

WHAT GOOD WILL IT DO?

A QUESTION ABOUT THE
DISESTABLISHMENT OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND,
EXAMINED AND ANSWERED.

BY THE

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“The thing as it is.”—JOB xxvi. 23.

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WHAT GOOD WILL IT DO?

THERE is a subject much talked of in the present day, about which I wish to say a few words. That subject is the Disestablishment and Disendowment of the Church of England.

The subject is one of real importance, and demands the careful attention of Churchmen. A Society, called the Liberationist Society, has been formed for the express purpose of promoting Disestablishment, and has many active and able supporters. This Society collects annually large sums of money for the purpose of spreading its own views. It pays lecturers to go throughout the country, making violent attacks on the union of Church and State. It prints and publishes large quantities of tracts, containing statements about the Church of England of a very erroneous character, which will not bear investigation. In short, there is, in full operation, an organized crusade against the Establishment. The campaign has begun. These are facts which every Churchman ought to know. It is folly to ignore them.

The world is fond of saying that clergymen cannot give an honest and disinterested opinion about this subject. "They are only fighting for the loaves and fishes," is the cry. Well, the world may say what it pleases: I am getting too old to care for such charges. I only care for the spread of truth, and I shall not shrink from giving my opinion, and showing "the thing as it is." It may be very true that at present Disestablishment is not within the range of "practical politics." But it may be pressed upon us very soon. Events work quickly in this day. It is well to be prepared with some knowledge of the subject.

In handling the subject I shall say nothing about the justice or honesty of Disestablishment and Disendowment, though I might say a good deal. I suppose Parliament has power to deprive any corporate body of its property, and, if it thinks fit, can take away the endowments of the Church of England. I shall stick close to one simple question:—that question is, "*What good would it do?*"

Let us, then, suppose that Parliament resolves some day to disestablish the Church of England, as it has already disestablished the Church of Ireland. Let us suppose that an Act of Parliament is passed by which the connection between Church and State is dissolved for ever, and the State takes possession, as far as it can, of the property of the Church. What would the consequences be?

The practical consequences of Disestablishment, I take it, would be something of this kind:—

(1) The Bishops would cease to be Peers of the Realm, and to sit in the House of Lords.

(2) The income of the Bishops and clergy, from tithes, old money endowments, and lands, would be appropriated by the State, and applied to other purposes, as fast as the present receivers of it died off.

(3) In process of time there would be nothing left to the Church, out of all her present possessions, except the church-buildings, the pew-rents, a life-interest in the income of the Bishops and clergy for a few years, and the endowments of the last two centuries. This property, on the principles of the Irish Church Act, would probably be left to the Church of England. Some wild and rabid Liberationists, I believe, have coolly proposed that the clergy shall be stripped of their life-incomes, and turned into the street, as paupers, the very day the Disestablishing Act passes! They have also proposed that parish churches shall be taken away from Episcopalians, and applied to other uses! Whether they are to be put up to auction and sold to the highest bidder, or turned into Libraries, Museums, Mechanics' Institutes, or Music Halls, I do not yet know. I decline, however, to notice such nonsense as this. Until the House of Commons is very unlike any House which has ever been elected in this country, it will never sanction such a policy, or ignore vested interests. The members of the Church of England are far too numerous and influential to make wholesale confiscation possible. There is no earthly reason why the strong Church of England should be treated more hardly than the weak Church of Ireland.

After Disestablishment all Churches and sects would be left on a dead level of equality. No favour or privilege would be granted by the State to one more than another. The State itself would have nothing to do with religion, and would leave the supply of it to the principles of free trade and the action of the voluntary system. In a word, the Government of England would allow all its subjects to serve God or Baal,—to go to heaven or to another place,—just as they please. The State would take no cognizance of spiritual matters, and would look on with Epicurean indifference and unconcern. The State would continue to care for the *bodies* of its subjects, but it would entirely ignore their *souls*.

Gallio, who thought Christianity was a matter of “words and names,” and “cared for none of these things,” would become the model of an English Statesman. The Sovereign of Great Britain might be a Papist, the Prime Minister a Mahometan, the Lord Chancellor a Jew. Parliament would begin without prayer. Oaths would be dispensed with in Courts of Justice. The next king would be crowned without a religious service in Westminster Abbey. Prisons and workhouses, men-of-war and regiments, would all be left without chaplains. In short, for fear of offending infidels and people who object to intercessory prayer, I suppose that regimental bands would be for-

bidden to play “God Save the Queen.”

This, so far as I can make out, is the state of things which the Liberationists wish to bring about in Great Britain. This is the end and object of all their talk, and noise, and organization, and agitation. This is the delightful condition of matters which their advocates and supporters, both in and out of Parliament, want to set up in the land. This is what they mean when they talk of “Disestablishment.” Let them deny it if they can.

Now, let us consider quietly *what good would all this do?* I will proceed step by step, and examine six broad questions one by one. I will assume that Disestablishment actually takes place. I will then ask:—

- I. What good would it do to Dissenters?
- II. What good would it do to the Church?
- III. What good would it do to the tithe-payers?
- IV. What good would it do to the poor?
- V. What good would it do to the cause of Christian charity?
- VI. What good would it do to the State?

I shall try to answer each of these questions in order.

I. First of all, What good would Disestablishment do *to the Dissenters?* I answer that question without the slightest hesitation. It would do them no good at all.

I take up this point first because it comes first in order. The Dissenters, as a body, with some notable exceptions, are the chief agitators for Disestablishment. They evidently think that it would be greatly for their benefit, and would improve their position. I venture to think that they are totally and entirely mistaken. I will give my reasons for saying so.

Would Disestablishment *destroy* the Church of England, and take the great rival of Dissenters completely out of the way? Would it leave the Dissenters a clear field, and throw the whole population into their hands? It would do nothing of the kind!—Unless the House of Commons resolves to proscribe the use of the Liturgy,—to make it penal to be an Episcopalian,—to confiscate the property of Churchmen, on the principles of French Communism,—and to imprison or shoot clergymen who work harder than others, on the principles of Sheffield rattening¹,—unless the House of Commons does this, the Church of England will never be killed by Disestablishment. The Dissenters would soon find that the old Church, when disestablished, was not dead, but alive.

Disestablishment would not even ruin the Church *financially*. The pew-

¹ “rattening” in 19th cent. was an agitation by militants forcefully taking the belts from grinding machines so workers and businesses could not work unless workers joined or were allowed to join the newly formed Trade Union in Sheffield. [ET editor]

rents and offertories would still remain. Parliament could not take them. The endowments of the last two centuries would still remain. Parliament, on the reasonable principles of the Irish Act, would not touch them. The life-interests of the Bishops and clergy, on the same principles, would still remain. A judicious system of life insurance or commutation, such as wise lay Churchmen, accustomed to financial matters, could soon devise, would turn those life-interests into a very large capital for investment, if safe investment could be found. In short, though sorely crippled and impoverished, the Church of England would not be ruined. We could still get on, and would get on, though many of us might have to reduce our expenditure very largely. The Liberationists would soon discover, after spoiling and impoverishing us as much as they could, that we were not quite bankrupt. We should maintain our position, in spite of our poverty, and not die. Let the Dissenters remember that.

Disestablishment would not affect the influence of the Church *in great towns* in the slightest appreciable degree. The tithe-receiving clergy in rural districts would doubtless lose half their income by life insurance or commutation, and be sorely hampered. But the clergy in most large cities, such as London, Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham, Leeds, and Sheffield, who generally depend chiefly on pew-rents, Easter offerings, and offertories, as a body, would be nearly as well off after Disestablishment as they were before. "The great towns govern the country," we are continually told. Yet in most great towns the Church would be as powerful as ever! Once more, I say, let the Dissenters remember that.

Disestablishment would not make the bulk of Englishmen *forsake the Church of England* and become Baptists, Independents, Presbyterians, or Methodists. It would not fill the chapels and empty the churches. It would not make the aristocracy, or the upper and middle classes, or a large part of the working classes, burn their Prayer-books, desert Episcopally-ordained ministers, and fall in love with extempore prayer. Not a bit of it! The vast majority of Churchmen would stick to Bishops, rectors, vicars, curates, liturgical worship, and the old paths of the Church of England, closer and tighter than ever.

They would make more of their poor old Church in her adversity than they ever did in her prosperity. They would love her better and open their purses more liberally, when they saw her in plain attire, than they ever did when she was clothed in purple and fine linen. In point of number of adherents, I verily believe Disestablishment would soon prove a dead loss to Dissenters, and not a gain.

Disestablishment *would not give more liberty* to Dissenters, or enable them to do anything which they cannot do now. No Christians on earth have such a plethora of civil and religious liberty as the English Noncon-

formists have in the present day. They have far more freedom than Churchmen! They can build chapels anywhere, preach anywhere, gather congregations anywhere, worship in any way, and serve God in any way, no man forbidding them, while Churchmen are checked and stopped by laws and restrictions at every turn. What in the world could the Dissenters do more, if the Church was Disestablished to-morrow? I do not suppose they would ask leave to shoot or hang all the clergy, to “improve us off the face of the earth,” to confiscate the cathedrals and parish churches, and to compel the millions of English men and women who now go to church to go to chapel, on pain of fines or death. But, short of this, I know of nothing they cannot do now. They have free liberty to make all Englishmen Dissenters, *if they can*; and what more do they want? The dissolution of the union of Church and State would do Dissenters no good at all.

Last, but not least, *Disestablishment would not remove the social disabilities under which Dissenters, and especially Dissenting ministers, are said now to labour*. This, I am aware, is a very difficult and delicate subject, and I am almost afraid to touch it, lest I should unintentionally give offence or hurt feelings. But the alleged grievance is said to be one which our Dissenting brethren feel very keenly. They complain, I am told, that we do not meet them on terms of social equality, and that we treat them as if they belonged to an inferior caste or order.

I must honestly say that I think there are no just grounds for this charge, and that the grievance complained of is purely sentimental and imaginary. Speaking for myself, I shall certainly not plead guilty. I have often cooperated with Dissenters on behalf of the London City Mission and Bible Societies. I have spoken side by side with their ministers on many a platform. I have entertained the leading members of the Wesleyan Conference at my own house in Liverpool. I have never disputed the talents, gifts, and graces of such men as Angell James, and Sherman, and Binney, and Stoughton, and Spurgeon, and Morley Punshon. Their works are on the shelves of my library, and I read and admire them. If I treated such men as belonging to an inferior caste, I should think I had made a poor exhibition of my Christianity, my courtesy, and my common sense.

But really our Nonconformist brethren seem to forget that when conscientious and earnest-minded Christians do not belong to the same Church, and do not worship God in the same way, there is never likely to be much social intercourse, or visiting, or intermarrying between their families. In fact, *the stronger and deeper the conscientiousness, the greater and wider will be the separation*. Moreover, they seem to forget that so long as young English Churchmen are trained for the ministry at Oxford and Cambridge, and Episcopal Theological Colleges like Highbury and St. Aidan’s, and young English Dissenters are generally trained for the ministry at their own

peculiar Dissenting Colleges, there is a bond of union wanting between them, which, generally speaking, nothing else will supply. Men must mix together and be educated side by side when they are young, if they are to be on familiar terms when they grow up.

One thing, to my mind, is perfectly certain. The alleged grievance I am now considering has nothing whatever to do with the union of Church and State, and would not be removed by the dissolution of that union. It is a state of things which arises entirely from the fact that Dissenters conscientiously hold one set of opinions, and we conscientiously hold another. Would Disestablishment make us give up our respective opinions? Would it turn Episcopalians into Presbyterians, or make Baptists and Independents adopt the Book of Common Prayer? We all know it would do nothing of the kind. On the contrary, I believe Churchmen would cling to their old opinions more tightly than ever, and keep to themselves more thoroughly than they ever did before. Where, then, is the use of raising a false issue, and holding out expectations from Disestablishment which are certain not to be realized? The existing line of social demarcation between Churchmen and Dissenters may be right or wrong, wise or foolish; but it is a line drawn by the very fact that they belong to two distinct religious systems. The separation of Church and State would do nothing whatever towards the removal of the alleged disability, and it would be felt as strongly after Disestablishment as before. The much wished-for equality and dead level of Churchmen and sects would not have the slightest effect in filling up the gulf and bridging over the chasm. In social matters Churchmen would keep to Churchmen, and Dissenters would keep to Dissenters, just as they do now, and even more; and I marvel that any man of sense and reflection can expect anything else.

In saying all this I would not be misunderstood. I disclaim the slightest feeling of ill-will towards Dissenters. I have not the least desire to interfere with them. I respect their conscientious convictions, even when I think them mistaken. I am thoroughly thankful for any good work they do. I wish to allow them to work and worship in their own way. I only express my own firm conviction that Disestablishment would do the Dissenters no good, but great harm. In their own interest they had better be quiet and let us alone.

II. In the second place, What good would Disestablishment *do to the Church of England?* My answer is twofold. It might possibly do it a little good; but it would certainly do it a great deal of harm.

The advocates of Disestablishment, I am well aware, are fond of telling us that their movement is all for our real advantage! They mean us no harm! not they! They love the Church of England, but dislike its connection

with the State. The Liberationist agitators are in reality our best friends, and we ought to be exceedingly obliged to them for their disinterested labours for our benefit! They want to strike the chains off our limbs, to deliver us from a yoke of bondage, and make us free and independent. Brave words these! and I quite believe that some of those who use them mean what they say. But they utterly fail to convince me. At the risk of being told that I am only caring for “the loaves and fishes,” I will give my reasons.

The good that Disestablishment would do the Church of England is very small. It would doubtless give us more liberty, and might enable us to effect some useful reforms. It would bring the laity forward into their rightful position from sheer necessity. It would probably give us a real and properly constituted Convocation, including laity as well as clergy. It would lead to an increase of Bishops, a division of dioceses, and a reconstruction of our cathedral bodies. It would make an end of Crown jobs in the choice of Bishops, and upset the whole existing system of patronage. It would destroy all sinecure offices, and drive all drones out of the ecclesiastical hive. It would enable us to make our worship more elastic, and our ritual better suited to the times. All these are gains unquestionably, but gains whose value must not be exaggerated.

On the other hand, the harm that Disestablishment would do to the Church of England is very great indeed. It would sorely impoverish the thousands of rural clergy, whose income depends on tithes, and would make it ultimately necessary to diminish their number by at least one-half, to consolidate half the livings and put an end to half the services! The voluntary system in rural districts is notoriously an entire failure. None know that better than the ministers of Nonconformist country chapels.² It would tax the energies of a disestablished Church most heavily to keep up an Episcopal ministry outside the towns. It would immensely cripple the power of the Church of England to do much for the evangelization of the heathen abroad, and the general spread of the Gospel at home. “Sustentation funds” would absorb three-quarters of the Church’s attention; and we should find it hard enough to maintain our position, and much harder to extend our lines. Last, but not least, Disestablishment would almost certainly lead to divisions, schisms, and possibly disruption in the Episcopal body. We should all become more narrow and less liberal and comprehensive in our views. Of course, this goes for nothing with some Christians, who seem to think that divisions and schisms are very nice things, and that multiplication of sects is the nearest thing to heaven upon earth! I content myself with remarking that our Lord Jesus Christ says, “A house divided against itself cannot stand.” The more divisions among Christians, the

² See the testimony of Mr. Spurgeon at the end of this paper.

greater the weakness and the smaller the influence of Christianity! To promote an increase of division among English Christians is the surest way to help the Pope, the infidel, and the devil.

I will not waste words on those who tell us that the English clergy, after Disestablishment, would preach better, and write better, and speak better, and work better than they do now, and that, like wild elephants, we should all be made tamer and more useful by starving. Anybody can make vague assertions like these: but assertions are worth nothing when they are contradicted by plain facts. I do not see that the American Episcopalians over the water, who have no connection with the State, are a bit better preachers and workers than the clergy of the English Establishment. Above all, I do not see that English Nonconformist ministers, as a body, are at all superior, in preaching or working, to the clergy of the English Established Church.

In short, the assertion of the advocates of Disestablishment, that this movement would do the Church of England good, appears to me utterly destitute of foundation. An ounce of facts is better than a pound of theories. Free Churches are very fine things to talk about, and look very fine at a distance; but matters are not always serene inside. The good that Disestablishment would do to the Church of England is comparatively small, and very uncertain. The harm that it would do is very certain and very great. The advocates of Disestablishment may say what they please about wishing to do us good, but they must not expect us to believe them. They had better drop that line of argument altogether. The man who tries to disestablish and disendow the Church of England, and set it free from the State, is, in my judgment, an enemy of the Church, and not a friend.

III. In the third place, What good would Disestablishment do to *the tithe-payers*? I answer that question very decidedly. It would not do them the slightest good whatever.

This is a point that needs clearing up. It touches men's pockets, and therefore they feel interested about it. Moreover, there is an amazing amount of ignorance in men's minds about it. I have not a doubt that many farmers and small occupiers of land in England are under the belief that, if Disestablishment came, they would be a great deal better off than they are now. They are secretly rejoicing in the vision of "no more Established Church! no more parsons to take rent-charge! no more tithes! So much more money in our pockets!"

Now I am sorry to dispel this pleasing vision, but I am obliged to do it. Facts are stubborn things, and cannot be evaded. There is such a thing as "reckoning without your host." I recommend tithe-payers, who are generally sensible, hard-headed fellows, to look at the subject on all sides. "Wait a bit, my friends," I would say: "don't be in a hurry. Before you help to

destroy the union of Church and State, consider whether the destruction will help your pockets." You think it will. I tell you it will not. Let us see.

It is a fact that for centuries nearly all land in England has been subject to the payment of tithes. For hundreds of years land has been bought and sold, let and hired, rented and farmed, at more or less annual payment, according to the amount of tithe. Tithe has been a regular charge, which has been taken into account in every agreement between landlord and tenant for many generations, *He that pays no tithe pays more rent, and he that pays tithe pays less rent.* Every farmer of average sense knows all this perfectly well. To tell them such things, to use a homely phrase, is like telling them that two and two make four, or that there are twenty shillings in a pound. It is a simple fact, which is known from one end of England to another, wherever men are not wilfully blind, or grossly ignorant, or dishonest reasoners.

Well, if the Church of England is disestablished and disendowed, it is plain that tithe-payment will either be done away or not. The clergy, of course, will cease to receive the tithes. But what will become of the tithes? Will Parliament do away with the payment of tithes altogether? or will Parliament decree that tithes shall be paid to some other purpose than the support of the clergy? One course or another must be adopted, and in either case the tithe-payers would not gain a single farthing!

Let us suppose, on the one hand, that tithes are completely abolished, and cease to be paid. At once every landlord in England would raise his rents, and on every principle of justice and equity he would have a right to do so. A very nice thing it would be for the landlords, and a very pretty addition it would be to their incomes! But the tenants would gain nothing at all! *What they saved in tithes they would lose in rent.*

Let us suppose, on the other hand, that tithes are not abolished when Disestablishment comes, but applied to some other purpose than the support of the clergy. Well, if they are not abolished, there is an end of the whole question. Disestablishment would evidently do no good, in that case, to the pockets of tithe-payers. They would continue to pay, and would be just where they were before!

I defy any advocate of Disestablishment and Disendowment to show any escape from these conclusions. Some tell us they would apply the tithes to the payment of poor-rates and highway-rates. Where would be the good of this? At once the landlords would raise their rents. Land is now let and hired subject to payment of poor-rates and highway-rates, and they make a regular deduction from the rent. *Take off the burden of poor-rates and highway-rates, and of course the rent would be raised!* Some would-be philanthropists tell us they would apply the tithes to public objects, such as harbours of refuge, public parks for great towns, museums, lunatic asylums,

and the like. Public objects, indeed! What benefit would rural tithe-payers get from them? What would a Suffolk tithe-payer care for harbours at Filey or Dover, or parks and museums at Wolverhampton or Oldham? His tithe-money would annually go away for objects which would do him no good at all. I suspect in a few years the tithe-payers would get sick of the new system, and would wish the old system could be set up again.

Let us add to all this, that the Episcopal clergyman, deprived of the tithes in a rural parish, would of course cease to pay any rates, except for his house and garden. At present the clergyman is often the largest ratepayer in the parish! In future what he used to pay must be made up by the other ratepayers. Let us remember, beside, that without the tithes the rural clergyman would in most cases be obliged to curtail his expenses, and to spend much less money in the parish than he does now. In either case the tithe-payers would suffer, and the parish would lose more than it gained by Disestablishment. There is an old fable, which tells of a man killing his goose for the sake of the golden eggs she laid. Of course he found that he never got another egg! I often think of that fable when I hear of rural tithe-payers clamouring for Disestablishment. At any rate, it would do *them* no good.

IV. In the fourth place, What good would Disestablishment do *to the poor*? I answer that inquiry without hesitation. It would not only do them no good, but would do them great harm.

This is a very serious question. "The poor shall never cease out of the land." To "remember the poor" is a plain command of Scripture. All changes, whether political or ecclesiastical, which tend to injure the poor, are, on the very face of them, objectionable. This is the heaviest indictment I bring against the whole Disestablishment movement. It would inflict grievous damage, both temporal and spiritual, on the agricultural poor, the very poor who of all classes in England are most ill-paid, and deserve most consideration.

Disestablishment would injure the poor *temporally*. I challenge any man of average intelligence to deny that in thousands of rural parishes throughout England the clergyman is the means of doing an immense amount of temporal good to the poor. Where is the well-ordered rural parish in which the clergyman's house is not the mainspring of a large machinery of charity to men's bodies? Who does not know that it is the clergyman who in every well-ordered country parish is naturally expected to take the lead about clothing clubs, shoe clubs, boot clubs, coal clubs, soup clubs, blanket clubs, libraries, and a hundred other means of helping the poor? Who does not know that in every well-ordered country parish the clergyman is ready to be the unpaid friend of every one who needs a friend, whether in the way of

money, or advice, or sympathy,—and the friend of poor Dissenters as well as poor church-goers? I defy any one to deny this. The quantity of temporal good which the agricultural poor receive from the clergy at present is something, I suspect, of which dwellers in towns, and Liberationist orators on platforms, have not the slightest idea. It is good which is done quietly and unostentatiously, without parade or blowing of trumpets. But it is done; and the last day alone will declare the full extent of it.

Well, there will be an end of a great deal of this if Disestablishment comes. Stripped of more than half his professional income, reduced to be the *minister of the Episcopalians alone* in his parish, the rural clergyman will, of course, cease to do what he once did for the poor. In most cases he would not be able to do much, if he had the will. He must rigidly confine himself to the members of his own congregation. If any man thinks this would be a nice change, and an advantage to the rural parishes, I differ from him entirely. The destruction of the Establishment would inflict immense temporal damage on the poor.

Disestablishment would do great *spiritual harm* to the poor. Stripped of a large part of her present endowments, the Church of England would be able to do far less than she now does for the extension of Christ's kingdom, whether at home or abroad. Aggressive measures for the evangelization of mining and manufacturing populations, the building of new churches and schools, the formation of new districts in poor neighbourhoods,—all these things would either be entirely stopped or greatly curtailed. With a rural clergy deprived of more than half their income, with town congregations obliged to give liberally to support the Church in the country, the Church's power of doing good to souls would be painfully lessened and diminished. To sustain her without extending, to keep her alive without increasing, to enable her to live without growth, would require the utmost exertions of her children. None would suffer so much from this state of things as the poor,

The plain truth is, that the voluntary system, on which in great measure the Church would be thrown, after Disestablishment, is a total and entire failure in rural districts. Dr. Parker, an eminent Nonconformist minister, calls it "a miserable failure." It is a failure in the United States of America, in spite of all the wealth and energy of the Americans. There are myriads of poor in New York, and in the backwoods, who are just like sheep without a shepherd. It is a failure in England among the Nonconformists at this day. With all their many privileges and advantages, they can neither pay their ministers sufficiently in rural districts, nor provide sufficient chapels for poor neighbourhoods. Above all, they cannot provide day schools for their own poor children, and are obliged to confess it. At the eleventh hour they have supported an "Education Act," which orders Board-schools to be built

by a compulsory rate, and by so doing they have practically admitted that the *voluntary system has thoroughly broken down!*³

I cannot get over facts like these. I advise every poor man in England who is urged to sign a petition for Disestablishment, to think twice before he signs, and to ask, "What good will it do to the poor? "Disestablish the Church of England, and the very first to suffer from it would be the poor. In the interests of the poor, if there were no other reasons, I see no good, but immense evil, in Disestablishment.

V. In the fifth place, What good would Disestablishment do to the *cause of peace and charity?* I shall answer that question very decidedly. It would do no good at all.

The quantity of stuff and nonsense and silly romantic rubbish, which is talked on this point, is very curious. There are many innocent-minded people, I believe, both Churchmen and Dissenters, who really think that, if the union of Church and State were dissolved, English Christians would get on far more happily and comfortably than they do now. There would be no more jealousies, or envyings, or rivalries, or wranglings, or squabblings, or quarrelling, or party spirit! Ephraim would no longer vex Judah, nor Judah Ephraim! The whole Christian body in Great Britain would become a great Evangelical alliance and happy family! Baptists, and Independents, and Presbyterians, and Episcopalians, would fraternize lovingly, and exchange pulpits! Mr. Spurgeon would preach in St. Paul's, and the Bishop of London in the Metropolitan Tabernacle! Such are the visions with which many worthy Christian laymen amuse themselves, and even laymen who do not approve of Disestablishment. They regard it as a painful operation, like drawing a tooth, and they are very sorry it should ever be performed. But the operation once over, and the tooth once out, they really believe we shall all be much happier and better friends for it. Like little children after a quarrel, we should just "kiss and be friends."

Now, I believe nothing whatever of the kind. I am all for unity, wherever it can be obtained, and I would willingly make large sacrifices in order to obtain it. I think the present divided state of English Christians a disgrace to religion. I disclaim the slightest sympathy with those who think that you cannot have too many sects and denominations, and that it does not matter a jot where you worship, or what you hear preached. I want to see more unity, and I should like to see more uniformity. But, for all this, I have not the slightest faith in unity being promoted by force, and plunder, and spoliation, and levelling down. Charity and peace among Christians will never be brought about by violence. Peace between Episcopalians and Dissenters is

³ The reader is once more advised to study carefully the candid admission of Mr. Spurgeon about the voluntary system in rural districts at the end of this paper.

about the last thing which would result from Disestablishment. It would make a breach that would never be built up.

Let us just take a practical, common-sense view of the matter in hand. Let us suppose that the Liberationists succeed in carrying out the Disestablishment and Disendowment of the Church of England. Let us suppose that some reckless House of Commons, and some popularity-hunting Prime Minister, give way at length to the importunity of the Liberationists and their many allies, and force through Parliament a Disestablishing Act for the Church of England, like that which was passed for the Church of Ireland. Such an event could only take place, I believe, after years of mischievous strife and agitation, and after hundreds of keen conflicts between Churchmen and chapel-goers all over the land. The Established Church of England, with all its defects and divisions, is a large and powerful body, and would make a long fight, and die very hard. Will any man in his sober senses tell me that this miserable long-drawn strife would promote unity? Would it not rather leave behind it festering sores that would never be healed? Of course it would! It would make unity between English Episcopalians and their adversaries an impossibility for several generations. The costly china plate would be broken. It might perhaps be riveted, but it could never be mended again.

But this is not all. Suppose that the Disestablishing Act tends to deprive the rural clergy, who depend on tithes, of half their incomes, as it certainly would. Suppose that thousands of quiet country rectors and vicars are suddenly obliged to reduce their expenditure, to alter their style of living, to take away their boys from good schools, to give their girls an inferior education, and to sacrifice a great many comforts; and all this in consequence of the attacks of the Liberationist Society and the Dissenters. Suppose all this to take place. Will any man pretend to say that there could possibly be much harmony and friendly feeling between Churchmen and chapel-goers in such a condition of things? It is absurd to expect it. For centuries there would be a gulf between Episcopalians and non-Episcopalians in England, which nothing would fill up. Disestablishment would be the grave of unity.

“It ought not to be so,” some innocent-minded man may say. “The union of Church and State is not essential to Christianity. Men may surely differ about it and keep friends. When the battle is over, why not forgive and forget?”—What *ought* to be, is a vague phrase, which I will not stop to discuss. What *would* be, is another question; and from my observation of human nature I have a very decided opinion about it. Believers who hold different views on non-essential points in religion can get on very comfortably so long as they are tolerant, and do not assault each other, and tread on one another’s toes. But the moment A begins to say to B, “I shall try to half-ruin your Church, and to get half your income taken away,” it is

nonsense to expect any more friendship between A and B! The Bible commands us to “forgive our enemies, to do good to them that hate us, and to pray for those that despitefully use us.” But the Bible nowhere says that we are to regard our enemies as beloved brothers and friends. The Bible says, “If any man take thy coat, let him take thy cloak also.” But the Bible nowhere says that we are to regard the man who has violently taken our coats and cloaks as a pleasant, praiseworthy, and honest man, and to shake hands with him as a dear friend.

For my own part, I can truly say that for forty years I have laboured hard to promote unity and good feeling between Churchmen and Nonconformists. I have gone so far in this direction that I have often been blamed, vilified, and slandered by my brother Churchmen, as half a Dissenter. I have gone on steadily nevertheless, and have always said that Dissenters deserve much kindness and consideration, because the Church’s neglect has made them what they are. But if Dissenters will not let the Church alone, and will not rest till they have destroyed the Establishment, I give up all hopes of unity. You cannot get on comfortably with men who have deliberately striven to upset your Church, and to take away half your income! Cooperation in future would be almost impossible. The Bible Society and the London City Mission would suffer heavily. From the day that the Church of England is disestablished there will be an end of much unity between Episcopalians and their Dissenting adversaries. There is little enough now, and after Disestablishment there will be much less. It is my deliberate judgment that those who labour to destroy the union of Church and State in England, under the vain idea of putting all Churches and sects on a dead level, are making unity and good feeling between Church and Chapel impossible for two hundred years.

VI. In the last place, what good would Disestablishment do *to the State*? My answer is short and decided. It would do it no good, but very great harm.

This question is far too wide and complicated to be fully discussed in a paper like this. But I shall try to throw a little light on it. If I can only show that the dissolution of the union of Church and State involves far more serious consequences than most of its advocates dream of, I shall be content. Such clap-trap phrases as “non-interference with spiritual matters,”—“unsectarian legislation,”—“allowing no special privilege to any denomination,”—“adopting the principles of free trade in religion,”—“leaving all Churches and sects to themselves,”—“taking no cognizance of any but secular matters,”—all these are fine, high-sounding expressions, and look very pretty in theory. But the moment you begin to work them out logically in practice, you will find grave objections rising up in your way, objections

that cannot be got over.

To begin with, Scripture teaches plainly that God rules everything in this world,—that He deals with nations as they deal with Him,—that national prosperity and national decline are ordered by Him,—that wars, pestilences, and famines are part of His providential government of the world,—and that without His blessing no nation can prosper. Now, do we believe all this or not? If we do believe it, it is simply absurd to say that Governments have nothing to do with religion, and that they may safely ignore God. That often quoted text, “My kingdom is not of this world,” has nothing whatever to do with the matter in hand (John xviii. 36). When our Lord spoke these words, He only meant to teach Pilate that His kingdom was not a mere secular kingdom, like a heathen Roman Emperor’s, and that it was not maintained or propagated, like the kingdoms of this world, by the sword. But, to say that our Lord meant that “Governments were never to support or countenance religion,” is a preposterous and unwarrantable interpretation of Scripture. Whether men like to see it or not, I believe it is the first duty of a State to honour and recognise God. The Government that refuses to do this, in order to save itself trouble, and to avoid favouring one Church more than another, may think it is doing a very “smart” and politic thing. But I believe its line of procedure is offensive to the Most High, and eminently calculated to draw down His displeasure.

Again, reason itself points out that the moral standard of a nation’s subjects is the grand secret of its prosperity. Gold mines, and manufactures, and scientific discoveries, and eloquent speeches, and commercial activity, and democratic institutions, are not enough to make or to keep nations great. Tyre, and Sidon, and Egypt, and Carthage, and Athens, and Rome, and Venice, and Spain, and Portugal, had plenty of such possessions as these, and yet fell into decay. The sinews of a nation’s strength are truthfulness, honesty, sobriety, purity, temperance, economy, diligence, brotherly kindness, charity among its inhabitants. Let those deny this who dare.—And will any man say that there is any surer way of producing these characteristics in a people than by encouraging, and fostering, and spreading, and teaching pure Scriptural Christianity? The man who says there is must be an infidel.—Then, if these things are so, the first duty of a State ought to be to encourage and countenance religion among its subjects in every possible way. Does a State want its subjects to be provident, truthful, diligent, temperate, honest, moral, and charitable? Does it or does it not? If it does, it ought to encourage, and not to ignore, *religion*. To punish vice and yet not cherish virtue,—to spend public money in building jails and yet not encourage churches, is, to say the least, an absurdly inconsistent policy. The more true religion the better subjects The more good subjects the more prosperity! The Government which ignores religion, and coolly declares

that it does not care whether its subjects are Christians or not, is guilty of an act of suicidal folly. Irreligion, even in a temporal point of view, is the worst enemy of a nation.

Once more, the practical consequences which logically result from carrying out the principle of Disestablishment, are so monstrous and appalling, that one can hardly believe that people who clamour for disconnecting Church and State have ever fully considered them. Let us look at them. Grant that the Church is disestablished, and that the English Government resolves to have nothing more to do with religion, and to leave it to the voluntary system. In order to carry out this principle consistently, the Succession Act must be repealed, and our Sovereigns might be Papists! Our Kings and Queens, if we had any more, would be crowned without any religious service. Our Parliaments would carry on their proceedings without prayer. Our regiments and men-of-war would no longer have chaplains. Our prisons and workhouses would have no chaplains. Even the religious observance of Sunday would be in danger. "Nonsense," some may say. "Of course we do not want such a state of things. We only want to dissolve the union between the State and the Church of England." People may cry "Nonsense," if they like, but they will never prove that the state of things I have just described will not be the logical consequence of Disestablishment, if followed out to its legitimate conclusions. After Disestablishment, the State, *if it acts consistently*, must either leave the souls of soldiers, sailors, prison and workhouse inmates entirely alone, or else we must get over the difficulty by putting up chaplaincies to public tender, and jobbing them out to the lowest bidder, whether he be Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Congregationalist, Socinian, or Papist!—there is no other course open to us. If the rulers of the State, after Disestablishment, appoint any particular chaplains to ships, regiments, workhouses, and jails, they are at once open to the charge of showing favour to one denomination more than another. Of course the Liberationist Society will not let the State do this!

The example of the United States and the Colonies is not the slightest reply to what I am saying. The Americans do not entirely separate religion and the State. The American Congress, I believe, has a chaplain, and is opened with prayer. The army and navy, the prisons and reformatories of America have chaplains, I have no doubt. But even then I can find no guarantee that these chaplains may not be Socinians or Papists!—And after all, the case of America only shows that our shrewd cousins see the utter uselessness of trying to carry out the principles of the Liberationist Society to their logical results, and are obliged to act with *splendid inconsistency*. In practice even a new country like America, not fettered by old precedents, finds it impossible entirely to ignore God. I cannot quite persuade myself that what Americans find impossible will ever be attempted in England.

When Liberationists have upset the union of Church and State, they will have to connive at some inconsistencies! The moment they admit the necessity of supplying religion to workhouses and jails, they must either throw open the chaplaincies to public tender, or give up the principle of religious equality, and favour some particular Church by appointing one of its ministers. Furthermore, I am by no means sure that the state of religious matters in the United States, without an Established Church, is nearly so paradisaical and satisfactory as the enemies of Establishments say that it is. Vague assertions are often made on this point, which seem to me, after some little inquiry, to be utterly wanting in foundation. I doubt exceedingly whether religion in the back settlements of America is in a prosperous state. A well-known American tale, called "The Shady Side," gives a painful impression of the position of many American ministers. I doubt whether even in the towns all things are serene, and Christianity is in a flourishing condition. The pictures drawn by Ward Beecher and Talmage, the two well-known American preachers, of the moral atmosphere of New York, are something appalling. My own belief is, to speak plainly, that the example of America tells far more against the Disestablishment movement than for it. It is a remarkable fact, that the farewell address of the famous American statesman, George Washington, contained this passage:—"Let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle." Even Daniel Webster, an American statesman of later date, and of lower type than Washington, said, "Religion is the only solid basis of morals, and moral instruction not resting on this basis is only building upon sand. It is a mockery and insult to common sense to maintain that a school for the instruction of youth from which Christian instruction is shut out is not atheistical and infidel" ("Talmage's Sermons," second series, p. 362). It is a simple matter of fact that there is such a widespread feeling of alarm among many Christian men in America at the rapid spread of infidelity and immorality, that a most important Convention was held in New York in the year 1873, in order to set on foot a movement for obtaining a national recognition of Christianity. The land of tall-talk and bunkum, the model country of Liberationist orators, is not the dependable witness against Establishments that many suppose her to be. Look below the surface and behind the curtain of society in America, and you will find little to encourage the separation of Church and State. The great Anglo-Saxon nation without an Establishment would be a far greater and far happier nation if she had one.

After all, I am one of those old-fashioned people who believe in a God. I believe in Him not only as the God of creation, but as the God of provi-

dence,—the God who governs the world, the God who hears and answers prayer. Believing all this, I will never admit that it signifies nothing whether a Government recognises Christianity or not, and that it matters little whether a country has an Established Church. I set my foot down firmly on the great principle, “Them that honour Me I will honour, and those that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed.” I apply that principle to nations, and I believe it will always hold good. The Act of Parliament which disestablished the Church of England might do great damage to the Church, but I am quite sure it would do far more damage to the State. We should lose much, but the State would lose a great deal more. As a patriot and an Englishman I would maintain the union of Church and State for the sake of my country.

What may be before us no man can tell. But in an age like our own,—an age of restlessness,—an age of liberality, falsely so called,—an age of popularity-hunting,—an age of sensationalism and surprises,—an age of idolatry of the mob,—an age of contempt for old things, merely because they are old,—an age of spasmodic feverish zeal for new things, merely because they are new,—an age of change for the sake of change,—an age of laziness and apathy among the defenders of the old things, and of earnestness and perseverance among the advocates of the new,—in such an age I shall never be surprised if Disestablishment comes. When it does come, I believe it will inflict such an amount of damage on the State as the mind of man can hardly conceive. I declare I had far rather see the Episcopal Establishment upset, and the Baptists or Independents made the Established Church of England, than see the State ceasing to recognise God. I had far rather see our next Sovereign crowned in Westminster Abbey by a Spurgeon, or the President of the Wesleyan Conference, with an extempore prayer, and the Archbishop of Canterbury standing as a private individual in the crowd, than see our Government turning its back on Christianity altogether.

When I read English history, I see plainly that the real greatness of this country dates from the Protestant Reformation. I see that it was under Sovereigns who ordered the Bible to be translated and circulated, and under Parliaments which ratified the Thirty-nine Articles, and took great practical interest in religion,—that our nation took its first great start in its career of freedom, wealth, and power. I see that the influence of England was seldom more felt in Europe than it was in the days of Oliver Cromwell, when that great, though misguided, man threw the shield of England over persecuted Protestants in Savoy, and even awed the Pope by interfering in religious matters. Seeing all this, I will never believe that Disestablishment would do no harm to the State. On the contrary, I believe it would bring down God’s heaviest judgments on this realm. I repeat that the Act of Parliament which dissolved Church and State would do great damage to the

Church; but it would be as nothing compared to the injury it would ultimately inflict on the State.

In what manner God would punish England, if English Governments cast off all connection with religion, I cannot tell. Whether He would punish us by some sudden blow, such as defeat in war, and the occupation of our territory by a foreign power,—whether He would waste us away gradually and slowly by placing a worm at the roots of our commercial prosperity,—whether He would break us to pieces by letting fools rule over us and allowing Parliaments to obey them, and permitting us, like the Midianites, to destroy one another,—whether He would ruin us by sending a dearth of wise statesmen in the upper ranks, and giving the reins of power to communists, socialists, and mob-leaders,—all these are points which I have no prophetic eye to see, and I do not pretend to determine. God's sorest judgments, the ancients said, "are like millstones, they grind very slowly, but they grind very fine." The thing that I fear most for my country is gradual, insensible dry-rot and decay. But of one thing I am very sure,—the State that begins by sowing the seed of national neglect of God, will sooner or later reap a harvest of national disaster and national ruin. If Disestablishment comes, it will do no hurt to the true Church of Christ, the body of real believers: *that* it is beyond the power of man to harm. It will do little comparative injury to the visible Episcopal Church of England: though impoverished and crippled in many ways, she will still live and not die. But it will do boundless harm to the State, and in the end will prove the ruin of all our greatness.

I have now considered the subject of this paper to the best of my ability. I have done it honestly and conscientiously, and have carefully avoided any exaggeration. It only remains for me to wind up the whole subject by a few words of friendly advice to the various classes into whose hands the paper may fall.

(1) Some of my readers may perhaps be men *who make no profession whatever in religion*, and care neither for Church nor chapel. I fear there are many such men in the land, and I suppose there always will be. Pilate, who asked sneeringly, "What is truth?"—Gallio, who thought Christianity was only a "matter of words and names,"—Festus, who thought it a "superstition concerning one Jesus,"—all these have never wanted successors. Men of this sort, of course, do not care a jot whether the Church of England is disestablished or not. "It is all the same to them. Religion is not a thing in their way." Yet even to these men I offer a word of counsel.

Are you quite sure that it would be a good thing to have less religion in England than there is now? Of course, if the Church is disestablished and impoverished, there will be less. Now are you quite sure you will like this?

Do you wish your wife, your children, your servants, your clerks, your tenants, your labourers, your partners in business, to have less religion and to become more godless than they are now? I should like that question to be answered.

If you do not wish this state of things to arise, I advise you to think twice before you allow the English Church Establishment to be destroyed, and the tithes and land to be taken away. Say what men please, this must have the effect of weakening the Church, lessening the number of her clergy, and reducing the whole quantity of religion in the country to a lower level. A tree once felled and cut down can never be put up again, and its shade and beauty may be regretted in vain. If you stand by and look on with folded arms, careless and unconcerned, while men are sawing in two the connection of Church and State, you may live to find out too late that you committed a fatal mistake.

(2) Some of my readers may be *zealous Churchmen*, who really believe it would be a good thing if the Church was disestablished. There are many men of this class in England, some very “high,” and some very “low” in opinion, who are continually building castles in the air about the “Church of the future.” They have pleasing visions of a free, rich, and powerful Church, no longer fettered by connection with the State, guided by perfect Bishops, no longer interfered with by naughty Parliaments and wicked Courts of law, possessing perfect unity, and able to do a hundred things which it cannot do now. To these amiable and well-meaning enthusiasts I offer a word of counsel.

I will ask them to remember two old proverbs. One says, “All is not gold that glitters.” The other says, “Look before you leap.” A free Church is a fine thing to talk about; but it is not always so free as it appears. There are other chains and screw-presses beside those of Parliament, secular law-courts, and the Royal supremacy. The frogs in the fable found fault with “King Log,” because he lay still like a huge inert mass, and did nothing at all. But they soon found that “King Stork” was much worse. Appeals to Courts of law will not be prevented by Disestablishment. So long as there are rights and wrongs, and questions of place and salary, so long the English courts of law will be open to Episcopalians who want redress. A diminution of ministerial incomes is a very serious matter, and it will certainly accompany Disestablishment in rural parishes, to the great damage of the Church’s power. Let no Churchman dream for a moment that there will ever be Disestablishment without Disendowment.—Last, but not least, unity will not be obtained by dissolving the connection of Church and State. There will be divisions of opinion among English Episcopalians after Disestablishment, and perhaps far more serious ones than there ever were before. Look at the American Episcopalian Church across the Atlantic. They

have no connection with the State. But they have not attained perfect unity.

It is an utter delusion to suppose that Disestablishment is the only cure for the Church's defects and abuses. Of all common cries in this day, I know none so unreasoning and foolish as this. I grant freely, as I have already said, that we have many things in the Church of England which might be altered for the better. Our dioceses might be divided, our Convocation reconstructed, our cathedrals made more useful, our services made more simple and better suited to the times. But why, in the name of common sense, should we not try to obtain all these Church reforms without Disestablishment? Why not try to correct our abuses without dissolving the union of Church and State? I have read of an Asiatic potentate who never tasted roast pig, till a day came, when his house was accidentally set on fire, and his pig-sty with its squeaking inmates burned. He found the taste of roast pig so good that he resolved to repeat the feast in the following week, by the curious plan of ordering another house with a pig-sty to be burned. And this process went on, the story goes, for several weeks, till at last some one suggested that he might easily have roast pig without burning a house. This potentate, most men will agree with me, was not very wise. But I really think he was not one bit more foolish than those folks who tell us that we cannot reform the Church without disestablishing it! At any rate, let us first try to roast the pig in the common way, before we adopt the rude and coarse plan of setting the house on fire.

In short, I advise my zealous brethren in the Church of England, who are hungering and thirsting for Disestablishment, to be content with such things as they have, to let well alone, and to do nothing rashly. It is not a friend, but an enemy, who is whispering to them, "Break off the union of Church and State,—cast thyself down." Let them ask the wisest Episcopalians in the United States and in the Colonies whether *they* advise Disestablishment, and think it desirable! Let them beware, lest they learn too late, by painful experience, the wisdom contained in the famous epitaph:—"I was well: I would be better: I took physic, and here I am." I always think of that epitaph when I hear an English Churchman expressing a wish for Disestablishment.

(3) Some of my readers perhaps are *honest Dissenters*, who have been told by the itinerant advocates of the Liberationist Society, that it is a Christian duty to endeavour to disestablish the Church of England. Their ears have been filled with monstrous stories about the Church, until they regard her as a huge public nuisance which ought to be swept away. To them also I tender a few words of friendly advice.,

I may fairly ask to be heard by Dissenters. I am, and always have been, what is called a "Low Churchman." I have never in my life interfered with Dissenters, or turned a cold shoulder upon them. I have never refused to

acknowledge non-Episcopal services. I have never denied that Dissenters have done and are doing much good to souls. I have never vilified them or denounced them as schismatics. To none of these things will I plead guilty. When, therefore, I offer a word of advice to Dissenters, I may ask to be patiently heard.

I advise them, for one thing, to use their own good sense, and not to believe all the gross misstatements that some Liberationists are continually making about the Church of England. It is utterly untrue that Disestablishment would enable the State to save twenty-six millions of annual taxes. The whole endowments of the Church are not five millions a year!—It is utterly untrue that the Bishops are rolling in wealth, and the clergy are overpaid. The Bishops have so many demands on their purses that they can hardly make both ends meet, and the clergy, if incomes were divided, would not have three hundred a year a-piece!—It is utterly untrue that the clergy are paid by the State, or that the people are taxed to pay the clergy: the State never gave the Church any tithes or lands at all!—It is utterly untrue that the Bishops and clergy are “State-made parsons,” seeing that the State cannot ordain any minister, and the Crown can only nominate as Bishops men who are already ordained.—It is utterly untrue that the Church prayers are “State-made prayers,” seeing that the Prayer-book was compiled by our Protestant Reformers.—It is utterly untrue that the Prayer-book is a mere Popish book, considering that the greater part of it is pure Scripture.—All these things are ridiculous untruths, which it is a shame for any man to circulate, and a discredit to any man to believe. May I not ask honest Dissenters, when they hear statements such as these, to exercise their own good sense, and to put the simple question, “Is this really true?” “A cause which can only be built on a foundation of gross misstatements is a very unsatisfactory cause to support. A readiness to believe falsehoods is not a nice character! If there is anything God hates, it is falsehood. “Thou shalt not bear false witness” is a commandment not yet repealed.

For another thing, I advise all honest Dissenters to use their own common sense, and to make a proper distinction between a system and the faults of those who work a system. No doubt many clergymen are worldly, careless, unconverted men. No doubt the endowments of the Established Church are not always well employed. No doubt some clergymen are half-sceptics and some are half-Papists. No doubt some parishes, both in town and country, are sadly neglected. But all this does not prove that the *principle* of an Established Church is wrong. This state of things will not be cured by dissolving the union of Church and State. Are all Dissenting ministers converted men? Do no Dissenting ministers ever spend their incomes badly? Are all Dissenting ministers entirely sound in the faith, and free from any erroneous doctrine? These are unpleasant questions, and I have

no wish to press them. But there is an old proverb which says, "Those who live in glass houses should not throw stones." The abuse of a thing is no argument against the use of it. The occasional inconsistency, or unsoundness of clergymen, in so large a Church as the Established Church of England, with 20,000 ministers in its pale, supplies no proof that the principle of an Establishment is wrong and unsound.

I advise honest Dissenters, for another thing, to remember the broad fact that many of their forefathers and predecessors, among Nonconformists, were strongly in favour of an Established Church, and never admitted the principle that Governments ought to ignore God, and have nothing to do with religion. Owen, and Baxter, and Flavel, and Howe, and Matthew Henry, were men of whom Nonconformists are justly proud. They were men whose names would do honour to the rolls of any Christian Church. Yet every one of these good men was strongly in favour of the connection between Church and State. No men loved religious liberty more. None contended more earnestly against the narrow-minded requirements of Churchmen in their day, and made more sacrifices for Nonconformity than these good men. Yet none of them ever dreamed of maintaining that the connection of Church and State was "an adulterous connection," or that Governments had nothing to do with religion. Alas, we may well say, "How is the fine gold become dim." I firmly believe that if Owen, Baxter, Howe, Flavel, and Matthew Henry could rise from their graves this day, they would be among the foremost opponents of the Liberationist Society.

I ask honest Dissenters in the last place to consider quietly what one single grievance they labour under now,—what disability, what hardship, what disadvantage,—which would be removed by Disestablishment. Let them name one if they can. I declare I cannot put my finger on one. They may possibly complain that Nonconformist ministers are not made so much of as Church ministers, and do not occupy so high a *social* position. Well, if that really is a grievance, I defy them to show how Disestablishment would remove it. I repeat, emphatically, that until Dissenters can persuade the great bulk of the English people to give up Episcopacy and the Liturgy, and to become Baptists, Independents, Presbyterians, or Methodists,—until they can do this, I say, they will never prevent the bulk of Churchmen making much of their own ministers, and giving them a *social* precedence. The alleged grievance has nothing to do with the connection of Church and State, and Disestablishment would certainly not take it away. Why, then, cannot Dissenters keep quiet, and let the Church alone?

(4) And now, last of all, this tract may perhaps be read by *some honest Churchmen* who are content with the present relations of Church and State, and have no wish to see them changed. To them also I shall offer a word of advice, and I earnestly hope it may not be thrown away.

For one thing, we must awake to a sense of the danger in which we stand just now, and must work hard to oppose our enemies. There is no safety in apathy. If others combine, we must combine. If others agitate, we must boldly resist the agitation. If others assert falsehoods, we must assert truth. If others flood the country with cheap tracts and leaflets attacking the Church, we must meet the attack by a counter-flood of cheap literature in the Church's defence. "Defence, not Defiance," must be our motto. Controversies and conflicts with other professing Christians are odious things. But the conduct of the Liberationists seems likely to leave us no alternative. If they will not let us alone, we must fight.

We have nothing whatever to fear for the connection of Church and State, if Churchmen will only awake, arise, and do their duty. Twenty thousand clergymen and ten million laymen are a force which the Liberationist Society ought never to overthrow. But we must combine, organize, work, write, speak, and spread information; and, above all, we must not go to sleep. The Churchman who folds his arms in our camp, and says, "Peace, peace! anything for a quiet life; let things take their course!" may be a very nice, amiable Churchman, but he is no true friend to the Church of England. I dread the laziness of Churchmen more than the whole attack of the Liberationist Society.

For another thing, if we would prevent Disestablishment, we must spare no pains to reform the Church of England. We need reform: there is no mistake about that. Our unreformed abuses are the worst foes of the union of Church and State. Our large undivided dioceses, our too often useless cathedrals, our anomalous and ill-constituted Convocation, our want of elasticity in liturgical worship, our shiftless adherence to old-fashioned modes of evangelization, our helpless inability to arrange systematic co-operation of clergy and laity, our barbarous Ecclesiastical Courts, our grossly defective discipline,—all these, and not a few more, are weak points in our line of defence, which skilful enemies are not slow to detect. They are points in which reform would not be difficult, if the matter was not trifled with, but heartily and earnestly taken up. Oh that God would raise up among us some powerful, wise, energetic Church reformer! Church reform is one of the best bulwarks against Church Disestablishment.

We all know what is done on board a man-of-war when an enemy is in sight, and an action is about to begin. The decks are cleared; the lumber is thrown overboard; every man is sent to his quarters; useless passengers and non-combatants are put under hatches, or consigned to the hold. It is high time to do the same with the Church of England, if the struggle for Disestablishment is at hand. It is nonsense to ignore the weak points in our system. We have weak points, and they are part of the strength of our adversaries. Let us strive to get rid of them without delay. Let us resolutely

and energetically take up the subject of Church Reform.

I leave the whole subject now with feelings of sorrow. I grieve to think that English Protestant Christians should be on the point of wasting time, and energy, and strength, and talents in such a miserable, unprofitable controversy as this about Disestablishment. If ever there was a time when British Christians should cease from controversy, and unite as one man, in order to resist the rising flood of Popery and infidelity, that time is now. Yet this is the very time when the Liberationist body chooses to stir up strife all over England, for the most useless and unprofitable cause in the world,—a cause in which their success will do good to nobody, and do harm to many! Well, be it so. The Liberationists are sowing the wind, and they must reap the whirlwind. They are the first to begin the miserable strife, and the blame of all the wretched consequences must lie at their door. But when I think of the ill feeling they are stirring up, the angry passions that will be called forth, the hard words that will be spoken, the divisions that will be made for ever in parishes, if they succeed, the sin that will be caused, the good that will be for ever stopped, and the harm that will be for ever done,—when I think of all this, I cannot help saying with a wise old statesman, “*Why cannot you let things alone?*”

The following letter by Mr. Spurgeon deserves the attention of all who think that the voluntary system is a success among the Baptists in the rural districts. It was written in 1867.

*“An Epistle to the Members of the Baptized Churches
of Jesus Christ.*

“BELOVED BRETHREN,—An exceedingly great and bitter cry has gone up unto heaven concerning many of us. It is not a cry from the world which hates us, nor from our fellow-members whom we may have offended, but (alas that it should be so!) it is wrung from hundreds of poor but faithful ministers of Christ Jesus who labour in our midst in word and doctrine, and are daily oppressed by the niggardliness of churls among us. . . . Hundreds of our ministers would improve their circumstances if they were to follow the commonest handicrafts. The earnings of artisans of but ordinary skill are far above the stipends of those among us who are considered to be comfortably maintained. . . . We are asked repeatedly to send students to spheres where £40 is mentioned as if it were competence, if not more, and those who so write are not always farm-labourers, but frequently tradesmen, who must know what penury £40 implies. A church contributing £70 frequently counts itself munificent, but many of its members must know that such a sum is not respectability, nor much less than hard, pinching, but covert want. I heard the other day of a minister—whose congregation would be shocked to know it, and I hope ashamed also—who very seldom sees a joint of meat, except on other people’s tables, and is indebted to gifts from friends in other denominations for parcels of left-off clothing, which are made up for his otherwise ragged children. With desperate self-denial alone is he kept from debt;

comfort he never knows. If these things needed to be so, it were a theme of rejoicing that our brethren are honoured to endure hardness for Christ's sake; but these are in many cases needless hardships, and should not be inflicted upon our honoured brethren. If their Master called them to it, well and good; but it is not the Master, it is the thoughtless fellow-servant who puts them to so severe a trial. Persuaded that a great reform is needed, I propose to publish such cases of deep necessity as may be supplied to me by Baptist ministers, and are well authenticated. The names and addresses shall be sacredly kept secret, but the facts shall be published, that holy shame may induce a speedy amendment. *Any person can reprint this article, and the more widely it is distributed the better.* I speak not without abundant cause. I am no retailer of baseless scandal. I am no advocate for an idle and ill-deserving ministry. I open my mouth for a really earnest, godly, laborious, gracious body of men, who are men of God, and approved of His Church. Are these for ever to be starved? Shall the ox that treadeth out the corn be always muzzled? Shall he who planted the vineyard eat none of its fruit? It is our shame as Baptists, to be mean towards our pastors. Brethren, help to roll away this reproach at once and for ever.

“C. H. SPURGEON.”

—*The Sword and the Trowel*, vol. iii. pp. 17-20.