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THE
CHURCHMAN

APRIL, 1895.

ART. I.—THE CONTINUITY OF THE ENGLISH
CHURCH A DOCTRINAL PERPETUITY, NOT A
MERE EXTERNAL SUCCESSION.

WE hear so much about the “continuity” of the Church, and the word has become so favourite a text in the ecclesiastical oratory of the day, that we are led to ask for a clear definition of a term which may have so many meanings, even in the minds of those who have taken it up with so much apparent unanimity, but perhaps have never agreed on a common measure for its meaning. Many interpretations of it must readily occur to every intelligent mind, for there may be (1) a continuity of corporate existence; (2) a continuity of outward organization; (3) a continuity of doctrine; (4) of sentiment; or (5) of practice; and we are therefore justified in asking the many who make it the theme of their discourse in which of these meanings they are employing the term—whether in one or more, or in all of them. Applied to the Christian Church, it is obvious that continuity may be either applied (i.) to its existence; (ii.) to its external organization; (iii.) to its doctrines; or (iv.) to its ritual and ceremonial observances.

I. Of the continuity of the existence of the Church, no doubt can arise in the minds of any believer in its Divine origin and first constitution. For it is founded in the great initiatory rite of baptism, and on the teaching of the doctrine of Christ which originally preceded, but now succeeds, that great introductory qualification for the citizenship of the kingdom of Christ upon earth. In the belief of the Church of all ages, everyone who is thus qualified forms a part of the long and unbroken succession of the Church, and here the meaning of continuity is clear, and the claim universally admitted. And it is to the Church in this sense, and in no other, that the perpetuity of the presence of Christ is promised. It is to the *ecclesia dispersa* in all its branches, as consisting

of all the baptized of every age and place, and not to a hierarchy or to any inferior organization, that our Lord uttered that supreme assurance, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." The Roman and the Reformed Churches here agree, and, by their admission of their members to baptism on the profession of the Apostles' Creed, establish for ever the inalienable franchise of the kingdom, and the indissolubility of the compact made between the Church and the individual believer. It must be clear from this that the existence of the Church no more depends upon its outward organization than the existence of a nation can depend upon its constitution or government. The relation between the two is that between the *esse* and the *bene esse*—the mere existence and the organized existence. From this primary continuity no subsequent qualification or change can separate any Church or body of Christians, however called or mis-called, who belong by baptism to the Church of the first-born—and who can never, but by an open renunciation of their faith or confirmed disobedience of the commandments it enjoins, be separated from the body. Those who cut off Christians from their communion on any other grounds than these, rather excommunicate themselves than those whom they have thus severed from their membership. "What injury can it do a man" (writes St. Augustine) "if human ignorance prevents his name from being recited among the members of the Church, if his evil conscience does not blot it out from the Book of Life?"¹

II. The continuity of a Church may arise out of its external organization, and its proof rest upon the uninterrupted succession of its governing or teaching body. It was to this kind of continuity that Tertullian, Irenæus, Eusebius, and other chroniclers of the episcopal succession, had regard, when they preserved for us the lists of the bishops of the greater sees up to their time. But it must not be supposed that their ultimate object was to prove this succession for its own sake. It was rather to prove that the documents of our faith had had a succession of such trustworthy custodians that neither the corrupted Gospel of Marcion, nor the many apocryphal writings of that inventive age, could claim any authority against them. The idea of an Apostolic succession, like that which has produced so many pretentious pedigrees in our own time, was far indeed from their minds, as may be clearly proved from the fourth book of the treatise of Tertullian against Marcion. In his "*De Præscr. adversus Hæreses*," he shows that not only the churches founded by the Apostles, but those which were

¹ Ep. 78, "ad Clerum Hippon. Eccl."

derived from them in later times, were truly Apostolic churches *pro consanguinitate doctrinæ*; as being *in eâdem fide conspirantes*, hereby proving that the perpetuation of the same doctrine is the only real continuity, the only Apostolic succession he recognised.

It is the primary argument of the champions of the continuity of our Church, as it has been for centuries the contention of the Church of Rome, that this outward succession has never been broken. But in neither Church can we see the slightest proofs of this boasted continuity. In the Roman Church, of which we were a collateral branch, the succession has been broken up by countless interruptions and intrusions, by innumerable schisms—by many a long interregnum, and by irregularities which in any other case would have made the succession altogether illegitimate. More fatally still has the universal simony which prevailed throughout Europe, and which that much misunderstood Pope, Gregory VII., strove in vain to remedy, rendered the whole succession rather a representation of Simon Magus than of Simon Peter. But we need not fall back upon the pre-Reformation history to show the gaps and breaks which the Roman Pontificate discloses throughout its long history. We pass on to the claim to continuity which is advanced for our own Church, and are bound on every testimony of history to admit that the so-called episcopal succession is fatally broken up, through the political changes and the arbitrary acts of the civil power, which rendered the history of our Church a kind of miniature representation of the Eastern Church in the days when bishops were possessed and dispossessed and again repossessed of their sees, and when the episcopate was a kind of appanage of the Empire. During such periods of usurpation, and often anarchy, there was certainly a continuity of the Church, but it was carried on by the *ecclesia dispersa*, and not by the episcopal succession, which was broken and dislocated in every joint.

To come to the Reformation period, can we honestly affirm that there was continuity in the successive breaks that our Church experienced from the days of Henry VIII. until the final settlement of Elizabeth? The question of the unbroken links of the ordination of the episcopate, which has evoked so earnest and so fruitless a controversy, must ever be regarded as secondary to that of the successive intrusion of bishops, and exile of their predecessors, which certainly, in earlier days, would have been regarded as constituting a fatal break in the succession. For, as St. Chrysostom declares in his discourse on St. Athanasius, "Not he who is forcibly intruded, but he who is forcibly ejected, is the true successor." Nor does he

recognise any true succession but by the suffrages of the whole people, which neither the intruder nor the ejected ever had.

Fortunately, in the midst of all this conflict and confusion, the foundation of the Church remained still—the continuity of the body was preserved in its original incorporation—the baptized and the professed yet remained. To assume that a perfect unity could exist between Cranmer and Warham, or (which marks a greater contrast) between Cranmer and Archbishop Arundel or Cardinals Bouchier or Morton, is so great an absurdity as at once to make the theory of a continuity impossible. Father Hudleston said rather shrewdly, "They must show their own cards, and not ours, if they would win the game." The pre-Reformation bishops belonged certainly to their pack, and not to ours. We have (as Montalembert observes) a wonderful power in moulding the past so as to suit the present, and, while repudiating the Papal authority, to live among the records of it as though they were in exact correspondence with our own practice—and he instances the carrying on of our ritual in Canterbury Cathedral amid all the traditions and monuments of the Papal reign. It is well that we have such a facility of adaptation, and are not too logical in carrying out the principle of an unbroken continuity.

Arguments have been deduced from the ready acceptance by the clergy and the people of the sudden changes of rulers and of doctrines which occurred at this period of confusion. But this is a sad and humiliating fact, which proves that the doctrinal continuity was broken again and again in order to prevent the loss of the temporalities, whose value appears to have greatly outweighed any spiritual consideration. Perhaps, however, the clergy who took these changes so easily were content to accept the doctrine of the continuity of the Church in its earliest sense, and to have the profession of a simpler form of Christianity secured to them, although its forms of expression were new and unwelcome. For it cannot be denied that the "new learning" did not find favour among the humbler classes, for even the irresistible power of the nobility, who profited so much by the change, was unable to prevent the "Pilgrimage of Grace" or the more serious rebellion in Yorkshire. Where, then, is the boasted continuity in the sense in which it is now so loudly claimed? Where is the unbroken succession, with all its well-joined links? That our Church came forth from the terrible conflict in safety and strength was the sole work of a wonderful Providence, and she need have no desire to look back upon scenes of so much horror, or to trace her succession through a series of crimes and a period of anarchical cruelty, or rather autocratical tyranny. There was indeed "a succession from darkness to light, from disease to

health, from a storm to a calm, from madness to sanity," to use the figurative language of St. Gregory Nazianzene; but that there was a peaceful and legitimate succession from one bishop to another no reader of history can venture to affirm.

III. But far more important questions arise from our third proposition. Was there a continuity of doctrine and teaching? If we admit that there was, we do away with the very *raison d'être* of the Reformation. It is safer to prove too little than to prove too much. For it may well be asked, Why, if our doctrines were identical with those which the pre-Reformation Church had held, did we sever ourselves from Rome, constituting ourselves a National Church, and, exercising the full rights of such a Church, set forth a body of doctrine not only different from the teachings of Rome, but diametrically opposed to them? To prove our continuity of doctrine with the pre-Reformation Church, we must reconcile the Articles of our Church with the Canons of the Council of Trent, which, though not altogether representative of the earlier Anglican doctrine, from which they swerve in many important particulars, yet exhibit to us a doctrine altogether irreconcilable with that of the Church of the Reformation. We rather see here a continuity of contrasts than of connections. We do not for a moment deny that had the Church of Rome of the Reformation period maintained the doctrines which she taught our forefathers in the day of their conversion, there would have been little reason for so complete a doctrinal severance. For in the authentic writings of Gregory the Great there is not a single doctrine which the Reformed Church of England has not religiously preserved, and there is not a vestige of those doctrines which now separate us. Transubstantiation has in them no place, and Mariolatry not a shadow of existence; the Scriptures are made supreme and exclusive, the extravagant claims of the Papacy are emphatically denounced. But this only proves that the continuity of doctrine was broken in a much earlier day, and broken once more when we returned to the teaching of the Roman Church in a better day. But wherever, or whenever, the links were broken, the continuity was broken with them. But the stones of the spiritual building (as Milton writes) may be contiguous without being continuous, and the continuity of the Church itself is not destroyed if the preservation of vital and essential truths is maintained, and the corporate existence of the body as it was formed by our Lord Himself remains inviolate. At one point, however, there was at the Reformation a breaking off from the Anglo-Saxon Church, if not also from the Church of the Norman period; and this was in the doctrine of the Divine authority of the Papacy, which was assumed to be involved in

the Petrine privilege. This doctrine, until the new learning of the Reformation, founded upon the teaching of the great synods and divines of the fifteenth century, had exposed the frauds and fictions upon which it rested, was regarded as a fundamental truth of Christianity. We trace it throughout the Anglo-Saxon charters, in which it has a conspicuous place in the motives and conditions alleged by the donors. Nor are we without proofs that other doctrines and practices, disused and disallowed at the Reformation, were held as matters of faith by our Saxon ancestors, among them the legend of the Assumption and of votive Masses for the living and the dead, which were ruthlessly confiscated for the benefit of a corrupt court. In any case, we cannot on historical grounds allege that there was a doctrinal continuity, though there might be an affinity, or (as divines phrase it) a consanguinity of doctrine and practice. A simple test of this continuity may be found in the question whether, on doctrinal grounds alone, apart from the vexed question of legitimate ordination, the cardinals and bishops of the pre-Reformation period would have recognised their successors as anything but heretical intruders. I once put this question in a direct form to the late learned and lamented Bishop Harold Browne, who held a high doctrine in regard to the continuity of the Church, and asked him whether he really thought that Cardinal Beaufort would have recognised him as his successor either in orders or in doctrine. To assert that the Church passed on unchanged through all the strange vicissitudes which it witnessed, which were as sudden as they were violent, is to assume what is not only incredible in itself, but a negation of all historical records and facts.

IV. From the question of doctrinal continuity we pass on to that of continuity of ritual and ceremonial observances, and all that constitutes the outward apparel of doctrine in public and private worship. Here we are bound to confess that there was a break in the continuity, and that, although our new services were founded on the ancient offices, the morning and evening prayers on the Breviary and our Communion Service on the Missal, the sacrificial idea was altogether eliminated from them, and all the occasional and festival offices so completely retrenched as to leave but few traces of them in the new ritual. Nor were the baptismal and ordination services without sufficient alteration to show that there was a break in the continuity, and that, though the new services more nearly resembled the primitive ones than the older ones, they could hardly be said to represent the mediæval Christianity of the pre-Reformation period. The commemoration of the saints and of the faithful departed, the offering of the elements as an oblation—these and other features of the service were

removed, though the consecration by the mere recital of the words of the institution, which had so greatly promoted the idea of a corporal change, was unfortunately preserved, instead of being superseded by the *ἐπίκλησις*, or invocation of the Holy Spirit, that sublime feature of all the Eastern liturgies. But we may well be thankful that, at a period in which liturgical history was so little known, and even the ritualists of the Western Church — Walafridus Strabo, Amalarius, Alcuinus, Isidore of Seville, Rupertus, Radulfus, and many other writers on the subject—were so little studied, we have so beautiful and simple a ritual, in which every necessary element of our worship is presented to us in language of unique and classic beauty, which has never been equalled in any other devotional work in our language. We have no need, therefore, to insist on the perfect continuity of our Church in its ritual features with the pre-Reformation Church, and still less desire to change its simple beauties for the more gorgeous and elaborate ritual which it superseded. We may say of these — “*Speciosiora nova non meliora.*” The Gregorian Sacramentary remains for us as a venerable monument of the past, and as a constant witness against the changes of doctrine which succeeded its compilation. Its sacred character has preserved it from the innovations of a later day, and every one of its prayers is a protest against transubstantiation, the denial of the cup to the laity, purgatory, and Mariolatry — as has been pointed out from the time of Berengarius to our own day, and can be distinctly proved by the ritual writers whom we have referred to. I entered upon this subject once with my learned acquaintance, the late Canon Rock, and undertook to prove from the Canon of the Mass and the ancient ritualists the novelty of the distinctive doctrines of Rome.

Enough has been said to show that our Church can claim that kind of continuity with the Church of every age which arises from the “one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all” (Eph. iv. 5); but that the constant breaks in its outward organization and structure have rendered the claim of a perfect continuity in this sense unhistorical and wholly inadmissible; that, unless we regard the history of the Reformation as a myth, we must admit that the continuity of doctrinal teaching and ritual practice was as completely broken as was the outward succession by the violent ejections and intrusions which succeeded one another from one reign to another during the Reformation period, and whose links not the most legal proof of a succession by the mere laying on of hands can repair.

Let us, then, cease to boast of such a continuity with the pre-Reformation Church, as would justify the Romanists in

their assertion that the Reformation was unnecessary, and that the Church needed no such stringent remedies to restore it to its first estate. Let us look fully and fairly into the face of history, and recognise its true features without attempting to distort them for controversial purposes. Above all, let us repudiate that fatal habit of self-adulation which has always been the bane of our Church, and which claims for it the self-acquired titles of "pure" and "Apostolic," and which has led us too often to look upon every other of the Churches of the Reformation (not to speak of the Nonconformist Churches of our own land) with the same superciliousness with which the Roman Church regards our own. Let us rather give "good proof of our ministry" than doubtful proofs of our succession.

Of the great Athanasius, Nazianzene has well said, "Though he was farthest from St. Mark in his presidential office, he was nearest to him in piety. For he who holds the same doctrine has also the same chair, while he who holds a contrary doctrine has a contrary chair."¹ This succession of piety and faith we may well claim for our Church from the days of the Reformation till our own. It is the highest succession—it is the best kind of continuity. For it is that kind of continuity which the primitive Church found sufficient for all its needs—when the first disciples "continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts ii. 42).

ROBERT C. JENKINS.



ART. II.—CHRISTIANITY AND JUDAISM.

God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the effulgence of His glory, and the very image of His substance, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had made purification of sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high (Heb. i. 1-3).

WHEN the Epistle to the Hebrews was written, the Temple was still standing, the morning and evening sacrifices were still offered, the magnificent ritual of the stately fabric was still observed with dazzling splendour. The Levitical dispensation had been established amidst remarkable manifestations of Divine power, by the ministration of angels and by the miraculous agency of Moses. Judaism had all the attractions which an ancient faith ever inspires. The Christian Jews resident in Jerusalem did not understand that their disciple-

¹ Naz., Orat. xxi.