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THE CHURCHMAN

A Monthly Magazine

*CONDUCTED BY CLERGYMEN AND LAYMEN
OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND*

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a distinct prayer for the work of Christian Missions has been inserted. That prayer has only been introduced in modern days. The only similar prayer in our Church liturgy is that used on Good Friday, for "Jews, Turks, Infidels and Heretics," written long before Christian Missions, organized as they now are, were thought of. It is probably a relic of the Crusades, when the only dealings that the Christian Church had with other religions were battles with the Turk in Palestine, the land of the Jew. It is well known that the Mahommedan calls everyone an infidel who has not embraced the creed of Islam. The word "infidel" placed so closely after "Turk" suggests a *tu quoque* taunt. Considering that Jews and Turks together number a very small percentage of either Hindoos or Buddhists, of whose creeds our forefathers were probably ignorant, the Church of England might very well in these more enlightened days either adopt the prayer of the Irish Church or improve its own, and use it oftener than once a year! Meanwhile, it rests with each individual, in private and in his family, to supplement the prayers of his Church by obeying the commands of the great Founder of Christianity, Who said to His followers, "Pray ye the Lord of the harvest, that He would send forth labourers into His harvest."

SETON CHURCHILL.



ART. II.—CHURCH DEFENCE AND RURAL PARISHES.

THE PROGRAMME OF THE LIBERATION SOCIETY: "WHAT ACTION WITH REFERENCE TO IT IS DESIRABLE IN RURAL PARISHES?"

RECENT circumstances make the programme of the Liberation Society of importance to the whole Church. But the question here proposed appears especially important, as the action of the Society is to be directed especially to rural populations.

Towards the end of last year the Executive Committee of the Liberation Society passed and published the following resolutions:

1. "Having regard to the fact that the Bill for the extension of the Parliamentary franchise in the counties has now become law, and that the Bill for the redistribution of Parliamentary seats will probably be

grant that Thy Holy Spirit may prosper their work, and that by their life and doctrine they may set forth Thy glory, and set forward the salvation of all men; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."—IRISH CHURCH LITURGY.

passed in the coming year, the Committee are of opinion that the time has arrived when the question of Disestablishment may be resolutely pressed upon Parliament, upon the constituencies, and upon the country at large, as one which demands early legislative settlement."

2. "They are further of opinion that, as early in 1886 the enfranchised classes and the new and altered constituencies will be called upon to exercise their electoral rights, energetic measures should be immediately adopted by the advocates of religious equality for securing, in every case in which it may be practicable, the choice and the return of candidates favourable to their aims."

3. "The Committee will themselves forthwith take steps for giving effect to the foregoing resolutions by action both in Parliament and in the constituencies, and they urge their supporters throughout the kingdom to consider without delay how they may best advance the movement in their several localities."

This action the Society followed up by summoning a Conference, which took place on the 13th of January last, at which similar resolutions were passed.

The Committee have further addressed a circular to the officers of all Liberal Associations throughout the kingdom.¹

The immediate occasion of intensified action on the part of the Society is the coming extension of the Franchise in 1886. The circular is an effort to secure the co-operation of Liberal agencies *everywhere* in returning candidates who shall go to Parliament pledged for Disestablishment and Disendowment. It will be observed, however, that the "Liberation" leaders, in appealing to their political allies, aim particularly at influencing county constituencies; but they urge their friends to adopt the means which seem most suitable for every several locality.

The principles and mode of action were expanded in the speeches at the Conference held in the Memorial Hall, Farringdon Street, on the 13th of January, to which I have alluded. The Chairman, the Hon. E. Lyulph Stanley, M.P.,

¹ The following is the main portion of the circular: "The Executive Committee will feel much obliged by your bringing the subjoined resolutions under the notice of the Liberal organization with which you are officially connected. At the last General Election the advocates of Disestablishment refrained from generally pressing their views, lest the success of the Liberal party should be endangered at an important political crisis. But at the next election the way will be comparatively clear for dealing with a question in regard to which public opinion has of late been rapidly ripening, and which has now obtained a firm hold on the Liberalism of the country. They therefore consider that they are entitled to urge that a reform to which they attach the highest importance should form part of the Liberal programme. That does not, however, involve the adoption by them of an inflexible rule in all constituencies; but is compatible with a due regard to local circumstances, and especially to their own electoral strength. In some cases it may be their duty to support candidates whose political opinions are less advanced than their own; in others, it may be no less their duty to press the claims of candidates who sympathize with them, and to claim for them the support of their Liberal allies."

insisted that the "time for *action* had come." Another M.P. said, "That if the Liberation Society did not make itself felt in the General Election of 1886, it would lose its political influence for ever." The Chairman referred to the two millions of new voters as involving "a new section of voters altogether—viz., the great mass of *rural* occupiers." Mr. Stanley said :

In the counties there has not been much opportunity to push the matter forward, because the mass of the electors in the counties had had no voice in the elections ; but when they looked at those who were to be voters—*agricultural labourers*, mechanics, and artisans, and small shopkeepers—he was sure the Liberation Society would be able to tell them, in spite of opposition, they had held successful meetings and had the sympathy of the *rural population*. He could not imagine any class who ought to be warmer friends to the Liberation Society than the poorer classes of the population. There was no class that had been more completely handed over to the united Church and State, represented by the squire and the clergyman, and there was no class who had been more kept down by its united influence.

The policy he recommended was to test by energetic action the opinion of the majority of the future constituencies, which he hoped would be found in accordance with Liberation principles. But if *not* found so, then to "work by agitation and education to convert that uneducated majority and to bring it over." He urged the "setting forth to the people of the *material* advantages of the policy of Disestablishment and *absolute Disendowment*." "He would have them know that there is six millions of national property misapplied ; and set forth before them the many useful ways in which it might be made to serve the public. For instance, if applied to support free education, it would at once deprive the Church of an unfair influence, and win over farmers and shopkeepers to Liberal principles by relieving them of an educational rate."

Another speaker maintained that the question was "secular rather than theological—there was a national estate to be devoted to the good of the people." Mr. Howard Evans "warned his sympathizers not to take it for granted that Liberals would promote their views [all 'Liberals,' *i.e.*, are not Liberationists] ; they must exert themselves, and that in the most practical way." Mr. Whitworth, M.P., insisted that "agitating at the beginning of 1886 would be too late, and the Society must do its work thoroughly in the present year before that time came.

Upon one point it seems there is a difference of opinion. Some Liberationists spoke in favour of a gradual accomplishment of their ends, *e.g.* by taking successively—the removal of the Bishops from the House of Lords ; Disestablishment in Wales, next in Scotland, and finally in England. Others were for a complete and drastic measure which would sweep

away, *with* the whole, every one of the so-called minor abuses.

I have sufficiently indicated, probably, the programme of the Liberation Society. But a summary of the information which I have gathered may not, to some at least of the readers of *THE CHURCHMAN*, be without interest, at the present moment.

The Liberation Society, with an income of £8,000 per annum, and a strong corps of practical agitators both in and out of the House of Commons, is roused by the prospect of the enlarged Franchise to strain every nerve to secure the new constituencies and their future representatives for carrying Disestablishment and Disendowment through Parliament. They have already taken their first steps; and they propose to agitate everywhere in accordance with local circumstances. They have a special eye to counties and to rural constituencies. They consider that their ultimate success hangs upon their efforts in the current year. They do not think that treatment such as the Irish Church had, of assigning certain funds to a Disestablished Church as a corporate body, is at all satisfactory. They go in now for "*absolute* Disendowment;" and intend to hold out before the voters the tempting prospect of the assignment of the Church's property (after meeting vested interests) to their own appropriation. The artisan or agricultural labourer is to have his child educated without school fees; the ratepayers will be free for ever from educational rates; and the whole of the Church's property¹ will be applied to whatever purposes Parliament by a general measure, or local boards of Government in detail, may deem "most useful to the public."

If any one will buy their "Case for Disestablishment," and also the tracts advertised at the end of it, he will see the complete statement of the views held by the Liberationists, and the manner in which those views are to be propounded among the constituencies by agitators and by circulated pamphlets.

Thus I have almost anticipated the first answer to my question, "What action is desirable in rural parishes," whether to the incumbent or to the loyal laymen, which is this: Order the above-named "Case" and tracts through your bookseller, and carefully read them, unless you are sufficiently acquainted with the tender mercies of the Disendowers. Churchmen

¹ The recent replies of such Liberal leaders as Mr. Gladstone and Lord Granville to questions about the "*State-paid Church*" may, perhaps, discourage a few of the Liberationists. Mr. Gladstone, *e.g.*, informed the querist that "the Clergy of the Church of England are *not* State-paid." Lord Granville wrote that "tithes existed before Acts of Parliament."

cannot afford to remain ignorant of the efforts to weaken the position and alienate the property of the Church. Let us learn a lesson from the fate of the Church of Ireland, and be awake.

My second answer, and no less, I am sure, important, is: Get and read our literature on Church Defence. Many timely books and tracts have been recommended in this Magazine.¹ For instance, "The Englishman's Brief on behalf of the National Church" (S.P.C.K.) and "The Dead Hand in the Free Churches of Dissent."

And if this earnest exhortation at the present crisis, may well be addressed to the rural clergy, I would venture to address it also to loyal brother Churchmen of the rural laity. The Church's gifts for usefulness are really your heritage. The vested interests of the living clergy are proposed to be protected. But when the old clergy are passed away, where will be the provision for the spiritual wants of yourselves, your children, your tenantry, your labourers? Certainly *you* need to be "up" in this question; and *your* defence of the Church's position will be the more telling because you have no personal pecuniary interest immediately at stake, as we beneficed clergy apparently have.

Of course, I assume that readers of THE CHURCHMAN are acquainted with the help they may get from the Church Defence Society, and with its monthly organ, *The National Church*, and that they support the Society and read the paper.²

I remark, *thirdly*, that we must not under-rate the force of the attack on our "Sion," nor over-rate our security in the consciousness that right is with us. Let us remember Mr. Evans's warning to the Liberationists, and *take nothing for granted*, but remember that *energetic and practical action* is the recipe for a successful defence. *Fas est et ab hoste doceri.*

Neither (*fourthly*) let us give way to despondency. To be always groaning out that Disestablishment must come some day, and is only a question of time, is "giving up the keys." Such prophecies work out their own fulfilment. There is much to encourage us. Out of 32,516 religious marriages in last year, in 29,696 cases the couples and their friends chose the

¹ Lectures such as Sir John Conroy's "Church Endowments," and "Church Property not National Property," and "The Church of England, Past and Present," by the Bishop of Carlisle, may be named; also "The Church of England not Established by Law, and not Endowed by the State," by the Rev. J. Hamilton; also Professor Freeman's treatise, "Disestablishment and Disendowment;" also "The Established Church Question, How to Deal with it."

² See "The Church Defence Institution and its Work," by Mr. Stanley Leighton, M.P., THE CHURCHMAN, vol. iv., p. 401.

old Church of England, and only 2,820 went to Nonconformists, including Roman Catholics. The vast sums by which every cathedral has been restored; numerous churches are yearly built; new sees are erected, and new parishes set going, testify to a vast love to the Church beating in the heart of England. We have only to *be true to ourselves*.

Fifthly, about Modes of Action. From my own happy experience I say, get a good lecturer into your parish. This awakens interest. Then have your Church Defence pamphlets ready. I found them not only *taken*, but sought for. And I suppose we must be prepared to meet the agitator when he comes, and to follow the circulation of Liberation by Defence literature; perhaps, best of all, from our own pens, if we have a "manifold writer."

I beg further to suggest an effort in each Ruridecanal Conference to establish a common understanding and action in the matter of recovery of tithes. It is hard that any clergyman should be left alone and without manifest sympathy if he be driven to the invidious necessity of distraint. And yet in many parishes in the hop-districts it *may* be a necessity to distrain, if the parson is to live. The so-called "extraordinary" tithe is at present the stalking-horse for the general attack of the agitator. It is often overlooked that this is a complete misnomer. A tithe can only be a tithe; but the tenth of more valuable produce must of course be greater than the tenth of less valuable. And it was at the urgent *request of owners and cultivators* that the tithe of more valuable crops was not laid by average calculation over the whole farm, but reserved to be paid separately according to the actual acreage of more valuable crops. This is what is called the "extraordinary" tithe; and it was arranged at the desire, and in the interest, of *the payer*, and not of the receiver. Still, if this *vexata quæstio* could be amicably arranged, the gain would be great. The farmer and the country parson should have nothing to alienate them one from another; and if the parson has a struggle to get on, he must (and does) sympathize with the farmer, who, at present, has the same. The Council of the Farmers' Alliance have lately resolved that it is most desirable that the tithe rent-charge should be paid direct by the owner. Every clergyman would rejoice at this. Some competent judges think that the averages of the extraordinary tithe were set too high. Every clergyman would rejoice that if there be an overpressure, it should be removed. I would venture to suggest for consideration, whether a longer interval between planting and extraordinary-tithe paying might not be fixed, so that the farmer should have full time to turn himself round after the cost of new cultivation. It

would be well if landowners, farmers, and clergy could take amicable counsel on these points, and agree on any principles for legislation. There is much ignorance in the matter, and some hot feeling, and of these the agitator makes capital, to the injury of those really concerned.

In conclusion, let us remember that the Church's property is in local corporations, and it is proposed to hand much of it over to local bodies. Let us, then, shew the laity what is before them. No Parson to minister to them; no Parsonage as a house of sympathy and help; the Church in the hands of a Board, who may use it as they like, or *sell* it for a barn. Let us tell our landowners that Radicals are avowedly seeking to level the "inequalities" in the property of the Church of England, because they are such a powerful precedent or "inequalities" in landed property generally.

Let us tell our Nonconformist parishioners that Liberationists are now avowing that this is a question of *secularities*; and that if Secularists succeed in secularizing "Church" property, they may step on to secularize Nonconformist property, if they find it worth diverting from the "useless object of religious teaching," to matters "really useful to the people." Let us at the same time beware of bitterness in regard to Nonconformists; let our rivalry be one of good works in love and devotion; let us try to get the good among our Nonconformist brethren to perceive that it is the means of making Christ and His salvation known throughout the land, which is really being attacked by Secularists of various shades. Let us, Churchmen, strive not to exaggerate but to minimize our differences; and at least join heart to heart and shoulder to shoulder in defence of the National Church.¹ Let us remember that no other influence on earth so binds a man to his fellow-man, or to a system, as the influence of grateful love for having been brought to a conscious acceptance of Christ, and so to peace—permanent and perfect peace. Therefore we clergy may be assured that in the truest living for our people, and labouring for bringing them, one by one, and family by family, to Christ as their Saviour and Master, we are most surely binding their hearts to the Church to defend which, as the great means of doing Christ's work, we have now to gird ourselves.

CLEMENT F. COBB.

¹ Some Churchmen, who complain of Erastianism, may be reminded that if the National Church should be disendowed, still the State will have all the same power to interfere with whatever property may be left us or we may acquire, and with our *teaching* in accordance with the trusts on which we shall hold it, which she now *exercises* over Nonconformists' property, teaching, and trusts.