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PASTORAL LETTER

OF THE

ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY

ON THE

NATIONAL CHURCH

AND THE WORK OF THE

CHURCH DEFENCE INSTITUTION.

## THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY AND THE NATIONAL CHURCH.

LAMBETH PALACE, S.E.

May 11, 1881.

My Reverend Brethren, and My Brethren of the Laity,

Attention has been recently called to certain "*Practical Suggestions relative to the Disestablishment and Disendowment of the Church of England*," circulated by the Liberation Society, a body which has risen to considerable political importance, and which has committed itself to an almost fanatical hatred of all Established Churches.

I find in the programme issued by this body, on page 11, the following, amongst other, proposals as to the Church of England; that, as soon as may be, Cathedrals, Abbeys, and other monumental buildings should be placed under national control, and be maintained for such uses as Parliament may from time to time determine; that all old Churches, meaning thereby Churches built before the year 1818, should be vested in a parochial board to be elected by the ratepayers, which board should have power to deal with them for the general benefit of the parishioners, power of sale being given.

Taking these proposals as specimens of the legislation which the advocates of Disestablishment desire, I think we have some reason to be thankful for the plainness of their utterances. It is quite possible that many persons, not fully acquainted with the real designs of this body, may have incautiously acted or spoken in such a manner as to give the impression that they were to some degree in sympathy with its miscalled liberal designs; but the overwhelming majority of the people of this country looks, I am persuaded, with no favour on the project which the body I allude to is formed to promote, and its intentions have only to be clearly stated that they may be repudiated by both the great political parties in the kingdom. Meanwhile the fanatical spirit which has dictated the programme of the Liberation Society must not be despised because its recognised supporters may be comparatively few.

In page 15 of the "*Practical Suggestions*," to which I have referred, we read: "It has been already stated that these suggestions are not to be regarded as an exhaustive statement of the various points which would require to be dealt with in connection with



the Disestablishment of the English Church. It is necessary to add that there are also subjects, which, though popularly associated with such a change, have no necessary connection with it. The most important of these is the Succession to the Crown, under what is known as the Act of Settlement. The exclusion of members of the Roman Catholic Church from the throne of Great Britain is a political, quite as much as an ecclesiastical question, and must be dealt with on its own merits. It was left untouched when the Irish Establishment was abolished, and may, in like manner, be left untouched when those of England and Scotland are disestablished also."

Now, it may be perfectly true that the English people are as little prepared, at the present moment, for giving effect to the destructive theories of this Society in reference to strictly ecclesiastical arrangements as they are to embark on that other important subject, which is foreshadowed by the above statement, viz., the re-opening of the question of the Succession to the Crown under what is known as the Act of Settlement. It is now, however, obvious that the earnestness with which these views are propagated can no longer be safely ignored by any well-wisher of his country. Large sums of money have been subscribed to further the dissemination of these and such-like principles throughout the land. Not only in great towns, but in small country towns and villages, Lecturers of the Liberation Society gather together meetings, often of very illiterate persons, to whom they recommend such schemes as I have mentioned by exaggerated statements as to the condition and working of the Established Church.

It constantly happens that this work is systematically carried on in towns or parishes without even coming to the knowledge of those who would be competent to answer the unscrupulous statements which are sown broadcast among the less educated of our people. The newspapers advocating the views of the Liberation Society, many thousand copies of which are circulated weekly throughout the whole kingdom, are not usually read by persons able or willing to refute by a plain statement of facts the allegations they contain.

Churchmen have thought, and wisely, that the best defence of their Church was to be found in the quiet, conscientious discharge of duty; and every Clergyman and layman attached to the Church of England will do well to remember that if he fails in his religious duties he thereby strengthens the hands of those who seek to destroy his Church. Still, it will not, in my judgment, be wise longer to overlook the attempts which are certainly

now being systematically made, with vigour and perseverance, in so many neighbourhoods, to pervert the judgment and alienate the loyal regard of our people.

The Church Defence Institution is ready to give whatever assistance is desired in order to meet these attacks. While scrupulously avoiding all agitation in the many places in which we are thankful to believe there is peace, its object is to supply in a cheap, popular, and convenient form, sound and accurate information as to the history and condition of the National Church, and, when required, to furnish competent Lecturers, who may follow the agents of the Liberation Society in their inroads, and expose the fallacies they would palm off on the ignorant. For such purposes as these, however, the Institution requires greatly increased support. Its annual income is at present quite insufficient for the performance of the work it is called upon to do. A meeting, largely and influentially attended, has lately been held at Lambeth Palace, at which the necessity for such exertions has been clearly demonstrated; and I think myself justified in appealing to all Englishmen, to whatever political or theological party they belong, provided they love the Church of England, and desire that its ministrations should continue to be a barrier against ignorance, infidelity, superstition, and vicious living, to assist in saving the minds of our people from being led astray, to the great injury of themselves and the generations that are to succeed them.

I remain,

Your faithful Brother and Servant,

A. C. CANTUAR.











