effect. The first part of the king's demands the clergy will now accede to, if the promise might be binding for his life only; but in the old canons they can permit no change.

The king's determination is, however, unaltered; and a new form of submission is sent them. But to this the prelates object, and then venture upon a positive refusal. The lower house of convocation, more apprehensive of the royal wrath, at last submit; and the prelates also, with only one

* Collier, iv. 189-199.

† Fox, Acts and Mon. ii. 961. Burnet, i. 225.

exception, finally agree, without any limitation whatever, not to enact, promulge, or put in use any new canons, without the royal permission.* If the king obtained not all that he desired, sufficient was gained to lay the whole body of the clergy at his feet. A little more time must pass, and all will be granted to the sovereign that his ambition or rapacity may instigate him to demand. Hitherto, no reformed doctrine had been admitted among the clergy. No change of religious faith had occurred. As Catholics they had submitted to a Catholic king, anxious only to preserve their livings, lands, and wealth; not dreaming that all would soon be in the grasp of the monarch, to whom they now yielded up their cherished independence, and for which act of spoliation they had themselves prepared the way.

The royal supremacy over the clergy was by no means suffered to sleep. One priest was imprisoned for upholding the papal authority. Another, charged with Lutheranism and thrown into prison by the archbishop of Canterbury, was immediately released on appealing to the king as supreme head. It now only remained to give these concessions of the clergy the force of public law, and for the commonalty to approve the exercise of this novel power. At present, it suited not with Henry's great cause at the court of Rome wholly to throw off the authority of that see; but everything was gradually prepared to effect it. Early in 1533, the parliament passed an act against all appeals to Rome in testamentary and matrimonial causes, and on the rights of tithes and oblations. In the following language they set forth the reasons for this fresh inroad upon papal usages: "That the kingdom of England is an empire provided with persons, both spiritual and temporal, well qualified to determine all controversies arising in it, without application to any foreign princes or potentates. And more particularly that part of the said

* Collier, iv. 199.

body, called the spirituality, or the English church, have always been esteemed, and found upon trial, sufficiently furnished with skill and integrity to determine all such doubts, and to administer all such offices and duties," as appertain to their spiritual station.*

In the early part of this year, Cranmer was consecrated to the see of Canterbury, which had been vacant since August, 1532. For this purpose Henry procured bulls from Rome; and so anxious was Cranmer to exhibit his entire approval of the course adopted towards the clergy, that he refused to accept them but from the king's own hand. Nor would he take the usual oath to the pope, without first protesting against those parts of it which he conceived might be a bar to the performance of his duty to God, the king, and his country. By this expedient, unworthy of an honorable mind, he entered on his high functions as the first archbishop of Canterbury, recognizing in spirituals the supremacy of the king. The subserviency he here displayed marked his whole career; on all occasions he evinced a remarkable readiness to do and to say all that could be pleasing to his royal master. He was immediately instructed to declare the marriage of Henry with Katharine null and void, in conformity with the decision of convocation, and to pronounce on the legitimacy of the king's union with Anne Boleyn, some months after the nuptials had been solemnized.† Negotiations were kept up at Rome during the remainder of the year, until the decision of the pope (March 21st, 1534,) put an end to the entire procedure. An immediate separation from his new queen, and the restoration of Katharine to all her conjugal rights, were the terms of the papal decree.‡

It does not appear that these proceedings at Rome at all

* Burnet, i. 232. Collier, iv. 207.

† Strype's Cranmer, pp. 26, 29, 8vo. edit.

‡ Short, Ch. Hist. p. 92.

accelerated the complete establishment of the royal supremacy; although they may have conduced to that utter exclusion of the pope from every kind of influence in the internal spiritual affairs of the kingdom, which so quickly followed the settlement of this great question by the parliament then assembled. This exclusion was owing, for the most part, to the nature of those principles on which the king's ecclesiastical authority was based, rather than to any purpose of the sovereign, the clergy, or the nation, to bring it to pass.

But while the pope was thus busily engaged at Rome, in rendering irrevocable the humiliation of his power in this country, the houses of parliament, which assembled on the 15th of January, 1534, completed the work so auspiciously begun in former sessions. The king's council had in the previous month, but after the revocation of Cranmer's sentence of divorce by the pontiff, entered on the consideration of various questions relating to the pope's "usurped power," as it was called, "within the realm;" and measures were resolved upon for the support of the royal prerogative.*

The statutes relating to heresy, were the first to be singled out by the Commons for amendment. The inquisitorial power of the bishops' courts was destroyed; all proceedings were to take place in open court, and by witnesses. Those adjudged guilty were not to suffer death until the king's writ, *De heretico comburendo*, had been obtained; but none were to be troubled upon any of the pope's canons or laws.† They next proceeded to the submission of the clergy, who had acknowledged, "according to the truth," that their convocations ought to assemble only by the king's writ, and had promised never to attempt the promulgation or execution of any canons without the royal assent to the same.

This submission the parliament enacted for a law, and thus extinguished the independent power of the clergy forever.

* Strype, Memor. I. i. 231.

† Burnet, i. 270.

All appeals to Rome were prohibited, and the monasteries put under the jurisdiction of the crown. The payment of annates was wholly forbidden; the procuring of bulls, briefs, or palls from the see of Rome denounced; every kind of payment formerly made under the names of pensions, censes, Peter-pence, dispensations, licenses, &c. &c., interdicted; the manner of the election of bishops determined to be thereafter by a *congé d'élire* from the king to the dean and chapter; and, lastly, the succession to the crown was settled on the issue of queen Anne.*

In the session at the close of the year all these acts were confirmed; the separation from Rome was completed, by the full recognition of the king, "as the supreme head in earth of the church in England," and to his spiritual jurisdiction all heresies and abuses were referred. It was made treason to deny the king this title, as also the once calling him heretic, schismatic, infidel, or usurper of the crown.†

In the interval of the two sessions, commissioners were sent through the land to offer the oath of submission to the clergy, in which was included a declaration that the king was head of the church; that the bishop of Rome had no more power than any other bishop; and that in their sermons they would not pervert the scripture, but preach Christ and his gospel sincerely, according to the scripture, and the tradition of orthodox and catholic doctors. Bishop Fisher and Sir Thomas More refused the oath, and forfeited their lives for resisting the royal power.‡

Thus was consummated the abolition of the papal power in this country, and the formation of that regal prerogative in spirituals, as well as in temporals, which has continued to be an incubus upon the Anglican church to the present day. It is evident that in the procurement of this change, a sincere and profound conviction of the errors of Rome, and of the

* Collier, iv. 234-241.

† Burnet, i. 288.

‡ Burnet, i. 284.

value of a scriptural faith and piety, had not the least share. The welfare of the church of Christ, the recognition of his claims as the King of saints, the emancipation of the human mind from the bondage of superstition, and the attainment of liberty of thought and freedom of conscience, formed no part of the object of the actors in this revolutionary drama.

“To this crisis the king of England had driven on . . . for with regard to the separation of this country from Rome, it has already been demonstrated, that Henry the Eighth had no credit whatever. At the moment ‘he meant not so,’ neither did he in his heart so intend. Could he only have moulded the pontiff to his will, no such event would have happened during his administration; and had Clement not been under the control of the emperor, Henry would have been an adherent still; as in opinion, if he had any opinions, he remained to the end of his life.”*

The whole nation seems to have been content with the change. During the session of parliament in which it was effected, care was taken, that from Sunday to Sunday, at St. Paul’s Cross, the usurpation of the pope in exercising jurisdiction within the realm, should be proclaimed to be as contrary to God’s laws as it was to the rights of princes.

Divines were employed to write on the king’s behalf; and books on the supremacy were plentifully distributed in the land. Gardiner, Tunstal, and Bonner, made their zeal in the king’s cause eminently to appear by their writings and sermons. “If you think,” says the bishop of Durham to Reginald Pole, in 1536, “the hearts of the subjects of this realm, greatly offended with abolishing of the bishop of Rome’s usurped authority in this realm, as if all the people, or most part of them, took the matter as ye do . . . I do assure you, ye be deceived. For the people perceive right well what profit cometh to the realm thereby; and that all such money

* Anderson’s Annals, i. 406, 407.

as before issued that way, now is kept within the realm. . . . So that, if at this day the king's grace would go about to renew in his realm the said abolished authority of the bishop of Rome, I think he should find much more difficulty to bring it about in his parliament, and to induce his people to agree thereunto, than anything that ever he purposed in his parliament, since his first reign."*

One tyranny was thus exchanged for another. A new feature, likewise hostile to true Christian liberty, becomes noticeable in the history of the church; and we now proceed to trace its characteristics as embraced and moulded by the teachers of reformation.

It was of necessity that Henry should call to his councils, Cranmer, Cromwell, and Audley; men tinged, to say the least, with the new learning. The position taken by the sovereign, could not be maintained upon any principle recognized as catholic; nay, it was a position destructive of the main pillar of *Roman orthodoxy*.

If the priestly order is by divine right the alone source and executive of spiritual jurisdiction, then by no proper title can it be claimed or exercised by any secular potentate; the assumption of a controlling and legislative power over the clergy, stands in direct antagonism with it.

The newly-acquired authority of Henry could find consistent supporters in the propagators of the new learning alone. From the commencement of the Reformation they had made the secular power their strength and shield. Nor was it long before it became distinctly visible to those who continued to adhere to the papacy, with all the fondness of old and early associations, that submission to the king involved an entire defection from the dogmas, as well as from the power of Rome. The acquisition of the supreme headship of the Anglican church, necessitated the introduction and par-

* Burnet, Records, III. ii. No. 52.

tial toleration of the reformed doctrines, if only as a counterpoise to the claims of the pope; and the king's reluctance to entertain Lutheran views must give way to that necessity. Gradually, but certainly, every consistent Romanist will be obliged to place himself in opposition to the royal prerogative; and as certainly will England, if determined to maintain that exclusive privilege, be thrown into the bosom of the reformation. Cranmer, during his residence abroad, as ambassador, had mingled much in the society of the leading continental reformers, having, indeed, married the niece of Osiander. From them he had imbibed the doctrine of secular interference in religious affairs; and on his elevation to the archiepiscopal see of Canterbury, he proceeded to introduce changes in the doctrine and discipline of the Anglican church, so far as the king's prejudices and policy would allow.

During the progress of the events already related, God's word had been spreading, somewhat rapidly, among the people. In 1526, the newly-translated Testament of Tyndale was in general circulation, awakening the fears and fiery wrath of Wolsey, Warham, and Tunstal. By the year 1534, not less than twelve editions of the New Testament were being perused throughout the land, besides some other portions of the lively oracles of truth.* The laws against heretics were not, however, put into execution with any severity, until, on the disgrace of Wolsey, Sir Thomas More became lord chancellor. It seems singular, that a man who in his *Utopia* had allowed of no persecution for religious tenets, should be thus blinded to "the partial advantage of that liberty," which in theory he had advocated.† In conjunction with Archbishop Warham and Tunstal, this eminent man, and persecutor, issued a warning against several heretical books in the English tongue that had been lately introduced, especially informing

* Anderson's Annals, ii. Index.

† Burnet, i. 292. Short, p. 95.

the people, that the king did well in *not* permitting the scriptures to be set out in the vulgar tongue.*

Great numbers of persons were brought before the bishops' courts, and compelled to abjure; and were oftentimes condemned to a public penance of flogging, bearing fagots and wax candles, in the white garb of penitents. It was their crime that they were "very expert in the gospels, and all other things belonging to divine service;" that they refused to go on pilgrimage, or to fast on saints' days, saying that salvation could not be obtained by good deeds; that "on Sunday then last past, in sacring time, they held down their heads and would not look upon the sacrament;" that they were heard to say, that it booteth not to pray to images; that the "sacrament of the altar was not, as it was pretended, the flesh, blood, and bone of Christ;" and especially, that they possessed the gospels and the psalter in English, the sum of scripture, and a variety of other books containing "pestilent and other horrible heresies." A few were burnt, as Thomas Hitton, for bringing in books from abroad; Thomas Bilney, for preaching against images, pilgrimages, and prayers to saints; Byfield and Tewksbury, as relapsed heretics. The most eminent was John Frith, the friend and companion of Tyndale. He combated successfully Sir Thomas More on the real presence; his reply to his learned antagonist was written while in confinement, and deprived of his books.†

These severities did not stay the progress of the truth, for the time was come, when, even in high places, the whole circle of Roman doctrines and ceremonies must be reviewed; and with the pope's supremacy, his dogmas, and discipline, be abandoned. The extirpation of the pontifical authority, and with it the rule of the canon law, threw the judgment of heresy upon its discordance with scripture; and by royal

* Burnet, i. 294.

† Fox, Acts and Mon. 897, 898, 910, 934, 941.

command, this became the standard of decision. Moreover, the necessities of the king's affairs abroad, constrained him to solicit the assistance of the foreign reformers, and of the princes by whom they were protected, in order to strengthen himself against the emperor, the nephew of his divorced queen, to whom was committed the execution of the pope's adverse decree.*

Now also, the encouragement shown by queen Anne, aided materially the extension of divine truth at home; and for a time, a greater liberty to preach and distribute the word of God prevailed. By her influence Latimer and Shaxton, both deeply imbued with the reformed doctrine, were advanced to bishoprics, and it is more than doubtful, whether Cranmer, without their help, would have dared to proceed in the path of reformation. The first use which had been made of his authority by this timid and obsequious prelate, was to issue, in conjunction with Gardiner, Stokesley, and Longland, an inhibition against preaching, unless permitted by a new license. To this was appended an order, "that no preachers for a year shall preach, neither with nor against purgatory, honoring of saints, that priests may have wives, *that faith only justifieth*, to go on pilgrimages, to forge miracles, considering these things have caused dissension."†

Under the fostering care of the royal prerogative, the year 1535 was chiefly occupied in preparing the way for the dissolution of the monasteries: the other portion of the "well-liked" advice of Cromwell to his sovereign in 1529. For this purpose Cromwell was named Vicegerent, the General Visitor of all monasteries and privileged places, with authority also to visit every archbishop and bishop of the kingdom. By the year 1540, their suppression was complete, and the king and his courtiers revelling in the spoils. Some few new bishoprics

* Burnet, i. 313. Collier, iv. 290.

† Cranmer's Works, i. 98; iv. 253. Jenkyn's edit.

were founded, the royal exchequer was replenished, and the greatest hindrances to the advance of the Reformation were moved out of the way.*

But the king's proceedings towards the bishops exhibited the boldest exercise of his supremacy that had yet occurred. On the 18th of September, he issued an order to the archbishops of Canterbury and York, suspending the ordinary jurisdiction of the whole hierarchy, until the general visitation of the clergy, he had recently set on foot, should be finished. It appears that this novel exercise of the prerogative was expected to call forth expressions of episcopal discontent; for six days after we find Legh and Ap Rice, two of the Vicegerent's delegates, urging their master to persist in the suspension. They say, that the bishops' jurisdiction is received, either by the law of God, by the bishop of Rome's authority, or else by the king's grace's permission. If by the first, let them bring forth scripture to prove it; if by the second, "let them exercise [it] still, *if they think it meet*;" or if by the last, wherefore should they be grieved if the king recall that which came from him? "It seems to us good that they should be driven by this means to agnize their author, spring, and fountain, as else they be too ingrate to enjoy it. Let them sue for it again by supplication, that they and all other may understand him to be the head-power within this

* Collier, iv. 294. Burnet, i. 331, 346. "These means he (Cromwell) used. He first found means to persuade the king that it might lawfully be done; that for his crown and state in safety it was necessary to be done, for that he made appear to the king how by their means the pope and clergy had so great authority, revenue, alliance, and principally captivity of the souls, and obedience of subjects, that they were able to put kings in hazard at their will; that for his revenue and maintenance of his estate, wars, and affairs, both in peace and in war, at home and abroad, with others, it was most profitable to dissolve them for augmentation of his treasure." Contemporary MS. in Letters relating to the Suppression of the Monasteries, Camden Society, p. 112.

realm under God; and that no jurisdiction proceedeth within the same, but from him.”*

The suspension was not removed, until thus compelled they “sued with words of prayer” for the restoration of their episcopal functions. Their prayer was granted, to be enjoyed during the royal pleasure only, and attended with the following extraordinary declaration:—That as his vicegerent, Cromwell, was so fully occupied with the arduous duties committed to his charge, and fearing lest injury should accrue thereby to his subjects, the supreme head on earth of the Anglican church, therefore, empowered the bishops in his stead, to confer orders, to institute and to collate to benefices, and to exercise other branches of episcopal jurisdiction, “beside and beyond those things which are divinely committed to their charge by the holy scriptures.”†

To this humiliation all the bishops quietly submitted, excepting only Gardiner who was abroad, apparently content to derive their office, as ministers of the gospel, from the civil magistrate; thereby virtually disclaiming the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ to set teachers in his church, and at the same time overthrowing the rights of the Christian community. The vicegerent’s commissioners diligently carried out the instructions of their master, as is seen by the following letter to their employer:—“Right worshipful sir, my duty presupposed, this is to advertise you that Master Doctor Layton and I, the 11th day of January (1536), were with the archbishop of York, whom we, according to your pleasure and precepts, have visited, enjoining him to preach and teach the word of God, according to his bound duty, to his cure committed unto him; and to see others here in his jurisdiction, being endued with good qualities, having any respect either to God, goodness, virtue or godliness, to perform the same; enjoining, moreover, to him, to bring up unto you his first, second, and third

* Strype, Memor. I. ii. 216, 217.

† Collier, ix, 156. Short, p. 104.

foundations whereupon he enjoyeth his office and prerogative power, with the grants, privileges, and concessions, given to him, and to his see appertaining.”*

The whole hierarchy was now at the king’s command; a despotic power was fully accorded him over body and soul. His subjects await the next utterance of their sovereign with anxiety and suspense; for he will immediately proceed to determine what they must believe. Their consciences must be for him a *tabula rasa*; a plastic, formless clay, ready to receive whatever form of doctrine the royal potter may think fit to frame. What is it to him that there is *one Lord and one Lawgiver*, the Everlasting Word, whose voice alone can speak into life, and illuminate the soul of man with the rays of truth? Is he not the only reflector of that bright image, and by divine right the only promulgator of eternal verities, within this his land?

Is it not treason to believe otherwise than as the head of the body politic? He deems it, therefore, to be his especial duty to take into his care the well-being of the souls with the bodies of his people.

The murder of Anne Boleyn was consummated; a spiritless parliament and a time-serving prelate had sanctioned the bloody deed; the one by reversing the law of succession, and Cranmer by annulling the marriage of his protectress and friend, as she stood in mockery of justice at his tribunal; when, on Friday, the 9th of June, the new convocation assembled. “Therein, the Lord Cromwell, prime secretary, sat in state above all the bishops as the king’s vicar or vice-regent-general in all spiritual matters.”†

The convocation is opened with a Latin sermon from Latymer, in obedience to “the commandment of our primate.” With great fidelity and boldness, the preacher sets before

* Dr. Legh to Cromwell, Letters relating to Suppression, &c. p. 95.

† Fuller, Ch. Hist. Book v. Sect. 25.

them their high duties as the stewards of Christ, though he fears many of them are children of darkness. He declaims, with pointed severity, against the general topics handled in their discourses to the people:—"Your care," he exclaims, "is not that all men may hear God's word, but all your care is, that no layman do read it; surely, being afraid lest they by their reading should understand it, and understanding learn to rebuke our slothfulness. What have ye done hitherto, I pray you, these seven years and more? What one thing that the people of England hath been the better of a hair; or you yourselves, either more accepted before God, or better discharged toward the people committed to your care? Is it unknown, think you, how both ye and your curates were, in a manner, by violence enforced to let books to be made, not by you, but by profane and lay persons; to let them, I say, be sold abroad, and read for the instruction of the people?" In a similar strain, he rebukes their cruel and persecuting spirit; their worldliness, their frauds, and deceptions practised on a foolish people, exhorting them to a reformation of their worship, to take away images and relics, to purify the bishops' courts, and to reduce the number of holidays.*

This startling and ominous discourse gave note of that which was about to follow. The first act of convocation, was to sign publicly an instrument, presented by Cromwell, relating to the nullity of the king's marriage with Anne Boleyn. "Oh! the operation of the purge of a premonition, so lately taken by the clergy, and a hundred thousand pounds paid thereupon! How did the remembrance thereof still work upon their spirits, and make them meek and mortified!—They knew the temper of the king, and had read the text, *The lion hath roared, who will not fear?* Amos iii. 8."†

And now the important object of their assembling was

* Latymer's Sermons, pp. 33-58. Parker Society edit.

† Fuller, Book v. Sect. 26.

brought forward. On Friday, July 23rd, the prolocutor of the lower house laid before the prelates a collection of sixty-seven erroneous doctrines, which, to the great grief of the clergy, were publicly preached, printed, and professed, "and are either the tenets of the old Lollards, or the new reformers, together with the anabaptists' opinions."* Here are some of them. "That all ceremonies accustomed in the church, which are not clearly expressed in scripture, must be taken away, because they are men's inventions: the church is the congregation of good men only: that it is as lawful to christen a child in a tub of water at home, or in a ditch by the way, as in a font-stone in the church: it is sufficient for a man or woman to make their confession to God alone: that it is not necessary or profitable to have any church or chapel to pray in, or to do any divine service in: that saints are not to be invoked or honored: that prayers, suffrages, fastings, or alms-deeds, do not help to take away sin: that by preaching the people have been brought in opinion and belief, that nothing is to be believed, except it can be proved expressly by scripture: that it is preached and taught, that, forasmuch as Christ hath shed his blood for us, and redeemed us, we need not to do anything at all but to believe and repent, if we have offended: that no human constitutions, or laws, do bind any Christian man, but such as be in the gospels, Paul's epistles, or the New Testament, and that a man may break them without any offence at all." These opinions were the fruit of freedom of thought, and of a sole regard to the testimony of holy writ. We shall presently see that they did not in the least harmonize with the views of either party, into which the convocation was divided, nor with the determination of him by whom their faith is about to be settled—for the present.†

It is the king's study, says his noble representative, day and night, to set a quietness in the church; nay, he cannot

* Burnet, i. 388.

† Fuller, book v. sect. 28.

rest till these controversies be fully debated and ended. A very special desire moves him to "set a stay for the unlearned people, whose consciences are in doubt what they may believe." But, well as the king is acquainted with these controversies, and able by his excellent learning to determine upon them, yet his great love to the clergy prompts him to lay the matter before them. He desires "you lovingly and friendly to dispute among yourselves, and conclude all things by the word of God, without all brawling and scolding." But he will not suffer scripture to be wrested, nor defaced, by any glosses, or papistical laws, or decrees of fathers and councils. "And his majesty will give you high thanks, if ye will sit and conclude a perfect unity."

After "this godly exhortation, of so worthy a prince," for which the bishops all rise up together to give thanks, they proceed to disputation. The thorny questions of the nature and number of the sacraments are their topics. Rome and Wittenburg produce their arguments, in the persons of opposing prelates. "Oh what tugging was here," says Fuller, "betwixt these opposite sides, whilst with all earnestness they thought to advance their several designs." "Let us grant," submits the bishop of London, "that the sacraments may be gathered out of the word of God, yet are you far deceived, if you think there is none other word of God, but that which every sowter and cobbler do read in their mother tongue. And if ye think, that nothing pertaineth unto the Christian faith, but that only which is written in the Bible, then err ye plainly with the Lutherans. . . . Now when the right noble Lord Cromwell, the archbishop, with the other bishops, which did defend the pure doctrine of the gospel, heard this, they smiled a little one upon another, forasmuch as they saw him flee, even in the very beginning of the disputation, into his old rusty sophistry and unwritten verities."* But what

* Fox, p. 3, 1080.

unity can be "set and concluded," when it is found that seven against seven the antagonists stand, and each side immovable? while a nation's faith, the obedience of myriads of consciences, must hang balanced in the scale—if it may.

A faith is however ready and at hand—at which these episcopal warriors will not venture to tilt. Unity *can* be "set and concluded," though bishops may fail to effect it; there is one, at least, bold enough to attempt it. "Articles concerning our faith, and laudable ceremonies in the church of Christ"—a "twilight religion"—may be framed, to which the consciences of the people, both cleric and lay, can and must obediently conform, and that by "Henry the Eighth, by the grace of God, King of England, and of France, Defender of the Faith, Lord of Ireland, and in Earth Supreme Head of the Church of England."* "For," saith he, "it most chiefly belongeth unto our charge, diligently to foresee, and cause that not only the most holy word and commandments of God should most sincerely be believed, and most reverently be observed, and kept of our subjects; but also that unity and concord in opinions, namely, in such things as do concern our religion, may increase and go forward, and all occasion of dissent and discord touching the same be repressed and utterly extinguished." Such is the introduction to the articles, which after several disputations were assented to, and signed by the convocation, and then published for the souls' health of the community.

In the first, they are taught that the entire canon of the Bible, which, at that time, included the apocrypha, as also the Apostles', the Nicene, and Athanasian creeds, are "the most certain and infallible words of God," which ought and must be most reverently observed and religiously kept, else were they "infidels, heretics, and members of the devil, with whom they shall be perpetually damned." In the second,

* Title to Book of Articles, then published. Fuller, book v. sect. 34, 35.

that of necessity they must and ought to believe, that baptism ordained by our Saviour, is to be given to all men, as also to infants, that thereby all sin, original and actual, may be washed away, and that "all the Anabaptists' or Pelagians' opinions in this behalf, ought to be reputed for detestable heresies, and utterly to be condemned." In the third, that penance is a sacrament appointed by Christ, and that without it, and "such good works of the same," no one shall obtain everlasting life, neither remission nor mitigation of present pains and afflictions in this life. In the fourth, that in the sacrament of the altar, the very flesh and blood of Christ is really and substantially present. In the fifth, that sinners are justified "by contrition and faith, joined with charity:" not as deserving to attain the said justification, but through the merits of the blood and passion of Jesus Christ. Next follow articles concerning the ceremonies to be used. Images are to be employed as "representers of virtue and good example:" the images of Christ and our Lady to kindle, and stir men's minds to recollection and lamentation of their sins. Saints are to be honored as the elect persons of Christ, who passed in godly life out of this transitory world, to whom we may laudably pray, and their holy days observe, except so far as they may be mitigated and moderated by the commandment "of us the supreme head." Holy vestments, the giving of holy bread, the sprinkling of holy water, bearing of candles on Candlemas-day, giving ashes on Ash Wednesday, bearing palms on Palm Sunday, creeping to the cross on Good Friday, and kissing it, setting up the sepulture of Christ, the hallowing of the font, and other exorcisms, customs, and benedictions, are not to be contemned, but used and continued. And lastly, prayers and masses are to be offered for souls departed, though it "be to us uncertain by scripture," where they are.*

* Fuller, book v. sect. 34, 35. Burnet, I ii. 457. Add. I i. 390.

Such was the commencement of the doctrinal reformation of the church of England, and the first example of the exercise of the royal prerogative in the imposition of dogmas of faith on the consciences of people. "For good instruction must they be taken" until such time as his majesty shall change or abrogate any of them.* Neither priest, bishop, nor king, seems to have thought of the impracticability of the work they took in hand, or of the iniquitous presumption of the endeavor to command and control the conscience. Nay, with a condescension amounting to mockery, the people are exhorted in "charitable unity and loving concord," to observe the same, as thereby they will "not a little encourage us to take farther travails, pains, and labors, for your commodities in all such other matters, as in time to come, may happen to occur, and as it shall be most to the honor of God, the profit, tranquillity, and quietness of all you, our most loving subjects."

May we not fairly suspect that none of these parties knew the power of true godliness to excite a most tender and sensitive regard to every, even the least, commandment of Jesus Christ? That such regard would lead its possessor through "floods and flames" to obey them? Surely their only conception of religion must have been that of a system of spiritual tyranny over the souls of men, as the source of wealth and power. The clergy, indeed, murmured at the authority assumed; but they knew the temper of Henry too well to offer any open resistance. Although their mass-money, their lucrative indulgencies, their shrined wealth, were at stake, a premunire might again pluck them of their gains, and the coffers of their sovereign be once more weighty with their gold, should they dare to oppose his will. The convocation completed its labors with a petition to the king, "that he would graciously indulge unto his subjects of the laity, the

* Strype's Cranmer, p. 690.

reading of the Bible in the English tongue,—and that a new translation might be forthwith made for that end and purpose.” Their petition eighteen months before had not succeeded. Nor was this regarded; for although in the ensuing year a reprint of Tyndale’s own translation, under another’s name, was ushered into the world under royal auspices, it was *without* the consent of the clergy, and to their very great vexation.*

The people were by no means pleased with the freedom so boldly taken with their faith. A general discontent, breaking out into open rebellion, soon displayed itself, which was with difficulty quelled. Yet in marvellous blindness they acknowledged the sovereign to be their supreme head under God, for the settlement of their religious belief.† The articles alluded to above, were in the following year embodied in the book entitled, “The Institution of a Christian Man.” Many additions were made to them, during the preparation of the work, by a number of bishops, and other learned men, who were appointed by the king to this weighty charge. It was not, however, easily achieved; so numerous were the objections of the partisans of the old learning. “Verily for my part,” says Latymer, “I had lever be poor parson of poor Kynnton again, than to continue thus bishop of Worcester.”‡ Here is the principle on which this reformed faith was imposed on the people: “It appertains to Christian kings and princes, in the discharge of their duty to God, to reform and reduce again the laws to their old limits, and pristine state of their power and jurisdiction, which was given them by Christ, and used in the primitive church. For it is out of all doubt that Christ’s faith was then most firm and pure, and the scriptures of God were then best understood. And therefore the customs and ordinances then used and made, must needs

* Anderson, Annals, i. 548, 578.

† Burnet, i. 413.

‡ Quoted in Cranmer’s Works, i. 188.

be more conform, and agreeable unto the true doctrine of Christ, and more conducing to the edifying and benefit of the church of Christ, than any customs or laws used or made since that time.”* Thus another rule of faith, one established by the prince and *his* church, was introduced into the place of the word of God.

For more than ten years, the sacred volume had found an entrance into the land, although forbidden, and its suppression earnestly sought. Until now, none in authority *cared for these things*, when by the wonderful providence of God the labors of the martyr of Vilvorde were crowned with success. Twenty-five editions of the New Testament at least, and four of the whole Bible, had been distributed, bearing fruit unto eternal life, ere it was allowed by the king’s grace to be bought and read in his realm.† The law of man and the law of God were now brought into conflict for the sovereignty of the soul: not without an assured victory to the latter, though it must win its way through tears, imprisonment, and blood. At the door of every man’s conscience the combatants stood, the wisdom of God and the wisdom of man. A struggle was inevitable; it has been long and severe: our own day has yet to witness its close.

By royal permission and command, a Bible was ordered to be set up in every church, and none hindered in its perusal; for “it is the true lively word of God, which every Christian ought to believe, embrace, and follow, if he expects to be saved.” But the people must beware of their own judgment. Let them not contest with each other the sense of difficult places, but refer themselves to men of better judgment, to the scribes and rabbis of the church.‡ Does the vicegerent, Cromwell, think, while he issues this injunction, that he can control the operations of the Spirit of God, whose living word

* Strype’s Cranmer, p. 177.

† Anderson’s Annals, i. 579. ii. App.

‡ Burnet, i. 453.

he thus places before the eyes and understandings of the people? or that those consciences in which the Spirit of truth shall speak with power, are amenable to his judgment? It is to be feared, that he who thus opened the sealed waters of life to thirsty souls, was himself a stranger to the grace of God, and that nothing but a low and worldly policy led him to an act so fertile in blessing to his country and the world.

But as if to illustrate the degree of liberty which the people were to be permitted to enjoy, the king himself engaged in the examination of Lambert for heresy. "A more miserable spectacle of a royal tyrant taunting and worrying his victim, Westminster Hall probably never witnessed before nor since." At this sad scene, Cromwell and Cranmer assisted, in conjunction with Gardiner; the first of them delivering without repugnance the sentence which consigned the martyr to the flames.* Other victims also were sought out to exhibit the fidelity of the sovereign to the catholic faith, but which he had unwittingly brought to the very verge of destruction. Cranmer again comes before us a persecutor. To him, with some others, including Robert Barnes, a martyr in the reign of Mary, was issued a commission signed by Cromwell, to seek out and try a certain people, "lurking secretly in divers corners and places," whose sentiments on baptism were not in harmony with the articles, recently set forth, to produce unity and contentation; who, moreover, ventured "to contemn and despise, of their own private wills and appetites," the laudable rites and ceremonies of his grace's church. They had committed treason in daring to think differently from the king, and for this they were to be pursued to death, *even, if need be, in a manner contrary to the due course of law!* Three men and a woman, with fagots bound on their backs, did penance for the crime at St. Paul's Cross, and one man and

* Anderson's Annals, ii. 19. Collier, iv. 436.

a woman of the same sect and country were burnt in Smithfield.*

The leaders of the catholic party had been recovering their influence with Henry for some time past, "when Gardiner, Tunstal, and other bishops, zealous for the old religion, put the king upon such methods, as dashed all the present hopes of the other party."† The tide of reformation began thus early to ebb. The royal power, which had hitherto opened channels for its flow, was now, and for the rest of Henry's days, to be employed in forming dykes against its further progress. It was to be clearly manifest that "*it was not by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord of Hosts,*" that the flood of divine truth was to pour its salutary streams into the souls of the people. Symptoms of the repaired strength of the old party had been shown in the prosecutions which had taken place in various parts of Kent, of "fautors of the new learning, as they call it," which the influence of Cranmer, even in his own diocese, and sustained by the vicegerent's power, could not prevent.‡ But this change was most fully exhibited, when, in the parliament of 1539, the act of six articles was affirmed to be the law of belief to the king's subjects for the future.

The disagreement of the hierarchy on the doctrines to be enforced, afforded another opportunity for the royal polemic to exhibit his theological, as well as his regal power. For "in his own princely person," he vouchsafed "to descend and come into his said high court of parliament and council, and there like a prince of most high prudence, and no less learning, opened and declared many things of high learning and great knowledge, touching the said articles, matters, and questions, for our unity to be had in the same."§ So the

* Collier, ix. 161, iv. 436. Anderson, ii. 18. Strype's Cranmer, p. 686.

† Dodd's Ch. Hist. i. 305. Tierney's ed. ‡ Cranmer's works, i. 242.

§ Preamble to the Act, in Dodd. i. p. 444.

people must believe, or profess to believe, 1. That in the holy sacrament of the altar, under the form of bread and wine, is present really the natural body and blood of our Saviour. 2. That communion in both kinds is not necessary to salvation. 3. That priests may *not* marry. 4. That vows of chastity are according to the law of God. 5. As is also the mass. 6. And that auricular confession is necessary for the church of God.* The blessed effects of union, and the mischiefs of discord, could, however, be evinced and cured only by the fagot and the stake, to which the venturous being was to be consigned, who dared to deny the truth of the first article. He who denied the rest, was to be imprisoned during pleasure, and, if obstinate and hardy in his opposition, hanging should put an end to every conscientious scruple.

The bishops proceeded with alacrity to employ the powers intrusted to them. "Great perturbation," says our martyr-ologist, "followed in all parishes almost through London," and five hundred persons were soon immured in fetid dungeons for their faith. No wonder it was complained of as a great hardship against conscience. "Men do not love to be dragged into religion; to be under the necessity of being either a martyr or an hypocrite, they thought singular usage."† But "the godly study, pain, and travail of his majesty, was undergone for the conservation of the church and congregation in a true, and sincere, and uniform doctrine of Christ's religion." Ought not therefore every loyal subject to accept the results of such self-imposed and disinterested toil? Could any motives but of the purest kind have influenced the sovereign in this kindly regard for the spiritual weal of his people? "This measure," we are told, "very much quieted the bigots, who were now persuaded that the king would not set up heresy, since he passed so severe an act

* Preamble to Act, in Dodd i. p. 444.

† Collier, v. 48

against it, and it made the total suppression of the monasteries go the more easily through."* The pocket and the conscience of the king were always nearly allied to each other; and probably he thought those of his subjects were so too.

The royal interference did not, however, reach to the prevention of the perusal of the word of God. Often were the church services interrupted by the loud voice of some reader, more lettered than his fellows, as, surrounded in the porch by listening crowds, he broke to the joyful and expecting throng the bread of life. Everywhere might be heard the eager conversation of minds, enlightened by the truth, speaking of those wonderful words which the Most High had spoken unto men; the street, the tavern, the ale-house, the church, and every company, were the scenes of earnest dispute, or holy zeal. Scripture was compared with scripture, and its sense closely scrutinized. The night of superstition retired before the morning dawn, and the "sacraments of holy church" were threatened with subversion and overthrow; some even had ventured to whisper thoughts which appeared to destroy "*the power and authority of princes and magistrates.*" It was time, therefore, that that power should vindicate its divine original, and remedy, by "most excellent wisdom," all irregularities and diversities of opinion, that by reducing the people to unity of judgment, there might be an increase of love and charity among them. For this purpose, his majesty issued a proclamation at the commencement of the session. His people must cease such disorderly practices. Nevertheless, his highness is content, ".that such as can and will read in the English tongue, shall and may quietly and reverently read the Bible and New Testament by themselves secretly, at all times and places, convenient for their own instruction and edification, to increase thereby godliness and virtuous living." Only let them not attempt to understand

* Burnet, i. 471.

difficult places, without the assistance of the learned; and moreover, "his majesty was not, nor is, compelled by God's word to set forth the scripture in English to his lay subjects; but, of his own liberality and goodness, was and is pleased that his said loving subjects should have and read the same in convenient places and times, to the only intent to bring them from their old ignorance and blindness to virtuous living and godliness, to God's glory and honor, and not to make and take occasion of dissension and tumult, by reason of the same. Wherefore his majesty chargeth and commandeth all his said subjects to use the holy scripture in English, according to his godly purpose and gracious intent, as they would avoid his most high displeasure and indignation."*

Thus did Henry strive to realize, in the omnipotency of his power, his supreme headship over the consciences of his subjects, and to restrain by his permission the all-conquering progress of the sacred word. They had read, and would continue to read, with or without his sanction, the holy page; notwithstanding that he may say by proclamations to the flood of heavenly truth, "*Hitherto shalt thou come; but no further.*"

But few other events will require our notice in the present reign. The most important was the publication, in 1543, of "The Erudition of a Christian Man." The issue of this work closed the labors of a commission of bishops, appointed three years before by the king, to fix the rule of religious belief. The influence of the catholic party in this also prevailed, and put back still further the reformation of the national faith. The people were commanded to "order" their lives by this book, the doctrine of it "having been seen and liked very well by both houses of parliament." It contained everything needful for the attainment of everlasting life.

* Dodd. i 310, 451.

They were no longer to busy "their heads and senses" about free-will, justification, good works, &c.; all these things were here fully and most certainly explained for their perfect contentation.

Moreover, they were instructed, "that the reading of the Old and New Testament is not so necessary for all those folks, that of duty they ought, and be bound to read it; but as the prince and the policy of the realm shall think convenient to be tolerated or taken from it."* This same parliament, which so well liked the new creed set forth by the king's authority, for the advancement of true religion, commanded that all Bibles and Testaments of Tyndale's translation, should be utterly extinguished and abolished, and all annotations and preambles be blotted out from all others. No women, except gentlewomen, no artificers, no journeymen, no husbandmen, nor laborers, were to read the Bible to themselves, nor to any other, privately or openly, on pain of a month's incarceration in prison.†

Such were the fetters and restrictions under which the nation was to learn the divine truths of Scripture. Nor must we be surprised that these were sanctioned and promoted by Cranmer, since he believed that all civil and ecclesiastical power had the same origin; that to the Christian prince was committed, immediately from God, not only the administration of things political, and civil governance, "but also the administration of God's word for the cure of souls." He thought that the election of the pastors of the church, should be "by the laws and orders of kings and princes."‡ Hence the simplest act of worship must be a matter of royal regulation; a prayer, in the people's tongue, may not rise from any lips in the public assemblies to the great Father and Fountain of mercy, until it shall please the sovereign to permit. The

* Strype, Mem. I. i. 586.

† Burnet, i. 584.

‡ Cranmer's Remains, ii. 101.

very matter of the preacher's sermon must be, and was, determined for him; and every truth, even the most precious to the soul's salvation, must give way to the frequent inculcation of the profane dogma of the king's supremacy; *that* must never be forgotten.

If souls were awakened into life; if any found their way to the Lamb of God, through the thick mists of superstition which hid him from their view; if a gem of heavenly truth glimmered in the surrounding darkness, from the brow of one made free by the Spirit of God, it was not the fault of princes and bishops if the soul thus blessed did not ascend to the regions of bliss in the lurid glare of the martyr-pile, or from the filthy and pestilential dungeon. Guided by no conscientious motive, or true religious sense themselves, they could not understand nor would they suffer any other to possess, that of which they were so painfully deficient. Soul, mind, thought, everything which elevates man to his Creator, together with the secular interests of humanity, must be subject to a domination fatal to their welfare, their expansion, their freedom, and their life.

We may close this portion of our sketch with the following accurate picture of the state of this, so-called, reformation, from the pen of an eye-witness. "Still remaineth their foul masses, of all abominations the principal; their prodigious sacrifices, their censings of idols, their boyish processions, their uncommanded worshippings, and their confessions in the ear, of all traitory the fountain; with many other strange observations, which the scripture of God knoweth not. Nothing is brought as yet to Christ's clear institution and sincere ordinance, but all remaineth still as the antichrists left it. Nothing is tried by God's word, but by the ancient authority of fathers: now passeth all under their title. . . . If it were naught afore, I think it is now much worse; for now are they become 'laudable ceremonies,' whereas beforetime they were

but ceremonies alone. Now are they become necessary rites, godly constitutions, seemly usages, and civil ordinances, whereas before they had no such names; and he that disobeyeth them, shall not only be judged a felon, and worthy to be hanged, by their new forged laws, but also condemned for a traitor against the king. To put this, with such like, in execution, the bishops have authority, every month in the year if they list, to call a session, to hang and burn at their pleasure. And this is ratified and confirmed by act of parliament, to stand the more in effect.”*

The king himself corroborates all this, though in more courtly phrase, in his speech to his last parliament. The close of his reign was at hand, though he knew it not; and from the lips of the sovereign we receive a confession of the utter futility of all his attempts to control the conscience, to fix the faith of his liege subjects, or to establish that unity and concord which had ever been pleaded, as the sufficient reason for his interference. “Behold, then,” he says, “what love and charity is amongst you, when the one calleth the other heretic and anabaptist, and he calleth him again papist, hypocrite, and pharisee. . . . I see and hear daily, that you of the clergy preach one against another, teach one contrary to another, inveigh one against another, without charity or discretion. Some be too stiff in their old mumpsimus, others be too busy and curious in their new sumpsimus. Thus all men almost be in variety, in discord, and few or none do preach, truly and sincerely, the word of God according as they ought to do. . . . You of the temporality be not clean and unspotted of malice and envy; for you rail on bishops, speak slanderously of priests, and rebuke and taunt preachers. . . . And although you be permitted to read holy scripture, and to have the word of God in your mother tongue, you must understand, that it is licensed you so to do, only to inform your own

* John Bale, quoted in Strype's *Cranmer*, p. 186.

conscience, and to instruct your children and family, and not to dispute, and make scripture a railing and a vaunting-stock against priests and preachers, as many light persons do. I am very sorry to know and hear how unreverently that most precious jewel, the word of God, is disputed, rhymed, sung, and jangled, in every alehouse and tavern, contrary to the true meaning and doctrine of the same; and yet I am even as much sorry, that the readers of the same follow it in doing so faintly and coldly. For of this I am sure, that charity was never so faint amongst you, and virtuous and godly living was never less used, nor was God himself amongst Christians never less revered, honored and served.”*

His failure to rule the conscience was complete. Honors, wealth, and power, had induced many to applaud and follow their sovereign in his revolutionary proceedings, and multitudes with him had bowed in worship, and sacrificed their souls, at the golden shrine of mammon; but others received the reward of their fidelity to God in stripes, bonds, and death. The soul eluded his grasp; it escaped his toils. There were those whom the Son had made free indeed, who dared to taste and handle the holy truths of the oracles of God, apart from, and uncontaminated by, the doctrines of men, however erudite and necessary to elucidate heaven's laws they were proclaimed to be, by this usurper of Christ's prerogative; of these we shall presently speak.

* Dodd. i. App. 454, 455.

SECTION II.

E D W A R D V I.

WHEN the youthful Edward ascended the throne, in 1547, but little more had been effected in the way of reformation than an entire separation of the English church from the Roman obedience. Many corruptions and abuses had been moderated or destroyed, but the national faith and discipline remained essentially catholic. It may be said, indeed, that but one of the various doctrines which were regarded as peculiarly protestant, had obtained any ascendancy at all; a doctrine too consonant to the pride and ambition of sovereigns, to be allowed to remain in abeyance by the tyrannical and unscrupulous Henry. Everywhere among the reformers, the right of the Christian magistrate to rule the conscience as well as the body of the subject, was asserted; and while themselves exercising their lately-acquired liberty to the fullest extent, they regarded with jealousy and bitter hatred all who ventured, while copying their example, to depart from their standard of truth. "Whether the omnipotence of the state be or be not a Christian or protestant principle, this is at any rate the form that protestantism then assumed most distinctly in England. Political and worldly interests soon gained an entire preponderance over all questions of religion and of truth; with whatever sincerity the latter may have been pleaded at the beginning of the movement."* This vicious principle distorted the fairer features of the reformation from

* Heber's English Universities, edit. by F. W. Newman, i. 269.

its very birth, and has been productive of untold mischiefs to the present hour. The doctrines, the ceremonies, the services of the Anglican church, were not founded on a conscientious conviction of their necessity to salvation, or of their harmony with the divine mind uttered in the oracles of truth. Neither were they the spring blossomings of an internal and renewed life, bursting forth into forms expressive of its vigor, its purity, and its heavenly origin. On the contrary, they were imposed upon an unwilling people, and but little, if any, improvement took place in the general character and religious feelings of the mass. Whatever of true piety was actually existent was not the fruit of these changes; neither did it spring from the holy seed of the gospel sown and cherished by regal power. The unsanctioned, discountenanced, and persecuted efforts of men in lowly life, whose hearts the Lord had opened, alone issued in the planting of the tree of liberty and truth.

With the above principle as the basis of their proceedings, Somerset the protector, Cranmer, and others forming the influential portion of the young king's council, commenced their alterations in the national faith. They labored to erect a church which should retain in mental slavery, and under religious bondage, a people among whom the emancipating truths of scripture were yet freely to circulate; thus insuring a state of unceasing conflict. The Christian community was to be kept in a perpetual childhood, ever to remain under the thralldom of tutors and governors. On the day of the youthful sovereign's coronation, the archbishop solemnly reminded him, "That being God's vicegerent, and Christ's vicar in his own dominions, he was obliged to follow the precedent of Josias, to take care the worship of God was under due regulations, to suppress idolatry, remove images, and discharge the tyranny of the bishop of Rome."* These "due regulations"

* Collier, v. 182.

were quickly supplied by the primate's zeal. A series of injunctions relating to every part of public worship, public instruction, and private devotion, were furnished to certain visitors appointed to proceed through the length and breadth of the land, that idolatry and superstition might be suppressed, the true religion planted, and all hypocrisy, enormities, and abuses extirpated.*

The publication of a volume of homilies, to be read to their flocks by those ministers who could not preach, soon followed, in which for the first time the important doctrine of justification by faith alone, was clearly enunciated by state authority. To Cranmer that part of the book is attributed.† Latymer thus amusingly informs his sovereign how his homiletic instructions were received among his people: "Some call them *homelies*, and indeed so they may be called, for they are homely handled. For though the priest read them never so well, yet if the parish like them not, there is such a talking and babbling in the church, that nothing can be heard; and if the parish be good, and the priest naught, he will so hack it, and chop it, that it were as good for them to be without it, for any word that shall be understood. And yet (the more pity) this is suffered of your grace's bishops, in their dioceses, unpunished. But I will be a suitor to your grace, that ye will give your bishops charge ere they go home, upon their allegiance, to look better to their flock, and to see your majesty's injunctions better kept, and send your visitors in their tails, and if they be found negligent and faulty in their duties, out with them. I require it, in God's behalf, make them quondams, all the pack of them."‡ Such was the information and advice given by Latymer, himself a quondam bishop, to the youthful monarch, in the "preaching place," in the king's garden at Westminster, the very place where,

* Documentary Annals, i. 4, &c. † Cranmer's Remains, ii. 138.

‡ Latymer's Sermons, pp. 121, 122. Parker Soc. edit.

thirteen years before, Cromwell had advised his sovereign to a course, of which the above was the fruit.

The mental activity of the people could not, however, be confined to the channels hewn out for it. Curious questions were passed about as to the nature of the mystery in the sacrament of the altar, which they were called upon to receive with an unreasoning faith. Even "unseemly and ungodly words" were uttered, by which "the holy body and blood of the Lord" were depraved and reviled. Was it indeed his "blessed body there, head, legs, arms, toes, and nails?" Could it be broken, or chewed in the mouths of the faithful, or was he always swallowed whole? Did they drink the very blood that flowed from his side, or that which remained in the lifeless, crucified form of the buried Saviour? And many other speeches, alike irreverent, were made on this profound mystery. "For reformation whereof, the king's highness, by advice of the lord protector, and other his majesty's council, straitly willeth and commandeth, that no man, nor person, from henceforth, do in anywise contentiously and openly argue, dispute, reason, preach, or teach, than be expressly taught in the holy scripture;—until such time as the king's majesty shall declare, and set forth, an open doctrine thereof, for he shall incur the king's high indignation, and suffer imprisonment, or be otherwise grievously punished."*

The "private mind and fantasy" of many persons outran the wishes of even Cranmer himself, though in some measure sanctioned by him. The non-observance of many of the laudable ceremonies of Henry's imposition, called forth, in less than two months, another proclamation to restrain their zeal. It was pronounced rash and seditious for any to preach in any open and unlicensed place, without royal or episcopal permission, especially since the people were persuaded by private

* Doc. Annals, Proclamation, Dec. 27th, 1547, vol. i. 26.

curates, preachers, and other laymen, not to observe the old and accustomed rites and formalities.*

The parliament also added its quota to the general progress. The statute of the six articles was repealed, which opened the way for the return of many who had gone abroad, fearing its cruel threatenings, among whom may be mentioned John Hooper and Miles Coverdale. The communion was commanded to be administered in both kinds, private masses abolished, and bishops in future were to be appointed by the royal letters patent alone. A further gift of all unsuppressed chantries, and of legacies given for obits and lamps in churches, was bestowed upon the king, to the profit of his many hungry courtiers.†

Many of the old superstitions were by this means rooted up, but without any general increase of true piety or even morality. This "dissolution of life," says Becon, a reformer and actor in these times, "this impiety of manners, maketh the gospel of our salvation to be evil spoken of. How can it otherwise be? For when they see an alteration in religion, and no alteration in manners, but a continuance in the old, or else a practice of much more ungodliness than heretofore hath been used, the adversaries of God's truth take easily an occasion to blaspheme the Christian doctrine."‡ Churches did not escape profanation; frays, quarrels, blood-shedding, the passage of horses and mules through them, were frightfully prevalent. "They were like a stable, or common inn, or rather a den and sink of all unchristness," says the proclamation by which these "evil demeanors" were forbidden.§

To this was added a prohibition of the exercise of the public ministry. The people had been fed with controversy,

* Doc. Annals, i. 34.

† Neal, i. 33, 34.

‡ Bacon's Jewel of Joy, p. 416. Works, Parker Soc. edit.

§ Strype's Cranmer, p. 251.

and with bitter disputes, it was said, instead of "the manna sent down from heaven."

But few, therefore, were permitted to exercise the calling of God, being those only who were licensed by the king's council. It appeared fitting to the rulers of the nation's conscience to send the clergy for a space into retirement, "to apply themselves to prayer to Almighty God." The loving subjects of the sovereign, could in the meantime occupy themselves with "due prayer in the church," although the service was still in Latin, "and in the patient hearing of the godly homilies," until one uniform order could be prepared for their use.* "What a system must that be, which recognizes in any human being a right to issue such an edict as this; an edict so fearfully impious as to involve a counteraction, and that on no limited scale, of God's wisest and most gracious designs! But such is the system which the Reformation perpetuated in this country, and which has subsequently been maintained by means in perfect harmony with its antichristian character."†

As the clergy were unable to instruct the people by an exhibition of divine truth, derived from a knowledge of God's word, and an experience of its power, so were they equally impotent and unqualified to pour forth at the throne of grace acceptable prayer.

With them, prayer could be nothing but a form, and that was now provided. Uniformity in divine worship was deemed a matter of the greatest moment. To effect this, every holy emotion of the heart must be suppressed, every aspiration of the heaven-born spirit hindered in its flight, and all communion with the Father in heaven checked, but such as the book of Common Prayer now set forth, allowed. True it is, that legends, responds, commemorations, synodals, and the un-

* Fuller, book I. sect. i. c. 15, vol. ii. 314. edit. 1842.

† Price, Hist. of Nonconf. i. 76.

certain stories of the Roman breviaries, had no place in this purgated edition of the missal; but yet there were prayers for the dead, Mariolatry was tacitly sanctioned, baptismal regeneration taught, and the exorcism of the unclean spirit from the infant to be baptized, was commanded to the officiating priest.*

“Here you have,” say the compilers, in the preface, “an order for prayer (as touching the reading of holy scripture), much agreeable to the mind and purpose of the old fathers, and a great deal more profitable and commodious than that which of late was used. It is more profitable, because there are left out many things whereof some be untrue, some uncertain, some vain and superstitious; and is ordained nothing to be read, but the very pure word of God, the holy scriptures, or that which is evidently grounded upon the same.” In this the Apocrypha was included.†

The ceremonies to be used were at the same time determined. In the exposition of their sentiments on this subject, it was declared by the compilers to be a great crime to neglect or break in upon the order of the church, and that private men ought not to presume to draw models or make such arrangements; it was the sole duty of the governors of the church. An exact uniformity of habits and ceremonies was insisted upon. The square cap and the surplice were so important as to be retained at the risk of the reformation itself.

* “I command thee, unclean spirit, in the name, &c., that thou come out and depart from these infants, whom our Lord Jesus Christ hath vouchsafed to call to his holy baptism, to be made members of his body and of his holy congregation. Thou cursed spirit, remember thy sentence, remember thy judgment, remember the day to be at hand wherein thou shalt burn in fire everlasting, prepared for thee and thy angels. And presume not hereafter to exercise any tyranny towards these infants, whom Christ has bought with his precious blood, and by his holy baptism, calleth to be of his flock.” King Edward’s Liturgies, pp. 108, 109; Parker Society’s edit. † King Edward’s Liturgies, p. 18.

Superstitious in their use, abused to idolatrous purposes as they had been, and conscientious as some were in the rejection of them, yet it was the pleasure of the rulers of the church to preserve them.

“Our reformers split upon this rock, sacrificing the peace of the church to a mistaken necessity of an exact uniformity of doctrine and worship, in which it was impossible for all men to agree.” Nevertheless, in all this we are informed by the act of uniformity, which imposed the book upon the people, that the “archbishop of Canterbury, and certain of the most discreet and learned bishops, had as well an eye and respect to the most sincere and pure Christian religion taught by the scripture, as to the usages of the primitive church;” and thus had made “one convenient and meet order, rite, and fashion, of common and open prayer, and administration of the sacraments; . . . the which, at this time, *by aid of the Holy Ghost*, with one uniform agreement is of them concluded.”*

And now Cranmer and his associates in this work flatter themselves that the honor of God, and great quietness, will ensue by the compulsory use of a form thus divinely prepared; as if at their command life would breathe its vital energy through this mechanism of piety. At all events, every other manifestation of spiritual life must be extinguished. He who ventures to “sing or say common prayer” after any other manner, or speak anything that may derogate from the excellence of the book, shall forfeit a year’s income from his benefice, and be imprisoned for six months. For a second offence, he shall be deprived altogether of his promotions, and be imprisoned for a year. A person having no preferment, shall be incarcerated; the first time for six months, the second during the remainder of his life. So solicitous indeed are they that due honor and respect should be paid to the

* Neal, i. 37, edit. 1837.

work of their hands, that penalties are enacted for those who in "interludes, plays, songs, or rhymes, or by any other open words declare or speak" to the depravation or despising of the book.* Thus they enforced the motto so significantly adopted, and placed in "the border around the title page in black letter," *Let every soul submit himself unto the authority of the higher powers. For there is no power but of God. The powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever, therefore, resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God.*

Can it be supposed that a book so imperfect as in three years to require revision, so full of erroneous sentiments, and imposed with such cruel conditions, was indeed according to the mind of the Spirit of God? Could this volume be the true exponent of the unutterable groanings which he oft raiseth in the hearts of God's children? Was this persecuting edict a fit accompaniment to the confessions of sin, of human frailty and corruption, marked down in its pages as the meet language of priest and people, of king and subject, when in His presence who willeth not the death of a sinner? Or must we think that the difference of the human and divine is such, that the work of man requires for its recommendation and defence, an artillery of power which the word of God in its plenitude of might rejects? Surely the claim of infallibility involved in this assumption of sovereignty over conscience, is alike odious and profane, whether exercised by a king or by a pope.

The reformation in this reign was completed by the promulgation of a series of forty-two articles, which were to constitute the doctrinal belief of the church of England. These vary but little from those afterwards adopted in the reign of Elizabeth, and which have ever since continued to be recognized as the standard of faith by the oaths and subscriptions of the Anglican clergy. Whether they have produced that

* Dodd, ii. App. lxxii.

unity in the faith, and rooted out "that discord of opinions," for which they were intended, we need not inquire. Those who subscribe either believe them to be true, or else they greatly prevaricate.* At all events, we know that their authoritative imposition has not quieted the scruples of tender consciences, nor silenced the utterances of some true-hearted men, whose faith has been drawn from another standard, which, in their weakness it may be, they have thought to be the only one—the volume of inspired truth.

That persecutions should result from these proceedings, was inevitable. Violent efforts to burst open the doors of conscience, and to sit enthroned on that seat of Deity, as his vicegerent, cannot fail to awaken resistance or produce hypocrisy; to advance true religion, they were worse than useless. Therefore, "ambition and emulation among the nobility, presumption and disobedience among the common people, grew so extravagant and insolent, that England seemed to be in a downright frenzy. The wise and good among the papists grew confirmed in their persuasion, that a corrupt church was better than no church at all." The sermons of the time give a frightful picture of the state of society. "All men," says Hooper, in one of his discourses, "confess that sin never so abounded."† Gambling, prostitution, separations of husbands from their wives, profane swearing, frauds in every trade, impunity of murder and theft, owing to the corruption of judges, and of every principle of justice, were the frequent topics of denunciation from the pulpits of the day.

While bishops and legislators were settling creeds and forms of worship, the people were running madly to destruction. The shackles of ancient superstitions were in part broken, their spells were well-nigh gone. No new form of

* Burnet, ii. 313.

† Haws's Sketches of the Reformation, pp. 142, 143.

spiritual belief had as yet taken their place, and bound the partially freed spirit. Licentiousness even found a support in a perverted view of gospel truth.

The martyr Ridley shall speak for us in a "Piteous Lamentation," when taking a retrospect of these times: "As for Latymer, Lever, Bradford, and Knox, their tongues were so sharp, they ripped in so deep in their galled backs, to have purged them, no doubt, of that filthy matter that was festered in their hearts, of insatiable covetousness, of filthy carnality and voluptuousness, of intolerable ambition and pride, of ungodly loathsomeness to hear poor men's causes, and to hear God's word, that these men of all other, these magistrates then could never abide. Other there were, very godly men, and well learned, that went about by the wholesome plasters of God's word, howbeit after a more soft manner of handling the matter; but alas! all sped in like. For all that could be done of all hands, their disease did not minish, but daily did increase. . . . As for the common sort of other inferior magistrates, as judges of the laws, justices of the peace, sergeants, common lawyers, it may be truly said of them, as of the most part of the clergy, of curates, vicars, parsons, prebendaries, doctors of the law, archdeacons, deans, yea, and I may say, of bishops also, I fear me, for the most part, although I doubt not but God had, and hath ever, whom he in every state knew and knoweth to be his—but for the most part, I say, they were never persuaded in their hearts, but from the teeth forward, and for the king's sake, in the truth of God's word; and yet all these did dissemble, and bear a copy of a countenance, as if they had been sound within."* Truly no very encouraging success for formularies of faith enjoined by royalty, for changes of religion supported by hope of gain, or fear of suffering.

The reformers were not backward in recognizing, both in

* Ridley's Works, p. 59; Parker Society's edit.

theory and practice, the principle of persecution necessarily involved in the assumption of a regal right to determine the faith of the people. Prosecution was not an accident of the system which the protestant divines sought to establish. It was as much involved in their idea of the might and majesty of kings, as rulers of the church and lawgivers to the consciences of their subjects, as in the pope's claim of supremacy over the soul, as the representative on earth of the Lord Jesus Christ. Both were hateful and blasphemous assumptions of a power belonging to the Highest alone; when exerted, it must persecute. For a hundred and fifty years, the church of England became a persecuting church, and for another equal period she strenuously maintained the test and corporation laws; which, while in some measure they restrained her power, stamped with obloquy and degradation those whom she could no longer hurt or destroy.

The act of parliament of 1534, by which the submission of the clergy to the royal supremacy was sanctioned, and enacted into law, provided that the various constitutions, canons, and synodical decrees, under which the church had been governed, should be revised by a commission of thirty-two persons, to be appointed by the king. Whatever canons they deemed worthy of preservation, were to be retained, the remainder abolished, "and made frustrate;" the royal consent being declared sufficient to give them the force of law. This act was renewed in 1536, and again in 1544. By the commissioners appointed under the last act, a body of ecclesiastical law was prepared, but the letter of ratification, though made out, never obtained the royal signature. Another ineffectual attempt to give it legal existence followed in 1550, when, under the immediate direction of Cranmer, assisted by Taylor, Haddon, and Peter Martyr, the compilation was perfected. Numerous corrections, in the handwriting of Cranmer and Martyr, may still be seen in a manuscript copy of the code,

preserved in the British Museum. The early death of Edward alone prevented it from having legal authority.* This code of ecclesiastical law punishes heresy with death.

We are told by the editor of Cranmer's Remains, that this book "may be safely referred to as an authentic record of the archbishop's opinions."† It threatens the penalty of death, and confiscation of goods, against a denial of the Trinity, and certain sentiments of the baptists. The unlawfulness of magistracy, a community of goods, the universal right of any to assume the pastoral office, the symbolical nature of the sacraments, and the unlawfulness of infant baptism, are particularly denounced as heretical. "In case excommunication was despised, and the discipline of the church made no impression, the culprits were then to be delivered into the hands of the secular magistrates, and they were to suffer death by the law."‡

It has been questioned by some of our historians, as by Burnet, and more lately by Townsend, whether this deliverance to the secular power really implied the penalty of death. But no doubt can be left on this point, if we take into consideration the share that Cranmer had in the martyrdoms of Joan Boucher and George Van Pare, and the expressed sentiments of others of the reformers.

Thus writes Thomas Becon, chaplain to archbishop Cranmer, and prebendary of Canterbury, in the reign of Edward the Sixth:—

"*Father.* And what sayest thou of heretics ?

"*Son.* Even the same that I have said of idolaters, and false prophets.

"*Father.* May the magistrates also punish them ?

* Jenkyn's Cranmer, i. Pref. p. cx.

† Ibid. p. cxi.

‡ Collier, v. 480, edit. 1840. Preb. Townsend's Prel. Dissertation to Fox's Acts and Mon. p. 181, last edit.

“*Son.* Yea, and also take them out of this life, if they will not repent, amend, and come to the truth.” Again—

“*Father.* Shall he be straightways put to death?”

“*Son.* St. Paul saith, *The magistrate beareth not the sword in vain.* If he that beareth false witness against man be worthy of death by the commandment of God, is he worthy of less punishment that beareth false witness against God? . . . Notwithstanding, it is to be wished that. . . the magistrate would first of all gently and lovingly deal with heretics, and see into what conformity he could bring them with his wisdom and counsel, and also suffer them to have access unto such as be godly learned, which may yet once again have conference with them.”

It is somewhat sickening, after this, to hear him exhorting the temporal rulers to “be no longer the pope’s hangmen.” He adds, “these smeared pill-pates, I would say, prelates, first of all accused him (the heretic), and afterwards pronounced the sentence of death upon him, and straightways delivered him to the temporal magistrate for to be put to execution, making the magistrate their hangman, and bond-slave, to hang, to draw, to quarter, to burn, to drown, &c., as it pleased them to appoint. O slavery! O misery! O un noble nobility!”* Is this mere blindness, or worthless hypocrisy? What appreciable difference is there between the reformer and the papist?

Even Latymer could speak complacently to his young sovereign of the cruel death that certain had suffered for their faith. “The anabaptists,” says he, “that were burnt here in divers towns in England (as I heard of credible men, I saw not them myself), went to their death even *intrepide*, as ye will say, without any fear in the world, cheerfully.—Well, let them go!”†

* Becon’s Catechism, pp. 312–315. Parker Society’s edit.

† Fourth Sermon before Edward VI. p. 160; Parker Society.

To these let us add one more testimony ; that of the ornament and boast of the English church, bishop Jewel. His adversary, Harding, taunted him with the brotherhood of certain heretics, whom the papists regarded as the spawn of the reformation. "There is Servetus," saith he, "the Arian, burnt at Geneva, and David George, whose bones were exhumed and burnt at Basil, were they not your brothers? And was not poor Joan of Kent also a sister of yours?" Thus replieth the "Bishop of Sarisburie. As for David George, and Servetus the Arian, and such other the like, they were yours, M. Harding, they were not of us. You brought them up, the one in Spain, the other in Flanders. We detected their heresies, and not you. We arraigned them ; we condemned them. We put them to the execution of the laws. It seemeth very much to call them our brothers, because we burnt them."* Alas ! in Joan's condemnation many of the principal reformers had a hand, and countenanced her death. Cranmer, Latymer, Ridley, Lever, and Hutchinson, beside the members of the king's council, consented to imbrue their hands in the blood of this poor female, whose opinion it is more than probable they mistook on a point of the profoundest mystery. Our duty now calls us to refer to the history of the people to whom she belonged, and to view under these two reigns their struggle for truth and liberty.

* Jewel's Works, Defence of Apology, pp. 27, 28, folio edit. 1611.

SECTION III.

THE BAPTISTS.

“THE Reformation had scarcely boasted an existence of five years, when, from the midst of its adherents, men arose who declared it to be insufficient.”* Their proceedings at once awakened the most virulent opposition and bitter complaint. The chief weapon of the reformers was most unexpectedly employed against themselves; their professed scriptural teaching came to be examined by the test they had so successfully applied to the dogmas of Rome; and scripture authority to be urged by men, whom universities had not nourished, nor academical honors graced, for practices and truths, to some extent destructive of the position which had been taken by the followers of Luther, Zuingli, and Calvin.

The church of God must be a community of holy men.

Faith is the result of divine tuition alone, and cannot be compelled by fire or sword.

A rite which has neither the sanction nor command of the Lord Jesus Christ, or his apostles, must not be admitted among the ordinances of the Lord's house.

Secular potentates have neither place nor dominion in the kingdom of Him who is the *blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords*. As there is but *one*

* Moenler's Symbolism, ii. 155, translated by Robertson.

Lord, so there is but *one lawgiver* in the church, Jesus Christ.*

Such were some of those principles, the enunciation of which called forth a torrent of abuse and persecution upon the heads of the baptists. They were regarded as the Pariah sect among religious communities, and no outrage upon truth or justice was left uncommitted to crush them.

One simple principle, now regarded as an axiom of a scriptural church policy, lay at the foundation of this internal movement in the bosom of the reformation. It shall be given in the words of the historian Mosheim: "The kingdom of Christ, or the visible church he had established on earth, was an assembly of true and real saints, and ought, therefore, to be inaccessible to the wicked and unrighteous, and also exempt from all those institutions which human prudence suggests to oppose the progress of iniquity, or to correct or reform transgressors."†

All secular interference must therefore be excluded from this holy community. Its formation is the work of the divine Spirit operating through the word. Its laws are the precepts, holy and self-denying, of the Lord Jesus Christ. Its ceremonies are the simple emblems and memorials of a life imparted and sustained by the Spirit of God, through the death of the Son of God. Here, since no human laws can

* Osiandri, *Enchiridion*, *Controv.* pp. 30, 43, 112, 113. *Tubingæ*, 1605. *Credunt, Dominum nostrum et Salvatorem Jesum Christum, illud in regno suo spirituali, hoc est, in ecclesia Novi Testamenti, quæ non est de mundo, ideoque mundanum regnum maxime respicit, non instituisse, neque officiis suæ ecclesiæ adjunxisse, &c.* Schyn, *Hist. Mennonitarum Plenior Deductio*, p. 50. *Non ensibus et corporalibus armis, sed spiritualibus solummodo, hoc est verbo Dei et Spiritu sancto pugnant.* *Ibid.* p. 147. *Populus Dei sese non armat carnalibus armis, sed solum armatura Dei, armisque justitiæ.* *Ibid.* p. 214. Bullinger, *adv. Catabaptist*, fol. 108, 152, edit. 1535. *Symbolism*, ii. pp. 183-185.

† *Eccles. Hist.* pp. 517, 518; royal 8vo. edit.

intervene, no human alliance can be due. The conscience is God's seat, the church his temple; which no human legislator should dare to desecrate, no human power control.*

This primary and exalted idea of the church of Christ, cherished, and sought to be realized by the baptists, was adverse to the views of the reformers. From this difference naturally resulted the opposition, which, on the one side, led to the oppression of conscience, and on the other, to the maintenance of its freedom. The reformers, by inclosing in the fold of the church all of every degree, age, and character, were constrained to employ, and to rely upon external means to effect that internal change which was allowed to be an essential feature of the true Christian. The church with them was not the segregation of the good, in bonds of holy amity and alliance with each other and the Lord, from the mass of pollution reigning around them, but embraced in its maternal arms all who at any age had been sealed by baptism as the church's own, whether they were helpless infants, or strangers to the power of spiritual truth. It was sufficient that they bore the magic mark, which, it was asserted, made them children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven. Such a church might be constituted by human agencies; it was within human power to effect it; and accordingly, by the secular arm the reformers sought to frame it. The operations of the divine Spirit were not absolutely essential to the formation of such a community; nor need they wait for living stones to build the temple of the Lord. The materials were at hand; the initiatory rite could be easily applied. Repentance towards God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, could be promised by surety, or supplied by an assent to creeds.

* *Nam quia Rex spiritualis est, ipsius regnum non de mundo, sed de cælo et spirituale, ipsius leges spirituales, ipsius subditi cælorum municipes, qui in hoc mundo non stabilem habent civitatem, sed futuram expectant.* Schyn, *Plenior Deduct.*, p. 53

It was, moreover, the duty of the secular magistrate to shape and fashion the church, so called, to that form which his conscience, instructed by the word of God, or by the interpretations of the church's teachers, should dictate.* To kings was granted the high honor of being its nursing fathers, to protect it from its foes, to maintain in physical comfort its ministers, to root out the weeds of evil doctrine, and to execute the decisions of the ecclesiastical body; force thus necessarily entered into this idea of the Christian community; and, without exception, the reformers yielded to the temporal powers the right of determining the form of the church in their respective dominions.

The fundamental idea of the baptists was antagonistic with all this. They thought and said that the temple could not be built until God had provided the stones. Holy men must be first produced by the power of the Spirit of God, and then shall a building rise to the glory of Him who had redeemed them by his blood. No human workman could be of use but as the channel of blessing; it was the prerogative of God to create anew in Christ Jesus. His word was the only effectual instrument of divine energy: force and coercion of every kind were inadmissible. *Faith is the gift of God. Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*; and no other weapon must the ministers of God's word employ.

Since then the church ought to be the aggregated result of an internal divine operation, exerted on every individual before he becomes a member of it, so in its formation no kind of outward compulsion can be permitted. The unconscious babe cannot be *made* a member of a community, where a hearty

* Cur ego hodie tantam sibi potestatem in rebus fidei sumit Christianus magistratus?—Hoc agit non ut magistratus sed ut Christianus magistratus, nec facit hoc sine precepto et exemplo . . . Inspectemus exemplum Josaphat, Joiadæ, Josiæ, Ezechiæ, Nabuchodonoseris, et Darii, apud Danielelem. Bullinger, adv. Catabapt., fol. 108, 109.

willing assent of the regenerated mind is an essential condition of membership, since intelligence is not there to give value and significance to the deed; nor may men be driven by force or fear, as foolish sheep, within the fortified barrier of the nation's church, since these cannot convert the soul. "Thus it was an ideal state of the Christian church, that floated before the imagination of the anabaptists,—the confused representation of a joyful kingdom of holy and blessed spirits, which inspired these sectaries with such deep enthusiasm, gave them such power and constancy of endurance, under all persecutions, and caused them to exert on all sides so contagious an influence."* In accordance with these views, they are represented by Justus Menius as thus introducing the novice into the sacred fold: "If thou wilt be saved, thou must truly renounce and give up all thy works, and all creatures, and lastly, thy own self, and must believe in God alone. But now I ask thee, dost thou renounce creatures? Yes. I ask thee again, dost thou renounce thy own self? Yes. Dost thou believe in God alone? Yes. Then I baptize thee in the name," &c.†

We may briefly state the opposite ideas of the reformers and the baptists on this important subject, as follows.

The former relied on the secular arm to build and maintain the church; the latter, on the Spirit of God. Hence arose on the one side the civil changes, the congresses, the diets, the wars, the conflicts of crowned heads, as they adhered to Rome or Wittenberg. On the other, the persecutions, oppressions, sufferings, scourgings, the *noyades*, and fiery martyrdoms, which attended and lit up the labors of these calumniated men. Oppression of conscience signalized the progress of the first, liberty of conscience attended the teaching of the last.

Nothing can be more plain on the surface of history than the fact, that this people came every where into collision with

* Moehler's Symbolism, ii. 157, 158.

† Quoted in Moehler's Symbolism, ii. 163.

the civil magistrate. Their existence was regarded as fatal to the well-being of all society. "They show themselves to be the enemies of God and man," says Calvin. "They wish," he continues, "to abrogate the power of the sword, the administration of the public weal. By a shorter cut they plot the ruin of the world, and the introduction of a greater license for robbery, than can otherwise be found."* But is this heavy charge true? Were they the enemies of all government, the sworn foes of all rule and magisterial authority? Let the accuser himself reply; for it is thus he represents their sentiments as from their own lips. "We grant that the sword is ordained of God, but it is without the fold or perfect community of Christ. For this reason the princes and powers of this world are appointed to punish offenders, even with death. But in the perfect church of Christ, excommunication is the final punishment, and without corporal death."† What is this but to say that the sphere of the civil magistrate is without the church, and not within it; that his laws bind man in his social relations only, but that in the church there is another Lawgiver, on whose prerogative he must not trench. Obedience to the civil power they enjoined both as a civil and religious duty, but resisted its exercise in things of God.

A considerable number of the baptists, however, carried their views of the spirituality and purity of the church still further. It was thought to be opposed to the humility of the Christian, to seek for lordship over his brethren. Christians were to be subject only to the meek, gentle, and pure precepts of Jesus; their only power was that of separation from the evils that arose in their midst. Nor can we be surprised, that, witnessing as they did the perversion of the civil authority, and suffering inconceivable anguish from its cruel exercise, they came to deem

* *Instruct. adv. Anab. in Tract. Theol.* fol. 367. Amstel. 1677.

† *Ibid.* fol. 364.

it an office incompatible with their allegiance to their Lord, and thought it a forbidden thing to perform the functions of magistracy; that is, of such magistracy, since they saw it nowhere exercised in the mild and loving spirit of the gospel.* For, surely nothing could be more dreadful, or more unchristian, than the barbarous and excruciating tortures inflicted by magistrates in the name of the law on these disciples of Christ; magistrates were their foes, their oppressors, their persecutors; inflicting punishment, not for sedition, treason, or crime, but for matters of opinion and faith.† Is it wonderful if in some few instances they became foes to magistrates? The coercion and force daily practised in both temporal and spiritual affairs, must have appeared to them inseparable from the magisterial office; which, however necessary for the civil rule of empires and kingdoms, are utterly inadmissible into the kingdom of Christ.

It is not within our purpose to examine or refute the common relations of the deeds at Munster. Various considerations might be suggested that would palliate or throw doubt on the narratives of those events. It is certain that the insurrection was clearly opposed to the doctrine, universally maintained among the baptists, of the divine institution of magistracy for the government of the world;‡ and it must be traced to that

* *Ipsis admodum difficile videtur, religioni Christianæ exacte obedire, et simul officio magistratus politici rite perfungi.* Schyn, *Plenior Deduc.* p. 50. Some thought capital punishments altogether discordant with the spirit of the gospel, and desired their cessation.

† “Could the baptists,” says Bayle, “only produce those who were put to death for attempts against the government, their bulky martyrology would make a ridiculous figure; but it is certain that several anabaptists, who suffered death courageously for their opinions, had never any intention of rebelling.” *Hist. and Critical Dict. Art. Anabaptists*, Note F. edit. Lond. 1734. A specimen of the deeply interesting narratives, contained in the martyrology above referred to, will be presently given in the martyrdoms of Jan Peters and Hendrik Terwoot.

‡ *Credunt, eum esse Dei ordinationem, necessariam institutamque ad*

oppression which makes a wise man mad. Laden with chains, incarcerated in a noisome and pestilential dungeon, a cruel and merciless death before him, Knipperdolling maintained to his examiners that magistracy was the ordinance of God, but that when the commands of the temporal were opposed to those of the heavenly superior, "we must obey God rather than man." We allow, said his interrogators, that we do not owe obedience to the magistrate when he would compel us contrary to the teaching of Christ; but it does not follow that it is lawful for a private person to repel force by force, he should rather observe the precept of Christ, who saith, *When men persecute you in one city, flee ye to another.* Most significant is the brevity and treacherous recollection of the examiner as he gives the prisoner's reply. "He answered, I know not what," says Corvinus, "concerning the tyranny of those who had been the cause of their revolt." The rapacity and cruelty of his employers must be touched with a gentle hand. The words of the "babbling" prisoner might awaken, if repeated, unpleasant and perhaps fearful thoughts in the mind of the oppressor.*

It was the crime of these persecuted people, that they rejected secular interference in the church of God; it was the boast and aim of the reformers everywhere to employ it: the natural fruit of the one was persecution, of the other liberty. Among them,

gubernationem communis societatis humanæ, &c. Schyn, *Plen. Deduct.* p. 49. *Hist. Mennon.* p. 214.

* *Eadem inscitia de magistratu garriebat, quem, tametsi ordinationem Dei esse fatebatur, tamen rebellionem, si quid secus ac Christus docet, jubeat, approbavit, fretus petrina illa sententia, Oportet Deo magis obedire quam hominibus. Ubi quum nos fateremur obedientiam quidem magistratui non deberi, si nos a Christi doctrina transversos agere conetur, attamen hinc non sequi, idcirco vim vi repellere, privatis personis licere, Sed potius id faciendum esse, quod Christus docuerit, Si vos persecuti fuerint in hac civitate migrate in aliam, respondit quid nescio de eorum Tyrannide, qui rebellandi ipsis occasionem præbuisent. De Miserabili Monast. Anabap. Epistola Ant. Corvini ad Spalatinum Viteb. 1536.*

therefore, we must look for the germs of that religious freedom we now enjoy, though still imperfectly understood. Nor shall we be disappointed in our search; nor open to contradiction, when we say, that they alone clearly perceived its truth and value, and maintained it during the stormy and eventful period of the reformation. That they should hold it was the inevitable consequence of their idea of the church, and it was stamped upon them with a distinctness, which neither the flames nor floods of martyrdom could destroy. It is only thus can be explained the universal storm of execration and persecution that fell upon them. They were thought to deny one of the highest attributes of human government: it brought them into collision with the very mainspring and support of the reformation.

There is not a Confession of faith, nor a Creed framed by any of the reformers, which does not give to the magistrate a coercive power in religion, and almost every one at the same time curses the resisting baptist. Thus, in the confession of Basle, it is written, "God hath assigned to the magistrate, who is his minister, the sword, and chief external power, for the defence of the good, and for the revenging and punishing of the evil, Rom. xiii. 4; 1 Peter ii. 14. Therefore every Christian magistrate doth direct all his strength to this, that among those which are committed to his charge, the word of God may be sanctified, his kingdom may be enlarged, and men may live according to his will, with an earnest rooting out of all naughtiness." Thus the confession of Bohemia, "They do govern instead of God upon earth, and are his deputies; it is meet that they frame themselves to the example of the superior Lord, by following and resembling him, and by learning of him mercy and justice. . . . He ought to be a partaker, and, as it were, chiefly, a minister of the power of the Lamb, Jesus Christ, . . . by this authority of his, to set forth the truth of the holy gospel, make way for the truth wheresoever, be a

defender of the ministers and people of Christ, suffer not (so far as in him lieth) idolatry, or the tyranny of antichrist, much less follow the same.”*

In these sentiments all the reformed communities agreed. All committed themselves to a course fatal to the liberties of man, and to the regal prerogatives of Jesus Christ. Honor, ease, and wealth flowed in upon the supporters of thrones, but tribulation unto death was the portion of those who ventured to oppose them. Most affectingly does the eminent Simon Menno refer to this contrast. “For eighteen years with my poor feeble wife and little children has it behoved me to bear great and various anxieties, sufferings, griefs, afflictions, miseries, and persecutions, and in every place to find a bare existence, in fear and danger of my life. While some preachers are reclining on their soft beds and downy pillows, we oft are hidden in the caves of the earth; while they are celebrating the nuptial or natal days of their children, with feasts and pipes, and rejoicing with the timbrel and the harp, we are looking anxiously about, fearing the barking of the dogs, lest persecutors should be suddenly at the door; while they are saluted by all around as doctors, masters, lords, we are compelled to hear ourselves called anabaptists, ale-house preachers, seducers, heretics, and to be hailed in the devil’s name. In a word, while they for their ministry are remunerated with annual stipends, and prosperous days, our wages are the fire, the sword, the death.”†

Were they inferior to their persecutors in godliness, or deserving of this fate for their crimes? Or was it but the fulfilment of the Saviour’s word, *In the world ye shall have tribulation?* Let a catholic reply, the president of the famous council of Trent. “If you behold their cheerfulness in suffering persecutions, the anabaptists run before all their heretics. If you will have regard to the number, it is like that in multitude they

* Harmony of Confessions, pp. 475—477. Hall’s edit. 1842.

† Schyn. Plenior Deduct. p. 133.

would swarm above all others, if they were not grievously plagued and cut off with the knife of persecution. If you have an eye to the outward appearance of godliness, both the Lutherans and Zuinglians must needs grant that they far pass them.

“If you will be moved by the boasting of the word of God, these be no less bold than Calvin to preach, and their doctrine must stand aloft above all the glory of the world, must stand invincible above all power, because it is not their word, but the word of the living God. Neither do they cry with less boldness than Luther, that with their doctrine, which is the word of God, they shall judge the angels. And surely, how many soever have written against this heresy, whether they were catholics or heretics [reformers], they were able to overthrow it, not so much by the testimony of the scriptures, as by the authority of the church.”*

We cannot pass over one instance of their patience under suffering and boldness in the face of death, illustrative as it is of their attachment to liberty of conscience, and of the views of their character we have endeavored to enforce. The scene is in Holland, the year 1551. An old man of seventy-five is brought before the bloody tribunal; his hair white, his body lean with age, his manners irreproachable, springing from a heart fearing God. In his old age he had been baptized, and received into the community of the church. And now, as a sheep bound for the slaughter-house, and surrounded by a number of the burghers, he sits calmly awaiting the approach of the criminal magistrate to pronounce the sentence of death.

* The Hatchet of Heresies, translated by R. Shacklock, fol. 48, edit. 1565. After noticing the arguments of Guy de Bres, Bayle proceeds, “A proof how greatly prejudicial the sect of the anabaptists has been to the protestants, who were obliged to refute it by arguments, which were turned against them by the papists.” Bayle’s Dict. Art. Anabaptists, Note F.

An officer speaks to him : Good father, why do you continue thus obstinately in your cursed error, do you think there is no such place as hell ?

Old Man. Sir, I believe a hell most certainly, but I know nothing of the errors you mention.

Another. Yes, you are in an error, and in so dreadful a one, that if you die in it you will be damned for ever.

Old Man. Are you sure of that ?

Officer. Yes, it is as sure as anything in the world.

Old Man. If it is so, then are ye murderers of my soul.

There is silence in the multitude as the old man thus discourses ; their attention is more earnest, and the officer, half enraged, and ashamed, loudly continues.

Officer. What do you say, you impertinent fellow ? Are we the murderers of your soul ?

Old Man. Do not be angry, Sir, at the sound of truth. You yourself know that faith is the gift of God, that neither I nor any other can extort this saving gift out of God's hands, that God bestows his gifts on one man early, on another late, just as he called the husbandmen into the vineyard. Suppose now that I had not yet received this gift, as you have, ought you to punish me for that misfortune ? Might not God, in case you suffered me to live, might he not impart to me as well as to you, this wholesome gift in a week, a month, a year ? If then you hinder me from sharing therein, by depriving me of this time of grace, what are you otherwise than murderers of my soul ?

But the officer of justice hurries him away, amid the murmurs of the people, whose hearts are moved by his courage and his words. His condemnation does not linger, neither does the sun reach his meridian splendor, before the glory of the Lamb bursts upon the vision of his martyred servant. He was beheaded for his testimony to Christ.*

* Brandt's Hist. of the Reformation in the Low Countries, i. 92, edit. Lond. 1720.

No country afforded a refuge to this persecuted people, though everywhere identified with the beginnings of the reformation.* Under whatever phase the reformed doctrines appeared, the principle which governed their success or defeat met with strenuous opponents in the baptists. Others might lend their consciences to the yoke of the civil power, they must resist; it was not the easy yoke of Christ. Their appearance in England had been prepared by the publication of a book, entitled "The Sum of Scripture;" many extracts from which obtained the honor of a formal condemnation in an assembly of bishops and others, convened by Warham, the archbishop of Canterbury, at the command of king Henry VIII., in the year 1530. It does not appear whether this book was the production of a baptist, although the sentiments condemned were unquestionably held by them, and for aught that we can find, by them only. We pass by such as do not relate to our immediate subject, and produce the following:—

"There be two sorts of people in the world, one is the kingdom of God, to which belongeth all true Christian people, and in this kingdom Christ is king and lord, and it is impossible that in this kingdom, that is to say, among very true Christian men, that the sword of justice temporal should have aught to do."

"There is another sort of people belongeth to the world, and they be unrighteous; and they had need of the sword of temporal justice."

"Jesus Christ hath not ordained in his spiritual kingdom, which is all true Christian people, any sword, for he himself is the king and governor, without sword, and without any outward law."

"Christian men among themselves have nought to do with

* Nam ubicumque Christus emergit, mox adsunt catabaptistæ, ut ecclesias renatus et feliciter institutas vastent ac dissecent. Bullinger, adv. Catabapt. Epist. ad Lector.

the sword, nor with the law, for that is to them neither needful nor profitable; the secular sword belongeth not to Christ's kingdom, for in it is none but good, and justice."

In another work, condemned at the same time, it was also asserted that, "No man ought to enforce, and compel men to fasting and prayer by laws, as they hitherto have done."*

Many other sentiments were with these pronounced ungodly and erroneous. Tyndale's New Testament was especially stigmatized, and the scriptures were declared to be unnecessary for the people. The source of these "damnable heresies" would seem to be indicated by the two proclamations for their suppression, which immediately followed the convention. They had been sown, it was declared, by the disciples of Luther, *and other heretics*, perverters of Christ's religion. Severe punishments were threatened "against the malicious and wicked sects of heretics, who, by perversion of holy scripture, do induce erroneous opinions, *sow sedition among Christian people*, and finally disturb the peace and tranquillity of Christian realms, as lately happened in some parts of Germany, where, by the procurement and sedition of Martin Luther and other heretics, were slain an infinite number of Christian people."†

Reference is here evidently made to the tumults which sprang up in Germany in 1525, and with which it was supposed the doctrines of the baptists had much to do. To none other sect can the sentiments we have quoted, and the condemnation of them in the proclamation, be supposed to refer. Two years before, seven baptists from Holland had been imprisoned, and two of them burnt.‡ Thus clearly showing that such opinions had been broached in this country by members of that sect which was known to hold them.

The year in which Henry obtained the recognition of his

* Wilkins, *Concilia*, iii. 732, 733, fol. ed. 1738.

† *Ibid.* iii. 737.

‡ Danvers, *Treatise of Baptism*, p. 307, edit. 1674.

claim as supreme head of the church, witnessed its exercise in two proclamations published against the baptists and sacramentaries, as the followers of Zuingle in his opinions on the eucharist, were called. Many of the king's "loving subjects had been induced and encouraged, arrogantly and superstitiously, to argue and dispute in open places, taverns, and ale-houses, not only upon baptism, but also upon the holy sacrament of the altar." The divine honor and glory required his immediate interference, and his grace's church must be defended from the inroads of these pestilent fellows. Of them, and his purposes towards them, he thus informs us:—"Forasmuch as divers and sundry strangers of the sect and false opinion of the anabaptists and sacramentaries, being lately come into this realm, where they lurk secretly in divers corners and places, minding craftily and subtilly to provoke and stir the king's loving subjects to their errors and opinions, whereof part of them, by the great travail and diligence of the king's highness and his council, be apprehended and taken, the king's most royal majesty declareth like a godly and catholic prince, that he abhorreth and detesteth the same sects, and their wicked and abominable errors and opinions, and intendeth to proceed against such of them as be already apprehended, according to their merits, and the laws of the realm." And he further commands all such as have not been found, to depart in eight or ten days, with all celerity from the kingdom.*

The proclamation next following brings into yet closer juxtaposition the royal prerogative, and its persecuting character; it also shows, by its early publication after the above, the futility of all the despot's efforts to destroy the maintainers of these obnoxious opinions. Many strangers, we are informed, baptized in infancy, but who, contemning that holy sacrament, had presumptuously re-baptized themselves, had entered the realm, spreading every where their pestilent heresies "against

* Wilkins, iii. 777.

God and his holy scriptures, to the great unquietness of Christendom, and perdition of innumerable Christian souls." A great number had been judicially convicted, "and have and shall for the same suffer the pains of death." The king's most royal majesty, being "supreme head in earth, under God, of the church of England, always intending to defend and maintain the faith of Christ, and daily studying and minding above all things to save his loving subjects from falling into any erroneous opinions," accordingly ordains the banishment of all such heretics in twelve days, "on pain to suffer death," if they abide, and be apprehended and taken.*

The royal pastor and vicar of Christ soon exhibited, in a somewhat sanguinary manner, his care and anxiety for the eternal well-being of his people. In the following year ten were put to death in sundry places of the realm, while ten others saved their lives by a timely recantation. Besides these, nineteen Hollanders were accused of heretical opinions, "denying Christ to be God and man, or that he took flesh and blood of the Virgin Mary, or that the sacraments had any effect on those that received them." Fourteen adhered to their convictions, and were burnt in pairs in several places. "It was complained," says the historian, "that all these drew their damnable errors from the indiscreet use of the scriptures." It was probably of these sufferers for conscience sake that Latymer spake in his sermon before king Edward in 1552.

The oppressive and persecuting nature of the royal supremacy was thus distinctly evinced. The political necessities of the king prevented its exercise on catholics or reformers; but it fell with crushing weight on a defenceless people, who dared not yield their religious convictions, as was done by others, to the dictation of an arrogant and impious trespasser upon the domain of the Highest.

The year 1538 is particularly noticeable for the zealous

* Wilkins, iii. 779.

efforts made to eradicate the baptists from the land. The king had been for some time flattered with the hope of being placed at the head of the league, which was contemplated by the German Protestant princes for their defence, against the combined powers of the emperor, Charles the Fifth, and the catholic states. It promised to be mutually advantageous, could it be effected. In 1535, therefore, the king sent bishops Fox and Heath, with Dr. Barnes, as ambassadors to Smalcalde, to treat upon the subject, and several divines were to be sent to England for the purpose of determining those points of a religious character to which the king hesitated to agree.

It was in this year (1538) that the ambassadors of the league appeared at Henry's court, headed by Burghardt, vice-chancellor of the elector of Saxony. Three points only remained for determination, the denial of the cup to the laity, the continuance of private masses, and the celibacy of the clergy. Henry would not give way. His mind was biassed by the bishops who still adhered to the old superstition.* In the month of October the king wrote to the elector, requesting the presence of Melancthon to assist him in promoting the "true glory of Christ, and the tranquillity and discipline of his religion." It might be that one so gentle could strike out a middle path, at once satisfactory to the royal conscience, and to the earnest desires of the reformers.

About this time one Peter Tasch, a baptist, was apprehended by the landgrave of Hesse. On him was found a correspondence with certain English baptists, some one of whom had recently published a book on the incarnation of Christ. Much benefit was expected to follow this publication, in the wider dissemination of their opinions in this country, whither Tasch himself proposed shortly to proceed, unless hindered, as he said, by the Spirit of God. Of these circumstances the elector

* Short's Hist. of the Ch. of England, p. 132, edit. 1840.

informs Henry, when replying to his application for the assistance of Melancthon. A two-fold good was expected to follow this token of evident anxiety for the welfare of Henry's realm. The king would be flattered and pleased, and, at the same time, the elector would purge himself from all suspicion of harboring these people in his own dominions; thus the main object of the ambassage, the union of Henry with the league, would be facilitated. He therefore transmitted a copy of the correspondence, and described their heresies and practices. It was in Frisia and Westphalia, he tells the king, that the sect especially found its home. It fled those countries where the gospel shone with purest light. For this reason the churches of Germany were more tranquil than those of Belgia; still, through the whole of Germany these errorists, impostors, and fanatics, stealthily wandered. One feature, especially, marked them,—they condemned the baptism of infants. To this prime heresy they added many other errors. "And inasmuch as an appearance of great humility and patience is most efficacious in deceiving the souls of men, they teach a community of goods, disapprove of all punishment, deny the duty of a Christian to exercise magistracy or justice, refuse to take an oath, and lastly they take away the political administration which God hath appointed and approved." He further enumerates some other errors by which a superstitious people were led astray. "They wander," he says, "in secret places, and spread in privacy the virus of their doctrine. When seized, learned men attempt to save them, but if they pertinaciously defend their condemnation of baptism, or their other impieties, or their judgment of political duties, which itself is seditious, then they are punished." Thus did the elector, under the tuition of the reformers, and by the pen of Melancthon, exhibit his zeal and resolution to defend the "true and catholic doctrine of the church of Christ."*

Henry's zeal required but little to inflame it against these

* Seckendorf, Hist. Lutheran., lib. III. sect. 66. Add. i. p. 181.

obnoxious oppugners of his supremacy over the church of God. On the 1st of October he issued a proclamation to Cranmer, and eight other bishops and clerics, to proceed inquisitorially against the baptists, to search for their books, and particularly to scrutinize with all diligence their letters. They were to urge them to recant, confuting and judging them "by the dogmas of the catholic church, and by the scripture." But if they were obstinate, then were they to exterminate them from the congregation of the faithful, and finally at their pleasure commit them, with their writings, to the flames.* This cruel edict could not have much hindered the progress of the truth, since we find the king, on the 16th of November following, constrained to publish a proclamation commanding that no book should be imported or printed without a license, especially and again condemning to the flames the works of baptists and sacramentaries.†

Not that these proceedings were without their seal of blood and martyrdom. On the 24th of November some of these men, who, "whilst their hands were busied about their manufactures, their heads were also beating about points of divinity," bare fagots at Paul's Cross, and three days after a man and woman were burnt in Smithfield.‡ The violence of the king yet further appeared in the following month, while keeping Christmas at Hampton Court. Cruelty was pastime and festivity to him. A letter was issued to the justices of peace throughout the country "to set forth his good intentions for the wealth and happiness of his people!" Its burden was an increase of rigor against the unfortunate baptists.§ Many of them fled. It was in the depth of winter when in secrecy and haste they sought refuge in Holland. But betrayed by envious men they fell into the hands of tyrants there. After many trials of their faith, exhibiting throughout great patience and

* Wilkins, iii. 836, 837.

† Fuller, Bk. V. sect. iv. c. 11.

‡ Burnet, ii. 13, edit. 1715.

§ Burnet, iii. 140.

perseverance under their sufferings, they were sentenced to death. On the 7th of January, sixteen men were beheaded at Delft, and fifteen women drowned, for their testimony to the truth of God. Twenty-seven other refugees had but a few months before passed through the great tribulation, and laid down their lives on the same spot.*

No crime was charged against them, but that of thinking differently from their persecutors. Whether their sentiments were true or false, they were martyrs for opinion. No pretence of rebellion, nor any disposition to resist lawful authority, could be substantiated. It was seditious in them merely to reject the exercise of royal or magisterial power in things of God. That this cruelty failed as it deserved, we have the king's own declaration; he found it needful to adopt milder measures, and to try what an act of grace could do. On February 25th, 1539, he accordingly issued his royal proclamation of mercy. The baptists were the particular objects of the sovereign's anxiety; many of his people had imbibed their doctrines, and this document is an unexpected and unquestionable testimony to their numbers and constancy.†

* Van Braght, *Het Bloedig Toonel of Martalaers-Spiegel des Deops-gesinde*, ii. 145.

† "And wherefore of late certain anabaptists and sacramentaries, coming out of outward parts into this realm, have, by diverse and many perverse and crafty means, seduced many simple persons of the king's subjects, which, as his highness trusteth, now be sorry for their offences, and minding fully to return again to the catholic church . . . the king's highness, like a most loving parent much moved with pity, tendering the winning of them again to Christ's flock, and much lamenting also their simplicity, so by devilish craft circumscribed . . . of his inestimable goodness, pity, and clemency, is content to remit, pardon, and, forgive . . . all and singular such persons, as well his grace's subjects as other, all such faults as they have committed by falling into such wrong and perverse opinions, by word or writing." He concludes by announcing his determination that if any should in future "fall to any such detestable and damnable opinions," the laws should be strictly and without mercy enforced against them. *Wilkins*, iii. 843.

It is not conceivable that this degree of lenity should have been exhibited towards them, had they been guilty of rebellious or traitorous practices. Their religious sentiments alone exposed them to the stroke of the iron hand of the oppressor—sentiments fatal to the high-handed and impious assumption of the monarch. But neither gentleness nor severity could hinder the progress of the truth. The king's care about religion failed to prevent "divers great and real errors and anabaptistical opinions from creeping about the realm." In 1540, he again attempted what threats could do. Resolved, if possible, to exterminate them, the baptists were excluded from the general pardon proclaimed at the rising of parliament in July. That none might mistake the objects of his indignation, he enumerated their errors. "Infants ought not to be baptized; it is not lawful for a Christian man to bear office or rule in the commonwealth; every manner of death, with the time and hour thereof, is so certainly prescribed, appointed, and determined to every man by God, that neither any prince by his word can alter it, nor any man by his wilfulness prevent or change it."* Such were some of the opinions to be answered with fiery wrath to those that maintained them. Truly they imply the helplessness of sovereign authority to turn back the purposes of God, or to change the ordinances of his house. But the oppressed, like the children of Israel in Egypt, grew and multiplied.

Amid the fluctuating policy of this reign, an almost uniform course of persecution was pursued. And if both catholics and protestants felt occasionally the severity of the royal prerogative, they yet united to hunt down with loud howlings of execration those who committed the unpardonable crime of exercising liberty of judgment, and of uttering sentiments destructive of the monstrous assumptions which make the church the fold of every unclean beast, the prey of ravening wolves wearing the garb of messengers of the living God.

* Collier, v. 69. Strype, Mem. I. i. 552.

The ascendancy of the reform party in the councils of Edward, by no means improved the position of the baptists. Their presence was regarded as the reproach of the reformation, and doubtless in some measure retarded its progress. The reformers stigmatized their opinions as the depths of Satan—an artifice of the great enemy to support his tottering throne against the true followers of the Lamb. They attempted disputation by word and writing, inveighed strongly against their so-called sedition against the rightful power of princes, and urged its repression by force of arms. Not a reformer of any eminence can be named who did not take part in this crusade. Luther, Melancthon, Zuingle, Bucer, Bullinger, Calvin, and others abroad; at home, Cranmer, Latymer, Ridley, Barnes, Philpot, Becon, Turner, Veron, and many more. Whether the baptists were confounded in disputation or not, “the burden of the song is always, that at the last the magistrates exerted their authority.” Penal laws, the *ratio ultima* of divines, were their most convincing arguments—their Achilles.*

It was natural that the reformers should highly laud the tranquillity which they enjoyed during the short reign of the youthful Edward. It was indeed to them “a breathing time.” So far as they were concerned, the rage of persecution ceased: to try, as it were, their temper, and to put to the proof their charity and magnanimity. But though the sword was wrested from their adversaries’ hands, it was employed with unsparing severity on the obnoxious sect. Even in the first year of Edward’s reign, we find Ridley and Gardiner strangely united together in a commission to deal with two baptists of Kent. Gardiner had but lately been released from prison, into which he had been thrown for his bold remonstrances against the innovating purposes of the council. He must have been reluctant to act with his fellow bishop, though it were to persecute, since Ridley felt himself constrained seriously to exhort his

* Bayle’s Dict. Art. Anabaptists, Note B.

colleague, not only to receive the true doctrine of justification, but also to be diligent in confounding the numerous baptists of his diocese.*

Their numbers, however, still increased. Their opinions were "believed by many honest-meaning people."† It might be that Robert Cook, or Cooch, was not one of this kind, since through fear of loss of place he finally recanted, and solaced himself for his retraction by retaining the office of gentleman of the queen's chapel in Elizabeth's reign, which his opinions had brought in jeopardy; at the period in question he was a man in some repute in the court of Edward. He was of courteous, fair deportment, of some learning, and well skilled in music; to which we may add, the description of Dr. Turner, his antagonist, a few years later, that he wore a ring, was a curious musician, a tall man, and lived single. He was in habits of intimacy with Parkhurst, Coverdale, Jewel, Turner, and other learned men, with whom he often disputed against the baptism of infants, and on original sin, besides "dispensing divers odd things"‡ about the Lord's supper. With them he went into exile during the reign of Mary.

* Strype's Memorials, II. i. 107. "In very deed I was sent from the council to my lord of Winchester, to exhort him to receive also the true confession of justification. And because he was very refractorious, I said to him, Why, my lord, what make you so great a matter herein? You see many anabaptists rise up against the sacrament of the altar: I pray you, my lord, be diligent in confounding of them. For at that time my lord of Winchester and I had to do with two anabaptists in Kent." Ridley's Examinations, Fox, Acts, &c. iii. 489, ed. 1641.

† Strype, Mem. II. i. 110.

‡ Among the Zurich Letters, second series, page 236, is a letter from him to Rodolph Gualter, under the date of August 13th, 1573. In this he inquires the opinion of Gualter on certain circumstances attending the primitive celebration of the Lord's supper, which he thinks ought to be observed with a plentiful supply of food and wine, after the manner of the paschal feast, and the Corinthian agapæ. In Edward's reign, he was keeper of the wine-cellar. Peter Martyr wrote him a long letter in defence of infant baptism.

Dr. Turner seems to have been particularly incited to oppose him. "Because," says he, in the dedication of his book to Latymer, "I did perceive that divers began to be infected with the poison of Pelagius, I devised a lecture in Thistleworth against two of the opinions of Pelagius, namely, against that children have no original sin, and that they ought not to be baptized. But within a few weeks after, one of Pelagius' disciples, in the defence of his master's doctrine, wrote against my lecture, with all the learning and cunning that he had. But lest he should glory and crake among his disciples, that I could not answer him, and to the intent that the venomous seed of his sowing may be destroyed, and so hindered from bringing forth fruit, I have set out this book."*

The paucity of existing documents written by baptists of this age, renders any accession to our gains, however small, of great value. And though they may pass through the refracting medium of bitter enmity, they are of the more value from their unquestionable authenticity. We may then be permitted to quote a few passages from this rare work.

The rejection of the reformers' practice of infant baptism might, on the principle of antagonism which so often rules in controversy, be expected to lead to some modification of the doctrine of original sin, on which it was professedly founded. It was held that baptism was necessary to salvation, that by it

* A Preservatiue, or Triacle agaynste the poyson of Pelagius lately renued and styrred up agayn by the furious secte of the Anabaptistes: deuysed by Wyllyam Turner, Doctor of Physick. Imprint, 30th Jan. 1551, not paged. In the reign of Henry, Turner was an active preacher of Lutheranism throughout the country, for which he was imprisoned. Being liberated, he went to Italy, and at Ferrara acquired the title of Doctor of Medicine. On Edward's accession, he returned home, and was preferred to a prebend of York, and made canon of Windsor; he was ordained in 1552, after his preferment. He was also incorporated M.D. of Oxford, and made physician to the Duke of Somerset. After his exile under Mary, he regained all his preferments. Tanner, Biblioth. Script. &c. p. 726, ed. 1748.

sins actual and original were remitted, and it was concluded that to refuse baptism to infants, involved either their final perdition, if so dying, or their freedom from that original depravity or guilt which brings death on all the posterity of Adam. It was in the following manner, Turner informs us, that the baptists met the former part of the assertion. "By baptism alone is no salvation, but by baptism and preaching; and certain it is that God is able to save his chosen church without these means. But this is his ordinary way to save and damn the whole world, namely, by offering remission of sins and baptism to all the world, that thereby the believers may be absolved from all conscience of sin, and the disobedient and unbelievers bound still either to amend or to be damned; for he that believeth not is already damned." In another place the baptist most plainly asserts, for Turner professes to quote from one of their writings, that a moral change must precede the rite; of this it is only the symbol, and without it is unprofitable. "For this, I say, the remission of sins is offered to all, but all receive it not; the church sanctified by faith in the blood of Christ only receiveth it, and unto them only baptism belongeth. Therefore none ought to receive it but such as have not only heard the good promises of God, but have also thereby received a singular consolation in their hearts, through remission of sin, which they by faith have received. For if any receive baptism without this persuasion, it profiteth them nothing. . . . Sacraments do not profit them which hear not the promise, and know not what it meaneth."

But if so, the reformer would reply, how can the original depravity of man be removed? The laver of baptism is the fountain where the birth-sin is washed away; do you mean to say that mankind did not fall in Adam, and become partaker of his guilt? "But now, I say," replies the baptist, "that all the world hath sinned, and is defiled in Adam. How now, will water scour away the filth of this corruption? No; it is

a wound received in the soul, and is washed away but with the only faith in the blood of Christ. . . . Though sin be common to all, yet baptism is not common to all." But what of infants? Can they believe? Are they not defiled with the leprosy of sin? How may they wash and be clean? Thus then the baptist. "If Christ had counted infants so defiled with Adam's sin as ye do, he would never have sent his apostles and us unto children to be defiled of them. But now he sendeth us thither for cleanness, to become such as they are, if we would enter into the kingdom of God; washed to the unwashed, christened to the unchristened, believers to unbelievers: not to become leprous, but that we should be full of innocency and simplicity; for it is written, *Except ye convert, and become as these infants, ye shall not enter in the kingdom of heaven.* (For they are pure virgins, and they have made white their garments in the blood of the Lamb.)" His evident meaning is, that the *blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin*; original, in those who cannot believe,—original and actual, in those who can. Turner would seem most reluctantly to quote the latter explanatory clause of this passage (for he places it in the margin), important as it is to vindicate the baptists from the charge of denying with Pelagius all original defilement; there was corruption, but not guilt; depravity, but not sin. That ancient heretic held, "that baptism is necessary for persons of all ages, in order that the baptized person might be adopted as a son of God; not because he derived from his parents anything which could be expiated in the laver of regeneration."* An opinion sufficiently diverse to have prevented the confounding the baptists with the Pelagians. But a point was gained, if ancient obloquy could be attached to their supposed modern representatives.

Whether Dr. Turner felt himself unable to reply, or the question too thorny for a clerical physician to handle, he was

* Davenant on Colossians, ii. 326. Allport's translation.

not unwilling nor forgetful to remind his antagonist of the peril in which he stood, while maintaining these obnoxious views. "For as much as ye are an open felon against the king's laws, and have committed such felony, as ye are excepted out of the pardon, whereof thieves and robbers are partakers, Almighty God amend you, and bring you into the high way again, and save you from it, that ye have justly deserved." Threats and bribes were well approved modes of conversion in those days, and Robert Cook fell beneath their combined power. Heresy had ceased to be treated as an ecclesiastical offence among the reformers, inasmuch as it was felony and treason to oppose the will of the magistrate in the imposition of religious belief.* True martyrs were thought to be found only amongst the protestants of established churches, the upholders of national creeds. All other sufferers for conscience' sake, were execrable traitors and felons, enduring that only which they had "justly deserved." That life and death should hang on the profession of such sentiments as the above, is truly a display of the most hateful tyranny, to be abhorred by every one who receives the words of Jesus, *I came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them.*

The year 1548 witnessed several recantations of these sentiments. Many strenuous efforts were made to put down by force opinions now freely broached in opposition to the views of the ruling party.† The absurdity of supposing that the civil magistrate has superior advantages for the discernment of truth, or that anything short of infallibility can justify the presumption of dictating to the conscience of his subjects, may be well illustrated by a reference to the catechism now put forth

* "Let it not make thee despair, neither yet discourage thee, O reader, that it is forbidden thee in pain of life and goods, or that it is made breaking of the king's peace, or treason unto his highness, to read the word of thy soul's health." Tyndale, Pref. to Obedience of a Christian Man. Works, i. 165.

† Strype's Cranmer, pp. 254-257.

by Cranmer for the guidance of the popular mind, and to preserve it from the heresies and "naughty doctrine" taught by false and privy preachers. Could their doctrine be more heretical or "naughty" than the following?—"That if it had happened to us to be born of heathen parents, and to die without baptism, we should be damned everlastingly;" that the second birth is by the water of baptism, in which our sins are forgiven, and the Holy Ghost poured into us; that there are *three* holy seals or sacraments by which God's ministers do work, baptism, absolution, and the Lord's supper; that baptism makes us partakers of the remission of sins, of the Holy Ghost, and of the "whole righteousness of Christ;" and that when the minister absolves, we ought to believe that our sins are truly forgiven.* Was Cranmer indeed fitted to be the infallible instructor of the people, in pure doctrine, freed from the inventions of men?

At all events he will act as if it were so. For the next year (1547) becomes memorable for the establishment of a protestant inquisition, under the primate's especial direction, and by which two persons at least were doomed to a fiery purgation. This tribunal continued in active operation through the remainder of the reign. Upon the pretext that many strangers from abroad had appeared in the country, and were making many proselytes, a commission was issued on the 12th of April, granting the amplest powers to inquire after heretical pravity.† The inquisitors‡ were Cranmer, the bishops of Ely, Worcester, Chichester, Lincoln, and Rochester, with some of the king's counsellors; his two secretaries, with Cox, Latymer, Hales, and others. We must give the opening portion of this document, as it will mark distinctly the connection of the dogma of royal supremacy in

* Cranmer's Catechism, pp. 51, 182, 183, 186-189, 197, 202. Oxford edition.

† Crosby, i. 47.

‡ Cognitores, inquisitores, judices, et commissarios nostros, &c. Rymer's Fœdera, Tom. vi. pars iii. ed. Hagæ, 1741.

things of God, with its natural consequence—persecution. “Although to all kings it belongeth to preserve intact the Christian faith and church, by their royal authority, to us especially it appertains, who are called by a certain title DEFENDER OF THE FAITH, that we take care that the noxious weeds of heresy, and the blemish of evil doctrine, should not be privately sown among our people.” The baptists are the peculiar objects of its provisions. They are said to have instilled into the ears of the king’s subjects, and into the minds of his “ignorant” people, their wicked opinions, their impious and impure dogmas. Therefore must they be extirpated and repressed. The commissioners are then directed to inquire in every way for them, to examine witnesses upon oath, to proceed with secrecy, and even without the forms of justice.* Salutary penances should be imposed on the penitent, who might then be absolved, and re-admitted to the church. But the obstinate must be ejected from the congregation of the faithful, and exterminated. If the atrocity of their deeds demands it, they must be delivered to the secular power. Prisons and chains might be freely employed at the discretion of the tribunal.

Joan Boucher, whose case now comes before us, must have been at this time in the hands of her foes; for on the 30th of April, eighteen days only after the issue of the commission, she was arraigned for the crime of heresy before this protestant inquisition, and her sentence formally pronounced. From Cranmer’s own archiepiscopal Register we learn, that he himself sat as principal judge on the occasion, assisted by Sir Thomas Smith, W. Cooke, dean of arches, Hugh Latymer, and Dr. Lyell, as the king’s “proctors, inquisitors, judges, and commissaries.”†

Joan Boucher had been an active distributor of the proscribed translation of the New Testament by Tyndale. The court of

* *Ac sine strepitu, et figura judicii.* Rymer, *Fœd.* Tom. vi. pars iii.

† Wilkins, *Cœcilia*, iv. 42.

Henry was the scene of her zealous labors, where she oft introduced the sacred volumes unsuspected, tying the precious books by strings to her apparel.* Although ready in the scriptures, she could not read them; no uncommon defect in that day, even in people of rank. Much of her time was occupied in visiting the prisons, wherein were incarcerated her companions in tribulation, whom it was her wont perpetually and bountifully to assist.†

But there was one error which was sufficient to expose her to the poisonous breath of calumny, and to the burning flame. For this she now appears before the inquisitors, "in the chapel of the blessed Mary in St. Paul's." The examinations are long, the judges learned, and apparently desirous to save her from the stake. She cannot, she will not be convinced that she holds any heresy derogatory to the truth. Neither entreaties nor threats move her. A good conscience emboldens her. At last she utters language grievous to hear, but which smites the consciences of her judges with its telling truth. "It is a goodly matter to consider your ignorance. It is not long ago since you burned Anne Askew for a piece of bread, and yet you came yourselves soon after to believe and profess the same doctrine for which you burned her. And now forsooth you will needs burn me for a piece of flesh, and in the end you will come to believe this also, when you have read the scriptures, and understood them."‡

With the "fear of God before his eyes," and with invocation of the name of Christ, the "reverend father in Christ, Thomas, archbishop of Canterbury," with the full approbation of his colleagues, now proceeds to pronounce her doom. The sentence contains her crime and its punishment. "You believe that the word was made flesh in the virgin's belly, but that Christ took

* Strype's Memor. II. i. 335.

† Fox Johan. Rerum in Ecclesiâ Gestarum. Basil, fol. 202.

‡ Strype, Mem. II. i. 335.

flesh of the virgin you believe not; because the flesh of the virgin being the outward man, sinfully gotten, and born in sin, but the word by the consent of the inward man of the virgin was made flesh. This dogma, with obstinate, obdurate, and pertinacious mind, you affirm, and not without much haughtiness of mien. With wonderful blindness of heart, to this you hold; therefore, for your demerits, obstinacy, and contumacy, aggravated by a wicked and damnable pertinacity, being also unwilling to return to the unity of the church, you are adjudged a heretic, to be handed to the secular power, to suffer in due course of law, and finally the ban of the great excommunication is upon you." The inquisitors complete the labors of the day, by announcing to the youthful sovereign, through their president, that they had decreed her separation from the Lord's flock as a diseased sheep. "And since," say they, "our holy mother, the church, hath naught else that she can do on this behalf, we leave the said heretic to your royal highness, and to the secular arm, to suffer her deserved punishment."*

Considerable delay, however, occurred before the execution of the sentence. We may give the reformers credit for an earnest desire to lead Joan Boucher to more correct views, but must not withhold an expression of just abhorrence at the bloody deed, and at the hateful principle on which they acted. They had adopted an unsound basis for their reformation, and its necessary result was oppression of conscience; the exercise of freedom of thought and judgment upon scripture truth was impossible. Ridley of London, and Goodrich of Ely, were especially active in their endeavors to reclaim her; to whom must be added, Cranmer, Latymer, Lever, Whitehead, and Hutchinson.†

A year within three days was passed in these unavailing efforts. Her constancy remained unshaken. On the 27th of

* Wilkins, *Concilia*, iv. 42, 43.

† Hutchinson's Works, *Biog. Notice*, p. iii. Parker Society edit.

April, the council issued their warrant to the lord chancellor to make out a writ for her execution ; and Cranmer is said by Fox to have been most urgent with the young king to affix the sign manual to the cruel document. The youthful king hesitated. Cranmer argued from the law of Moses, by which blasphemers were to be stoned to death ; this woman was guilty of an impiety in the sight of God, which a prince, as God's deputy, ought to punish. With tears, but unconvinced, the royal signature was appended.* Rogers, the proto-martyr of Mary's reign, also thought that she ought to be put to death, and when urged with the cruelty of the deed, replied, "that burning alive was no cruel death, but easy enough."† He was soon called, in the reign of Mary, to test the truth of his own remark.

The bishops had, however, resolved that she should die, and on the 2nd of May, 1550, she appeared at the stake in Smithfield. Here further efforts were made to shake her confidence. To bishop Scory was allotted the duty of preaching to the sufferer, and to the people, on the occasion. "He tried to convert her ; she scoffed, and said he lied like a rogue, and bade him, 'Go read the scriptures.'"‡ It was doubtless an indignant rejection of the shameful misrepresentations which in that hour of trial were made of her faith. She clung to those words of truth which were her joy and strength, in the moments of her

* We do not attribute much importance to the attempt to vindicate Cranmer at the expense of Fox's veracity ; since if he were not guilty of urging the king to sign the warrant of execution, nor present at the council when the issue of it was determined upon, he had mercilessly condemned her to death, and acted throughout as the chief inquisitor. Fox had too many reasons to withhold the statement were it not true, and it can add but little to Cranmer's guilt, that at his persuasion Edward committed her to the flames. See Hutchinson's Works, Biog. Notice, pp. 4, 5.

† Pierce's Vindication, p. 34.

‡ Strype, Memor. II. i. 335.

dying agony. She loved and adored the holy and immaculate Lamb of God.

We must look for the rise of the opinion attributed to this Christian female to the gross Mariolatry of the Romish church. For more than two hundred years the pulpits of Christendom had resounded with the conflicting asseverations of the followers of St. Dominic and St. Francis, the one maintaining, the other denying, the immaculate purity and sinlessness of the mother of God.* The grossest indecencies were uttered in their intemperate harangues, and nature's secrets laid open by vulgar hands to the vulgar gaze. Thus a subject wrapt in profound mystery was forced upon thoughtful minds, and it became heresy to doubt the common and gainful sentiment of the holy virgin's untainted nature. Fox would seem to refer to this when speaking of Boucher; he says, "that she and others appeared to differ somewhat from the catholics;"† and he then instances her views on this subject, as the alone feature that marred her Christian excellence. At a much later period, in 1620, a baptist distinctly avers that it was in order to advance the high estimation in which Rome holds the virgin, that the council of Trent declared her to be exempt from all sin.‡ Were it not so, it was argued, how was it possible for Jesus Christ to escape all contamination? Can a clean thing come out of an unclean? So then must it be that the mother and the son were alike sinless and undefiled. It is easy to conceive that a simple mind, in rebutting this view of the virgin's purity, might fall into a mode of stating the mystery of the incarnation somewhat divergent from the truth,

* "And of what text the grave (grey?) friar proveth that our lady was without original sin, of the same shall the black friar prove that she was conceived in original sin." Tyndale's *Obedience of a Christian Man*, Preface Works, i. 195.

† *A catholicis nonnihil dissentire videbantur. Rerum in Eccles. Gest. fol. 202.*

‡ A description of what God, &c., p. 121.

if indeed the subject be susceptible of accurate statement at all.*

But it is by no means clear that Boucher held a sentiment every way so objectionable, as her persecutors would seem to affirm. It was certainly stated by herself in a form, if not perfectly intelligible, yet wanting in those offensive features which are generally put prominently forth as her peculiar demerit. "When I," says Mr. Roger Hutchinson, "and my well-beloved friend, Thomas Lever, and others, alleged this text against her opinions, *Semen mulieris conteret caput serpentis, The seed of the woman shall grind, or break, the serpent's head*; she answered, 'I deny not that Christ is Mary's seed, or the woman's seed, nor I deny him not to be a man; but Mary had two seeds, one seed of her faith, and another seed of her flesh, and in her body. There is a natural and a corporal seed, and there is a spiritual and an heavenly seed, as we may gather of St. John, where he saith, *The seed of God remaineth in him, and he cannot sin*. And Christ is her seed, but he is become man of the seed of her faith and belief, of spiritual seed, not of natural seed; for her seed and flesh was sinful, as the flesh and seed of others.'"[†] Had she been as "ready" in the fathers as

* St. Anselm taught in the eleventh century, *Omnes in peccatis mortuos, demtâ solummodo matre Dei*. He further says, *Quemadmodum Deus ea substantiâ genuit eum, per quem cunctis originem dedit; ita beata virgo Maria de sua carne mundissimâ peperit illum*. Magdeburg. Centuriatores, Cent. xi. tom. iii. 335, 34. The unspotted conception of the mother of Jesus, was taught in the twelfth century in France; Duns Scotus adhered to this opinion, and with him his followers, the Franciscans, and since that time, the Jesuits. It was opposed by Aquinas and the Dominicani, and led to a violent dispute in the church of Rome from the 15th to the 17th centuries. Knapp's Lectures on Christian Theol. p. 255. Ward's edit. Still Aquinas taught as follows: *Beata virgo, in sui sanctificatione, fuit ab originali peccato purgata; in filii sui conceptione, totaliter à fomite mundata; in sui vero assumptione, ab omni miseriâ liberata*. Magd. Centur. Cent. xiii. p. 117, tom. iii.

† Works, p. 145.

in the scriptures, she might have added to her acute reply, and to the farther perplexity of her visitors, that Augustine also saith, "It behoved him to be born of a virgin, whom his mother's faith, and not natural desire, had conceived."* At all events, Cranmer and his fellow-inquisitors, had no such special exemption from error on this point, as to entitle them to proceed as if infallibility was in their possession, and to attempt the exercise of a power over the body and the soul, to commit the one and the other to the blazing stake and to the flames of hell.

It would seem that a desire to intimidate a body daily increasing in numbers, hastened the end of this servant of God. More rugged methods than were agreeable to the principles of the gospel were determined upon.† The parliament which rose in February, especially exempted the baptists from the pardon granted to such as had been concerned in the late rebellion. Many were in prison. Their opinions on baptism, on oaths, and on magistracy, were declared inconsistent with the well-being of a Christian commonwealth.‡ Ridley, in the visitation of his diocese, received particular directions to inquire after the baptists. Their assemblies were to be sought out, and a report made, whether they separated from the rest of their fellow-parishioners for the private use of doctrine, and the administration of the sacraments.§

Complaints of the existence of some such congregations were made to the council from the counties of Essex and Kent. Secret assemblies were discovered at Brocking and Feversham, and in divers other towns and villages. These congregations were supported by the contributions of their members, mutual

* De virgine nasci oportebat, quem fides matris, non libido, conceperat. Enchirid. ad Laurent. cap. xxxiv. p. 193. Tauchnitz edit.

† Strype, Memor. II. i. 335.

‡ Strype, Memor. II. i. 291.

§ Cardwell's Doc. Annals, i. 79.

instruction was practised, and fellowship in the gospel regularly maintained. Four of their teachers, with a considerable number of the people, were accordingly seized. About sixty persons were met in a house at Brocking, when the sheriff interrupted their assembly. On appearing before the council, they confessed the purpose of their meeting to be "to talk of the scriptures," and that they had not gone to communion for two years. They were judged by their examiners to hold many evil opinions, and to be guilty of several superstitious and erroneous practices, and therefore worthy of great punishment. Some were at once committed to prison, and others bound in recognizances to the king in forty pounds each man, to appear when called upon.* For a while they were at liberty, but were soon brought into the ecclesiastical court, and examined on no less than forty-six articles. These articles related for the most part to the doctrines of original sin and predestination, which the baptists were supposed to deny. Their opinions on the former gained them the name of Pelagians.

Mr. Humphrey Middleton was the most eminent of the ministers thus summoned for conscience' sake before the ecclesiastical tribunal. He appears to have remained in prison, by the authority of Cranmer, until the last year of Edward's reign. To that prelate he is reported to have said, after his condemnation,—“Well, reverend sir, pass what sentence you think fit upon us, but that you may not say you were not forewarned, I testify that your own turn will be next.” His release from prison took place at the king's death, but was of short duration; for in the reign of Mary he was again the victim of intolerance, and with some others found in Smithfield a pathway of fire to heaven.†

Mr. Henry Hart was another of the teachers of this interesting community, and suffered with it the vicissitudes and

* Strype's Cranmer, p. 335.

† Pierce's Vindication, p. 35. Fox, Acts and Mon., p. 1519, edit. 1610.

dangers of persecution. In the next reign he was also imprisoned for heresy, when he made himself conspicuous, not only for his rejection of the predestinarian views of some of the martyrs, but also for the active controversy he maintained with them. We know not whether he too suffered at the stake. Greatly is it to be regretted that so little is known of a church, considerable for its numbers, yielding its proportion of confessors and martyrs to the Roman beast, and which, we are told, was the first that made a separation from the church of England, having gathered congregations of their own.*

Bold misrepresentations by professed ministers of peace, exciting the rulers of the land to an exterminating warfare against the baptists, were not wanting. "Ye are placed in authority," writes John Veron to Sir John Gates, "for this our county of Essex, in the which, many of these libertines and anabaptists are running in, 'hoker moker,' among the simple and ignorant people, to impel and move them to tumult and insurrection against the magistrates and rulers of this realm. Whom I trust if ye once know them, ye will soon weed out of this county, to the great good and quiet of the king's subjects of the same county and shire."† It was their crime, that, sitting upon their ale-benches, wheresoever they dare utter their poison, they taught the wrong of the attempt to unite things civil and divine. Men who held that magistracy was a civil ordinance of God, and to be obeyed in all civil affairs, were guilty of contention, sedition, and treason, when resisting its entrance into the church of God, seeing "it is neither profitable nor yet necessary to a Christian commonweal." "Which," continues Veron, "would God it were

* Strype, Memor. II. i. 369.

† A moste necessary and frutefull Dialogue between y^e seditious Libertin or rebel Anabaptist, and the true obedient Christiaⁿ, &c. Translated out of Latin into English, by Jhoⁿ Veron Senonys. Imprinted at Worcester, anno 1551.

diligently weeded out by the magistrates and rulers, that these most pestiferous anabaptists and libertines, might once both feel and know, that they do not bear the sword delivered unto them of God in vain.”*

The commission of 1549 was renewed, with a few changes in the commissioners, on the 18th of January, 1551, Cranmer still holding the place of chief-inquisitor. Under its provisions George van Pare surrendered his life at the stake. He was charged with a denial of the deity of our Lord, “that Christ is not very God.” On the 6th of April, he passed through the same forms of trial as Boucher, and was in like manner condemned. On the 25th, he also was burnt in Smithfield. He was a man of exemplary life, passing much time in acts of devotion. He suffered with great constancy of mind, embracing the fagots and the stake that were about to consume him.†

These acts are an indelible blot on the memory of Cranmer, and have been referred to by the Romanists as a palliation of the enormities of the following reign. But it is said in reply, that no catholic suffered for religious opinions during the rule of the youthful and gentle Edward. It was a time of peaceful progress, when men might worship God as truth and scripture required. This however, if true, cannot excuse the persecutions that did occur, of which ample proof has been given; nor in the least exonerate Cranmer from the guilt of being their active and constant promoter. Other reasons, however, than the pacific disposition of the king, or the supposed unwillingness of Cranmer to resort to these cruel methods of propagating his faith, existed to render a catholic persecution at once impracticable and dangerous. No credit is due either to Edward or his council for their forbearance. It was a constrained lenity, and owed nothing of its propriety and worth to the generous or

* Grindal also appears as a persecutor of the Essex baptists. Ridley's Works, p. 331. Parker Society.

† Doc. Annals, i. 91. Wilkins, iv. 43. Neal, i. 42.

noble temper of the king's advisers ; their principles were opposed to the existence of any faith but such a one as coincided with their own. The catholic party was too strong and too large to permit them to venture on the impolitic course of coercion. Reformed opinions had as yet but little hold upon that portion of the community in whose hands lay the wealth and power of the country. Romish practices were in many places used side by side with the new "laudable ceremonies." The nation did not feel itself reformed, and the leaders of the movement saw the impossibility of any other than a gradual submission to their imposed formularies of faith. Still there was no intention to bear the presence of Romanism beyond a certain point. If it ceased to be passive, it was at once met with stern threatening and reproof. Gardiner for his remonstrances was thrown into prison, and Bonner for his nonconformity deprived.

The insurrections in Devonshire and Norfolk, which had chiefly in view the re-establishment of the old religion, were put down with much loss of life and great severity ; and a long and elaborate document, from the pen of Cranmer, was issued in reply to their articles, to justify the innovations that had been introduced. The omnipotence of the state in spiritual as in civil affairs, was the fertile parent of these sanguinary deeds, and Cranmer wielded it to that end, without shuddering or fear.

The same relentless rigor followed the baptists to the end. Towards the close of the last year of Edward's reign, the archbishop was again in motion to examine a number of persons who were said to have lately appeared in Kent. Of his researches we know nothing. We cannot suppose that the example of their probable friend and companion, Joan Boucher, in any way repressed their zeal for the truth, or hindered its successful propagation.* It was not unnecessary that their testimony should be heard, since in the liturgy, now put forth,

* Strype, Mem. II. ii. 19, 209.

it was declared that he who refuseth the traditions of the church, hurteth the authority of the civil magistrate.* Against this pernicious principle the baptists nobly protested, and claimed for the church of God that liberty to receive laws from Christ alone which is its inalienable right.

The articles of religion, issued just previous to the king's death, are said to have been "principally designed to vindicate the English reformation from that slur and disgrace which the anabaptists' tenets had brought upon the reformation."† They could, therefore, have been neither few nor unimportant, to have merited this deference to their sentiments in the fundamental documents of the English church.

* King Edward's Liturgies, p. 535.

† Lewis, Brief Hist. of the English Anabaptists, p. 54.

SECTION IV.

M A R Y .

THE reformed doctrines had not obtained such a predominance in the popular mind as to render long doubtful the succession of Mary to the crown. A nation's opinions cannot be changed in a few short years, much less its religious life. The protestant council of the late king failed therefore in their illegal attempt to place the amiable, but unfortunate, Lady Jane Grey upon the throne, and Mary, without bloodshed, entered upon the exercise of her regal functions.

Her fears had, however, forced from her the promise of permitting liberty of conscience. She assured the men of Suffolk, that there should be no alteration in the established worship. To the lord mayor and aldermen of London, on her arrival at the Tower, she declared, that while her own conscience was stayed in matters of religion, she meant not to compel or strain her people's consciences.* But on the 18th of August, by proclamation, it was announced, that although she observed, and would maintain, the religion of her infancy, and be glad if it were received by her subjects, yet she did not intend to compel them to embrace it, "till public order should be taken in it by common consent."† This proclamation was an advance upon her earlier promises, and darkly intimated the coming severities. She could, however, appeal to her brother's example, as a prece-

* Neal, i. 59. Price, Hist. of Nonconf. i. 99.

† Tierney's Dodd. ii. 57.

dent for the suspension of all public preaching and scriptural exposition, which she proceeded to command: she therein only imitated the applauded policy of the reformers themselves. The first act of Mary's regal supremacy, was merely the exercise of a sovereignty over conscience, which they recognized, and had often employed.*

All the deprived catholic bishops, Gardiner, Bonner, Tunstall, Day, and Heath, were restored to their sees. Six other bishops, who had professed themselves protestants in the reign of Edward, conformed to the new order of things. The rest were deprived, either for being married, or for preaching doctrines displeasing to the ruling party.† The catholics hastened to enjoy the public exercise of their worship. The mass was again restored, images and altars set up, the Latin service revived, and sermons, which irritated more than they convinced, were preached in maintenance of the old ceremonies.‡ The first session of parliament was opened with a high mass in Latin on the 5th of October, and it immediately proceeded to reverse the laws which obstructed the full establishment of popery.

Convocation went hand in hand with the houses of parliament. But few protestants were to be found in that assembly; only five, of whom archdeacon Philpot was the chief, appeared to defend the innovations of Edward, or to plead for their continuance. Great numbers of the more eminent of the reformers had withdrawn to various places abroad. From three to eight hundred are reckoned to have thus expatriated themselves from their native land.§

The change did not much affect the common people. They were ignorant and vicious; corruption of manners prevailed throughout the nation; the spreading light of the gospel had not penetrated the masses of society, nor wrought in them a purer morality. Unmoved by religious considerations, they

* Collier, vi. 12.

† Dodd, ii. 57.

‡ Fuller, ii. 382, 383.

§ Ibid. pp. 56, 58. Collier, vi. 19.

had rejoiced only in the removal of the restraints and exactions to which, under the dominion of Rome, they had been subject.* The transference from one faith to another, was to them an easy matter; neither class of religionists demanded the obedience of the heart; papist and protestant were both content with an outward observance of their respective rites. The upper classes had acquiesced in, nay coveted, the revolutions of former reigns, for they had brought to them an increase of wealth. This was the only obstacle to an immediate reconciliation with Rome; the spoliators of abbeys and monasteries feared a resumption of church property, an enforced restitution of their sacrilegious spoil. The houses of parliament therefore hesitated to acknowledge the supremacy of the pope, and it was not until Cardinal Pole, in the following year, by permission of the pope, surrendered this point, and gave secure possession to the holders of church lands, that the queen was allowed to lay down the title of supreme head of the church of England, although she regarded it as profane.†

It was on the 30th of November, 1554, St. Andrew's day, that the re-union of the nation to Rome was solemnly recognized, and its reconciliation effected. Cardinal Pole then appeared in parliament. His credentials, the briefs and bulls which authorized him, were read before the assembled Lords and Commons. He sought by moving words to confirm their resolution, to awaken repentance. England was a prodigal son, he said, who having wasted his spiritual substance, and destroyed all his ancestral monuments of piety, now returned to his father's house, to the centre of unity, the see of Rome. If heaven rejoiced over *one* repenting sinner, how much greater must be the angelic raptures, when a whole kingdom lay prostrate in their sight! Both houses knelt before the representative of the vicar of Christ; they besought God for mercy to themselves, and to the kingdom, by the hands of his servant;

* Strype's Cranmer, p. 447. Short, p. 192.

† Dodd, ii. 65.

and, in the plenitude of his apostolic jurisdiction, the cardinal uttered the following absolution:—"Our Lord Jesus Christ, which with his most precious blood hath redeemed and washed us from all our sins and iniquities, that he might purchase unto himself a glorious spouse, without spot or wrinkle, and whom the Father hath appointed Head over all his church, he, by his mercy, absolve you: and we, by apostolic authority, given unto us by the most holy lord, Pope Julius III., his vicegerent in earth, do absolve and deliver you, and every one of you, with the whole realms and dominions thereof, from all heresy and schism, and from all and every judgment, censures, and pains, for that cause incurred; and also, we do restore you again unto the unity of our mother, the holy church, as in our letters more plainly it shall appear, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Both the houses of parliament answered aloud, "Amen! Amen!" Tears filled every eye; many embraced each other in the gladness of their joy. Ambassadors were despatched to Rome to tender the obedience of the nation, and a jubilee over the whole church was proclaimed.*

It still remained to abrogate certain other laws relating to the supremacy. So soon as the houses of parliament were assured of the inviolability of the abbey and church lands, the acts passed since the twentieth year of Henry the Eighth, the year of schism, were summarily repealed. On that condition alone would they acknowledge the supreme jurisdiction of the Roman pontiff. Self-interest reigned paramount, and avarice again decided the national creed. Consideration must be shown towards the powerful and wealthy spoliators of the church's goods; but none to those tender and scrupulous consciences whose wealth lay in the possession of the truth. The laws against heretics were revived, the enormities of Lollardy were to be suppressed, and heretical preachers arrested. When delivered into the sheriffs'

* Dodd, ii. 62, 63.

hands by their inquisitors, they were "then, on a high place, before the people, to be burnt."*

Thus the way was prepared for the exercise of those sanguinary cruelties which have rendered infamous the reign of Mary; so great and numerous as to eclipse the feebler, but not less execrable severities of the parties who suffered them. "The system which had slowly grown out of the ignorance and superstition of mankind, was restored to its forfeited supremacy; and afforded another opportunity of developing its character, and of proving, more completely than ever it had yet done, its incompatibility with freedom of thought and the wide extension of knowledge."†

The feast of reconciliation being passed with joyful thanksgivings (Jan. 25th), the machinery of persecution was at once set in motion. On the 28th the cardinal issued a commission to search and examine all preachers of heresy, and commit them to prison. Commissioners and inquisitors went through the realm, and great numbers, from the counties of Kent, Essex, Norfolk, and Suffolk, were apprehended, sent to London, and immured in its pestilential dungeons, to await the fiery trial.‡

The restored church of Rome proclaimed at the earliest moment her sanguinary purposes, and, without delay, sought by terror to repress rebellion against its spiritual authority. She chose for her ground of procedure a dogma repulsive to common sense, and therefore the better calculated to test the blind obedience she required. A simpler course could not have been selected to bring to the trial a man's faith in the word of God, or in the dicta of the church. Gardiner took the lead in this warfare upon conscience, and on the 28th of January, in the church of St. Mary Overies, in Southwark, summoned the first of the martyrs before him. Rogers and Bradford, bishop

* Statutes at Large, 1 and 2 Phil. and Mariæ, c. vi. and viii.

† Price, i. 107.

‡ Fox, iii. 18. edit. 1641.

Hooper and Dr. Taylor, appeared; they were examined, excommunicated, and remanded to prison.* On the 4th of February, Rogers was led to the stake, and breathed his last triumphantly amid the suffocating flames. Bradford was respited to the month of July. Hooper laid down his life with great firmness and joy, five days after Rogers. And, on the same day, Taylor passed through the consuming flame at Hadley in Suffolk.”†

These sanguinary measures had not been adopted without considerable discussion among the councillors of the queen. On the side of lenity, it is said, were the queen, king Philip, and cardinal Pole; Gardiner and Bonner led the opposite party. Many things had occurred to irritate the ruling ecclesiastics. Actions at once indefensible and impolitic proceeded from the reformers. They had even gone so far as to justify treason, and had looked with favor on Wyatt's insurrection. The queen's preacher was shot at in the pulpit at St. Paul's Cross; her chaplains mobbed, and pelted with stones. The ecclesiastical tonsure was made a mockery, a dog's head being shaved in contempt; and a cat with a wafer in her paws was hung upon a gallows at Cheapside, to ridicule the sacrament. One parson Rose publicly prayed, “that God would either turn the queen's heart, or shorten her days.”‡

Timely severities might also complete the work of re-union, so auspiciously begun; cruelty to the few might strike terror in the many, and fix their wavering faith. There was much to countenance this idea. The leading reformers had fled, excepting only a very small number, whose death at Oxford and elsewhere was sufficient to mark the equity and sternness of the resolve. The professed adherents of the reformation were but a little band, and confined to a few localities. It would

* Collier, vi. 105.

† Macintosh, Mary, p. 290. Collier, vi. 107.

‡ Collier, vi. 82, 93, 104. Dodd, ii. 97.

seem no difficult nor tedious employ, to extirpate a heresy whose roots had not yet struck deeply into the popular soil. It was, moreover, perfectly consonant with the maxims of a church, out of which there is no salvation, and had for centuries been sanctioned by success. Such or similar reasons weighed with the queen, when, on the intimation of her council that they had determined to resort to persecution, she replied, "Touching the punishment of heretics we thinketh it ought to be done without rashness, not leaving in the meanwhile to do justice to such, as, by learning, would seem to deceive the simple: and the rest so to be used, that the people might well perceive them not to be condemned without just occasion, whereby they shall both understand the truth, and beware to do the like. And especially within London, I would wish none to be burnt, without some of the council's presence, and both there and every where good sermons at the same."*

The first example awakened general disgust, which was so far effectual as to call forth the day following the death of Rogers, a disclaimer, on the part of the court, of any participation in the horrid transaction, by one Alphonso di Castro, a Spanish friar. He inveighed against the bishops for burning men, saying plainly that scripture taught them not to burn any for conscience; but on the contrary, that they should be permitted to live, in hopes of their conversion.† The spirit of intolerance seemed for a moment abashed, but was not quenched. The sermon was plainly a stratagem, to remove the odium from the queen, and especially from Philip, who was extremely anxious to ingratiate himself with the people. In a few weeks the fires were again lighted up. The persecution continued until the end of the reign, when two hundred and seventy persons had perished in the flames of martyrdom.

The ravages of the persecutors were confined to a few districts of the country. At least two hundred were victims of

* Collier, vi. 85.

† Fox, iii. 139.

the dark-minded and bloody Bonner. The northern dioceses were free from the fiery scourge, as were also some of the western. By far the largest number of martyrs was drawn from the dioceses of Canterbury, London, Norwich, Rochester, and Chichester. They were the foci of the reformed movement; from those places the sufferers of former times had come, and there it was that gospel-light penetrated farthest into the middle and lower ranks of society. The humblest conditions of life yielded a much more than proportionate number; "an instance of the power of conscience to elevate the lowest of human beings above themselves, and is a proof of the cold-blooded cruelty of the persecutors, who, in order to spread terror through every class, laboriously dug up victims from the darkest corners of society, whose errors might have hoped for indulgence from any passion less merciless than bigotry."*

* Fuller, ii. Macintosh, Mary, ch. xv.

SECTION V.

THE BAPTISTS.

By the aid of the historian Strype, we discover that not a few baptists were entangled in the meshes of the sanguinary foe. His information was chiefly gleaned from the papers of the English martyrologist, and it is much to be regretted that from a desire to please the ruling party, or a repugnance to acknowledge the merit of those who came not up to his standard of orthodoxy, Mr. Fox has either omitted altogether any reference to their sufferings, or when he has mentioned them, has suppressed those particulars which would enable us to identify them as belonging to this obnoxious sect. It will be remembered, that in the previous reign, a congregation of baptists had been discovered, assembling as they might find convenient, at various place in the counties of Kent and Essex, but especially at Feversham and Bocking. Many of its members were then immured in prison, with their two pastors, Mr. Henry Hart and Mr. Humphrey Middleton, but were probably released on the death of Edward. In 1554, those two preachers were again incarcerated, with two other ministers of the same people.*

On the 12th of July, 1555, Mr. Middleton was burnt at Canterbury, with three others. His examinations were on the usual test-doctrine, transubstantiation. He averred that there was no real presence in the mass, that both the sacred emblems ought to be administered to the communicants, and in the

* Strype's Cranmer, p. 502.

English tongue. It was with difficulty that he was brought to answer the questions of his examiners, but he assured them, that he believed in his own God, saying, "My living God, and no dead God." Bound to two stakes, he and his fellow-sufferers passed into the presence of the Lamb from amid the devouring flame. Like true soldiers of Jesus Christ, they gave a constant testimony to the truth of his holy gospel.*

Mr. Hart, with many others, was imprisoned in the King's Bench, where also were confined several, who, under the name of gossellers, adhered to the religion established by Edward the Sixth. Among these prisoners of Jesus Christ arose considerable contention and strife. The eternal predestination of the elect, and the ability of man to keep God's commandments, were the topics which excited their unseemly divisions. The baptists were distinguished by the epithets of free-willers and Pelagians. The martyr Bradford entered deeply into the subject with them, and more especially with Hart. The latter wrote a piece in defence of his sentiments, to which Bradford replied; in a letter to Cranmer, Ridley, and Latymer, at Oxford, he communicates his fears, and sends them both Hart's book and his own. He conceives that these men confounded the effects of salvation with its cause; on the matter of free-will he deems them plain papists, yea Pelagians. They also utterly contemned all learning. Their holy life, for "they were men of strict and holy lives," commended them to the world, and rendered their sentiments the more dangerous. To his letter were appended the names of Bishop Ferrar, Taylor, and Philpot. Some yielded to his persuasions; to the rest he showed uniform kindness, alleviating the distress of their imprisonment, from funds confided to his care; for "that he was persuaded of them, that they feared the Lord, and therefore he loved them." Others dealt not so gently with their erring brethren. Archdeacon Philpot was among their oppo-

* Fox, iii. 363, 373, 377.

nents. In a letter to John Careless, he calls them schismatics, arrogant and self-willed, blind scatterers, contentious babblers, perverse and intractable.*

In a long letter to a friend in Newgate, Philpot endeavored to establish the truth of infant baptism. Infants, he says, were included in the command of our Lord, *Go ye into all nations, &c.*; but especially had they the same covenant-right enjoyed by the posterity of Abraham. Evidently feeling these grounds somewhat unstable, he earnestly exhorts his correspondent "to submit to the judgment of the church, for the better understanding the articles of our faith, and of the doubtful sentences of scripture. Therefore," he continues, "let us believe as they have taught us of the scripture, and be at peace with them, according as the true catholic church is at this day."† To such a surrender of understanding and conscience, the baptists were and ever have been opposed, inasmuch as they conceive that the marks of infallibility have never yet been discovered, engraven by divine skill, either on the "holy Roman church," or on that constituted by the legislative enactments of King Edward and his successors on the British throne.

Singular, too, is the harmony of sentiment existing between our reformer and his cruel persecutor, Bonner, who this same year (1555) put forth his book of homilies. Their arrows are drawn from the same quiver, and winged on earth, not in heaven. Thus in the homily on the authority of the church, in almost the same language, doth this blood-stained hero of Rome's infallibility proceed to say: "I exhort and beseech all you, good Christian people, that in all doubts, opinions, and controversies, ye would resort to the holy church, and there learn what the same catholic church hath believed and taught, from time to time, concerning doubts or controversies." And in the exposition of the sacrament of baptism, he gives especial warning against the error of the baptists; for, says he, "certain

* Strype's Cranmer, 502, 503, 907.

† Fox, iii. pp. 606, 607.

heresies have risen up and sprung in our days, against the christening of infants ;” which elsewhere he teaches, that “the most wholesome authority of the church doth command.”*

While, then, our reformers endeavored to reduce the catholic church to the standard of scripture, appealing to its doctrines and honoring to some extent its commands ; yet were they not free from a papal dread of too much light. They feared the perfect communication of the word of God to the laity, and dreaded the action of free minds on its contents. “To the unlearned and laity,” says Roger Hutchinson, in 1552, “the publishing them without interpretation is a like matter as if a man would give to young children whole nuts ; which, when they have tumbled long up and down in their mouths, and licked the hard shell, being not able to come to their sweetness, at last they spit out, and cast away both the shell and the kernel. The eternal God, to help the infirmity of man’s capacity and understanding herein, hath ordained two honorable and most necessary offices in his church : the office of preaching, and the office of reading and interpreting.” To these must the humble man resort ; so great is the hardness and difficulty of holy writ, that without a teacher none can wade through it.†

Great therefore was the dismay of Ridley and others, when, as he says, these imprisoned baptists rejected an open, that is, an established ministry, as not necessary ; when the sacraments were regarded as only “badges and tokens of Christian men’s profession :” or, as Ridley puts it, they made no difference between the Lord’s table and their own ; yet more amazed was he, that they refused to attend the ministry, or submit to any Christian rite from the hands of any clergyman, however pure his succession, who was not known as a man of God by his holy life, and the fruits of piety. In such cases of schismatic

* A profitable and necessarye doctrine, with certain homelyes adioyned therunto, set forth by Edmunde, Byshope of London, &c., MDLV.

† Works, pp. 91, 94. Parker Society’s edit.

folly, Ridley counselled a resort to coercion. Since conviction could not be produced by persuasion, force must be applied. To quote the more gentle Hutchinson: "If there be any suspected to be an anabaptist, I would to God well-learned preachers were authorized to compel and call such to render account of their faith—if it were found anabaptistical, that the preacher enter into disputation with him, and openly convict him by the scriptures and elder fathers; and if he remain obstinate, the same preacher to excommunicate him; and then to meddle no further with him, but give knowledge thereof to the temporal magistrate, which, for civil consideration, may punish him with imprisonment, death, or otherwise."* Hence the opprobrious epithets, the passionate language, the bitter invective, which marked the controversies of these fellow-sufferers for the truth.

Not the least among the opponents of the baptists was Mr. John Careless, an eminent martyr, and their fellow-prisoner in the King's Bench. He had much conference with them, but failed, to his great grief, in convincing them. In 1556, Careless wrote a confession of his faith, especially favoring absolute predestination against free-will. It was generally concurred in by the protestant prisoners in Newgate and the King's Bench, where he lay. A copy fell into Mr. Hart's hands, and on the back of it he wrote his sentiments. His colleague Mr. Chamberlain also wrote against it. Strype mentions only one article of this document, from which may be inferred the opposing sentiment of the baptists. "That the second book of Common Prayer, set forth in king Edward's days, was good and godly; but that the church of Christ hath authority to enlarge and diminish things in the same book, so far forth as it is agreeable to scripture." This reply of Hart fall into the hands of the catholic party, and gave rise to scoffs at the divisions and

* Works, p. 201. Ridley's Works, pp. 9, 264, 121, 129, 141, 142. Strype, Memor. III. ii. 454.

various opinions of the professors of the gospel. It ended in the disownment of the baptists by the gossellers, and a breach of all intercourse and unity between them.*

The friends of the prisoners sought to comfort and cheer them by letters. One of these is preserved. Strype thinks the writer was Mr. Hart; but it is evidently written from the country to those in London who were suffering for the truth; and, as Mr. Hart was one of them, it must have come from some other person. The writer prays that his imprisoned friends may be endued with all wisdom and spiritual understanding. He urges them to walk as the children of the light, and to be fruitful in all good works; to have no fellowship with unrighteousness, to walk circumspectly, to "use well the time, for it is a miserable time, yea, and such a time that if it were possible, the very chosen and elect should be brought into errors;" therefore, they must watch, search diligently the scriptures, and take gladly the yoke of Christ upon them. The writer then proceeds to argue from the precepts given by Christ to keep his commandments, and to love God with all the heart, soul, mind, and strength, that we are able to observe them; that God has given us understanding and reason for the purpose; and that life and death are set before men freely to choose. He concludes: "Wherefore, dearly beloved, let us look earnestly to the commandments of the Lord, and let us go about to keep them, before we say that we be not able to keep them. Let us not play the slothful servants, but let us be willing to go about to do them, and then no doubt God shall assist and strengthen us, that we shall bring them to conclusion. And always, dearly beloved, have the fear of the Lord before your eyes, for whoso feareth the Lord walketh in the right path, . . . and at the last God shall reward every man according to his deeds."†

How these followers of Jesus fared after this period, we have

* Strype's Cranmer, p. 505.

† Strype, Memor. III. ii. 321—329.

no means of ascertaining. The last mention of their persecutions in this reign, is that of the sudden recall of certain inquisitors, who in the year 1558 visited Essex, and especially the district around Colchester, for the purpose of feeding the languishing flames of the martyr's pile, with fresh living fuel. With regret the commissioners obeyed the Council's commands. "Would to God," they write, "the honorable Council saw the face of Essex as we do see; we have such obstinate heretics, anabaptists, and other unruly persons here, as never was heard of. . . . If we should give it off in the midst, we should set the country in such a roar, that my estimation, and the residue of the commissioners, shall be for ever lost."*

The country began to groan over the ashes of the dead, and to regard with horror the cruelties of bigotry and Rome. On the 17th of November Mary died, and this darkest period of our national annals, and of the reformed faith in this land, yielded to a brighter day.

* Strype, Memor. III. ii. 125, 126.

SECTION VI.

ELIZABETH.

THE reign of Elizabeth was an era of conflict. Light struggled with darkness, and by the hands of its professed friends was shut up in the dark lanthorn of a state-establishment. The world became enthroned in the church, and political considerations were of more importance than the laws of the King of kings. "Every moral principle was set at nought, and every crooked path of state-expediency was trodden."* The law of the Lord, that perfect law, might be obeyed only so far as it was transcribed into the statute-book of the realm.

Immediately upon her accession (Nov. 17th, 1558), the queen gave an earnest of the course she intended to pursue. Cecil's advice for reformation was accepted. Protestants were introduced into the council, and catholics excluded from it. On Sunday, the 20th, she listened to the gospel from the lips of Dr. Bill; but imprisoned Christopherson, "the brawling bishop of Chichester," who, on the following Sunday, with great vehemence and freedom, refuted the reformers' doctrine as the "invention of new men and heretics!"† She at once assumed the controverted authority of the state in religious matters, by issuing a proclamation forbidding all preaching and exposition

* Huber's English Universities, i. 294.

† Macintosh, Hist. of Eng. Eliz. ch. xvi. Zurich Letters, i. 4, 6. Parker Society.

of holy scripture, till the decision of parliament should be known. The people might, however, read—only read—the epistles, the gospels, and the commandments, in English; and were besides allowed to pray in the language of the Lord's prayer, the litany, and the creed. For a while, masses, and all the abominations of popery, were sanctioned, the rubric of the missals and breviaries followed, and the zeal of the reformers repressed. But their private meetings were connived at, while the parish churches were closed against them.*

With great gladness the exiles returned from their places of sojourn abroad, full of hope and expectation. "The most merciful God," says one of them, "has visited our affliction, and wrought out the redemption of his people." † Halcyon days were come; *the winter was past, the rain was over and gone*. Martyr-blood had fertilized the soil, and now flowers bright with the beauty of holiness would appear. A new star had arisen to lead the Lord's people, and to shed beams of grace upon the church of the living God. ‡ Visions of happiness too early destroyed by the stern realities of the strife awaiting the wearied pilgrims! Within two months of the queen's accession, Jewel wrote the ominous words, "I only wish that our party may not act with too much worldly prudence and policy in the cause of God." §

"Worldly prudence and policy," did, however, from this time, control the ecclesiastical movements of the hierarchy and the state; religion was made to worship at their shrine. The queen became wonderfully afraid of innovations. "She is,

* Documentary Annals, i. 176. Collier, vi. 200. Zurich Lett. ii. 29.

† Sir Ant. Cook to Bullinger. Zurich Lett. ii. 1.

‡ "God, whose property is to show his mercies, then greatest when they are nearest. to be utterly despaired of, caused in the depth of discomfort and darkness a most glorious star to arise, and on her head settled the crown."—Hooker, book iv. sect. 14. Hanbury's edit. vol. i. p. 327.

§ Jewel to Martyr, Zurich Lett. i. 8, 10.

however, prudently, and firmly, and piously, following up her purpose, though somewhat more slowly than we could wish." * The purer-minded reformers were shocked to see the crucifix still erect in the queen's chapel, and much more, when, habited in the golden vestments of the papacy, with candles lighted before the image, three of the new bishops ministered at the table of the Lord, as priest, deacon, and subdeacon, "without any sermon." "What hope," exclaims the pious Sampson, "is there of any good, when our party are disposed to look for religion in these dumb remnants of idolatry, and not from the preaching of the lively word of God." † Many longed impatiently for further and more active progress in the establishment of the gospel. They chided the wariness, the deliberation, the prudence of the royal counsels, "as if," says Jewel, "God himself could scarce retain his authority without our ordinances and precautions; so that it is idly and scurrilously said, that as heretofore Christ was cast out by his enemies, so he is now kept out by his friends." ‡ The people were disgusted with the insolence and cruelty of the papists; many called them butchers to their face. They thirsted for the gospel exceedingly; the consuming fire of the martyr-pile had well nigh burnt up every green herb, and by its scorching power rendered arid many a spot once fertilized by evangelic truth; but the waters of life were not yet to irrigate the parched ground. The sanction of law was necessary to let loose the pent-up floods of the everlasting springs. §

But will the law, or the lawgivers, grant liberty to the free utterance of God's truth? Are the sighings of the people to be heard? Will the breeze now rustling in the forest tops bring the refreshing rain, the fertilizing shower of heavenly doctrine,

* Jewel to Martyr, Mar. 20, 1559. Zurich Lett. i. 11.

† Sampson to Martyr. Zurich Lett. i. 63.

‡ Jewel to Martyr, Apr. 14, 1559. Zurich Lett. i. 17.

§ Ib. i. 31, 18.

flooding the land with life and peace? Let us see. Ten days after the queen's coronation, the Lords and Commons, her first parliament, assembled. She appeared amongst them. By the mouth of the lord keeper, Sir Nicholas Bacon, she intimated her desire to unite her people in one uniform order of religion. The history of all ages, he said, instructed them to submit to exemplary punishment all undue worship and superstition, especially atheism and immorality. Good king Hezekiah, and noble queen Esther, were eminent examples of zeal to discharge error, and to reform what was amiss. These her majesty would emulate, and strive thus to recommend herself to the approbation of almighty God.*

By the first act of the session, all jurisdiction over the state ecclesiastical was restored to the crown. With the title of Supreme Governor, the queen was invested with supreme power over the church. The whole compass of church discipline was transferred to her. At her bidding, the court of high commission, in part clerical and in part lay, might proceed to reform every abuse, to judge error, to pronounce the doom of heresy, and to punish all schisms, contempts, and offences, as they might think fit. Heresy was defined to be any departure from the canonical scriptures, or from the faith established by the first four general councils; also, any dogma, which, at any future time, should be adjudged heresy by the parliament of the realm, with the assent of the clergy in convocation. This profane assumption of dominion over conscience was further enlarged by a provision, that none should dare to adjudge the order or determination of any religious matter, made by authority of parliament, to be an error, heresy, schism, or schismatical opinion.†

On this broad foundation of infallibility, the Houses laid their second act, to provide for the uniformity of common prayer and

* Collier, vi. 204.

† Statutes at Large, 1 Eliz. c. i. vol. vi. p. 107.

service in the church, and administration of the sacraments. They adopted the second service book of Edward the Sixth, with some changes to make it more palatable to the catholics. "This holy little book," was now restored to the church of England. "We embraced that book," continues the zealous bishop of Ely, "with open arms, and not without thanks to God, who had preserved to us such a treasure, and restored it to us in safety."* Like the first statute, this, with its prescribed liturgy, was guarded by penalties. After the ensuing feast of John the Baptist, all the inhabitants of the realm were diligently and faithfully, on Sundays and feast days, to appear at their parish church, there to join in common prayer; twelve pence was the fine for absence. But if any should be so wicked as to defame "this holy little book," or use in public any other prayers to the God of heaven, or refuse to use any rite, ceremony, matins, evensong, or administration of the sacraments, ordained therein: then shall such person be imprisoned for half a year, and deprived of all his emoluments.

The passing of these acts was strenuously resisted by the catholics in the upper house; but in vain. Nor were the milder and more pious of the reformers pleased with many of the rites and forms imposed by the act of uniformity, and in the book of Common Prayer. Both parties objected on the ground of their religious opinions; but no one saw how unholy and unscriptural were these legislative measures, nor how much they set at nought the rights of conscience. And when at midsummer (1559), the liturgy was introduced, and the oath of supremacy administered, only eighty rectors, with one hundred and seven dignitaries of the church, in all one hundred and eighty-seven, from among more than nine thousand clergymen, were found to refuse compliance. A memorable

* Cox to Gualter. Feb. 12, 1571. Zurich Lett., i. 235. It was this very bishop that stirred up "the troubles at Frankfort" about the prayer-book.—Phœnix, ii. 72.

exhibition of the power of self-interest, and of the little truthfulness and religion then existing among the religious guides of the people.*

The source of these errors in legislation, may be discovered in the views of the reformers on the nature of the church. In their conference with the catholics, while the measures were under the consideration of parliament, the protestants laid down the following proposition for debate. "Every particular church hath authority to institute, change, and abrogate ceremonies and rites in the church, so that it be to edify;" and they thus define the term, "every particular church:"—"We understand every particular kingdom, province, or region, which by order make one Christian society, or body, according to the distinction of countries, and orders of the same."† The church of Christ is thus made co-extensive with the provinces, nations, and kingdoms of the world. From its fold none are excluded, however profane. Because girt about by the same natural boundaries, the godly and the ungodly are united into one ecclesiastical community, and the natural laws which govern every social state, must, of necessity, become the rule and standard of the supernatural. The church ceases to be the fellowship of the saints; the saying of our Lord, *My kingdom is not of this world*, is reversed. Necessarily different laws than those he has instituted, must be made to govern such a mixed assemblage, since his divine legislation has respect to a community, constituted by *repentance towards God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ*. The terms of communion must be

* Cardwell's Hist. of Conferences on Book of Common Prayer, p. 35. Statutes at Large, 1 Elizabeth, c. 2.

† Cardwell's Hist. of Conferences, &c., p. 72. "For if the commonwealth be Christian, if the people which are of it do publicly embrace the true religion, this very thing doth make it the church, as hath been shewed."—Hooker's Works, iii. 324, Hanbury's edit.

altered, and *birth of blood, of the will of the flesh, and the will of man*, may suffice to make a son of God.*

With great consistency the protestant divines proceed to say, that the ceremonies and rites of the church, "may by God's word, by general councils, and by particular provinces, regions, and societies of Christians, according to the state of the times, be instituted and ordained, changed and removed, upon such just grounds, causes, and considerations, as the state of the times, places, people, and other circumstances shall require; so that it be done to edify God's people."† In other words, a political state, a general council, and God's word, are of equal and co-ordinate authority in the church of God, that is, in a province or national society of Christians; and in questions of ecclesiastical polity, the superiority of dominion is with the magistrate, or political chief of the nation, who is also the "supreme governor" of the church. Thus, "things of their own nature indifferent," may be lawfully imposed on the consciences of men, and the godly be compelled to submit to an authority in the church, unrecognised in the oracles of truth. The rule laid down with so much apparent explicitness, that such things only may be enjoined as are edifying to God's people, it is self-evident, is worthless. The queen, the depositary of the nation's power, the exponent of the nation's will, which be it remembered is the church, is edified when on bended knee she offers prayer at a gilded shrine, with her eye glancing upon a cross, the emblem of man's redemption. But her bishops are scandalized at the sight. This "scenic apparatus of divine worship" offends them. "As if," says Jewel, "the Christian religion could not exist without something tawdry."‡ But who then shall decide? The word of God? The bishops, its professed expounders? Whose edification shall be the rule

* See the order of Infant Baptism, in the Book of Common Prayer.

† Cardwell, Hist of Conf., p. 72.

‡ To Martyr in 1599. Zurich Lett., i. 23.

of judgment? It is the queen, and the parliament of the nation, and not the statute-book of Christ, which shall decide. And further, it shall be sedition, treason to the magistrate, to venture to disobey, or even to call in question their decisions. "For the queen, a most discreet and excellent woman, most manfully and courageously declared, that she would not allow any of her subjects to dissent from this religion with impunity."*

It is obvious that on such principles the church would be sacrificed to the world; that a reformation thus established would be adverse to the claims of Jesus, as King in Zion; and that a foundation would be laid for perpetual strife and division; for minds, in which the supremacy of God's word is acknowledged, must, sooner or later, rise in rebellion against the supremacy of the throne, the imposing power, and endeavor to break through the "braided trammels," woven to keep them in bondage to the elements of the world. Such was the case: and to that strife we have now to direct our attention.

Stringent as were the above laws, and of imperative obligation on the subjects of the queen, a considerable latitude of practice was enjoyed during the first five years of her reign. Catholics saw no such great change in external ordinances, as to feel their absence from the parish churches a matter of religious necessity. The preachers of the gospel were comparatively few; hardly one in a hundred of the clergy was able or willing to preach. Many parishes were without a clergyman, and some dioceses without a bishop. Much freedom was thus enjoyed by those who had at heart the dissemination of divine truth; and by commendatory letters from the queen or one of the bishops,

* Jewel to Martyr, May 20, 1560. Zurich Lett., i. 79. Saith Archbishop Sandys a few years later, as the beams of royal favor fell upon him, "Our Deborah hath mightily repressed the rebel Jabin; our Judith hath beheaded Holophernes, the sworn enemy of Christianity; our Hester hath hanged up that Haman which sought to bring us and our children into miserable servitude."—Sermons, &c., by Sandys, Archbishop of York, p. 81. Parker Society.

some few eminent men were permitted to preach throughout the country.* Great diversities likewise existed among the officiating clergy; some more than others adhering to the rubric, some altogether passing it by. So, according to secretary Cecil, some said the service and prayers in the chancel, others in the body of the church; some officiated in a seat, others in a pulpit; some in a surplice, others without; some baptized in a font, others in a bason; some signed with a cross, by others it was omitted; some of the clergy wore square caps, some round ones, and some hats.† Some, like Bishop Jewel, thought the habits theatrical, employed because of the ignorance of the priests, who being found no better than logs of wood, without talent, learning, or morality, were commended to the people “by that comical dress.”‡ Others, with the pious Sampson, called them “the relics of the Amorites,” a popish invention, to be abominated by all godly people.§

Such disorders were intolerable. They broke the uniformity so earnestly desired. This variety in practice, this disagreement in religion—as if religion consisted in these ceremonial observances and vestures—and this disregard of the establishment, disturbed the public harmony, and dissevered the government. So the queen thought, and thus she wrote to the archbishop of Canterbury, chiding him and his fellow-bishops for their remissness, and commanding them to exercise their authority with more vigilance and vigor. She was resolved, she said, to bring her subjects to conformity; peevishness and clamor she would not suffer to be indulged; nor should any man’s obstinacy shelter him from punishment.|| The bishops were roused to exertion. They soon (1564) issued certain disciplinary laws, to

* Lever to Bullinger, July 10, 1660. Zur. Lett. i. 85.

† Collier, vi. 394.

‡ Jewel to Martyr, Nov. 5, 1559. Zur. Lett. i. 52.

§ Sampson to Martyr, Jan. 6, 1560. Ibid. i. 64, 158.

|| Collier, vi. 395.

which the clergy were compelled to subscribe. The shapes and fashions of ecclesiastical dress were their chief subject. Side-gowns with sleeves, straight at the hand, without any cuffs or falling capes, tippets of white sarcenet, silk hoods, caps, copes, comely surplices with sleeves, were among the weightier matters that engaged the earnest attention and solemn consultations of the reverend bench, for the "advancement of God's glory, and to the establishment of Christe's pure religion." That none might avoid the imposition, all licenses to preach were withdrawn from the ensuing March, and not renewed until the clergy should append their signatures to all things therein prescribed.*

A strong and early disinclination to wear the habits had been shown by Dr. Thomas Sampson, dean of Christchurch, and Dr. Lawrence Humphreys, Regius Professor of Divinity, and President of Magdalen College, Oxford. The unseemliness of these superstitious dresses was from the first a matter of complaint with the pious Sampson. From Strasburg, on his way home, he expressed to Peter Martyr his dislike. "I think it," says he, "scarcely endurable, even if we are to act in all things according to the law of expediency."† The other exiles sympathized in his objections, and fruitlessly endeavored to set the obnoxious garments aside.‡ The popish attachments of the queen to crucifixes and images, to silk hoods and surplices, even led Jewel to contemplate the necessity of abandoning his bishopric.§ Nevertheless, after the publication of the queen's injunctions (1559), by which "some ornaments, such as the mass-priests formerly" used, were prescribed, great numbers of the clergy, who had put them off, resumed them. They wore them, they said, for the sake of obedience. "They are but few of us," writes Lever

* Doc. Annals, i. 287. Collier, vi. 400.

† Zurich Letters, i. 1.

‡ Strype, Annals I. i. 263.

§ Jewel to Martyr, Feb. 9, 1560. Zur. Lett. i. 68.

to his friend Bullinger, "who hold such garments in the same abhorrence as the soldier, mentioned by Tertullian, did the crown."* Thus the ears and eyes of the multitude were fascinated, and they could scarcely believe but that the popish doctrine was retained, or would shortly be restored.†

But the latitude hitherto enjoyed, by the connivance of the prelates, was now to cease. The publication of the advertisements, the disciplinary laws above-mentioned, was immediately followed by resolute efforts to enforce them. Deprivation was the penalty of non-compliance. In the month of March (1564), Sampson and Humphreys, with four London ministers, were cited before the queen's commissioners. All the six declined conformity; they could not be prevailed upon, although submission was sanctioned by several of the foreign reformers, who had gained their esteem and affection in the years of exile. Every indulgence was denied them. Conformity or deprivation was the alternative absolutely placed before them.‡ On the 24th of March, the same choice was proposed to the whole metropolitan clergy. A conforming priest, clothed in the obnoxious vestures, was placed before them. "My masters," said the bishop's chancellor, "the council's pleasure is, that ye strictly keep unity of apparel, like to this man. In the church, ye must wear a surplice; the rubrics in the book of Common Prayer, the queen's majesty's injunctions, and the articles, ye must inviolably observe. Ye that will subscribe, write *volo*; ye that will not, write *nolo*. Be brief; no words." Efforts to speak were abruptly stopped: "Peace, peace; Apparitor, call the churches." Thirty, out of one hundred and forty, preferred immediate sequestration; and with few exceptions, were deprived at the end of three months allowed them for reflection. The

* Tertullianus de Corona, c. i.

† July 10, 1560. Zur. Lett. i. 84.

‡ Soames's Elizabeth. Rel. History, pp. 45, 46.

papists among them went abroad. The rest welcomed poverty, rather than pollute their consciences with an unholy compliance.*

It would lead us beyond our purpose to detail the varying aspects and events of this conflict. The matter in question appeared trifling; but it was pregnant with the most important consequences. The whole question of church authority, and of human intervention in divine things, was stirred; and the refusal to wear a surplice, a square cap, a gown of peculiar fashion, involving as it did the duty of obedience to the ruling power, could be justified only by an appeal to the paramount law, that Christ alone is king in his church. The resulting exclusion of the secular magistrate, either as legislator or administrator, from the sacred fold, was not however perceived; and when set before the protestant mind by the baptists, was deemed visionary and impracticable; nay, seditious and subversive of all authority whatsoever. Yet, here and there, in the examinations and writings of the nonconformists, may be found glimpses of the fundamental objection to these impositions; they exalted the supremacy of the scriptures, and confidently appealed to its decisions, but threw open the flank of an otherwise impregnable position, by one mistaken conclusion. They were fatally inconsistent in recognising any human authority, or royal supremacy, in the church of Christ, while they objected to consequences inevitably flowing from its exercise. The bible and the statute-book cannot possess a co-ordinate jurisdiction; one must reign supreme. The puritans, therefore, erred in admitting a foreign authority into the kingdom of the Most High—that of men.

The chief arguments employed against the habits were two. 1. That all things in the church ought to edify. 2. That the queen had no right to impose anything besides scripture, or contrary to it. The apparel in question had been abused to idolatrous purposes; it was offensive from its associations, and therefore unedifying to the children of God. Neither could the

* Soames, pp. 47, 48.

scriptures of truth, nor the elder fathers, be brought to sanction such a dress, for the ministry of the new dispensation. Christ had purchased a liberty for his people which ought to be maintained, and royal interference must be confined to the enforcement of his instructions.* This latter admission of the nonconformists breached their munition of rock.

And now the godly mourned. Schism began to rend the church; the fair prospect was overspread with clouds. In vain they awaited the guidance of the Divine Spirit; for the queen, who held the helm, directed the bark "according to her pleasure." Under her charge it was drifting fast towards the sands of a shifting, worldly policy; and ere long some would be compelled to abandon a vessel whose pilot, neither truth nor zeal, piety nor importunity, could persuade to turn the "sails to another quarter."†

* Neal, i. 141—143, note.

† See Horn's Letter to Bullinger, August 8, 1571. Zurich Letters, ii. 248.

SECTION VII.

THE PURITANS.

SYMPTOMS of further movement soon began to appear ; and many other matters to be called in question, besides caps and copes. As scripture did not authorise their use, so were there some other things not found written therein, but to which the rulers of the church most pertinaciously adhered. Were archbishops, bishops, deans, archdeacons, rectors, vicars, curates, commissaries, &c., necessary parts of the sacred edifice, *whose builder and maker is God?* From whom was derived the royal title of supreme governor of the church of England? Was there not another Head, whose claim was infinitely more legitimate, but disallowed by English parliaments and queen's councils? Who imparted the right of limiting the prayers of the faithful to the book of Common Prayer? Were there no "absurdities and silly superfluities" in it? Was it not composed "after the model, and in the manner of the papists?" Whence came the commissary's power of excommunication, and the absolution of the excommunicated in private, "without any trouble, and for a sum of money?" Were episcopal courts, courts of arches and audience, and courts of faculties, granting licenses for non-residence, pluralities, dispensations, &c., scriptural additions to the *courts of the Lord's house?* Part-singing in churches, organs, tolling bells at funerals, and on vigils of saints, bowing at the name of Jesus, baptism at private houses and by women, the sign of the cross, the sponsorial responses

of the infant,—were these, and other such things, becoming the simplicity, and according to the precepts, of the gospel? And last, but not least, was it not an unheard-of assumption, that “the queen’s majesty, with the advice of the archbishop of Canterbury, may order, change, and remove anything in the church at her pleasure?”*

Yet these truly unscriptural laws and institutions were rigorously enforced, and the queen’s known determination destroyed the hope of any relaxation. The hardships and deprivations of many godly uncompliant men, induced many, in the year 1566, to separate from the established worship. Despite the meanness of their condition, and the perils that surrounded them, they “stood to the truth of God’s word;” and sometimes in private houses, sometimes in the fields, and occasionally even in ships, they held their meetings and administered the sacraments. They also ordained them ministers and deacons, and exercised discipline upon such as walked not according to godliness.† In this separation, they had not the sympathy of all who agreed with them as to the objectionable nature of the established worship. Many still clung to the vain hope of a purer ritual. They thought the evils of separation greater than submission to episcopal and royal commands. The church’s standards of doctrine were pure, from her pulpits many proclaimed the way of salvation, and the points of agreement were more than those of difference. Thus did such men as Fox, Sampson, and Humphreys argue, and cleave to a community, which had been sanctified in their affections by the blood of many saints.‡

The separatists, however, became more bold. In the following year they ventured to assemble at Plumber’s Hall, in

* The Church of England as described by Perceval Wilburn. Zurich Letters, ii. 358.

† Grindal to Bullinger, June 11, 1568. Zur. Lett. i. 201.

‡ Price, i. 198.

London. Being discovered, the sheriffs broke up their meeting and took the greater part into custody. The day after, they were brought before bishop Grindal, who charged them with their separation as a crime, and that thereby they condemned the well-reformed church of England, for which martyrs had shed their blood. Why had they separated? Were not the ceremonies indifferent, and under the prince's power to command for the sake of order? "So long," said John Smith, one of the company, "as we might have the word freely preached, and the sacraments administered without the use of idolatrous gear, we never assembled in private houses. But when all our preachers who could not subscribe to your apparel and your laws, were displaced, so that we could not hear any of them in the church for the space of seven or eight weeks, excepting father Coverdale, who at length durst not make known to us where he preached; and then we were troubled in your courts from day to day, for not coming to our parish churches; we considered among ourselves what we should do." Being thus driven from the Anglican pale, they formed a congregation after the example of one in Queen Mary's days, using in their worship a book formerly approved by Calvin. Their further objections embraced the hierarchy of the church. They asserted that the kingly authority of Jesus Christ was sacrificed to popish canons and the prince's will. By that "prince's will, they too were sacrificed" to the phantom of uniformity: they were cast into prison. It was the beginning of sorrows. Severities multiplied. The prisons of London were soon filled with a numerous band of men, to whom a good conscience was of more value than the wealth and preferments of the state church.*

An able and learned expositor of the advancing sentiments of the nonconformists, now appeared in the person of Mr. Thomas Cartwright. He availed himself of his public position as divinity lecturer at Cambridge, to proclaim the necessity of

* Parte of a Register, 23—37. Grindal's Remains, p. 369.

further reformation, and of a return to the practice of apostolic men. He asserted that a divine model of church polity was prepared in scripture, to which every ecclesiastical arrangement should conform. The titles and offices of archbishops and archdeacons were not there; they must be suppressed. The names of bishops, too, must be rejected, since the office no longer resembled the apostolic institute. Character and ability to exercise the functions of a teacher and pastor, must be peremptorily required of all who aspired to be ministers of the church. In many other particulars the Anglican forms needed amendment, and ought to be reduced to the primitive pattern: then only could the church of England be regarded as a church of Christ.* These were dangerous doctrines, subversive of the very being of the establishment. Their defender was suspended from his office, expelled the university, and for a time compelled to reside abroad.

Meanwhile the sufferings of the non-compliant ministers increased; they were every where harassed by examinations, suspensions, deprivations, and imprisonments. Subscription was strictly insisted on. The house of commons was haughtily commanded not to interfere with the queen's prerogative in ecclesiastical affairs; and the aged but energetic proposer of further reformation, was forbidden to enter the house during her pleasure. "The world," it was said, "cannot bear two suns, much less can the kingdom endure two queens, or two religions.†

These rigorous proceedings were not, and could not be regarded as arising from a jealous watchfulness over the interests of Christ's kingdom. "How the most part of the bishops," writes one of the deprived ministers, "by wealth, honors, and dignity, are blinded, the present storms and tempests, where-

* Collier, vi. 485. Neal, i. 173.

† Neal, i. 185. Soames, p. 147. Pilkington to Bullinger, July 15, 1570. Zur. Lett. i. 222.

with God's people are tossed, do sufficiently declare." They could not be sincerely anxious to cast out "the rags and dregs" of popery, while they stretched to the uttermost their authority to keep them; for they who would not use them, were forbidden to preach, deprived, and imprisoned. Thousands of unworthy men were permitted to exercise their ministry, and to enjoy livings; while fit and competent men were thrust out, because unwilling to wear the pope's livery. Immorality, the saying of mass for many years, gaming, and drunkenness, were no bar to promotion, if only such persons would obey the episcopal injunctions. Disobedience to the unscriptural regulations of the prince, was visited with the severest penalties by these pretended shepherds, but no notice taken of disobedience to God.*

At length, in 1572, the controversy assumed a form more menacing to the stability of the church than it had yet done. Though of much influence in the house of commons, the puritan party failed to obtain any relief. Or, as the spirited Wentworth afterwards said, "God would not vouchsafe that his Holy Spirit should all that session descend upon our bishops, so that in that session nothing was done to the advancement of his glory."† Immediately after the prorogation, the famous Admonition to Parliament appeared. The effect of it was great and immediate, and threw consternation into the intrenchments of the church. Such bold language had not been heard before; the mitre was challenged to a fall. It commences with a reference to the citations and deprivations of "many ministers of God's holy word and sacraments," by her majesty's high commissioners, and prays the interference of the house. It then details with much energy and sharpness, it may be said irritation, the many grievances under which those desirous of reformation suffered. The prayer-book, they said, was picked and culled out of that popish dunghill, the portuise and mass-book; the homilies were too

* A Comfortable Epistle, &c. Parte of a Register, pp. 2—9.

† Speech in 1575. Parliamentary History, iv. 195.

homely to be set in the place of scripture ; the title of priests was a denial of Christ's having come, or a memorial of the popish priesthood ; the rites employed in infant baptism were childish and superstitious toys ; confirmation was popish and peevish ; the churching of women smelt of Jewish purifications ; the psalms were tossed like tennis balls, so confused was their order ; divine service was often profanely hurried, that the minister might go to his second church, and the people to their games, dancing, bull-baiting, and above all, to the interludes ; the whole hierarchy, from the archbishop of Canterbury to the meanest sexton, was opposed to the word of God ; a true ministry and regiment of the church were entirely wanting. To the articles, however, they were willing to subscribe. They conclude with a prayer, " that the reign of antichrist may be turned out headlong from amongst us, and Christ our Lord may reign over us by his word."*

The authors of this bold appeal to the nation's representatives, and of these sweeping accusations against the church, were Mr. John Field and Mr. Thomas Willecocks, two puritan clergymen of celebrity. Both were immediately imprisoned in Newgate. The archbishop's intolerance had, at length, led men to question the authority that oppressed them, and a rival polity now stood forth to claim the affections, and to arrest the judgment of the godly. Henceforth the conflict was not for mere concessions, nor for the removal of offensive apparel from the services of the church ; the very existence of the hierarchy was threatened, and a new aspirant to dominion over conscience appeared, when presbytery stood forth in array before the entrenched hosts of established episcopacy.

Mr. Cartwright returned about this time from exile, and supported the first by a Second Admonition. In this he lays down the new "platform" of church discipline, taking the Genevan

* An Admonition to Parliament, 12mo. It has neither name, place, nor date.

presbyterial government for his model. He endeavors to strengthen his positions by an appeal to scripture, on which all church polity as well as doctrine depends. But to give his system stability, he enunciates the following important sentiment. "The civil magistrate, the nurse and foster-father of the church, shall do well to provide some sharp punishment for those that contemn this censure and discipline of the church, for no doubt it is in the degree of blasphemy, of a heathen, our Saviour says, that renounceth God and Christ."* Near the close, in an appeal to the queen, he further urges the point. "We beseech her majesty to have the hearing of this matter of God's, and to take the defence of it upon her; and to fortify it by law, that it may be received by common order throughout her dominions. For though the orders be, and ought to be, drawn out of the book of God, yet it is her majesty, that by her princely authority, should see every of these things put in practice, and punish those that neglect them, making laws therefore; for the church may keep these orders, but never in peace, except the comfortable and blessed assistance of the states and governors link in to see them accepted in their countries and used."† Such was the foundation laid by this great puritan divine, and we look in vain through his writings to find any higher views of human freedom in the church of God.

This publication of Mr. Cartwright, was followed in a few weeks by Dr. Whitgift's Answer to the first Admonition; at

* A Second Admonition, &c., p. 49.

† Ibid. p. 60. "But," saith archbishop Sandys, "our skilful householder, our wise governor, *hath* planted in this our vineyard neither thorns nor thistles, but the true vine—Christ. This vine *hath* been diligently watered with the dew of God's truth sincerely preached,—with his sacraments reverently administered, according to his will; it *hath* been under-propped with the continuance of authority, and defence of zealous Christian magistrates. . . . No flock better fed; no people more instructed; no vineyard in the world more beautiful or goodly to behold."—Sermons, p. 59. Parker Society edition.

the close of which he briefly refers to the second. In his introduction, Whitgift endeavors, at some length, to fix on the monitors the charge of Anabaptistry; in that they considered not the authority due to the magistrate in ecclesiastical matters, nor the inapplicability of scripture rules to the varying circumstances of time and place.* Cartwright, in his reply, published in the following year, disclaimed this identity. He fully admitted the magistrate's authority, and acknowledged its lawfulness; but maintained that it was limited in its exercise by the scriptures. Truth might and ought to be established and held by the civil power; but not a hierarchy and a discipline having no foundation therein. Two other large volumes followed these, one on either side; but it were too long to enter upon the numerous subjects of discussion embraced by them. It will suffice, if we mark the agreement or difference of opinion of the disputants, on one or two of the main features of the strife.

The controversy turned upon two important points—church polity and church authority; or the sufficiency of scripture as a rule for ecclesiastical discipline, and the nature and extent of the magistrates' authority in or over the church. On the first topic they were at irreconcilable variance. Whitgift would grant scripture to be the only rule for doctrine, but for the rest, the church *hath* power to decree rites and ceremonies. On the general question, the arguments of Cartwright were conclusive and triumphant; but he had to encounter great difficulties in establishing his synodal and consistorial discipline, as the order of the New Testament. With his opponent, the learned puritan was compelled to resort to patristical authority, for proofs of some of his positions; and not a little ingenuity does he display in order to evade the force of the intractable passages quoted against him. If the testimony of the fathers had sufficed to prove episcopacy to be the divine polity of the

*An Answer to a certen Libel, &c. p. i. 4to. 1572.

church, then did Whitgift gain the advantage; on scriptural grounds he was overthrown by the learned puritan. The episcopalian could, however, solace himself with the discomfiture which the presbytery, the holy discipline of his antagonist, met with at his hands.

On the second topic, the authority of the prince, Whitgift justified the appellation of head of the church, given to the reigning sovereign; and boldly asserted, not only that it was his duty to enforce obedience to the doctrines and commands of God's word, but to arrange, and even invent, new ceremonies in the church, for order and decency.* Cartwright admitted the duty of the magistrate to enforce doctrine, but rejected the title of head, as clashing with the only headship of Christ; and limited his authority to the imposition of that polity which was revealed in scripture. Christ, he said, was the only King and Head in his church, and had committed to pastors and teachers, the exercise of discipline according to his word; it was spiritual in its origin and object, and must be administered by spiritual men, lawfully called and ordained thereto. But it was incumbent on the magistrate to establish, within his jurisdiction, this true and godly discipline, and to aid, with his civil power, the presbytery in enforcing it. Whitgift was not slow to perceive, that this was a return to the papal doctrine of the church's independence of the state: while at the same time it made the civil power subservient to it. "It bringeth in a new popedom and tyranny into the church," said he.

But Cartwright's views of the power of the magistrate did not stop here. He asserted, that the judicial laws of Moses,

* Thirty years later it was asserted, in a book dedicated to the Archbishop of Canterbury, "Our church hath this day power to have instituted the baptism of infants, although it had not been used in former ages. And consequently, that it hath power, *a fortiori*, to set down orders and laws for the apparel of ministers," &c. !—The Regiment of the Church, as it is agreeable with Scriptures, &c. By Thomas Bell, London, 1606. 4to. p. 184.

which were “merely politic and without all mixture of ceremonies, must remain; forasmuch as there is in those laws a constant and everlasting equity;” therefore, in making political laws, Christian magistrates ought to propound those laws unto themselves, and in the light of their equity, frame them.* Hence he concluded that contemners of the word ought to be put to death; since, “he that despiseth the word of God, despiseth God himself.” For, “if it be meet to maintain the life of man, by the punishment of death, how should the honor of God, which is more precious than all men’s lives, be with smaller punishment established.” And he goes on to assert, that the immoralities, perjuries, and murders, which abounded in the land, owed their prevalence to the “want of sharp and severe punishment, especially against idolaters, blasphemers, contemners of true religion, and of the service of God.”†

The disputants were agreed upon two principles which were fundamental in the controversy; their differences arose in the application of them. Both believed, 1. That the church should be a national church, and not a mere congregation of believers; 2. That a divine obligation lay upon the magistrate to maintain, *vi et armis*, the true religion—that is, Christianity. They divided on the question, which of the two competing theories, episcopacy or presbytery, ought to be the favored polity. The puritan would have the point determined by scripture only, the episcopalian by scripture and the fathers. It was a mere question of polity; in doctrinal sentiment they were agreed.

* Second Replie, p. 97, edit. 1575.

† Ibid. pp. 68, 117. Hallam remarks, after quoting a somewhat similar passage to the above, “It is difficult to believe that I am transcribing the words of a protestant writer; so much does this passage call to mind those tones of infatuated arrogance which had been heard from the lips of Gregory VII., and of those who trod in his footsteps.”—Const. Hist. i. 254. See also Short, p. 182.

The thirty-nine articles were to each party the law of belief, and were willingly subscribed by both. Whether, therefore, the prince became the head of the church, or merely the executor of its decrees, the result must be the same—oppression of conscience, and the persecution of the dissentient. And at this distance of time, looking at the state of the nation, sunk in ignorance and vice, and at the historical results of the one polity, and the probable effects of the other, apart from any scriptural authority that either might show, we are inclined to think, that the episcopal, under all circumstances, was the preferable polity of the two. The sterner features of the presbyterian discipline, its provisions for a close and systematic inquiry into the social life of the community, and that inquisition brought to bear upon an ill-instructed and immoral people, would have led to more suffering, and wider-spread persecution, than that which befell the earnest, and generally pious, upholders of the “holy discipline.” Even while themselves enduring the many hardships entailed by a conscientious adherence to their views, they often urged most strenuously upon the ruling powers, the proscription, expatriation, and punishment of the catholics. “It was good policy,” said one, “to root out the sprigs of popery.” All history showed how necessary it was, “when thou hast subdued thy capital enemy, or banished him, to root out all his friends.”* The example of Calvin and Servetus would doubtless have had its counterpart under a presbyterian rule.

The boldness and extent of the change advocated in the Admonitions, and in Cartwright’s replies, awakened the fears and the anger of the queen and hierarchy. In the month of June (1573), a condemnatory proclamation was published. All who possessed copies of these books were ordered to bring them in for destruction. Before the close of the year, another mani-

* An Humble Motion to the Lords of the Council, p. 54, ed. 1599.

festus was issued, denouncing these despisers of the order settled in the church, and of the common prayer; "wherein is nothing contained but the scripture of God, and that which is consonant unto it." The bishops were directed to enforce yet more strictly the Act of Uniformity. But although these writings were in wide circulation, thirty-four copies only, which lay in the hands of a bookseller, were brought in.*

It is unnecessary to trace the progress of events to the period of the queen's death. One uniform course of repression and punishment of the puritans was adopted. Many hundreds of pious and holy men were excluded from the ministry, deprived of their property, and often of life, through long and painful imprisonments. With growing severities the bitterness of both parties increased, and innumerable violent publications added fuel to the flame. The Marprelate tracts stood prominently forth, as incentives to greater rigor, and were doubtless injurious to the cause they were intended to serve. A new feature was introduced into the controversy, when, for the first time, it was asserted by Bancroft, in a sermon at St. Paul's cross, in 1589, that episcopacy was a divine ordinance; that the bishops had a supremacy over the clergy by divine right, "and were empowered, by virtue of their commission from heaven, to superintend and regulate their proceedings."† This new element of strife was vigorously assailed; but no refutation of such extravagant claims, removed, in the least, the oppressive burdens under which the consciences of the puritans groaned. The reign of Elizabeth closed, without any advance in the reformation so earnestly desired, so boldly attempted, and so courageously maintained.

* Doc. Annals, i. 384. Neal, i. 195.

† Price, i. 376.

SECTION VIII.

THE BROWNISTS.

MORE correct views of the nature of the church of Christ, were slowly winning their way through the contentions of the two great parties dividing the nation, and struggling for mastery. It is not known whence Robert Browne acquired those opinions, which, about the year 1580, he began to propagate in the counties of Norfolk and Suffolk. He had, some years before, made himself obnoxious by his bold invectives against the established order, and, with several other puritans, was cited, in 1571, before archbishop Whitgift. His high connexions for a time protected him. But he now began to preach and disseminate opinions, which were alike destructive of episcopacy and presbytery, and of a national church under either form.

He said, that "The church planted and gathered, is a company, or number, of Christians and believers, which by a willing covenant made with their God, are under the government of God and Christ, and keep his laws in one holy communion. . . . The kingdom of Christ is his office of government, whereby he useth the obedience of his people to keep his laws and commandments, to their salvation and welfare. . . . The kingdom of antichrist is his government confirmed by the civil magistrate, whereby he abuseth the obedience of the people to keep his evil laws and customs, to their own damnation. . . . Civil magistrates, are persons authorized of God, and received by the consent or choice of the people, whether officers or subjects, or

by birth and succession also, to make and execute laws by public agreement; to rule the commonwealth in all outward justice; and to maintain the right, welfare, and honor thereof, with outward power, bodily punishments, and civil forcing of men.”*

Thus Browne would have the church composed of true Christians only, excluding therefrom all human law. He inveighed strongly against the puritans for their pusillanimity and sin, in awaiting a reformation by the magistrate. It was a duty that they owed to God, to separate from the antichristian community to which they clung, and to set up at once the building and kingdom of the Lord. Such sentiments soon brought upon him prelatical wrath, and he was compelled to fly. At Middleburg, in Zeeland, he, with many of his adherents, found a refuge. Differences of opinion soon arose among them, and the greater part united with the baptists, who, under the protection of the Prince of Orange, there formed a flourishing community.†

While at Middleburg, Browne printed a work of some importance, and which was very widely circulated in his native land. Some extracts have been already given. Other portions of it were especially directed against the wickedness of certain preachers, who would not amend, “until the magistrate reform and compel them.” He thus remarks on the magistrate’s authority: “For the magistrate, how far by their authority, or without it, the church must be builded and reformation made, and whether any open wickedness must be tolerated in the church because of them, let this be our answer—for chiefly on this point they have wrought us great trouble, and dismayed many weaklings from embracing the truth;—we say, therefore, and often have taught, concerning our sovereign, queen Elizabeth, that

* Hanbury’s *Hist. Memorials of Independents*, i. 18, 21.

† Hoornbeck, *J. Summa Controvers.* p. 739, ed. 1676. Brandt’s *Hist. of Ref.* i. 343, 443.

neither the pope, nor other popeling, is to have any authority over her, or over the church of God, and that the church of Rome is antichrist, whose kingdom ought utterly to be taken away. Again, we say, that her authority is civil, and that power she hath as highest under God within her dominions, and that over all persons and causes. By that, she may put to death all that deserve it by law, either of the church or commonwealth, and none may resist her, or the magistrate under her, by force or wicked speeches, when they execute the law."

Not untruly does he represent the puritans, as depending more upon secular power, than upon the spiritual weapons of the word of God. "You will be delivered from the yoke of antichrist, by bow, and by sword, and by battle, by horse and horsemen, that is, by civil power and pomp of magistrates; by their proclamations and parliaments; and the kingdom of God must come with observation, that men may say, 'Lo! the parliament;' or, 'lo! the bishop's decrees;' but the kingdom of God should be within you. . . . Ye set aloft man's authority above God's, and the preacher must hang on his sleeve for the discharge of his calling." Browne regarded the church, and its edification, as of more importance than earthly kingdoms; and by these enlightened sentiments did much to overthrow the prevalent notions of magisterial duty, and to purify the church from political intrusion.

Yet Browne was not wholly free from error on this point. There were some cases, in which he considered secular interference to be both necessary and scriptural. Thus he speaks, "Neither durst Moses, nor any of the good kings of Judah, force the people, by law or by power, to receive the church government; but after they received it, if then they fell away, and sought not the Lord, they might put them to death." Again he says, "If the magistrate be of their flocks, why should they tarry for them? Unless they will have the sheep force the shepherd unto his duty. *Indeed the magistrate may force him,*

but it is his shame to tarry till he be forced." Yet elsewhere he asserts, that to compel to religion, to plant churches by power, and to force a submission to ecclesiastical government, by laws and penalties, belong not to the magistrate, neither yet to the church. "For it is the conscience, and not the power of man, that will drive us to seek the Lord's kingdom."*

While, then, he claimed for the church a perfect independence of the civil power, he yet allowed the magistrate a coercive authority in cases of acknowledged duty. In this opinion his successors followed him, as will presently appear. It may be doubted, whether Browne was ever sincere in his separation from the church, since, on his return to his native country, he renounced what he had taught, conformed, and enjoyed for many years a living in Northamptonshire. His moral obliquities finally brought him to a gaol, where he died. Several of his followers, who were very active in dispersing his books, were imprisoned, and two of them were put to death. †

Between the years 1580 and 1593, the Brownists multiplied greatly; so much so, that Sir Walter Raleigh stated in the House of Commons, perhaps somewhat at random, that there were not less than twenty thousand of them. They were divided into several congregations in Norfolk, Essex, and London. Mr. Henry Barrow and Mr. John Greenwood were at this time two of their most eminent ministers. In 1586, they were summoned before archbishop Whitgift. For a time released on bond, they continued their zealous labors, and were again

* The treatise is not paged. Its full title is, "A Booke which sheweth the life and manners of all true Christians, and howe unlike they are to Turkes, and Papistes, and Heathen folke, &c. Also there goeth a treatise before of Reformation without tarrying for anie, and of the wickednesse of those Preachers which will not reforme themselves, and their charge, because they will tarrie till the Magistrate commaunde and compell them. By me Robert Browne. Middleburgh. 1582."

† Neal, i. 248.

committed to the Fleet in 1588. After suffering much injustice and cruelty, during five years confinement in gaol, they were executed at Tyburn, in the year 1593. About six weeks after, Mr. John Penry, for the same crime, forfeited his life upon the scaffold.* The fidelity and loyalty to the queen of these sufferers for conscience' cause are beyond all question; their ignominious deaths were a sacrifice to the unholy zeal of prelates, whom worldly policy and power had blinded to the true nature of the kingdom of Christ. The bishops cemented the stones of their building with the blood of better men.

Their fellow-sufferers were for a long time vexed, and grievously afflicted, by every species of persecution. After enduring long imprisonments, with great fortitude, they were banished to other lands, and under the pastoral care of Mr. Francis Johnson and Mr. Henry Ainsworth, a church of these exiles was formed, and continued to exist for many years, at Amsterdam, in Holland. They were far in advance of their contemporaries, and were called to endure obloquy, hatred, and death—the common lot of those benefactors of the human race, who have been the first to utter truths of eternal value. It would seem, as if by some immutable law in the moral government of the universe, such men must not only lay the basis of a new era of human progress, but expiate with their blood the crimes and misdeeds of the evil principles they destroy.

The Brownists, or Barrowists, as they were likewise called, regarded the church of England in the same light as the puritans, from whom they sprung. Separation was the legitimate conclusion of their teaching: but from it they timidly shrunk. Both puritan and Brownist held, that the church of England had been constituted, for the most part, of papists, who had revolted from their profession in king Edward's days, and after another change, shed much blood of many Christian martyrs in queen Mary's. "This people, yet standing in this

* Neal, i. 347. Hanbury, i. 34.

fearful sinful estate, in idolatry, blindness, superstition, and all manner of wickedness, without any professed repentance, were, by force and authority of law only, compelled and together received into the bosom and body of the church." None were excluded, were they never so profane; atheists, adulterers, thieves, &c., were of one fellowship, one body, one church. The same popish prelacy and clergy were set over them, persecuting "to death all that dare but once mutter against their unlawful proceedings." Parsons, priests, vicars, curates, were sworn to canonical obedience, to read the service book and bishops' decrees. In a word, the whole clergy were in servitude to the lordly prelates. Now the statute-book of the kingdom of God commanded none, and condemned much, of these things. But the puritan ministers, the Brownists went on to say, were weary with the troubles that came upon them. They gave place to prelatic tyranny, and were content to conform. "Keeping now silence, yea, going back, bearing and bolstering the things which heretofore by word and writing they stood against, so long as there was any hope that the queen and council would have hearkened unto them, and put these adversary prelates out of the church." But it was incumbent upon the true child of God to separate from a church set up after the pattern and mould of the apostasy of Rome, and his duty, without longer delay, to walk in all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord.*

As true Christian men, the Brownists therefore separated from communion with the church of England, pushing yet further their views of the church of Christ. Their ideas of the spiritual and eclectic character of the kingdom of God, placed them in opposition to both episcopalians and puritans. "The true planted and rightly established church of Christ, is a company of faithful people, separated from the unbelievers and

* Preface to Confession of Faith printed in 1596. H. Ainsworth's Defence of Brownists, pp. 8—12. edition 1604.

heathens of the land: gathered in the name of Christ, whom they truly worship, and readily obey;—joined together as members of one body; ordered and governed by such officers and laws, as Christ in his last will and testament, hath thereunto ordained.” On the contrary, the parish assemblies transgressed this rule in every point, and were governed by the laws and ordinances of such officers as the pope left, “standing in bondage to the Romish courts and canons, having no power to execute the Lord’s judgments, or to redress the least sin or transgression amongst themselves.”* Of this separated community, Barrow further writes, “There may be none admitted into the church of Christ, but such as enter by a public profession of true faith; none remain there, but such as bring forth the fruits of faith.”† It was one amongst the many forged excuses of the prelates, “that where a Christian prince is, which maintaineth the gospel, and the whole land, not resisting this commandment, reverenceth the word and sacraments, there the whole multitude of such a land, or state, are without doubt to be esteemed and judged a true church.”‡ This, in Barrow’s estimation, was a sacrilegious profanation of the things of God—a poisoning of all Christian communion and fellowship.

Did the Brownists then deny the power of the magistrate? Were they one in opinion with the anabaptists? Nay. “The prince,” says Barrow, “is to govern, oversee, and provide the commonwealth, administering and dispensing, gathering and dispersing, the creatures and the wealth thereof, as a father and a steward: yet still with this *interim*, as the steward and servant of God, according to their Master’s will, as they that shall account.” “Life and goods were at his command, only in divine things must he not command nor be obeyed; even the command to fast in Lent was unjust, contrary to the bountiful

* Conferences of Barrowe and Greenwood, p. 67. edit. 1590.

† A Brief Discovery of the False Church, p. 8. edit. 1590.

‡ Ibid. p. 13.

liberality of God, and to his honor and praise. It were, moreover, contrary to the liberty and freedom God hath given us in Christ. . . . Policy must take, and not give, laws to religion.”*

The advance was great on the politico-religious theories which had gone before. One principle, far-reaching in its results, and lying at the foundation of every question concerning the relations of the church to the state, was clearly enunciated and maintained—that the church, the true community of believers, is solely dependent on the laws of the one Lawgiver, Christ Jesus. Complete in itself, the church is able to execute all the functions for which it is formed. But here the Brownists stopped. These despised but honored men, were not able to advance the final step, and demand that perfect freedom of conscience, which is the corollary to the proposition they demonstrated. Thus Mr. Greenwood, in the conference with Cooper, says, “The magistrate ought to compel the infidels to hear the doctrine of the church, and also with the approbation of the church, to send forth meet men, with gifts and graces, to instruct the infidels.”† Mr. Barrow gives the magistrate a yet greater power: “The prince hath the book of God committed unto him, with charge to see it duly executed, by every one in his calling. . . . That the prince also is charged, and of duty ought, to see the ministers of the church do their duty, and teach the law of God diligently and sincerely, we read, Deut. xvii. 1 Chron. xxviii. 2 Chron. xxix. and xxx. and xxxv. This did Jehoshaphat, and no other thing.”‡ But he marks the limit of the prince’s power, and the distinction between his sentiments and those of his opponents, in the following manner: “It will not suffice to confess, that God hath made the civil magistrate the keeper of the book of the law, to see both the tables thereof observed by all persons, both in the church and commonwealth; and so hath

* Barrow’s Brief Discovery, &c., pp. 91, 92.

† Conferences, p. 59.

‡ Brief Discovery, &c. pp. 253, 257.

power over both church and commonwealth : but they must have this indefinite proposition granted them, ' That a prince hath power to make laws for the church.' . . . A godly prince is bound to God's law ; made the keeper thereof, not the controller ; the servant, not the Lord. God hath in that book made most perfect and necessary laws, both for church and commonwealth ; he requireth of the king and magistrate to see these laws executed, and not to make new." By new laws is to be understood " traditions, ordinances, customs, &c., which are not prescribed in Christ's testament."*

The following passage, penned by Mr. Francis Johnson, will show how the Brownists attempted to reconcile these views with the contradictory sentiment, that God only can persuade the conscience :—" We condemn not," he says, " reformation commanded and compelled by the magistrate, but do unfeignedly desire that God would put into the heart of her majesty, and all other princes within their dominions, to command and compel a reformation, according to the word of the Lord ; as it is expressly noted that Hezekiah, and other good kings of Judah did. . . . Where, note withal, that it is the work of God only, to add to his church such as he will save. And, therefore, that it is not in the power of princes, or any man whatsoever, to persuade the conscience, and make members of the church, but this must be left to God alone, who only can do it. Acts ii. 47. Princes may and ought, within their dominions, to abolish all false worship, and all false ministries whatsoever ; and to establish the true worship and ministry appointed by God in his word ; commanding and compelling their subjects to come unto, and practise no other but this. Yet they must leave it unto God to persuade the conscience, and to add to his church from time to time such as shall be saved."†

It is obvious, that this is persecution, under the garb of

* Brief Discovery, &c. pp. 218, 219.

† An Answer to Maister H. Jacob, &c., pp. 198, 199, ed. 1600.

honoring and doing service to God ; and that while the Brownists held truly, that the church ought to be free from secular legislation, and that the conscience was God's seat, they most inconsistently delivered to the magistrate a rule of action, which must interfere with the one, and trample upon the convictions of the other.

SECTION IX.

THE BAPTISTS.

It has been already seen, that the claim, for the church and for the conscience, of freedom from all human control, was a distinguishing and characteristic trait of the baptists in former reigns. The divine saying, "FAITH IS THE GIFT OF GOD," moved, animated, strengthened them. Its practical assertion brought them into collision with every form of human invention in the worship of God. Faith, God's gift, must not be subjected to man's device, nor enchained by the legislative enactments of parliaments or kings. To worship God aright, the highest function of humanity, the spirit must be free; true worship can come only from a willing heart. For this the baptists bore cheerfully, *cruel mockings, and scourgings; yea, moreover, bonds and imprisonments*, and death. The reign of Elizabeth saw no change in their faith, no amelioration of their sorrows. No brighter day dawned for them: the "bright Occidental Star,"* whose rising exiles and Marian death-expecting prisoners hailed, was to them a scorching, meteoric flame.

In the view of the great polemic of that age, Richard Hooker, it was "a loose and licentious opinion, which the anabaptists" had embraced. They held that "a Christian man's liberty is lost, and the soul which Christ hath redeemed unto himself, injuriously drawn into servitude under the yoke of human power, if any law be now imposed besides the gospel of Christ,

* Translators' Dedication of the Authorized Version of the Bible.

in obedience whereunto the Spirit of God, and not the constraint of men, is to lead us; according to that of the blessed apostle, *Such as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God*, and not such as live in thralldom to men. Their judgment is, therefore, that the church of Christ should admit of no law-makers but the evangelists, no courts but presbyteries, no punishments but ecclesiastical censures.* His witness is true. Grand as were the conceptions of the "judicious Hooker," this idea of the Christian man's liberty exceeded them. The "door was too low, or he too stout to enter;" for not unfrequently, in the divine purposes of the Father, has it come to pass, "that poor shepherds which are accustomed to stables, have been found meet to have Christ revealed unto them." The *wise* and the *prudent* oftener find Herod's hall a "more meet place," than "Christ's stable."† He has, nevertheless, echoed, in his own beautiful way, the language of some "poor shepherd," who in his lowliness found and prized the truth, to whom the babe of Bethlehem was more attractive than the pomp and glitter of courts.

Early in the reign of Elizabeth, did the baptists utter their protest, against the abhorrent spirit of persecution displayed by the reformers. Their words are embalmed for us in the pages of a bitter foe. The ireful spirit of the Scotch reformer had been chafed by their opinions on predestination; so that in the year 1560, he poured forth upon them an objurgatory stream of indignant reproach. It was, "An Answer to a great number of blasphemous cavillations written by an Anabaptist, and Adversarie of God's eternal Predestination; and confuted by John Knox."‡ With much fairness he has given, in separate paragraphs, the whole of the obnoxious production,

* Hooker, *Eccles. Pol.* book viii. sect. 9. vol. iii. 328. Hanbury's edit. Keble considers this to be a part of a Sermon on Civil Obedience.

† So the baptist to John Knox, in a work to be presently cited.

‡ The edition before us is the third, of 1591.

appending to each its confutation. The immediate subject of the controversy must be passed over, not without some wonder at the large vocabulary of invective employed by the vigorous reformer. The passages following attract our attention; and, because the rulers and polemics of that day, proscribed, demolished, and misrepresented most diligently, the writings and opinions of this abhorred sect, so as to leave but rare specimens of their productions, it must be allowed the baptist on this occasion to speak for himself, although at some length; it is a voice from the deep darkness of oblivion. He addresses such men as Calvin and Beza, and Knox, the chiefest in this land of Calvin's disciples:—

“Your chief Apollos be persecutors, on whom the blood of Servetus crieth a vengeance, so doth the blood of others more whom I could name. But forasmuch as God hath partly already revenged their blood, and served some of their persecutors with the same measure wherewith they measured to others, I will make no mention of them at this time. And to declare their wickedness not to have proceeded of ignorance and human infirmity, but of indured malice, they have for a perpetual memory of their cruelty, set forth books, affirming it to be lawful to persecute and put to death such as dissent from others in controversies of religion, whom they call blasphemers of God. Notwithstanding, afore they came to authority, they were of another judgment, and did both say and write, that no man ought to be persecuted for his conscience' sake; but now they are not only become persecutors, but also they have given, as far as lieth in them, the sword into the hand of bloody tyrants. Be *these*, I pray you, the sheep whom Christ sent forth in the midst of wolves? Can the sheep persecute the wolf? Doth Abel kill Cain? Doth David, though he might, kill Saul? Shortly, doth he which is born of the Spirit kill him which is born after the flesh?

“Mark, how ye be fallen into most abominable tyranny,

and yet ye see it not. Thus I am constrained of conscience to write. That if it shall please God to awake you out of your dream, that ye may perceive how one error hath drowned you in more error, and hath brought you to a sleeping security, that when ye walk, even after the lusts, thirsting after blood, and persecuting poor men for their conscience' sake, ye be blinded, and see not yourselves; but say, tush! we be predestinate, whatsoever we do we are certain we cannot fall out of God's favor. Awake, therefore, and look what danger ye be in, and how by your poisoned doctrine ye infect the people of God, and draw them to a secure, idle, and careless life."

And what saith Knox to this: "You dissembling hypocrites cannot abide that the sword of God's vengeance shall strike the murderer, the blasphemer, and such others as God commandeth by his word to die; not so, by your judgments; he must live, and may repent." The reformer then infers that Joan Boucher was meant, as one of those whose blood cried for vengeance; and truly, the reformers' consciences might well be stricken with fear, when that dark deed rose to their remembrance. Our Knox seems somewhat aghast as he appeals to "all that fear God," against the judgment of the baptist upon those most valiant soldiers, Cranmer, Latimer, Ridley, Rogers, Bradford, and others, most of whom took part in the condemnation of that Christian woman. Yet, "upon whom—that is Cranmer and his fellow-inquisitors—O blasphemous mouth, thou sayest, God hath taken vengeance, which is an horrible blasphemy in the ears of all the godly!"

But has the reformer no good strong arguments to withstand the claims of conscience? Cannot the volume of holy truth supply some inexpugnable reasons for withholding its liberty? With no such ineffectual weapons will he meet his man. Argument with a blasphemer? No. "I will not now so much labor to confute by my pen, as [because] that my full purpose

is to lay the same to thy charge, if I shall apprehend thee in any commonwealth where justice against blasphemers may be ministered, as God's word requireth. And hereof I give thee warning, lest that after thou shalt complain that under the cloak of friendship I have deceived thee. Thy manifest defection from God, and this thy open blasphemy have so broken and dissolved all familiarity which hath been betwixt us, that although thou wert my natural brother, I durst not conceal thine iniquity in this case."* Let the baptist and quondam friend of John Knox beware! He may find a Geneva in Scotland, or perhaps in England, if he wait awhile.

But the reformer after all feels constrained to attempt some sort of reply. He endeavors first to prejudice his opponent's cause, by insinuating that he sympathized in the anti-trinitarian views of Servetus, although Knox knew to the contrary, since they were agreed on the unlawfulness of baptizing children, on the preaching of the gospel, and the administration of the Lord's Supper. He then confesses that books have been written by both parties, "that lawful it is not, to the civil magistrate, to use the sword against heretics;" but which that godly learned man, Theodore Beza, had answered.† He avers that Servetus and Joan of Kent were justly burnt, since God allowed the idolaters of the golden calf to be slain by the sons

* An Answer, &c. pp. 189-204.

† Beza wrote his Treatise, *De Hæreticis a Civili Magistratu puniendis*, in 1553, in defence of the execution of Servetus, and to establish the right of the civil power to punish heresy. In the year 1601, it was translated into Dutch, for the purpose of exciting the magistrates of Friesland to persecute the baptists. Its editors say, that persecution is the means of restoring the dominion over conscience to God, "seeing it is only an attempt to execute the divine commands by divine methods!" Brandt, *Hist. of Ref.*, ii. 8. Referring to Servetus, Beza says, "Quum igitur in carcerem coniectus esset, ecce statim *quidam Satanæ emissarii* clamitare cœperunt iniquissimum esse."—*Tract. Theol. Theodori Bezæ*, vol. i. p. 83, ed. 1582.

of Levi, at Moses' command. If, however, the baptist should infer, which he doubtless did, that since Abel, Isaac, and David, slew not Cain, nor Ishmael, nor Saul, it is not lawful "for any of God's elect to kill any man for his conscience' sake;" then "I answer," says Knox, "that if under the name of conscience, ye include whatsoever seemeth good in your own eyes, then ye affirm a great absurdity," which very thing the baptist did *not* affirm. But, "you say, that external crimes have no affinity with matters of religion, for the conscience of every man is not alike persuaded in the service and honoring of God, neither yet in such controversies as God's word hath not plainly decided. But, I ask, if that be a just excuse why pernicious errors shall be obstinately defended, either yet that God's established religion shall be contemptuously despised?"*

So then, under the plea of some possibility of pernicious error, conscience must be trampled under foot; and its utterances, should they be found, or imagined, to be dissenting from an established religion, assumed to be of God, treated as blasphemy, and as the vilest of crimes. Infinitely more pernicious have been the domination over conscience, and the repression of its liberty, enforced by men claiming the authority of the Highest for their deeds of blood, than the multitude of errors they have sought to destroy. This hateful tyranny, disguised in pretensions to sanctity and truth, hath shed the blood of myriads of earth's noblest men, and of heaven's most worthy inhabitants. One more manifestation of thy wolfish spirit, O Knox! thy fearful imprecations, upon these poor peeled and scattered sheep, and we leave thee. "Your privy assemblies, and all those that in despite of Christ's blessed ordinance do frequent the same, are accursed of God!" † The maledictions of persecutors are a rich inheritance to the persecuted followers of the Lamb.

The "privy assemblies" of the baptists, and the attendance

* An Answer, &c. pp. 209-11.

† Ibid.

at them, must have been somewhat numerous in the early years of Elizabeth's reign. "We found," says Jewel, writing to Martyr, "a large and inauspicious crop of Arians, anabaptists, and other pests, which I know not how, but as mushrooms spring up in the night and in darkness, so these sprung up in that darkness and unhappy night of the Marian times."* The measures adopted to root out this pestiferous "crop," accorded with the nature of a national church. They were denounced from the pulpit, the press sent forth its black load of falsehood and calumny, but was closed to every reply, and public law laid its ban upon them. St. Paul's Cross, where Latimer and Ridley, Bourn and Bonner, had each in turn, during the rapidly shifting scenes of that period, proclaimed the ruler's and the nation's faith, protestant or papal as it might be, became a place of attack upon them. In the beginning of the reign, John Veron had been chosen public divinity lecturer at St. Paul's. On that renowned spot, this bold and popular preacher inveighed against the baptists, "who molest and trouble the godly quietness and peace of the church."† Their detestable heresies, as well as those of papists, were his not unfrequent theme. Free-will and predestination were the favorite topics handled in these discourses, which he afterwards committed to the press, to stay the "swynyshe gruntinge—the vain and blasphemous objections that the Epicures and anabaptists of our time can make." But while maintaining the scriptural truth, "that God bath from the beginning ordained and appointed some to be fellow-heirs with his Son Jesus Christ," he recoiled

* Zurich. Lett. i. 92.

† An Apology and Defence of the doctrine of Predestination, by John Veron, fol. 40, printed about 1560. Veron was a native of Sens, in France, but came to England, where he taught successfully in many places the Latin language. By Ridley he was collated to the living of St. Alphage in London, in 1552, and immediately on Elizabeth's accession, obtained a prebend in St. Paul's. To this was shortly added the readership of theology. Tanner, Bib. Scrip. p. 732, ed. 1748.

not from the fearful statement "that some again are appointed (from the beginning) to be everlastingly damned."* Strange inconsistency, that men holding such opinions should endeavor to coerce the consciences of others. Is it by fiery trials, or by lingering imprisonments, that the elect of God are to be brought to faith? Will the sight of the stake, the clanking of chains, or the severities of unrequited labor, change the immutable decrees of heaven? Did they doubt the execution of the doom, pronounced from eternity, which they said was the portion of these "accursed" heretics, that they hastened its approach by putting them to death? Why not bide the time of the full developement of the unchanging purposes of God, rather than strive, by such unhallowed means, to accomplish what, for aught they knew, was predetermined should not be done, and by their cruelty rendered impossible, the conversion of these erring souls? Were they the executioners of eternal doom, as well as the heralds of grace?

The archbishops and bishops dealt with the consciences of men, as if they thought them convertible by other means than God's word, when, in 1559, they directed "that incorrigible Arians, Pelagians, or free-will men, be sent into some one castle in North Wales, or Wallingford, and there to live of their own labor and exercise, and none other be suffered to resort unto them but their keepers, until they be found to repent their errors."† This was not intended to be an unmeaning threat. Parkhurst, the bishop of Norwich, who had most reluctantly yielded to the imposition of the habits, was warmly upbraided with remissness and want of activity in removing the baptists from his diocese, although he labored by preaching to destroy the impression their doctrines had made.‡ Many foreigners,

* A Fruteful Treatise on Predestination. Dedicated to queen Elizabeth. Imprinted by John Tisdale, no date.

† Doc. Annals, i. 205.

‡ Strype's Parker, I. i. 214.

especially Dutch, had taken refuge in that part of the country, from the fanatical and bloody decrees of Philip of Spain. Not a few of them were baptists, who with some success propagated their opinions among the native population. Under the "haleyon" reign of Elizabeth, they expected to find in England a peaceful shelter, from the frightful storm of persecution, that elsewhere beat upon them. There was none. "The queen, by a proclamation, ordered these heretics, both aliens and natural-born English, to depart the kingdom within one-and-twenty days."* Imprisonment and forfeiture of all their property, were the penalties of a longer sojourn. Many, however, evaded the command, screening themselves in various ways from the severities inflicted by the royal injunctions. The good bishop Jewel hoped, indeed, that it was the fact that they had retreated before "the light of purer doctrine," for, he says, they were "nowhere to be found; or at least, if anywhere, they are now no longer troublesome to our churches."† But it was not the "light of purer doctrine," that had driven them into the gloom of the forest glade to worship their God, "like owls at the sight of the sun;" it was regal usurped might, and episcopal tyranny.

Success still lingered behind the efforts of the queen and her obsequious bishops, when, in 1567, articles of inquiry were issued to the metropolitan, having especial respect to the state of the diocese of Norwich, where Parkhurst, its bishop, still "winked at schismatics and anabaptists." In addition to the usual inquiries to be made concerning the mode of performing divine service, the state of the grammar schools, and the due performance of their respective ministries, by the various functionaries of the church, particular inquisition was ordered, as to whether any taught or said, that children being infants ought not to be baptized, that post-baptismal sins were not

* Collier, vi. 332.

† To Martyr, Nov. 6, 1660. Zur. Lett. i. 92.

remissible by penance, that it was not lawful to swear, that civil magistrates may not punish certain crimes with death, or that it was lawful for any man, without the appointment and calling of the magistrate, to take upon him any ministry in Christ's church.* These, in the royal estimation, were most dangerous opinions, demanding every exertion to repress them.

For the third time, a special visitation was ordered in the following year, in every parish throughout the realm, wherever there was any confluence of strangers, to discover the teachers of such evil doctrines. Great numbers of Dutch people, under which designation were included both Germans and Flemings, were daily repairing to this country for a refuge from the sanguinary cruelties of the duke of Alva. Among them, it was feared were some infested with poisonous errors, "contrary to the faith of Christ's church, as anabaptists, and such other sectaries." Their mode of life, the length of their residence in the realm, the cause of their resort hither, and to what churches they went for worship, were to be carefully noted and registered. The suspected, and the unconformable to the established order, were to be speedily brought to trial, and if not reconciled by "charitable teaching," to depart in twenty days on pain of severe punishment. "This provision," says Collier, "was no more than necessary; for the Dutch anabaptists held private conventicles in London, and perverted a great many."†

It is most probable, that a congregation discovered in the isle of Ely, in the year 1573, consisted of some of these converts. They refused oaths, condemned capital punishments, exercised a Christian liberty in the preaching and exposition of scripture, and some were *supposed* to maintain an inequality of persons in the godhead; this latter is very doubtful. Their meetings were private; closed to all but such as agreed with them in sentiment.‡ It gives us but little concern that many charges

* Doc. Annals, i. 306. † Collier, vi. 462. Doc. Annals, i. 309.

‡ Strype's Parker, II. 287.

of immorality are made against them. It has ever been the custom of the enemies of true godliness thus to vilify its professors. Were these charges admissible, we should be compelled to believe that an earnest heed to the word of God, which it was made a crime in these people to have shown, was productive of results the opposite to those which experience daily justifies. Light and darkness cannot long intermingle in the human heart, without one or the other gaining the mastery. *The fear of the Lord is clean* ; sin must flee before the pure, eye-enlightening commandments of God.

The very partial success of these repressive measures, seems to have led to that dark catastrophe, to which in the progress of events we are now brought ; the burning alive of two Flemish baptists in Smithfield, an oblation of blood to the demon of protestant intolerance. Lingering imprisonments, fines, and banishment, had not been found effectual ; the fires of Smithfield might perhaps scare the pertinacious errorist, and by their burning radiance neutralize the glimmerings of the true light, which here and there feebly shone. The zeal of puritans, too, might be allayed, by this evidence of the inexorable purpose of the queen, to permit no dissentients from the national creed within her dominions.

It was on Easter-day, April 3, 1575, that a congregation of Flemish baptists, numbering some thirty persons, men and women, assembled in a private house in the suburbs of London, just without Aldgate Bars.* The slaughterings and devastations of the Duke of Alva, in the Low Countries, had caused severe distress, and loss of trade. Urged by the desire of obtaining a livelihood for their wives and children, and liberty to worship God in the simplicity of faith and love, these exiles had left Flanders for England. Outcasts and strangers, they sought a heavenly citizenship, and in their sojourn met to comfort each other, and to unite their prayers at the throne of

* Holinshed's Chron. iv. 326, ed. 1808.

grace. Their meeting was espied by the neighbors, although conducted with secrecy. While commending each other to God, their devotions were suddenly interrupted by the entrance of a constable, who, addressing them as devils, demanded which was their teacher. Seven-and-twenty names were put down at his command, and taking their promise to remain, he proceeded with a few to the magistrate. He shortly returned, and with opprobrious and cruel words drove the rest before him to the gaol. Two escaped on the way; the rest were "led as sheep to the slaughter." On the third day they were released, heavy bail being taken for their appearance, whenever and wherever it should please the authorities to determine.*

Information of the capture was conveyed to the queen's council; and at the suggestion, apparently, of archbishop Parker, a commission was issued on the 27th of April, to Sandys, the bishop of London, assisted by several civilians and judges, "to confer with the accused, and to proceed judicially, if the case so required."† But a few days elapsed before the summonses to appear were issued, and these poor people stood criminally arraigned, for worshipping God according to their

* Where not otherwise stated, the narrative in the text is derived from three relations preserved in the Dutch Martyrology. The first is that of the martyrologist. The second is by Gerrit van Byler, one of the prisoners. The third by one James de Somer, a member of the Dutch church in London, contained in a letter to his mother, residing at Ghent, in Flanders; he writes as an eye-witness of the facts he relates. The title of the work is, *The Bloody Theatre, or Mirror of Baptists Martyrs*. By Thielem J. van Braght. Amsterdam, two volumes, folio, 1685. The first volume is a history of the church from the first to the fifteenth centuries. The second, and by far the largest of the two, is devoted to the martyrdoms of baptists during the sixteenth century. The account now laid before the reader may be regarded as a fair example of the many deeply interesting narratives it contains. Both volumes are adorned by a large number of beautifully executed and spirited etchings.

† Soames, *Eliz.* p. 213. Macintosh, *Eliz.* ch. xviii. p. 375.

convictions. The court assembled in the consistory of St. Paul's ; for it was a case of heresy. Besides the commissioners, certain members of the Dutch congregation were present as interpreters, a French preacher, and two aldermen. The prisoners first laid before the court a confession of their faith. The bishop was not satisfied. He produced four articles, requiring their subscription ; if obstinate in their refusal, they should be burnt alive. Such were the instructions he had received.

"They proposed to us four questions," says one of the prisoners, "telling us to say yea, or nay :—

"1. Whether Christ had not taken his flesh and blood of the Virgin Mary ?

"We answered : He is the son of the living God.

"2. Ought not little children to be baptized ?

"We answered : Not so ; we find it not written in holy scripture.

"3. May a Christian serve the office of a magistrate ?*

"We answered, That it did not oblige our consciences ; but, as we read, we esteemed it an ordinance of God.

"4. Whether a Christian, if needs be, may not swear ?

"We answered, That it also obliged not our consciences ; for Christ has said, in Matthew, *Let your words be yea, yea ; nay, nay.* Then we were silent.

"But the bishop said, that our misdeeds therein were so great, that we could not enjoy the favor of God. O Lord ! avenge it not. He then said to us all, that we should be imprisoned in the Marshalsea."

Many threats were uttered during the examination ; they were vexed with subtle questions, and urged to recant on peril of a cruel death. That they might expect no favour, the bishop sternly informed them of the firm determination of the queen and her council to compel all strangers to sign a renun-

* Our author understands the office of a *criminal* magistrate to be meant here.

ciation of these articles. The conforming might remain in the land, and be free from taxes ; but the uncompliant should die a frightful death. The prisoners were unmoved, and were conveyed to the Marshalsea for the testimony of Christ. One young brother, the first questioned, was sent into solitary confinement at Westminster, for his bold attestation to the truth.

And now severe trials and temptations beset them. Private friendships, the arguments of learned men, and the dark background of a fearful death, combined to shake their constancy. "Master Joris came to us and said, If we would join the church, that is, the Dutch church, our chains should be struck off, and our bonds loosed. The bishop, he said, had given him command so to do. But we remained stedfast to the truth of Jesus Christ. He is indeed our Captain, and no other ; yea, in Him is all our trust. My dear brethren, and sweet sisters, let us bravely persevere until we conquer. The Lord will then give us to drink of the new wine. O Lord, strengthen our faith. As we have received the Lord Jesus Christ, let us go forward courageously, trusting in Him."

Five, however, yielded to the solicitations of the Netherland preachers, quailing at the fearful prospect set before them. They consented to forego their convictions, and subscribe the articles. Notwithstanding the bishop's promise, that subscription should release them from all pains and penalties, they were brought to St. Paul's Cross on the 25th of May, to make a public recantation. Taken in their toils, these recovered sheep were not gently lifted on the shepherds' shoulders, and brought home with joyful shouts, as Christ teaches us the *good* pastor will do ; but before many thousands of people, in the churchyard of St. Paul's, they were set for a gazing stock, a fagot bound on each one's shoulder, as a sign that they were worthy of the fire. At the close of the bishop's sermon, their prescribed recantation was read. They declared themselves to have been seduced by the spirit of error, and that their renounced opinions

were damnable and detestable heresies ; but that the whole doctrine and religion established in England, as also that received and practised by the Dutch congregation in London, was sound, true, and according to the word of God. It was afterwards repeated in the Dutch church, to which they promised to unite ; and bail taken for the performance of the vow.*

Two several times were the rest taken before their inquisitors, and for three weeks endured rigorous imprisonment, the sore chafing of iron fetters, with mingled entreaties and threats, to induce them to a renunciation of their faith. On the 11th May, a further commission was issued, to proceed to their condemnation. On Whitsun-eve, the 21st, ten women and one man were formally condemned to the fire, one female shrank from the trial.† A few days after the public penance at St. Paul's, the remainder were again brought up to the bishop's court, the place of Bonner's savage cruelties in queen Mary's time. Day was just dawning when, bound two and two, they entered the place of doom. "We remember the word of the Lord," says Gerrit van Byler, "*When they shall lead you before lords and princes, fear not what you shall say, for in that hour it shall be given you.* So we trusted in the Lord. The questions were again proposed, and subscription demanded ; but we said, That we would cleave to the word of the Lord."

In the plenitude of royal authority—dare any one call it apostolical?—delegated to him, the bishop sentenced them to excision from the church of Christ, and to death ; and formally delivered them to the secular arm for punishment.

Fourteen women and a youth, bound together, were led

* Holinshed, iv. 326, 327.

† There is much difficulty in reconciling the accounts of the English chroniclers, especially as to the numbers tried and punished. It is very likely that some others had been discovered, and that they were brought before the same commissioners, whose powers were enlarged for the purpose.

away to Newgate; the remaining five were kept in the bishop's custody. And now for five or six days they suffered great anxiety and temptation. Oft threatened with a cruel and fiery death, they feared from day to day, the hour of their offering up was at hand. They were severely treated, and compelled to hear the blasphemies of the vilest criminals. Ten days thus passed, when on the eve of the first of June, about ten o'clock, the gaoler, with his officers, entered their place of confinement, noted down their goods, and bid them prepare to die on the morrow. Seeing that their courage, and faith in God, remained unshaken, he then announced to them, that the queen, in her clemency, had commanded a milder penalty—banishment.*

In the morning, surrounded by halberdiers, they were led by the sheriffs to the water-side, and put on board a ship at St. Catherine's. The youth followed, tied to a cart's tail, and was whipped to the place of embarkation.† Thus the ties of nature were severed: some of the poor exiles had to mourn in anguish over husbands and fathers, left in the hands of their persecutors, for whom yet more cruel severities were reserved.

The next day, June 2nd, the five men,‡ who remained of this company, were again led bound into the consistory. The terrors of the stake were vividly set before them; their only escape, subscription to the articles. They were urged, they were threatened; it was unavailing. "It is a small matter thus to die," said Jan Peters, with a courageous mind. The bishop

* In a sermon preached at the Spittle in London, probably about this time, Sandys remarked:—"Such as are of no religion, of no church, godless and faithless people, some papists, some anabaptists;—these are to be expelled and cast out of the country, lest for their wickedness God plague the whole realm." *Sermons*, p. 266.

† Some hints it appears were given to the captain of the vessel, that if the banished ones did not reach the land of their fathers in safety, he need not fear any inquiry. He was, however, proof against the base instigation.

‡ It is manifest that Strype is mistaken in supposing that these were the five who had previously recanted. *Strype's Annals*, II. i. 564.

sharply inquired, "What does he say?" Peters replied. The bishop listened with some moderation, and then stoutly said, "We must shave such heretics, and cut them off as an evil thing from the church."* Said Hendrik Terwoort, "How canst thou cut us off from your church, since we are not of it?" The bishop, "It was all the same; there were none in England who were not members of the church of God." And now were these friends of Christ unjustly condemned, and led away to Newgate to await the day of death.

Here they were strongly secured, heavily ironed, and thrown into a deep and noisome den, swarming with foul and disgusting vermin. "Then we thought ourselves," says Byler, "within one or two days of the end, after which we earnestly longed, for the prison was grievous; but it was not yet the Lord's will. After eight days, one of our brethren was released by death, trusting in God; his dying testimony filled us with joy." Even the society of thieves and malefactors was deemed too pure for them, both the bishop and a preacher saying, that care must be taken, lest the criminals should be corrupted by the association. Great indeed must have been the horror their opinions had inspired, when an English preacher, occasionally visiting their dungeon, would lay his hands upon them, and falling upon his knees, cry aloud, "Sirs, be ye converted;" and then, exorcising the devil within them, exclaim, "Hence, depart, thou evil fiend!"

But exertions of another kind were not wanting on their behalf. Strenuous efforts were made to bring their case before the queen. An earnest supplication, and a confession of their

* A few years later, when archbishop of York, Sandys, in a *pastoral* letter, said:—Those who are stubborn and inveterate foes are to be bruised with a rod of iron, at least to be restrained that their leprosy infect not the sound; nets must be spread by which the papal stragglers, the firebrands of sedition, and pests of the church, may be snared and fall." The bishop was at least impartial in his zeal for the church's purity. Sandys' Sermons, p. 441.

faith on the four articles, were prepared ; but the attempt to present them to her was met with a stern and passionate rebuke to the ladies of her court, who ventured to intrude on the royal prerogative. Reports of the most unjust kind were rumored about ; that they disowned God and Christ, and rejected all government and authority of magistrates.* Her majesty was not free from these impressions, and they were sedulously fostered in her mind, by parties thirsting for innocent blood. The bishop was next applied to. A nobleman, Lord de Bodley, undertook to plead their cause, and, if possible, move his compassion. A simple confession of their faith was laid before him. But bishop Sandys refused to interfere. He even demanded their assent to the doctrine, that a Christian magistrate may rightly punish the obstinate heretic with the sword.†

A month's reprieve was, however, granted them, at the earnest suit of the venerable martyrologist, John Fox. His pious admiration of the Marian martyrs was shocked at the thought, that the scene of their triumphs would be defiled with the blood of these fanatic and miserable wretches. To roast alive was more accordant to papal practices, he said, than to the custom of the gossellers. He therefore urged upon her majesty the adoption of some other mode of punishment. Might not

* "Barbarous and wicked is the opinion of the anabaptists, which condemn all superiority, authority, and government in the church. For what is this else, but utterly to expel, both out of church and commonwealth, all godliness, all peace, all honesty?" Sandys' Sermons, .p. 85. Preached at York.

† This was no hasty opinion of the bishop ; for thus he instructs the parliament at an early period of the reign :—"Such as teach, but teach not the good and right way ; such as are open and public maintainers of errors and heresy ; such in the judgment of God, are thought unworthy to live. . . . I have no cruel heart : blood be far from me : I mind nothing less. Yet needs must it be granted that the maintainers and teachers of errors and heresy, are to be repressed in every Christian commonwealth !" Sandys' Sermons, p. 40.

close imprisonment, or bonds, or perpetual banishment, or burning of the hand, or scourging, or even slavery, suffice? Any or all of these would be preferable to death by fire. But not one word does her "Father Fox" breathe of tenderness for the rights of conscience. He also addressed the victims. He laboured to persuade them to acknowledge their error, and bow to the voice of scripture; to cease "to cultivate certain fanatic conceptions, nay, rather deceptions," of their own minds; "for it is sufficiently apparent, that for long you have disturbed the church by your great scandal and offence." To the lord chief justice Monson, one of their judges, he sent a copy of his letters to the queen and council, further reprobating the punishment of death, and advocating a milder punishment.* The sufferers highly estimated his kindly interference; but while they thanked him for his condescension, they endeavoured to change his unfavourable opinion.†

The month expired, without any alteration in the resolution of these servants of God, or in their fidelity to the truths they had received. Early in the month of July, it was intimated to two of them, that they must die. Incarcerated in separate cells, they were not permitted to enjoy each other's society, and words of love. On the 15th, the queen signed, at Gorhambury, the warrant and writ for the execution to proceed.‡ Jan Peters and Hendrik Terwoort, were the two selected.

* Prebendary Townsend's *Life of Fox*, in vol. i. of the 8vo. edit. of *Acts and Mon.* p. 198.

† Fox's letter to the queen has been several times printed; as by Fuller in his *Church History*, ii. 507. Crosby has given a translation of it. *Hist. of Eng. Baptists*, i. 80. Fox's letters to the lord chief justice and to the council, still exist among the Harleian MSS. in the British Museum, and have never yet, we believe, been printed. The excellent and interesting answer of the prisoners to Fox, we have placed in the *Addenda*, Note A. Also their supplication to the queen, and confession of faith.

‡ *Doc. Annals*, i. 360. Prebendary Townsend says, "I have

Jan Peters* was an aged man, and poor, with nine children. His first wife, some years before, had been burnt for her religion, at Ghent, in Flanders; and his then wife had lost her first husband by martyrdom for the truth. They had fled to England, hoping there to worship without danger. His circumstances were laid before the bishop, and he had earnestly entreated permission to leave the country with his wife and children; but the bishop was inexorable.

Hendrik Terwoort was a man of good estate, five or six-and-twenty years of age, and a goldsmith by trade. He had been married about eight or ten weeks before his imprisonment. But neither domestic affection, nor the solicitations of his friends, nor the dread of death, weakened his resolution.

On Sunday, the 17th, tidings were brought them, that within three days they would be burnt, unless they desired delay. To this Terwoort replied, "Since this your design must come to pass, so we wish you to speed the more quickly with the matter, for we would indeed rather die than live, to be released from this frightful den." He, however, asked till Friday. We again quote the affecting narrative of their companion in tribulation. "Upon Tuesday, a stake was set up in Smithfield, but the execution was not that day. On Wednesday, many people were gathered together to witness the death of our two friends, but it was again deferred. This was done to terrify, and draw our friends and us from the faith. But on Friday, our two friends, Hendrik Terwoort and Jan Peters, being brought out from their prison, were led to the sacrifice. As they went forth, Jan examined the writ by virtue of which they were burnt: and am sorry to say that it is worded as the old writs for burning the episcopal and other protestants in the reign of Mary." *Life of Fox*, p. 199, vol. i. 8vo. edit. of Acts and Mon.

* By the chronicler, Stow, he is called John Wielmacker, but in the warrant for execution John Peters, as in the Dutch narratives. Perhaps the former indicates his trade, that of a wheelwright. Van Braght does not mention his occupation.

Peters said, 'The holy prophets, and also Christ, our Saviour, have gone this way before us, even from the beginning, from Abel until now.' "

It was early morning when they reached the scene of their triumph. They were fastened to one stake, neither strangling, nor gunpowder being used to diminish their torture. As defenceless sheep of Christ, following the footsteps of their master, resolutely, for the name of Christ, they went to die. An English preacher was present, to embitter, if possible, by his cruel mockings, the closing moments of their martyr-life, and martyr-death. Before all the people he exclaimed, "These men believe not on God." Saith Jan Peters, "We believe in one God, our heavenly Father Almighty, and in Jesus Christ his Son." While standing bound at the stake, the articles were again, for the last time, presented to them, and pardon promised on subscription. Peters again spake, "You have labored hard to drive us to you, but now, when placed at the stake, it is labor in vain." One of the preachers attempted an excuse: "That all such matters were determined by the council, and that it was the queen's intention they should die." But, said Peters, "You are the teachers of the queen, whom it behooves you to instruct better, therefore shall our blood be required at your hands."

And now with courage they entered on the conflict, and fought through the trial, in the midst of the burning flame; an oblation to the Lord, which they living offered unto him. *Accepting not of deliverance*, for the truth's sake, they counted not their lives dear unto them, that they might finish their course with joy.

"For what were thy terrors, O Death?

And where was thy triumph, O Grave?

When the vest of pure white, and the conquering wreath

Were the prize of the scorner and slave?"—DALE.

We are saved comment on this painful scene. All writers,

of every party, are agreed in condemnation of its folly and criminality. "How utterly absurd and unchristian," saith our Dutch martyrologist, "do all such cruel proceedings, and sentences as are here seen, appear, when contrasted with the Christian faith. The Christian host is described as sheep and lambs, sent forth among cruel and devouring wolves: Who will be able with a good conscience to believe, that these English preachers were the true sheep of Christ, since in this matter they brought forth so notably the fruit of wolves?"*

But although none defend the deed, some defame the sufferers to lessen its enormity. They were actuated, it is said, by a spirit of insubordination, and their principles were of a disorganizing tendency; the overthrow of church and commonwealth must have followed their prevalence, and it was incumbent on the ruling authority to crush the germ of sedition and rebellion in its earliest form. And so it has been ever said of the members of the spiritual kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ; and without question, while oppression reigns supreme, while injustice ravages the homes and possessions of a people, while the honor of God and the rights of conscience are trampled under foot,—the gospel of eternal verity, the word of the God of equity, and the pure unworldly doctrine of Christ, must overturn, overturn, until He shall reign, whose is the right. But when under the garb of religion, when in the name of holy truth, when with the words of heaven upon their lips, men go forth to slay the innocent, to destroy the lowly disciple of Jesus, to forbid the word of the living God to echo in the soul the voice of the Eternal, and to stifle the groanings of the human spirit under

* The other two sufferers were for a long time kept in prison. The last we hear of them is, that attempting to escape, by filing the bars of their dungeon window, they were discovered, and heavily ironed. James de Somer, in conjunction with a friend, made several ineffectual efforts to obtain their release.

its bond-chain of sin and woe, sighing for liberty to serve its God, and, as the free angels of his presence, to obey His will—then human guilt has reached its highest mark, and displayed the most intensely affecting feature of the ruin which has befallen our race. It is an effort to crush the only means of man's restoration, to quench the spark of reviving life amid the agonizing death-throes of the human soul.

But what was the crime of which these victims of intolerance so dreadful were guilty? Did they aim at the queen's life? Did they assemble to plot the ruin of the state which sheltered them? Did they league with any whose glory is in their shame, to assassinate, to rob, to violate the rights of their neighbor? Let us hear them speak from their abyss of sorrow, "We, poor and despised strangers, who are in persecution for the testimony of Jesus Christ, entreat from God for all men, of every race and degree, that the Lord may grant perpetual peace and every happiness, and that we may live among them in peace and godliness, to the praise and glory of the Lord. Our fatherland, our friendships, our property, have we been compelled to forsake, through great tyranny, and as lambs before wolves, have fled, only for the pure evangelic truth of Christ, and not for uproars and seditions, as we are accused. . . . We know that we follow no strange gods, neither have we an heretical faith, contrary to the word of Christ. But we believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Creator of the heavens and the earth; in one Jesus Christ, his only beloved Son; who was conceived of the Holy Ghost, born of the undefiled Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. On the third day he arose from the dead, ascended to heaven, and is sitting at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty; from thence he will come again to judge the quick and the dead. We believe in the Holy Ghost. We believe that Jesus Christ is true God and man. . . . We do

not boast ourselves to be free from sin, but confess that every moment we are sinners before God. But we must abstain from wilful sins, if we would be saved; viz., from adultery, fornication, witchcraft, sedition, bloodshed, cursing, and stealing . . . hatred and envy. They who do such things shall not possess the kingdom of God." Here we leave this noble evangelic confession of the martyr, Hendrik Terwoort. He hath fairly won the martyr's crown. Although despised, trampled upon, and his name held accursed among men, his is the palm-branch of victory, and the white robe, washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb.

Not less nobly does he plead the rights of conscience. "Observe well the command of God: *Thou shalt love the stranger as thyself.* Should he then who is in misery, and dwelling in a strange land, be driven thence with his companions, to their great damage? Of this Christ speaks, *Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.* Oh! that they would deal with us according to natural reasonableness, and evangelic truth, of which our persecutors so highly boast. For Christ and his disciples persecuted no one; but, on the contrary, Jesus hath thus taught, *Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, &c.* This doctrine Christ left behind with his apostles, as they testify. Thus Paul, *Unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place; and labor, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it.* From all this it is clear, that those who have the one true gospel doctrine and faith will persecute no one, but will themselves be persecuted."*

* Besides the narratives, the supplication to the queen, and the reply to Fox, already referred to, the martyrologist has preserved a writing or letter, of considerable length, by Terwoort, from which the two passages above are extracts; and also a confession of faith, embracing

The reader is now able to judge of the truth of the innumerable crimes laid to the charge of these the Lord's afflicted ones, the baptists of that age. Thus runs the accusation of the celebrated Whitgift: They give honor and reverence to none in authority;—they seek the overthrow of commonwealths and states of government;—they are full of pride and contempt;—their whole intent is schismatic, and to be free from all laws, to live as they list;—they feign an austerity of life and manners, and are great hypocrites, &c. But the same high authority, the future archbishop of Canterbury, adds these following particulars as aggravations of their guilt:—In all their doings they pretend the glory of God, the edifying of the church, and the purity of the gospel;—when punished for their errors, they greatly complain, that nothing is used but violence: that the truth is oppressed, innocent and godly men, who would have all things reformed according to the word of God, cannot be heard nor have liberty to speak, and that their mouths are stopped, not by God's word, but by the authority of the magistrate;—they assert, that the civil magistrate has no authority in ecclesiastical matters, and ought not to meddle in causes of religion and faith, and that no man ought to be compelled to faith and religion;—and lastly, they complain much of persecution, and brag that they defend their cause, not with words only, but by the shedding of their blood.*

These were the high crimes and misdemeanors of which the baptists were accused. They need neither counsel nor apologist. The indictment is at the same time their accusa-

the most important doctrines of holy writ; this latter is deposited in the Addenda to this volume, as it will serve to show the general orthodoxy of the baptists at that period. Note A. See *Het Bloedig Toonel*. Deel ii. pp. 694—712. [Broadmead Records, Add. p. 503.]

* An Answer to a certain Libel, &c. by John Whitgift, D. of Divinitie, pp. 3—5. ed. 1572.

tion, and their acquittal. Their deeds were noble; their sentiments just. Their affliction and triumphant deaths, reflect glory on the holy truths of humanity's Great Martyr, in whose footsteps of blood they trod; but shame upon the men, who, with loud professions of fidelity to Him, slew the servants he had sent.

We have perhaps lingered too long over these events, but justice, oft somewhat tardy in her pace, seemed to demand that the sufferers should at last be heard in defence, after nearly three centuries of defamation and obloquy; and that the meagre and hostile accounts of our historians be corrected by authentic narrations, preserved in a foreign tongue, and now for the first time presented to the English reader.*

From this time until the reign of James, the notices of the baptists in our writers and annalists, are but few and indistinct. Although "they were rife in many places of the land," as we are told by Mr. Cartwright in 1575,† the severities they endured doubtless caused many to emigrate, and the rest to hide *in dens and caves of the earth*. Yet on the literature of the time, their name was ever floating as a term of reproach. Their principles were thrown from disputant to disputant, evidently felt though not seen, to be the only justifiable basis of the changes made or urged by the conflicting parties. Their views formed the ultimate idea of the great movement of the reformation, although eschewed by every other party, as subversive of that union of things sacred and secular, to which both reformers and puritans clung with a

* A translation of the deeply affecting narratives of Van Braght has been often desired, both in England and America; it is hoped that the Hanserd Knollys Society may be able to effect this important object. [A translation of this work is now, (Nov. 1850) in course of preparation, by the Hanserd Knollys Society, and will soon be published.—*American Editor*.]

† Second Replie. Epist. ed. 1575.

blind pertinacity. It was anabaptistical, to hold that the church ought to be constituted of believers only;—to separate from the national church because of its many unscriptural practices, unauthorized constitutions, and the impiety of the majority of its members;—to demand that the minister of the word should be a believer of the truths he preached, and a practiser of the piety he inculcated:—to give to the whole community of the faithful the power of electing their pastor, of binding and loosing, of discipline and instruction, and to call such as were gifted by divine grace, whether learned or unlearned, to the teacher's office;—and lastly, to exclude the magistrate from the exercise of any civil power in the church.*

We may adopt the language of Bishop Saunderson on this subject:—"The Reverend Archbishop Whitgift, and the learned Hooker, men of great judgment, and famous in their times, did long since foresee and declare their fear, that if puritanism should prevail among us, it would soon draw in anabaptism after it. This Cartwright and the disciplinarians denied, and were offended at. But these good men judged right; they considered, only as prudent men, that anabaptism had its rise from the same principle the puritans held, and its growth from the same course they took, together with the natural tendency of their principles and practices towards it; especially that ONE PRINCIPLE, as it was by them misunderstood; that the scripture was *adequata agendorum regula*, so as nothing might lawfully be done, without express warrant, either from some command or example therein contained; which clue, if followed as far as it would go, would

* See A Godly Treatise, wherein are examined and confuted many execrable fancies, given out and holden partly by Henry Barrowe and John Greenwood: partly by other of the anabaptistical order. Written by Robert Some, Doctor of Divinity, 4to. London, 1589.

certainly in time carry them as far as the anabaptists had then gone.”*

Thus it was that Whitgift, in his controversy with Cartwright, drew a full length portrait of these men, as the original picture of the “holy discipline;” but marred by the superfluous touches of the puritans. He likewise appeared as the antagonist of the baptists in a sermon at St. Paul’s in 1583.† Hence the universal execration which attended them, and the solemn asseveration of the puritan justices of Norfolk, “We allow not of the anabaptists, nor of their community; we allow not of the Brownists, the overthrowers both of church and commonwealth; we abhor all these, and we punish them.”‡ Every man’s hand was against them.

Still they lingered in various places, nor could all the diligence of their foes wholly extirpate them. “I would,” says the author of the Defence of the Ecclesiastical Discipline, in 1588, “I would we could say for our church, that there are none of the family, no recusants, yea, no anabaptists, nor libertines, amongst us.”§ A congregation was discovered in 1586, of which one Glover was the minister, which appears to have been formed from this persecuted sect. He was imprisoned by the order of Whitgift, but released through the interference of Lord Burghley.|| Two years after, (1588,) some further discoveries were made of several conventicles of “wicked sects and opinions.” In the summer time they met in the fields. Seated on a bank, they read, and listened to exhortations, from the word of God, by some of their number. In the winter they assembled in a house at the early hour of five; the day was passed in prayer and scripture exposition. They dined together, then collected money to pay for their food, carrying the surplus to any of their brethren who were

* Quoted in Early Hist. of Rhode Island, p. 112. Boston, 1843.

† Strype’s Whitgift, i. 264.

‡ Parte of a Register, p. 129.

§ P. 183.

|| Strype’s Annals, III. i. 634.

in bonds for the testimony of a good conscience. They used no form of prayer, not even the Lord's prayer; their devotions were extemporaneous. "The use of stinted prayer, or said service, is but babbling in the Lord's sight," they said, "and hath neither promise of blessing, nor edification." They regarded Christ as the supreme governor of the church; the queen had neither authority to appoint ministers, nor to frame any ecclesiastical government for it. A private man, being a brother, might preach, and "beget faith;" but every man in his own calling was to preach the gospel. It was unlawful to attend the public prayer and preaching, because the clergy taught, "that the state of the realm of England is the true church;" this they denied; the preachers were false preachers, who proclaimed not the glad tidings of the gospel. They were under no obligation to wait for the magistrate to reform the church; whenever stones were ready, they ought to go forward with the building, as the apostles did; but the preachers made Christ attend upon princes, and be subject to their laws and government. They held it unlawful to baptize children. They refused the salutary water to a child, twelve years of age, who tearfully sought to repair its parents' neglect; and, when the child was publicly baptized at the command of the Chamber of London, the mother fled for fear of punishment.*

Thus the leaven of the true doctrine slowly and secretly spread. Many also of the Brownists, on emigration, became baptists. Thus Mr. Johnson, writing in 1606, says, "About thirteen years since, this church, through persecution in England, was driven to come into these countries [Low Countries.] A while after they were come hither, divers of them fell into the errors of the anabaptists, which are too common in these countries, and so persisting, were excommu-

* Strype's Annals, III. ii. 102—106.

nicated by the rest.”* And it will be remembered, that a few years earlier, the congregation formed by Mr. Browne at Middleburg, lost many of its members from the same cause.

From a very singular book, written by one John Payne, at Harlaem, in 1597, it appears that there were considerable numbers of baptized believers in this country. He makes especial mention of a prisoner in Norwich gaol, Maydstone by name, incarcerated and threatened with death for professing baptist sentiments. He addresses his loving brethren, the merchants who frequent the Royal Exchange, to quicken them with a godly emulation, ere the axe be laid to the root of the tree. He is most anxious, however, to give the various classes of his fellow-countrymen warning to avoid “new English anabaptists.” “I wish you beware of the dangerous opinions of such English anabaptists bred here, as whose parsons, in part with more store of their letters, doth creep and spread among you in city and country.” Having heard of the proposed execution of Maydstone, he urges his wish that the prisoner should not be put to death, but banished: “by reason, our noble prince, judges, nor state, should not be so reputed of, with such hard terms, by anabaptists and others, as I am loath here to express; and (I am) already grieved to hear, what I hear, by occasion of report, that one of this English company is shortly like to die, being prisoner at Norwich.” He then appeals to the “prisoner at Norwich;” hopes some loving brother will signify to him, that “his suddenly stepping from his spiritual mother to a new stepdame, rejecting the sweet food of the one, and licking up the poison of the other, that therefore his suffering is as comfortless as it is rash and perilous.” The usual topics of reproach are then introduced, and, as was likewise usual, the

* An Inquirie and Answer of Thomas White, &c. p. 63, ed. 1606.

sufferer's opinions misstated, distorted, and defamed.* It is unnecessary to quote, since the reader is by this time familiar with them, and can estimate the little confidence to be placed in the accusations of a prejudiced opponent.

We here close our notes from the fragmentary history of a people, who, among the mighty movements of the sixteenth century, held a subordinate, but by no means unimportant place. The history of their embodiment into churches, having historical records of their own and an abiding-place in this land, belongs rather to the notices which will accompany the earliest remaining writings of their pastors, Mr. John Smyth and Mr. Thomas Helwys.

It has been seen that their idea, the true archetypal idea, of the church, was the grand cause of the separation of the baptists, as individuals and communities, from all the various forms of ecclesiastical arrangement adopted by the reformers and their successors. There could be no harmony between the parties; they were antagonistic from the first. Hence the baptists cannot be regarded as owing their origin to a secession from the protestant churches; they occupied an independent and original position, one which unquestionably involved sufferings and loss from its unworldliness, and manifest contrariety to the political tendencies and alliances of the reform movement. Let it be granted as a truth of divine origin and power, that a visible church of Christ ought to comprise none but such as are believers in his doctrine, under the influence of his Spirit, and subject to him as *Head over all things to his church*; then it follows, that the mixed assemblages of a national church, under the headship of worldly princes, cannot be the true churches of Christ; and also, that the exercise of secular power by the magistrate, either as the

* Royall Exchange: To suche worshipfull Citezins, Marchants, Gentlemen, and other occupiers of the contrey as resorte thervnto.—At Harlem, printed with Gyles Romaen, pp. 21, 23, 45. 4to. 1597.

imposer or executor of the church's law, is an invasion of the rights of the flock of Jesus, a breach of the statutes of the only Lawgiver, and a denial of his all-sufficient authority. Then also, the conscience must be free to follow the instructions of the Heavenly Monitor, and none, not even idolaters, blasphemers, nor papists, be driven to the sacred temple by threats or violence, since faith is the gift of God, not producible by human power; nay, less likely to be produced, when physical force is resorted to. Then too, lastly, the unconscious babe must be denied admittance to the church, since both reason and scripture refuse to recognize the unintelligent infant as possessed of that faith, which can only follow hearing the word of God, being also unable to declare a hearty, free, and willing acceptance of the salvation it proclaims.

It would be an interesting inquiry, did time and occasion permit, how far this instinct of liberty influenced the doctrinal peculiarities of the baptists, and led to the maintenance of a dogma, so often the theme of reproach against them, the freedom of the will against the absolute predestination of the reformed. Liberty of conscience, and the free action of the will, are evidently nearly allied; and perhaps influenced, by some of those intangible and mental sympathies which often affect opinion, or by the antagonist position in which they found themselves on the other points to those who persecuted them, they were probably led to adopt a mode of stating this "vexed question" somewhat distant from the true mean.

We have, however, discovered, the real cause of the unanimous hostility these despised people encountered. Papist and protestant, puritan and Brownist, with one consent, laid aside their differences, to condemn and punish a sect, a heresy, an opinion, which threw prostrate their favorite church, their politico-ecclesiastical power, their extravagant assumptions, and their unscriptural theories. The papist

abhorred them : for, if this heresy prevailed, a church hoary with age, laden with the spoils of many lands, rich in the merchandise of souls, must be utterly broken and destroyed. The protestants hated them : for their cherished headship, their worldly alliances, the pomps and circumstances of a state religion, must be debased before the kingly crown of Jesus. The puritans defamed them : for baptist sentiments were too liberal and free for those who sought a papal authority over conscience, and desired the sword of the higher powers to enforce their "holy discipline" on an unconverted people. The Brownist avoided them : for their principle of liberty was too broad, and to this they added the crime of rejecting the "Lord's little ones" from the fold.

Thus the baptists became the first and only propounders of "absolute liberty, just and true liberty, equal and impartial liberty."* For this they suffered and died. They proclaimed it by their deeds, they propagated it in their writings. In almost every country of Europe, amid tempests of wrath, stirred up by their faith, and their manly adherence to the truth, they were the indefatigable, consistent primal apostles of liberty in this latter age. We honor them. We reverence them. And humble though they be, we welcome the republication of the first English writings which sounded the note of freedom for conscience as man's birth-right, in this land of the free ; they are sanctified by holy tears and the martyr's blood.†

* Locke on Toleration, p. 31, 4to. ed.

† See Tracts on Liberty of Conscience, published by the Hanserd Knollys Society. 8vo. 1846.

SECTION X.

THE INDEPENDENTS.

A BRIEF notice will suffice to dispose of a recent effort to deprive the baptists of the honor which is their due, and to claim for others the commendations which is their historic right. "We shall not hesitate," says Mr. Hanbury, "to attribute to Jacob's pen, what constitutes the boast and glory of our denomination as independents, the very first composition ever addressed to authority, restricted to the particularly interesting object expressed in its title in these terms:—'An humble supplication for TOLERATION and Liberty to enjoy and observe the ordinances of Jesus Christ, in the administration of his churches, in lieu of human constitutions.'"*

The "restricted" claim made in this supplication would not have required our attention, had the historian of the independents been content therewith; but as in the face of every accessible historical fact he has questioned the "equity of the claim" asserted, among others, by Dr. Price, in his *History of Nonconformity*,† that the baptists "must be regarded as the first expounders, and most enlightened advocates of the best inheritance of man"—liberty of conscience; it becomes necessary to vindicate their equitable right and pre-eminence.

* Memorials relating to the Independents, i. 225. † Vol. i. 522.

We propose, therefore, to establish the three following points:—1. That the petition in question did not emanate from the independents. 2. That its contents do not entitle it to the honorable position assigned it. 3. That the independents, to a much later period, were not the advocates of an absolute, true, and impartial liberty.

1. From whom did the petition for toleration emanate? On the accession of James I. to the crown of this country, the Puritans made, as is well known, several attempts to obtain a new settlement of ecclesiastical affairs. The ill success of the Hampton Court conference forever crushed their hopes of further reformation, and was followed by the immediate deprivation of some hundreds of godly men. Among these was Mr. Henry Jacob. He became the most active of those ministers, who were designated by Mr. Bradshawe, another of them, “the rigidest sort of them that are called Puritans.”*

But that Mr. Jacob was not the author of the petition, is evident from his own words. For thus he speaks of its author: “That faithful man of God, whosoever he was, that made that petition to the king’s majesty for a toleration of our way and profession, with peace and quietness in England.”† Still, in its prayer and statements he heartily concurred, and frequently referred to it with approbation. The petition is signed by “Your majesty’s most loyal, faithful, and obedient subjects, some of the late silenced and deprived ministers.”‡ If then Mr. Jacob was one of the subscribers, which he probably was, he and the petitioners were Puritans, and not Brownists nor independents.

In perfect accordance with this fact, which appears on the

* English Puritanism, containing the main opinions of, &c., printed 1605.

† An Attestation, &c., p. 137. 1613.

‡ P. 48, edit. 1609. See also Hanbury, i. 227.

face of the petition, the authorship is ascribed to the Puritans by the writer of the Supplication to king James in 1620.* We find, moreover, at the period when Mr. Jacob was at Leyden, in Holland, that although he enjoyed the friendship of Mr. Robinson, who is with justice regarded as the parent of modern independency, yet, as an elder, he governed a separatist church, "which began before Mr. Robinson, and continued after him," and which, without doubt, was a presbyterian church.† Certain it is, that in 1613, four years after the date of the petition in question, Mr. Jacob held to a presbyterian and synodal association of churches, "differing," he says, "not one hair from Calvin and Beza, touching the substance of this matter."‡ And when forming his congregation in London, in 1616, he consulted not with the separatists, nor with the Brownists, nor with the Independents, but with certain deprived and learned puritans, who expressed their approbation of his design.§

Other circumstances seem to lead to the conclusion, that the church established by Jacob was not an independent church. From a letter, dated April 5, 1624, about the time of Jacob's departure for Virginia, addressed by Mr. Robinson to some other church in London, we learn that it was questioned whether Jacob's church was a true church, and to be recognized as such. Mr. Robinson replies in the affirmative, but somewhat doubtingly; which hesitation could not have existed had it been in communion, or governed on the same principles, with his own church.||

* "The Puritans.....in their supplication, printed anno 1609. Much they write for toleration." Tracts on Liberty of Conscience, pp. 222, 223.

† Cotton's Way of Congregational Churches, p. 14, edit. 1648. Steven's Hist. of Scot. Ch. at Rotterdam, p. 310.

‡ An Attestation, &c. pp. 13, 97.

§ Neal. i. 462.

|| Treatise on the Lawfulness of hearing ministers of the Church of England. Printed 1634; at the end.

It is to be further observed, that when, in 1633, Mr. Spilsbury seceded from Jacob's church, it being then under the pastoral care of Mr. Lathorpe, it was ranked as an independent church, as it continued to be for some time after, until, during the pastorate of Mr. Henry Jessey, it became a baptist community. Now we are informed by Mr. Kiffin, that Mr. Spilsbury's secession was owing not merely to a change of views on the subject of baptism, but "that the congregation kept not to their first principles of separation." Thus, before it became an independent church, it held certain "principles of separation," which could have been none other than those of the more rigid puritans, to whom Mr. Jacob, about 1609, belonged.*

It is, however, clear, that the petition for toleration is a puritan production, and that if Mr. Jacob united in its prayer, as he certainly concurred in its sentiments, it was not as an independent, but as a puritan. Whatever cause there may be for glorying in this matter, the "glory" and the "boast" must evidently belong to that party.

2. But do the contents of the petition bear out the pre-eminence assigned to it? It is admitted by Mr. Hanbury, "that Mr. Jacob did not on his side dissert upon, or argue for religious liberty, in the entire breadth of it."† Where, then, is the basis of Mr. Hanbury's claim, since the baptists DID "dissert upon, and argue for religious liberty" in its fullest extent, as the "Tracts on Liberty of Conscience" clearly show. Can a prayer for a *restricted* toleration be set by the side of a demand for entire liberty of conscience, as of equal worth? Yet such was the toleration in question; for thus it prays:—"First, the liberty of enjoying and practising the holy ordinances enacted and left by the Lord, for the perpetual direction and guiding of his churches. Sec-

* Wilson, i. 41. Crosby, i. 148.

† Hanbury, i. 225, note.

ondly, an entire exemption from the jurisdiction of the said prelates and their officers. And lastly, the happiness to live under the command and charge of any of your subordinate civil magistrates, and so to be for our actions and carriage in the ministry accountable unto them.”*

Again: “We acknowledge no other power and authority for the overseeing, ruling, and censuring of particular churches, how many soever in number, in the case of their misgovernment, than that which is originally invested in your royal person, and from it derived to such of your laity as you shall judge worthy to be deputed to the execution of the same under you. So as the favor humbly solicited by us is, that whereas our Lord Jesus hath given to each particular church this right and privilege, viz., to elect, ordain, and deprive her own ministers, and to exercise all other parts of lawful ecclesiastical jurisdiction under him, your majesty would be pleased to take order, as well that each particular church that shall be allowed to partake in the benefit of the said toleration, may have, enjoy, and put in execution and practise, this her said right and privilege, as that some your subaltern civil officers may be appointed by you to demand and receive of each church a due and just account of their proceedings.”†

Having thus provided for secular interference with the church's affairs, the petitioners proceed to limit to themselves the toleration desired. “We do humbly beseech your majesty not to think, that by our suit for the said toleration, we make an overture and way for toleration unto papists, our suit being of a different nature from theirs, and the inducements thereof such, as cannot conclude aught in favor of them, whose head is antichrist, whose worship is idolatry, whose doctrine is heresy, and a profession directly con-

* An Humble Supplication, &c., p. 8. Hanbury, i. 225.

† Ibid. pp. 13, 14. Hanbury, i. 226.

trary to the lawful state and government of free countries and kingdoms.”*

For such a “restricted” toleration the papists had petitioned the sovereign at an earlier period. The language of the puritans is but the counterpart of the following, which issued five years before from these excepted religionists.

“We think,” say the catholics, “that the permission of the liberty we entreat, is, neither in reason of state, a thing hurtful, nor by the doctrine of protestants unlawful.—But the puritan, as he increaseth daily above the protestant in number, so is he of a more presuming, imperious, and hotter disposition and zeal, ever strongly burning in desire to reduce all things to the form of his own idea, or imagination conceived, and therefore, by discourse or reason, not unlike to attempt the overthrow of the protestant, and bring the kingdom, especially the ecclesiastical state, to a parity, or popular government, if the catholic were once extinguished; and to extinguish him no mean more potent, than to forbid and punish the exercise of his religion.”† A singular and pre-eminent toleration truly, which would involve an exterminating and internecine war between papist and puritan!

Mr. Jacob has, however, left us no room to doubt the nature of the toleration, he and his brother puritans so earnestly pressed. Thus, in 1606, he writes it down as a proposition they were willing to maintain, against the prelates; that “civil magistrates ought to be the overseers of provinces and dioceses, and of the several churches therein. And it is their office, and duty, enjoined them by God, to take knowledge of, to punish and redress, all misgoverning or ill-teaching of any church, or church officer.”‡ Again, in the

* Ibid. p. 20. Hanbury, *ibid.*

† A Supplication to the King, &c. pp. 4, 9. 4to. 1604.

‡ A Christian and Modest Offer of a Conference, &c. pp. 2, 3. 4to. 1606.

year 1613, when he is supposed by Mr. Hanbury to have joined the Independents, he writes, "Though we affirm that the church government is independent, and immediately derived from Christ, yet we affirm also, that the civil magistrate is even therein supreme governor civilly. And though nothing may be imposed on the Christian people of a congregation, against their wills, by any spiritual authority—for so only we intend—yet we affirm withal, that the civil magistrate may impose on them spiritual matters, by civil power; yea, whether they like or dislike, if he see it good. This we all gladly acknowledge." And he refers to the petition in question for proof.*

Elsewhere Mr. Jacob says, "We grant that civil magistrates may, and sometimes ought, to impose good things on a true church, against their wills, if they stiffly err, as sometimes they may."† And in his latest production, when engaged, in the year 1616, in forming his church in London, he makes use of the following language, in the Confession of Faith he then put forth to clear the "said Christians from the slander of schism, and undutifulness to the magistrate." "We believe that we, and all true visible churches, ought to be overseen, and kept in good and peace, and ought to be governed, (under Christ) both supremely and also subordinately by the civil magistrate; yea, in causes of religion when need is. By which rightful power of his, he ought to cherish and prefer the godly and religious, and to punish as truth and right shall require, the untractable and unreasonable. Howbeit, yet always but civilly. And therefore we from our heart, most humbly do desire that our gracious sovereign king would himself as far as he seeth good, and further by some substituted civil magistrate under him, in

* An Attestation of many learned, &c., pp. 115—117.

† An Attestation, &c., p. 316, edit. 1613.

clemency take this special oversight and government of us, to whose ordering and protection we most humbly commit ourselves.”* To this confession is added another supplication for toleration, which he humbly prays his majesty to appoint some civil magistrate, “qualified with wisdom, learning, and virtue, to be overseer for their more peaceable, orderly, and dutiful carriage, both in our worshipping God, and in all other our affairs.”†

The admission then of Mr. Hanbury, so fatal to his claim, that Mr. Jacob did not “dissert upon, nor argue for religious liberty, in the entire breadth of it,” is established by undeniable evidence; and we are now entitled to ask, Is the clear, explicit, and broad statement of the doctrine of religious liberty, in the treatises published in the years 1614 and 1615 by the baptists, to be regarded as of less value than the meagre and individual desire of toleration which this petition, and these extracts from the writings of its supposed author, exhibit? A toleration founded on the narrowest basis; to be enjoyed only by the body that sought it; and, at the same time, allowing, nay, asking for a compulsory and forced interference with its religious rights and duties, and those of others also? Can this be “the glory and boast” of the “independent denomination,” for which Mr. Hanbury thinks it so “commendable to strive for the pre-eminence?” The baptists may relinquish such a glory; while they hold in equity, that

* Anno Domini, 1616. A Confession and Protestation, &c. not paged. Hanbury, i. 301.

† A Confession, &c. Hanbury, i. 306. The petition of 1609 is also referred to approvingly in this Supplication, and in other places of the Confession. Jacob’s words are, “Beseeching you, as in effect they formerly did, so now again, to give unto them this favor, that peaceably and quietly they may worship God,” &c. And in the margin reference is made thus:—“Anno 1609. An Humble Supplication.” Jacob thus again, in 1616, identifies himself with the puritans.

perfect liberty of conscience, to be enjoyed by all men, excelleth in glory; and for *this* they strive.

3. But lastly, we have to show, that the independents to a yet later period were not the advocates of an absolute, full, and impartial liberty. If Mr. Jacob was a puritan, then are they deprived of the honor in question; or if an independent, the evidence fails to substantiate the claim. It now remains to examine one other witness, of whose relation to that body there can be no doubt, and whose name would be an honor and a praise to any community who could call him theirs. Mr. John Robinson had been a puritan. He separated on holy principles from a church, which he thought to be anti-christian, and in exile nobly endured and labored for the cause of God. He was the spiritual parent of many, who, in future years, were to be called the pilgrim fathers; whose deeds form the earlier annals of a mighty people. But while on many points he arrived at juster and truer views than the puritans: on their doctrine of coercion in matters of religion he made little or no advance. In the year 1610, in the earliest of his productions, he thus explicitly asserts its propriety—"That godly magistrates are by compulsion to repress public and notable idolatry, as also to provide that the truth of God, in his ordinance, be taught and published in their dominions, I make no doubt; it may be also, it is not unlawful for them by some penalty or other, to provoke their subjects universally unto hearing for their instruction and conversion; yea, to grant they may inflict the same upon them, if, after due teaching, they offer not themselves unto the church." And again, he says, "That religious actions may be punished civilly by the magistrate, which is the preserver of both tables, and so to punish all breaches of both, especially such as draw with them the violation of the positive laws of kingdoms, or disturbances of common peace."*

* Justification of Separation, pp. 242, 243, 153, edit. 1639.

It was in the year succeeding this publication of Mr. Robinson, 1611, that the baptists issued a "Confession of Faith, with certain conclusions," in which they assert, "that the magistrate is not to meddle with religion, or matters of conscience, nor compel men to this or that form of religion, because Christ is the King and Lawgiver of the church and conscience." This assertion was questioned by Robinson, and in 1614 he published a work in which it was denied. The baptists were not slow to answer, and in the next year replied to his objections, endeavoring to prove, "that no man ought to be persecuted for his religion." For this piece, and the sentiments of Mr. Robinson, we must refer to the volume lately published.*

These views of Mr. Robinson were not accidental, they constituted a part of his religious belief. Hence in nearly all his works, from the first in 1610 to the last in 1625, we find the same sentiments maintained.

In his Observations, Divine and Moral, he says, "Men are for the most part minded for or against Toleration of Diversity of Religions, according to the conformity which they themselves hold, or hold not, with the country or kingdom where they live. Protestants, living in the country of papists, commonly plead for toleration of religion; so do papists that live where protestants bear sway; though few of either, especially the clergy, as they are called, would have the other tolerated where the world goes on their side." He then remarks on the sentiments of the fathers on this point, and says that the saying of "the wise king of Poland seemeth approvable, that it is 'one of three things which God hath kept in his own hands, to urge the conscience this way,' and to cause a man to profess a religion by working it first in his heart."†

* Tracts on Liberty of Conscience, pp. 85—180.

† See Tracts, &c. p. 216.

He next reviews two or three objections, and comes "Lastly, to that of the father, 'that many who at first serve God by compulsion, come after to serve him freely and willingly.' I answer," he says, "that neither good intents, nor events, which are casual, can justify unreasonable violence; and, withal, that by this course of compulsion many become atheists, hypocrites, and familists, and being at first constrained to practise against conscience, lose all conscience afterwards. . . . Yet, do I not deny all compulsion to the hearing of God's word, as the means to work religion, and common to all of all sorts, good and bad; much less excuse civil disobedience, palliated with religious shows and pretences; or condemn convenient restraint of public idolatry; so as this rule of reason holds its place, viz., that 'the bond between magistrate and subject is essentially civil,' but religious accidentally only, though eminently."*

Our last quotation shall be taken from his most important work;—a work issued as a formal, and therefore carefully digested statement of his belief on all points of faith and godliness. It is "A just and necessary Apology of certain Christians, no less contumeliously than commonly called Brownists or Barrowists." It was first published in Latin, in 1619, and afterwards translated by himself, and printed in 1625. The latter edition is before us. In the chapter on civil magistracy he thus writes—"We believe the very same, touching the civil magistrate, with the Belgic reformed churches, and willingly subscribe to their confession; and the more, because what is by many restrained to the Christian magistrate, they extend indefinitely and absolutely to the magistrate whomsoever." In commenting on this enlarged duty of the magistrate, and which we will presently produce,

* Observations Divine and Moral, &c., pp. 49—51, edit. 1625. Hanbury, i. 436.

he says, "The magistrate, though a heathen, hath power, as the minister of God for the good of his subjects, to command and procure in and by good and lawful manner and means, whatsoever appertains either to their natural or spiritual life, so the same be not contrary to God's word : upon which word of God, if it beat, God forbid, that the Christian magistrate should take liberty to use, or rather abuse his' authority for the same."* That is to say, the magistrate, whether Christian or heathen, has a natural and unchangeable right neither diminished nor increased by his profession of Christianity, to command the *truth*, that is of course such truth as Mr. Robinson may approve, but no other. And inasmuch as many persons may not be able to receive that truth, then must they abide the infliction of some undefined penalty for their unbelief.

We now turn to the Belgic confession for the full and authentic expression of Mr. Robinson's creed upon this point. The reader will be then fully prepared to appreciate the "equity of the claim" made by the advocate of the independents. After confessing the divine institution of magistrates, to punish the wicked and defend the good, it thus proceeds—"Moreover it is their duty, not only to be careful to preserve the civil government, but also to endeavor that the ministry may be preserved, that all idolatry and counterfeit worship of God, may be clean abolished, that the kingdom of antichrist may be overthrown, and that the kingdom of Christ may be enlarged. To conclude, it is their duty to bring to pass, that the holy word of the gospel may be preached everywhere, that all men may serve and worship God purely and freely, according to the prescript rule of his word." And they finish with the following damnatory clause:—"Wherefore we condemn the anabaptists, and all those troublesome spirits,

* Ch. xi. pp. 56, 57. Hanbury, i. 384. The last part of this passage is omitted by Mr. Hanbury.

who do reject higher powers and magistrates, overthrow all laws and judgments, make all goods common, and to conclude, do abolish and confound all those orders and degrees which God hath appointed among men for honesty's sake."*

It is then most conclusively shown, that the petition of 1609 fails to sustain the assertion of Mr. Hanbury, being puritan in its origin, and unworthy of the commendation bestowed upon it; and that the independents, as such, in the person of their founder, did not understand, up to the period of his death in 1626, the rights of conscience.

We may here close our defence of the claim of "priority boasted of by some modern baptists;" a claim, however, advanced and established, not in the spirit of boasting, but on the ground of truth and historic fact. Our forefathers asserted the inalienable right of all men, Jew and Gentile, papist and puritan, infidel and believer, to serve God, to obey the statutes of the Lord Jesus in his sanctuary, and to act as each one's conscience might dictate; they desired not to be *tolerated*, but to be *free*. Evidence can be adduced that the Independents reached not this high ground of truth and liberty until a much later period; and that even in the times of the Commonwealth, while many were favorable to a toleration, they refused to allow an unrestricted liberty in matters of faith. Enough is, however, presented to show the fallacy of the claim made by Mr. Hanbury, and the injustice of withholding from the authors of the tracts above-mentioned, the pre-eminent honor of having issued "the very first composition ever addressed to authority," NOT restricted to toleration, but demanding an absolute, full, and impartial liberty.

The baptists stood alone, amidst all their contemporaries,

* An Harmony of the Confessions, &c., p. 588, edit. 1586. Hall' Harmony of the Confessions, p. 483, edit. 1842.

for liberal and enlightened views. Calumny, contumely, reproach, and persecution, failed to turn them from their high and holy calling. Freedom to worship God, as each for himself thought right, even when others might think it heresy, they nobly struggled for to the end. They were the first to pioneer the way through the forests of human superstitions, the morasses of human inventions, and the barriers of human usurpations. A forlorn hope, they assailed the huge fortress of human tyranny. But *God was their refuge and their strength*. They made the costly outlay for that inheritance whose rich and pleasant fruit we daily gather. On their behalf, on our own behalf, that the stigma of ingratitude may not attach to us, nor those worthy ones be deprived of their honorable and blood-bought renown, we most emphatically, re-assert their claim, and adopt, with an assured confidence in its truth, the admirable language of Dr. Price—"It belonged to the members of a calumniated and despised sect, few in number and poor in circumstances, to bring forth to public view, in their simplicity and omnipotence, those immortal principles which are now universally recognized as of divine authority and universal obligation. Other writers of more distinguished name succeeded, and robbed them of their honor; but their title is so good, and the amount of service they performed on behalf of the common interests of humanity is so incalculable, that an impartial posterity must assign to them their due meed of praise."*

* History of Nonconformity, i. 522, 523.

SECTION XI.

THE SETTLEMENT OF NEW ENGLAND.

[From the "Biographical Introduction" to the Bloody Tenent.*]

It was on the 1st day of December, in the year 1630, that Mr. Roger Williams, with his wife, embarked at Bristol for America, in the ship *Lyon*, Captain William Pierce.

Two years and a half before, a number of eminent and enthusiastic men had gone forth, animated by religious principles and purposes, to seek a home and a refuge from persecution, on the wild and untenanted shores of Massachusetts Bay. Charles I. had announced his design of ruling the English people by arbitrary power, only a few days before a patent for the Company of Massachusetts Bay passed the seals.† No provision was made in this document for the exercise of religious liberty. The emigrants were puritans, and although they had suffered long for conscience' sake, on this subject their views were as contracted as those of their brethren who in Elizabeth's reign sought the overthrow of England's hierarchy.‡ The patent secured to them, however, to a great extent, a legislative independence of the mother country; but they soon employed that power to persecute differing consciences.

The emigrants landed at Salem at the end of June, 1629.

* Hanserd Knollys Society's Edition.

† Bancroft's Hist. of U. S. i. 342. Knowles' Life of R. Williams, p. 31.

‡ See Broadmead Records, Introd. p. xxii.

A few mud hovels alone marked the place of their future abode. On their passage they arranged the order of their government, and bound themselves by solemn covenant to each other and the Lord. As religion was the cause of their abandonment of their native land, so was its establishment their first care. At their request a few of the settlers at Plymouth, where in 1620 a colony had been established by the members of Mr. John Robinson's church, came over to assist and advise on the arrangement of their church polity. After several conferences, the order determined on was the congregational, and measures were immediately taken for the choice of elders and deacons. A day of fasting and prayer was appointed, and thirty persons covenanted together to walk in the ways of God. Mr. Skelton was chosen pastor, Mr. Higginson teacher, both puritan clergymen of celebrity, and Mr. Houghton ruling elder. They agreed with the church at Plymouth, "That the children of the faithful are church members with their parents, and that their baptism is a seal of their being so."*

The church was thus self-constituted. It owned no allegiance to bishop, priest, or king. It recognized but one authority—the King of saints: but one rule—the word of God. The new system did not, however, meet with the approbation of all this little company. Some still fondly clung to the episcopacy of their native land, and to the more imposing rites of their mother church. The main body of the emigrants did not altogether refuse to have communion with the church which had so unnaturally driven them away; but, as they said, they separated from her corruptions, and rejected the human inventions in worship which they discovered in her fold. Not so all. Liberty of worship they desired indeed, but not a new form of polity. Two brothers,

* Neal's Hist. of N. England, i. 141, 144. Baillie's Dissuasive, p. 66. Mather's Magnalia, i. 19.

John and Samuel Browne, the one a lawyer, the other a merchant, were the leaders of this little band. They wished the continuance of the Common Prayer, of the ceremonies usually observed in the administration of baptism and the Lord's Supper, and a wider door for the entrance of members into a church state. Dissatisfied with the new order of things, they set up a separate assembly. This was a mutiny against the state, as well as against the church; and proving incorrigible, the brothers were sent home in "the Lyon's Whelp."*

In the year 1630, a large addition was made to the pilgrim band, on the arrival of Governor Winthrop. Not less than 1500 persons accompanied him, to escape the bigotry and persecuting spirit of Laud. Several new settlements were formed, and the seat of the colonial government was fixed at Boston. Though sincere in their attachment to true religion, and desirous of practising its duties unmolested by episcopal tyranny, they thought not of toleration for others. No such idea had dawned upon them. They were prepared to practise over other consciences the like tyranny to that from which they had fled.

With nobler views than these did Mr. Williams disembark at Boston, after a very tempestuous voyage, on the 5th of February, in the year 1631. The infant colony had suffered very much during the winter from the severity of the weather, and the scarcity of provisions. The arrival of the Lyon was welcomed with gratitude, as the friendly interposition of the hand of God.†

Roger Williams was at this time little more than thirty years of age—"a young minister, godly and zealous, having precious gifts."‡ Tradition tells us, that he was born in

* Neal, i. 144. Bancroft, i. 350. Cotton Mather's *Magnalia*, book i. p. 19. Backus' *Hist. of Baptists in New England*, i. 45.

† Knowles, p. 37.

‡ Bancroft, i. 367.

Wales: that he was in some way related to Cromwell: that his parents were in humble life: and that he owed his education to Sir Edward Coke, who, accidentally observing his attention at public worship, and ascertaining the accuracy of the notes he took of the sermon, sent him to the University of Oxford. All this may or may not be true; but it is evident that his education was liberal, and that he had a good acquaintance with the classics and the original languages of the scriptures.

He himself informs us, that in his early years his heart was imbued with spiritual life. "From my childhood, the Father of lights and mercies touched my soul with a love to himself, to his only begotten, the true Lord Jesus, to his holy scriptures."* At this time he must have been about twelve years old. His first studies were directed to the law, probably at the suggestion of his patron. He became early attached to those democratic principles which are so ably stated in the "Bloody Tenent," and to those rights of liberty which found so able a defender in the aged Coke. Subsequently, however, he turned his attention to theology, and assumed the charge of a parish. It was during this period that he became acquainted with the leading emigrants to America; and he appears to have been the most decided amongst them in their opposition to the liturgy, ceremonies, and hierarchy of the English church.† It is probable that it was upon the subject of the grievances they endured, he had the interview

* Knowles, p. 23, 391. Backus, i. 508.

† "Master Cotton may call to mind that the discussor [Williams], riding with himself and one other of precious memory, Master Hooker, to and from Sempringham, presented his arguments from scripture, why he durst not join with them in their use of Common Prayer." *Bloody Tenent more Bloody*, p. 12. See also *Bloody Tenent* [wherever reference is made to this work in these pages, it is to the edition of the Hanserd Knollys Society], pp. 43 and 374. Baillie's *Dissuasive*, p. 55.

with King James of which he speaks in a letter written late in life.*

It was a notable year, both in Old and in New England, in which Williams sought a refuge for conscience amid the wilds of America. Autocratic rule was decided upon by the infatuated Charles, and the utterance of the most arbitrary principles from the pulpits of the court clergy was encouraged. Doctrines subversive of popular rights were taught, and the sermons containing them published at the king's special command. Laud assumed a similar authority in ecclesiastical affairs. With unscrupulous zeal and severity he sought to extirpate puritanism from the church. The Calvinistic interpretation of the articles was condemned, and Bishop Davenant was rebuked for a sermon which he preached upon the 17th. The puritans were to a man Calvinists, the Laudean party were Arminians. And as if to give the former practical proof of the lengths to which Laud was prepared to go, and to shut them up either to silence or to voluntary banishment, Leighton, for his "Plea against Prelacy," was this year committed to prison for life, fined £10,000, degraded from his ministry, whipped, pilloried, his ears cut off, his nose slit, and his face branded with a hot iron. From this tyranny over thought and conscience Williams fled, only to bear his testimony against similar outrages upon conscience and human rights in the New World—to find the same principles in active operation among the very men who like him had suffered, and who like him sought relief on that distant shore.

No sooner had Mr. Williams landed at Boston, than we find him declaring his opinion, that "the magistrate might not punish a breach of the sabbath, nor any other offence, as

* In his letter to Major Mason, he refers to "King James, whom I have spoke with." Knowles, p. 31.

it was a breach of the first table.”* Moreover, so impure did he deem the communion of the church of England, that he hesitated to hold communion with any church that continued in any manner favorable to it. This was, however, the case with the church at Boston. It refused to regard the hierarchy and parishional assemblies of the English church as portions of the abominations of anti-christ. It permitted its members, when in England, to commune with it, in hearing the word and in the private administration of the sacraments.† Thus while separating from its corruptions, the emigrants clave to it with a fond pertinacity. This was displeasing to the free soul of Williams. He refused to join the congregation at Boston. It would have been a weak and sinful compliance with evil. He could not regard the cruelties and severities, and oppression, exercised by the church of England, with any feelings but those of indignation. That could not be the true church of Christ on whose skirts was found sprinkled the blood of saints and martyrs. He therefore gladly accepted the invitation of the church at Salem, and a few weeks after his arrival he left Boston to enter upon the pastorate there.

But on the very same day on which he commenced his ministry at Salem (April 12), the General Court of the Colony expressed its disapprobation of the step, and required the church to forbear any further proceeding. This was an arbitrary and unjust interference with the rights of the Salem church. As a congregational and independent community, it had a perfect right to select Mr. Williams for its pastor. The choice of its ministry is one of the church's most sacred privileges, to be exercised only in subordination to the laws and to the will of its great Head. This right the General Court

* Such is Governor Winthrop's testimony. Knowles, p. 46.

† Weld's Answer to W. R. p. 10. 4to. 1644.

most flagrantly violated, and thus laid the foundation for that course of resistance which eventually led to the banishment of Mr. Williams.*

To the civil government of the colony Mr. Williams was prepared to give all due submission. Very soon after his arrival, he entered his name upon the list of those who desired to be made freemen, and on the 12th of May took the customary oaths. Yet as if to bring into conflict at the earliest moment, and to excite the expression of those generous sentiments on religious and civil liberty which animated the soul of Mr. Williams, on that very day the court "ordered and agreed, that for the time to come, no man shall be admitted to the freedom of this body politic, but such as are members of some of the churches within the limits of the same." Thus a theocracy was established. The government belonged to the saints. They alone could rule in the commonwealth, or be capable of the exercise of civil rights. "Not only was the door of calling to magistracy shut against natural and unregenerate men, though excellently fitted for civil offices, but also against the best and ablest servants of God, except they be entered into church estate."† This was to follow, according to Williams' idea, "Moses' church constitution," "to pluck up the roots and foundations of all common society in the world, to turn the garden and paradise of the church and saints into the field of the civil state

* Backus, i. 54, 57.

† See *Bloody Tenent*, pp. 287, 247, 353. Knowles, pp. 45, 49. Backus, i. 49. Bancroft, i. 360. At Taunton, the minister, Mr. Streete, "publicly and earnestly persuaded his church members to give land to none but such as might be fit for church members: yea, not to receive such English into the town." *Bloody Tenent* more *Bloody*, p. 283. By a subsequent law no church could be constituted without the sanction of the magistrates: and the members of any church formed without it, were deprived of the franchise. Backus, i. 77.

of the world, and to reduce the world to the first chaos or confusion.”*

As peace could not be enjoyed at Salem, before the end of the summer Mr. Williams withdrew to Plymouth; “where,” says Governor Bradford, “he was freely entertained, according to our poor ability, and exercised his gifts among us; and after some time was admitted a member of the church, and his teaching well approved.”† Two years he labored in the ministry of the word among the pilgrim fathers; but it would seem not without proclaiming those principles of freedom which had already made him an object of jealousy. For on requesting his dismissal thence to Salem, in the autumn of 1635, we find the elder, Mr. Brewster, persuading the church at Plymouth to relinquish communion with him, lest he should “run the same course of rigid separation and anabaptistry which Mr. John Smith, the se-baptist, at Amsterdam, had done.”‡ It was during his residence at Plymouth that he acquired that knowledge of the Indian language, and that acquaintance with the chiefs of the Narragansetts, which became so serviceable to him in his banishment.

His acceptance of their invitation afforded sincere and great pleasure to the church at Salem. His former ministry amongst them had resulted in a warm attachment, and not a few left Plymouth to place themselves under his spiritual care. Two

* “Mr. Cotton effectually recommended, that none should be elected nor electors therein, except such as were visible subjects of our Lord Jesus Christ, personally confederated in our churches.” Mather’s *Magnalia*, b. iii. p. 21.

† Backus, i. 54. Knowles, p. 50.

‡ Knowles, p. 53. Mr. Cotton, in his Answer to Roger Williams, tells us that “elder Brewster warned the whole church of the danger of his spirit, which moved the better part of the church to be glad of his removal from them into the Bay.” Cotton’s Answer, p. 4.

or three weeks only could have passed after his return, when, on the 3d of September, Mr. Cotton, his destined antagonist in the strife on liberty of conscience, landed at Boston, in company with Mr. Hooker, and Mr. Stone; which "glorious triumvirate coming together, made the poor people in the wilderness to say, That the God of heaven had supplied them with what would in some sort answer their three great necessities: *Cotton* for their clothing, *Hooker* for their fishing, and *Stone* for their building."*

John Cotton was the son of a puritan lawyer. Educated at Cambridge, he had acquired a large amount of learning; and by his study of the schoolmen sharpened the natural acuteness and subtilty of his mind. In theology he was a thorough Calvinist, and adopted in all their extent the theocratic principles of the great Genevan reformer. On his arrival in New England, he was immediately called upon to advise and arrange the civil and ecclesiastical affairs of the colony. By his personal influence the churches were settled in a regular and permanent form, and their laws of discipline were finally determined by the platform adopted at Cambridge in 1648. The civil laws were adjusted to the polity of the church, and while nominally distinct, they supported and assisted each other.†

Matter for complaint was soon discovered against Mr. Williams. At Plymouth he had already urged objections relative

* Mather's *Magnalia*, iii. 20. *Cotton's Way of Cong. Churches*, pp. 16, 30.

† Knowles, pp. 42, 43. "It was requested of Mr. Cotton," says his descendant Cotton Mather, "that he would from the laws wherewith God governed his ancient people, form an abstract of such as were of a moral and lasting equity; which he performed as acceptably as judiciously. . . ." He propounded unto them, an endeavor after a theocracy, as near as might be to that which was the glory of Israel, the peculiar people." *Magnalia*, iii. 20. Backus, i. 79.

to the royal patent, under which the colonists held their lands. A manuscript treatise concerning it now became the subject of consideration by the General Court. In this work, Mr. Williams appears to have questioned the King's right to grant the possession of lands which did not belong to him, but to the natives who hunted over them. Equity required that they should be fairly purchased of the Indian possessors. Mr. Williams was "convented" before the Court. Subsequently, he gave satisfaction to his judges of his "intentions and loyalty," and the matter was passed by. It will be seen, however, that this accusation was revived, and declared to be one of the causes of his banishment.*

For a few months, during the sickness of Mr. Skelton, Mr. Williams continued his ministry without interruption, and with great acceptance. On the 2d of August, 1634, Mr. Skelton died, and the Salem church shortly thereafter chose him to be their settled teacher. To this the magistrates and ministers objected. His principles were obnoxious to them. They sent a request to the church, that they would not ordain him. But in the exercise of their undoubted right the church persisted, and Mr. Williams was regularly inducted to the office of teacher.†

Occasion was soon found to punish the church and its refractory minister. On November the 17th, he was summoned to appear before the Court, for again teaching publicly "against the king's patent, and our great sin in claiming right thereby to this country: and for terming the churches of England antichristian." A new accusation was made on the 30th of the following April, 1635. He had taught publicly, it was said, "that a magistrate ought not to tender an

* Knowles, p. 57, 61. Master John Cotton's Answer to Master Roger Williams, p. 4.

† Cotton's Answer, p. 4. Knowles, p. 61. Mather, vii. 7. Backus, i. 57.

oath to an unregenerate man, for that we thereby have communion with a wicked man in the worship of God, and cause him to take the name of God in vain. He was heard before all the ministers, and very clearly confuted.”* In the month of July he was again summoned to Boston, and some other dangerous opinions were now laid to his charge. He was accused of maintaining:—That the magistrate ought not to punish the breach of the first table, otherwise than in such cases as did disturb the civil peace:—That a man ought not to pray with the unregenerate, though wife or child—That a man ought not to give thanks after the sacrament, nor after meat. But the aggravation of his offences was that, notwithstanding these crimes were charged upon him, the church at Salem, in spite of the magisterial admonitions, and the exhortations of the pastors, had called him to the office of teacher. To mark their sense of this recusancy, the Salem people were refused, three days after, the possession of a piece of land for which they had applied, and to which they had a just claim.†

This flagrant wrong induced Mr. Williams and his church to write admonitory letters to the churches of which these magistrates were members, requesting them to admonish the magistrates of the criminality of their conduct, it being a “breach of the rule of justice.” The letters were thus addressed because the members of the churches were the only freemen, and the only parties interested in the civil government of the colony. They were without effect. His own people began to waver under the pressure of ministerial power and influence. Mr. Williams’s health too gave way, “by his excessive labors, preaching thrice a week, by labors night and day in the field; and by travels night and day to go and come from the Court.” Even his wife added to his

* Knowles, p. 66.

† So Winthrop. Knowles, pp. 68—70. Backus, i. 67, 68.

affliction by her reproaches, "till at length he drew her to partake with him in the error of his way." He now declared his intention to withdraw communion from all the churches in the Bay, and from Salem also if they would not separate with him. His friend Endicot was imprisoned for justifying the letter of admonition, and Mr. Sharpe was summoned to appear to answer for the same. In October he was called before the court for the last time. All the ministers were present. They had already decided "that any one was worthy of banishment who should obstinately assert, that the civil magistrate might not intermeddle even to stop a church from apostacy and heresy."* His letters were read, which he justified; he maintained all his opinions. After a disputation with Mr. Hooker, who could not "reduce him from any of his errors," he was sentenced to banishment in six weeks, all the ministers, save one, approving of the deed.†

Before proceeding to detail the subsequent events of his history, it will be necessary to make a few remarks on the topics of accusation which were brought against Mr. Williams.

The causes of his banishment are given by Mr. Williams in his examination of Mr. Cotton's letter, and with his account agrees Governor Winthrop's testimony cited above. Mr. Cotton, however, does not concur in this statement: the two

* Bancroft, i. 373.

† Knowles, pp. 71, 72. The sentence was as follows:—"Whereas Mr. Roger Williams, one of the elders of the church of Salem, hath broached and divulged divers new and dangerous opinions, against the authority of magistrates; as also writ letters of defamation, both of the magistrates and the churches here, and that before any conviction, and yet maintaineth the same without any retractation; it is therefore ordered that the said Mr. Williams shall depart out of this jurisdiction within six weeks, now next ensuing, which, if he neglect to perform, it shall be lawful for the governor and two of the magistrates to send him to some place out of this jurisdiction, not to return any more without license from the Court." Backus, i. 69, 70.

last causes he denies, giving as his reason, "that many are known to hold both those opinions, and are yet tolerated not only to live in the commonwealth, but also in the fellowship of the churches." The other two points, he likewise asserts, were held by some, who yet were permitted to enjoy both civil and church liberties.* What then were the grounds of this harsh proceeding according to Mr. Cotton? They were as follows:—"Two things there were, which to my best observation, and remembrance, caused the sentence of his banishment: and two other fell in that hastened it. 1. His violent and tumultuous carriage against the patent. . . . 2. The magistrates, and other members of the general Court upon intelligence of some episcopal and malignant practices against the country, they made an order of Court to take trial of the fidelity of the people, not by imposing upon them, but by offering to them an oath of fidelity. This oath when it came abroad, he vehemently withstood it, and dissuaded sundry from it, partly because it was, as he said, Christ's prerogative to have his office established by oath: partly because an oath was a part of God's worship, and God's worship was not to be put upon carnal persons, as he conceived many of the people to be." The two concurring causes were:—1. That notwithstanding his "heady and turbulent spirit," which induced the magistrates to advise the church at Salem not to call him to the office of teacher, yet the major part of the church made choice of him. And when for this the Court refused Salem the parcel of land, Mr. Williams stirred up the church to unite with him in letters of admonition to the churches "whereof those magistrates were members, to admonish them of their open transgression of the rule of justice." 2. That when by letters from the ministers the Salem church was inclined to abandon their teacher, Mr. Williams renounced communion with Salem and all the

* Cotton's Answer, p. 26.

churches in the Bay, refused to resort to public worship, and preached to "sundry who began to resort to his family," on the Lord's day.*

On examination, it is evident that the two statements do not materially differ. Mr. Williams held the patents to be sinful "wherein Christian kings, so called, are invested with right by virtue of their Christianity, to take and give away the lands and countries of other men."† It were easy to represent opposition to the patent of New England as overthrowing the foundation on which colonial laws were framed, and as a denial of the power claimed by the ministers and the General Court "to erect such a government of the church as is most agreeable to the word." Such was Mr. Cotton's view, and which he succeeded in impressing on the minds of the magistrates. Mr. Williams may perhaps have acquired somewhat of his jealousy concerning these patents from the instructions of Sir Edward Coke, who so nobly withstood the indiscriminate granting of monopolies in the parliament of his native land.‡ There can be no question that Williams was substantially right. His own practice, when subsequently laying the basis for the state of Rhode Island, evinces the equity, uprightness, and generosity of his motives. Perhaps too his views upon the origin of all governmental power may have had some influence in producing his opposition. He held that the sovereignty lay in the hands of the people. No patent or royal rights could therefore be alleged as against the popular will. That must make rulers, confirm the laws, and control the acts of the executive. Before it patents, privileges, and monopolies, the exclusive rights of a few, must sink away.

Moreover, it is clear, from Cotton's own statement, that this question of the patent involved that of religious liberty.

* Cotton's Answer, pp. 27—30.

† Bloody Tenent more Bloody, p. 276.

‡ Bancroft, i. 327.

The colony claimed under it the right of erecting a church, of framing an ecclesiastical polity: and it exercised it. Ecclesiastical laws were made every whit as stringent as the canons of the establishment of the mother country. Already we have seen that church members alone could be freemen. Every adult person was compelled to be present at public congregational worship, and to support both ministry and church with payment of dues enforced by magisterial power.* “Three months was, by the law, the time of patience to the excommunicate, before the secular power was to deal with him:” then the obstinate person might be fined, imprisoned, or banished. Several persons were banished for noncompliance with the state religion.† In 1644, a law was promulgated against the baptists, by which “it is ordered and agreed, that if any person or persons, within this jurisdiction, shall either openly condemn or oppose the baptizing of infants,” or seduce others, or leave the congregation during the administration of the rite, they “shall be sentenced to banishment.” The same year we accordingly find that a poor man was tied up and whipped for refusing to have his child sprinkled.‡ Heresy, blasphemy, and some other the like

* Mr. Cotton pleads that anabaptists and others were not compelled *against* conscience; nor were they punished for conscience’ sake; but for *sinning* against conscience. *Tenent Washed*, pp. 165, 189. Backus, i. 98.

† See *Bloody Tenent* pp. 186, 331; *Bloody Tenent more Bloody*, p. 122. By the law of September 6, 1638, the time was extended to six months. Backus, i. 45, 98; Bancroft, i. 349.

‡ “The Lady Moody, a wise and amiable religious woman, being taken with the error of denying baptism to infants, was dealt withal by many of the elders and others, and admonished by the church at Salem.” To avoid more trouble, she went amongst the Dutch; but was excommunicated. In 1651, the Rev. J. Clarke and Mr. O. Holmes, of Rhode Island, for visiting a sick baptist brother in Massachusetts, were arrested, fined, imprisoned, and whipped. At an earlier period, they had been compelled to leave Plymouth for their opinions. Mr. Cotton approved of this. Backus, i. 146, 207, 225.

crimes, exposed the culprit to expatriation. It was against this course that Mr. Williams afterwards wrote his "Bloody Tenent;" and through the "sad evil" "of the civil magistrates dealing in matters of conscience and religion, as also of persecuting and hunting any for any matter merely spiritual and religious," which he opposed, was he banished.*

The question of the patent could not therefore be discussed in the General Court without involving a discussion upon religious liberty. Mr. Cotton has chosen to make most prominent, in his articles of accusation, the question of the origin of the patent; the magistrate, whose statement is adduced by Mr. Williams, places in the forefront that of the magistrate's power over conscience. As the matter stood, these two subjects were allied. To doubt the one was to doubt the other. But Mr. Williams was decided as to the iniquity of both.

On the subject of the denial of the oath of fidelity, it is evident, from Mr. Cotton's statement, that the oath owed its origin to intolerance. Episcopacy should have no place under congregational rule, no more than independency could be suffered to exist under the domination of the English hierarchy. But Mr. Williams appears to have objected to the oath chiefly on other grounds: it was allowed by all parties that oath-taking was a religious act. If so, it was concluded by Mr. Williams, in entire consistency with his other views, that, 1, It ought not to be forced on any, so far as it was religious; nor, 2, could an unregenerate man take part in what was thought to be an act of religious worship. Whether an oath be a religious act, we shall not discuss; but on the admitted principles of the parties engaged in this strife, Mr. Williams's argument seems to us irrefragable.

On the concurring causes referred to by Mr. Cotton, it will be unnecessary to make extended comment. Mr. Cotton and

* Williams's Letter to Endicot. Bloody Tenent more Bloody, p. 305.

Mr. Williams were representatives of the two great bodies of dissentients from the law-established church of England. One party deemed it to be an anti-christian church, its rites to be avoided, its ministry forsaken, its communion abjured: these were the separatists, or true Nonconformists, to whom Mr. Williams belonged.* The other party, although declaiming against the supposed corruptions of the church, loved its stately service, its governmental patronage, its common prayer, and its parishional assemblies: † these were the puritans who, in New England, became Independents, or Congregationalists ‡—in Old England, during the Commonwealth, chiefly Presbyterians, and some Independents: to these Mr. Cotton belonged.

Mr. Williams thought it his duty to renounce all connection with the oppressor of the Lord's people, and also with those who still held communion with her. § Let us not deem him too rigid in these principles of separation. There can be no fellowship between Christ and Belial. And if, as was indeed the case, the Anglican church too largely exhibited those principles which were subversive of man's inalienable rights, exercised a tyrannous and intolerable sway over the bodies and consciences of the people, and drove from her fold, as outcasts, many of her best and holiest children,—it is

* "Whilst he lived at Salem, he neither admitted, nor permitted any church members but such as rejected all communion with the parish assemblies, so much as in hearing the word amongst them." Cotton's Answer, p. 64. See p. 397 of the Bloody Tenent.

† "The substance of the true estate of churches abideth in their congregational assemblies." Cotton's Answer, p. 109. Cotton refers here to the parish congregations.

‡ Mather's Magnalia, i. 21.

§ Cotton charges Williams with attempting to draw away the Salem church from holding communion with all the churches of the Bay, "because we tolerated our members to hear the word in the parishes of England." Tenent Washed, p. 166.

no wonder that they should in return regard her touch as polluting, her ecclesiastical frame as the work of anti-christ. The Congregationalists introduced her spirit and practice into the legislation of the New World, and it behooved every lover of true liberty to stand aloof and separate from the evil. This did Mr. Williams. He was right in regarding the relation of the Congregational polity to the civil state in New England as *implicitly* a national church state, although that relation was denied to be *explicitly* national by Mr. Cotton and his brethren. "I affirm," said Williams, "that that church estate, that religion and worship which is commanded, or permitted to be *but one* in a country, nation, or province, *that* church is not in the nature of the particular churches of Christ, but in the nature of a national or state church."*

To this controversy we are indebted for Mr. Williams's book entitled "Mr. Cotton's Letter, Examined and Answered." While wandering among the uncivilized tribes of Indians, Mr. Cotton's letter came into Mr. Williams's hands.† It seems to have been a part of a somewhat extended correspondence between them, and to have originated in Mr. Cotton's two-fold desire to correct the aberrations, as he deemed them, of his old friend, and to shield himself from the charge of being not only an accessory, but to some degree the instigator of the sentence of banishment decreed against him. His defence of himself is unworthy of his candor, and betrays, by its subtle distinctions and passionate language, by his cruel insinuations and ready seizure of the most trifling inaccuracies, a mind ill at ease and painfully conscious that he had dealt both unjustly and unkindly with his former companion

* See Bloody Tenent p. 246. Bloody Tenent more Bloody, p. 230.

† It must have reached Williams *after* his settlement at Providence. Cotton, in 1647, says he wrote it about "half a score years ago," which would give the date of 1637.

in tribulation. By some means, but without his knowledge, Mr. Cotton's letter got into print, to him most "unwelcome;" and while in England, in 1644, Mr. Williams printed his reply. It will be seen that Mr. Williams has given the whole of it: and with scrupulous fidelity, adding thereto his remarks and reasonings. Mr. Cotton, however, did not hesitate to aver the righteousness of the persecution and banishment which Williams endured.*

In the Colonial Records, the date of Mr. Williams's sentence is November 3, (1635). He immediately withdrew from all church communion with the authors of his sufferings. A few attached friends assembled around him, and preparations were made for departure.† It would seem that he had, for some time, contemplated the formation of a settlement where liberty, both civil and religious, should be enjoyed. This reached the ears of his adversaries. His Lord's day addresses were attractive to many, and withdrew them from the congregations of the dominant sect. Provoked at "the increase of concourse of people to him on the Lord's day in private," and fearing the further extension of principles so subversive of their state-church proceedings, they resolved on Mr. Williams's immediate deportation. Two or three months had to elapse, of the additional time granted for his departure, before their sentence could take effect. Delay was dangerous: therefore the Court met at Boston on the 11th of January, 1636, and resolved that he should immediately be shipped for England, in a vessel then riding at anchor in the bay. A warrant was despatched

* See Examination and Answer, p. 377. Cotton's Answer, p. 8, 9, 13, 36-39. "I did never intend to say that I did not consent to the justice of the sentence when it was passed."

† Cotton says, "Some of his friends went to the place appointed by himself beforehand, to make provision of housing and other necessaries against his coming." Answer, p. 8. This, however, is very doubtful.

summoning him to Boston. He returned answer that his life was in hazard; and came not. A pinnace was sent to fetch him; "but when they came to his house, they found he had been gone three days before, but whither they could not learn."*

His wife and two children, the youngest less than three months old, were left behind. By a mortgage on his property at Salem he had raised money to supply his wants. He then plunged into the untrodden wilds; being "denied the common air to breathe in, and a civil cohabitation upon the same common earth; yea, and also without mercy and human compassion, exposed to winter miseries in a howling wilderness."†

After fourteen weeks' exposure to frost and snow, "not knowing what bread or bed did mean," he arrived at Seekonk,‡ on the east bank of Pawtucket river. Here he began to build and plant. In the following expressive lines he seems to refer to the kind support afforded him by the Indians:—

"God's providence is rich to his,
Let none distrustful be;
In wilderness, in great distress,
These ravens have fed me."§

Their hospitality he requited throughout his long life by acts of benevolence, and by unceasing efforts to benefit and befriend them. He taught them Christianity; and was the first of the American pilgrims to convey to these savage tribes the message of salvation.

* See Examination and Answer p. 388. Knowles, p. 73. Backus, i. 70. Gov. Winthrop had privately advised him to leave the colony. The friendship of this eminent man was of frequent service to our exile. Cotton declares that the officer who served the warrant saw "no sign of sickness upon him." Answer, p. 57. This he might not choose to see.

† See Examination and Answer, p. 370. Knowles, p. 395.

‡ Now called Rehoboth.

§ Quoted from his "Key," &c. by Knowles. 101.

Before his crops were ripe for harvest, he received intimation from the governor of Plymouth, that he had "fallen into the edge of their bounds," and as they were loath to offend the people of the Bay, he was requested to remove beyond their jurisdiction. With five companions he embarked in his canoe, descending the river, till arriving at a little cove on the opposite side, they were hailed by the Indians with the cry of "*What cheer?*"* Cheered with this friendly salutation they went ashore. Again embarking, they reached a spot at the mouth of the Mohassuck river, where they landed, near to a spring—remaining to this day as an emblem of those vital blessings which flow to society from true liberty. That spot is "holy ground," where sprung up the first civil polity in the world permitting freedom to the human soul in things of God. There Roger Williams founded the town of Providence. It was, and has ever been, the "refuge of distressed consciences." Persecution has never sullied its annals. Freedom to worship God was the desire of its founder—for himself and for all, and he nobly endured till it was accomplished.

On reaching Providence, the first object of Mr. Williams would be to obtain possession of some land. This he acquired from the Narragansett Indians, the owners of the soil surrounding the bay into which he had steered his course. By a deed dated the 24th March, 1638, certain lands and meadows were made over to him by the Indian chiefs which he had purchased of them two years before, that is, at the time of his settlement amongst them. He shortly after reconveyed these lands to his companions. In a deed dated 1661, he says, "I desired it might be for a shelter for persons distressed for conscience. I then considering the condition of divers of my distressed countrymen, I communicated my said purchase unto my loving friends [whom he names], who then

* The land at this spot still bears the designation of "What Cheer?"

desired to take shelter here with me."* This worthy conception of his noble mind was realized, and he lived to see a settled community formed wherein liberty of conscience was a primary and fundamental law. Thirty-five years afterward he could say, "Here, all over this colony, a great number of weak and distressed souls, scattered, are flying hither from Old and New England, the Most High and Only Wise hath, in his infinite wisdom, provided this country and this corner as a shelter for the poor and persecuted, according to their several persuasions."†

The year 1638 witnessed the settlement of Rhode Island, from which the state subsequently took its name, by some other parties, driven from Massachusetts by the persecution of the ruling clerical power. So great was the hatred or the envy felt towards the new colony, that Massachusetts framed a law prohibiting the inhabitants of Providence from coming within its bounds.‡ This was a cruel law, for thus trading was hindered with the English vessels frequenting Boston, from whence came the chief supplies of foreign goods. So great was the scarcity of paper from this cause among the Rhode Islanders, that "the first of their writings that are to be found, appear on small scraps of paper, wrote as thick, and crowded as close as possible." "God knows," says Williams, "that many thousand pounds cannot repay the very temporary losses I have sustained," by being debarred from Boston.§

In March, 1639, Mr. Williams became a baptist, together with several more of his companions in exile. As none in the colony had been baptized, a Mr. Holliman was selected to baptize Mr. Williams, who then baptized Mr. Holliman and ten

* Knowles, p. 103, 112. Backus, i. 90, 94.

† Letter to Mason. Knowles, p. 398.

‡ Backus, i. 95, 115. Knowles, p. 148.

§ Knowles, p. 149, 395.

others. Thus was founded the first baptist church in America.* On the first of the following July, Mr. Williams and his wife, with eight others, were excommunicated by the church at Salem, then under the pastoral care of the celebrated Hugh Peters. Thus was destroyed the last link which bound these exiles to the congregational churches of New England, where infant baptism and persecution abode, as in other churches, in sisterly embrace together.†

Mr. Williams appears to have remained pastor of the newly formed church but a few months. For, while retaining all his original sentiments upon the doctrines of God's word, and the ordinances of the church, he conceived a true ministry must derive its authority from direct apostolic succession or endowment: that, therefore, without such a commission he had no authority to assume the office of pastor, or be a teacher in the house of God, or proclaim to the impenitent the saving mercies of redemption. It is, however, by no means clear that he regarded the latter as wrong, for we find him in after days desiring to print several discourses which he had delivered amongst the Indians.‡ He seems rather to have conceived that the church of Christ had so fallen into apostacy, as to have lost both its right form and the due administration of the ordinances, which could only be restored by some new apostolic, or specially commissioned messenger from above. Various passages in his writings will be met with which favor this view: § the following is from his "Hireling Ministry:" "In the poor small span of my life, I de-

Knowles, p. 165. Benedict, p. 441. Backus, i. 105.

† Backus, i. 107. Knowles, p. 176. Hanbury, iii. 571.

‡ Backus, i. 107, 108. Knowles, p. 170.

§ Cotton says, he fell "from all ordinances of Christ dispensed in any church way, till God shall stir up himself, or some new apostles, to recover and restore all ordinances, and churches of Christ out of the ruins of antichristian apostacy." Cotton's Answer, p. 2. The insinuation in this passage is both unjust and untrue.

sired to have been a diligent and constant observer, and have been myself many ways engaged, in city, in country, in court, in schools, in universities, in churches, in Old and New England, and yet cannot, in the holy presence of God, bring in the result of a satisfying discovery, that either the begetting ministry of the apostles or messengers to the nations, or the feeding or nourishing ministry of pastors and teachers, according to the first institution of the Lord Jesus, are yet restored and extant.”* From this passage it would seem that his objections were rather owing to the imperfection of the church in its revived condition, than to the want of a right succession in the ministry. These imperfections could be removed by a new apostolic ministry alone. He therefore was opposed to “the office of any ministry, but such as the Lord Jesus appointeth.” Perhaps in the following assertion of Mr. Cotton we have the true expression of Mr. Williams’s views. He conceived “that the apostacy of anti-christ hath so far corrupted all, that there can be no recovery out of that apostacy till Christ shall send forth new apostles to plant churches anew.”†

The constantly increasing number of settlers in the new colony rendered a form of civil government necessary. A model was drawn up, of which the essential principles were democratic. The power was invested in the freemen, orderly assembled, or a major part of them. None were to be accounted delinquents for doctrine, “provided it be not directly repugnant to the government or laws established.” And a few months later this was further confirmed by a special act, “that that law concerning liberty of conscience in point of doctrine, be perpetuated.” Thus liberty of conscience was the basis of the legislation of the colony of Rhode Island,

* Knowles, p. 172. Callender’s Historical Discourse, by Dr. R. Elton, p. 101.

† Cotton’s Answer, p. 9.

and its annals have remained to this day unsullied by the blot of persecution.* But many were the examples of an opposite course occurring in the neighboring colony of Boston. Not satisfied with having driven Williams and many more from their borders by their oppressive measures against conscience, the General Court laid claim to jurisdiction over the young and rapidly increasing settlements of the sons of liberty. This, concurring with other causes, led the inhabitants of Rhode Island and Providence to request Mr. Williams to take passage to England, and, if possible, obtain a charter defining their rights, and giving them independent authority, freed from the intrusive interference of the Massachusetts Bay.

In the month of June, 1643, Mr. Williams set sail from New York for England, for he was not permitted to enter the territories of Massachusetts, and to ship from the more convenient port of Boston, although his services in allaying Indian ferocity, and preventing by his influence the attacks of the native tribes upon their settlements, were of the highest value and of the most important kind.†

At the time of his arrival in England, the country was involved in the horrors of civil war. By an ordinance dated Nov. 3, 1643, the affairs of the colonies were intrusted to a board of commissioners, of which Lord Warwick was the head. Aided by the influence of his friend, Sir Henry Vans, Mr. Williams quickly obtained the charter he sought, dated March 14, 1644, giving to the "Providence Plantations in the

* Knowles, p. 181. Callender, p. 159. Backus, i. 112. Bancroft, i. 380. The attachment of the Rhode Islanders to this great principle receives a curious illustration in the case of one Joshua Verin, who was deprived for a time of his franchise for refusing to his wife liberty of conscience, in not permitting her to go to Mr. Williams's meeting as often as requisite. Backus, i. 95.

† Backus, i. 147.

Narragansett Bay," full power to rule themselves, by any form of government they preferred.*

With this charter Mr. Williams, in the summer of the same year, returned to New England, and landed at Boston, Sept. 17th, emboldened to tread this forbidden ground by a commendatory letter to the Governor and Assistants of the Bay, from several noblemen and members of parliament. The first elections under this charter were held at Portsmouth in May, 1641, when the General Assembly then constituted, proceeded to frame a code of laws, and to commence the structure of their civil government. It was declared in the act then passed, "that the form of government established in Providence Plantations is DEMOCRATICAL, that is to say, a government held by the free and voluntary consent of all, or the greater part of the free inhabitants." The conclusion of this Magna Charta of Rhode Island is in these memorable words: "These are the laws that concern all men, and these are the penalties for the transgression thereof, which, by common consent, are ratified and established throughout the whole colony. And otherwise than thus, what is herein forbidden, all men may walk as their consciences persuade them, every one in the name of his God. AND LET THE SAINTS OF THE MOST HIGH WALK IN THIS COLONY WITHOUT MOLESTATION, IN THE NAME OF JEHOVAH THEIR GOD, FOREVER AND EVER."† Mr. Roger Williams was chosen assistant, and in subsequent years governor. Thus under the auspices of this noble-minded man was sown the germ of modern democratic institutions, combining therewith the yet more precious seed of religious liberty.

We here trace no further the history of Roger Williams in relation to the state of which he was the honored founder. To the period at which we have arrived, their story is indis-

* Backus, i. 148. Knowles, p. 198.

† Elton, in notes to Callender, p. 230. Knowles, p. 208.

solubly allied together. Others, imbued with his principles, henceforth took part in working out the great and then unsolved problem—how liberty, civil and religious, could exist in harmony with dutiful obedience to the rightful laws. Posterity is witness to the result. The great communities of the Old World are daily approximating to that example, and recognizing the truth and power of those principles which throw around the name of ROGER WILLIAMS a halo of imperishable glory and renown.

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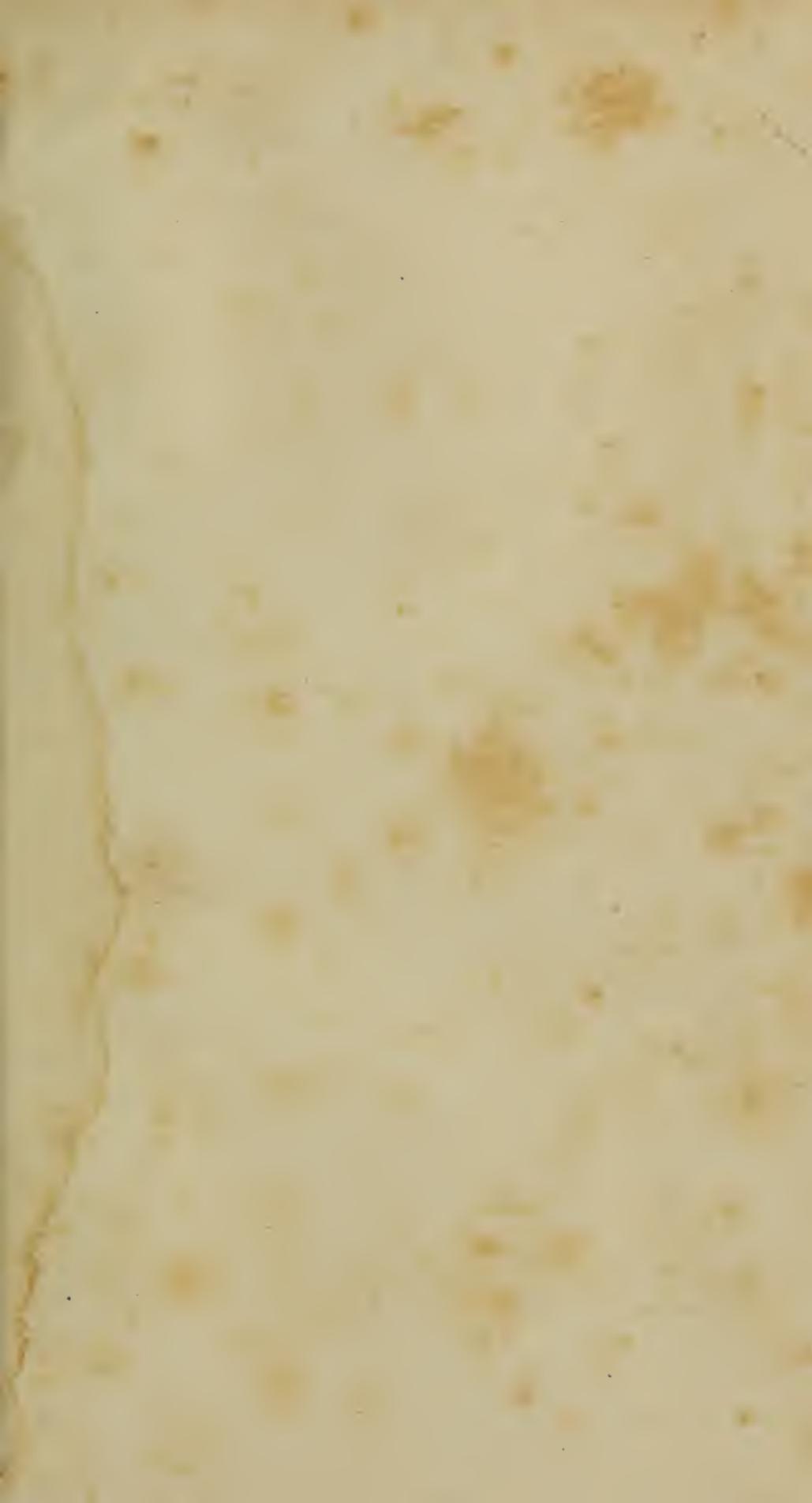
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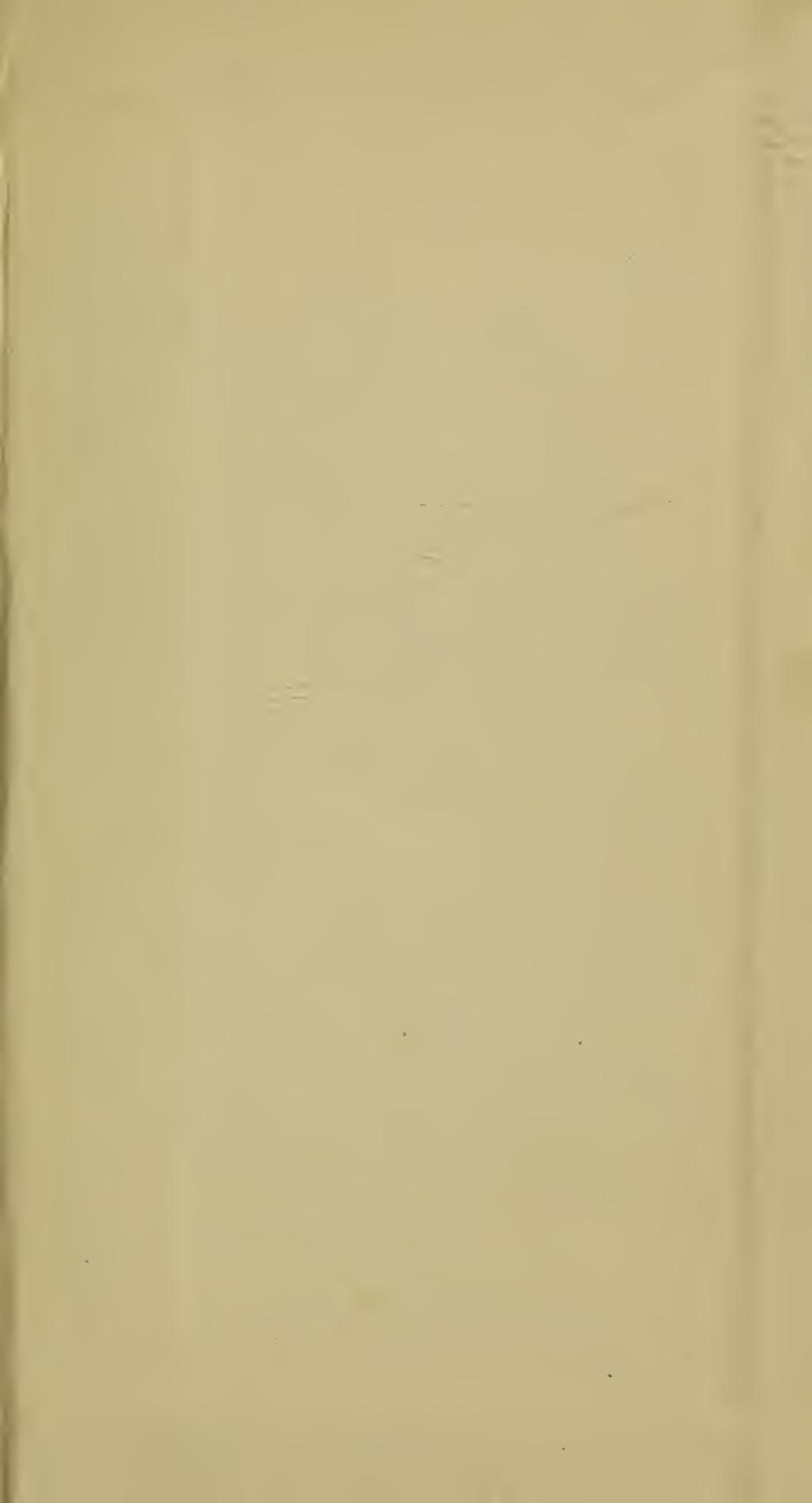
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