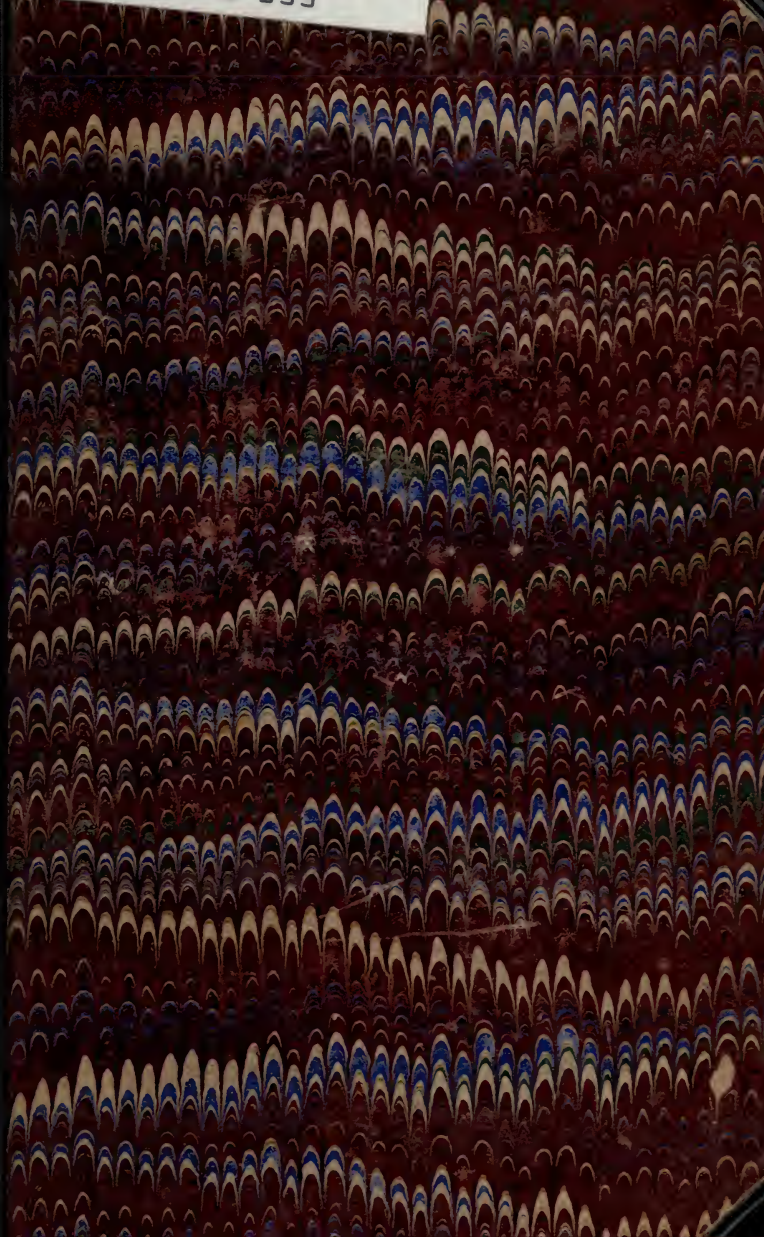




B 3 046 355





*John Eustace Grubbe.*



EX LIBRIS



Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2007 with funding from  
Microsoft Corporation

OUGHT, OR OUGHT NOT

THE

CHURCH OF ROME IN IRELAND

TO BE ESTABLISHED?

THE QUESTION CONSIDERED

IN A LETTER

TO THE

RIGHT HON. SIR R. PEEL, BART.,

FIRST LORD OF THE TREASURY, &c. &c.

BY A.M. OXONIENSIS.

LONDON:

JOHN OLLIVIER, 59, PALL MALL.

1843.

TO BE HAD OF THE AUTHOR

1818

THE HISTORY OF THE

TO BE RETAINED

THE QUESTION

IN A LETTER

1818

TO THE HON. SIR J. BURKE

OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

BY A. M. OXLEY

LONDON

JOHN OLLIVER, 55, FLEET STREET

1818



## A LETTER,

*&c. &c.*

SIR,

THE question is now so frequently agitated in the upper classes in society, and by the public press, that it becomes every British subject, who has Parliamentary influence, to consider, whether the Church of Rome in Ireland ought to be established or not?

You, Sir Robert, I am convinced, have deliberated upon this question, and know so well the difficulties which beset it, when viewed either in the affirmative or—as many think—even in the negative, that you will not refuse to listen to an expression of opinion on the part of a brother member of your own University. He asks simply, what he knows you are willing to give to any reasonable

statement affecting the public welfare, a candid and impartial attention to a few of the arguments which have weighed with his own mind.

Regarded as a religious question, there can be no doubt that the establishment of its opponent is not likely to encourage any system of religion. A weight is thrown into the scale which, in any age, will preponderate over much that may be adverse. Establish a Church and you add to it the influential support and advocacy of the State. In the instance of a State powerful as our own this is the addition of no small momentum. Besides, in establishing a Church the State at once recognizes what that Church teaches as not being altogether erroneous. It stamps upon the doctrine, if not the seal of its complete approbation, at least the mark of its favor. The wealth also and thereby the influence of the Church are in a measure increased. Take, as an instance, the American Episcopal Church. Possessed of the same advantage of a well ordered machinery, and exposed to less rancorous attacks, how is it that the American Episcopal Church has acquired so little influence over the population of the States, in comparison with the influence enjoyed by the Episcopal



Church in this country? Simply, as I apprehend, because it has not the advantage of the exclusive support of the State. Now, of course, it will be said that the case is not parallel, because the American Church is not only not exclusively supported, but is altogether unsupported by the State; whereas, if the Roman Church in Ireland were to be established, it would be only a joint establishment with that already existing. But, on the other hand, it is the *exclusive* support given by a State which adds strength to a Church, as evincing the perfect confidence felt by the State in the teaching of that Church. Let another Church be also established, the confidence of the State is supposed to be shaken, and the affection of the people is shaken with it. Indirectly a slur is cast upon the previously established Church.

Again, in Ireland there is a peculiar difficulty attending the co-establishment of the Roman Church, because the Established Church of Ireland maintains that the Roman Church teaches error, that some of her doctrines are "blasphemous fables and dangerous deceits," "and that the Church has erred not only in her living and manner of ceremonies but also in matters of faith." Articles XXXI. XIX. Whether these expressions be defensible or not is another

question, but whilst they remain in her Articles of faith, as being the deliberate dicta of the Church of Ireland, they form, as it seems to me, an insuperable barrier against the co-establishment of a Church, which is thus condemned by the Church already established.

It has been alleged by persons, whose knowledge of history is competent, that Almighty God has blessed or withdrawn his blessing from this country, since the Reformation, in the exact ratio of her efforts in opposition to or in behalf of the Church of Rome. I know not how far this assertion is supported in every instance by the fact; yet, if the Reformation be, as we believe it to be, a Divine interference for the purifying and benefiting of God's Church, it might be expected, from the analogy of His dealings with nations, that He would give His blessing, wherever His plan should be carried out by human agency, and withdraw that blessing, wherever it should be wilfully thwarted.

But you, Sir, must already have viewed this question in the light of religion, and therefore it is not needful for me to add more. That you perceive the importance of regarding it in this point

of view, I have no doubt. A man, whose private life is regulated by the pure principles of Christianity, knows too well the duty of weighing public affairs in the scale of religion to hesitate in applying the same test to the conduct of governments, which he applies to the actions of individuals.

I would then simply regard the question as one affecting the civil interests of the community.

The object proposed in the payment of the Roman Priests in Ireland is, as I suppose, threefold—to remove the seeming anomaly of a large majority being taxed to support a Church which belongs to the minority—to lessen the authority which the Roman Priesthood possess over their flocks, and to bring the former more under the control of the government—and lastly, to lighten, in a measure, the burden under which the Roman Catholic population of Ireland now labours, in the heavy taxation of fees for the performance of ecclesiastical rites.

With reference to the first object, may not it be more plausible than real? The population of Ireland is not to be alone regarded. By the Union the two countries have become one. The Churches



are now the United Church of England and Ireland. The population, therefore, of the united country is to be the standard, and this amounts, in round numbers, exclusive of Scotland, to 24,000,000. Of English Dissenters there are about 2,200,000, of Irish, including the Presbyterians, 660,000 ; and estimating the Romanist population of England and Ireland at 7,500,000, which is rather more than their actual number, we leave a proportion of 7,500,000 Romanists to upwards of 13,500,000, who are members of the United Church, a proportion of not much more than one-half. In these days, when the proverb is almost realised in respect of theology, "*Quot homines tot sententiæ*," this preponderance of the members of the State Church, is as large as it could reasonably be expected to be ; and, therefore, the seeming hardship, of which the Irish Romanists complain, is not such in reality.

But I would suggest a further question, viz. Whether the Romanist majority in Ireland, can be said, with truth, to be taxed for the payment of the Protestant clergy? The tithe is a land-tax, and it is the landlord, in fact, who pays it. Under the

old law, the Irish tenant calculated the outgoings of tithe in the valuation of the land, which he was about to take on lease, and deducted accordingly. Under the new law, the rent charge falls upon the landlord, who may indeed charge it again upon the tenant; but the tenant will have the opportunity, in turn, when he renews his lease, of charging it back upon his landlord, who, in the issue, must pay. Now, as the Protestant landlords are to the Romanist as fifteen to one, the far greater proportion of the tithe paid to the Protestant clergy in Ireland, comes from the Protestant gentry, so that the majority of the Romanist population have no right to complain. And again, the permanent residence of a gentleman of some property amongst them, in the person of the clergyman of the parish, must obviously be productive of great advantage to the Romanist population, who will benefit by the expenditure of his income, and by the increased inducement held out, by his society and ministrations, to other opulent families to settle in the neighbourhood.

In reference to the second object proposed, I would suggest, that it is not so easy to restrain



under secular authority the priesthood of the Roman Church. Past experience and history prove that the civil power has never been able to soothe them into quiet submission, when, in fundamental principles, it has differed from them. I would instance Prussia. You, Sir Robert, well know that the system adopted in Rhenish Prussia, of a Government provision for the Roman clergy, has not freed the Prussian government from unpleasant interference, and even determined opposition on the part of the stipendiary priesthood. The experiment has proved any thing but successful there. Why should it be more likely to prove successful in Ireland?

Again: Where is the money to be obtained? The funds of the Irish Church are not in a condition to supply the required amount, nor would a Conservative administration advise that, if superabundant, they should be appropriated to such a purpose. The British exchequer exhibits no surplus. The Parliament of the United Kingdom is unable, in consequence of the poverty of the country, to vote even a small grant out of the public monies for the

important object of Church extension, of a provision for the spiritual wants of an ignorant population rising around us, to the peril of our safety as a nation.

The Roman priests in Ireland, are in number four thousand. Suppose that £200. per annum were assigned to each. From whence are the £800,000. to be procured? Suppose that less be offered. The present incomes of the Roman clergy in Ireland are estimated, at the very lowest computation, at £300. per annum for each priest. Will £100. per annum satisfy?—Will £200?—Must not the Government stipend overmatch the income derived from fees, either to make it worthy the priest's acceptance, or to enable the Government to retain control?

It may, however be said, "Let us try the experiment; the priests will refuse the offer, and then the burden will be put off upon their shoulders. We shall be exempted from seeming partiality in the administration of the Government in Ireland, and they will be silenced in their clamour on the score of injustice."

But is not the experiment dangerous? Will they refuse? Do men who intend to refuse a gift when offered, generally refuse it before it be offered? Usually men do not dislike the offer being made, although they may afterwards reject it; and even if they have made up their minds, they wait till it comes, and then refuse. This is the natural and straightforward manner of acting. It avoids the risk of refusing what may not be offered.

But mark the conduct of the Roman bishops in Ireland. They call a meeting, and draw up formal resolutions, indignantly rejecting what has never been offered. Surely, Sir Robert, this conduct of theirs is suspicious! I am convinced, that, as a man of singular discernment, you must have seen, more quickly than most men, through the disguise. It is a mere "*ruse de guerre.*" It reminds me much of a well known beggar, who, although ever in courteous and grateful terms, refused the alms, for which she was, all the while, eagerly holding out her hand.

The Church of Rome never yet rejected money. From the days of Leo the Tenth, to our own day,

rapacity, the term is not too strong,\* has marked her character as a religious system. The love of money has been one of the chief banes of that unhappy church. I feel certain that the offer would be accepted, and assuredly, upon the mere contingency of its being accepted, the risk attending the acceptance of the proposal should be duly weighed.

I ask then, lastly, will the poor of Ireland be relieved from the present burdensome taxation of ecclesiastical fees? and I contend, in reply, that they will not be relieved; for it will not be possible for the State to offer a sufficient stipend to the Roman clergy, to prevent them from continuing to take fees.

Suppose that a stipend of £200. per annum, each, were granted to them, they will not be willing to surrender £100. per annum, of their present incomes, nor *would it be right to demand of them such a sacrifice.* They will continue to take fees, for this no Government can prevent. At first, in-

\* Professor Ranke's "Lives of the Popes," Book I. chap. ii. *passim.*



deed, the scale of these fees may be moderated, but we remember that quaint adage, "*Crescit amor nummi, quantum ipsa pecunia crescit.*" And, that the adage will, in this instance, prove true, I feel no doubt. The Government stipend will be quietly pocketed, and, in the end, the fees with it, so that the poor of Ireland will not be benefited; and a considerable accession of wealth and of influence will accrue to a Church which our own, Sir Robert, declares to be teaching "blasphemous fables and dangerous deceits;" and by whose teaching the souls of our fellow-countrymen in Ireland are already sufficiently endangered.

Let me request you to consider also the influence which the seeming encouragement of Romanism will give to Tractarianism within the pale of our own Church. It will refine away a portion of the line of distinction at present existing between the Churches. A clergyman maintaining Romanist sentiments, and continuing in the Anglican or the Hibernian Church will be but holding the opinions of a Church acknowledged equally and established by the State; and in passing from the one to the



other, no difficulty upon the score of appearances, or of pecuniary loss, will interfere to prevent. In fact, few measures could be proposed which would more facilitate the plans, further the efforts, and strengthen the hands of the Tractarian party, which, as the laity of our Church as well as the clergy, are now aware, is already too strong for the welfare of the State, or the peace of the Church.

I have the honour to be,

SIR ROBERT,

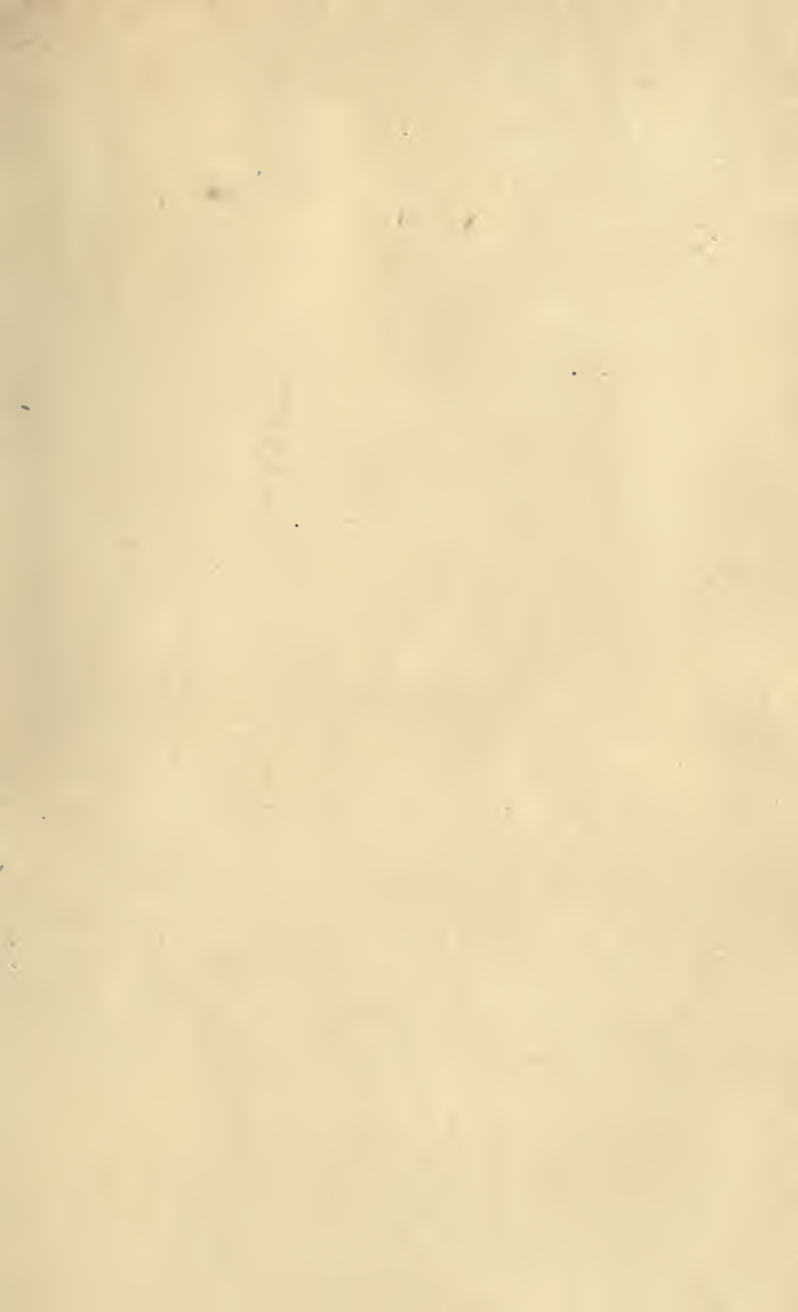
Your very faithful servant,

A MASTER OF ARTS OF

THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD.

*Dec. 13th.*





14 DAY USE  
RETURN TO DESK FROM WHICH BORROWED  
**LOAN DEPT.**

This book is due on the last date stamped below, or  
on the date to which renewed.  
Renewed books are subject to immediate recall.

MAR 20 1967 9

RECEIVED

MAR 5 '67 - 1 PM

LOAN DEPT.

MAY 1 1969 48

FEB 07 1997

REC. MOFFITT NOV 14 '9

RECEIVED

APR 17 '69 - 3 PM

LOAN DEPT.

MAY 21 1969 09

JUN 6 '69 - 3 PM

REC'D LD JUN

NOV 13 1970 04

REC'D LD OCT 3 070 - 12 AM 8

LD 21A-60m-7,'66  
(G4427s10)476B

General Library  
University of California  
Berkeley

U. C. BERKELEY LIBRARIES



C057938897

871786

AC1

M5

47

~~AC1~~

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY



