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THE
CHURCHMAN

APRIL, 1901.

ART. I.—DISESTABLISHMENT AND DISENDOWMENT
IN IRELAND. SOME OF ITS GAINS.

I WRITE this paper because it is asked for by the editor of the CHURCHMAN, and I am unwilling to refuse; and also because nothing but good is likely, as a general rule, to come from a knowledge of facts. The rule is not a universal one, as we all see in the case of children, from whom we conceal much until they are capable of placing it in its true surroundings, and assigning its relative importance. As if by such children, mischievous attempts have been made to draw inferences from the consequences in Ireland of the transaction of 1870 to the probable results of a similar policy in England now, without the least consideration of the differences between the cases.

Some Liberationists have actually been converted to the kindest view of our Church (lately so corrupt and such a cumberer of the ground); they have forgotten all their clamours at that time about the essential differences between us and the Church of England—which then was not to be frightened; they are enthusiastic about the fruits which now grow upon this “branch” of the celebrated “upas-tree”; they dwell with loving ardour upon the nobility with which we endure hardness, to prove that others may be made to suffer like things (quite as if the Chinese should justify their slaughter of modern missionaries by the canonization of ancient martyrs), and they argue, because some good has come to us from being pillaged, that the Church of England also, if she were not so curiously blind to her own interests, would ask to be robbed.

But even as regards Disendowment, no real parallel between the two cases would exist, not even if the same nominal terms were to be offered to both Churches. The Church of Ireland

was, in the nature of the case, politically and religiously homogeneous. The enemies of the Church, as such, were also the enemies of the class to which the Church when disestablished should appeal for her support. The blow that struck her down was an insult and a menace also to the Protestant proprietors and gentry of Ireland, a menace which has been amply fulfilled. But when she appealed to them, they were still able to respond, and every secular motive conspired with far nobler and more generous ones to elicit the splendid and practically unanimous response by which the Church, reeling under such a buffet, regained stability. But if ever the Church of England be disendowed, multitudes of her own children will be consenting parties to the transaction. In the passionate discussions which must precede so great a revolution, Churchman will be arrayed against Churchman in every parish; and it is absurd to reckon, for a long time, upon anything like the unanimity with which Irish Churchmen rallied to the support of their Church.

And what would happen afterwards? Elderly men still remember the heated doctrinal debates of early Irish synods. At least once it seemed as if the unity of the Church was beyond salvation. And yet we knew nothing of the extremes by which English differences must be measured. Incense, the Reservation of the Elements, the Mass of the Presanctified, Children's Communions, were not so much as named among us. Our extremest "Puritan" never went so far as some English controversialists venture. Our stiffest "Churchman" would have been regarded as moderate across the Channel. The most painful scene in our revision debates was not more violent than many letters which are deliberately and in cold blood written and posted to the party organs in England every week. It is absurd to argue from whatever success we have attained that the Church of England could even hold together. But if the Church of England could not only hold together, but raise a capital sum commensurate to ours—and not only an equal sum of money, for this she ought to do in a week, and it would be a drop in the bucket to her requirements—a proportionate capital sum would leave her almost impecunious. For how would she invest it? The rise in the cost of all trustee securities since 1870 would suffice to ruin our whole financial system if our capital had not been safely invested before Mr. Goschen's operation upon Government Stocks, directly so successful, produced such remarkable by-products.

It is said by many that the subsequent impoverishment of the Irish landlords is in reality due less to the legislation which enacted it than to that competition with new regions in which English proprietors have also bitterly suffered. If

there is any modicum of truth in this assertion, if the wealth of England has to any appreciable extent passed into the hands of a new class, ostentatious, luxurious, and irreligious, this is yet another proof of the absurdity of arguing, because our worst fears about the Church of Ireland have not been verified, that a new and vaster confiscation could not possibly do any harm. It is so that children infer, because a fire in the grate is harmless, that they may light another upon the top of the stairs.

With this protest in advance against the abuse of the Irish precedent by interested politicians, let us pass to consider some spiritual advantages which have come from disestablishment.

I. The Irish Church had been dealt with by legislation, drastically enough, long before 1870. In 1833 two Archbishoprics were reduced to bishoprics, and ten sees were abolished. A heavy percentage was levied by taxation from all dignities and benefices of more than £300 a year, and power was given to abolish sinecures, and sweep up their incomes in the same net. The Ecclesiastical Commissioners who administered the fund thus created might augment poor benefices with any "excess of revenue." This was good; but the phrase implies that their chief object was different. They were to build new churches where these were required—and the views of their architects, often surprising, may still be traced in many parts of Ireland in identical and melancholy structures. In some places, where local munificence contributed large sums of money, and called in eminent artists, their designs were wantonly and provokingly mutilated by interference from the officials in Merrion Street, notoriously jealous, and able to veto anything. The same office kept all the churches in repair. It did more, and the remainder was purely mischievous; it provided all "Church requisites"; the Communion vessels, and the Communion cloths, Bibles and Prayer-Books for the desks (of lecterns there were not a score in all Ireland), even bread and wine for Holy Communion, all such things were paid for by these Commissioners. No system could be more cleverly adapted, even by a deliberate conspiracy, to stifle the affection of Churchmen for their Church. It was *not* theirs. If a pane of glass were broken, the clergyman applied for it, and it was put in without consulting them. It was the same from the leaking of a spout to the building of a new church. When the vast growth of Belfast began to make the demands upon the whole Church which have never ceased since then, one new church after another, for which five or six thousand pounds had been collected, deliberately waited until another thousand or so

had been granted by this Board. Except in Belfast and Cork, the people were practically called upon to do nothing, and since it is less blessed to receive than to give, the whole Church lost enormously.

It was a spiritual loss. The sense of privilege which comes when one has "willingly offered," the warm and growing personal interest which one feels in a cause for which he has spent money and toil, the cohesion and brotherhood of a congregation which owes its very existence to common self-denial, the added recognition of one's own need of public worship, and one's own blessing in it which is evoked in the process of striving for it, all these were frozen at the fountain-head. It cannot have been good for anyone to know that even the bread and wine which he consumed in Holy Communion were paid for by a tax upon his clergyman. Poor parishes were so pauperized that not a farthing could be had from them for anything. Solvent parishes would have been far happier, and happier in the deepest respects, if this whole fund, drawn from the pockets of the clergy since 1833, had been stolen by the nation thirty-seven years sooner than it had.

The obligation to provide all these necessary things, to keep the churches and graveyards in repair, and to build where building was required, fell heavily upon each congregation at the same moment with the new demand for sustentation of the clergy. It is the latter, almost altogether, which is represented by the vast sums exhibited in the Reports of the Representative Church Body. What we are now considering is an additional charge, the amount of which will never be known, for it is recorded only in the minutes of thousands of parish vestries.

But if I were invited to choose between half a million of money and what has been thus contributed, even after subtracting all that has been expended by rich men upon three or four of our cathedrals, I should expect to have a very large advantage by choosing the latter sum.

I do not know of any church that is seriously in debt for such purposes, nor of more than half a dozen which have been content to remain as Disestablishment found them. Chancels have been added to quadrilateral churches, roofs opened up, vestries built, organs bought or enlarged, upon a surprising scale. The North of Ireland, with its democratic and somewhat Puritan population of Protestants, and with comparatively few affluent Churchmen, has vied with a South where the conditions (speaking roughly) are reversed.

Now, it is well enough to speak about the modern æsthetic revival, for which some advanced Churchmen would gladly accept all the credit. I am describing no such thing. English

tourists, I fear, would smile grimly if any such movement were said to be wide-spread in the county Donegal. But the people are spending money upon their churches as they used not to do, as no Ulsterman will spend money for anything but what he really cares about. And as I watch this growing love of the Irish laity for the habitation of the Lord's house, the place where His honour dwelleth, I feel the thrill of the words: "Then the people rejoiced for that they offered willingly, because with a perfect heart they offered willingly unto the Lord, and David the king also rejoiced with great joy, and David blessed the Lord."

II. It may seem at first sight that any benefit to be derived from supporting the clergy can only be the same as we have just considered, upon a larger scale, more constant and regular, and reaching down to the humblest villager who subscribes half a crown a year.

And, as a serious offset, the dependence upon the people for support might have drawn after it many grave evils. It might have established a cruel financial tyranny, condemning to feed upon bread of affliction and water of affliction everyone who refused to speak good concerning the squire of the parish or the local demagogue.

In many dioceses this risk has been entirely banished by their plan of diocesan finance, known as the "Diocesan Scheme." The parishes began to pay into a diocesan sustentation fund, promptly, from the date of Disestablishment; and, as long as the annuitant clergy lived and worked, these payments accumulated for future need. Each diocese was able therefore, with the help of subscriptions, to promise the parishes that an annual assessment, varying from about £55 to £65, begun at once, and permanent, should yield £100 per annum as soon as the demand was felt.

But the dioceses in question have provided that, even if the parochial endowment were to be stopped altogether, the clergyman in possession should continue to receive his stipend, the deficit accumulating as a debt, but at his removal no money whatever should be forthcoming for his successor until the debt was paid off in full.

This provision for the independence of the clergy could never have been forced upon the laity: they made it with their eyes open, and I am certain with the highest motives, choosing rather to establish a clergy who need not prophesy smooth things than to enjoy an occasional facility for squeezing out an uncongenial man. It was a grace, and doubtless it brought grace with it—"grace for grace." Doubtless many a layman saw clearly, for the first time, the duty of clerical fidelity in dealing with him, and the spirit in which

he should meet such action, when he deliberately rejected the temptation to retain in his own hands a dangerous control. The influence of these dioceses has been felt throughout the rest; and the fact that nowhere does a clergyman receive his stipend directly from the parish, but from a central office, to which his parish is proclaimed a defaulter if it comes short, has been extremely beneficial to the whole Church. There was much apprehension that Disestablishment would lower the status of the ministry: as a matter of fact the level has fallen much less in Ireland than in England, and excellent clergymen who went across the channel are returning to us, after the loss of years of service.

III. On the other hand, there is a great place in the government of the Church to which the laity are entitled. Theoretically, in the Church of England this right is exercised through Parliament; and the defects of this theory are the impelling motive for the revival of Convocation and the attempts to reform it, and also for Synods and Church Congresses. But in Ireland theory and practice were much more woefully far apart. There were great offices in our Church to which an Irishman was never appointed, or if at all, only through political connections. In Parliament, where alone the laity could be heard, Irish questions were unpopular, and the Irish Church was practically not represented at all. In the day of her trial the worst reproaches brought against her were really wrongs, not of her perpetrating, but of her endurance; and the party which raked them up was the same which had been most cynical and impudent in inflicting them. Perhaps it was time that at any cost she should be freed from such indignity, and religion from such reproach.

Now, the Christian laity exercise their rights directly and straightforwardly throughout the whole organization of the Church.

In each parish a generation has arisen which never knew the time when the laity did not (by the elected Parish Council, called the Select Vestry) administer the finances which they gave, when a change in the fabric was possible, without their consent (as well as the incumbent's and the Bishop's), or when any veto could prevent the humblest aggrieved parishioner from appealing to the Courts of the Church to say whether any practice was really legal or not. The consequence is that, having their rights frankly recognised, they are not tempted to encroach on those of others. There will always be unreasonable people (even in Ireland), but, on the whole, the constant meeting of clergymen and laymen in the vestry, and the frank interchange of views, has been a powerful influence toward mutual understanding. The days are gone when a

clergyman could, if he chose, do exactly as he liked in everything, and resent any expression of lay opinion as an impertinence. The revolution is a spiritual gain, because the temper thus engendered was bad for the people, and worse for the parson who made himself a lord over God's heritage. And these parochial councils have averted misunderstandings, and acted as a shield between the clergymen and wrong-headed individuals, cranks and would-be dictators, more than perhaps most of us realize.

IV. Archbishop Magee said in one of those pronouncements about ritualism which might with advantage be reprinted now, that: "Law was the only safeguard of liberty. It was the protection of the liberty of the congregation against the tyranny of the clergyman; it was the protection of the liberty of the clergyman against the tyranny of the laity; it was the protection of the clergy and laity against the tyranny of the Bishops; and the protection sometimes of the unhappy and persecuted Bishops against the pressure of these parties. . . . But if there was to be a law, then the law by which the clergy should be governed should be clear and indisputable. . . . The laws they were bound to obey should be unambiguous, and in order to get this they should either have it better defined, or they must get a sentence of some generally recognised and authoritative court. . . . Either a generally accepted court or an indisputable rubric was clearly an essential requisite for peace. Had they got such a court which was generally accepted? Most certainly, he said, they had not." (*"Life of Archbishop Magee,"* ii., pp. 272, 273.)

If this was true ten years ago, how much more is its truth manifest to-day!

We have got these three things: law which is able to enforce itself, indisputable canons, and Church courts of unquestionable authority. In the getting of them there was much heat and friction; but there was no secession, nor reason to secede; and we have attained, what the Archbishop said could only be attained by these, peace in the Church.

The Church of Ireland is face to face with real Romanism; she is also jealously watched by other Protestant communions, of whose children the greater number by far do recognise more or less the community and the comity of the faith—the best of them do so with a generous pleasure—but a few baser spirits, naturally more sensitive to such considerations as that competition is the life of trade—including their own ministerial trade—are ever ready to claim the noble office of the Accuser of the Brethren.

There is therefore every reason, the highest and the lowest,

to make it impossible for the Church of Ireland to be ritualistic. But it was not at all impossible for a few headstrong young men, ambitious of a painless martyrdom and English fame, to have hoisted the ritualistic flag, and created a panic which would have emptied half our churches.

It is not to be supposed that the rank and file of the insurgents who are defying law and order and their ordination vows in England would have faced such responsibilities if there had existed a clear and well-defined fence, and they had been called upon to break it down. A man does not call black white without a good deal of shading off, interposed between these opposites. And it is a great security for many a heady young man, bitten by the notion of "bright" services, and the ambition of being a pioneer, to be confronted with a distinct prohibition and asked, since he professes to be a Churchman, whether he will listen to the voice of his own Church or not. In Ireland, at all events, he finds the pronouncement of what he regards as the National Church so clear and distinct, and its authority so easy to put into action if he disobeys, that he cannot "drift." He may rebel; but then he is highly unlikely to wait to be expelled: he will "trek across the frontier."

Apart entirely from the controverted points at issue, what a blessing is the repose from controversy, the universal knowledge that law exists and must be obeyed, the security of parishioners everywhere from the fear of learning that their clergy have decided upon adopting a new position, a new vestment, or a new and original service, concerning which they had not been consulted, and against which they had no appeal worth mentioning. It is not to be denied that waves from the English storm have reached our shore. Mr. Kensit has visited Ireland, and is not satisfied with us. A society exists, perhaps two societies, of which the object is to keep distrust alive among us. One foolish clergyman succeeded for a while in making himself more notorious than he could otherwise have hoped ever to become, by deliberately flouting both public opinion and the directions of his Bishop.

But there is one clear and full proof of the peaceful condition of the Church and the tranquillity of the lay mind: With doors open to every Churchman who will lodge a small security for costs, with no secular punishments to provoke reaction, the Court of the General Synod, in which all such questions must be tried, has had in thirty years just five prosecutions of all sorts to inquire into.

V. One reason for this tranquillity is the General Synod itself, the Parliament of the Church of Ireland. It may seem like a paradox to add that the hot and sometimes fierce

debates about the revision of the Prayer-Book were a great help. And yet this is true. They educated the public, and taught reasonable men to understand each other. One distinguished prelate publicly confessed that he had always hitherto regarded the Evangelical explanation of our baptismal service as evasive, but he no longer did so. Evangelicals certainly learned that Churchmen might belong to other schools and yet be as good Protestants as themselves. The ignorant attempts to confound all High Churchmen, however moderate, with the Ritualists of England, might have succeeded better if the High Churchmen were not personally known to the representatives in Synod of our remotest diocese as straightforward, outspoken, law-abiding Christian gentlemen. We know each other, and this helps us greatly to dwell together in unity.

VI. Every now and then a complaint is heard about our Boards of Nomination. Indeed, it is quite certain that no system can ever work perfectly as long as the human nature which administers it is itself imperfect; and also that, if it could work perfectly, there would still be disappointed candidates to cry out upon it. But I must guard myself against any such unworthy insinuation as that only disappointed candidates criticise our system of patronage. How could it be so when Episcopal patronage, private patronage, patronage in the hands of trustees, all are open to censure not wholly undeserved?

In the Church of Ireland every Diocesan Synod elects triennially two clergymen and one layman to form a "Committee of Patronage." Every parish also elects three lay nominators, but if an incumbency be vacant at the time of election, the former nominators sit *pro hac vice*, so jealous is the constitution that they shall act as trustees, and not mere delegates. When a vacancy arises, these six representative persons, with the Bishop (who has both a vote and a casting vote), constitute a "Board of Nomination," which elects a clergyman. It will be seen that the diocesan element predominates; but it sometimes happens, though rarely and with increasing rareness, that when a parish insists upon electing a certain person the lay diocesan nominator feels bound to vote with his brother laymen, and a purely party vote (lay versus clerical) prevails. But I have had share in the working of the system for more than a quarter of a century, and in two dioceses, without ever myself witnessing what I could stigmatize as a really factious election. I am certain that the parochial nominators are as earnest and single-minded in their desire to elect a proper clergyman as any other member of the Board, and that they are increasingly

anxious to avail themselves of the experience of their official coadjutors. They will not be driven. But, then, no one has any right to drive them; and they are generally very willing to be led.

There is no doubt whatever that the share of patronage thus given to the parish is inevitable in a voluntary Church; and I am persuaded that it is wholesome, and that it draws the congregation and its clergyman closer to each other.¹ I have frequently seen the parochial nominators, after striving to have one clergyman elected, move and second the formal appointment of that other whom the diocesan nominators preferred, that so he might come to his new parish formally accepted by his flock. They are also learning, much more than at first, to value solid and unostentatious worth. I am certain also that all the demoralizing influence which dependence on such Boards for preferment might conceivably exercise upon clergymen accessible to selfish motives has not been as great as that which Government patronage formerly brought to bear when such a question as that of the National Board of Education was under debate.

For myself, upon the whole, I am an optimist. The one cloud I see on the horizon is financial. We are largely dependent for support upon the landed class, which is unable to contribute as it used to do. And if we turn to the farming class, and other Churchmen of small means, comforting ourselves with the undoubted fact that these have only begun to learn to give, we cannot conceal from ourselves that this class also is threatened. There are large districts where it is now impossible for a Protestant, and especially for a Churchman, to obtain a farm. There is one parish known to me where the Roman priest has avowed his hope of seeing the last heretic weeded out before he dies, where the clergyman cannot retain a Protestant servant, where the sexton can only hold his ground by subscribing a fixed sum* to the chapel, and where a flourishing hotel, maintained by English tourists, has to employ a purely, or almost purely, Roman staff.

The danger is grave, perhaps alarming; but my belief is firm that no Church faithful to the truth, at peace within

¹ I wonder what the persons who resent their presence on the Board would say to the system of the great Anglican Church of the United States. "On our American plan, the vestry, generally some seven, nine, or twelve of the leading laymen of the parish, elected annually in Easter week, can call any priest of the Church in good standing in any diocese; and no Bishop has a canonical right to refuse him if he comes with clean papers. These Easter elections of vestrymen are generally mere forms. When the parish is at peace, scarce half a dozen voters ever attend."—Professor T. J. Hopkins, S.T.P.

itself, and bearing the peaceable fruits of righteousness, will ever perish for the lack of money.

And meanwhile the growth of mutual tolerance and the freedom with which men now express their views within the defined limits of our Church; the increased loyalty and (in a sense which is not that of party) the stronger Churchmanship of our people; the sense of duty which leads eminent laymen to give invaluable aid, unbought, in all our councils; their harmony; the disappearance from them of noisy politicians and self-seekers; the fact that all our charities have been maintained and many new ones are flourishing (including Diocesan or County Protestant Orphan Societies, well supported, in almost every place where they did not exist already); the immensely increased revenues drawn by our two great missionary societies from Ireland, where that of the C.M.S. has quadrupled—all these, I am persuaded, are outward and visible signs of the inward and spiritual grace of God, Who is with us of a truth.

G. A. DERRY AND RAPHOE.



ART. II.—MESSAGES FROM THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS.

I. “*Consider Him.*”

LET us open the Epistle to the Hebrews together, with a simple aim, altogether practical, for heart and for life. Let us take it just as it stands, and somewhat as a whole. We will not discuss its authorship, interesting and extensive as that problem is. We will not attempt, within the compass of a few short papers, to expound continuously even a portion of its text. We will gather up from it some of its large and conspicuous spiritual messages, taken as messages of the mighty Word of God.

No part of Holy Scripture is ever really out of date. But it is true meanwhile that, as for persons so for periods, there are Scripture books and Scripture truths which are more than ordinarily timely. It is not that others are therefore untimely, nor that only one class of book or one aspect of truth can be eminently timely at one time. But it seems evident that the foreseeing Architect of the Bible has so adjusted the parts of His wonderful vehicle of revelation and blessing that special fitnesses continually emerge between our varying times and seasons on the one hand and the multifold Word on the other.