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SHORT PAPERS ON  
THE IRISH CHURCH QUESTION.

No. V.

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AN ADDRESS TO CHURCHMEN ON THE  
PRESENT CRISIS.

AN Englishman who for many years has resided in Ireland ventures to ask his brother Churchmen in England to allow him to address a few words to them respecting the great question of the day,—that of the Irish Church.

To enable England to express a sound opinion on this question, which reaches down to the very foundations of our Constitution, it is needful that she should be well acquainted with the actual facts of the case.

From what sources of information have Englishmen in general obtained their present knowledge of the Irish Church?

Chiefly from leading articles of newspapers and magazines determined to write down the Irish Church, and from speakers and lecturers employed to speak against her.

Is it possible that a sound and correct judgment can be formed on such a question from such sources as these? We think not.

The country is asked to give its opinion firmly and decidedly respecting the Irish Church. Let the country, before it does this, be sure that it has the materials before it on which to form a true opinion on this matter.

Let me very briefly set before you some of the chief points which are absolutely necessary to be understood, in order to form a sound judgment on this question.

I will divide what I have to say into three heads.

I.—*The History of the Established Church in Ireland.*

The Church in Ireland was first connected with the State 700 years ago, by Henry II., in A.D. 1172. In Henry the Eighth's reign no new Church was introduced into Ireland, the old Church was simply *re-formed*. In 1537, when the Act for sanctioning the Royal Supremacy was passed, all the Bishops of Ireland (except the Archbishops of Armagh and Dublin) were Irishmen. The Reformed Faith, then, was inaugurated in Ireland by Irishmen, not by "Bishops imported from England." The Church so reformed synodically accepted the English Book of Common Prayer. In 1634 it likewise accepted as its own the English Articles of 1562. From that time to the present day the Church in England and the Church in Ireland has been entirely one "in doctrine, government, and discipline." In 1800, by the Treaty of Union, the status and temporalities of the two Churches were placed, as regards the State, on the same basis. Long before, the Churches had ecclesiastically been "one Church." The title "United Church" did but express in words that which had long before existed. When the two Kingdoms became "the United Kingdom"—when the two Parliaments became "the United Parliament"—the title of "United Church" also followed as a matter of course. It is not the union of the two branches of the United Church, considered ecclesiastically, that is now threatened; this would remain if the Irish Church were dis-established to-morrow. It is the union of the Church with the State, by which the nation professes itself Christian, that is now threatened,—first in Ireland, and then in England also.

II. *As regards Church property in Ireland.*

It is commonly believed that the Roman Catholics of Ireland pay for the support of the Clergy of the Irish Church. This is one of the chief grounds on which an opinion adverse to the Irish Church has been formed in England. Again and again it has been reiterated that "it is a gross injustice for the poor of Ireland,

who are chiefly Roman Catholics, to pay for the support of the Church to which they do not belong." This is one of those popular errors which are largely believed, but which is entirely a delusion. No Roman Catholic in Ireland pays anything out of his pocket for the support of the Irish Clergy. Sir George Cornwall Lewis has borne the most direct testimony to this; so also did Mr. Roebuck in the late debate. Sir. G. C. Lewis says, "This grievance is commonly stated to be, that the Roman Catholics are compelled to contribute by the payment of tithes to the support of a Church from which they differ. Now, in fact, the Roman Catholics, although they may pay the tithe, contribute nothing, inasmuch as in Ireland tithes is of a nature of a reserved rent, which never belonged to the landlord or the tenant." And to this effect is Mr. Roebuck's testimony. "Let us," said he, "understand this doctrine of tithe, because it was one of the statements made by the Right Honourable Gentleman the member for South Lancashire (Mr. Gladstone), that the Irish people maintained a Church to which they are opposed. *I deny that entirely.* They don't do any such thing. The Irish farmer when he buys a farm takes it subject to tithe; he therefore takes it at so much less rent, and he does not pay the tithe. (Hear, hear.) The landlord when he buys an estate buys it charged with tithe; he buys it at so much less, and therefore he does not buy the tithe. It does not belong to him."—*The Times*, April 3, 1868.

We must remember also that the rent-charge is entirely a charge on the land, and of the £401,000 a-year, of which the rent-charge consists, £356,000 comes off land belonging to Protestants, and only £45,000 a-year from land held by Roman Catholics.

Again, the glebe lands of Ireland belonging to the beneficed Clergy are only 132,756 acres, and of these 111,151 acres, or 5-6ths of the whole, have been granted to the Church since the Reformation, and were therefore never in the hands of the Church of Rome.

If therefore the Church in Ireland professes the Reformed Faith, it is to be remembered that by far the greater part of the endowments arise exclusively from Protestant sources.

Again, every glebe-house at present existing in Ireland, and nearly every church, has been built since the Reformation. In the frequent wars of Ireland, the Churches were again and again demolished, so that very few ancient buildings, save some cathedrals, remain.

Nor is the income of the Irish Church excessive for the work to be done. The average income of an Irish incumbent is £245 a-year. The average Church population of an Irish benefice is 459. The average number of Clergy in a diocese of the Irish Church is 190. The average number in a Roman Catholic diocese in Ireland is only 100. The annual income of the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland, as stated by one of their own authorities, is £762,030 per annum. These facts are well worthy of careful attention when considering this question. They suggest much to thoughtful minds respecting Ireland's future should the Established Church be ever removed from that country.

III. Great efforts are being made to persuade Churchmen in England that their Church stands on a totally different footing from the Irish Church. Let not Englishmen be thus deceived. This blind is only for a time; it will be dropped at once as soon as the Irish Church is destroyed. The majority argument is a dangerous one, yet it is the only one used by the enemies of the Irish Church in favour of retaining the English establishment. If it is a sound one, it is equally good for establishing the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland as for retaining the Established Church in England. It is dangerous for a nation when great principles come to be decided, independently of truth, by mere numerical majorities. When this comes to pass, we are not far from great national crimes. None but those who are wilfully blind can doubt the great effect Ireland exerts upon England,

both as regards secular and religious affairs. The old adage—

“ He who England would win,  
With Ireland must first begin,”

is daily receiving fresh testimonies to its truth. Take but two instances—the one secular, the other religious. Two or three years ago a Fenian rising took place in Ireland. England looked on with careless indifference. It was a “mere Irish matter.” Last year Fenianism crossed the Channel. The only outward manifestations of its presence were the attempt on Chester Castle, the murder of a Manchester policeman, and the dastardly Clerkenwell explosion; and forthwith “this mere Irish matter” agitated England to its very centre. Special constables by the thousand were sworn in; the usual safeguards of society seemed to be endangered; for weeks there was a panic on all sides; and all this on account of what a few months before was regarded as a merely petty Irish row, not worthy of the attention of a well-to-do Englishman.

As it is with the State so is it with the Church. Thirty years ago English Churchmen permitted, without much compunction, Church-rates to be abolished in Ireland, and the burden of maintaining the fabrics and providing the necessary Church requisites thrown principally upon the Irish Clergy. Where are Church-rates in England now? All but practically abolished; and, if English churchmen now permit the Irish Church to be dis-established, but a few years will elapse before their own establishment will follow its fate.

All Establishments in the United Kingdom are now on their trial. The enemy’s cry is “*Divide et impera!*” “Lull the English Church to sleep and then destroy the Irish. How soon she awakes after that is done is of little consequence.” But we believe the enemy has calculated too much on the results of a surprise. They have succeeded in their first impetuous attack

on the Irish Church. But England is beginning to open her eyes and consider this matter. Information is asked for on all sides. Englishmen want to get to the bottom of this question. They want to know where this movement is to end. They want to be sure that the great sacrifice demanded of them will produce peace in Ireland. It is not our national characteristic to desert our friends; we rather like to stand by them, and defend them even when attacked by too great odds; and before we betray our best friends in Ireland, and bring a stain on our national honour by breaking a solemn national compact, it is well for us to consider, thoroughly, whether we shall gain or lose by such a course; or whether Lord Russell was right or wrong when he told the House of Commons, when he was in the full vigour of his Parliamentary career, that "to overthrow the Established Church in Ireland was to place the Churchmen of Ireland in a state of political inferiority to their fellow-countrymen:" "to make such a breach in the Act of Union would endanger the integrity of the empire," and moreover "would occasion such a rent in the whole Ecclesiastical Constitution of these realms as to cause the Church of England to suffer deeply from such a measure."

Is there such a thing as political inebriety? If so, we might, without any want of respect to one whom all parties honour as a distinguished statesman, appeal from Philip drunk to Philip sober; from Earl Russell of 1868 to Lord John Russell of 1838; from Earl Russell in opposition now, to Lord John Russell, speaking, with the full weight of ministerial authority, thirty years ago. Then Lord John saw plainly enough the dangers that would result to the Empire from the destruction of the Irish Establishment. These dangers are by no means diminished now. The time has come when all who love their Church, when all who desire to do their duty to their Queen, their country, and their God, must seriously consider these things, and seek to determine their course of action, not by party motives, not by the desire of

furthering the political ascendancy of any party in the State; but by seeking to remove whatever may be shown to be amiss in the Irish Church, whilst at the same time they maintain to the utmost of their power that Union of Church and State, which, with whatever inconveniences it may sometimes be attended, is after all the chief safeguard of our religious liberty, and the source of untold benefits to the people of this United Kingdom.

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### **Vested rights of the laity in the Irish Church.**

“ But there are other vested rights and interests besides those of the clergy. Our poorer Protestant brethren, who have established themselves in every part of the country—and this in the faith of the maintenance of the present settlement of things—they, too, have a vested right, for themselves and for their children in that ministry of God’s Word and Sacraments, according to the order of our Reformed Church, which hitherto they have so freely enjoyed . . . . . We cannot indeed regard the spiritual condition to which many of the poorer members of our Church, thinly scattered in remote districts, and far from the aid of their richer brethren, will be reduced without the deepest anxiety and alarm. The witness of our Church—for Christ in His office, which no man may usurp, in His mediatorial dignity, with which no creature may interfere—this, God helping, our Church shall maintain to the end, and it shall never cease in the land. But the difficulty of bringing home the means of grace to some portions of our people, if ever the parochial system as now existing should be abolished, will be almost impossible to overcome, and there is extreme danger that, in one way or another, many of them would be lost to us for ever. Some deprived of the means of grace would emigrate with their families; but many

must remain to whom this way of escape would not be open. Too poor to provide the services of a clergyman for themselves, and of a class peculiarly needing the watchful care of one, the heads and some of the elder members of the families might continue stedfast in the faith in which they have been brought up, but they would be little able to instruct and train their children, who would almost inevitably be absorbed in the masses of the followers of Rome, by whom they are surrounded. And thus, over a wide extent of country, little by little, the light of the Reformation would be extinguished." — *Address of the Irish Archbishops and Bishops to Her Majesty, May 1868.*

The average size of every Irish benefice is 20 square miles. The average Church population is 459. The average income of the Incumbent, £245. Out of the 1510 Irish benefices 1055 are under £300 a year. There is only one benefice in Ireland, and that peculiarly situated, which has not a Church population.

	YEARS.
Irish Church History may be divided into the following periods:—	
The Church existed in Ireland without acknowledging the Papal Supremacy from A.D. 432 to A.D. 1152, a period of . . . . .	720
The Supremacy of the Pope was exercised in Ireland from A.D. 1152 to A.D. 1534, a period of . . . . .	382
The Reformed Church in Ireland has renounced the Supremacy of the Pope since A.D. 1534, a period of . . . . .	334
Total period of Christianity in Ireland . . . . .	1436
Total period during which the Church in Ireland has not acknowledged the Supremacy of the Pope . . . . .	1054











