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THE "RETREAT"  
OF MR. GLADSTONE,

AND HIS PRESENT POSITION IN REFERENCE TO

THE IRISH CHURCH :

A Letter, &c.

BY

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"As thou urgest justice, be assured  
Thou shalt have justice, more than thou desir'st."

London,  
RIVINGTONS, WATERLOO PLACE ;  
HIGH STREET, | TRINITY STREET,  
Oxford. | Cambridge.

1869.



## A LETTER,

ſc.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

You asked me some time ago to justify the expressions I had used in reprobation of Mr. Gladstone's recent proceedings against the status of the Church in Ireland, and you have lately referred me to the "Chapter of Autobiography," in the hope that this must at least "modify" my opinion. I answer that this publication has more than justified my censure upon Mr. Gladstone, personally, and his measure—*his* emphatically as introduced, grounded and argued by him. I charged Mr. Gladstone with dishonesty and injustice, as exhibited in his own conduct in reference to his proposition for disestablishing the Irish Church, and in the proposition itself as presented by him to the conscience of the country.

Let me again premise, that with the abstract question of Church Establishments I do not in this censure concern myself; nor will I here consider, when and at what point the Church of England and

Ireland might not only acquiesce in, but *require* separation from the State, and from the control which their present connexion imposes. You and I and many others, lay and clerical members of the Church, might differ much and with equal loyalty on this point. But this question is now irrelevant, or only so far relevant, in that the act and effect of Mr. Gladstone's assault on the Irish Church may be thought by some—friends and foes—to weaken the foundations of Church Establishments generally, and in particular that of England.

However, Mr. Gladstone professes to have no such objects, no such fears or hopes. The measure he has introduced is purely an Irish measure, not grounded upon any general policy for or against Church Establishments, but one of justice to Ireland—Ireland, meaning the Roman Catholic majority there, represented virtually by the Roman Catholic priesthood—Justice to Ireland, by the redress of a crying wrong and insult offered by the Church Establishment to the majority of the Irish people.

Now it is on this lofty pretext, this high title and designation of Mr. Gladstone's measure, that I impeach the honesty of its author. It would be hard to believe, under any circumstances, that any man so advanced in years and versed in political investigation—one too with more than ordinary pretensions to moral earnestness—could have become suddenly enlightened as to a question of justice; so enlightened as to see a flagrant injustice in that in which he had hitherto, to say the least, silently acquiesced; so zealously enlightened, as to denounce those who do not see as he now sees, but as he once



and for a long while saw, and allowed the world to believe that he saw. His conversion is either recent, or of long standing; if recent, his own conduct defames it; if of long standing, he must bear the reproach of having been a party to an injustice which he *felt to be one*. For observe the manner and sphere of these convictions whensoever felt. Here is no question of mere policy or expediency—no such question as that of the franchise, or even of Church Establishments, on which opinions, nay, and principles, may become obsolete by the altered condition of the country. No, Mr. Gladstone stands erect and hostile on a question of justice; he and his allies denounce the Irish Church as a wrong so deep that assassins and traitors may find therein *some* plea for their crimes. How long and by what process of thought Mr. Gladstone had learnt thus to discern between right and wrong he was bound to tell us; above all he was bound to provide that the *cause* should not be sullied by even the semblance, much less, the patent reality of party manœuvre or personal ambition. What Mr. Gladstone has done you know, and how he introduced his measure. The plea, the time, method, and associates you know—as also the expected immediate result of his success. Even the "Guardian," whose chief concern seems to be to sustain Mr. Gladstone as the exemplar of political purity and highmindedness, demurred at first, surprised into candour, to the *time* chosen by that gentleman for his assault on the Irish Church; a demurrer, which involved more than the "Guardian" would care now to acknowledge.

Observe then two points; first the issue raised

by Mr. Gladstone—secondly, my charge of dishonesty against him and it.

Mr. Gladstone proposes to disestablish the Irish Church on the ground that that Establishment is a "gross injustice, a wrong and insult to the Roman Catholics of Ireland," a system which insults the majority of the Irish people, a breach of "civil justice" and of the "essential principles of political right," a violation of "the great commandment which forms the groundwork of all relative duties." Such is the issue raised with a scornful confidence by Mr. Gladstone. The charge I bring against him is, that either his conviction of the "injustice" of the Irish Church Establishment was sudden and precipitate—"timed and tuned to the interests of personal advancement"—or, that he had been guilty of a dishonest concealment of that conviction, deceiving and betraying those who trusted him.

Mr. Gladstone may not allow the former alternative, which is, of course, incapable of demonstration; but one thing is clear, that, if the latter be proved, whatever be the mental date which his own conscience may assign to the birth and growth of his conviction, its *public announcement* was characterized by that suddenness and interested seasonableness which mark those changes which "destroy confidence, and entail merited dishonour."

But now as to the alternative charge. The proofs were extant long before the appearance of the "Chapter," &c., but as you refer me to this extraordinary vindication, you will require from me some notice of its contents.

Let me draw your attention then first to pages

20, 21, where Mr. Gladstone begins to "show the manner of his retreat from an untenable position." "Was it sudden?" . . . . "My opinion of the Established Church of Ireland now is the direct opposite of what it was then. I then thought it reconcilable with civil and national justice; I now think it grossly unjust." Well, considering that "then" refers to 1841, and "now" to 1868, there is certainly no ground for charging the Right Honourable Gentleman with suddenness of retreat *from the one position to the other*. The *entire* manœuvre at least was not accomplished with celerity. But skilful tacticians, political as well as military, may begin and continue to move covertly, and may, after dexterous feints of occupation, *appear* suddenly in quite a new position. The history of the retreat, its reasons and stratagems, may then form a "Chapter of Autobiography." Before following the historian in his line of retreat, I beg you to observe this description which the autobiographer gives here of his "then" position: "My doctrine *was*," he told us (in p. 19), that "the Church, as established by law, was to be maintained for its Truth." This was Mr. Gladstone's *original* position—how abandoned we shall presently see; but on commencing the history of his retreat, he says, "I then thought it (the Established Church of Ireland) reconcilable with civil and national justice." Although therefore the ground of truth had been deserted, yet, observe, Mr. Gladstone still held, on behalf of the Church of Ireland, the ground of civil and national justice; he then saw in the Establishment nothing at variance with moral and

political right. *When* Mr, Gladstone's change of opinion as to this question of right and wrong, justice and injustice, took place, we endeavour vainly to ascertain from this history; when it was disclosed to the public, or to his constituents, before its sudden manifestation in 1868, this history will certainly not tell us; how it was *concealed* it may in part reveal.

In the preface to the story of the retreat, occurs this wonderful challenge: "I challenge all my censors to impugn me when I affirm that, if the propositions of my work are in conflict (as they are) with an assault upon the existence of the Irish Establishment, they are at least as much, or even more, hostile to the grounds on which it is now attempted to maintain it." Leaving the hypothetical portion of this proposition to Mr. Gladstone's own keeping, and only just noticing the *impersonal* reference made to the defence of the Irish Church ("it is attempted") the challenge may be fully and categorically met. I do not pretend to know *all* the "propositions" of his work, but I for one am ready to "impugn" Mr. Gladstone's affirmation, and to assert that the two propositions which he has just enunciated as the main tenets of his creed in 1841, viz. the duty of maintaining the Church for its truth's sake, and the reconcilableness of this maintenance with civil and national justice, are *not* in conflict with the grounds on which it is now attempted to defend it. I throw back the challenge. Mr. Gladstone assails the Irish Church Establishment on the ground of its being "grossly unjust," and an "insult" to the Roman Catholics of

Ireland. I challenge him to *prove this* charge, which he has for so many months made in Parliament and on platform, but not even *attempted* to prove; first, however, challenging him to show *when* he embraced this opinion on right and wrong; and if embraced long ago, on what principle of honour he *so* concealed it?

And now we come to that event, or course of events, under cover of which Mr. Gladstone began, and now justifies and rationalizes, his retreat. The event was the remodelling and increasing, in 1844, the Grant to Maynooth College. "The principle of this Grant and the principle of an Established Church in Ireland could not stand together," *therefore* Mr. Gladstone was bound to abandon *his* principle of an Established Church in Ireland—to throw overboard, before "lifting anchor," the doctrine that the Church was to be "maintained for its truth!" The Legislature thought good, for *other reasons*, to make the Maynooth Grant, and *therefore* Mr. Gladstone was bound to abandon *his* reason for maintaining the Established Church. "I was bound," he says (p. 25), "to defend the Irish Church as long as it could be defended on the ground of its truth." What limit in truth and honour had Mr. Gladstone for *such defence by him*? Does he dare to say that that ground had failed? that that Church had ceased to enshrine and exhibit truth? Does his conscience tell him that his own obligation to defend that Church so long as that ground remained was discharged, because others (if so be, which I deny) "definitively abandoned it"? Was he bound *not* to sup-

port the Establishment on the ground of truth, *because* the Legislature endowed Maynooth *not* on the ground of truth?

Mr. Gladstone says (p. 30) he "admitted the validity of a claim by the Church of Rome to the Gift." On *what ground* did he admit the validity of the claim? Evidently not on the ground of religious truth; so that with this great and earnest thinker the validity of a claim which does NOT rest on religious grounds, *invalidates* a claim which *does*—nay, dispossesses the religious claimant in favour of the non-religious!

Once more: how could a *non-establishing* boon to a college affect Mr. Gladstone's religious grounds for a *Church Establishment*? He had defended a State Establishment because it exhibited truth; a grant is made on secular and politic grounds to a Corporate Body having no *such* State relations, and *therefore* he abandons that Institution which still retains its claims as a State Establishment for the exhibition of truth!

Thus Mr. Gladstone *reasoned*: and thus illustrated his past convictions as to the grounds for maintaining the Irish Church; and thus obtained his "freedom" for not only abandoning her cause, but for assailing her existence. "From that day forward" Mr. Gladstone "never said one word in public or private which could pledge him on principle to the maintenance of the Irish Church;" but he was then "willing and desirous for the continuance of the Church of Ireland." She had his "sincere good-will." It is clear, therefore, that at this time, 1845, Mr. Gladstone still held the Established Church of Ireland to be "recon-

cilable with civil and national justice," he did not then think it "grossly unjust," "insulting to the religion of the majority," a violation of "political right," and of the "great commandment," &c., &c.

I pass by, for the present, his topic of the Church's failure; so, as I shall show, unfairly dealt with by Mr. Gladstone, in order to follow the order of retreat, and discern, if possible, *when* that fervid condemnation of the Irish Church on the ground of its "gross injustice" and breach of duty to our neighbour entered the soul of Mr. Gladstone; and *when*—I fear a hopeless search—this great moral change, convulsion it might be called—was *avowed*.

In 1846 Mr. Gladstone refused to oppose a member of the newly-formed Government of Lord John Russell, writing thus: "As to the Irish Church, I am not able to go to war with them, on the ground that they will not pledge themselves to the maintenance of the existing appropriation of Church property in Ireland." "This was," as he truly says, "a private proceeding;" and even as such, referred merely to "the maintenance of the" (then) "existing appropriation of Church property"—whatever that may mean; as to the non-maintenance of the Establishment on the ground of its gross injustice, not, even privately, a word.

In 1847, as Candidate for the University of Oxford, Mr. Gladstone was "challenged," he says, "as to his opinions on the Established Church of Ireland" by, as says Mr. Coleridge, here quoted by Mr. Gladstone, "some older and more moderate supporters, extremely anxious to draw from him some pledge that he should stand by the Irish

Church. He distinctly refused to pledge himself to any thing of the kind." Will Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Coleridge say who those challengers and supporters were, and the exact import of the words "stand by the Irish Church"? Will they aver that the Committee generally, or any fair proportion, were aware of the "challenge" and the refusal? Will they assert that the refusal to give a pledge was not made, as the Chairman of Mr. Gladstone's Oxford Committee in 1865 reports it then to have been made, on the score of "sensitiveness," of "reflection on his honour and sincerity of purpose," of dislike to pledges on principle, &c., &c.? Will they say that these "more moderate," which seems to mean lukewarm supporters, were made distinctly to understand that the pledge was refused because Mr. Gladstone was then wavering in his adhesion to the Irish Church? above all, will Mr. Gladstone tell us whether he *then* believed that Establishment to be a "gross injustice," &c.; and, if so, whether he *then* avowed *this* change even to one private friend? Certain it is that, if then existing, it was concealed, *under challenge*, from those who ought to have received the confession.

In 1851 Mr. Gladstone resisted the Ecclesiastical Titles Bill. He thinks it worth while to add that he made then no "profession of adhesion in principle to the maintenance of the Established Church in Ireland;" but what relation his proceeding and speech on the Ecclesiastical Titles Bill have to the Established Church *in Ireland*, more than to the Established Church *in England*, I see not. If they were significant of a wavering adhesion to the one,



they were so to the other; and possibly Mr. Gladstone may reproduce this record of his conduct whenever he writes another "Chapter" in explanation of a sudden outburst of indignation against the gross injustice of the remaining branch of the Established Church of England and Ireland.

However, not yet (1851) have we discovered any indication of such a conviction existing in the bosom of Mr. Gladstone. "The years rolled on:" so did the under-current of Mr. Gladstone's moral and political sensibilities. "From time to time motions were made in relation to the Established Church of Ireland." Here follows (pp. 38, 39) a tempting passage, but I will deal with it very briefly. In justifying the inaction of the "older leaders" of the Liberal Party, Mr. Gladstone writes *as though* these leaders admitted the propriety of disestablishing the Irish Church in principle, and were only waiting for a more suitable season to accomplish it. Now, Mr. Gladstone knows that the most eminent of those leaders, Earl Russell and Sir G. Grey, strongly asserted the duty of the Legislature to maintain the Establishment. This, by the way, in illustration of Mr. Gladstone's historical method; but what I desire you to note in this passage is, that during this interval from 1846 to 1865, when motions were being made from time to time in relation to the Irish Church, "honourable," Mr. Gladstone says, "to those who made them"—when individuals in the Legislature were, in the presence and hearing of Mr. Gladstone, bearing witness to the "principle of a true religious equality to Ireland"—when there were thus frequent provocations to an avowal of any

strong feeling of justice abiding in the breast,— Mr. Gladstone *was silent*; the silent vote being given *against* the motions which bore witness to the principle of religious equality to Ireland. Now, either Mr. Gladstone, during this period, held his present convictions as to the "gross injustice" of the Irish Church, or he did not; if he did, his concealment of them was dishonourable, not merely before his constituents, but before his country; if he did *not*, then we have arrived at the year 1865, and Mr. Gladstone not yet a convert to his present creed; not yet with a mind enlightened on a question of right and wrong, justice, and injustice, in the matter of the "great commandment which forms the groundwork of all relative duties."

In 1863, indeed, a very remarkable disclosure had been made to *one* person "in private;" of this more as we proceed, observing only here that at that date, the tenour of Sir Roundell Palmer's speech at Richmond in vindication of his friend, implies that Mr. Gladstone had *then* made "up his mind" at the first "favourable opportunity" to disestablish the Irish Church. But let us proceed to another exhibition of Mr. Gladstone's state of mind in 1865. On Mr. Dillwyn's motion, Mr. Gladstone made a speech which was at once denounced by Mr. Whiteside, as "one intended to be fatal to the Established Church of Ireland when an opportunity should arise." Mr. Gladstone's opponents in the University took the same view as Mr. Whiteside. "His friends however stood by him;" one of these applied nevertheless to Mr. Gladstone "to give certain explanations for the appeasing of doubts,"

and we have the reply made to a friend who trusted surely in the outspoken honour of his correspondent. Mr. Gladstone has offered a key to open to us the *meaning* of his letter to Dr. Hannah: but he has not explained how it was, that having in 1863 "made up his mind" to disestablish the Irish Church at the first opportunity, and having then desired that his mind should be disclosed to his Oxford political friends, he now, in 1865, on the eve of the University election, so writes to one of these, in order to appease doubts, as to lead him inevitably to the belief that he (Mr. G.) was still prepared to maintain the Establishment of the Irish Church; *and* so writes as to hide, if it then existed, his conviction that that Establishment was a "gross injustice" and "insult" to the majority of the Irish people.

As to the explanation given by Mr. Gladstone in his "Chapter," of his letter to Dr. Hannah, it appears to say this, that he intended by his reference to the Act of Union to indicate his belief that under that Act, the State *Establishment* of the Irish Church as distinct from the *Endowment*, must be maintained. Well, if that was his meaning, then, notwithstanding he had "made up his mind" otherwise in 1863, the *maintenance* of the Establishment was even at this late date of June, 1865, the idea and purpose of Mr. Gladstone. And mark once more that the condemnation of the Establishment as a "gross injustice" and "insult" to the Roman Catholics of Ireland had never yet been whispered, so far as appears, even to a single friend; if existing as a conviction, it had been concealed—concealed

under circumstances by which honour should have been provoked to utter it—to stifle it was dishonour.

Well, the conviction "bided its *time*." I need not dwell again upon the character of the time, and how, if not Mr. Gladstone's change, the open avowal of that change was "timed."

"How many things by season season'd are  
To their right praise, and true perfection!"

And doubtless the righteous purpose of disestablishing the Irish Church, whether just matured or newly formed, found its season of perfection in all the opportune coincidences of the hour.

I have no desire, however, to impute to Mr. Gladstone the small collateral delinquencies of a mere and sordid desire for office; but what I do impute to him is this, that he now brings a heavy accusation against an institution of the country, which up to this moment he has never breathed—that he has made it the sharp and deadly weapon for his assault upon that institution—that he has urged it with vehemence, used it as an obvious, undeniable axiom which the conscience of all men must allow. I say that he denounces the Irish Church Establishment as a gross iniquity, as a plant laden with the noxious fruit of "religious ascendancy," as a violation of the Divine law; and I repeat that either his conviction of these foul characteristics of the Irish Church Establishment was sudden and precipitate, and "made to minister to the interests of political ambition," or that he has been guilty of a dishonest concealment of that conviction, deceiving and betraying those who

trusted him. And I add this, that if it was sudden, born at and to the "time," it was an enlightenment of conscience upon right and wrong at a very ripe age of life and statesmanship—one which in decency and charity, he should have presented to the world with moderation of tone, and, above all, with some distinct reference to, and argumentative refutation of, his former judgment. He was bound to *prove*, on some recognized principles of natural or political justice—he never even *attempted* to *prove* on *any grounds*—his pleas of wrong against an institution, which, as he knows, is in mere harmony with a fundamental and essential law of the Empire, forms one of the conditions of a solemn compact between two portions of the United Kingdom, and is guaranteed by the sanctity of an oath taken by and now resting upon the Sovereign of this country. I do not complain that he *did* not *prove* the iniquity of *such* an institution; my complaint is that he dares to *assert* it, but does not *attempt* to prove it. He who *so* brings an accusation of injustice, proportionably criminales himself.

The sudden, moral *untimeliness* of his grave accusation, together with his entire abstinence of an attempt to prove it, I present to you as a foremost presumptive proof that the charge against the Church Establishment in Ireland was dishonestly made; dishonest in the season, dishonest in the conception.

I now ask your attention to the manner, ethically and argumentatively, in which Mr. Gladstone formally introduced his proposition for disestablishing the Irish Church. I want you to consider what in-

dications there were of a man earnestly redressing a mighty wrong by a measure purely and simply just. In such a case, from such an accuser, was it too much to expect some clear acknowledgment of past error or past torpor in the matter of right and wrong? Was not this due to himself—to his friends—to the moral sense of the country—to that Church which a new sense of duty was compelling him to strike? Was not such a method of preliminary argument a necessary decency? an *honest* "price" to pay for the "freedom" of that impeachment he was about to bring? Would a deep sense of *justice* have allowed him to omit such topics? But, you know, he did not thus address himself to his suddenly-assumed task of accusation; and you know how, to his lasting dishonour, he divorced his proceeding from the ground of justice or even political honour. The leading, the *stirring motive* which this high-minded statesman offered to the conscience of Parliament and the country for doing justice and redressing wrong was the existence of murder and sedition; or, if you will, and think it improves the matter, the sympathy existing in Ireland with these abominations. Mr. Gladstone connected the wrongs of Ireland in the matter of the Irish Church with these crimes; he presented the sympathy with treason as an urgent motive for disestablishing the Church; he thus and so far palliated, he thus and so far encouraged, that treason and its outrages. No man purely actuated by motives of justice, or zealously affected on behalf of right, would defile his cause by such prefatory or collateral argument. He would not subpœna as-

sassins and their sympathizers to sustain his righteous pleadings against the Irish Church. His own conscience would not be quickened into the sense of justice by the spectre of Fenianism, nor his mind *thus* stirred into the expression of his convictions.

And now as to the character of Mr. Gladstone's measure. You will observe what it is *not*. The proposition to disestablish the Irish Church is not grounded on the *principle* of Church disestablishment, not, *as he alleges*, on any principle which affects the Church Establishments in England, Wales, and Scotland; it is a measure *sui generis*, grounded on justice to Ireland, the Church Establishment *there* being, he now says, an iniquity and an insulting wrong. It was quite necessary to *assert* this, because *otherwise*, if the Irish Church Establishment be *not* an unjust thing and a wrong done to some party, then the overthrow of this Establishment, with such prescriptive and covenanted rights, no misdemeanour being charged, *would* be an injustice and a wrong done to the Irish Church. And now, my friend, I ask you on what principles of proof, on what presumptions of right, moral or constitutional, is the Irish Church Establishment an injustice and wrong? Against whom is the wrong committed? for whom is it to be repaired? The answer given is, the Roman Catholic majority of the Irish people. Well, as to this presently, but first I ask you candidly to answer me this question: Do *you* believe, do you believe that Mr. Gladstone, Earl Russell, Mr. Bright believe, that the great bulk of the Irish people, that those lay Roman Catholics

who live and form the great majority in some parishes of the Established Church, have spontaneously felt that Church to be an injustice and a wrong-doing to them? I am sure *you* do not believe this, for you acknowledge that it is the Roman Catholic Priesthood in Ireland who resent this "wrong," and who are the real prosecutors in this suit of justice. Well, under what presumptions of right on their part, and of wrong done to them or theirs by the Irish Church Establishment, do these *injured* claimants come into court? They come with the solemnly avouched, the oath-bound pledge of their predecessors, and in part of themselves, that this Irish Church Establishment is *no* wrong which they resent—*no* grievance they desire to redress; they come into that national council in which their representatives obtained a right to sit by swearing before God that they would do nothing there to subvert the Establishment of the Irish Church; and there they—the Roman Catholic Priesthood now—as ever since these oaths were taken they have from time to time done—by their representatives assail this very Establishment as the plague spot of their country, an injustice and insult troubling the land, wounding their most sacred feelings, and oppressing their co-religionists. Upon one point on which you know I have always felt most strongly, I will not now trust myself to dwell. You have often acknowledged the flagrant disregard of their oaths there committed by many of the Roman Catholic members of that House, but I am now showing you under what presumptions of right, truth, and



justice, with what impure and fraud-spotted hands, these hostile claimants, to satisfy whose "just" demands Mr. Gladstone proposes to subvert the Irish Church Establishment, come before the country, and ask for justice.

These, then, are the parties against whom the wrong has been committed, and for whom it is to be repaired; and I have a right to describe these *in limine*, and to put into court their own solemn allegations once made upon the matter on which the country must now adjudicate.

But as to the matter itself. The Irish Church Establishment and, so far as connected therewith, its Endowments, are a wrong done, it is said, to the Irish Roman Catholics; well, if so—*fiat justitia*—remove the wrong, and do justly to the injured party. First, as to the Endowments, does Mr. Gladstone say that the possession of these, wholly or in part, is an injustice to the Roman Catholics? then, *if* he believes this, why does he not in common honesty *restore* them? or, if he believes that the injury consists in this, that these Endowments are the common property of the Irish people, to be distributed for the religious benefit of the various sections of that people, and that justice requires that distribution according to their numerical claims, why does he not avow this plea and purpose of right?

But I need not pursue this topic further. Sir Roundell Palmer, an enthusiastic eulogist of Mr. Gladstone, has denounced his friend's measure so far as it imports disendowment. "It is not fair or just," he says, "to disendow the Irish Church. It is not

a question of competing claims, but of mere confiscation" (confiscation being, according to Dr. Johnson, "the act of transferring the forfeited goods of *criminals* to public use").

It is indeed a *criminal* action which Mr. Gladstone is bringing against the Irish Church.

And now as to disestablishment, which is the primary proposition of Mr. Gladstone, and this because the Establishment of the Irish Church is an injury and insult to the Roman Catholics of Ireland. If it be an injury and insult, then the constitution of the country, as regards one of its fundamental laws—the tenure by which the Queen holds the crown, the bond of rule and allegiance, the terms of the Coronation Oath—all these are an injury and insult to them. If by the constitution of this country the first Estate of the Realm *must* have a certain religious profession, if in that Estate this profession must be *established*, if this establishment be settled and imposed *there*, with forfeiture otherwise of title to the country's allegiance, without injury and insult to the Roman Catholics in Ireland, how is it that the sacred ministry of this profession having special constitutional recognition by and connexion with that first Estate of the Realm, can be an injury and insult to the same? If the Sovereign of the United Kingdom were to-morrow to profess the religious faith of five-sixths of her Irish subjects, that Sovereign would *therefore* forfeit the Crown of the United Kingdom;—is this an insult? If the heir apparent, when receiving some months ago the loyal homage of the great bulk of the Irish people, Roman Catholics as well as Protestants, had there and then

professed the faith of the Roman Catholics, he would then and there have forfeited his title to be their future king—is this an insult? If the constitutional royalty of the United Kingdom be an insult to this portion of its subjects, then, and *then only*, is its Church Establishment an insult. You cannot assail the latter as unjust and insulting by its very existence, and vindicate the former, by virtue of which the latter has its being and recognition. You cannot do this *justly*—be your standard of right, natural justice, or that political justice recognized, nay imposed by the fundamental laws of the kingdom.

The standard of public right in this kingdom exists and is proclaimed in its fundamental laws; can you, so long as these laws are unrepealed, *justly* denounce as *unjust* that which is but an expression of these laws? Can that be a civil or political injury in any portion of the Realm which the Constitutional Sovereignty of the Realm *must* exhibit throughout the Empire? You cannot break the force of this by reminding me that in large portions of the Queen's dominions there is no Established Church. *Every where* the Sovereign's title to the throne rests upon her Protestant non-Roman Catholic profession of faith; and so *every where* this "injury," if it be one, is offered by the Constitutional Sovereignty of the Realm to the Roman Catholic subjects; and, if I have not forgotten my logic, I say *nowhere*, if *this* be *no* injury, can a special constitutional recognition of the Protestant non-Roman Catholic profession of faith of any portion of the subjects of the Crown be an injury and insult to Roman Catholics. And observe that this way of putting it exactly represents

the issue raised by Mr. Gladstone. The Irish Church Establishment is, he pretends, an injustice to the *Roman Catholics* of Ireland. A national Establishment is not condemned—no exception is taken to the fact that the Establishment in Ireland does not include all the Protestants in the island—but the injury and insult is to the *Roman Catholics*; so that if every Protestant in Ireland belonged to the Established Church, that Church would still be, BECAUSE Protestant, BECAUSE non-Roman Catholic, BECAUSE *in that respect* identical with the constitutionally imposed religion of the Crown, an injury and insult to the *Roman Catholics*! Can you seriously maintain this?

This is an argument independent of religious distinctions. If there were a province of the Turkish empire, containing one million Mahometans and five million Christians, the establishment of the Mahometan religion among the one million, would be no injustice or insult to the Christians. No Turkish statesman, while Mahometanism was the necessary faith of the throne, and the condition of its sovereignty, could honestly maintain that to give special constitutional recognition to the religion of the sovereign among the one million, or even among one hundred of his Mahometan subjects in any part of his dominions, would be an insult and injury to his subjects of another faith. The only injustice would be, if these latter were oppressed in the matter of civil and religious rights; can the *Roman Catholics* of Ireland assert this? have they not every civil privilege enjoyed by their fellow-subjects? have they not full liberty in the exercise of their faith and

worship? or, if in this latter respect they claim any thing which the constitutional prerogatives of the Crown cannot allow them, is the establishment of the Irish Church the hindrance? No, my friend, the grievance of the Irish Roman Catholics is this, *that the religious profession imposed by the Constitution on the Sovereign is recognized, as such, in Ireland.* And again let me impress on you, that Mr. Gladstone's proposition of *disestablishment* is, by his own procedure, a plea of justice conceded to the Irish Catholics against the Irish Church Establishment; a plea of right against wrong. He invokes, before the Court of the Parliament and the country, justice, not policy; not expediency, not the Nemesis of Church and State connexion, but the retribution of a national crime. If this plea be just, he has learnt the rudiments of right and wrong as tardily as suspiciously; if it be not just, then his measure for disestablishment founded on this plea, is an iniquity. I declare to you solemnly, that were I ever so much opposed to Church Establishments on principle, yet I could not support Mr. Gladstone's measure, so grounded and introduced. I could not advance my principles and object, by such a falsification of the issue. How honest, high-minded Liberals can do this, I know not. I must add here a word which will surprise you, perhaps, as it has other of my Church friends. Of the two, I would rather see the disendowment than the disestablishment of the Irish Church—for these reasons—the former would indeed be a sacrilegious robbery, a "confiscation," at least, to use Sir R. Palmer's expression (why he never gave utterance to this opinion in Parliament, those

who are jealous of his honour would like to know), but disestablishment is a treasonous falsehood against the Constitution in Church and State, and a concession to those who are its avowed enemies. Again, disendowment may possibly find advocates who are really puzzled or deceived as to the origin, tenure, and circumstance of Church property; many, too, may think the Church property excessive, and see in disendowment a mere retrenchment of that excess: and *so*, many may see no injustice in disendowment, and intend no concession of a constitutional establishment to its foes; but no man can concede the Church Establishment of Ireland to those foes *on the pretext of justice*, and do so as friends to the Constitution in Church and State, without a flagrant assault on that Constitution, vilifying its fundamental law by an ungenerous and fraudulent attack on that institution whose only offence is, that in it that law is exhibited. In disestablishment, therefore, *on such a plea*, I see a mean falsehood, treachery, disloyalty, and every thing to wound the moral sense.

Allow me to mention another standard of public right which exists in bar to the disestablishment of the Irish Church. I refer to the Act of Union, which Mr. Gladstone, in his too famous letter in 1865, said ought to be "recognized" in any dealing with the Irish Church. I need not tell you that by that Act the maintenance of the Irish Church as part of the United Church of England and Ireland was made a "fundamental" condition of the legislative union of the two countries. Whether that Act could be formally repealed by the united Legislature,

without a dissolution of the Union, I will not pretend to say; but that that Act will be *violated*, that wrong will be done to it, and to those who hold under it status and property, by the disestablishment of the Irish Church, is undeniable; and how, so long as that Act exists, so long as the Imperial Parliament exists by virtue of that Act, the Establishment of the Irish Church guaranteed by that Act—nay, one of its solemn conditions—can be *justly* denounced as an *injustice* to Ireland, I pray you to explain.

If you or others say that the Act of Settlement and the Act of Union are unjust, insulting, contrary to civil and natural right, *repeal these Acts*, but do not retain and profess to respect them, and yet denounce as unjust an institution which is merely consonant with the one, and is guaranteed most solemnly by the other—this latter being a most solemn Act and Covenant of Right—do not so demoralize, do not so deceive, the moral sense of the country. If you *must be unjust*, spare the *hypocrisy*.

To these just impediments to the charge of moral and political iniquity brought *now* by Mr. Gladstone against the Irish Church Establishment, I must with "no 'bated breath" name another—if not to be called a standard of political right, yet a high solemnity, bearing a most solemn witness to those standards, and sealing them from time to time with the sanctity of a religious ceremonial and appeal to heaven. I refer, of course, to the Coronation Oath. I am not about to enter on the sickening task of arguing against Mr. Gladstone and those who with him assert that the Sovereign who takes the oath to maintain the Church Establishment must, as a matter of course,

be at the bidding of Parliament a distinct party to its destruction. Mr. Gladstone, who holds that the Act of Union would not be violated if the Irish Church were "stripped of every shilling of her endowments," would doubtless smile at such a "vulgar error" as the belief that the Sovereign had any conscience in the matter; but this much I say, that so long as that oath exists which gives a sacrosanct character to the Irish Church as established by law, it is a gross indecency of injustice to denounce as unjust that Establishment. The Irish Church bears at all events the guarantee of a national oath, required from and taken by the nation's Sovereign; a statesman and minister of the Sovereign and the nation should not anathematize any institution so sanctioned, so long as the sanction remains a high statute and solemn ordinance of the realm.

The same taint of dishonesty appears in those appeals or references made by Mr. Gladstone to "religious liberty," "religious equality," "religious ascendancy," *implying*—which is the worst and meanest form of falsehood—propositions and premises which he dares not nakedly assert. Will he dare to say that by the existence of the Church Establishment the Irish people are deprived of religious liberty and religious equality? Will he declare that they are less religiously free and equal than the English people? that in these respects, the Irish Roman Catholics are below the level of their fellow religionists in England and Scotland? Will he assert that an Established Church precludes the enjoyment of these rights, and that therefore the people of



England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland are alike without religious equality and freedom?

Will he assert, that so long as the constitutionally imposed law of the sovereignty of this realm remains as it is, Roman Catholics *can* have *such* a religious equality *in relation to the State* as that possessed by the non-Roman Catholic subjects of the empire? And as to religious "ascendancy," that "poisonous tree," will Mr. Gladstone declare that the removal of the Irish Church Establishment will, in relation to Roman Catholics, abolish or even diminish this? Will he deny that religious ascendancy *in that direction* is graven on the sceptre, and lives in the person of the Sovereign? that while every member of any other Christian community in Ireland *may constitutionally* be co-religionists with their sovereign, the Roman Catholics, the religious majority of her Irish subjects *cannot*?—the fundamental law of the land will not allow it.

Mr. Gladstone dares not assert or deny severally these propositions, but he deals in implication; he trusts by his own reiterated and lofty *assertion* of the "injustice" of the Irish Establishment, by *references* to "civil justice," "political right" duty to our neighbour, "religious liberty" and "equality" and "ascendancy," and by concurrent like *assertions* in the columns of the "Liberal" press, to possess the minds of the people with the idea that by dis-establishing the Irish Church they will be doing an act of justice to their Roman Catholic fellow-subjects in Ireland, flagrantly and specially wronged.

But here you will, as you have before done, check my censure by pointing to the petition of the 261

clergymen of the Church of England presented to the House of Lords in favour of the disestablishment of the Irish Church.

I have heard this petition called "ungenerous;" I cannot allow it the merit implied in that epithet; the petition was *unjust*; it has on it that stain of injustice which marks all the advocacy of disestablishment. It asserts, it accuses, without proof alleged.

The petition denounces the Irish Church Establishment as an "injustice;" could not these eminent petitioners and accusers have embodied in their petition and indictment one *reason* for their charge? Surely a petition against a branch of their own National Church conveying so grave an accusation *ought* to have offered some preamble of argument and proofs. The indictment, singularly lacking in specific allegation, is yet overstrained in its pleadings. It accuses with an *ex-abundanti* vigour; "an injustice which *legitimately* offends the majority of the Irish people!" Are these poor Irish people oppressed by any injustice which *illegitimately* offends them? We know they have many grievances, and, perhaps, legitimacy of offence may be the differentia of the iniquity of the Irish Church.

But I would rather credit the petitioners with an intention to refer here to some specific landmarks of legitimacy, some known, recognized standards of public right, in obvious and distinct violation of which the Irish Church Establishment is maintained. Well, could not, ought not one of these grounds of indictment to have been stated in a solemn document presented to the legislature of the country?

But passing from these associates of Mr. Gladstone in the art of accusation without proof, I must now ask you to consider the honesty of this Right Honourable gentleman's charge against the Irish Church, that it has "*failed*" as a religious institution; is of "proved impotence." Pp. 32, 33.

It would have been well, for honesty's sake, if Mr. Gladstone had more clearly *adjusted* this allegation of failure. If, as he hints—and as, of course, it is open for him to say—the Irish Church Establishment has failed *because* it was an injustice, we might, though demurring to the assigned cause, still merely examine the allegation of failure; but, unhappily, Mr. Gladstone so speaks about the failure as to suggest that the injustice is *ex post facto* the failure. The failure is so manipulated, as by a sleight of logic to appear to prove the injustice; and the injustice seems to depend upon the issues of success and failure. "It was a duty from my point of view completely to exhaust every chance on behalf of the Irish Church." Previous to 1832 that Church "had not fair play;" since that date she has had "fair play." "We ought *now* to perceive that the annexation of the warrant of civil authority to the religious embassy of the Irish Church discredits in lieu of recommending it in the view of the Irish people." What if this were *not* perceptible (as indeed it *is* not)? what if the iniquity had *flourished* with or without "fair play," would it *not* have been iniquity? I denounce this method of accusation, and I say that these pleas of essential injustice and contingent failure have no moral congruity in the indictment thus brought against the Irish Church,

and that they impugn the sincerity of him who brings it. Failure may condemn a system in policy, but cannot help to prove its injustice. A naval squadron on the coast of Africa for the prevention of the slave trade may be denounced and withdrawn as a failure; but no man, if pronouncing the squadron an iniquity, would *so* exhibit its failure as to suggest that, if that iniquity had *not* failed, the wrong would be inoperative.

Mr. Gladstone imputes failure to the Irish Church on the ground of defective proselytism; but was proselytism her mission in any other way or degree than it is the mission of all Christian Churches, Established or non-Established? Are all religious communities to be accounted failures if, whatever be the degree of their own growth in religious and social virtues, they should retain, after the lapse of years, their relative numerical proportions?

And now pray mark the fairness with which Mr. Gladstone endeavours to enhance the "failure" on the part of the Irish Church to convert numbers of the Roman Catholics to her communion. That process must have been either by consistency of faith and practice within her own communion, together with works of charity and beneficence to those without—or, *also* by a systematic aggressive propagandism assailing directly the faith, worship, and discipline of the Roman Catholic Church. That the former process was in operation—how successfully it matters not—Mr. Gladstone cannot deny. Will he venture to say that the latter was the proper instrument of her vocation either as a "Rival," to use his phrase, or as an Established, Church?

And pray, then, note the character of the *period* which Mr. Gladstone represents as especially favourable for converting, by whatever means, the Roman Catholics to the communion of the Irish Church. This period commences about 1832; then, says Mr. Gladstone, the Established Church "had perfect security." Indeed? rather will the true historian say that then the Irish Church began to be virulently assailed by those who had sworn a few years before to respect her rights and position as an Establishment, and who had obtained legislative power by virtue of that oath; who found active abettors in political leaders in Parliament; who, though for awhile unsuccessful in their full aim, yet succeeded in irritating incessantly the Roman Catholic people of Ireland against that Church which they had sworn to respect; who, inspired and aided by foreign ecclesiastical agency, encouraged the priests of the Roman Catholic Church to vilify the Established Church as a flagrant insult to their flocks; who took part in the council of the nation with the one view of shaping parties and measures to the destruction of that Church; and whose untiring persecution of that Church at length culminated in 1868, when by the adoption of a measure of Disestablishment, a Party leader, *till then silent as to the wrong*, was enabled to win a triumph for himself and Party. Such was the period, so characterized, with such relations and attitude towards the Irish Church, that Mr. Gladstone proclaims to have been eminently "favourable" for the conversion by that Church of the Roman Catholics of Ireland!

And now, in bringing my letter to a close, I need

hardly observe to you how Mr. Gladstone mis-states "the offence of which he is held guilty"—"Ille ego qui quondam." The offence is not simply that he who "did till 1841 recommend upon the highest and most imperious grounds the maintenance of the Irish Church Establishment, now endeavours to put an end to its existence;" it is not simply that he has so strangely abandoned those grounds, but that with regard to one of these grounds, viz. civil justice and political right, he never before 1868 declared that he *had* abandoned it—never before now avowed his conviction of the "gross injustice" of the Irish Church Establishment—"Ille ego qui" NUNQUAM.

This offence, moreover, is deepened by the method of his present denunciation—injustice charged without show of proof, or reference to those standards of justice which exist as the landmarks of constitutional right in this country. Mere inconsistency, however eccentric and intellectual, need not give moral offence. And in one point certainly Mr. Gladstone has been consistent. "Then" and "now," in 1841 and in 1868, he has sacrificed the Irish Church on account of the Church of Rome in Ireland; though here, too, by a dramatic unity characteristic of the ἦθος of the Right Honourable gentleman, the consistent and the inconsistent are marvellously blended—*κὰν γὰρ ἀνώμαλός τις ἦ, ὁμῶς ὀμαλῶς ἀνώμαλον δεῖ εἶναι*. In 1841 Mr. Gladstone admits the validity of a claim of the Church of Rome to the endowment of a college, *and* abandons his original ground of *defence* of the Irish Church: in 1868 he takes fire at a presumed intention of

endowing a Roman Catholic University, raises a cry of No Popery, *and denounces* the Irish Church.

One further remark. You will see that the many topics and issues, most important indeed and relevant, which have been raised in reference to Mr. Gladstone's measure, have nevertheless tended to cloud the real aspect of the aggression made by him on the Irish Church. The general advantages of Church Establishments, the effects of Mr. Gladstone's propositions on the status of the Church in England, the superior vigour and efficiency likely to be exhibited by the Irish Church on its release from State connexion—these matters (to say nothing of the attempt to impute to those who oppose Mr. Gladstone's measure the cry of No Popery) displace too conveniently for Mr. Gladstone that issue which he has dared to make the groundwork of his sudden but "timed" assault, viz. the injustice, wrong, and insult of the Irish Church Establishment towards the Roman Catholics of Ireland. This issue should be simply met. It is the only issue that I care for. I arraign Mr. Gladstone for the time and manner in which he has raised this issue; which oblige me to say that he has raised it falsely. I arraign his measure as being in itself iniquitous, as wrongfully and calumniously aggressive, as an injury and insult, not to this or that portion of my countrymen, but to the moral sense and honesty of the nation.

You will say I have written "bitterly:" I *feel* "bitterly."

Yours faithfully,

T. T. BAZELY.

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