

Some Advantages of Establishment.¹

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I WILL confine myself strictly to the title of this paper—"Advantages of Establishment"—and endeavour to show that those advantages are of such a nature as to put all question of disestablishment out of the minds of reasonable men.

I propose to clear the ground first of all by answering two questions: (1) What is the meaning of Establishment? and (2) What are the incidents of Establishment?

We need to understand very clearly what we mean by Establishment, for it seems to imply one thing to one man and another to another, and the confusion thus produced is responsible for much heat in controversy and much misrepresentation. Not a few people are under the impression that the Church of England is called the Established Church because at some time or other it was created or founded by an act of the Legislature; that the State did something in the way of choosing it, in preference to any other form of religion, as the expression of the national faith. Nothing could be more erroneous or misleading. There never was a moment in the history of England when the Church of England was chosen as the peculiar expression of Christianity which the nation was by law to adopt. "There was no one moment, no one Act of Parliament, when and by which the Church was 'established'; still less was there any Act by which one Church was 'disestablished,' and another Church 'established' in its place" (Freeman).

There are only three periods in the history of this country when such suggested Establishment could possibly have taken place: (1) On the formation of the single kingdom of England from the kingdoms of the Heptarchy; (2) at the Reformation; (3) at the Restoration.

With regard to the first of these periods, it is well known

¹ Being a paper read at the Church House, Carlisle.

that the formation of the kingdoms of England into one nation was preceded by the Christianization of the country and the recognition of Christianity within the kingdoms as the true religion. There was no question of choice. The Church was in possession; the victory over paganism had been won; and the formation of the single kingdom involved no change, no choice of religion, and no formal establishment by law of the religion already existing in the country. In the case of the second period I may content myself by again quoting the historian Freeman that "in all they did Henry VIII. and Elizabeth had no more thought of establishing a new Church than they had of founding a new nation, for in their eyes the nation and Church were the same thing." In the third possible period it is true that the Church had been disestablished by the Commonwealth, but it is equally true that at the Restoration there was no re-establishing her; she simply returned to her own, which had been taken away from her, just as the King returned to his throne and the nation to monarchical government. There was, as a matter of fact, at each of these great historical crises, no question of establishing at all. "The relations between the ecclesiastical and civil powers were not then or at any other time settled by any one formal enactment. They grew up and shaped themselves according to the circumstances of one age or another." The Church Establishment has just the same history as the House of Commons or the Trial by Jury. It is the creation of law; but it is not the creation of any particular law, but of the general course of English law, written and unwritten. The Church was never established; it grew up simply because it was the nation in one of its aspects.

What, then, do we mean by an Established Church? It is obvious from the foregoing that we can only mean the accepted and adopted national expression of religion. In our own case it is that organization of religion which has grown up with the nation and embedded its fibres into the very centre and heart of the national constitution. We find that with the brief interlude of the Commonwealth, a period whose termination was

hailed with wilder joy than the relief of Mafeking, there has been but one religious organization whose law has been incorporated into the law of the realm, as a branch of the general law of the country, under the shadow of whose moral protection, and by the inspiration of whose life, the nation has risen from the tiniest beginnings to become the mightiest power in the world.

We now pass to our second question, What are the incidents of Establishment? That is to say, In what respect does the Church of England differ in its relation to the State from the Nonconformist bodies? It is well to remember that until the sixteenth century the identity of the Church and nation was an accepted fact, which needed no more discussion than the succession of the seasons. It is well to remember this, because the incidents of the Establishment are not the result of conflict between rival religious organizations, but the natural result of the joint life of Church and State. "Stated briefly," says Mr. Eldon Banks, in one of his clever pamphlets, "the chief incidents of the Establishment are as follows :

"1. That the King is the supreme head of the Church and the ultimate Court of Appeal in matters Ecclesiastical (the appeal now being to the Privy Council).

2. The summoning of the Convocations by Royal writ.

3. The part taken by Parliament in Ecclesiastical Legislation.

4. The restrictions placed by the State upon the enactment of Church laws.

5. The authority of the Church Courts.

6. The fact that certain of the Bishops sit in the House of Lords.

7. The fact that the right of nominating the Bishops rests with the Crown.

"It is easy to trace what led up to these incidents. For instance, the Royal Supremacy is due to the determination on the part of King Henry VIII. to exclude the Papal power, and to establish the supremacy of the British Crown over the Church of England. It was during the primacy of Archbishop

Warham in 1530 and 1531 that the Convocations of both provinces of Canterbury and York formally acknowledged the King's supreme headship of the Church of England. It was three years later—in 1534—that the Act of Parliament was passed which added to the King's style the title of the 'only Supreme Head on Earth of the Church of England.'

“Take other incidents—for instance, the summoning of Convocation by Royal writ, and the summoning of the Bishops to the House of Lords. How came these about? Again it is easy to trace. The eleventh constitution of the Council of Clarendon declared that the Archbishops and Bishops, and all other persons of the realm who hold in chief of the Crown, are to have their possessions of the King by the title of barony, and, like the other Barons of the kingdom, they are to have places with the Barons in the King's Court, except in cases of life and limb. King John, by his Charter, promised to summon the Archbishops, Bishops, and Abbots, as well as the Earls and greater Barons, to his great Council, whenever a grant or subsidy might be required. Here we find the origin of the Bishops sitting in the House of Lords, and learn that it was simply by reason of the fact that, like other great landowners of the time, they held their lands as tenants-in-chief by barony from the Crown, and as such they received their writs of summons.

“The origin of Convocation is also interesting and instructive. King Edward I. wished that representatives of the clergy as well as the Archbishops and Bishops should attend in Parliament, and he issued his writs accordingly. But the clergy objected on the ground that it was uncanonical to summon them to the King's Parliament—a secular Court. This dispute was finally adjusted in the time of King Edward II., when the Provincial Convocations were established upon the system which has ever since been continued, being summoned, pursuant to Royal writ, by the Archbishops simultaneously with every Parliament.

“I mention these matters as illustrations to show how these chief incidents of the Establishment have come about, and to

illustrate what I have said about recognition by the State constituting Establishment ; and that these acts of recognition were not steps in the building up or creating of a Church, but natural incidents, as it were, having regard to the circumstances of the time, and the relative positions which Church and State then occupied in this country.

“ If it is desired to make any alterations in any of these matters which I have mentioned, it is possible to do it by Act of Parliament. It is not necessary to disestablish the Church in order to secure any needed alteration.”

We thus arrive, without any difficulty, at the conclusion that the Church has grown side by side with the State, and that Establishment does not rest on any one act done at a particular time from definitive motives. It has come to be what it is through the circumstances of our history. The Church was once the nation, looked at in reference to religion, just as the Army was the nation looked at in reference to warfare, or the Parliament the nation looked at in reference to legislation.

At this point the inquiry may be made as to what are the advantages of Establishment and of the connection with the State which it is proposed to destroy. Let us remind ourselves in passing that so far as protection and recognition by the State is concerned, the Nonconformist bodies are all equally recognized and protected with the Church. A moment's consideration proves this. Take the position to-day of the relation of the State to the Church of England and to any one of the great Nonconformist parties. Each is recognized by the State as a lawful institution or community ; each is allowed to conduct its services according to its constitution ; each is allowed to possess and hold property ; each appeals to the State for protection, in the event of its property being taken from it, or its rights infringed ; each has received from the State the same exemption from State obligations, as, for instance, the exemption of churches on the one hand and chapels on the other from the obligation to pay rates. These are instances where the extent of the recognition of the State is substantially the same. And these considerations prove,

I think, that the word "Established," when used in connection with the Church of England, means considerably more than merely recognition by the State. How much more it is not easy to define. The answer is to be found in considering the incidents of the Establishment to which I have already made reference.

The advantages of Establishment, succinctly put, may be stated as follows :

1. *National Recognition of God.*—This is no small advantage ; so long as the Church is established the nation is openly and avowedly Christian. She can appeal to the sentiment and fact of religion, and take her position as a definite religious force in the world. Admit Disestablishment, and no other form of religion can possibly be placed in the position which the Church holds. The nation must in her worldly aspect be non-Christian. A State without a creed is a miserable object, but the maintenance of the Church of England as the National Church saves the nation from the intolerance of sectarianism, and from being torn in pieces by the struggles of fanatical opinions. Divine institutions cannot be discarded without affecting the welfare of Society. Further, the State which has once receded from the strict externally established form of religion, and has framed or tolerated a new form of Church government upon the ground of opinion, cannot take its stand upon doctrine or defend any truth whatever, even the vital fact of Revelation itself. For if opinion be valid against one positive institution, it is valid against all. Let me here quote a valuable extract from a little-read book by a once-famous Professor, the Rev. William Sewell, D.D. He says :

"If the Church of England be, as it is supposed, a sect—that is, if, in either of the senses of the word sect, it be either a self-formed Society, following a human leader of its own choice, or a section of Christians which has severed itself, or has been rightfully severed, from the body of the Catholic Church ; if its creeds are either imagined by itself, or deduced by its own interpretation from the Scriptures, without authority from a higher source ; if its commission to teach and to administer sacraments be a human expedient, not a Divine appointment ; or if its claim to support be the accordance of its system with the opinions and interests of man, not the authority externally conferred on it by Heaven ; if, in one word, it rests its strength on anything

but external historical testimony to the reality and the maintenance of its externally revealed and externally transmitted truth—then the foundation of the Church rests upon opinion, the opinion of fallible men; and for opinion there is no available criterion but numbers. And a Government derives no right to pronounce judgment from its possession of power, since power is no test of truth; nor from its alleged superiority of wisdom, since this also must be reduced to a question of opinion. And neither has it any right to draw a line of distinction by itself between essential doctrines of Christianity, which it resolves to retain, and supposed non-essential forms, which it is willing to abandon. No one, in a matter of Revelation, may presume to say what is important, and what is unimportant, where all alike is enforced by a positive institution of the Almighty. If, on the other hand, external Revelation and appointment be binding for an article of faith, it is binding for episcopacy. And thus, step by step, from outward form to inward principle, from the outskirts, as it were, of Christianity and of all religion to its inmost heart and citadel, a State which has once abandoned its adherence to Apostolical tradition must be necessarily driven back—compelled to cast away, fragment by fragment, whatever offends any considerable number of its subjects—not logically justified in retaining anything—and, at last, stripped of all its truth, its arms bound down, its tongue paralyzed, and all its influence, if influence it can possess, turned in the defence and propagation of falsehood, blasphemy, and unbelief.”

From such a disaster as this Establishment saves the nation, since by virtue of the maintenance of the National Church the nation, as such, accepts Christian Revelation and recognizes the Law of God.

2. *The Maintenance of Religious Sanction for our Acts of Government.*—As I have already said, if you admit Disestablishment you make it impossible for the State ever to recognize religion in her public acts and functions, for to do so would be to establish one form or other of Christianity or of some other religion, and this would be to return, in a baser form, to the principle which you repudiated. But surely it must be wholly to the advantage of any State to maintain a due and proper recognition of the Almighty, at least in its public ceremonies. That recognition can only be made in outward form of ritual and of creed which are the appurtenances of some accepted form of religion. Do away with such recognition, deprive the nation of religious sanction for its acts of government, and you reduce it to a nation of fools, for it is the fool who says in his heart, “There s no God.” The first and the second Table of Commandments

are closely bound together, as closely as truth and right, the head and the heart of man, his thoughts and his feelings, his feelings and his actions, and to allow the State to imagine that it is possible for it to do its duty towards its neighbour while ignoring its duty towards God is to court national disaster. The nation which casts off faith in God will soon lose its sense of duty towards man, and the Socialism that follows will be blood-red Anarchy. From all this the Establishment saves us, and I venture to claim this salvation as an advantage which cannot be overestimated.

3. The third point I would make is that *without Establishment our Sovereigns would be free to be of any or no religion*. Disestablish the Church in England, and you cannot impose any obligation on the Sovereign to observe any form of religion. You have reduced creed to a mere matter of opinion, and the Church to a sect. You could not compel the Sovereign to swear to maintain throughout his realm the doctrines and integrity of a sect. In fact, if you abolish the Establishment, you could place no obstacle in the way of our Sovereign being a Mohammedan, a Buddhist, a Jew, an atheist, or anything he pleases. Religion would be degraded from the level of Revelation to that of mere opinion. Now, the Establishment prevents the possibility of all this, and I ask, Is not this a very great advantage?

4. The fourth advantage is one which perhaps touches us more nearly than the others—namely, *the relation of the parish priest to the people*. Any person who recognizes the value of religion in educating the moral sense of the people must admit that it is an inestimable boon to have our parish churches served by earnest men, whose duty it is to preach the Gospel, and teach religion and minister to the spiritual needs of the people. By our present system provision is made that everyone may be within reach, free of charge, of the spiritual ministrations of a parish priest. Disendow the Church—for Disestablishment is not contemplated, and could not be accomplished without Disendowment—and your parish priest becomes merely a congregational minister. No longer can the

people claim his ministrations as theirs by right. He will be able, like the Nonconformist of to-day, to minister only to those who can afford to pay for his ministrations. The possession of a spiritual birthright, as well as of a national birthright, is no small matter, and is no little advantage to the development of character. Deprive the nation of the national religion and you take away the inestimable boon of spiritual birthright. There can then, of course, be no more chaplains of prisons, reformatories, ships, or armies, recognized by the State. No man, when serving his country, can expect his country to consider his spiritual welfare. So far as that country is concerned his eyes will close in death with his soul unaided, save by the futile efforts of his own darkened imagination. But if it would be impossible to attend to the spiritual needs of those who were fighting their country's battles, it would be certainly impossible to supply the spiritual needs of many thousands at home. Unable to pay for spiritual ministration, the poor would for many years at least go neglected and unattended, to live without hope, and to die without God. By the maintenance of the Establishment we avoid all this. May I not justly claim that this is an advantage we dare not lightly pass by, and one which must counterbalance many a disadvantage, for what could compensate the nation for such a loss as that of the work and influence of the parish priest?

5. Our fifth advantage resides in the fact that the *union of Christendom can the better be accomplished by its maintenance*. Establishment is and must be a bond of union, not a ground of separation. But allow Nonconformity to tear asunder the lifelong union of Church and State, a union which has grown through centuries of English history, and you make a chasm deep, wide, and almost impassable, between English dissent and the English Church, which will take longer to bridge over than it has taken to build up Church and State. It will postpone indefinitely any chance of reunion. As it is at present, the Church of England occupies a unique position in Christendom. No Church has a similar history; no Church has

built up national life in the same way. No Church is so national, so broad, so comprehensive, so capable of becoming the meeting-place of all sects, the basis of union for all Christendom. But destroy her national character, her representative character, reduce her to the level of a sect, and you deprive Christendom at once of one of the most, if not the most, important element in the problem of reunion, while postponing indefinitely the chance of religious peace at home. The bond of union lost in the parish will not be rediscovered in the babel of sectarian strife.

6. The sixth advantage *is the independence of the clergy*. We know how debasing to all that is noblest and best in the teacher it is to be in the power of the purse-holders. To preach and teach without let or hindrance the glorious Gospel entrusted to our charge is the privilege and prerogative of the clergy of the Church of England, but to be responsible for these things to the Vestry is to lose that independence of spirit, the loss of which must hinder the free course of the Spirit of God.

These are a few out of the many advantages which this country reaps by having an Established Church. There may be disadvantages when compared with the imagined freedom of the Church in the Colonies, or of the Nonconformist Churches at home. We are not, however, considering the disadvantages of Establishment, and I would only add in conclusion that whatever and however great those disadvantages may be, there are none of them which cannot be got over by reformation, instead of deformation. Disestablish the Church, and you can never re-establish, nor can you ever compensate for the loss that is bound to ensue.

I hope I have, in this brief space, said enough to show that the advantages of Establishment are so great that he would indeed be a misguided person who, seeing what these advantages are, would lightly throw them on one side, for the somewhat chimerical advantages of a Church severed from its lifelong partner, the sharer of its joys and sorrows, whose separation would leave it lacerated and bleeding. "Take the Church of England,"

said Mr. Gladstone, "out of the history of England, and the history of England becomes a chaos without order, without life, without meaning." Leave the Church of England where she is, support her, enrich her, enable her to reform, to carry on her noble work, unhindered and unimpeded, and you will retain the history of England an intelligent whole, and keep the nation alive to its spiritual birthright, with its face set towards the golden spot in the distance, and its heart atuned to that

"One far-off Divine event
Towards which the whole Creation moves."



Anglo- and Roman Catholic Responsibility for Truth.

BY G. G. COULTON, M.A.

THE popular conception of extreme High Churchmen as crypto-Romanists, however unjust, is really fostered by many of those who are loudest in their complaints. The attachment of certain ritualists to Roman uses, as such (including certain customs which have neither antiquity nor piety to recommend them), revolts even the majority of their own party. These extremists, moreover, as their principles draw them necessarily far closer to the Romanist than to the Nonconformist, are likewise tempted to follow the Romanist policy of setting "authority" above facts, which is simply the frank medieval preference of "edification" to veracity. Canon Rashdall's scathing phrase, "their appalling indifference to truth," will not seem too strong to any unprejudiced reader who labours to track the "Church Times" through some of its devious ways. With all its ability and fairness in many cases, that journal frequently commissions, and shields from open criticism, articles of startling unveracity. It hesitates no more than the "Tablet" to burke the plainest documentary evidence; while an article may appear to-day in the Anglican organ, and to-morrow as a