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THE CHANCES OF DISESTABLISHMENT.

THE popularity, and therefore the fate, of the Church of England will be tested at the ballot-box. This is an incident of her position, not an attribute of her essence. None the less it is a fact, and a fact of grave and far-reaching moment. We must reckon with it. We must face, clearly and courageously, the consequences of the fact.

I am glad that the Archbishop has recently recalled the minds of Churchmen to the presence of Disestablishment in the political atmosphere. A prelate so sagacious, so circumspect, so large-hearted as he would not do so needlessly, and has not done so nervously.

But I do not now dwell on the political aspect of the question. To my thinking, the Disestablishment question is at bottom, not a political, but a religious one. I am not qualified to say whether and when that question will emerge into the vague arena known as "practical politics." Neither can I forecast the form in which it will arise.

I can easily believe in the sincerity of conviction with which Disestablishers denounce the Establishment, wholly mistaken though I hold them to be. I cannot impute their action to unmingled malignity, or their opinions to unmingled stupidity. With equal ease can I admire the genuine, if not discriminating, zeal of the politicians who lift up their voices for "Church and King."

If the Church is secure of the religious confidence of the nation, no political combination can possibly overthrow her. If she has forfeited that confidence, no political combination, however venerable, powerful, and highly organized, can save her from political extinction.

It is not indispensable to this contention that we should have a scientific notion of Disestablishment. Establishment is an extremely complex fact. It is not wonderful if the ideas

about it which prevail should be vague. But those ideas are deeply rooted and tenacious; even if mingled with prejudice, they are potent and respectable.

For that which is epitomized in the term "Establishment" is a series of traditions, sentiments, and arrangements, which extends into remote antiquity. In this series are to be found elements of custom, of historical pageant, and of religious veneration. The Establishment is attached to the national life by a thousand variegated threads. Taken severally they are fragile, but collectively they form a bond intimate, ancient, and strong.

I do not under-rate the strength of either imagination or of sentiment in the hold which the Church has upon the nation. The most obvious proof of this strength has been furnished by the exploits of the Primrose League. Yet I should be sorry indeed to believe that my fellow-countrymen were attached to the Church of their fathers chiefly by ties of sentiment and imagination.

Religion is surely in the Church question the ruling fact. The Church is not a society of æsthetics or of antiquaries, but of souls associated for the purposes of salvation. We must look to the religious convictions of the nation as the decisive factor which will outweigh all others when the fate of the Church is in the balance.

And despite many symptoms of decline in religion, I must still hope that the people of England are so far sensible to the claims of religion that they will not allow the question to be decided on any other issues than those which are properly religious. This is the fundamental position of this article. To it I desire to draw the closest and most patient attention.

To yield a grudging assent to this position is both weak and impolitic. For what chance can the Church have in the impending struggle for national existence if the nation will not acknowledge her as its spiritual mother? And what arguments will then avail for an institution which after fifteen centuries has failed to make the nation realize what all that time has been her *raison d'être*.

I maintain, then, that the Establishment question is in the final resort a religious question. To admit this has an additional advantage. It releases us from the necessity of advocating a theory of religious establishment in the abstract. We are not founding a new commonwealth. We are not debating whether an ancient commonwealth should now establish one of the competing forms of Christianity. We need not be academic in the discussion. The Establishment exists among us. We are confronted with the possibility of a formidable assault upon it by a party bent on its political

extinction. We are determined to repel that assault. We will repel it on religious grounds.

The Church of England stands for a certain conception of Christianity. No fact is more demonstrable than this. Since the Reformation, at all events, she has been known in Christendom as a portion of the grand whole of Protestantism. Deliberately, and in her own fashion, she at that epoch elected to secede from the Roman oppression. Her action was necessitated by the religious conviction of her children. Her attitude was finally revealed and fixed in the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion and in the Book of Common Prayer. She became the National Church on the basis of the Reformation settlement. This must be frankly recognised. But this is not all. The Church owes her national position to another cause of a kindred order. She was accepted as national because she was felt to be the expression of the nation's yearning after personal liberty and after political independence. It is this element in the Church which is sometimes nicknamed Erastianism. Erastian she certainly is not, in origin or essence.

But it cannot be denied that at times in her history she has breathed the Erastian spirit, and used the Erastian vocabulary with deplorable facility. These, however, were abuses of her privilege. They were reprehensible and calamitous. But they were only flaws in the mirror designed to reflect the English national life—transient, not indelible, blemishes.

Described broadly, in theological terms rather true than technical, the Church stands before the national mind as upholding the beliefs following: She stands committed to an *open Bible*, without the "muzzling order" of "tradition" or "patristic consent." She is committed to a view of the Christian ministry decisively anti-sacerdotal. We have the Pope's authority for this. She stands committed to a doctrine of Justification, substantially that of Luther, and wholly opposite to that so eloquently and subtly recommended by Newman in his "Lectures on Justification." She proclaims that "man is justified by faith alone." She stands committed to a rejection of the Mass, and to the necessity of faith for a true and worthy reception of the Lord's Supper. She stands committed to the abolition of the Confessional, and to all that the Confessional implies. She stands committed to the repudiation of the Pope's monarchy over Christians. She is prepared to guide and govern herself under Christ and through His Spirit and Word.

Eight out of every ten Englishmen feel that these are the doctrines of the National Church. I do not mean that eight out of ten Englishmen can give a reasoned defence of these doctrines; or can prove their truth by texts from the Bible;

or can say how the Church came to hold and to teach these doctrines. I do mean, however, that most Englishmen know that the Church does teach these doctrines, and, moreover, that these doctrines are true if there be any truth in Christianity at all.

Englishmen may, without discourtesy, be said to have small taste for speculative theology. Yet to infer from this that they are indifferent to theological truth would be a hardy impertinence.

I suspect that most Englishmen at first value the national Church for two reasons. First, they believe that she respects the right of access to God on the part of every man as such. Secondly, they believe that she has cherished national independence, and this has fostered national expansion. These beliefs are sometimes denominated the right of private judgment and of individual liberty. They appear to have ever been the things most highly prized by Englishmen in the inventory of the soul. And because he has, on the whole, found that the Church respected these beliefs, he has respected the Church.

We may regard these beliefs as forming to the average Englishman an equivalent of the theology of the Reformation. They are a practical compendium of Protestantism. They have been extracted from a mass of lessons and traditions. They furnish a test of dogmas and of ceremonies. They result from a candid and common-sense inquiry into abstruse and complex matters concerning his soul. They serve his turn well; at least, in the elementary stages of religious life.

Two instances are furnished by our history of the spirit in which Englishmen regard the Church. The national heroes in religion are certainly Wyclif and Cranmer. Each of these was a good Christian. Each was a great divine. But neither Wyclif nor Cranmer obtained his peculiar place in the affections of his country because he was eminent in piety or learning, but because he was a vigorous defender of national rights in connection with religion.

I do not disparage Wyclif's services as translator of the Bible, as Evangelical teacher at Oxford, as founder of itinerant preachers, as castigatour of clerical irregularities. For all these England held him in honour then, and has held him in honour ever since. But his ascendancy over the nation's heart was due not to these so much as to his fearless denunciation of Papal encroachments upon the liberties and revenues of England.

The history of Cranmer illustrates this point even more clearly. Professor Pollard, the Archbishop's latest biographer,

no less than good old Strype, establishes this view. That Cranmer had exceptional learning, that he was a speculative divine, that he was a steady reformer of Church abuses, that he was a master of devotional English, are facts which not even Jesuit malignity has been able to disprove. But that which endeared the Archbishop to the heart of England was his courageous and judicious resistance to the claims of the Papacy, his steady maintenance of the royal supremacy, and his willingness to remodel or repeal the canon law.

Sacerdotalism is hostile to both the convictions so long and so warmly cherished by Englishmen. It is hostile by its very nature. History also furnishes numerous instances of the hostility. Contemporary experience confirms it. Has any great movement in favour of liberty ever been headed and organized by the priesthood? Have countries in which the sacerdotal theory of the Church has prevailed been conspicuous for the liberty of their institutions in public or private life? Are Ireland, Spain, Portugal, and Austria lands which will be naturally and generally cited as typically free and enlightened? Was Philip II.—the most stern and inflexible of Catholic monarchs—a ruler such as a free people would spontaneously elect? Was Louis XIV. a model for the imitation of constitutional sovereigns?

It is, indeed, certain that the very nature of the priestly notion of Christianity cannot coexist permanently with the two things which Englishmen hold supremely dear. For that notion of the Church involves the subjugation of the laity to the clergy in all departments of life and of thought, and a subjugated laity can never make a free people.

No more cogent proof of the essential opposition between sacerdotalism and liberty can be required than that which is found in Newman's "Apologia" for his own life. Newman's genius, capacity, and learning are admitted by all men. His Catholic orthodoxy was unimpeachable. He must be accepted as a witness above suspicion. Did Cardinal Newman, the champion of modern Romanism, so express himself as to inspire us with the belief that he and his Church were friendly to liberty? The answer is plain. He argued in favour of everything that is most opposed to liberty. He defends the doctrine of the infallibility of the Church. He vindicates the exercise of those ecclesiastical prerogatives which have often been employed to punish by physical force departures from the Pope's will and the Pope's creed. He extenuates the acts of the Inquisition—of the persecutions by which the Waldenses, the Protestants, the Jansenists, were crushed. Let us hear him:

"St. Paul says in one place that his apostolic power is given him to edification and not to destruction; there can be no better account of the

infallibility of the Church. . . . What have been its great works? All of them in the distinct province of theology. To put down Arianism, Eutychianism, Pelagianism, Manicheism, Lutheranism, Jansenism. Such is the broad result of its action in the past."<sup>1</sup>

"The Catholic Church claims not only to judge infallibly on religious questions, but to animadvert on opinions in secular matters which bear upon religion, on matters of philosophy, of science, of literature, of history, and it demands our submission to the claim. It claims to censure books, silence authors, and to forbid discussion. . . . I think history supplies us with instances in the Church where legitimate power has been harshly used. To make such an admission is no more than saying that the Divine treasure is in earthen vessels."<sup>2</sup>

If Newman, a mild English exponent of the Roman system, writes thus, what may not be expected from Ultramontanes? "If they do these things in the green tree, what will be done in the dry?" The question may be succinctly answered by a quotation from "The Pope and the Council," a book by Janus, which appeared at the time of the Vatican Council, 1869. It was then the Church of Rome defined that attitude of antagonism towards modern life from which she has never receded, nor, indeed, can recede, since the dogma of infallibility has made the definition perpetual. In that book the following words are quoted by Janus from the Jesuit Schneemann:

"As the Church has an external jurisdiction she can impose temporal punishments, and not only deprive the guilty of spiritual privileges. . . . The love of earthly things, which injures the Church's order, obviously cannot be effectively put down by merely spiritual punishments. It is little affected by them. If that order is to be avenged on what has injured it, if that is to suffer which has enjoyed the sin, temporal and sensible punishments must be employed. . . . Among these Schneemann reckons fines, imprisonment, scourging, and banishment."<sup>3</sup>

Janus himself sums up the position of affairs created by the Pope's acts and doctrines thus:

"It follows that they are greatly mistaken who suppose that the Biblical and old Christian spirit has prevailed in the Church over the mediæval notion of her being an institution with coercive power to imprison, hang, and burn."<sup>4</sup>

I have made these quotations to prove that sacerdotalism and liberty cannot dwell together. I think that the proof is unimpeachable and complete.

Now, there is a close affinity between all forms of sacerdotalism. Whether Roman or Anglican, it breathes one spirit and has one end. In England it is held in restraint by public opinion and by a vigorous Protestantism, ever on the watch. But no one can disprove the assertion that there

<sup>1</sup> "Apologia," Longman's edition, p. 253.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 257.

<sup>3</sup> "The Pope and the Council," p. 10.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

is in the Church of England a party, numerous, active, and well equipped, which is sacerdotal to the backbone.

I have said already that Englishmen are averse from theological speculations. While sacerdotalism was confined to books and lecture-rooms it was tolerated or ignored. But it has now emerged from a learned obscurity, and has become a matter of public notoriety. It has made itself felt in a thousand ways.

The manhood of the nation has become uneasy. The Non-conformists have grown alarmed and indignant. Their indignation and alarm have imparted bitterness to the educational controversy. In Parliament itself the dread of sacerdotalism was expressed in the Kenyon-Slaney clause of the Education Act. The Royal Commission on Ritual is another proof of the same uneasiness in the public mind. The nation is aware that sacerdotalism is militant and aggressive; and the nation, jealous for its dearest rights, has begun to restrain sacerdotal tendencies among the clergy.

If this unrest and suspicion be not allayed, the consequences must be serious, and may be disastrous for the Church. The exponents of Evangelical Churchmanship in no way impair the Church's stability by the prevalence of their doctrines. This is not enough. They are bound, in conscience, to exercise their influence in her defence. The saving of the Church from Disestablishment rests in their hands if the contention maintained in this article be sound.

Evangelicals are not sacerdotalists. They are believers in the right of private judgment. Evangelicals love Christian liberty with the deep and fervid love of St. Paul, and the lovers of Christian liberty are the natural friends of all true liberty. The nation must be taught that its liberties can only flourish when the national Church is Evangelical; and the consequence will be that the nation, unless it apostatize from the faith of its forefathers, will find in Evangelical religion the salvation of the Church.

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#### SOME OLD TESTAMENT TITLES OF GOD.

“THE Name of the Lord,” is an expression which runs through Holy Scripture, more especially through the Old Testament, denoting the nature, the glory, and the will of God. The word “Name” is singular. God is indeed revealed to us by many names; but all are comprehended and summed up in one—“the Name of the Lord,” which the