





LIBRARY  
OF THE  
UNIVERSITY  
OF ILLINOIS





John Lubbock  
W.C.G.

# CONSERVATISM;

ITS PRINCIPLE, POLICY, AND PRACTICE.

A REPLY TO,

MR. GLADSTONE'S SPEECH AT WIGAN,

23rd OCTOBER, 1868.

BY LORD LINDSAY.

SECOND EDITION.

LONDON:

JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET,

1868.

---

LONDON : PRINTED BY W. CLOWES<sup>d</sup> AND SONS, DUKE STREET, STAMFORD STREET,  
AND CHARING CROSS.

# CONSERVATISM;

## ITS PRINCIPLE, POLICY, AND PRACTICE.

---

MR. GLADSTONE, in his speech to my friends at Wigan, has made a grave charge against the Conservative party. He questions the truthfulness and honesty of their proceedings, their firmness in their principles,—he is apprehensive that their “great demoralisation” may contaminate the Liberals. He charges them with “an awkward affectation of Liberal methods of proceeding,” as instanced by the “unparalleled manœuvre executed by the leaders of that party and by its followers,” to wit, the recent Reform Bill. He accuses them of, first, being willing to establish the Roman-Catholic and Presbyterian Churches alongside of the Established Church in Ireland, and since, (if I understand him rightly,) of opposing church-disestablishment as promotive of Popery. He describes their policy as dictated throughout by, “instead of enlightened conviction, a slavish fear.” He justifies this imputation by the supposed influence upon them of the demonstration of “the population of London, indignant at the manner in which the subject” of reform “was dealt with,” when they made their “grievances” understood by that political feat which “astounded the world”—the pulling down the railings of Hyde Park. He asserts that their conduct, generally, “strikes a blow at the Constitution such as we have never (seen?)

dealt to it," "destroys faith, destroys confidence, destroys the ties which bind man to man in public as well as in private life," and undermines the trust of the people in their rulers, inasmuch as "we know from a long and repeated experience that all which is required of them is to be a little more violent, a little more menacing to take steps to protect the laws of the country, and then all that they (we?) desire will be conceded."—Grave charges these; and, to sum up—after demanding from the Conservatives "consistency of creed," adding "that is what they have not got," and complaining of the opposition he has met with as "half-hearted, indecisive," and "paltering," "watered down to the extreme of debility," Mr. Gladstone concentrates his inculcation as follows:—"The Conservative or Constitutional creed is . . . not to support any one measure or any one institution; it is, not to be bound to the maintenance of any one principle; it is simply this—to this article I believe there will be a rigid adherence; it is to intend to vote for maintaining Her Majesty's Government in power."

In the leading points of this indictment Mr. Gladstone touches the honour of a large body of the gentlemen of England, and does injustice to the deliberate convictions of one half at least of the thinking men of this empire. I beg therefore, in opposition to these charges to submit the three following propositions,—

- I. That it is the duty of the patriot in the present day to be a Conservative—in order to withstand the too rapid progress of Democracy in England:—And on this point I would say at once, in order to avoid misapprehension, that, although I hate Democracy (in its accepted and familiar sense) as cordially as I hate



Absolutism, I cheerfully acknowledge the democratic principle as a legitimate element in the British Constitution. It is only against its excess, its tendency to predominance, and for the object of preserving unimpaired the balance and harmony, the organic life of the Constitution, that the enlightened Conservative protests and struggles :—

- II. That the Conservative Government are honestly, wisely, and fearlessly doing their best to fulfil this their duty :—
- III. That the principles of the Conservative, fundamentally opposed to those of the Liberal, are as clear and decided now as ever ; and that nothing can obliterate that distinction, each of the two parties representing a counter element of human nature.

I shall base a general negative to Mr. Gladstone's charge upon my demonstration of these three propositions. And I shall therefrom deduce a moral for which I venture to request, from both parties, a candid consideration.

My object is conciliation. My words will be, I trust, words of moderation. I shall pass over, as lightly as I can, expressions which, however calculated to prejudice and irritate, may be attributed to the passionate flow of oratory. But I will not compliment away what I believe to be truth,—nor would any but those pre-determined to differ wish me to do so.

I. *That it is the duty of the patriot in the present day to be a Conservative.*—Patriotism, although scoffed at by the political sceptic, is, like loyalty, a real thing, a ruling motive of action with statesmen and with earnest

and honest men in every station of life. And the rule for political adhesion is ascertained, historically, as follows:—A nation of the highest type, like that of Britain, passes through three distinct periods—of growth, of maturity, and of decline. The period of growth is marked by the struggle of the People, aristocracy and commons acting in union, for Liberty against the power of the Crown,—during this period the patriot is the Liberal. The period of Maturity is witnessed by the development of two great political parties, springing from and representing the higher intellect of the race; represented by the national Aristocracy, territorial and commercial; known by the varying names of Tory and Whig, Conservative and Liberal; contending under the rival banners of Order and Liberty; each of nearly equal weight and power, and alternately prevailing, the result of the successive struggles being development (at once) and consolidation of the political constitution of the country—so long, that is to say, as neither of the two parties (for this is the criterion) permanently prevails over and depresses the other. The period of Decline commences from the moment when one of these two great parties begins to obtain a permanent ascendancy in the counsels of the nation; and it is always the Whig or Liberal party that ultimately does so, supported and pushed forward by the increasing influence of the masses of the people, gradually sharing (as they have a right to share) in the intellectual life diffused by education from the central focus of the national intelligence. The result of this undue exaltation of Liberty and depression of Order is that the ship of the State becomes as it were lopsided; the free play of political life is checked; the vigour that springs from opposition, from the independent and sharp contention of champions

equally powerful, equally honoured by the people, in the arena of public life gradually departs; selfishness, tyranny, political scepticism, the loss of the sense of national obligation to the laws of God, indifference to public honour, contempt for political enemies, and general moral cowardice take the place of the corresponding virtues of heroic self-sacrifice, respect for the rights of others, faith, the grateful consciousness of responsibility, jealousy for national credit, chivalrous esteem for our opponents, and indifference to mere popular applause which characterised the earlier life of the community; and, while private virtue languishes, and Liberty, no longer protected by Order, vanishes from the scene, Constitutional Government in its highest form, as exhibited, for example, by the old Constitution of England—monarchical, aristocratical, and democratical in consummate harmony, each element in its place, neither of them predominant—ultimately expires,—to be replaced by Democracy pure and simple, the rule of the mob, short and disastrous in its culmination, born in licence, flowering in anarchy, and to be cut down by Despotism—after which nations may (assisted by others) recover liberty, and even virtue, but can never influence the world as under the privileges which they have once enjoyed, but forfeited. It is many years now since Britain entered on this her Third period, of Decline—the process is a work of time, and she has yet, I trust, a long lease of life and honour to look forward to before the decline developes into that confirmed disease which ends in political death; but, meanwhile, the gradual and systematic depression of the party of Order in favour of that of Liberty—the encouragement given to the encroachment of democratical influence upon private rights and the harmony of the Constitution—the avowed sympathy with the

United States of America as a political exemplar and with the revolutionary movements on the Continent—Mr. Gladstone's very appeal in his recent speech to that mob from whose too close embrace Mr. Bright is endeavouring to escape, are symptoms too marked to be misunderstood; the test is infallible (if rightly applied)—Britain has entered upon her decline; and the duty and course of the patriot is thus prescribed and determined as by the Shekineh in the wilderness,—it is to adhere to the party of Order, the Conservative in opposition to the Liberal party, for the purpose of preserving the balance of the Constitution, the organic life of the nation, in its highest intellectual range, from overthrow so long as may be possible. And, with this view, it is his province to protest in behalf of the wisdom of our ancestors, to vindicate the presumption that that which has worked well for a thousand years ought not to be precipitately cast aside in a day—in a word, to preach the lessons of past history and experience to a generation accustomed to live politically from hand to mouth, and to a nation which has a mortal aversion to those abstract principles which are in reality the most practical of all things, and to that historical consideration of the causes and recondite but influential relations of things without appreciation of which the present is Lethe and the future Erebus,—a sad defect, if I may presume to say so, in the national character, and a grievous public misfortune; for there are times in every man's life, and in the lives of nations as at the present moment, when to shut the eye against the testimony of the past and rush blindly on the future would be to commit political suicide.

Such are my reasons in support of my first proposition, viz., that the Conservative is the real patriot in the nineteenth century; and, in professing and com-

mending this faith, I do so on the same consistent principle on which, had I been living in the thirteenth, I should have sought my place of duty beneath the Liberal banner of the barons at Runnymede and of Simon de Montfort afterwards; or, if in the seventeenth, I should have been, like Montrose, a Covenanter and a Parliamentary till the balance between Order and Liberty, between the rights of authority and the claims of freedom, had been adjusted—thereafter to resume my natural place on the side of Order—all in the predominant interest of the Constitution.

I speak with strong conviction, although not, I trust, with dogmatism, in all this; but one thing, at least, all candid opponents will confess, that his is not a mean or ungenerous, a half-hearted or a paltering spirit, who, as a patriot, throws in his lot with a struggling but pre-eminently constitutional party either in the stormy spring or the yellowing autumn of his nation's history. The Conservative has neither support nor consolation to expect from popular favour. His support is from God, and his consolation truly not of this world. It lies in the consciousness of fulfilling what he believes to be his duty,—and, while believing this, he gives full credit to his political opponents for perfect sincerity in viewing their duty differently.—I now proceed to the establishment of my second proposition, to wit,

II. *That the Conservative party are honestly, wisely, and fearlessly doing their best to fulfil their patriotic duty, as above indicated.*—The two points that prominently suggest themselves at present as a test of their honesty and wisdom are the fact of the recent Reform Bill and their policy with regard to the Irish Church, the inquiry being, 1. Why the Conservatives have passed a Reform Bill which some consider unduly democra-

tical? and 2. Why they refuse to be parties to the disestablishment of the Protestant Established Church in Ireland? I submit that the Reform Bill was from its first conception a fundamentally Conservative and Constitutional measure, and that there are reasons amply sufficient to engage not only statesmen careful for imperial interests, but Churchmen, Dissenters, and even that considerable body of Roman-Catholics of the old constitutional Gallican school who are opposed to ultramontaniam, in support of the Conservative opposition to Mr. Gladstone's proposed scheme of disestablishment.

1. *The Conservative Reform Bill.*—It is a fallacy to suppose that because the Conservatives have passed a large and generous measure, it must be in dereliction from their principles. Those principles are essentially large and generous, as well in what they concede as in what, on imperial considerations, they deny; and the object they had in view in applying them in the case before us was not party aggrandisement at the expense of the Constitution, but the strengthening of the Constitution itself in the interest of all—of their opponents, the Liberals, no less than of themselves,—the present danger being (as I would throughout inculcate) that, through the decay and lapse of that Conservative principle of Order, which the Constitutional Liberals in reality value as highly as the Conservatives do the counter principle of Liberty, the entire political machine may rush into confusion. The question before the Conservative Government was, which class of electors would be most likely to value and support the ancient Constitution of England, and thus return as their representatives members—whether Liberal or Conservative was comparatively matter of indifference—worthy to sit in, not a chamber of mere delegates, but an imperial Parliament. That one stratum of society, a lower one

in the scale, might be through circumstances more dispassionate, more capable of exercising the franchise in a Conservative, that is (at the present time) a Constitutional sense, than another stratum more elevated in social rank, was easily to be conceived. The Conservative Government believed, in a word, on a survey of the entire political field before them, that the body of men now admitted to the franchise were more likely, from a thousand varied influences, to take a broad view of the constitutional questions which would come before them, and to return men of large, liberal, independent, and thus truly conservative views as their representatives to Parliament than a higher class, intermediate between the late and the present constituency, strongly tinged with radical, if not democratic feeling, in whom Mr. Gladstone and the more ardent Liberals would have found strong, perhaps exclusive partisans—necessarily to the enhancement of that impetus towards Democracy which the patriot must, as I have shewn, necessarily deprecate. The Conservative Government therefore pierced through that sandy and unstable stratum to descend to more firm and solid ground as the basis on which—not to rebuild, far less to revolutionise, but to underpin the broad and comprehensive but many-sided fabric of the Constitution—that fabric which they wish to conserve as far as possible unimpaired in its beauty and harmony, its symmetry and its strength. In this, I submit, they have acted wisely, honestly, and fearlessly,—*wisely*, because everything that can retard the permanent depression of the Conservative or Tory element, and, along with that depression, the incidental depletion of the sister element of Constitutional Liberalism as distinct from Radicalism, is a prolongation of the political life and liberty of England, and the present measure offered (as the Conservatives thought) a fair

prospect of this double result,—*honestly*, because, amidst a thousand unexampled difficulties, keeping the interest of the country steadily in view, and disregarding every meaner consideration, they nobly humbled themselves to seek the co-operation of all parties in the House of Commons towards the achievement of this great work, which none could accomplish except themselves—a humility which inferred not a particle of humiliation, and which none but those incapable of such self-sacrifice would dare to qualify as such,—and in fine, *fearlessly*, inasmuch as they have reposed a bold and generous trust in the loyalty and patriotic sentiments of the people at large—confident that they would respond to this trust with correspondent frankness and sincerity. The measure was a bold, not a rash one ; it was a wise, because a constitutional one ; and it remains for the enfranchised classes to shew in future years that they are worthy of the political virtue and discernment with which the Conservatives have credited them.

2. *The Conservative opposition to the Disestablishment of the Irish Church.*—That this opposition is not unwarranted upon grounds involving the deepest interests of the nation may appear from the following considerations,—and it must not be supposed, because some of the positions may appear to be antiquated, or even novel, in an age (or rather during an interregnum) of religious, philosophical, and political scepticism, that they are the less sound. Some Conservatives may assert less, some more than what is here given, but the general argument may be summarised, I think, as follows :—

- i. That the disestablishment of the Protestant Established Church in Ireland involves in the issue (which is affirmed rather than denied by the Liberals) the disestablishment of the Protestant Established Churches



in England and Scotland. It is argued that it does not follow, because the one church is disestablished, that the others should be so likewise. Mr. Gladstone, in his speech at Ormskirk, contends to this effect with reference to the Church of England, that that church "cannot" and "ought not" to be disestablished,— "cannot," because that "perfect regard for vested rights" which would require to be satisfied in her deposition would cost the country from eighty to ninety millions; "ought not," because she is strong through her merits in the affections of "the bulk of the people." But the "cannot" proceeds on the untenable assumption that Mr. Gladstone's sense of justice would animate future parliaments, prone as they will be to confiscation in exact proportion to the prevalence of democratic ideas; and the "ought not" rests on mere sentiment, the vaguest, least stable, and most fallacious of all things—the sentiment of numbers, the will and pleasure *pro tempore* of a majority. There is no security in such safeguards.

- ii. That ancient wisdom and religious obligation alike prescribe the public profession and inculcation of religion by nations, that is, State-worship by Establishments—the favour of the Almighty towards the nation, as such, being understood to depend on this public recognition of faith and dependence upon Him. The worship of individuals, or of separate sects or communions, is private, not public, not official, not national worship. Mr. Disraeli's first proposal, Mr. Pitt's originally, to endow the Presbyterian and the Roman-Catholic as well as the Established Church, did not at least violate this obligation, or expose us to the danger of the Divine displeasure. Mr. Gladstone's, it is submitted, does. Our transatlantic kinsmen have tried the experiment now recommended to us; it remains to be seen whether God's answer to the challenge will ultimately warrant us in following the example. All authority, all experience hitherto, is against it. Mr. Gladstone's scheme would, it is to be apprehended, in its results secularise us as a nation,

and cut us off as a State from the membership of God's family on earth.

- iii. That Christianity—and Catholic, Œcumenical, or Apostolic as distinguished from Dissenting or Separatist Christianity—has a prior claim to national recognition and establishment. The criterion of truth is the same now as in the primitive ages, Apostolic Catholicity. It is truth, not numbers, that the State has in all ages looked to in establishing and maintaining the national worship of God. To maintain that national worship should veer about, like a weather-cock, to every changing blast of doctrine—to hold that the 'vox populi,' the opinion of numbers, the voice of a majority, should determine questions pertaining, not to the World of Knowledge but to the World of Faith—would be to assert the principle of the sophist Thrasymachus that 'Might makes Right.' The test of numbers, consistently carried out, would, were we chusing a religion for the world, substitute Buddhism for Christianity. "Gods such as guilt makes welcome" have always been the popular deities of mankind.
- iv. That the present Irish Church, the Protestant Establishment, is the ancient national Church of Ireland, which remained Catholic, Œcumenical, Apostolical, and independent of Rome from the primitive ages till the twelfth century, when the Pope overthrew her independence (after making over Ireland by a bull to the English crown), and maintained the usurpation till the sixteenth, at which time the church in question threw off the yoke, reclaimed her original independence, and reformed her doctrine—protesting against Roman novelties in the exercise of the ancient rights and according to the rule and standard of Œcumenical Catholicity. A majority dissented and adhered to the Papaey, but this was on their own responsibility, entailing consequences for which the mother church which they abandoned is not responsible. The Irish Church thus remains still what she was—Catholic, Apostolical, and independent of Rome now as she was previously to the invasion of the

English and the Papal usurpation in the twelfth century; in some places flourishing, in others a mere lodge in the wilderness; but still an altar set on every hill, where, even if but two or three are gathered together, prayers are put up and answered for the common weal of the Church, of the empire, and of mankind—still a witness in the land—still a beacon, a land-mark, and a banner for her dissentient children to rally to when education, freedom of thought, and repentance shall have taught them to value and reclaim their share in the heritage which at present they undervalue. Meanwhile, those dissentient children, the Roman-Catholics, are not taxed for her support. Descriptions of her by ultramontane advocates as “an ecclesiastical establishment endowed with the confiscated property of the ancient Church of our fathers”—words in Cardinal Cullen’s recent letter—are mere flourishes of a very vicious rhetoric—vicious in the true sense of *vitium*, hollowness and deficiency, as wanting in historical accuracy, the “ancient church” of Ireland having been always (except during the brief period of Papal usurpation) Catholic, not Roman-Catholic. “The argument against the Established Church,” I quote the words of the very anti-Conservative Dean of Elphin in his letter of July last, “grounded on the alleged ‘injustice’ of requiring Roman-Catholics to contribute to the support of a church of which they do not approve, is without foundation; they do not, as Roman-Catholics, contribute towards the support of the Irish Establishment; they merely pay a charge, and that on a greatly diminished scale, to which their property was subject before they became possessed of it; and the proof that this is the view taken of it by all parties is to be found in the fact that no party proposes to bestow the tithe rent-charge either on the landlord or the tenant,—if either landlord or tenant had a just claim on the tithe rent-charge no doubt there would be found some party in Parliament to advocate their claims.” Add to this, that the Church before the Reformation was chiefly served by the monasteries,

and when those were abolished, none of the monastic property was bestowed upon her, but, as in England and Scotland, upon the laity. Her glebe-lands were granted to her subsequently to the Reformation, and never belonged to the Roman-Catholics. While, even if everything the Church now holds could be proved to have been held by her (as it was not) before the Reformation, she would still, as above shewn, be entitled to it all in simple right as the ancient, national, Catholic, but protesting and emancipated Church of Ireland—the Roman-Catholics being there, as in England, dissenters from her Apostolical and Œcumenical rule and standard. No ‘injustice’ therefore attaches to the existence and maintenance of the Irish Church on this ground. The real ‘injustice’ would be to deprive the Roman-Catholics of their ancient Church, their rallying-point and city of refuge in the future. There would be unmistakable ‘injustice’ to the faithful few who remained staunch to their church, were we to punish them by church-disestablishment for the lapse of their less stable brethren—and ‘injustice’ too to the families of the English settlers who have adopted Ireland as their home on the faith of the maintenance of the Irish Church as the religious establishment of the country. No consideration is paid to the rightful claims of either of these bodies of men in the Liberal scheme.

- v. That, passing from the question of religious obligation, disestablishment of the Established Church in Ireland and England would lead to great moral evils by throwing the clergy upon their spiritual weapons, the artillery of terror, and betraying them and the laity into the successive phases of Enthusiasm, Fanaticism, and Spiritual Despotism. It was as a protection against such evils, and generally against the aggressive instincts of a priesthood, that the original establishment of the Catholic Church by Constantine and his successors, and all other church-establishments since, were designed, politically, to serve. This object is attained in the case of the Churches of England and Ireland by an arrangement or compact, binding

alike on Church and State so long as it continues; the State establishing and endowing the Church; the Church submitting herself to a system of doctrine and discipline agreed upon by herself in the first instance, but defined, sanctioned, and enforced by the civil law—which secures to each of the two great parties known as High Church and Low Church its several independence—each being allowed a large latitude as demanded by its constitutional importance, but each, on the other hand, balanced and checked by the other, and thus prevented from carrying its instinctive principle and passionate views into injurious and un-Catholic excess, the result being a sustained, healthy, and organic general vitality. But, disestablish the Church and thus terminate the compact—the Church then re-enters into full possession of her original powers, her spiritual sword; and—for, excellent of the earth as they are, the clergy are but men—nothing remains to prevent the excess of either party in their instinctive directions beyond the bounds of Catholic and Constitutional moderation. The immediate consequence of Disestablishment would be that the two parties of High Church and Low Church would start asunder in the inherent hostility of their principles; the Common-Prayer-Book, its text and its rubrics, would no longer be a standard for both, prescribed by law,—High Church and Low Church would add, abridge, or excise at their pleasure; Ritualism would press closer and closer to Rome, ultra-Evangelicalism nearer and nearer towards Protestant Dissent; every church would have its separate ‘use,’ and Congregationalism would practically usurp the place of “the Catholic and Apostolic Church” in England. Deprived of the *ποῦ στῶ* provided by the legal check on eccentricity, no room would be left for the man of moderate views and temperate counsels, the sound churchman, whether High Church or Low Church, of the present time, who atones by his wisdom and his independence for the extravagance of his more ardent brethren,—where competition is the general rule, and the clergy live by their congrega-

tions, the passions of those congregations determine the standard of their teachers; where there is no independence, men must be *ultra*, must maintain their influence by exciting and riding upon the storm of those passions, although without governing them,—otherwise they are left in the lurch. Men are not governed by temperate counsels in spiritual matters, but by working on their enthusiasm, on their fanaticism, till voluntarily—laity and clergy acting and reacting upon each other (and this would be peculiarly the case in a country densely peopled and of old traditions like England)—they submit themselves to that spiritual thralldom which, whether exercised in the halls of the Vatican or in a Presbyterian synod of the seventeenth century is incompatible with Liberty, either religious or civil. There is nothing new in all this,—the wisdom of other days, thought lightly of in the present, and that experience which can only be gathered by watching the issues of principles in events and investigating the causes which have occasioned laws to be made, alike testify that it is only in the alliance of Church and State on equal terms, each yielding somewhat to the other on the principle of ‘give and take,’ that either Church or State flourishes, or that Liberty, civil and religious, is secured. Liberty would be depressed by Church-Disestablishment in the exact ratio in which Order would be depressed through the prevalence of Democracy in the State; and it is in defence of the harmony and balance of the Constitution, thus menaced on both sides, that the Conservatives are consistently opposed to all such revolutionary innovation. It is hardly necessary to remark that, with a lower grade of clergy, which we must look for if the principle of disestablishment be inaugurated in Ireland and carried out in England, the temptations to the abuse of spiritual influence, in the direction of superstition, above pointed out, will be all the more powerful, and the mischief done greater.

- vi. That the present Established Church and other Presbyterian communions of Scotland and the Dissenting

communions in England and Ireland would suffer grievous deterioration from the disestablishment of the Established Church in England and Ireland, which, as a standard set on high and a witness in her Catholic capacity to both sides of truth as of equal importance, has contributed to their preservation from that materialistic and idealistic declension in the directions either of Socinianism or Rationalism to which Dissent naturally gravitates, and which their brethren, the Calvinists in France and at Geneva and the Lutherans in Germany had respectively reached by the close of last century,—to revive undoubtedly in the present, but mainly through the reaction to unintellectual mysticism.

- vii. That incidentally with the disappearance of a learned clergy, consequent upon disestablishment and the practical reduction of the Church to mere missionary proportions, the whole tone of religious teaching in the three kingdoms would degenerate; the laity would be deprived of the shield they have hitherto enjoyed against the dogmatism of Rome on the one hand and of Infidelity on the other through the controversial training of the clergy; the clergy, themselves, would, in proportion to their want of depth in theology, their utter ignorance of any comprehensive philosophy, and their nearer approximation in social rank to the masses of the people, become more and more open to influences materialistic and idealistic, in either case equally superstitious; while in the Dissenting communions this clerical degeneracy would indirectly promote the peculiar aberrations to which their several idiosyncrasies render them liable, as noticed in the preceding paragraph. Rome would thus be trebly armed in the controversy against the Anglican Church, Anglican Protestantism; Rationalism would become rampant from the opposite quarter,—theirs would be the gain, the triumph; and thus Mr. Gladstone's proposed measure would in its effects be the most fatal blow to the Reformation and to Christianity ever struck during the last three hundred years. Add to these considerations that Secular Education, an excellent

thing so far as it goes, can offer no protection against these results; Denominational Education can but pre-occupy the heart with personal piety,—it is only the culture of a profound theology by a learned clergy, from whom the working clergy (as they are called by an invidious distinction) receive that daily bread of doctrine which they dispense to their congregations, that can guard the popular mind from superstition. The seductions of error, the wiles of Duessa and Armida, are usually stronger, through human weakness and perversity, than the central path and sober attractions of truth. And, finally,

- viii. That the sacrifice of the Established Church in Ireland would be utterly thrown away; it would not pacify Ireland, that is, the Celtic and Roman-Catholic population of Ireland, their genuine demand being for autonomy, for separate government as an independent nationality, in “federal amity” with England, but (it is hardly disguised) as a republic—to which the treasonable cries of ‘No Queen! No Queen!’ heard the other day at the Rotunda in Dublin and the avowed proclivities of their leaders sufficiently testify,—with the ultimate view (as appears probable as well from the analogy of history as from other indications) of appropriating and apportioning the entire soil among the native race, the American-Irish included. England has as yet merely scratched the surface in attempting to reach the roots of Irish discontent; she must dig deeper if she would discover them. It is the land and not the church question that she has to deal with. The political struggles between Celt and Teuton have always turned fundamentally upon such matters as the right to the soil, the rules of marriage and legitimacy, of succession, of tenure, and of allegiance, as contrasted in the varying codes and customs of Celtic *versus* feudal and Teutonic law. The antagonism between the native Celtic race and the Saxon and Norman settlers who ultimately became dominant in Scotland was debated upon these questions in an alternation of armed insurrections and chronic discontent (gradually abating) from the twelfth to the sixteenth century; and the pro-



bability is, that dim traditions of a time when the land was the common property of the tribe, and the chief—represented now by the landlord—received merely a provision or aliment out of it, having no proprietary interest, linger on in the minds of a race so tenacious of ancient memories as the Irish, and animate, unconsciously to themselves, the present demands upon England. But, stopping short of the extreme conclusion, England must ask, when required to concede church-disestablishment, what farther extent will she be expected to go to in the effort to pacify her Celtic sister? It is above all things important to view this matter calmly, and under a sense of justice to England and the British Empire, generally, no less than to Ireland, Celtic Ireland, in particular. Under a generous abhorrence of what he believes Ireland to have undeservedly suffered at English hands during the last seven centuries, Mr. Gladstone has pledged himself to grant, not church-disestablishment only, but everything the Irish may ask. In replying at Wigan to the objection (tabled by himself) that “the Irish never will be satisfied, that they invent one demand after the other, and that any concession that is made to them only makes them keener to agitate for the next,” he answers by paralleling Ireland to a just creditor and England to a solvent debtor, and laying it down that “Ireland is entitled, in my judgment, to ask of England, not five shillings, nor ten, nor fifteen, but twenty shillings in the pound.” It remains to be seen whether the Liberals, and beyond the Liberals the country, will endorse this magnificent cheque upon the national exchequer. The very extravagance of such a pledge by a future premier renders it *per se* impossible that the sacrifice of the Irish Church should, in terms of the present point of the Conservative argument, pacify Ireland. The Conservative Government will doubtless (for I know nothing of its counsels) suggest what it may consider wise and equitable towards removing every just ground of complaint. But when the Irish demands are based and vindicated upon a broad charge of cruelty and injustice perpetrated and persevered in

for seven hundred years by the stronger against the weaker sister, it behoves England (for Scotland, I am happy to say, has no responsibility in the matter) to turn, thus upbraided, upon her accusers, and ask the question boldly, with the history of Europe in her hand, "Have I been so much to blame? Has Ireland, has the Irish race suffered more than other countries and races similarly situated have suffered and must inevitably suffer in the process of their being welded into nations? Has not my policy in other respects been that of self-defence, Ireland being the Pope's entrenched camp within the limits of the British empire, perpetually threatening my independence? I acted up to the light of the civilisation of the times, and have been neither better nor worse than my neighbours. For the last eighty years, it is admitted that I have done much for the good of Ireland." This is a point of view which has not as yet been done justice to, and which, not the Conservatives only, but Englishmen *en masse* (always prone to write bitter and sometimes unjust things against themselves) ought to take notice of. History, as usual, supplies the explanation of the whole difficulty, and suggests the remedy. The misfortune of Ireland, she tells us, has been that, unlike Gallic France, Celtiberian Spain, Cymraic England, and Gaelic Scotland, all of them fundamentally Celtic countries, Ireland was only half conquered, and that the native race has never become amalgamated with the Teutonic. That certain races, including the Celtic, only attain to the highest development they are capable of through subjection to and fusion with others stronger and more energetic (though not more admirable otherwise) than themselves, to the generation between them of a higher and more progressive race than either of the parent stocks, separately considered, is a law of nature; and till the Irishman ceases to fight against it—till he lends himself to the process of amalgamation in blood, in thought, and in common interest with his Teutonic brethren—till he accepts a destiny which, as shewn by the example of the kindred nations above enumerated, offers him a glorious future of development and pro-

gress, he must be content, according to the historical analogies thus indicated, to remain what he is, an anachronism in the nineteenth century—not a loving and beloved member, but a thorn in the side of the British empire. It is cruel to see a gallant people deluded by such expectations as those held out at Wigan into persistence in a recalcitration which, if pushed beyond patience-point, would change the present kindly spirit of the English people into bitter hostility. Englishmen are very liberal with other people's property, but, if touched in any tender point themselves, their sentimental sympathies shrivel up like a morning mist. There are no limits to human inconsistency. Meanwhile, England may be assured that nothing short of the subversion of the Anglo-Irish interest in Ireland, on the cry of 'Ireland for the Irish,' would satisfy the present race of Irish agitators; and as for the disestablishment of the Established Church, which Mr. Gladstone and the Liberals would fling to them as a peace-offering, the Celtic Cerberus would barely smell at the sop.

Lord Russell observed, in his speech on the Irish Church at St. James's Hall some months ago, that his "difficulty" in speaking on the subject of that church was "the difficulty of finding any arguments in defence of it." The difficulty of the Conservative would be to know where to stop,—so numerous are the contingencies, so wide-spread the issues to which, in their ramifications, these considerations point. Enough, at least, has been said to show that the Conservatives do not oppose the proposed disestablishment of the Irish Church without reasonable cause; that the Churchman, the Presbyterian, the Methodist, the Gallican Roman-Catholic (in so far as he dreads ultramontane despotism), and the tenderer of civil and religious liberty, are all interested in her preservation; and that, so far from "Protestantism and Popery" having "nothing whatever to do with the question" of the Irish Church when

“we get rid of prejudices” and “simply look at the pith and kernel” of the matter, as urged by Mr. Bright at Edinburgh, the problem—like all such political problems—is complicated and deep far beyond the superficial or partial glance, and ought not to be dealt with in the fury of popular passion or under the influence of the softer seductions of sentiment, but on the paramount and sole consideration of imperial interest, — never forgetting that every member of a composite nationality like ours is expected to abate somewhat of its claims, real or supposed, towards the common good in return for the benefits it receives, or may receive, from cordial acceptance of an amalgamation such as that through which England and Scotland, at least, are content to coalesce into the undivided unity of Britain. Would that Mr. Bright, who thinks so lightly of the question as between “Protestantism and Popery,” could listen to what is being said around me at this moment by Ultramontanes and liberal Roman-Catholics of Italy,—the former expressing their delight at the near prospect of the Pope recovering in England what he has lost in Italy and Spain—viewing the disestablishment of the Irish Church as the beginning of the end of Anglican Protestantism ; the latter warning us against the Papacy as a political far more than an ecclesiastical ‘governo,’ but doubly to be dreaded on that account ! The fate of the Irish Church is watched with the deepest interest here as significative of the future relations of England and Rome.

If then—to sum up my vindication of the second of my three propositions, as stated at the commencement of this letter—the Conservatives and their Government have acted, as has been shewn, in the true interests of the Constitution in passing a large and generous measure of Reform, basing the suffrage on the broadest

foundation compatible with political responsibility ; and if they stand justified by the considerations above summarised in opposing the proposal of Mr. Gladstone to disestablish the Irish Church, and thus inaugurate a principle at variance (as has been shewn) with obligation to God, with the interests of religion, with the dues of civil (always bound up with religious) liberty, and with the time-honoured policy of this great empire ; then, I submit, they have acted at once wisely and honestly, and fearlessly too, in every step they have as yet taken—as true patriots—fulfilling an obligation which nothing but a sense of duty would induce high-minded English gentlemen to undertake ; and I claim for them, whether in office or out of office, the sympathy and respect of the Liberals themselves as the due of men who have devoted their time, their thoughts, their experience, and their credit to the maintenance, as best they might, of the landmarks of the Constitution against the influx of democracy that threatens to overwhelm and confound them.—My third proposition is as follows,—

III. *That the principles of the Conservative, fundamentally opposed to those of the Liberal, are as clear and decided now as ever, and that nothing can obliterate that distinction, each of the two parties representing a counter element of human nature.*—This proposition has been incidentally proved, I think, in every sentence of the preceding paragraphs. Some further illustration may however be added here, partly with a view to the moral which I propose to point upon a review of the entire argument, and partly with reference to the charge of inconsistency and of varying and (as represented) dishonest counsels constantly objected, and not by Mr. Gladstone only, against the Conservative party. It is

far better to face and to trample such attacks under foot, once for all, than to give them the go by.

The Conservative represents the Imaginative as the Liberal does the Reasoning element—I might call them the Aristotelic and Platonic elements—in the Intellect or higher life of the nation—the former (as I have previously said) struggling for the rights of Order, the latter for those of Liberty—principles essentially distinct, yet equally important to Constitutional Government, which springs from their reconciliation or compromise. There can but be approximation to an absolute ideal, and Constitutional Government shares in the imperfection ; but the compromise is more equal and more just, the ideal more nearly attained to, in the British Constitution than in any other hitherto developed among mankind ; and thus the nations of the Continent have been wont to point to it as the supreme expression of polity, the proudest national heritage on earth. The prominent distinction between the two parties through whose antagonism this constitutional compromise has been generated lies in their contrary views of Power. To the Conservative, and especially to the British Conservative, Power, as proceeding and delegated from God to Man, accepted and ratified by Man in law, and expressed in the political constitution of his country, is a sacred trust ; and, while fully recognising the rule of growth, maturity, and decay inherent in all sublunary things, he stands (as I have already stated) upon the presumption that institutions which have upon the whole worked well, to the general good, from antiquity to the present time bear the stamp of excellence and, although not unsusceptible of improvement, ought not to be carelessly tampered with or set aside. With the Liberal, and especially the British Liberal, Power ascends from the People. There is to him small sanctity in prescription ;

the wisdom of age is of little account beside the enthusiasm, the generous but somewhat presumptuous enthusiasm of youth ; prepossessions to him are prejudices ; the notions of the hour, lightly taken up, run away with his judgment ; he marches with airy step where angels might fear to tread ; and he refers all things, like German philosophers, to the criterion of his inner consciousness, of his individual sense of what is just and right, judging of matters by the light of the moment and in the interest of the hour, treating everything (it is his boast) on its own merits, and those its superficial merits, in neglect of the deeply interlaced relations of things below the surface, with but little regard to the experience of the past, and apparently in indifference (it would be hard to say, wilful blindness) to the long train of consequences which must follow upon adoption of the measures he advocates. In his gilded barge, hope at the prow and fortune at the wheel, he speeds gaily along on the political Nile, amid the applause of the millions that crowd its banks, easily reconciling himself to the situation wherever circumstances compel him to shoot a more decided rapid towards the cataract of democracy—never, in fact, seriously realising the bourne to which he is tending. There is something suggestive at once of pleasure and sorrow in watching such a course ; it is impossible not to sympathise with all that is generous, free, and hopeful in the enthusiastic Liberal, his zeal for progress, his faith in the perfectibility of man, his confidence in the ultimate victory of good over evil. But the calmer eye, the more chastened heart, the broader view of the Conservative—an elder, if not a wiser man—cannot consent to yield to the impulse of the hour and risk on the chances of a throw principles and institutions which, once forfeited, can never, he knows, be re-vindicated or re-established. He

may be too cautious, as the Liberal may be too bold,—it is for the two Houses of Parliament and the Sovereign, as representing the National Unity, to strike the wise and equitable medium; but the presumption of right—this much I may say with confidence—must always, in the third and declining epoch of a country, be on the side of the Conservative with respect to each great constitutional question that emerges from debate, till the national fiat has been pronounced, for good or for evil. He must then review his ground, and make his dispositions anew, in the interest of the trust confided to him, the defence of things as they are, of the Constitution as *pro tempore* it is.

It is at such moments of constitutional crisis, when parties occasionally appear to the superficial observer to have changed sides—when a Tory ministry, for example, concedes political emancipation to the Roman-Catholics—when, as the other day, a Conservative ministry terminates a period of protracted agitation, a political dead-lock, by passing a measure of Reform at which the Whigs from their peculiar point of view stand aghast through the distrust they feel of those classes in whom the Conservatives repose confidence as loyal to the Constitution—or when, as in a case instanced by Mr. Gladstone, an individual member of the Conservative party, bewildered by the situation, appears to have started strange heresies in the excitement of the moment, unworthy in truth of serious notice—it is at such times that the questions are often asked in broader terms than even Mr. Gladstone has used, ‘What difference is there practically between Conservative and Liberal? Have the Conservatives any principle at all?’ The answer to such questions is easily given, and Mr. Gladstone has himself anticipated it in his picture to the Wigan Liberals of “the great Liberal



army of the country” pressing its way with determination, strength, and courage, “from stage to stage,” through what he believes to be the “disordered ranks” of the Conservative party, towards the object they aim at—What? While the Whigs are, in a political point of view, an attacking and a stronger army, menacing the citadel of the Constitution, the Conservatives are an army of defence, weaker, and fighting in these latter days at a disadvantage. The tactics of the two parties are thus of a wholly different character, in the one case simplicity itself, in the other very complex—the latter consequently more prone to error, more liable to misconstruction when right, more difficult at all times to be understood. The policy and action of the Liberal leader is consistent, in one direction, impelled onward by a motive power such as the floods that are at present sweeping away the bridges, destroying the roads, and desolating the pleasant vineyards amongst which I am writing. But while the policy, or rather principle, of a Conservative leader is plain, as a defender of the Constitution, his action is hampered by every difficulty and his path beset by every peril,—it needs the strategic skill of a consummate general to maintain his ground. Sometimes he has to seize a position in advance, or carry the war boldly into the enemy’s quarters—more often he has to fall back, like a Fabius or a Wellington, from post to post—when a measure is carried against his will, he must acquiesce, and he honestly acquiesces, in the accomplished change; but the modifications thus successively effected, in spite of his better judgment, in the territory which, by common consent, becomes after every such change the still further restricted and thus the more disadvantageous area of contention constantly necessitate a change of tactics; what he struggled against yesterday may become under

altered circumstances the necessity of to-day, what was inexpedient then may be expedient now, for the protection of the Lares and Penates under his charge. He must, in a word, in military phrase, adopt a fresh and broader basis of operations on every such occasion. Were this essential distinction between the political warfare of Whig and Tory appreciated there would be less misconstruction of the action of the Conservative party, less surprise at superficial inconsistencies, apparent variations, in their policy; nor would any but political novices ask such questions as those above indicated. To such, and on the general subject of the proposition which is my present thesis, and which I trust I have sufficiently vindicated, I reply in one word thus:—The question between Whig and Tory is decided and distinct as heaven from earth—warfare sharp and unremitting, but in all courtesy and honesty, for honour, in the discharge of duty—the watchword of the former being Liberty, of the latter Order—each equally eager for the public good; the Sovereign, as representing the entire nation, presiding over the field of contest. Nothing can obliterate these essential distinctions.

Such are my three propositions and their proof, to wit, I. That it is the duty of the patriot to be a Conservative in this third stage of England's history; II. That the present Government are doing their best, honestly, wisely, and fearlessly, to fulfil this patriotic duty; and, III. That the difference between Conservative and Liberal is one, not of degree in similarity, but of principle in contrast, each of them representing an antagonistic force of nature—the object and struggle of the Conservatives being, broadly, to withstand that too rapid advance of the tide of democracy which, in their opinion, threatens to swamp the Constitution.

And on a review of these propositions I submit that I am justified in meeting Mr. Gladstone's sweeping charge of want of principle—his assertion that “the Conservative or Constitutional creed . . . is . . . not to support any one measure or any one institution; it is not to be bound to the maintenance of any one principle; it is simply this—to this article I believe there will be a rigid adherence—it is to intend to vote for maintaining Her Majesty's Government in power”—with an emphatic negative.

---

The moral, a threefold one, which I would draw from the preceding considerations and commend to the attention of both parties in the State, but more especially to the Liberal party, is as follows:—

(1.) The vitality of the Conservative party, the recognition of their patriotism, and their support by the nation in full and co-equal strength and esteem with the Liberal party, are matter of life and death to England at all times, but pre-eminently so at the present day. These two great parties are like two fair and symmetrical columns which support the British Constitution,—like blind Sampson at Gaza, you may pull either of them down, but you will die with the Philistines in doing so. In the present lengthening evening, as yet a calm and placid one, of England's glory, the Conservative column is the weaker of the two, not through its own fault but the nation's constitutional defect in the inevitable tendency of her decline; and if I urge therefore with anxiety and earnestness that, having an onerous and unpopular duty to fulfil, the Conservatives have a claim to national gratitude for their constancy, and to the sympathy and support of the people at large, and of the Whigs or Constitutional

Liberals in particular, in their struggle to do their prescribed duty, I say so—or rather a Conservative leader would say so—in no tone of deprecation or apology, but on equal terms of dignity and right.

(2.) If such wise mutual understanding between the two parties ought in reason to be expected, especially in days like these, and is in fact demanded of them in the interest of the entire nation by moderate men, nothing, it is evident, can tend more to defeat such mutual understanding than imputations—I would give worlds to think that the final clause of Mr. Gladstone's charge, as just quoted, did not infer such—unworthy imputations of sordid motives by the leaders and spokesmen of the one party to the rank and file if not to the leaders of the other. Here too it is better to take the bull by the horns, and explain in what sense the Conservatives, leaders and followers, aspire to office. If the Conservative leaders, as the leaders of every political party must in turn do, aspire to office, or, when in office, seek by the national suffrage to be maintained there, it is, broadly speaking, for the honour of serving their Queen and country, for the opportunity of usefulness afforded them by ministerial power to promote the public good—not for personal aggrandisement, and least of all for the loaves and fishes of the official dining-table,—although, be it remembered, if the rank and file of the Conservative party have no share, for ever so short a sitting, in those same loaves and fishes, many of the young and able men who would naturally belong to it will take part with the popular side—a contingency to be deprecated by the wiser Liberals themselves as further weakening the cause of Order, depriving them of the main let to their own democratisation, and thus double-wise precipitating the national decay. Such imputations, in fact, cut two

ways, and cannot be vented without great risk of sapping the confidence reposed in those who utter them by the temperate men of a party, without whose support the strength of a leader is often found but as a rope of sand. Would the Conservatives, I would ask of such intemperates, be worth their salt if they did not believe in themselves, if they did not fearlessly say to the nation, 'Our rule would be more for the public interest than that of the Liberals?' And if so, if you allow this, why impute degrading motives? Democratised the country if you will—and can; dispense with a Queen, abolish the Lords, disown the Church, reduce your defensibility to that of a hermit-crab, without a shell, be an United States of Lilliput—every man out of Bedlam has the power to cut his own throat if he pleases—but if such be *not* your objects, speak not, I would entreat you, evil of dignities, of the representatives of great national trusts which exist but for the public good, and who would scorn to ask for respect or deference on any meaner consideration. Meanwhile, till that nadir of national debasement be reached, the predominant, unselfish anxiety of the Conservatives—seldom likely now-a-days, in the very nature of their position, to attain to office—will be, when there, to contribute by their counsels and measures to maintain the crown on the Queen's head, to preserve our ancient institutions from destruction, to vindicate old principles, old truths, from careless dispraise—in short, to stave off as long as possible the engulfment of this grand old British empire in the earthquake of licence and anarchy that awaits her—I do not say to-day or to-morrow, or next day, but ultimately,—and this is no imaginary or alarmist prospect, for the true statesman's eye ranges over, not seventy but a thousand years; he is in every respect the contemporary of his nation's

history. This is the plain issue before us at the present moment, at the election and meeting of this new Parliament—not the mere personal struggle between two leaders, to which those who fawn on America would fain reduce the dimensions of the present contest. My words and warning extend far beyond such limited bounds; nor do they apply merely to the particular question which just now divides the counsels of the nation.—Lastly,

(3.) If the existence and vitality of the Conservative party be, as I have shewn, a matter of life and death to Britain in the present day—and if the tendency of the Liberal leaders be, as now manifested, to betray their followers into a state of things in which the traditional courtesies of political life are forgotten, imputations are flung out which touch the honour of gentlemen, and amount in fact to an indictment against half a nation, half, at least, of the intelligence of the British nation; and if, at the back of all this, the mob are to be called in as referees and arbiters—if such be the premonitory symptoms of the turn affairs are taking in the downward direction under the present Liberal leaders—then, I say, that it has indeed become high time for the honest and independent Liberal to ask himself the question whether, in the face of all this—in the view of what is going on in Europe, and of what recent revelations have shewn to be festering oeneath the surface of English society and breaking out into foul ulcers on the face of British life—it has not become his duty to transfer his allegiance and side with the party which has become identified with the cause of national salvation? I address this as to one man in five hundred, or five thousand, each such man being worth millions to the cause of Order through the qualities of thoughtfulness, principle, and moral

courage which such transfer of party allegiance in deference to the superior law of duty to the Constitution would testify to. The time will come at last.—God forbid that I should see it in my day!—the ‘Cave’ was a foreshadowing of it—when the Liberals, as a body, will learn too late the lessons they at present despise; and then the remnant of the Conservatives and the Liberals will coalesce at last into one constitutional party—but it will be in opposition to the Radicalism, if not the Red Republicanism which the Liberals at present permit their leaders to coquet with; and when it has come to this, that the political struggles of a nation are between, not the twin and rival elements of its intellect, in the antagonism of which lies the life, and progress, and glory of humanity, but between its Intellect in the gross and the brute force of its Mob, *c’en est fait*—it may recover after awhile; it may enjoy a brief St. Martin’s summer; but, practically, the game is up for ever with such a people.

---

What then, in conclusion, I would especially plead for at the present moment, when this new House of Commons is about to meet—is mutual respect between the two great parties of Conservative and Liberal, the growing dereliction from which, as manifested recently both in leaders and subordinates, is a bad feature of the time. One of the marks of a declining nation is contempt, real or affected, for political opponents, replacing the generous and chivalric esteem for them which characterised its better days. Language such as we have not been accustomed to on this side the Atlantic has been used, and epithets and reproaches flung, in and out of Parliament—especially, I must

say, against the Conservative party—which are much to be deprecated, which injure those who use them far more in the long run than those to whom they are applied. The law of charity applies to politics as well as to private life; and the inculcation and practice of that law as binding upon all sides should be coupled with enforcement of the lesson (still to be learnt by the ‘schoolmaster’ of this nineteenth century) that Knowledge is mere force, brute and anarchical, but Wisdom is Power, a living, healing, governing intelligence—that Knowledge is from below, but Wisdom from above—that Knowledge divides, to misery and to death, but Wisdom combines, for happiness and immortality—and that Political Wisdom consists, not in party or self-seeking, not in setting man against man, class against class, but in the pursuit of Harmony as the law and end of national existence, and in the furthering it by that charity of God which recognises the equal claims of Conservative and Liberal in the great account, and credits a Russell and a Gladstone no less than a Derby or a Disraeli (Mr. Bright’s ultimate place is as yet dubious) with honesty and sincerity as statesmen in their contentions at Westminster.

---

Oh! Gladstone, Gladstone! born for better things;  
 Why ’mong vile potsherds soil thy silver wings?  
 Fling off Democracy’s ignoble chain,  
 And, soaring, seek thy native skies again!

*Florence, 11th November, 1868.*









