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FIFTY YEARS OF THE DISESTABLISHED CHURCH OF IRELAND.¹

BY THE REV. THOS. J. PULVERTAFT, M.A.

FEW books that have been recently published contain more useful lessons for English Churchmen than Archdeacon Patton's brilliant sketch of the first half-century of the Disestablished Church of Ireland. The book is cheap, for it costs only five shillings, and contains illustrations that are in themselves worth the price paid. It is written in a bright crisp style with entire freedom from mannerisms and is decidedly one of those literary histories that are written to be read. Humour abounds in its pages, and a kindliness of spirit is found even when men and measures are severely criticized. It is easy to see that among leaders of the past Bishop Fitzgerald of Killaloe is the chief object of his reverence, and for Lord James Butler he reserves his sharpest fangs. Yet he mentions of the latter (quoting Archdeacon Sherlock) the courtesy shown Archbishop Trench by the most extreme of his critics. We miss in the book one document which is of outstanding importance as all the Clergy of the Church before ordination or assuming any office therein, have to approve and agree to its contents. The Preamble and Declaration prefixed to the Statutes of the Church of Ireland is the regulative document of the Church. It deserves quotation in full, for unless it is known to the reader much of the history of the Church of Ireland will not be understood.

I

(1) The Church of Ireland doth, as heretofore, accept and unfeignedly believe all the Canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, as given by inspiration of God; and doth continue to profess the faith of Christ as professed by the Primitive Church.

(2) The Church of Ireland will continue to minister the Doctrine, and Sacraments, and the Discipline of Christ, as the Lord hath commanded; and will maintain inviolate the Three Orders of Bishops, Priests or Presbyters and Deacons in the Sacred Ministry.

(3) The Church of Ireland, as a Reformed and Protestant Church, doth hereby affirm its constant witness against all those innovations in doctrine and worship, whereby the Primitive Faith hath been from time to time defaced or overlaid, and which at the Reformation this Church did disown and reject.

¹ *Fifty Years of Disestablishment*, by H. E. Patton. Dublin A.P.C.K. 5/-.

II

The Church of Ireland doth receive and approve, The Book of the Articles of Religion commonly called the Thirty-nine Articles, received and approved by the Archbishops and Bishops and the rest of the Clergy of Ireland in the Synod holden in Dublin, A.D. 1634 ; also the Book of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments, and other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church, according to the use of the Church of Ireland ; and the Form and Manner of Making, Ordaining and Consecrating of Bishops, Priests and Deacons, as approved and adopted by the Synod holden in Dublin A.D. 1662 and hitherto in use in this Church. And this Church will continue to use the same, subject to such alterations only as may be made therein from time to time by the lawful authority of the Church.

III

The Church of Ireland will maintain Communion with the Sister Church of England, and with all other Christian Churches agreeing in the principle of this Declaration ; and will set forward, so far as in it lieth, quietness, peace and love among all Christian people.

IV

The Church of Ireland, deriving its authority from Christ, Who is the Head over all things in the Church, doth declare that a General Synod of the Church of Ireland, consisting of the Archbishops and Bishops, and of Representatives of the Clergy and Laity, shall have chief legislative power therein, and such administrative power as may be necessary for the Church, and consistent with its Episcopal Constitution.

The importance of this statement cannot be minimised, and it is surprising that it finds no place in the Archdeacon's sketch. The writer well remembers how he and his brother candidates for ordination were sent to study it before signing the declaration, and we believe that this practice still exists in the Church. No man in its ministry can have any doubt of the doctrinal orientation of the Church, and the attitude it adopts on many subjects of acute controversy in the Church of England.

Deprived of its connexion with the State, despoiled of its revenues by the passage of an Act described as " most unhappy, most ill-tried, most ill-omened," the Church had in eighteen months to set its house in order. Financially the dangers were overcome by an act of faith on the part of the clergy who preferred the uncertainty of the future to personal gain in the service of God, and by the generosity of laymen for the most part connected with the land-

owning class. As a result of the wisdom of its leaders and the continued support of its people, the clergy of the Church of Ireland have been kept from want. They have had neither poverty nor riches but a sufficiency to maintain simple living among a kind-hearted people. Until the rise of prices came as the result of the war there might be struggle in the rectories—there was not the want with which we have become only too familiar in England. By reorganization and another great effort the clergy of to-day have been rescued from the plight in which they were placed by economic causes beyond their power to avert and have also Pension and Widows and Orphans Schemes that are financially sound. The story of the steps by which this end has been reached is lucidly set forth and can be easily followed by even the least intelligent of readers.

A demand came for Revision of the Book of Common Prayer. Stability had been secured for the framework of the Church by the action of bishops, clergy and people who recognized that unity was all important, and this could only be attained by genial feeling and hearty co-operation. Sixty-nine of the clergy protested against any Revision. One of them said that the inscription "Mangling Done Here" should be written over the door of the meeting place of the Revision Committee. Archdeacon Lee of Dublin in consequence of the acceptance of a motion in favour of Revision resigned from the body that passed the motion. Many of the Revisionists would have altered the doctrines of the Church beyond recognition. They were extreme Puritans who "uttered dreary jeremiads over the rigidity of those who preferred the doctrines of the Prayer Book as they were." It was a time of controversial eagerness. Men were fighting for what they believed to be matters of vital importance. For many years the struggle raged over the use of the Athanasian Creed. Many were the proposals and all excited heat. At last the Creed was printed without the English rubric, and was allowed—unlike in the American Church—to retain its place in the Eighth Article. Pusey and Liddon thundered that this involved the irretrievable loss of the place of the Church of Ireland in Catholic Christendom. Bishop Alexander who fought hard against this solution lived to say "the decision come to by the Church of Ireland upon the Athanasian Creed now strikes me as one of consummate wisdom." No changes of moment were made in the offices for Holy Communion

and Holy Baptism. The declaratory absolution was omitted in the office for the Visitation of the Sick, and the Ordinal was not altered.

To quiet consciences and to make plain the teaching of the Church a new Preface was prefixed to the Prayer Book, and the Ornaments Rubric was dropped—provision as to the dress of ministers and the furnishing of chancels being made by canon. The Preface has been bitterly attacked for its Protestant character. It stands as the official act of the body that sanctioned the Prayer Book and cannot be explained away. Two testimonies to the Revised Prayer Book from men whose ecclesiastical views are not those of the majority of Irish Churchmen may be quoted. Archbishop Alexander said: "It was quaintly said by an Irish prelate of a certain sermon that it did not 'contain enough gospel to save a fly.' Our Prayer Book has not admitted into its text enough anti-catholicism to drown an ecclesiastical midge." The Most Rev. Dr. Bernard, Provost of Trinity College, has given it as his opinion in reply to the remark "our Irish Preface, if not openly heretical, speaks with an heretical brogue," "I am afraid that we must plead guilty to our brogue; indeed none of us is ashamed of it, I should hope. For the 'brogue' is the distinctive mark of an Irishman's nationality, and we have always claimed to be a National Church, with a right to a 'brogue.' And the form which our 'brogue' takes in Church matters is not perhaps more offensive, after all, than the insularity which suspects heresy in every unfamiliar custom or phrase. No one is more deeply sensible of the shortcomings of the Irish Church than those who have the honour to serve her; the ideal is greater than the performance. But to suggest that she has fallen into heresy, or that she has protested herself out of her catholic inheritance, is to suggest what is, happily, untrue."

We may say that in the Canons dealing with the regulation of Divine Service and the Ornaments of the Churches and Ministers "the Church of Ireland has taken every possible measure to prevent the assimilation of the Communion Service to the Roman Mass." No one who reads them can have any doubt on this point. Their directions are clear, unambiguous and directive. When a Church knows its own mind it can make its position plain to all its members.

To-day the Church of England is agitated by proposals for Revision. In Ireland the doctrinal revisionists were intellectually and

theologically Puritans. Some of them might be called without offence Plymouthists in their attitude, for the teaching of John Nelson Darby, who was a Co. Wicklow curate, had then a hold upon many earnest minds. They failed in their object which they considered to be theological manifestation of the spirit of the Protestant Reformation in Public Worship. In England the party clamouring for doctrinal Revision wish to get behind the Reformation and to restore much that defaced and obscured the teaching of the Primitive Church. We are convinced that as in Ireland, so it may be in England, the main body of Churchmen will prove their attachment to the Church of their baptism by resisting successfully the proposed alterations that bring back the teaching of the Mass to the formularies of the Church. Revision in Ireland led to many a tough contest, but it left no rancour behind it, as the men who worked on both sides were at bottom one. There was no fear of a "split," or a secession on any scale worth mentioning. All were loyal children of the Reformation, and it was a struggle between those who were content with the heritage of their fathers and those who wished to go beyond it in a reforming direction. All accepted the Declaration which we have quoted, and when that was accepted there could be no great defection from the Book as it was used before Disestablishment. If English Churchmen understand what is at stake we believe they will be as successful in their struggle as their Irish brethren were in the seventies.

During the ten years that followed Disestablishment it might seem that a Church faced by such trying problems would spend all its time and energy in meeting new difficulties. It was not so in Ireland. Three cathedrals were restored. St. Finbar's, Cork, was without its spires. Two citizens offered £39,000 to erect them, and Bishop John Gregg said: "And now we will soon have our three towers erected and won't we sing Hallelujah Choruses then? And won't we sing triumphantly when we have these towers towering in the sky? But you must remember that won't complete the whole. Look at the carving in front we will have to do; but I hope, with God's blessing having done so well, we will do well in future." And well they did. St. Finbar's Cathedral is one of the most beautiful cathedrals in the United Kingdom. Very different in some respects it bears to our mind influences of the Spanish cathedral of Burgos—the greatest architectural gem of its kind in the

world. Dublin also saw Christ Church Cathedral restored at a cost of nearly a quarter of a million, and the work done by Mr. Burges in Cork was repeated in a very different style of architecture by Mr. G. E. Street in the capital. Those who have worshipped in its beauty, need not be reminded of its perfection of line and solemn dignity. In the West the Cathedral Church of St. Mary, Tuam, was restored and the Church of Ireland engraved on the skyline a stone record of its faith in its future.

But another work of a different kind was done that has left its mark upon the Church of England. It must be told in Archdeacon Patton's words. "Bishop Samuel Wilberforce, of Winchester, had moved at the Canterbury House of Convocation in 1861 that a new Lectionary should be provided. Convocation agreed and requested the Bishop to frame one. The Bishop wrote to his former curate, Dr. Trench, then Archbishop of Dublin, suggesting that he should undertake the task. But it was the first year of Disestablishment; the Archbishop's hands were already full; and unwilling to disappoint his friend Archbishop Trench requested one of his ablest clergy, Canon J. G. Scott, of Bray, to draw up the proposed Lectionary. Canon Scott, like his Archbishop, was busy in the work of reconstruction, and he in turn assigned the duty to his curate, the Rev. William Sherlock. Mr. Sherlock, admirably qualified for the task, framed the New Lectionary, which Convocation accepted, and thus it came to pass that a Lectionary, commonly in use throughout the greatest national Church in Christendom, under lawful authority, for many years, was the composition of an Irish curate." That Lectionary still has lawful authority among us and with the exception of the replacement of its Apocrypha lessons by the omitted chapters from the Book of the Revelation was the Lectionary adopted by the Church of Ireland.

After a period of comparative quiet Ireland entered upon "perilous times." "Agitation was rampant, and disloyalty was spouted from many platforms. Boycotting had come to stay and Dublin Castle was in constant guard against surprise." The poorer rural dioceses were in difficulties and the North of Ireland came to their rescue. England, too, gave help, and an important letter from the Bishop of Tuam was read at a meeting in support of a Church of Ireland Sustentation Fund in Lambeth Palace. Remarkable progress had been made in Tuam Diocese during the preceding twenty

years. Alas! a very different story has to be told to-day of the Western Diocese. The Church was passing through a very trying time. The landed gentry had been its chief support, and Dr. J. P. Mahaffy wrote: "It is the opinion of the best and most experienced authorities that before two years more have elapsed at least half the Irish gentry will be bankrupt." Like other prophets of evil he exceeded in his descriptions the darkness of the prospect. But he had not then any inkling of what would happen in the twentieth century when the landlords had disappeared and their houses were burnt to the ground. The Church did not lose faith. It went on with its work and proved equal to the task of meeting fresh situations with measures adapted to relieve the threatening evils. The dread of Home Rule was a very real fear to Irish Churchmen, and the Bishop of Derry (Dr. Alexander) expressed the views of most Irish Churchmen when he said at the Albert Hall of the Bill: "Morally, it is the great betrayal; logically, it is the great fallacy; religiously, it is the great sectarianism; socially it is the great break up; and imperially, it is the great break down." The Home Rule Bills were defeated, and it is now a matter of speculation what would have their effect been in Ireland had they passed. Irish Churchmen held their convictions conscientiously, and at Special Synod Meetings expressed them. It is useless even for the wisest Irishmen to pronounce any trustworthy opinion on the effect of their defeat on the development of the country. We know Ireland to-day, and the people who inhabit the island were as elusive of generalized description then as they are now.

During the years 1880-1900 Ireland took its place in the world politics of the Anglican Communion. The Archbishop of Dublin—Lord Plunket—was one of nature's gentlemen—a gentleman by birth, a greater gentleman by nature. No one who knew him doubted his gentleness and few were prepared for his courageous facing difficulties that he might have avoided. Described as a "true knight errant of the Cross of Christ" he had the sympathy of the best of the knights of old, but he never sought perplexities for their own sake. A young Englishman—incumbent of a Kingstown church—the Rev. H. E. Noyes, now Vicar of St. Mary's, Kilburn, brought to his notice the brave effort of Spanish and Portuguese Evangelical Churchmen to form native Churches and obtain full episcopal orders for their elected leaders. Lord Plunket, then

Bishop of Meath, was deeply interested by what he heard at the Lambeth Conference of 1878. He went to Spain and saw for himself what was being done, and to the day of his death in 1897 he was the chief champion and protector of the Reformers of Spain and Portugal. His apostolic journeys, his great and calm courtesy, and his self-forgetfulness in the advocacy of their cause brought him before the general public. He had a passion for freedom and a deep conviction of the reality of the spiritual movement in the Peninsula. He found humble men and women sharing his own faith, and he saw no reason why they should not have all the spiritual privileges he and his fellow Churchmen enjoyed in their own country.

Controversy arose in England, and the apple of discord was thrown into the Church of Ireland that was at first unanimously behind Archbishop Plunket. It is sad but true that practically all the divisions that have occurred in Ireland—and they were very few—have been the reflexion of English ecclesiastical movements. The Archbishop was determined if he obtained permission from the Irish bishops to consecrate Bishop of the Spanish Reformed Church Señor Cabrera, a man of striking personality, deep learning of the Spanish type, and undoubted piety. Accompanied by the Bishops of Clogher and Down and Connor (Drs. Stack and Welland) he consecrated Sr. Cabrera and an ecclesiastical uproar arose that astonished most Irish and English Churchmen. Lord Halifax wrote to the Archbishop of Toledo expressing sympathy with him on the intrusion of the British bishops. When Archbishop Plunket read this letter the writer of this article was with his Grace. He laid aside the paper and bowed his head in silence. For some minutes nothing was said and then the Archbishop looked up with tears pouring down his face. "To think that an English Churchman, in Lord Halifax's position, should write apologizing for the bestowal of spiritual privileges on fellow Churchmen, to the head of the traditionally most intolerant part of the Roman Church." His Grace said no more, but the incident left a never to be forgotten impression on the man who witnessed it.

The reasons for the outburst were soon apparent. Efforts for a rapprochement with the Roman Church were in progress, and the Spanish Consecration proved the occasion of a rupture. Cardinal Vaughan informed the Spanish Archbishop that Lord Halifax merely represented a portion of a Protestant sect in England. We

have no wish to re-open old controversies, but it is worthy of notice that the main burden of the complaint was that Archbishop Plunket had intruded in an ancient Catholic See and had set up altar against altar. How shallow this contention was, appeared plain when it was discovered that a very large proportion of the American Episcopate was condemned on that ground. The American Protestant Episcopal Church has since consecrated bishops for Brazil, Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippine Islands in all of which there already existed old bishoprics. What was at stake was something more than a mere matter of ecclesiastical order. The fundamental difference between traditional Anglican and neo-Catholic convictions came to the front.

In this chapter we have noticed a few minor errors—due to the confused writing of the period when no one unless an expert was able to distinguish between the truth or otherwise of the contradictory statements. On the whole it is a remarkably fair presentation of facts in perspective and is a tribute to the industry of Archdeacon Patton and his skill in disentangling facts from fiction. No Irish archbishop or bishop was a more fearless advocate for the Reformed Faith than Lord Plunket, and yet his statue is the only episcopal statue in a public place in Ireland. It was erected by subscriptions collected from all classes of Irishmen on a site provided by the Corporation of Dublin. It required something more than mere ecclesiastical greatness in Ireland in 1897 to produce this testimony to the character of a man who never did anything to seek the approval of the public, but followed his conscience whithersoever it led him. He added lustre to a great name, and was an inspiration to all who knew and loved his Christian simplicity and devoted service of his Saviour.

A visit from the Archbishop of Canterbury (Dr. Benson) was paid to the Church of Ireland which made it its duty to give him the heartiest of welcomes. His Grace addressed a great meeting in Dublin and over the platform were the words, "Catholic, Apostolic, Reformed and Protestant." With skill the Archbishop took the words as the basis of his speech, and showed how each one contributed an essential element to the character of the Church. His Grace reopened the cathedral of St. Brigid, Kildare, at a service which lasted three and a half hours. He said in his sermon: "It was with no eye to compromise that the Reformation took its

course: 'Truth, Truth,' was the morning star which guided its gaze to the sun. The spirit had no mind to break the thread of the Church's history. Witness in every hand the Prayer Book, and its clear-voiced preface on 'the wisdom of the Church of England,' that preface which you in your Prayer Book freely adopt and stand by." Leaving Armagh the Archbishop of Canterbury took the hand of Archbishop Alexander and smilingly kissed the archiepiscopal ring upon it, saying, "I salute the ancient See of Armagh." He visited Belfast, where he received the most cordial of welcomes, and two days after his departure he fell on sleep in Hawarden Parish Church. Archdeacon Patton tells the story of this historic visit with feeling and picturesque vividness.

The last section of the book deals with the work that has been recently accomplished. Irish Churchmen in the South and West live for the most part isolated lives. No opportunity was given them of taking part in public life. In Ulster they are very numerous but they are for the most part working men, and in Belfast problems similar to those that arrest attention in Birmingham have to be faced. With a spirit of heart unity, North and South have ever been component parts of the one Church, and have worked together "bearing one another's burdens." Hand in hand they faced the changes and needs of a kaleidoscopic time, laid deep and well the foundations of plans that have borne fruit and are able to see rising in crowded districts new work and in the country where population diminishes schemes for using the man power to the best advantage. It is a tale of brave endeavour made in faith—a story of a gallant fight for maintenance of opportunities for feeding on the living bread in every part of the country. Very briefly Archdeacon Patton sketches the last two years and quotes the letter of the Roman Catholic bishops in proof of the ravages of internal strife. What was true in October, 1922, is much sadder truth now. "The words are dreadfully true; and inasmuch as 'the mansions' and 'country houses' and 'demesnes' referred to belonged for the most part to members of the Church of Ireland, the loss to Churchmen has been unspeakable. And there have been worse losses. The lives of loyal men have been taken. It would not be too much to say that the Church has lost more in these two years than in the preceding fifty years with which this volume is concerned. And yet amid it all, amid the deep con-

sciousness of such awful times, amid wofully depressing days, there is hope. A gleam of light is breaking through the darkness. The Provisional Government has begun well. It has shown a realization of Ireland's needs, and proved already its capacity for further service." We quote these optimistic words. Their commentary must be sought in the events that have happened since November, 1922. They were penned in that month.

We have only skimmed the contents of this fascinating volume that records the life of a Church whose contributions to Foreign Missions increased from £12,837 to £72,365. We have said nothing of the fascinating character sketches that adorn its pages and the humour which cannot be concealed by any Irishman who is racy of the soil writing about the deeds of his brother Irishmen. The present writer was privileged to enjoy the friendship of many of those whose names appear, and to be acquainted with the majority of the men mentioned as leaders. He can only say that the author has caught with an amazing fidelity the chief points in their outlook and has charmingly described their work. No one who wishes to know what Ireland at its best can be, should pass the book by as a mere ecclesiastical history. It is alive from its first to its last line.

Two impressions deserve stressing. The Church of Ireland has unity amid variety. It is a great mistake to say that men of differing types do not find themselves at home within its comprehensive borders. We may not always agree with the Archdeacon on the wisdom or unwisdom of certain events he describes, and it is possible to think that the Church has had more than its own share of internal struggles. No conclusion could be more unfounded. There is a common loyalty to the Church and a brotherliness that cannot be too highly extolled. Many years ago the writer had a prolonged discussion in print with Canon Travers Smith—the protagonist of the traditional Sacramental School in the Church of Ireland. He fell into an error of fact that would have called from most men the retort "*ab uno disce omnes.*" Instead of scoring a point, the Canon wrote to his young friend pointing out the error and ignored it in his published reply, dealing with the main argument of the letter that contained the blunder. This is one small illustration of the underlying friendliness that prevailed and still prevails in the Church of Ireland. Bitterness does not exist—differences are

recognized as honest convictions rightly held within the Church, for the sons of the Church of Ireland are loyal to its teaching.

Much has been said of the bad results of popular election to bishoprics in the Church of Ireland. A few years ago an Irish clergyman resident in England sat with half a dozen Irish bishops. He asked them "could they mention the names of those clergymen who ought to have been bishops since Disestablishment and had not been chosen by the Synods or the House of Bishops." Many names were mentioned, and after a long discussion it was decided that no really outstanding man *capax imperii* had been overlooked. The same question was put to a number of leading clergymen and the reply was identical. Readers of this book can judge for themselves of the wisdom of the choices made, but they must remember that Dr. Salmon more than once declined to allow himself to be nominated for the Episcopate. We thank God for what the Church of Ireland has been enabled in the Providence of God to accomplish, and heartily agree with the Archbishop of Armagh in expressing our happiness "in the discovery of a chronicler who does not lack the needful gifts" of telling the story of her activities during fifty years of Disestablishment.

FIFTY-SIX SHORT SERMONS. By the Right Rev. Gilbert White, M.A., D.D., Bishop of Willochra. London: S.P.C.K. 6s. 6d. net.

These sermons, "for the use of lay readers," have at least the merit of brevity, but beyond that there is nothing very remarkable about them; only a few of them rise above the mediocre. Many statements are, in our opinion, open to criticism. We wonder if the Bishop ever read Waterland on *ἀναμνησις*, and we never heard before that Protestants "think that anyone can found a Christian Church!" They believe that *the* Church was founded by Christ, and is something vastly bigger than the Anglican or any other community. Of course it is conceivable that they may be wrong and the Bishop right, but nevertheless, he need not misrepresent them! All New Testament references to judgment are apparently taken to refer to the Great White Throne. Used with discretion, however, lay workers will find some plain sermons on useful texts. Some one has said that a text torn out of its context is but a pretext! But the Bishop is not guilty of this: his texts are not mottoes, but the discourses aim at exposition.