

# CHARGES AND ADDRESSES

*to the Diocese of Liverpool,*

by

the Right Reverend Bishop of Liverpool,

John Charles Ryle, D.D.,

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## Our Position and our Dangers.\*

My Reverend and Lay Brethren, I offer you a hearty welcome to our Fourth Annual Conference, and I pray that our proceedings may tend to the glory of God, to the benefit of the Church of England, and to the good of our own souls. We have all need to pray. We must not ignore the fact that we are gathered together in very critical times. I doubt whether the ecclesiastical and political horizon of the country has been so dark for many years as it is at the present day. The Established Church of England, I am convinced, demands the watchful attention, the united wisdom, and the unflinching courage of all her faithful children.

In my Address today I shall strictly confine myself to two points. One is the state of our own Diocese, and the other is the general condition of the Church of England. On both these points I have something to say, as your Bishop, which I am unwilling to defer and leave unsaid until my Triennial Visitation. Events of vast moment succeed each other so rapidly in the present age, and carry with them such important consequences, that the consideration of them cannot safely be put off for three years, as they used to be in days gone by. It is rapidly becoming a grave question whether an annual Pastoral address from the Bishop ought not to supersede the old-fashioned Triennial Charge, and whether the Head of every Diocese ought not to

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\* *An address given at the fourth Liverpool Diocesan Conference, 1885.*

deliver his mind on the topics of the day once every year. I intend to act on this principle in the year 1885.

I. Concerning *the state of our own Diocese* my report must be a chequered one. There is both light and shade in the picture. There are some things in our condition which are sorrowful and depressing; there are others for which there is cause to be thankful.

(1) The *financial position of our Diocesan Institutions* continues eminently unsatisfactory. In eighty parishes out of our two hundred no collection is made for them. The total income which they receive from annual subscriptions is far below what it ought to be, considering the wealth of the Diocese. At the same time, it must in fairness be remembered that the whole nation is passing through a period of extraordinary commercial depression, and no place perhaps feels this more keenly than Liverpool. Moreover, it is useless to ignore the fact that, in every part of England, Churchmen do not give money so readily to General Societies, to be distributed at the discretion of a General Committee, as they do to objects close to their own doors, with which they are familiar, and in which they have a direct personal interest. I press that fact once more upon your attention. I proved last year in my Charge, by statistics which cannot be overthrown, that while the contributions to Diocesan Institutions in Liverpool appear extremely small, the total sum of money contributed to Church and School and Missionary purposes in our nine Rural Deaneries is very large.

(2) The *spiritual destitution* of many parishes in our Diocese continues to be a cause of great sorrow and anxiety to me. The want of some provision for the retirement of aged and worn-out incumbents in large town parishes is one of the greatest defects in our Church system, and does great harm in every part of England. The number of parochial districts in the West Derby Hundred in which there are eight, ten, twelve, or fifteen thousand people, with only one Church, one Incumbent, and not always a Curate or a Scripture Reader, and in some of which, consequently, the Church has no influence at all, is very considerable. At present it seems impossible to supply a remedy, while the commercial depression lasts. Moreover, the number of such districts seems to be increasing rather than diminishing. Plant one leg of a gigantic compass at the Town Hall of Liverpool, and then sweep the other leg round a half-circle from Seaforth at the north to St. Michael's-in-the-Hamlet in the south, and any thinking man will see at once what I mean when I talk of spiritual destitution. In Bootle, Kirkdale, Walton, Everton, Wavertree, Edge Hill down to the southern boundary of Toxteth, the report is everywhere the same. Miles and miles of £18\* houses are continually springing up. These houses are occupied as soon as they are built; and the difficulty of

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\* House rented at £18 per annum (7/- per week).

providing means of grace for the inhabitants is simply appalling. Without places of worship provided by the Church of England, and without pastoral visitation, it is useless to be surprised if the dwellers in these new districts are lost to our Church altogether, and many never attend any place of worship at all. Until the means of grace and living agents of the gospel are at least doubled, Liverpool will not cease to be branded, blamed, and held up to public notice, as it was last year by Mr. Gladstone, in the House of Commons, as a city remarkable for its number of non-worshippers and Sabbath-breakers. Were it not for the invaluable aid afforded by the Church Pastoral Aid Society, and Additional Curates' Society, I should be tempted to sit down in despair. The debt which Liverpool owes to these two Societies is incalculable.

From the shades of the picture of our Diocese, which it is vain to conceal, I gladly turn to the lights, and I am thankful to say that they are not few.

(3) The *building of new churches*, notwithstanding the diminished profits of trade, goes on in a very satisfactory way. I have consecrated no less than four churches in the last twelve months, making twelve in all which I have consecrated since I came to the Diocese, viz.:—Maghull; St. John, in Walton; St. Athanasius, in Kirkdale; All Saints', Wigan; Farnworth; St. Cyprian; Aspull; Crossens; St. Gabriel's, Toxteth Park; All Saints', Prince's Gate; St. Agnes, Sefton Park; and St. Chad's, Everton. Besides these twelve, there are four large churches open by licence, and only waiting for the Endowment and Repair Fund to be made up in order to be consecrated. These four are St. Mary, Waterloo; St. Lawrence, Kirkdale; Cowley Hill, St. Helen's; and Widnes. Four other churches are being built, and likely to be finished in the beginning of next year, viz.:—St. Bede's, Hartington Road; St. Philip's, Sheil Road; St. Polycarp's, Everton; and St. Philip's, Southport. Three others are about to be commenced immediately: St. Dunstan's, Earle Road; St. Benedict's, in Everton; and a new church in Ince, near Wigan. From what I know of the promoters of these three last churches, I feel confident that they will soon be built. Besides this, there are already two districts marked out, and temporary churches licensed and in full operation, in Walton. I refer to St. Luke's, and St. Simon and St. Jude's.

All this, I know, is only a tale of bricks and mortar. But it is a tale that means a great deal. Every new church added to the list in our Diocese means a new Incumbent, very often a new Curate, a Sunday School, and a whole train of organized Christian machinery. Every one of the twenty new churches I have named, reckoning up the cost of site, fabric, fittings, warming, architect, endowment, repair fund, and fencing round, represents an average expenditure of at least £7000 or £8000, and is a solid proof that the Voluntary system can do something within the pale of the Establishment. Above all, it proves that the Churchmen of our Diocese are not asleep, but

awake, and that even in troublous times of commercial depression we are building the walls of our Zion. As Bishop of the Diocese, I feel it a plain duty to express publicly my gratitude to those who have promoted, and are promoting, the church building which I have just described, and I earnestly hope that others may be stirred up to follow their example. Two more large churches and parochial districts are wanted at this moment in Bootle, owing to the immense increase of population caused by the Alexandra docks. Would to God that it might be put into the heart of some one to come forward and offer to build, after the magnificent example of more than one Liverpool family which I could name! There are not a few who could easily do it, and would never miss the money. The pressing want of more clergymen and more means of grace in that district is the greatest blot in our Diocese. A guarantee of £500 a year for five years would soon procure two clergymen to work up two provisional parishes, and with two right men I believe we should soon get two churches.

(4) Another area of light in the picture of our Diocese, to which I have pleasure in directing your attention, is the *annual increase in the number of young persons who are presented to the Bishop for confirmation*. In the first year of my Episcopate the sum total, in round numbers, was 4700. By the end of the present year I shall have confirmed about 6700. This return, from a Diocese of only 200 Incumbents, speaks for itself. I am aware that numbers alone do not prove everything, and that the quality of candidates is much more important than the quantity. But the annual increase of which I speak is, at any rate, a plain proof that young persons are more looked after than they once were, and that the clergy of this Diocese are obtaining more influence for good among the junior members of their congregations. About the immense value and importance of the ordinance of Confirmation, and of the previous preparation for it, I can add nothing to what I have frequently said. I believe it to be the right arm of the Church of England, and a means of usefulness second only to preaching and the sacraments. I trust that every year will see a regular increase of the numbers confirmed. There is still room for great improvement, and the presentations from some large parishes are painfully small.

(5) Another bright point in our Diocesan picture is the greatly *increased number of candidates for ordination*, and consequently the growing number of clergymen added to the staff of the Church. In the five years preceding 1880, the number of Deacons ordained for the West Derby Hundred was 92. In the last five years I have ordained 152. I do not, of course, forget that some anonymous writers have thought fit to speak in very slighting terms of the character of the Deacons who obtain titles, and are now ordained in this Diocese. I regard such attacks with complete indifference, as they only exhibit the ignorance of those who make them. I believe the Examining Chaplains

of this Diocese are second to none in England in intellectual calibre and capacity for their work, that the standard of attainment required in candidates is not inferior to that of any northern Diocese, and that the examinations are conducted with perfect fairness and impartiality. If any one supposes that all candidates for ordination in this Diocese are accepted and ordained as a matter of course, like Jeroboam's priests, and that no one is ever rejected, I will only remark that he is totally and entirely mistaken. Not a few candidates in the last five years have found that out to their sorrow. No doubt our candidates are not all Cambridge Wranglers and Oxford first-class men, any more than they are in any Diocese; and districts like Lancashire are not so popular with young men as Middlesex, Kent, Surrey, Sussex, Herts, and the sunny South. But if any one means to say that the great majority of our Deacons are below the level of other Dioceses, and are not hardworking, useful clergymen, I tell him he will find it hard to prove what he says. After all, whatever may be said, the broad fact remains that Curates cannot be ordained without titles for orders, and the large annual increase in the number of men ordained here is a clear proof that the Incumbents are taking more pains to add to the number of living agents in their parishes, and that more ministerial work is annually done in the Diocese. For this, as the Bishop of a new Diocese which labours under great disadvantages, I feel extremely thankful.

I could mention other bright points in our position, if time permitted. The solid, steady work done by the Scripture Readers' Society, the Bible Women's Society, the Church of England Temperance Society, the Voluntary Lay Helpers' Society, the Sunday School Institute, and many of the Voluntary Schools in very poor districts, is beyond all praise. It is work done quietly, noiselessly, without any blowing of trumpets or flourishing of banners. The Diocese of Liverpool keeps no trumpeter, and we labour on 'sine vate sacro.'\* But it is work which will tell in the long run, and year by year is strengthening the Church of England. From all this, however, I must turn away to a subject of even more pressing importance, and that is the general position of the whole Church of England, of which our Diocese only forms a part.

II. Concerning *the general condition of the whole Church of England* there is much cause for anxiety. It is vain to shut our eyes to the fact that we live in very critical times. Men of all ranks, classes, and shades of opinion seem to agree about this. I know not what you may think, but I am thoroughly convinced myself that the Established Church has arrived at a great crisis in her history, and that it behoves all her children to mind what they are about,

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\* 'Without a holy prophet'.

to keep their powder dry, and to be ready for any emergency. I shall make no apology for seizing the opportunity which this Conference affords, and for laying before you a few observations which I commend to your special attention. In so doing I shall have to touch some vital questions, and to handle some burning subjects which at any other time I would gladly leave alone. But we have reached a point when I think a Bishop must speak out, or for ever hold his peace. The ship is among breakers, and the captain must not stand on ceremony in the use of language. Events move so rapidly nowadays that he who keeps silent may never have another opportunity of speaking out, and I shall therefore make no excuse for using ‘great plainness of speech,’ both about our Church’s perils and our Church’s preparedness to meet them.

Let me begin by reminding you that the Established Church of England is going to be brought face to face with one of the greatest political changes which this country has ever gone through for at least two centuries. I refer, of course, to the recent Act of Parliament\* by which the Franchise has been greatly lowered, the number of electors to Parliament greatly increased, and the whole power of choosing representatives and creating a House of Commons has been placed in the hands of an immense number of persons who never possessed this power before. Now what will be the consequence of this change? What kind of men will the new representatives be in the third estate of the realm? What kind of legislation may we expect? I cannot find anybody who pretends to give an answer to these questions, or can do more than guess and conjecture. Most wise men seem to agree in thinking that our country is about to take ‘a leap in the dark.’ Even foreigners are looking on with amazement. One thing only is perfectly certain, and that is, that in these days the House of Commons has all power in its hands. Let me quote the words of a well-known writer not long taken from us. He says: ‘When De Tocqueville, the famous Frenchman, was standing in the House of Lords, on the steps of the throne, on the occasion of the opening of a certain Parliament, he watched in silence the gathering of the Peers in their scarlet robes, the entrance of the Ministers in their official uniforms, the appearance of the Sovereign in royal magnificence; but when he beheld the Commons rushing to the bar in their plain unadorned everyday dress, he exclaimed, “Voila le maître” (there comes the master). He seemed to say that the day was come in the nation as in a household, when it is the servants only who appear in livery, while the real master stands above formalities.’ That witness is perfectly true. It was true in the days of the shrewd Frenchman. It is much more true in 1885.

And what kind of subjects is the newly-coined House of Commons likely to take up? You have only got to read the newspaper reports of political

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\* The Parliamentary Reform Act of 1884 completed universal manhood suffrage, and raised the number of voters in the United Kingdom from about 3 millions to about 5 millions.

meetings, and the speeches made by candidates for Parliament, and you will soon get an answer. There is nothing too monstrous or extravagant to be propounded by some aspirants for a seat. The wildest schemes are in the air, and the most sweeping changes are coolly talked of as possibilities, if not probabilities. The desirableness of getting rid of the monarchy, the House of Lords, the landlords, the navy, and the army, is quietly discussed. Preposterous schemes of political economy, under which everybody is to be rich and nobody is to be poor; everybody is to have a certain quantity of land, but nobody is to have much; the rich and the successful in business are to pay all the taxes, and those who are not rich or successful are to pay none; schemes which would infallibly discourage every man from taking pains to get on and prosper, and would ultimately drive all capital out of the country—such schemes as these are deliberately presented to the public ear, and those who propound them get a hearing. It was a wise saying of the ‘judicious’ Hooker, that the man who tries to persuade people that they are not governed as well as they might be, will never lack hearers. But if the future House of Commons is to contain many members who hold such opinions as those I have just tried to describe, it is perfectly certain that an ancient endowed institution like the Established Church of England will soon be fiercely attacked, and will have to struggle hard for her existence, if indeed she is allowed to exist at all.\*

But unhappily this is not all. It is folly to shut our eyes to the fact that the Disestablishment and Disendowment of the Church of England already form a subject which is continually brought forward on almost every political platform in the land, from the Isle of Wight up to John o’Groat’s House, and from the Land’s End to the North Foreland. The Liberationist party, so called, have inaugurated a regular crusade against the Establishment, and one of the stock questions put to candidates for seats is this: ‘Are you prepared to vote for the Disestablishment and Disendowment of the Churches of England and Scotland?’ The meaning of that question, in plain English, is this: ‘Are you prepared to vote for depriving the Church of her property, for placing the Church of England on a level with all the other Churches and sects in the country, and for entirely dissolving any connection between the State and religion?’ To this question I observe many candidates reply, ‘Yes.’ Many others fence with it, and say it is not a question of practical politics at present. But only a few comparatively say boldly, ‘No.’ In fact, the subject of Disestablishment is upon us whether we like it or not, and it is high time for every Churchman to open his eyes, and wake up and consider seriously what he is about to do. ‘The Philistines are upon thee, O Samson.’ The well-known

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\* [See Endnote.]

words of Nelson should be remembered, 'England expects that every man will do his duty.'

Now it is useless to tell us that there is no danger, and that we are crying 'Wolf, wolf!' when there is nothing to fear, and no cause for alarm. It is too late for this. A voice has lately spoken to which we cannot afford to turn a deaf ear. In a recent elaborate manifesto, that remarkable statesman, Mr. Gladstone, has spoken plainly about Disestablishment as 'a possibility,' which we may have to face before many years have passed away. No doubt he has touched the question vaguely and briefly. He has not explained whether he means that the Government of this country shall cease to acknowledge religion. He has not told us whether our future monarchs are to be crowned in Westminster Abbey with prayer or not, and if so, whether that prayer is to be offered up by a Protestant or a Roman Catholic, an Episcopalian or a non-Episcopalian, a Christian or a Jew. But it is quite evident that he contemplates the possibility of Disendowment accompanying Disestablishment, and he darkly hints at 'the vigour' of the Voluntary system. He has not said a word about the justice or honesty of seizing the Church's property, and applying it to secular purposes. Nor has he explained how the clergy in rural districts, already pauperized by agricultural depression, are to live when deprived of the tithes. All these things he has left in the dark. But he has said quite enough to whet the appetite and strengthen the hands of our Liberationist assailants. In short, Achilles has appeared, and come forth from his tent, and lifted up his voice. No man living can tell what this impulsive Statesman may do next. He suddenly turned on the Irish Church, and disestablished it, before some of our Hibernian brethren had time to awake. He may suddenly try to do the same with the English Church, under pressure of influence from beneath. At any rate, he has given us warning, and if we do not beat to quarters, clear the decks, throw lumber overboard, and prepare for action, we are fools or madmen, and given over to judicial blindness. The enemy's ship may be hull-down at present, so that we can scarcely see her royals above the horizon. But the enemy's ship is rising fast, and may be alongside of us sooner than we think.

Concerning the immense amount of harm which Disestablishment and Disendowment would do, if their advocates succeeded, I will not weary you with words. In fact, you all know what my mind is, if you read the papers on the subject which I felt it my duty to send to every Incumbent in this Diocese not long ago. I stand to every sentence which those papers contained, and withdraw nothing. I believe that no man living can realize the amount of damage which Disestablishment would do, not merely to the Church of England, but to the cause of Christ throughout the world, the cause of morality and philanthropy in our own land, and to the cause of unity and peace among English professing Christians. It would shut up two-thirds of our rural

churches, or at any rate withdraw two-thirds of the rural clergy from their present position. Stripped of their tithes they could not live; and the population of our country parishes in many cases would be left unvisited, and without means of grace. It would cripple all our Missionary Societies, shut up most of our Voluntary schools, and dry up many sources of benevolence by which our isolated rural poor are often civilized, humanized, and comforted. If any system has ever proved a dead failure, it is the operation of the Voluntary system in rural districts. And against this immense amount of damage there is next to nothing to set off. Nonconformists, after Disestablishment, will be unable to do anything they cannot do now, for they have already a plethora of liberty to build, and preach, and proselytize as much as they please. Unity and brotherly feeling between Churchmen and non-Churchmen will certainly not be increased by taking away the Church's endowments and pauperizing her clergy. The much-coveted equality between Episcopalians and non-Episcopalians will certainly not be produced so long as Episcopalians comprise within their ranks the immense majority of the upper classes. It would never come unless our Rulers ordered people to 'boycott' all Episcopalians, and made it penal to use a Prayer-book.

And behind all these things there remains a point of far higher and deeper importance. The State will risk incurring the displeasure of Almighty God, on whom alone our prosperity depends, when she deliberately chooses to ignore Christianity, and to have her monarchs crowned without any religious ceremonial, and her Parliaments opened without prayer. Whether our unhappy sister country of Ireland has derived the slightest benefit from the Disestablishment of the Protestant Church is a question which I leave any sensible man to decide. Most men tell me that her internal condition, both socially and politically, has been worse, since the so-called Upas tree\* was cut down, than it ever was before.

Now, concerning the paramount duty of resisting the Disestablishment movement to the bitter end, I hope we are all of one mind. I know there are some enthusiastic Churchmen here and there who fancy that freedom from State control would be a real benefit to the Church of England. 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. These amiable enthusiasts would soon find, if they had their own way, that a Free Church is a fine thing to talk about, but not so free as it appears. There are other chains and screw-presses beside those of Parliament, secular Law Courts, and the

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\* Gladstone had formerly compared evils in Ireland to the branches of the (supposedly poisonous) Upas tree of the tropics.

Royal supremacy. The frogs in the fable found King Stork far worse than King Log. When I hear an English Churchman expressing a wish for Disestablishment, I always think of the famous epitaph which said: 'I was well; I would be better; I took physic, and here I am.'

I trust, however, that the vast majority of English Churchmen will turn away from such delusions, and will resolve to do their utmost to prevent the Church of England being disestablished. But I warn my brother Churchmen that we must gird up our loins like men, and prepare for a severe struggle. It will never do to rest supinely on our oars, and let the question drift, and proclaim that 'we never meddle with politics.' I tell the clergyman who talks in that way that, if he does not take care, politics will meddle with him, turn him out of his house, and strip him of his income. I call upon him to remember that it is his primary and bounden duty to spread accurate information about the Church of England, and to furnish his people with correct replies to the gross misstatements that Liberationists are continually making about the Church of England. The number of such misstatements is simply amazing, and they would be ridiculous if they were not calculated to be most mischievous to ignorant minds. It is a shame for any man to circulate them, and a discredit to any man to believe them. The Church has nothing whatever to fear from the most searching examination of her constitution and the amount of her revenues. All she asks is, that people should know the truth about her much-abused connection with the State, and not lightly believe everything that is said, printed, and circulated about it. It was a wise remark of the late Archbishop Tait, when he said, in 1881: 'We must no longer overlook the attempts which are certainly now being systematically made in many neighbourhoods to pervert the judgment and alienate the loyal regard of our people.' It was an equally wise and very practical remark of the present Archbishop of Canterbury, only a few weeks ago: 'Every clergyman should consider himself bound by his office to diffuse the truth by books, lectures, papers, conversation, and to ask all Church thinkers, and students, and practical men to help him.' You may depend upon it, if you wish to defend the Church, this must be done, and done without delay. Information, information, information is the first weapon that must be used if we want to defend the Church.

I must turn, however, from this branch of Church Defence to another, which appears to me of equal, if not superior, importance. If we wish to resist the Disestablishment movement successfully, we must set our own house in order. We must resolve that Church Reform shall accompany Church Defence. We must try to rectify known abuses, to stop the sale of livings, to revive ecclesiastical discipline, to simplify our Prayer-book services, to proportion revenues to duties, to provide pensions for aged or infirm clergymen, to organize a system of aggressive evangelization for overgrown or neglected parishes, and to give the laity their rightful place in all the councils of the

Church, both great and small. And above all, we must close our ranks, and take care that we have no weak points in our position. You may depend upon it, it is useless to talk of Church defence if we neglect this obvious duty. The famous lines of Torres Vedras would never have kept the French out of Portugal, if the Duke of Wellington had left any part of them open and undefended. Our military squares in the Soudan campaign would never have been entered by the Arabs if they had been closed up, and had had no gaps left at the corners. The strongest chain in the world is no stronger than it is at some weak or defective link. Now, have we no weak points in the Church of England? Have we no gaps in our 'square'? I fear that we have some very serious ones, and unless they are rectified we shall suffer greatly in the day of battle, even if we escape defeat. I must say that I should like to see a rather humbler tone among some of our Church defenders, and a greater readiness to confess that our good old Church has some imperfections and defects. Let me try to explain briefly what I mean.

1. The first, worst, and weakest point in the position of the Established Church consists in *its most unhappy divisions*. If we would set our house in order, we must begin there. You need not be afraid that I am going to weary and worry you with controversial details about gestures, and postures, and vestments, and music. I will simply put one great broad fact before you in its naked simplicity, and ask every wise man to judge for himself whether we are not most sadly divided. I find, then, that at the annual meeting of a great religious Society, which was held in London last June of this very year, the President, at the conclusion of a long and carefully prepared speech, used the following words: 'We must strive for union, especially with the great Latin Church from which we were separated by the sins of the 16th century.' I quote these words from the report of the *Church Times*, which was probably revised. The report of another paper differs slightly, and is as follows: 'The restoration of visible unity with the members of the Church abroad, east and west alike, but above all with the great Apostolic See of the West, with the holy Roman Church, which has done so much to guard the true faith—these surely should be our objects, and the objects nearest our hearts.' Whichever report you take, I call that very ominous and painful language indeed. I have no doubt that Lord Halifax, who spoke these words, is a devout and honourable man, though he is not like the Lord Halifax who led the cheering when the Seven Bishops were acquitted in Westminster Hall two hundred years ago. But, of course, we all know that 'the Latin Church' means the Church of Rome, and the 'sins of the 16th century' mean the Protestant Reformation. Now, I find that the Society which he addressed, the English Church Union, includes among its members no less than 2600 clergy and 20,000 laymen, and has branches and ramifications from one end of the land to the other. I find, moreover, that the noble President, who used this language, and is, of

course, the mouthpiece and representative of these 2600 clergy, was heard without the slightest objection being made, and I cannot find that his sentiments have ever been repudiated down to the present day. In the face of a fact like this, I ask any one of common sense whether it is possible to deny that our Church is most painfully divided. To shut our eyes, and say, 'We see no divisions,' is the height of folly, and something like judicial blindness. Timid Churchmen may say 'Hush!' but the divisions remain.

I shall not plead guilty to the vulgar charge of narrowmindedness and illiberality. On the contrary, I have always maintained, and have been bitterly blamed for maintaining, that our Church is eminently comprehensive, and that High, Low, and Broad schools were meant to find room within her pale. But I must contend that there are limits to her comprehensiveness, and those limits seem to me most painfully and dangerously exceeded by the words of the President of the English Church Union. In short, unless the Society disavows them, or explains them away, it is sheer nonsense to say that we are not divided. It is perfectly notorious that there are thousands of English clergymen and laymen who glory in the Protestant Reformation, who abhor the very idea of re-union with the Church of Rome, and who would rather see the Church disestablished than see it give up its Protestant principles. By no ingenious policy of toleration, compromise, or comprehensiveness, can you ever make the members of two such diametrically opposite schools of thought work harmoniously together. There is a yawning gulf between them, and to sing, as we often do,

*We are not divided—  
All one body we,*

is to sing what is not only incorrect, but most painfully untrue. In short, we are about to join battle with outward enemies, with an army rent by internal divisions; and if we do not come ultimately to grief it will only be by the miraculous interposition of a merciful God. 'The Scripture cannot be broken.' The words of our Lord are just as true now as they were 1800 years ago: 'A house divided against itself cannot stand.' I leave the matter here for your own private consideration, and your private prayers. If this is not a weak point in our position, I know not what is. It cannot be concealed. Our enemies know it well, and are sure to make capital out of it. We ought to compass sea and land, and leave no stone unturned to obtain more unity. In order to obtain it we ought to be ready to sacrifice many private tastes, and to concede much, provided always that we do not sacrifice God's truth on the altar of a so-called peace. But unless we can heal our divisions we may stave off defeat in the House of Commons for a few Sessions, but sooner or later we shall be beaten.

2. The second weak point in the position of our Established Church is a very serious one. I refer to the widespread *spirit of lawlessness and disobedience to authority* which prevails throughout our ranks. You need not suppose that I am going to drag you through the thorny jungle of ecclesiastical suits, whether past or present. I am not even going to say who I think has been right and who wrong in any of those suits. I shall simply call your attention to the following undeniable facts. It is a fact that certain practices in the administration of the Lord's Supper have been declared illegal by the Queen's Courts, after careful argument and investigation. It is a certain fact that until the decisions of these Courts are either reversed, or declared null and void by Act of Parliament, they are practically the law of the land. It is a certain fact that if you go to the Temple or Lincoln's Inn, any lawyer would tell you that these decisions, whether good or bad, are binding on all clergymen, and ought to be obeyed. It is a certain fact that in the famous Miles Platting case it was ruled by the Judge that these decisions were law, and from the judgment given on that occasion there was no appeal. But what is the state of things in every part of England? In the face of the facts I have just mentioned, the very practices which have been declared illegal are habitually carried on by hundreds of clergymen throughout the land, and approved by thousands who do not adopt them. Nor is this all. These very illegalities are tolerated, sanctioned, and not interfered with, and any one who tries to interfere with them is violently denounced and blamed. Now, if this is not 'lawlessness' I know not what is. It is a state of things which is not allowed for a moment in any other profession, in the army or the navy, among medical men, or at the bar. In short, it is complete anarchy and chaos; and discipline is dead. The only rule appears to be that of the times of the Judges, and every clergyman is to 'do that which is right in his own eyes.' As for the unfortunate Bishops, who are bound by their office to see that the Royal supremacy is maintained and the Queen's laws are respected in their dioceses, their position is most pitiable. If they sit still and do nothing, and look on with folded arms, they are blamed. If they allow any steps to be taken to check illegality, they are blamed again. Blamed, did I say? The phrase is *euphemism* indeed! That word is far too weak to convey an idea of the fierce, violent, insulting language which is poured on the devoted heads of Bishops, by the extreme writers on both sides. Whatever they do they are wrong.

Worst of all, there does not appear to be the slightest prospect of any remedy or change for the better. The very people who tell us that the Law Courts are bad Courts, and their decisions worthless, are making no attempt to get the decisions reversed, or the Law Courts reformed. No Peer, no member of the Lower House of Parliament, brings in a bill for the creation of better Courts, or for the amendment of the Clergy Discipline and Public Worship Acts. The Royal Commission which reported three years ago has proved

as completely abortive as the Commission on Ritual. The whole subject seems at a deadlock. The Church appears to go on year after year fumbling, and dawdling, and wrangling, and squabbling, and pamphleteering, and waiting for a ‘convenient season,’ and nothing is done. ‘Rusticus expectat dum defluit amnis.’\* The only certain fact that remains is this—the authority of the Queen’s Courts is continually set at nought, their decisions are treated as null and void, and the Royal supremacy is practically ignored.

Some good people, I believe, like this condition of things, and consider it healthy and safe. I admire their simplicity, but I differ from them entirely. So long as our present anarchy continues, I am certain it will prove an immense source of weakness when we come face to face with the Disestablishment movement in the House of Commons. The question will naturally be asked whether a Church deserves any favour which sets the Royal supremacy at defiance, or at any rate refuses to attend to the decisions of the Queen’s Courts. For it must always be remembered that whether the Courts are good or bad, and whether the decisions are right or wrong, they do represent the Royal supremacy; and the champions of Disestablishment may justly ask, ‘Do you mean to deny the Royal supremacy, or do you not?’ Our present attitude is sure to make Parliament suspect that we want to make the Church independent of the State, and wish to transfer all power to Convocation, and take it away from the House of Commons. This, we may depend upon it, no British House of Commons will ever allow. The history of Laud’s Convocation in 1640 is not forgotten. He that wants our Courts reformed and obnoxious decisions reversed, will find that, sooner or later, he must go to Caesar for authority to do it, and unless Caesar approves it will not be done. I leave this part of my subject to your private reflection. I only repeat that our present undeniable lawlessness and anarchy will prove one of the biggest gaps in our line of defence in fighting the Disestablishment battle. You may not believe me, any more than Cassandra† was believed in ancient days. But it is my deliberate conviction that, if the British public once grasps the idea that clergymen are a class of men who are chartered libertines, and are to be allowed to defy the law with impunity, you will never prevent Disestablishment.

3. The third weak point in our position is one which I refer to very unwillingly, but I am obliged to do it. I refer to the *general apathy and indifference of lay Churchmen* about our Church’s affairs. The number of laymen who ever come forward and exhibit any interest in ecclesiastical matters, whether in town or country parishes, or in Dioceses, or in Conferences, or in Congresses, is most painfully small. In this respect the comparison between the Church of England and all other Churches which have any life in them is

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\* ‘The Countryman waits until all the water be gone past’ (Horace, *Epistles* I, 2.41).

† She repeatedly told her husband Agamemnon of the calamities that awaited him if he returned to Greece from Troy, but he paid no heed to her and was assassinated.

most unfavourable to us. No man can read accounts of the proceedings of the American Episcopal Church, or the disestablished Church of Ireland, of the Canadian or Australian Churches, of the Scotch Presbyterian Churches, or the Methodist, or Independent, or Baptist Churches in our own land—no man, I say, can read these accounts, and fail to observe that in every case the laymen exhibit far more interest in the welfare of their own body than the laity of the Established Church of England do in the welfare of their own Communion. Who does not know that there are hundreds and thousands of hard-headed intelligent laymen in our upper and middle classes who go to church regularly on Sundays, and fill their place in their congregations, and yet never attend a Vestry meeting, never join a Parochial Council, never appear on the platform of a religious Society, and never attend a Diocesan Conference or a Congress? Who does not know, beside this, that too many of them seem determined to push aside all Church questions, however important they may be, and appear resolved not to understand them or be troubled about them? If the clergyman of their parish is only devout, and moral, and amiable, and learned, and hard-working, they seem to think he must be in the right. They forget that all this is no more than might be said of Ignatius Loyola and the Jesuits, and that the grand question about every clergyman ought to be, ‘Does he teach God’s truth?’

This state of things is a very dangerous symptom in our condition. I suppose it is a remnant of the good old times, when religion was supposed to be the peculiar province of the parson, and the laity seemed to think they had nothing to do but to shut their eyes, open their ears and mouths, and believe whatever the parson told them. But it is high time to awake out of this slumber. It was all very well in the reigns of Queen Anne or the first two Georges. But it will never do in the nineteenth century. If Disestablishment were really to come, there would be a rude break up of this ‘Sleepy Hollow,’\* and the Rip Van Winkles among our laity would find that every one must take an active part in the Church’s affairs, or else the Church would melt away and die. We want more men in the navy like Blake, and more men in the army like Havelock and Gordon; more Peers in the House of Lords like Lord Shaftesbury; more men on the judicial bench like Lord Hatherley and Lord Cairns; more members in the House of Commons like William Wilberforce; more statesmen in our Colonies like Henry and John Lawrence; and more bankers and merchants like Thornton and George Moore. At present, I do not believe that four-fifths of the Church laity have at all realized what Disestablishment and Disendowment mean and involve, what an immense rooting up of the very foundations of society would be the result, and what a huge

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\* The name given in Washington Irving’s *Sketch Book* to a quiet old-world village on the River Hudson.

demand would be made on their own purses, unless they were resolved to let the Church of England die altogether. I leave this weak point here, for I have no time to say more about it. In what I have said, you will please to remember that I have been speaking generally about the Church of England. The matter is one in which I firmly believe our own Diocese is better off than many. There are lay Churchmen here who are worth their weight in gold, and are ready to help forward every good work, and without whom this Diocese would never have been formed. I only wish their number was greatly increased. But throughout the land I am confident that the laity ought to take a more active interest in the Church than they have done hitherto, and show better proof that they really care for its existence. Without this, I am certain the Establishment will not stand many years.

4. Another weak point in our position is one of very grave and deep importance. The whole *standard of practical Christianity* throughout the land is far below what it ought to be, in spite of a vast show of outward profession. I often think that God is angry with us as a nation because of our national sins, and that one of the sore judgments He is about to send on us is the overthrow of one of our oldest Institutions. It would not surprise me if He were to chastise us, and bring us to our senses by permitting the Disestablishment and Disendowment of the Church of England.

This is an unpleasant subject, and I handle it very reluctantly. But the time is short, the ship is among breakers, and the matter demands very plain speaking. It is such an age for mutual admiration, for complimenting and thanking everybody, and shirking disagreeable subjects, that we are all apt to think too well of our condition, and to shut our eyes to our defects. In short, we are walking in a vain shadow, and gilding and varnishing much that is rotten and defective. Some people, for instance, point to the numerous restorations of cathedrals and churches in the last fifty years, and seem to think that they prove the Church to be in a most satisfactory condition. Others point to the immense increase of what are called 'bright and hearty services,' the improvement in singing and general ceremonial, and the frequent communions, and tell us that they are certain evidences of spiritual life. I cannot see with the eyes of these people. They appear to forget that there never was a grander place of worship than the temple at Jerusalem after Herod's restoration, and there probably never was a more perfect ceremonial than that which was kept up in this temple in the days of our Lord. Yet at that very time both temple and ceremonial were on the brink of destruction. The whole system was like a whitened sepulchre, fair without but rotten within, and in a few years the Romans came and took away both place and nation. 'Let us not be high-minded, but fear.' Notwithstanding the immense change for the better in outward things which the Established Church has exhibited in the last fifty years, it may well be doubted whether there has been any corresponding

improvement in inward vital religion and true godliness. If a tenth part of the time and money, which have been spent on Church music and ceremonial in the last fifty years, had been expended in pressing home on people repentance, faith, holiness, and self-denial, I believe our Church would have been in a far healthier state than she is now. I have read that the famous Italian statesman, Count Cavour, once said: 'Humanity, no doubt, is making progress in arts, sciences, and civilization; but the individual man makes no advance at all.'

I do not forget that we have many excellent Societies for checking evil and doing good, and I am thankful for what they do. But how weak and feeble they are, and how little influence they have over the mass of the nation. Let any thoughtful man take the Ten Commandments, in proof of what I say, and try the practical Christianity of this day by this test, and see what the result will be. Which of all the ten is really revered and obeyed as it ought to be? Look at the widespread Sabbath-breaking and neglect of public worship which is the habitual custom of millions. Look at the awful revelations of impurity and breach of the seventh commandment which have lately been exhibited to the public eye. Look at the enormous amount of drunkenness and intemperance which still continues in spite of every effort to stop it. Look at the gambling and betting, and perfect idolatry of recreations, which the large-typed columns of almost every daily paper in the land are constantly recording. Look at the extravagant expenditure of money, and self-indulgence of all kinds, compared with the disgracefully small sums given to religious objects. Look at the spread of communism and socialism among the masses, and the cold, sneering agnosticism or infidelity of the upper ten thousand. Look, last but not least, at the extraordinary bitterness and want of charity with which all controversies, whether political or theological, are continually carried on. The words of the great historian, Thucydides\*, in which he describes the party spirit of his own day, apply most painfully to our own times. He says: 'No assurances or pledges of either party could gain credit with the other. The most reasonable proposal coming from an opponent was received, not with candour, but suspicion. No artifice was reckoned dishonourable, if a point could be carried. All recommendation of moderate measures was reckoned a mark either of cowardice or insincerity. He only was accounted a safe man whose violence was blind and boundless, and those who tried to steer a middle course were spared by neither side.' Alas! this picture, drawn by a heathen pen, is only too true of our own land, the land in which people call themselves Christians, and profess to believe St. Paul's account of charity in the First Epistle to the Corinthians. But let any man, I say, deny the existence of these immense evils if he can. Let him

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\* *History of the Peloponnesian War*, Book III.

remember that they exist in the face of an Established Church which seems unable to prevent them, and then let him say whether there is not grave cause for anxiety in our camp, and great weakness along our whole line, which may well make us fear for the Establishment in the coming battle. After all, the cool, careless indifference with which most people regard the state of things I have described, is one of the worst symptoms of our condition.

I, for one, am one of those old-fashioned people who believe in God's overruling government of nations. I believe that He deals with them in this world according to their sins, increases or diminishes them, raises or lowers them, according as they deal with Him. I look at Nineveh and Babylon and Egypt and Tyre and Carthage and Venice and Spain and Portugal and Mexico and Peru, and I cannot help feeling anxious about our future. Except we repent and amend our ways, I shall never be surprised if our candlestick is taken away, and our Established Church is broken up amidst a crash of all the ancient and time-honoured Institutions of our land. Every wise and thoughtful man knows that it was the low standard of practical religion and morality which brought on France the tremendous catastrophe of the 1789 Revolution; and if we do not mind what we are about we may possibly come to the same disastrous end.

I shall say no more, and perhaps some of you will think perhaps I have said too much. But I have spoken as I have done from a deep sense of duty, and from a firm conviction that we live in most critical times, and that no man can tell what may happen before our Conference meets in 1886.

I do not despair of the future. God forbid that I should do so. I believe in the Almighty power of God to deliver us, even in the darkest hour. He brought our beloved Church safe through the reign of Elizabeth, though half the clergy in the beginning of that reign were Papists at heart, and secretly cared nothing for the Reformation. He revived us again out of the dust after the Commonwealth days, when the Archbishop of Canterbury had been beheaded, and Bishops and Prayer-books had been clean swept away. He rescued us from the Romanizing designs of James II, and gave the Seven Bishops grace to go to prison rather than sanction popery. He kept us alive in the middle of the last century, when the blindness of our spiritual rulers had shut the Methodists out of the Church. What He has done in time past He may do again. For this let us all agree to pray. A praying, interceding people are the very backbone of a Church.

In any case, let us all resolve to be found at our respective posts, like the gallant Roman sentinel at the destruction of Pompeii in the great eruption of Vesuvius, whose bones tell us to this day that he would not flee, but died where he had been posted. A Church which can number ten millions of people in her ranks ought to make a very good fight, and should take a great deal of killing. We are not dead yet. The old Church of England is an anvil which

has broken many a hammer. When the daughter of Sir William Waller, the famous Commonwealth General, was engaged to marry a Churchman, some one expressed his surprise that her father should let her marry a member of a falling Church. The old General replied drily that he observed 'this falling Church had a strange knack of rising again.' So may it be with us! May we be like the bush that burned with fire but was not consumed.

Two duties are immediately before us, and to them let us attend with heart, and soul, and mind, and strength. On the one hand, let us use every reasonable means to spread information, and meet falsehood with truth. On the other hand, let us set our own house in order, and not go to battle with our feet fettered and millstones round our necks. Our watchword and rallying-cry must be, 'Union on the basis of loyalty to the formularies of the Church of England and to the principles of the Reformation.' Of some things we may be quite certain. One is, that the people of England will never allow the Established Church to go back to Rome. Another is, that the Parliament of England will never allow the Established Church to be above the law. The last, but far the most important, is this, that God will never support a Church which is content with a low standard of practical religion.

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NOTE.

The schemes which some politicians gravely propose in the present day are so amazingly unreasonable, unpractical, and useless, that I think it well to say a few words about one of them, in order to prevent simple-minded people being deceived.

I remark, then, that some tell us that the cure for all the poverty and social depression of the lower classes is to give them land. 'Give every man three acres of British soil,' they say. 'Create an immense class of peasant proprietors, and there will be an end of complaining, destitution, and pauperism.' How this notable plan could be carried into effect without forcibly depriving the present landowners of property most of them have honestly bought, and do not want to part with, I fail to see. Moreover, whether there is sufficient land worth cultivating in Great Britain to provide every man with three acres is more than doubtful. However, these are little difficulties which I am willing to pass by.

The point which I wish to urge on the consideration of all sensible readers is simply this: The mere possession of three acres of land without capital, to nineteen men out of twenty, would be perfectly useless. It would do them no more good than the gift of a white elephant. One really might suppose, on

reading the speeches of some modern political orators, that land produces crops without labour, and that the working man has only to strike his foot on the soil, and bread and meat and potatoes will at once start up before his eyes! But every practical farmer or agricultural labourer could tell us that this is ridiculous and absurd. There is no profession in which skill, diligence, and constant attention are more necessary, if success is to be obtained, than in that of the cultivation of land. And if any one thing has been found out by long experience, it is this, that a man cannot live with comfort, and bring up a family, if he has only three acres of land, and nothing else to depend on. It is too much land to leave him time to attend to any business. It is too little to make him as well off as a steady London or Birmingham artisan who has regular employment.

I may be allowed to speak pretty confidently on this subject. I have passed forty years of my ministerial life in agricultural parishes. I have had more opportunities than most men of observing the condition of farmers, both great and small, and of agricultural labourers. I have not the slightest hesitation in saying that, as a general rule, the occupiers of three or four acres of land are in a most miserable condition, and are not nearly so well off as the labourers around them, who are regularly working for the farmers at twelve or fourteen shillings a week, paying a fair rent for a cottage and half an acre of allotment land, but not possessing a foot of soil of their own. If the owner and occupier of three or four acres is a strong man, living close to a town, with two or three sons to help him, and knows what can be done with land, and is never idle, or drunk, and has a succession of good seasons and good prices, I have observed that in some rare exceptional cases he can get on pretty well for a few years. But I repeat that, as a general rule, such a man is sure to come to grief at last. I am therefore quite certain that the idea of improving the condition of London or Birmingham artisans, who know nothing of farming, by giving each man three acres of land, without capital to farm it, is a complete delusion, and would infallibly lead to bitter disappointment. He must begin his first year with borrowing, and we all know the old proverb, 'He that goes a-borrowing goes a-sorrowing.' I advise those who are not satisfied with what I have just said, to study an admirable book lately published by Lady Verney, entitled *Peasant Properties*. If that book does not show the utter fallacy of the vaunted three-acre remedy for the wants of the working classes, I am greatly mistaken.

After all, the grand error which lies at the root of half the wild schemes for ameliorating the condition of the lower orders is forgetfulness of the great Bible doctrine of the fall, and the consequent corruption of human nature. So long as men and women are what they are, no laws or enactments of Parliament will ever produce a dead level of equality, or prevent some being rich, and others very poor, just as it was in the golden days of Solomon. So long

as human nature remains unchanged, some men will be industrious and some will be lazy, some will be stupid and some will be clever, some will be intemperate and some will be sober, some will be thrifty and saving and some will be extravagant and wasteful, some will be strong in body and some will be delicate and weak. So long as this is the case it is utterly impossible to prevent immense difference in the circumstances of men. No doubt it is quite right to provide bridges and steps by which men in a lower position may raise themselves to a higher one, to supply the poor with the cheapest and best education, to encourage those who are disposed to emigrate to seek a new position in Colonies where land and food are cheap and labour is highly paid. But those many political philanthropists who are now proclaiming from the house-tops schemes and nostrums by which everybody is to be well off, and nobody is to be poor in a fallen world, are only wasting their time, deluding ignorant hearers, raising expectations which can never be fulfilled, and exhibiting their own want of common sense.