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A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php

THE
CHURCHMAN

JUNE, 1895.

ART. I.—AN OBSERVATION ON THE PAPAL LETTER
TO THE PEOPLE OF ENGLAND.

THE Papal Letter is based upon two assumptions, one relating to jurisdiction, the other to doctrine, neither of which, on historical and doctrinal grounds, we can for a moment admit :

I. It assumes that the authority of the Church of Rome can supersede that of the ancient British Church, suppressing and even obliterating its ancient constitution and liberties, and almost effacing its very existence.

II. It assumes that the modern religion of Rome, whose distinctive doctrines cannot be traced beyond the Middle Ages, represents the form of Christianity which Gregory the Great offered to our Anglo-Saxon ancestors.

I. It is an indisputable fact, proved during the entire course which that great Pope pursued in the conversion of England, as well as by the doctrine he laid down so emphatically in his letters to the Patriarchs, John of Constantinople and Eulogius of Alexandria, that he never intended to claim jurisdiction for the Bishops of Rome over the Church of Britain. He recognises that Church (although it knew nothing whatever of the claims of the See of Rome and even of its existence) as a kindred and co-ordinate Church, with which he hopes to enter upon relations of fraternal affection. And as the British Church indisputably received its Christianity from the Eastern Church, it might well claim, as affiliated to that Church, the same freedom from his jurisdiction which he declared that the Patriarchs of Alexandria and Antioch had enjoyed from the beginning, and which even in the West the Church of Africa contended for so successfully. This admission is clearly implied in his letter to Augustin, in which he writes that "for the love of Christ he seeks for the brethren in Britain, who had been unknown to him"—("in Britannia fratres quaerimus quos ignorabamus")

—on which words the learned editor of his works, the Père Gussanville, observes: "Already in the very infancy of our religion (in *ipsis religionis incunabulis*), the Christian faith had prevailed in Britain, as has been rightly observed by Alteserra, who cites Tertullian, Arnobius, Clement Alex. and Jerome." In none of Gregory's writings is there the shadow of an indication that he claimed any other part or office in the great work of the conversion of England, than that of a counsellor, a guide, and an organizer of its infant Church, never asserting a jurisdiction over it, and by his very silence disclaiming it as clearly as he disclaimed any authority over the Eastern Churches in his emphatic letters to the two Patriarchs. His singularly judicious and practical mind saw at once the impossibility of connecting Britain with Rome in the matter of jurisdiction, however important its intercourse with Rome had been in matters of direction and organization, and still might be. His letters to Augustine and Æthelbert are counsels and suggestions for the guidance of the mission, and have in them no authoritative or dictatorial power. It is well observed by Bishop Ricci, in a luminous memoir addressed to the Grand Duke Leopold of Tuscany, that "the spirit of legislation and dominion came in incontestably after the false decretals. Even the decrees of Innocent III., and Alexander III., retained for the most part for a long time the nature of consultations."¹

The Pope observed with grave apprehension this spirit of domination as springing up in Augustine, occasioned by his too sudden success, and asserted on the ground of his alleged miraculous powers. He warns him seriously of this great danger, under which he so fatally fell in his interview with the British bishops, and which induced him to claim for himself, in right of the Pope, a supremacy which the Pope had never claimed in his own person or right, placing his conduct in painful contrast with that of his great patron. It was the pride which he exhibited on that occasion, and his conflict for power, crowned with his sanguinary prophecy, which led to the barbarous massacre of the British bishops and the monks of Bangor, constituting them martyrs instead of fellow-workers in the cause of Christ.

The grand aspiration of Gregory for a fraternal co-operation with the Ancient Church of Britain was thus frustrated by his emissary, and the Celt and the Saxon found a new and deeper ground of estrangement than that of race and political enmity. In view of these facts we can hardly wonder that Leo XIII., in

¹ "Vie de Scipion de' Ricci, Evêque de Pistoie et de Prato," par De Potter, tom. iv., p. 224.

his address to the people of England, passes over the history of our earlier Christianity, and begins his retrospect with its second great epoch, in which for the first time the existence of the Papacy became known in England. The generous eulogies he has bestowed on religious life and work in our country stand in honourable contrast with the address of Pius IX. in his invitation to us to take interest, if not part, in his Vatican Council. In that document it was declared to be "impossible for our Churches to contribute unto that one Catholic Church built up by *our* Christ and His Apostles"—a sentiment which we are glad to Christianize, by claiming for the faithful in the Church of Rome, as well as in our own, the same "Jesus Christ *both theirs and ours.*" But the doctrine of Gregory the Great was very different from that of his later successors. He was not so infatuated as to believe the faith of Christ to depend upon himself, or a previous faith in himself to be necessary for its reception, or the submission to his authority to be essential to its practice, nor did he invert the creed so strangely as to make a belief in the Roman Church and its Petrine claim to precede the belief in God and in the Trinity. For all the Articles of the Creed which precede the belief in the Church must in the order of nature be known before we can know whether there be any Church at all, far less a particular Church like the Roman. We never find him asserting the Petrine claim which he declares to the Patriarch of Alexandria that he shares with him and with the Patriarch of Antioch. He regards it as an inducement to do the works of Peter and follow his doctrine, and not as constituting a claim of authority and jurisdiction. He held that Christ was the Rock upon which the Church was built, and that all the faithful were only stones built on the foundation.¹ He declares Christ to be the "one only Head to which all alike cling."² He did not shut up the kingdom of God within the narrow limits of his own Church, but declares that "all the faithful are members of the Redeemer."³ Elsewhere he defines the faithful as those who carry out the vows of their baptism—"Si servat post baptismum quod ante baptismum spondit, certus jam quia fidelis est gaudiat."⁴ These words were preached in St. Peter's on Ascension Day—would that the same doctrine were preached there to this day!

II. These testimonies of the great Gregory may well prepare the reader for the consideration of the second assumption of the letter of Leo XIII., that the religion of modern Rome presents in any of its distinctive features the teaching of his

¹ Mor. in Job, l. xxxvi., c. 19.

² Epp., l. vi., Ind. xv., Ep. 37.

³ Mor. in Job, l. xiv., c. 22.

⁴ Homil., l. ii., Hom. xxix.

illustrious predecessor. And here the most singular of the many contrasts that meet the eye, and one which the Pope brings before us more conspicuously than any other, is the worship of the Virgin Mary, which has not the shadow of existence in any of the authentic writings of Gregory, nor in any of the traditions which Augustine brought with him from the teaching of his great Master. "Novit fraternitas tua" (were the words of Gregory) "*Romanæ ecclesiæ consuetudinem in quâ se meminit nutritam*"—and that custom in the matter of Divine worship is proved, by the Sacramentary which Gregory completed, to have excluded every worship but that addressed to the Father through the Son, and to the Son as One with the Father. The Virgin Mary has a place assigned to her in the Canon of the Mass which precludes every idea of direct worship, and associates her with the members of the glorified Church who worship God only and know of no other service. In the numerous writings of Gregory there are no more than three or four places in which her name is mentioned. In the most important one she is spoken of in a manner which most clearly shows her subordination to her Son, and indicates the contrast between the ancient and modern doctrine of the Church of Rome in a very remarkable degree. Writing on the passage, "What have I to do with Thee?" he observes, "This is as though he had said openly, 'Whence am I able to do a miracle? This is from my Father, and not from my mother.' For from His mother He derived the liability to death (*ex matre mori poterat*), while from the nature of His Father he wrought miracles. Hence, when fixed to the Cross he recognised His mother and commended her to His disciple, saying, 'Behold thy mother!' He says, therefore, 'What have I to do with thee?' as though He would say, 'In miracles which I derive not from thy nature I do not acknowledge thee as mother, but when the hour of death comes, I recognise thee as a mother, because my liability to death I derive from thee.'"¹ The fatal dowry of freedom from original sin would have exempted her from the necessity of redemption, and deprived her of the far higher privilege of uttering in the "prayer of the faithful"—the prayer her Lord taught her—that confession of sin and supplication for its remission, "Forgive us our trespasses," which (as the Council of Milevis declared) "the saints said for themselves as well as for others." The new dogma is as clearly opposed to the teaching of Gregory as it is to that of the Church of every age.²

We might indicate many other most important points in which the doctrine of the great Pope is diametrically opposed

Epp., l. viii., Ind. iii., Ep. 42.

² Mor. in Job, l. xviii., c. 27.

to the teachings of the modern Roman Church. But as this is the only one on which the Pope dwells in his letter, the scope of our remarks must be equally contracted. We need not present our entire case while, in a single instance, not only the means of our worship, but the object of it is so seriously compromised. On this ground alone we are justified in our emphatic refusal to entertain the invitation of the Pope, and to leave our ancient pastures for ground sown with so many seeds which our Heavenly Father hath not planted. We cannot accept his estimate of its blessings and advantages, but must judge of it for ourselves, mindful of the words of one of his predecessors in an earlier age, "Beatus grex cui dedit Deus de pascuis judicare." Nothing would more successfully repel us from it than the fatal gift of indulgences with which the letter closes, that culminating abuse which gave occasion to the great outburst of the Reformation, and has alienated, and must alienate for ever, the intelligent of every nation in Christendom from the Church and Court of Rome, and led Petrarch to describe it as a *fucina d'inganni*. If even the great Florentine poet in a darker age of the Church's history proclaimed in the person of Peter these wretched counterfeits to be

—privilegi venduti e mendaci
Ond' io sovente arrosso e disfavillo¹

is it possible that the Pope can be serious in flaunting them before us in the very dawn of the twentieth century?

We are reminded by Gregory the Great that we are possessed of a far higher privilege and an infinitely more precious gift—the Scriptures of eternal truth, which he calls the "Letter of the Heavenly Emperor"—to the reading of which he exhorted the nobleman Theodore, and for the knowledge of which he applauded the poor and afflicted Servulus.² There were no "indulgences" in that better day, and had there been any, they would not have been within the reach of the destitute one. For the "Taxatio Camerae Apostolicæ" declares plainly, "Nota diligenter quod hujusmodi gratiæ non conceduntur pauperibus quia non habent, ergo non possunt consolari." But poor Servulus had a better consolation. He had bought a copy of the Scriptures, and when his life-long sufferings prevented him from reading them himself, he got all who came to see him to read them to him. And in this state, truly in the odour of sanctity, he passed on to a better life. England, as the Pope admits, has faithfully followed this good tradition, by extending to all her sons the knowledge of the Scriptures

¹ Dante, "Paradiso," Cant. xxvii., v. 50.

² Epp. l. iv., Ind. xiii., Ep. 40, and In Evangel., Hom. xv.

and making the Word of God her supreme and only Counsellor. And as her great poet has said, with no less eloquence than truth, "This shall be our righteousness and ample warrant and strong assurance both now and at the last day never to be ashamed of, that we have been taught by the pure and living precept of God's Word only, which without more additions—nay, with a forbidding of them—hath within itself the promise of eternal life, the end of all our wearisome labours and all our sustaining hopes."¹

R. C. JENKINS.



ART. II.—THE INNER MISSION OF GREAT BRITAIN.

(Concluded.)

5. **I**N some towns there is a Conference of ministers of religion on social questions. The one in Liverpool is the best known, and the following are the first two paragraphs in the draft of its constitution: (1) "Membership in the Conference shall be open to all recognised ministers of religion in the district; (2) the object of the Conference shall be to take counsel on questions affecting the social and moral life of the community, and, as occasion requires, to engage in common action or for such public expression of opinion as may be thought desirable." The influence of this Conference in Liverpool has been very great, and has been the chief factor in one of the most significant municipal reforms or revolutions of recent years. It has led to the organization and very effective working of a Vigilance Committee, which co-operates with the Watch Committee of the City Council in a strict administration of the licensing law and the conduct of public-houses, and in another social movement which has wonderfully promoted the cause of social purity in a city which had been cursed with the great social evil.

In other places, however, the Conference of ministers of religion, including Roman Catholics and Unitarians, has been confined to the administration of charity in the district represented by the Conference, and to other practical philanthropic work.

6. I will classify under this head four special movements which deserve notice:

¹ Milton, "Prose Works."