

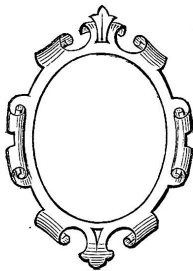
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HOW TO COMPLETE  
THE REFORMATION.

A LECTURE

BY

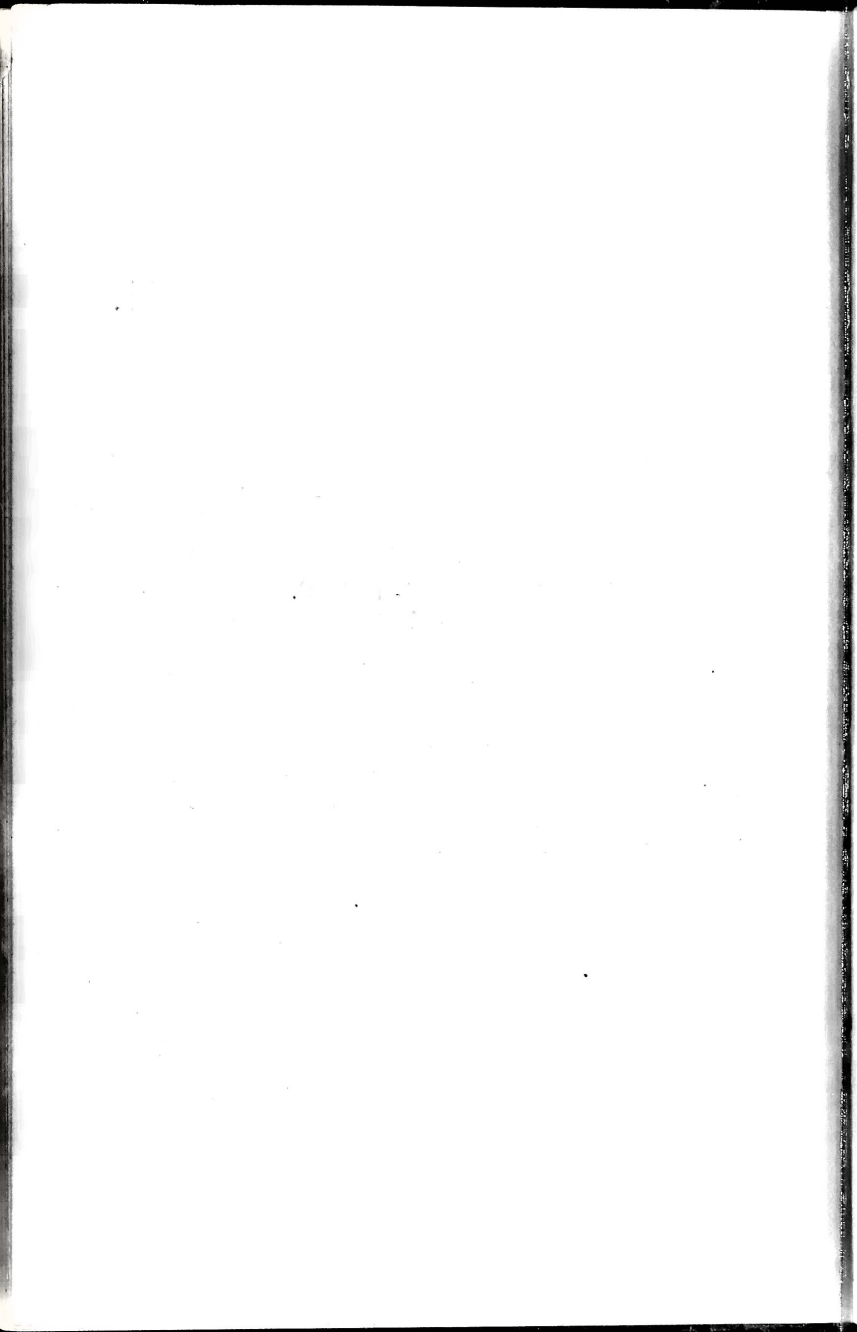
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## HOW TO COMPLETE THE REFORMATION.

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### I.

IT is nearly two hundred and thirty years since John Milton uttered these words :—

“ Now once again, by all concurrence of signs, and by the general instinct of devout and holy men, as they daily and solemnly express their thoughts, God is beginning to decree some new and great period in his church, even to the reforming of reformation itself. What does He then, but reveal himself to his servants, and as his manner is, first to his Englishmen ? ”

Nearly two hundred and thirty years, and not only has the Reformation never been reformed, it has never even been completed. Two hundred and thirty years since the signs of the times led one of the most highly inspired of Englishmen to believe that God was then decreeing to begin the reforming of the Reformation, and there is scarcely a portion of our vast social system into which the animating principle of that Reformation has yet found its way : still are our laws in many respects based upon principles essentially antagonistic to it ; still are our Churches, whether established or independent, for the most part but servile repetitions of that old Romish system from the influence of which it was the express function of the Reformation to detach them. Still does our education, whether in family or school, consist mainly in the inculcation of habits of thought and

## 6      *How to Complete the Reformation.*

tenets wholly inconsistent with the broad purpose of the Reformation.

Not that the Reformation, either in its principles or practice, has been formally repudiated or virtually discontinued; except perhaps by an insignificant section. So far from this being the case, the movement of which it was the initiation, continues under a more significant name and in a more comprehensive form than ever was contemplated by its originators: being known to us by the modern designation of *Liberalism*. But this Liberalism, while demonstrated both by family resemblance, pedigree, and character, to be the one and true heir of the Reformation, and though a sturdy and capable stripling, and well fitted to sustain and extend the honours of its ancestral line, sadly needs schooling. Through want of a logical comprehension of its real character and functions, it not unfrequently turns its back completely upon itself and its parent, setting their interests and principles entirely at naught. Through lack of thoroughness it halts and falls far short of its proper goal; and a halting Liberalism signifies an incomplete Reformation.

Regarding this young Liberalism as the hope of the world to come, at once the Atlas on whose broad shoulders the future of Humanity rests, and the Hercules by whose labours it is to be purified from the defilements of past ages of ignorance, superstition, and barbarism; regarding, in short, Liberalism as synonymous with the development of the human intelligence and moral sense,—I trust I may be allowed to speak freely of the characteristics which appear to me as marring its perfections, and to point out the proper path to the fulfilment of its high destiny.

### II.

It has long been generally agreed that the fun-



damental principle of the Reformation was the right of private judgment, and of action in accordance therewith. The assertion of that principle was a protest on the part of individual liberty against an organisation that sought to engulf the world beneath an overwhelming regime of uniformity. It involved, moreover, the right of every individual to all possible means of developing and informing his judgment.

The fundamental principle of Liberalism may be broadly stated as consisting in the tenet that opinion should govern the world, in all respects in which the world needs governing, such opinion to be the result of the free, genuine, deliberate thought of living men.

To accept these definitions,—and I do not see how it is possible to decline them,—is to admit the essential identity of Liberalism and the Reformation. It is to recognise it as the function of Liberalism to carry out the intention of the Reformation ; and it is to admit that only by accomplishing the programme of Liberalism is it possible to complete the Reformation.

In dealing, then, with the completion of the Reformation, we deal really with the development of the programme of Liberalism.

In this relation I propose to show, First, the main respect in which both the Reformation and Liberalism have as yet failed to carry out their own principles ; and, Secondly, the precise and most necessary step to be taken in reversal of such failure.

The subject of my Lecture is capable of expression by a still more condensed term. The ability of the individual to develop and use his own judgment involves directly the question of the education of his understanding. Do not recoil at the word education, trite and hackneyed though it be. I have not brought you here to take you over beaten paths. The side from which I propose to attack this Matterhorn

of our social system, has scarcely, if ever, yet been assailed. And if the method employed seem at first somewhat indirect or obscure, I must ask you to consider that it is because the process I propose to adopt is rather that of piercing into the centre and tunnelling upwards through the interior, than of scrambling up by the outside; and that when we do attain the summit it will be without risk of a fall, and at the gain of a suddenly revealed panoramic view.

The view which I am desirous of presenting to you is that of the possibility of realising all our wishes, and more than our hopes, in the matter of our National Education by means of the utilisation of the Church-establishment: and this, not by destruction or disestablishment, not by deprivation or spoliation, but by conversion or re-construction. Even to its own accepted definition of the original intention of that vast organisation, but one word needs to be added to make it all that we want. Originally designed to minister to our moral and spiritual necessities, it has only to be adapted to our moral, spiritual, and *intellectual* needs, to insure at once the fulfilment of the programme of Liberalism, and the completion of the Reformation.

If it be the fact that the addition of this single term *intellectual* to the category of the functions of the Church, has the effect of reversing or modifying the whole of its previous conditions of existence, and setting it to work in a track that is in any degree strange and repugnant to it,—we need no further proof that the Reformation has never yet reached the Church, be it of England or of Scotland, “as by law established.”

And so also we may say of the independent nonconformist churches, that if their spirit be antagonistic to that free intellectual development which is absolutely inconsistent with dogmatic teaching in any department of knowledge whatsoever, we need no

farther proof that the Reformation has not yet reached even the Protestant dissenting bodies. And these form a class, be it remembered, that specially affects Liberalism in its politics.

To appreciate the position I am here taking up, it must be borne in mind that, though fighting Rome with its own weapons, and using dogma to combat dogma, the Reformation was essentially a repudiation of all dogma. Using Biblical Infallibility as an engine of destruction against Papal Infallibility, the Reformation, by its very assertion of the right of private judgment in the choice of Infallibilities, struck at the principle of all Infallibility whatever.

### III.

The Reformation, therefore, not only had, properly, no dogma of its own, but it was a protest against all dogma whatsoever. Of which of the Churches, or sects, to which the Reformation gave birth, can it now be said that it has no dogma? If there be one, that one, and that only, is entitled to be called a reformed church.

For, only where there is freedom to follow truth by means of evidence, and without deference to ancient authority or foregone conclusion, has the Reformation been completed: only there are the principles of Liberalism practised: only there is the judgment of the individual subjected to a regime favourable to the production of that genuine Opinion which, according to the doctrine of Liberalism, alone ought to govern the world.

For ourselves as a nation we claim to be governed, at least in matters of common concern, by the opinions of the majority of our citizens. It is well known that large numbers of those citizens are altogether uneducated and illiterate; and that of those who claim to be neither uneducated nor illiterate, a large

proportion have no genuine opinions whatever ; but derive that which they regard as their opinion, from mere prejudice, habit, or authority, traditional or other, and altogether independently of any known facts. In short, judging by what we know of the nature of the instruction given to our youth both at home and in school, in college and university, in church and in chapel, it is impossible to avoid the conclusion that so far from really governing ourselves, so far from carrying out the principle of the Reformation and of Liberalism that Opinion ought to govern the world, such opinion to be the result of the free, genuine, deliberate thought of living men,—we are in reality governed by the dead, by means of tenets adopted from them mechanically and retained by habit.

It was Hegel who first, I think, taught us to see in the papal system a continuation of the domineering spirit of ancient Rome ; spiritual terror being substituted for material force as the basis and mainstay of its authority : and in the Reformation, an assertion of the rights of individual nationalities against Rome's all-absorbing regime of uniformity. If Liberalism be a step further in advance, it is so in respect of its claiming a similar right on behalf of every individual to judge for himself both independently of his nationality, and in all matters, secular, as well as religious.

Now, let us consider the regime to which every one of us has been subjected, and to which in turn nearly every one of us subjects or has subjected his children ; and ask whether there is a topic of importance concerning which we have ourselves grown up, or we have allowed them to grow up, with unbiased judgment to form an independent opinion. Is it not notoriously the case that both in things political and things social, in things religious and even in things scientific, there is scarcely a child in the country that

is suffered to grow up without having its mind so fettered and moulded by foregone conclusions, based, at least in great part, on dogmatic authority and not on any impartial review of the balance of evidence, as to be absolutely incapacitated for forming any genuine independent opinion whatever? Defining Dogma as doctrine claiming to be accepted in virtue of the authority by which it is laid down, and by no means in virtue of its being possible, provable, useful, or true, it cannot be too persistently set forth that every sect, every teacher, every parent, that rests the education of a child upon a dogmatic basis, instead of cultivating its power of independent judgment, is an enemy to the principles of Liberalism and of the Reformation, is still the servitor and agent of Rome.

Does it not now begin to appear that, so far from the Reformation having ever been completed, it has scarcely advanced a step beyond its initial movement? By profession we hold it immoral to inculcate opinion by compulsion of authority, yet in practice we do it universally and constantly.

The fact is, that to the guiding spirits of the Reformation, or at least to their immediate successors, the emancipation of Thought was a Frankenstein from which they shrank back in terror so soon as they began to discern the giant's real dimensions. They could not re-inclose it in the narrow limits from which it had so lately been released; but what they could do to arrest its movements and restrain its force, they did. Its chains, re-cast, re-gilt, and a little stretched, were insidiously replaced. A new tyranny was created, a new Trinity, as it were, having three persons,—Articles, Creeds, and Tests; and one God—Biblical Infallibility. To the compulsory service of this complex divinity was the soul of every individual in the State by law devoted the moment he drew the breath of life. Its requirements, among which were included "all the Articles



of the Christian Faith," every helpless infant was compelled by its sureties to promise and vow, that when it should come of age, it would most surely keep and perform. Passing from infancy into childhood, the individual was bred up on, and so saturated with, the dogmas of the Catechism, that, like an insect taking its colour from the leaves on which it feeds, he had no choice, on reaching youth, but to take upon himself in Confirmation, under the delusion that he was doing so voluntarily, everything his sureties had pledged him to. Every essential function of his nature was placed under ecclesiastical control. Certificates of compliance with the requirements of Orthodoxy were exacted before he was permitted to earn an honourable living. Still deeper implication in church dogma was necessary to enable him to contract an honourable marriage. When in health, he incurred penalties if he absented himself from a place of the established worship. When sick, a profession of Orthodoxy was necessary to entitle him to spiritual consolation. When dead, to burial among his fellows. When risen, to admission into heaven.

It was Rome again, with its headquarters at home instead of abroad. The Reformation was in ashes. Out of its ashes rose Liberalism. Its commencement was not propitious. Liberalism, it is true, released the individual from compulsory compliance with the State-Church regime; but it called forth a number of competing regimes, each more or less inimical to that liberty which consists in the development of individuality. For each separate system required conformity to special tenets. Membership was inconsistent with the love of truth for its own sake and apart from the Cause. In thus requiring adherence to any set of opinions, the non-conforming bodies were constituted upon the precise model of the established church, as the Church was upon that of Rome.

It pleases some of our most liberal clergy to call dissenters by the name of Non-conforming Churchmen. Far nearer the mark would it be to describe both dissenters and members of the established churches of England and Scotland as "Non-conforming Papists." Protestantism equally with Romanism, asserted as more than possible, the incompatibility of Faith with Knowledge. Where the acquisition of knowledge might lead to a modification or renunciation of Faith, it became a necessary condition of church membership, or Orthodoxy, that knowledge be not pursued to a point at which it might become incompatible with the faith of the sect. In thus admitting this incompatibility the Reformation reverted to Rome, in spite even of its new guise of Liberalism.

The circumstance that adherence to any of these associations was voluntary, so far as the law was concerned, was something gained. Practically, however, the gain was to a great extent neutralised by the still backward state of the public mind. To belong to the Establishment was alone considered socially "respectable;" while for anyone to refrain from identifying himself with some religious denomination, was to incur universal reprobation: and to quit one of them, having once been a member, was to insure persecution and odium. And even if adults, if parents were free, how was it with children? What, under the tuition of the Sects, was their chance of growing up unfettered, and able to form their own judgment? Would it be greater than under the tuition of the Church, or of Rome? And if not, where was the Reformation? It may be true that Legislation, even of the most advanced Liberal type, cannot interfere to prevent parents from shackling the minds of their children. But parents who do thus shackle them, have no claim to be regarded as Liberals, or followers of the Reformation. They are

of Rome, Romish, no matter how bitter and bigoted their so-called "Protestantism."

## IV.

Let us take an illustration from Science, undeterred by the recent dictum of a Cabinet Minister to the effect that "Religion differs from Science in that fresh discoveries can be made in Science but not in Religion." Though Secretary of State in a "Liberal" Government, he forgot one very important discovery that might be made in religion, namely, the discovery that all existing religions are false religions. It is a discovery that has been made more than once in the history of the world, and more than once it has led to the introduction of a new religion. What is to prevent the same thing from happening again? But it is an illusion to suppose that there is any such essential distinction between Science and Religion. The recognition of a truth, whether religious or scientific, consists in *an impression upon the mind*. The source and nature of the impression requires in each case to be brought to the test of evidence, that is, to be judged by the human understanding. For the testing of evidence we have but one set of faculties; and we have no faculty whereby we can transcend those faculties. Certitude, or the conviction that one is in the right, proves nothing beyond one's own individual sentiment; and nothing is more common than for different people to be equally and absolutely certain of the most opposite beliefs.

When I speak of dogma, I do not include beliefs which we are forced, by their very nature, or by our very nature, to hold without proof, simply because we cannot conceive the opposite of them. For us Space *must* be infinite, Time *must* be eternal, God *must* exist, (if only as the *nature* of things,) because these are among the necessary bases of our conscious-



ness, and we cannot think otherwise. Dogmatism would consist in imposing beliefs respecting them, without regard to evidence or probability; not in asserting their existence, for we cannot think of them as non-existent.

As nothing is true for us unless capable of verification by evidence, so nothing is good unless capable of justification by experience. It is as absurd and immoral to dogmatise concerning metaphysical or transcendental subjects, as concerning scientific ones. And how absurd and immoral this would be, may be seen by this illustration from astronomy. The effect of requiring astronomers to pledge themselves always to uphold a particular theory of the Solar System—as that the earth goes round the sun, or the sun round the earth,—(it would make no difference in principle which, for the instant even an ascertained truth is converted into a dogma, it acquires all the perniciousness of a falsehood, inasmuch as it is received upon grounds other than that of its truth)—the effect of such a pledge would at once be to make Astronomy, as a Science, altogether unreliable, and to expose its professors to deserved suspicion that their teaching was the result of self-interest, and not of the facts they had ascertained. The extension of such a system generally to other departments of knowledge could have no other result than to convert the people who were subjected to it, into a nation of liars. Against its application to the more palpable truths of Physical Science, both our sense and our moral sense, so far developed under the Reformation, have with considerable effect protested. Our legislature dare not, if it would, countenance such dishonesty in the department of Science. We have not yet attained that degree of clear perception at which we should equally prohibit its countenancing the like dishonesty in the department of religion.

## V.

By this point I wish to bring you on the way to the end I have in view. I wish you to discern distinctly, as a landmark once seen never to be forgotten, this axiom: *That the contract whereby the State recognises and protects the endowment of dogma, is an immoral contract.* It is not only to institutions connected with the State that this axiom has reference. It is equally valid for all associations, public or private, which invoke the public law to the enforcement of those articles of their constitution which involve the inculcation of dogma, whether in pulpit or schoolroom, in science, religion, or morals.

The grounds on which the Church-establishment is ordinarily attacked are many and various. Objection is made that it is unfair to other dogmatic bodies that any should be selected for the favour of the State: that the State has no proper concern with religion: that the church ought to be permitted to govern itself without control by the secular power: that State interference diminishes religious zeal: that its dogmas are not true; and that the State, though quite right to select a church for its exclusive patronage, has in our case selected the wrong one. No objection has, so far as I am aware, hitherto been taken on the ground that all dogmatic teaching whatever is immoral, independently of the nature of the thing taught, and that the State has no right to countenance immorality. What prevents this axiom from itself being a dogma, is the simple but essential fact, that in support of it the appeal is, not to authority, but to evidence, or experience, and reason. There are among us intelligent and active spirits who are striving to obtain the release of the Established Church, not from the State, but from its dogmatic trammels: some, on the ground that its dogmas are false; and others on the ground that, whether true or false, a national institution ought to

be exempt from such limitation. With the end that these have in view, I heartily coincide; but seeing that they betray no conviction that those trammels are immoral simply because they are dogmatic, I base my adherence to their programme on other grounds.

## VI.

I propose now to show, from the practical working of the dogmatic spirit, how suicidal it is for a free State to do aught to encourage its promotion.

It has often been said in ridicule of the principle of democracy that truth and justice have nothing to do with majorities. It certainly is characteristic of minorities that the more insignificant they are in point of numbers, the more confident they are apt to be of their own infallibility. Fanaticism needs not for its own satisfaction any confirmation by success in winning adherents by conviction. The fanatic is content to force his tenets down the throats of others, careless of the slow process of the reason. Certain of his own infallibility, the secular doctrinaire is but a variation of the religious dogmatist. In so far as political or social doctrinarism involves the submission of the individual to a regime of uniformity, it savours of mediæval papalism. It becomes altogether of Rome when it would impose that regime by force, whether of physical violence, or the resistless compulsion of early training. The spirit of fanaticism is everywhere the same, and its root one, Infallibility, that aged fiend which recognises its divinely appointed vanquisher and destroyer in modern Liberalism, and shrieks and rages against it. No matter whether the direction of a fanaticism be for or against the ancient orthodoxy, it becomes one with it in spirit when it adopts the tactics of that orthodoxy. Even the fanatic for liberty turns renegade to the principles of liberty when he seeks to compel others to be free.

Liberty does not consist in releasing even slaves from their fetters against their will. The liberal throws his principles overboard, and turns bigot when he seeks to propagate his creed by force. Infallibility, having its basis in the emotions, and by no means in reason, naturally sees no reason why it should not force others to admit its claims. Liberalism, having its basis in reason, is bound by the very constitution of its being to repudiate compulsion as a legitimate or even possible method of attaining success. Every step won by such means is in reality several steps backward. It is suicidal for reason to appeal to force. Having to deal with reason and not with prejudice or passion, it is eminently characteristic of true Liberalism to be patient. When in a minority, it has no right to dominate by force. When in a majority, it has no need to do so.

I have spoken of Liberalism as a capable and sturdy stripling, but one that sadly needs schooling. Let me indicate one of the blemishes by which the conduct of its professors among ourselves has been marred of late. The practice of holding great public meetings in the neighbourhood of the Houses of Parliament, in order, by a demonstration of physical force, to accelerate the passage of a popular measure, is, for Liberals, nothing less than a faithless abnegation of the fundamental principles of Liberalism: for it involves an appeal from the deliberate reason of the Legislature to its fears:—fears of excesses that may be committed by an excited multitude: such multitude itself probably being for the most part utterly ignorant and incapable of forming a sound judgment respecting any great public question whatever. Be it once understood that the promotion of tenets or measures by physical compulsion is the peculiar and especial characteristic of Orthodoxy or Toryism, and it becomes clear that however fair it may be to fight an opponent with his own weapons, the cause of Liber-

alism is only discredited and retarded by its adoption of tactics which are inconsistent with its principles. Besides, the adherence of an ignorant crowd proves nothing beyond the fact that such a side has gained its favour for the moment, a favour which is apt to be far less dependent upon rational views, than upon some shallow or deceptive consideration ; a favour, too, which may at any moment and upon slight provocation be turned the opposite way. The worst enemy of democracy is the Demagogue. By exciting antagonism between class and class, he retards that progress of conviction which is the only practical test of the relative strength of opinions. Minds forced into such an attitude, become necessarily non-receptive as to new impressions. People are put upon their mettle to resist conversion ; recoiling from violence, they recoil also from the doctrine of the violent. And not only of the opposing parties, but of the nation generally, is the capacity for deliberation seriously diminished, when, instead of remaining calm, clear and judicial in tone, it is stirred into turbidity by noisy agitation. The fact that those who have already been converted are impatient at the slowness of others to be convinced also, constitutes no just pretext for violence. The scholar does not the sooner gain a knowledge of arithmetic through having his slate broken over his head by an impatient master. Indeed the violence of the latter is rather a confession of his inability to teach. In a community in which the governing power is vested in "the common-sense of most," the very use of force to effect a change is a virtual confession that the advocates of that change are still in a minority, and therefore, on the principles of Liberalism, incompetent to demand that the change be made at present. We shall indeed have reason to congratulate Liberalism on its progress among us, when we see the Legislature so imbued with its principles as to vindicate them against all dema-

goguery whatever, by boldly declaring, whenever it may find itself menaced by demonstrations of physical force, that it will postpone all consideration of the questions at issue until such demonstrations shall have wholly ceased. By such dignified assertion of the rights of conviction as against compulsion in matters eminently requiring the exercise of reason, the cause of Liberalism would gain infinitely more than it would lose by delay. It is in quietness and confidence that its strength should lie.

It is in reality the Sectarian spirit that prompts the demagogue to restrict the term *people* to a single class. Forgetting that the people of any country consist of the whole of its citizens, rich and poor, great and small, learned and ignorant, those who have succeeded, as well as those who have failed in life, the demagogue delights in restricting it to the failures, and strives ever to exasperate them against the rest, and to obtain by dint of their uninstructed force that which they have failed to demonstrate by reason to be necessary and right. Impatience of the slow process of reason, eagerness to seize results without undergoing that preliminary discipline which is apt to be even more beneficent than the results themselves, is always characteristic of the shallow and slenderly educated. One of the chief evils of demagoguery, that is, of appealing to the passions rather than to the reason of the community, consists in its practice of stimulating this impatience among the masses. Liberalism, aiming at reform, naturally commends itself in the first instance to those classes whose condition is the most susceptible of improvement. Thinking more of the superficial and immediate than of the thorough and the permanent, and knowing little of the patience whereby greatness, whether individual or national, is alone to be achieved, these classes are naturally liable to grasp at any plausible measure that promises a temporary



alleviation of an evil, without considering what, in the long run, may be the effect of the principle involved. When needed reforms fail to come from above, that is, from the action of that educated class which alone has leisure and culture sufficient to allow of the necessary examination,—when, I say, reforms fail to descend in beneficent dews and showers, they are apt to be forced up from below with volcanic destructiveness. The recent clamours for organic changes on slight pretexts are an illustration of this. The function of Liberalism is to enlarge, not contract our liberties. When the constitution of society is such that it does not afford sufficient room for the co-existence of two undoubted rights, Liberalism, rather than sacrifice either of these rights, is bound to enlarge the terms of the social contract, until it can include and reconcile both. The masses, in their keen appreciation of the evils of interference with the liberty of election, have shown themselves ready to sacrifice one of the most essential of a freeman's rights in order to secure another. There is strong reason to fear that, by having recourse to compulsory secrecy as a protection against interference, they are seeking a remedy which will prove worse than the disease. It is a far higher stage of liberty which allows us to act as we please, openly and without fear or favour, than that which allows us to act as we please only on condition that we let nobody know how we act. In demanding secrecy we abandon our claim to this higher liberty, and with it the freeman's noblest privilege. I know well that it is through no love of darkness for its own sake that our toiling classes have clamoured for the Ballot. Far rather would they, with our great Patriot-poet, cry, "Hail! holy light," than with the arch-fiend call to the sun to tell it that they "hate its beams," and prefer the concealment of darkness. I know too that, thus far, at least, it is the wealthy and so-called educated

classes who, by their abuse of their privileges and powers, have driven their poorer fellow citizens to crave the shelter of secrecy. That this should be so, is only a further proof of the worse than worthlessness of much of the education hitherto given. It has never comprised a knowledge of those first principles of human association, which constitute the basis of social morality, and the recognition of which constitutes the very alphabet of Liberalism. But to substitute a compulsory secrecy for the publicity which is the high privilege and distinguishing badge of the Freeman, at least before the Legislature has exhausted all possible means at its disposal, is to purchase one right by the sacrifice of another, instead of endeavouring to secure both. True thoroughgoing Liberalism, despising mere expedients, and repudiating mechanical remedies for moral defects, ever aims at the highest, and would rather endure a prolonged condition of discomfort, than lower its aim to an inferior standard.

## VII.

The only wonder, however, is that the cause of Liberalism has not been marked by far more and greater errors. The "Church" of a country ought, as its chief educational and civilising agent, to be the leader and example to all parties. Such advantage our Liberalism has failed to enjoy. Where the Church is dogmatic, it cannot influence Liberalism for good. The two have no points of coincidence. Where the Church's own weapon is compulsion, it cannot be expected to teach men the use of reason.

Our own day has witnessed a most startling instance of the tremendous folly and wickedness of the appeal to violence. France, as befits the elder son of a dogmatic Church, ever does appeal to force. As regards her foreign relations, her hand is always on the hilt.



And at home her minorities do not wait to convince, but always strive to coerce the majority. Of all those who in France are at issue with the Commune, the Church is the least entitled to utter a word of reproach. The Church has no right even to condemn it as Atheistic. An infallible theory of Labour and Capital may as fairly be regarded as a fitting object of veneration by some, as an infallible priest or book by others. The Communist of modern Europe may have a vision of the possibilities of Humanity bright and glowing with blessedness in its exemption from poverty and woe, and of the efficacy of his doctrines to make that vision a reality. And the realisation of his vision is as high and legitimate a subject of ambition for him, as the establishment of the supremacy of his church is for a cardinal archbishop. Each has his ideal, at once the initial and the final cause of the universe; and his ideal is to him as God. Call that ideal what he will, Jehovah, Jesus, Church, or Humanity, neither can substantiate the charge of Atheism against the other. The sole radical difference of faith lies between those who trust to reason, and those who believe only in force. Violence is the legacy of Cain, a legacy shared alike by Catholic and Communist. In the long run it ever reacts upon its employer. It is in more senses than one that the blood of the martyr has proved the seed of the Church. There is good reason for ascribing much of the success of the doctrine so shocking to the developed moral sense of men, the doctrine of bloody sacrifices, of a deity that requires to be propitiated towards mankind by blood, even human blood, the blood of his nearest and dearest, to the legend that represents Abel as dying a martyr to his faith in it. A far happier moral may be found in the tale which represents the first man who wantonly sacrificed life, as the first to lose his own. But however just and noble the indignation of the impetuous Cain, his appeal to force

recoiled upon his own gentler faith, and thenceforth, under the rule of a ferocious orthodoxy, blood took the place of fruits and flowers, and terror the place of affection, in the worship of the Supreme Being.

By its appeal to a force which is not that of Reason, orthodoxy establishes its continuity with barbaric antiquity. The invasion of Canaan, whether by Israelites or Crusaders, was due to the aggressiveness of an orthodox creed, and no mere struggle for existence. The ground may be shifted from the next world to this, and the motives be limited to the secular, but Communism and Trades-Unionism have shown themselves animated by the identical spirit of fanaticism, which would subordinate the individual to a regime of uniformity, and use force to achieve its purpose of subjugation. Even when engaged in murdering priests and burning churches, it is still Satan casting out Satan. The creed of both is dogmatic, and both use the same weapons. The Church is the fountain even of the doctrinairism that would commence with destroying the church. Indeed, they are not without method in their madness who hold that it was the Church's chief apostle himself who first set the example of massacring non-communists, and that without regard to sex ; and that the sudden death miraculously inflicted upon two of them by Peter, was the initiation of the atrocities which long afterwards accompanied similar notions with the Lollards and Anabaptists. The violence of Peter proved as ineffectual to establish Communism within the Church, as the gunpowder and petroleum of Paris to establish it without the Church. The shrewd sense of Paul gave another direction to the Christian movement, and saved it from the antagonism of Property. But the direction in which that movement was turned by the influence of Paul's strong native bent towards theological metaphysics, led to the creation of a

systematised dogmatism, not less fatal to human intellect and advancement, than ever the Communism of Peter could have been. Both were alike destructive of individual freedom and development. The modern spectacle of Sacerdotalism—the Sacerdotalism that has thriven upon St Bartholomew and a myriad other massacres—affecting to be based upon primitive Christianity, and at the same time denouncing and slaughtering the Communists of Paris, is veritably the spectacle of Saturn devouring his own children.

The whole principle of Dogma and of its enforcement by violence, is derivable from the Semitic character of the church, which in respect of dogma had its breeding-ground and nursery in Alexandria. From Egypt came the Israelites of old with their cruel Jehovistic alternative of conversion or destruction, and the spirit which animates alike the ultramontanist of Rome, and the fanatic of the Revolution. The wand that divided the Red Sea was the real destroyer of Paris. And so long as we retain in our midst an institution, bound by virtue of its constitution, to maintain dogma and implant the seeds of fanaticism, Egyptian darkness may be truly said to dominate ourselves. The principle that endows a dogma, enforces a creed, imposes a catechism, or pledges an infant in baptism, is identical with the principle that massacres a tribe in Canaan, explodes a bomb in the workshop of a non-union artisan, or desolates a land by a religious war. In each case alike the fanaticism is the offspring of a claim to infallibility, and the result is the determination to promote opinion by means other than those of rational conviction. So that when would-be liberals appeal from reason to demonstrations of physical force, they turn their backs upon liberalism, and follow the fanatic and the bigot.

It is the Liberalism of the modern age that has repudiated the ancient doctrine of the absolute pro-

perty of parents in their children. The Church, following the patriarchs, has ever asserted a similar right on behalf, not of the parent, but of itself. As it never occurred to Abraham that he had no right to kill his son, so it seems never to have occurred to the Church that no one has a right to dispose of a child's mind and soul by pledging it to the profession of any particular set of religious opinions.

## VIII.

True Liberalism troubles itself little about forms. In the State, it is neither monarchical nor republican. In Society, it is neither aristocratic nor democratic. In the Church, it is neither established nor dissenting. Its aim, following the Reformation, is to bring about a liberty which consists in the recognition of the right of every person to develop his own individuality of character and ability, to form and formulate his own philosophy and faith, to work as best he likes without the loss of caste, and earn as much as he can, to enjoy the free disposal of his property, with power to leave it to whom he will, to enjoy after him:—for this is one of the highest incitements to, and rewards of successful industry:—in short, to regulate his life and faith in accordance with his own tastes and his own deductions from the phenomena of the world, the sole limit being the equal liberty of others. Whatever forms of government or society best promote such liberty, these are the forms approved by Liberalism. As the genius of peoples and races varies, so also will these forms vary. The detail must be a matter of experience for each, not of dogma for any. All regimes which fall short of such aims are, whether secular or spiritual, political, industrial, or social, essentially ultramontane in character, and antagonistic to Liberalism and the Reformation.

I have specified these details because there exists among us a spirit which not unfrequently exhibits itself in the form of class antagonism, seeking to excite the animosity of the poor against the rich, of the ignorant against the cultivated. I have already designated the demagogue the worst enemy of democracy. Liberalism is not the exclusive appanage of those who call themselves by its name. Sometimes it is not theirs at all. Liberals have no monopoly of it in practice, whatever they may pretend in principle. Those who endeavour to set class against class, on the ground of the inequality of their respective successes in the battle of life, are the worst enemies of Liberalism and Liberty. To have succeeded in that for which all are striving, namely in winning exemption from a life of constant hardship, and its degrading accompaniments, ignorance and coarseness, they pretend to account a positive demerit and disqualification. Failing to see that the chief glory of labour consists in its capacity to enable men to live without excessive labour, and to provide leisure for cultivation and enjoyment, they would inflict penalties for all success beyond a certain mean standard. "A man ought not to be allowed to be so rich." "The law should make him pay in taxes all that he has over and above a certain income." Such are the phrases in which our Apostles of Communism in disguise express themselves; as if the success of one involved the failure of another: not seeing that to lop off all above a certain height would be, not to raise the lower stratum,—for the poor are not poor through the rich being rich,—but to make feebleness, stupidity, ill-luck, or general incapacity, the universal monotonous rule, and to convert the nation into a community of peasants and artisans, without space for legitimate ambition or any ideal of life. It is thus that the old dogmatic spirit is ever re-asserting



itself under new forms. So soon as we make an advance in the direction of greater liberty of individual development, a corresponding movement is started to check it. The fanaticism bred by the Church, takes the shape of doctrinairism in industrial, and intolerance of individuality in social, life. The old orthodoxy, regarding all assertion of individuality as heresy, measured all men by a standard of religious doctrine ; this new one measures them by a standard of wealth, or rather of poverty. Thus the Church and the Commune are at one, for their spirit is the same ; and "Peter" and "Petroleum" betray a mutual affinity in operation as well as in name.

## IX.

Similarly all existing fanaticism may be shown to be an ecclesiastical product. Even those of our non-conforming sects which account themselves truest heirs of the Reformation, are lineally descended from Rome, and partake the family features. It has been shrewdly suggested that if, in their present temper, the Nonconformists obtain influence in the Universities, any formal religious tests will be superfluous ; for liberal though they affect to be in their politics, they make amends by being doubly narrow in their religion. It is not for those who have acquiesced in the exclusion of Nonconformists from the advantages of those institutions to taunt them on such score. The fact, however, remains. And so long as we suffer any of our national institutions to be conducted on principles so much at variance with the principles of Liberalism and the Reformation, as our Universities have been and still are, we cannot boast of our respect either for real education, for truth, or for liberty. In Germany, the Universities, freed from the trammels of dogma, are the homes and producers

of the learning and science of the nation. A glance at the roll of our great names reveals an almost total divorce between the Universities and the genius of the living generation. For a man of real science and learning, even to retain his connection with them, it is needful that he, in part, either suppress his convictions, or modify his utterances in deference to their traditions. The vast bulk of the endowments, the honours, the emoluments, the prizes, in our colleges are but means to enable dead bigots to afflict the generations that come after them with the perpetual reiteration of their own antiquated tenets and obsolete arguments, and by no means to enable men to follow the true, and utter their own convictions. It was stated in evidence before the Lords' Committee on University Tests, that it is considered necessary by the University Authorities that parents should feel assured that their sons will find nothing in the University System to interfere with the religious beliefs they bring from home. It is in utter contradiction to all the principles both of Liberalism and the Reformation thus to suffer the understanding of our youth to be emasculated, their morality to be depraved, and the whole future of the nation to be held in leading-strings by the stagnant or the dead.

#### X.

From the Universities let us glance to the next scene in the career of those of their students who proceed to take Orders in the Established Church. Constituted as the Establishment now is, there can scarcely be, for one thoroughly imbued with the true spirit of Liberalism and the Reformation, a sadder spectacle than that of an Ordination Service. It is not that the particular doctrines, which the high-spirited and highly cultivated youth have there assembled to pledge

themselves to teach, are false and pernicious in themselves. Even if they be so, this is not the worst characteristic of the scene. It is because these youths are pledging themselves to maintain those doctrines whether they be true or not. It is because they are bartering, as for a mess of pottage, their soul's birth-right; quenching the spirit of truthfulness within them; binding themselves not to enquire further, lest they come to see differently; binding themselves to teach one thing, even when that thing shall have ceased to be true for them; even to representing the character and dealings of the Almighty as they no longer believe them to have been; binding themselves to treat freedom of thought as licentiousness, freedom of expression as blasphemy. To be true to their profession and pledge there recorded, they must thenceforth treat the Universe as a sealed book; for, were they to explore it, they might, perchance, encounter facts which refuse to square with their doctrines, the doctrines to which they have vowed a life-long adherence, no matter how much in conflict with the positive testimony of the rocks beneath, of the skies above, or of the mind and soul within them. Call such self-immolation what they will, it is essentially irreligious in character. Religion has reference to God, and it is not in God that they have undertaken to place their trust, not in his "invisible things made visible" in his works, and palpable to the developed consciousness and conscience of man, as an index to the divine nature; but in certain utterances, which may or may not have been misreported or misinterpreted, of men who may or may not have been mistaken or misinformed, utterances handed down through conflicts of angry, unscrupulous partisans, through changes of language and associations, through a hundred troubled, distorting media; and these utterances are to be, for time and for eternity, their sole criterion of truth, and sole guide of life!



Far different would be the moral aspect of the spectacle, were each of these youths come thither to devote himself, in the spirit of highest chivalry, to go forth, no slave of a hierarchy, or bondsman of a creed, but a knight-errant of light and liberty, in pursuit of the Holy Grail of Truth, heedless whither it might draw him ; acknowledging no other allegiance, uttering no other watchword, but in perfect confidence in his instinctive perception of the harmony of the physical, moral, and spiritual universe, the divinest of all bases of consciousness, fearing not to face even the howling wilderness of absolute negation : and, thus equipped with truest faith, seek to lead his fellows on to those higher ranges of the intellect and the moral sense, which are attainable only by earnest and true spirits : seek too to rekindle the flames of real patriotism, which consists in that sincere and hearty comradeship which our present fatal sectarianism, like an all-devouring acid, seems to have eaten out of our national life.

## XI.

It is a favourite way of defending certain of our institutions, to say that, although it may be true that were we suddenly placed on a desert island, and forced to construct our system anew from the beginning, we should have many things different from what they are, yet that, as our present institutions have grown up with us as a part of ourselves, and in accordance with our circumstances, it is better to keep them, and patch and mend them as may be found necessary, than to undergo the wrench and discomfort of a total change, more particularly when we know the limits of the disadvantages of the old, and are not certain of the advantages of the new.

No doubt there are some of our institutions which it may be better thus to put up with, rather than

start on a quest of doubtful issue, to realise an ideal of which we have no experience. But it does not follow that all are of that character, or that we have nothing that is not defensible for better reasons, or capable of being, by practical reforms, adapted perfectly to all our needs.

Let us suppose ourselves newly arrived, in considerable numbers, a free community, in some new territory, in possession of a fair amount of intelligence, but compelled to construct our social and political system without reference to traditions. After making certain provisions in the interests of security and order, there can be no doubt that one of our first cares would be to provide for the education of the young, and the general diffusion of useful knowledge and sound principles of conduct among all classes. To the first of these ends we should create elementary common schools upon the broadest possible basis throughout the whole settlement, with trustworthy supervisors to ensure their efficiency. Proceeding upon Liberal principles, and having therefore no ulterior purpose, no traditional interests, no particular form of society or government, or any end whatever, to serve apart from its present or prospective utility, the main object of the education given would be to develop the faculties and judgments of the scholars. The teachers would of course be chosen for their special capacity, and as their influence over the rising generation would necessarily be great, the parents and the legislature would watch most jealously over their exercise of it. The bulk of the people would, of course, be engaged in industrial pursuits, and have but little time to devote to their own mental improvement. The second and remaining division of our educational system, therefore, would deal more especially with the adult population. In order to develop and gratify the higher instincts of our nature, of which the instinct of preservation,

whether of self or of the species, forms only the basis, we should encourage qualified persons to study for our benefit, and to set before us, from time to time, the results of their studies, in history, science, philosophy, literature, art, and religion ; and, probably, we should appoint certain periodical occasions, when the whole population might rest from their physical labours, and enjoy the mental recreation to be derived from listening to intelligent and cultivated expositors in these various departments of knowledge. Indeed, I should not be surprised to find certain whole days, at convenient intervals, set apart for such admirable purpose ; and on the discussion arising as to what those intervals should be, to find that portion of the teaching class which more particularly had devoted itself to the study of meteorology and astronomy, suggesting that the period of the moon's quarters would make the most convenient division of time, and recommending that every seventh day be made the day of general rest and recreation : in short, that something very like the Sabbath should be instituted. We can even understand the people becoming greatly attached to such an institution, and guarding it from infringement by severe penalties, simply, of course, because of its human value. And we can imagine with what zest the labourers in the various intellectual departments would work during the week to be able to give of their best when the holiday came round ; feeling that, on their earnestness and genuineness the higher life and happiness of their fellow-countrymen in great measure depended. We can imagine, too, that the very buildings in which the people and their instructors met for such purpose, would become the objects of affection, and be constructed and decorated in the most beautiful style that could be devised.

We can scarcely imagine, however, that these various educational and recreational departments would become jealous of each other ; still less can we imagine any one of them claiming such superiority over the others as to seek to oust them altogether from their share in the appointed ministrations, and obtain a monopoly of the day to themselves. Neither can we imagine that they would be suffered by the community to prevail in such a demand were they so unreasonable and arrogant as to make it. It would be among the duties of the National Education overseers,—who might fairly, in token of their function, be distinguished by the title of Bishops, and would doubtless comprise in their number the Mills, Huxleys, and Tyndals of the community,—to see that provision was made for the due satisfaction of every side of man's mental nature, and that neither secular nor spiritual interests should usurp the place of the other. It would also be among the duties of those Bishops, as education controllers, to take care that none but those who had first approved themselves qualified by natural gifts and by culture, should fill the office of teacher, under the recognition and remuneration of the State : that their teaching did not degenerate into trite common-place or dogmatic assertion ; but that the same Liberal principle that prohibits all pretension to be wise beyond that which is written in the book of Nature, and can be plainly read there, should pervade alike both higher and lower departments of education. Not that opinion and hypothesis should not be freely stated and canvassed, but that while all have a hearing, none be suffered to assume an authority beyond the fair warrant of evidence and reason : so that there would be no pretext for forming rival systems without the general one in order to propound divergent doctrines.

XII.

I can imagine, as the picture of such an ideal constitution grows and spreads before our minds, longings being excited for the realisation of such a happy condition of things among ourselves to replace our own distracted state. I can imagine, as we study the details of such a system in order to compare it with our own, and take account of the day we have set apart, each seventh day, for physical, mental, and spiritual renovation; of our army of preachers so numerous and admirably organised as to have its ramifications alike in populous city and remote hamlet; of its hierarchy of overseers, ennobled as in recognition of the loftiness of their functions; of the vast revenues set apart for the higher education of the whole people; and the vast multitude of edifices noble and commodious devoted to their uses; I can imagine, as we detect the many points of coincidence between the ideal system I have attempted to describe, and the real one which we already possess, the conviction growing strong within us that we already have in our possession not only such an ideal system, but one far transcending in the perfection of its organisation, the immensity of its appliances, the number and quality of its agents, all that the most fertile imagination could have devised without centuries of experience: that we have already in possession and operation a system of abundant capacity to lift the dead weight of our most debased classes out of the depths into which they have sunk, and sustain the most elevated at their utmost height. And the conviction would be a true one. For we, in very deed, have in our possession an instrument, which like an organ, magnificent in quality and unlimited in capacity, but impaired with misuse, requires only to be tuned up to the concert-pitch of our high needs and aspirations, to produce in abundance the full rich harmony of a perfect civilisation.



It is by means of the Nationalisation of our Church Establishment that I propose to complete the Reformation, and secure the final triumph of Liberalism. To do this but one thing is needful. We have but to purge it of its dogmatism to make it all that we have been so long seeking for; all that the most developed consciousness of our multiform deficiencies can require, to minister to our educational needs high or low. We have but to drive those thieves of the Intellect and the Moral Sense, Creeds, and Articles and Tests, out of the Temple of our Humanity, and replace them by the simple Spirit of Truthfulness. In driving out these, we shall drive out also from our midst the malignant spirit of fanaticism which is ever the same whatever the cause in which it is evoked; whatever the means by which it works; whether it be to wage a religious war, or to crush a soul's freedom over its whole career from the cradle to the grave.

Disestablish the Church, and we have what? A sect, a discord, the more. Perhaps three or four sects the more. In any case a huge and wealthy sect; for it could not be turned adrift bare, or without much wealth, corporately, of its own: it would have, too, greater claim on the wealth of its members, and so be the richer in their zeal. It would have power and prestige to arrogate superiority over all other sects; and to develop, unmitigated by the tempering influences of the State, into full activity of fanaticism, all the fierce bigotries that even now are glowing within its volcanic breast. Let us never forget the utterance wherewith the late Charles Buller pleaded against the separation of the Church from the State: "For heaven's sake, don't meddle with the Church! It is the only thing that stands between us and religion!" Even now, while still connected with the State, such is the power of dogmatism to generate and foster bigotry that the Church fails to "stand between us

and religion," or fanaticism. Numbers of its clergy have taken the bit between their teeth, and are boring ahead in all directions at once. Those who once thought that they found in the State-religion a harmless non-explosive compound, find it no such compound now. Disestablished, and left to propagate unrestrained the spirit of dogmatism and fanaticism, it will be impossible to over-estimate the injury it will do to the State. The State dares not risk such a danger to itself. It dares not set up a vast *imperium in imperio*, endowed with both will and power to withstand all progress in the direction of Liberalism and Civilisation. It dares not renew its immoral contract to recognise and protect the endowment of dogma, when once its eyes are open to the nature of that contract.

### XIII.

There is but one condition upon which the State can set the Church free, and allow it to retain a particle of the property of the National Establishment: the condition that it abandons its dogmatic character, and in place of constituting itself a huge conspiracy against the intelligence and moral sense of the nation, becomes co-extensive with the nation. The retention by the Church of the national property on any other terms, would be a perpetuation of the robbery of the State by the Church.

But thus purged of these its defects and limitations, all pretext for its disestablishment would cease to exist, for it would then constitute, ready-made in our hands, and in full operation, precisely the organisation we require to crown and complete our new national system of elementary education. Already, by our creation of this system, we have recognized and acted on two principles: *First*, that no member of the State has a right to menace the

safety and comfort of the community, or to sacrifice his children, by allowing those children to grow up as barbarians : and *Second*, that the compulsory inculcation of dogma is immoral and pernicious. It needs but to extend the same principles to the Establishment. It is true the State cannot prevent people from being themselves dogmatic, and fanatical, and otherwise immoral. But this is no reason why the State should directly promote, by immoral legislation, a temper so injurious to the community. It has but to make its educational system of a piece throughout, by banishing dogma from the higher, as it has banished it from the lower branch, its latest and purest creation. Whether we keep the Church, or disestablish it, so long as we suffer it to rest on a dogmatic basis, all our efforts to educate our young on the principles of a rational, manly Liberalism, will be vain. I do not overlook all that its clergy have done for education. I grant them, individually, fullest credit for their earnest and self-denying labours in this behalf ; but it is not the less true that the system on which they have worked is, both in its method and in its purpose, a system for producing, not men, but slaves and cretins ; for it is a system that sets the understanding at nought, by blinding it to the meaning of Natural law, to the significance of facts, the value of evidence, and the very meaning even, and use of the faculty of truthfulness. It is a system of spiritual trades-unionism, regime at once of Sheffield and of Rome, making the capacity of the feeblest and stupidest the rule of all ; for the regime is the same that restricts the strength and genius of the workman to the standard of the least capable, limiting the number of bricks the builder shall carry in his hod at a time, or lay in a day, the number of types the printer shall set up, the number of hours each man shall work, the amount of wage he shall earn ; and



that restricts his aspirations and advance towards the universe of divine facts, by keeping him as a caged squirrel, revolving within a little circle of artificial beliefs and observances. The spirit is the same, and the regime is the same. The end also is one. For the spirit is that of cowardice and selfishness: the regime, that of tyrannical repression of the human faculties; the end, the advancement of a caste irrespective of the cost to mankind.

#### XIV.

Stifled as the faculty of reason ever has been by authority based upon dogma, it is no matter for wonder that the revolts against that authority should oftentimes fail to be governed by reason. Even the agitation lately commenced for the disestablishment of the Church indicates little appreciation of the principles of Liberalism and of Liberty. The agitators are divisible into two classes, of which one seeks but to reduce the Establishment to the level of other sects, and the other seeks to enable it to indulge its sacerdotal predilections to the heart's content of its most bigoted adherents; while neither seems to care for the moral character of our legislation, for the waste of the nation's resources, or how they are directed against their proper function of promoting civilisation.

And what hinders us from completing the Reformation by such Nationalisation of the church establishment as that which I am advocating? Is it that which people are pleased to call their Christianity—their “common Christianity”? Admirable audacity, to prate of a “common Christianity;” or even to adduce what they possess under such name, as a thing to be cherished and preserved at the cost of all that is noblest in Humanity! For my part, though I have been over a goodly proportion of the

earth's surface, I know not where in the world to look to find a Christianity fulfilling its proper function, (if such be its proper function,) of raising and sustaining the moral, spiritual, and intellectual life of a people by its hearty acceptance and wise application of the only means that can tend to such ends. And if such have as yet no existence anywhere, why may not Milton's prognostication turn out true, and "God, as His manner is, reveal Himself first to His Englishmen?"

What hinders? Is it the invincible attachment of the clergy or the laity to their dogmas? For the laity, it is but necessary to point to the vast numbers of men who abstain from the services, and reject the teaching of the Church altogether, and that other large proportion of men who attend them merely to gratify the women of their families. For the clergy, I need but specify the large and increasing number who, longing to be delivered from their bondage, are ever striving to infuse into the ancient forms, significations which are not altogether repulsive to their intelligence or their moral sense, and who yet feel that, jangle their fetters as they will, the music they make is still but the clanking of fetters.

What hinders? Is it a fear of being charged with "confiscation" and "sacrilege?" If names import anything, we have great names wherewith to confront these loud sounding terms. We have Milton, the soundness of whose orthodoxy no one is entitled to question, for has he not, in his *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained*, and *Hymn of the Nativity*, provided us with a framework of mythology for our theology more complex and perfect, even than that of the Bible itself? Well, Milton advocated the application of revenues "left," to use his own words, "perhaps anciently to superstitious, but meant undoubtedly to good and best uses, and therefore applicable by the present magistrate to such uses as the church, or

solid reason from whomsoever, shall convince him to think best ;” and enumerates among those legitimate uses for church property, the “erection in greater numbers all over the land of schools and libraries, so that all the land would be soon the better civilised.” \*

Milton, it is true, was a Nonconformist, but we find the most eminent of our Bishops, Bishop Butler, declaring that “every donation to the Christian Church is a human donation and no more, and therefore cannot give a divine right, but such right only as must be subject, in common with all other property, to the regulation of human laws. . . . The persons who gave lands to the Church had no right of perpetuity in them, and consequently could convey no such rights to the Church.” †

But authorities are not needed to prove to us that the religious revenues of a people not only may follow the religion of that people, but are applicable to their “good and best uses,” whatever the changed sentiment of the people may come to consider those uses to be. To regard them otherwise would be to let the dead, not bury the dead, but govern the living for evermore, a principle at once fatal to Christianity, to the Reformation, to Liberalism, to all advance and improvement whatever in the world.

Neither do we require names or authorities to convince us that the “confiscation,” and the “sacrilege,” if any, would not be on our part, but is on theirs already who have diverted the property of the Establishment from its “good and best uses,” to the use of an association for the preservation of sectarian dogmas and the observance of sectarian rituals. It is not the “Church” that would suffer injustice : It is the State that *is* robbed, under the present system, and that would be robbed in perpetuity by the

\* “The likeliest way to remove Hirelings out of the Church.”

† “Letter to a Lady.”

appropriation of its revenues to the purposes of a sect.

## XV.

It is not for man to live for ever in the nursery. As in the history of an individual, so in that of a people, there is a period when larger views must prevail and greater freedom of action be accorded ; when life will have many sides, and hold relations with a vast range of facts and interests, of which none can be left out of the account without detriment to all concerned. Formerly, it may be, men were able, or content, to recognise their relations with the infinite on but a single side of their nature. When a strongly marked line divided the object of their religious emotions from all other objects, when that alone was deemed divine, and all else constituted the profane or secular, there may have been excuse for their accordance of supremacy to the one class of emotions, and of inferior respect, or even contempt, to the other. But we have passed out of that stage, we know no such distinction in kind between the various classes of our emotions. They all are human, and therefore all divine. They all serve to connect us with the universe of which we are a portion, the whole of which universe must be equally divine for us, though we may rank some of its uses above others in reference to our own nature. Thus, if there is nothing that is specially sacred for us, it is because there is nothing that is really profane ; but all is sacred, from the least to the greatest. And this is the lesson that the Churches have yet to learn. Let us complete the Reformation by freeing our own Church from its ancient limitations, which are of the nursery. Let us release our teachers from the corner in which they have so long been cramped, and they will soon learn to take greater delight in exploring the many mansions which compose the whole glorious house of

the universe, and unfolding in turn to their hearers whatever they can best tell, whether of science, philosophy, religion, art, or morality, not necessarily neglecting those spiritual metaphysics to which they have in great measure hitherto been restricted, and the consequence of which restriction has been but to distort them and all else from their due proportion. In the Church thus reformed, all subjects that tend to edification will be fitting ones for the preacher. But whatever the subject, the method will have to be but one, always the scientific, never the dogmatic method. The appeal will be to the intellects, the hearts, and the consciences of the living, never to mere authority, living or dead. There will be no heresy, because no orthodoxy; or rather, the question of heresy as against orthodoxy will be a question of method, not of conclusions. From the pulpits of such a church no genuine student or thinker will be excluded, but will find welcome everywhere from congregations composed, not of the women only and the weaker brethren, but of men, men with brains and culture! Who knows what edifices of knowledge may be reared, what reaches of spiritual perception may be attained, upon a basis from which all the rubbish of ages has been cleared away, and where all that is useful and true in the past is built into the foundations of the future! Who can tell how nearly we may attain to the perfections of the blessed when, no longer straitened in heart and mind and spirit by a narrow sectarianism, but with the scientific and the *verifiable* everywhere substituted for the dogmatic and the incomprehensible, the veil which has so long shrouded the universe as with a thick mist shall be altogether withdrawn, when the All is revealed without stint to our gaze in such degree as each is able to bear, and Theology no longer serves but to paint and darken the windows through which man gazes out into the infinite!

Thus reformed, amended, and enlarged, the estab-



lished Churches of Great Britain will be no exclusive corporations, watched with jealous eyes of less favoured sects. Nonconformity will disappear, for there will be nothing to nonconform to: Fanaticism, for there will be no Dogma; Intolerance and Bigotry, for there will be no Infallibility. Comprehensive, as all that claims to be national and human ought to be, no conditions of membership will be imposed to entitle any to a share of its benefits: but every variety of opinion will find expression and a home precisely in the degree to which it may commend itself to the general intelligence.

The bitterness of sectarian animosity thus extinguished, and no place found for dogmatic assertion or theological hatred, it will seem as if the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and a new heaven and new earth had come, in which there was no more sea of troubles, or ought to set men against each other and keep them from uniting in aid of their common welfare. Lit by the clear light of the cultivated intellect, and watered by the pure river of the developed moral sense, the State will be free to grow into a veritable City of God, where there shall be no more curse of poverty or crime, no night of intolerant stupidity, but all shall know that which is good for all, from the least to the greatest.