

THE  
**POLITICS**  
OF  
**NONCONFORMITY**

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THE  
**POLITICS OF NONCONFORMITY.**

A Lecture,

BY

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## LECTURE.

THREE years ago, when we were just emerging from the excitement of that great contest which determined the fate of the ecclesiastical Establishment in Ireland, there were many Nonconformists who, in the enthusiasm of their delight, supposed that the protracted struggle for perfect religious equality in this empire was near its final triumph. There was a presumptuous hope that the principles of justice which the Liberal party was pledged to apply to the Established Church in Ireland, would before very long determine its policy in relation to the Established Churches of England and Scotland. Even those of us who were less sanguine, believed that we might rely on Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Gladstone's Government not to augment the disadvantages under which English Nonconformists were already suffering, and not to create new difficulties to impede the gradual development of the principle of religious liberty. At the close of the last general election, Mr. Gladstone was regarded by Nonconformists with passionate admiration, and with unmeasured confidence. Speaking for myself, I must declare that my admiration for the genius of the leader of the Liberal party is undiminished, and that my confidence in his integrity is unshaken. (Hear, hear,)

But the relations of the Nonconformists to Mr. Gladstone's Government have undergone a great and startling change. Confidence has given place to distrust, and enthusiasm to resentment. The Ministry in which we so perfectly confided has already, in the judgment of many of us, inflicted upon Nonconformity a great wrong. Its future policy is regarded with apprehension. During the last few months, announcement after announcement has ap-

peared in the columns of the newspapers of the formation of Nonconformist committees in one great town after another, from Newcastle to Plymouth, to resist what are alleged to be the offences already committed by Mr. Gladstone's Government against the principles of religious equality, and to avert offences graver still which seem likely to be committed before many months are over. Conferences are being called together in the North and in the South, in the East and in the West, to deliberate on the policy which Nonconformists should follow, and to concentrate and organise their power for a conflict which seems inevitable. There is universal alarm; and the alarm is greatest in those parts of the country where three years ago the confidence in Mr. Gladstone's Government was most hearty. The zeal, the energy, and the self-sacrifice of the Nonconformists contributed very much to the winning of the magnificent triumph of the Liberal party at the last election—(cheers);—and now those who are watching most carefully the movement of the public mind are predicting that the Liberal party is in danger of being broken to pieces by Nonconformist discontent.

The causes of this singular change are not far to seek. It appears that justice was to be done in Ireland because injustice had made the government of Ireland by peaceful and constitutional means impossible. But justice is still to be delayed in England, because those who suffer wrong in this country are men capable of an almost inexhaustible endurance; and it is their settled habit and their immovable purpose to secure the redress of their grievances, not by disturbing the public peace, but by endeavouring to convince the judgment and awaken the conscience of the nation. (Cheers.) To this work the Nonconformists in every part of the kingdom are addressing themselves; and I heartily congratulate the Nonconformists of this great city, which has borne so illustrious a part in the political history of the empire, that they are taking their place in the van of the movement. The old energy which wrestled successfully 30 years ago with the most powerful and compact of all the political interests of this country—the courage which no difficulties could daunt—the high spirit which no temporary disappointments could subdue—the resolute persistency, unexhausted by the tremendous and protracted strain

upon your resources—the unfaltering faith in the certain victory of the principles which it was then your distinction to defend—all the elements of intellectual and moral force, which secured for you the triumph of which this hall is the visible and permanent memorial—will, I trust, be revealed once more in the struggle to which you are now committed, and will achieve a not less glorious success.

If I understand the present temper and disposition of Nonconformists, they are rapidly coming to the determination not to be satisfied with the defence and illustration of their principles in public lectures and public meetings, and by all those means through which the opinion of the country is gradually influenced; but to adopt a definite line of political action. We have hitherto been content to accept a subordinate place in the Liberal party. We have very seldom taken a separate and independent position at elections. Our political leaders have never been asked to pledge themselves to our abstract principles. We have, it is true, won a long succession of victories, and these victories have resulted partly from the spirit of justice with which we think that Nonconformity has gradually inspired large masses of the English people. But the principles for which we are contending have never been accepted by any organised political party. Catholic emancipation was not a frank homage to the principles of religious equality; it was a political necessity. The abolition of church rates was carried by the Liberal party, not because the Liberal party was convinced of the injustice of compelling Nonconformists to contribute to the maintenance of a form of worship which they disapproved, but because church-rate contests were an intolerable scandal, and because the Liberal leaders, like the unjust judge in the Gospels, were wearied out by our incessant appeals for relief. (Laughter and cheers.) The abolition of the Irish Church was determined upon because Irish discontent had become formidable to the empire. Even the abolition of University Tests was not achieved by Nonconformist agitation; it was not the expression of a cordial acquiescence in the doctrine that the Episcopal Church has no right to the exclusive enjoyment of national wealth and national distinctions; it was largely the result of a conviction which had been growing for years in the minds of Churchmen themselves, that the tests were injurious to public morality.

It is not now proposed that Nonconformist electors in every constituency in the country should insist on the acceptance of their abstract principles by every candidate for their suffrages. No such dictatorial spirit, so far as I know, has ever yet been manifested even by those whose indignation at the recent policy of the Government is most vehement. We do not claim to represent the majority of the Liberal party throughout the kingdom. Most of us, I think, are prepared to say that we intend to follow the example of our ecclesiastical ancestors, who, when suffering oppression from which we are happily free, were always prepared in critical moments of our national history to suppress their own complaints, to be silent about their own wrongs, and to give their hearty support to the political leaders whose power appeared to be necessary to avert the immediate perils of the State. But in many constituencies we constitute such an overwhelming majority of the Liberal electors, that we think we have a right to claim that Liberal candidates shall accept our principles in all their breadth, and be prepared to carry them to their ultimate issue as the condition of our support. (Cheers.) In other constituencies we are so necessary to the Liberal party, that we think we have a right to demand that Liberal candidates shall at least pledge themselves to resist any new violations of those principles of religious equality which we regard as a sacred trust, and which we are under the most solemn obligations to defend. For the sake of the nation, to turn aside any great danger which menaced national safety, to secure the success of any great measure urgently necessary to the national well-being, we should be prepared to waive our claims; but we are not prepared to waive them for the sake of the Liberal party. We are tolcl of what the Liberal party has done for us in past times; we have done as much for the Liberal party as the Liberal party has done for us. (Cheers.) If there is any unsettled balance in this old account, the balance is not against the Nonconformists. (Laughter and cheers.)

In determining to carry the controversy out of the region of abstract discussion into the region of practical politics, we must be willing to incur the charge of being political Dissenters. There are many excellent people, both among Churchmen and Nonconformists, who seem to think it a crime for religious men to interfere in



political struggles. How it should be possible for Nonconformists to regard the neglect of political duty as a virtue, I have very great difficulty in understanding; but for Churchmen to tell us that our religious faith should lead us to abstain from political life is, if possible, more unreasonable still; for let me ask those Churchmen who are accustomed to charge us with the offence of being political Dissenters—What would happen if religious men ceased to be political? Your bishops, and your deans, and your canons are appointed by the Prime Minister—do you think it desirable that such appointments should be made by men who have no religious faith, and are indifferent to the religious life of the nation? How are you to have a Prime Minister with the religious discernment and the religious earnestness necessary for the wise administration of such patronage as this, if religious men are not to touch politics? The House of Commons is the supreme legislative court of the Episcopal Church. The Prayer Book is a mere schedule to an act of Parliament. If you want to make a change in the order in which the Holy Scriptures are to be read in your public services, the change cannot be made unless Parliament consents. I have an act at home, passed only last session, determining what chapters of the Bible may be read in future in the public services of your churches. There is hardly a session in which some bill is not introduced, either into the Lords or the Commons, affecting your ecclesiastical organisation. I hear of a bill which is to provide for the establishment of parochial councils, and of a bill which is to enable Nonconformist ministers to preach in your churches, and to give the Bishop of Manchester liberty, if he wishes to do it, to ask my friend Mr. M'Laren to preach in the Cathedral. (Loud cheers and laughter.) Unless you believe that an assembly of atheists and of profligates will be likely to give the Church better laws than an assembly of religious men, and that a statesman who regards the Christian faith as an obsolete superstition will select better bishops than a devout and earnest Christian, you ought to be eager to fill the benches of the House of Commons with the best representatives you can find of the religious life of the country. But if religious men should transact the political business of the nation in the House of Commons, why should religious men abstain from the political action in the country by which the members of that House are returned?

If you think that Dissenters, when they are religious men, ought to leave politics alone, how is it that you do not try to teach this singular faith to the members of your own Church? (Hear.) Is our religion so much less secular and so much more spiritual than yours—(laughter),—that while you are astonished that a devout Nonconformist should engage in political contests, a Churchman may be political without inconsistency? There is a saying which you and we regard with equal reverence, about the man who wants to take a mote out of the eye of his brother, when there is a beam in his own eye. I never heard that there was any difficulty in inducing Churchmen to become Lords of the Admiralty, Home Secretaries, Chancellors of the Exchequer, or Prime Ministers; I never heard that it was hard to persuade country rectors to vote for the Conservative candidates for the county—(laughter);—and what is most surprising, I have never seen leading articles in Church newspapers in which Churchmen were condemned for accepting high political office, or in which they were told that they ought never to be seen at the hustings or at a polling booth. The *Standard* and the *Record* are filled with great horror when Nonconformists meddle with politics; but they appear to believe that for a Churchman to be political is no crime at all.

Why are Nonconformists to incur odium if they attempt to discharge their political duties? “Why is it insinuated that we, and we alone, cease to be religious when we presume to touch the affairs of the country? We, too, are affected in our personal rights, in our property, and in all the interests which human law can touch, by the acts of the Imperial Legislature and by the general policy of the Government. The great traditions of England, and its greater hopes, are ours as well as yours. We too are Englishmen, and our religious faith does not disqualify us for rendering service to the State. (Cheers.) If the charge that we are political Dissenters means anything, it means that all political power in this country should be vested in the hands of Churchmen; that we should receive from them the laws by which we are to be governed, and that to Churchmen should be entrusted the administration of those laws; that we should submit without complaint to whatever disabilities may be the penalty of Nonconformity;

that in separating ourselves from the communion of the National Church we should renounce all claim to the rights of citizenship, and live as aliens in the country which gave us birth. We refuse to submit to this insulting degradation. (Cheers.) We decline to be excluded from the political life of the State.

Singularly enough, the very men who are most accustomed to speak about the difference between religious and political Dissenters, and who profess the greatest respect for those Nonconformists—they are becoming fewer every day—who never interfere with political affairs, are also accustomed to charge political Dissenters with the crime of wishing to destroy the religious element of our national life. They are constantly reiterating the statement that it is our design to secularise politics, and to banish the thought of God and all reverence for His authority from political affairs. But I should have supposed that this charge might be more justly brought against the “religious” Dissenters. The way to make politics irreligious is for religious men to cease to be politicians. If I wanted to withdraw legislation and the policy of the State from under the control of the law of Christ, I can imagine no method more likely to secure that object than to tell Christian men to leave the conduct of political business to those who have no reverence for Christ’s authority. If religious men have nothing to do with literature, literature will become irreligious; if religious men have nothing to do with commerce, commerce will become irreligious; and politics will become irreligious if religious men regard it as a duty to have nothing to do with politics. It is time that religious Churchmen and religious Dissenters understood each other better. We have no desire to exclude from political and national life the acknowledgment of God’s authority and the influence of the spirit of Christ. But it is our conviction—a conviction founded upon our conception of the genius of the Gospel of Christ, and of the laws which govern the spiritual life of man—that the political organisation of a country is the worst machinery that can be employed to provide for the maintenance of religious worship and the propagation of religious truth, and that any organic relation between the Christian Church and the secular government does more to secularise the Church than to Christianise the State. (Cheers.) We believe

that this conviction is confirmed by the History of Christendom. In the actual condition of religious thought and life in this country it seems to us flagrantly unjust for the Government to increase the power of the ministers of a particular Church by investing them with exceptional privileges and an artificial social position, and to use the national resources for the maintenance of forms of religious teaching and worship which are regarded with hostility by a large proportion of the people. It offends an instinct which seems to us to spring from the love and honour with which we regard the Lord Jesus Christ, that national wealth, of which irreligious men are part proprietors, should be appropriated by public law to the support of the Christian Church.

We have long held these convictions; we have endeavoured to explain them to our fellow-countrymen. At the present moment there are reasons of exceptional gravity for giving them the clearest and strongest expression, and for endeavouring to apply them in practical politics. Hitherto our chief solicitude has been to make the principles themselves intelligible to the public mind. We know too well how alien they are from the traditional conviction, and from the intelligent and cherished faith of large numbers of the English people, to suppose that it is possible as yet to secure their full recognition in our national policy. We were in no haste to precipitate the severe political conflict through which alone our principles can secure their ultimate triumph. We felt that time was on our side; that the deepening religious earnestness of the Established Church was favourable to us, and the magnificent development within its limits of voluntary religious work and of a noble generosity; that the stream of European politics was running fast in our direction; that the growing sense of justice in the mind of the country gave us a fair promise that whatever force there might be in the great argument for the separation of the Church from the State would gradually come to exercise its legitimate influence on the general opinion of the nation. We were content to co-operate with that political party with whose history and principles all our political instincts and convictions bring us into most intimate sympathy, and were grateful as one incidental and subordinate grievance after another from which we suffered was removed, although the great grievance—the root and support

and justification of all the rest remained untouched. We had a just appreciation of the grandeur of the principle for which we were contending, and were willing to wait till it commanded the judgment of an effective majority of the people. To resort to unnatural political alliances with political opponents in order to provoke our friends to greater zeal—to take advantage of critical exigencies either in the history of the nation or in the history of political parties, in order to force our claims—was foreign to our spirit. (Cheers.) Nor do we intend to pursue any such policy now. (Hear.)

And yet the time has come for taking a new line. So long as we saw that the whole course of public events was moving, however slowly, towards the end that we desire, we could be satisfied with the argumentative vindication of our principles, and could hold ourselves bound by the political ties which united us with the Liberal party. But as soon as that very party—or at least its leaders in the House of Commons—entered upon a policy directly adverse to our ultimate object, those ties were loosened. As they pursued that policy, our relations to the Liberal leaders became less and less friendly. At the present moment it seems probable that we shall be driven into open hostility, and shall be compelled to form a separate and independent party in the State. (Loud and continued cheering.)

Let me remind you of what has taken place during the last few months. At the close of the session of 1869 a measure was carried through Parliament which promised to dissolve the power which the Established Church has exerted over the ancient grammar schools of the country, and to rescue educational endowments, which belong to the nation, from ecclesiastical control. Some of these endowments the act recognised as specially intended for the maintenance of the characteristic teaching of the Established Church. In the rest, the Established Church was declared to have no special interest; and it was provided that in the schemes which were to be drawn up for the future administration of these national endowments, “the religious opinions of any person, or his attendance or non-attendance at any particular form of religious worship, shall not in any way affect his qualification for being one of the governing body of such endowment.” With such a clause

in the Act, we should have supposed that the Government would have taken care that at least one of the Commissioners appointed to draw up the new schemes should be a Nonconformist; but the three Commissioners were all Churchmen. ("Shame.") Nor was this an accidental oversight. I believe that it is no secret that the attention of Mr. Forster was drawn to this defect in the constitution of the commission, and he declined to remedy it. This, however, would have been of little consequence had the Commissioners been ruled by the spirit of the Act which they had to administer, or if they had even taken the trouble to master the letter of the Act and to conform to it. (Hear.) But in every one of the six schemes which, after lying before Parliament for 40 days, have become law, they have provided that a clergyman should be an *ex-officio* member of the governing body. In 30 out of the 34 schemes which they have issued, but which have not yet become law, a clergyman is constituted an *ex-officio* member of the governing body. We do not object to making rectors, vicars, curates, archdeacons, or bishops governors of grammar schools; but we object very strongly to making the clergyman of the parish or the archdeacon of the district, or the bishop of the diocese an *ex-officio* governor. The anxiety of the Commissioners to perpetuate the subordination of the grammar schools to the Established Church has led them to exceed the powers granted them by the Act (Hear, hear.)

A few weeks ago, the Central Nonconformist Committee in Birmingham received an official letter from the secretary of the commission containing the information that they had discovered that the appointment of clerical *ex-officio* governors was illegal, and that they would be withdrawn from all schemes which had not received the sanction of Parliament. (Laughter and cheers.) Could any more injurious illustration be given of the spirit by which the Commission has been guided? (Hear, hear.) Their zeal for clerical governors has betrayed them into a positive violation of the Act under which they were appointed—(hear, hear), and although we might have remonstrated in vain, they have been obliged to retreat under the constraint of a legal opinion. But this offence, it may be said, cannot be charged against her Majesty's Government; the Commissioners may have been indiscreetly zealous

for the Church, but the Ministry cannot be held responsible. That Mr. Gladstone is not responsible I very cheerfully acknowledge; but every one of these schemes required the sanction of the Educational Department before it could be laid upon the table of the House of Commons, and they all bear the name of the Minister whom we have learned to regard with distrust—(loud cheers)—the Right. Hon. Wm. Edward Forster. (Renewed cheering.)

Mr. Forster's attention was called to this objectionable feature in the new schemes by Mr. Edward Miall—who, on August 7th inquired (1) "whether, seeing that every scheme of the Endowed Schools Commission for applying Educational Endowments which has been laid upon the table of the House provides that the incumbent of a parish shall be an *ex-officio* governor of the school to which the scheme relates, it is an understood rule with the Commission to make a similar provision a feature of all future schemes; (2) whether such *ex-officio* appointments of the Incumbents of parishes do not contravene the spirit of the Endowed Schools Act, and particularly clause 17, section 1, of that Act; and (3) whether, considering that these schemes have been laid upon the table at a period of the session when, owing to the pressure of other business, it is impossible to find a suitable time for an adequate discussion of them, they cannot be held over or withdrawn till next session, when the attention of the House may be drawn to the subject."—Mr. W. E. Forster said "it was not a rule with the Commissioners that the Incumbent of a Parish should be *ex-officio* a Governor of an Endowed School. In *several* instances, *though not in all*, it had occurred that an Incumbent had formed part of the governing body, because it *appeared desirable and in accordance with the wish of the community*; but there was no rule laid down and the Commissioners did not think they had contravened the spirit or letter of the Act by making such appointments. It would not be advisable to withdraw schemes which had been laid on the table, with a view to finding more time afterwards for the discussion of them, especially as there was no notice of opposition to them; and in the case of one scheme, in which the constituents of the hon. member and of himself were interested, he could imagine no greater inconvenience than would result from the suspension or withdrawal of it, particularly as it was one generally approved by all parties."

Mr. Forster expressed no regret that the Commissioners had been so constructing the schemes as to give the Church of England a fresh hold on the grammar school endowments; he did not imply that the pressure of his official duties had prevented him from subjecting the schemes to careful examination; he seemed to be perfectly satisfied with what the Commissioners had done. If the sanction of the department was given to these schemes without due consideration, and if Mr. Forster does not sympathise with the desire of the Commissioners to create a formal link between the grammar schools and the Established Church, he will have the opportunity next session to give the best possible proof that he regrets his oversight. Let him move the Commissioners to amend the six schemes which have received the sanction of Parliament, by cancelling the *ex-officio* clerical governors. Nor is this the only way in which he can show that he has been misunderstood. In some of the schemes which have not yet become law, it is provided that representative governors should be appointed by corporations, which it is certain will elect members of the Church of England. Let him refuse to sanction the scheme for Tideswell, in Derbyshire, under which the Dean and Chapter of Lichfield have the power of putting a representative on the governing body. Let him decline to lay on the table of the House the scheme for the Grammar School at Sherborne, under which two of the governors are to be elected by the governors of King's School in that town, which is a Church of England foundation. Let him apply the same principle to other schemes which have the same sectarian taint. Let him further ask how it happens that, among the co-optative governors named by the Commissioners there is such an enormous preponderance of Churchmen, that we have learned by correspondence with gentlemen in the various localities where the schools are situated, that out of 74 co-optative governors 65 are Churchmen and 9 are Nonconformists. ("Shame," and hisses.) If, in such facts as these, we discover evidence that, whether by intention or by accident, the three Commissioners are likely, if not altogether to exclude Nonconformists from the administration of the grammar school trusts, yet to reduce them to an insignificant and powerless minority, it may, perhaps, occur to him that it would be well to put some one on the Commission in whom Nonconfor-



mists are likely to have confidence. But if the Ministry show no signs of their intention to control the policy of the Commissioners—if, contrary to the spirit of the Endowed Schools Act, the great mass of the educational endowments of the nation are to be placed under the control of the Established Church—if Nonconformists are to be excluded in the future as they have been excluded in the past from grammar school trusts—and this by the consent and concurrence of a Liberal ministry—then, I think, it is time for us to say that we will not lift a finger, or raise a voice, or give a vote, at the next election, merely for the sake of keeping the Liberal party in power. (Cheers.)

I now come to the policy of the Government in relation to a question which has created extraordinary excitement in nearly every district of the country where School Boards have been appointed under the recent Elementary Education Act. I refer to the payment out of the rates of the fees of indigent children attending denominational schools. You are aware that the Act permits School Boards to provide for the free education of the children of very poor parents by any one of three methods, or if they please they can adopt all three. With the consent of the Educational Department they can erect a school in a poor district where no fees shall be charged; or they can remit, in individual cases, the fees which are usually paid by children attending a board school, or they can pay, in individual cases, the fees for children attending denominational schools under the control of private managers. Should they determine not to erect a free school, they can, if they please, pass bye-laws providing either for the remission of fees in their own schools or for the payment of fees in denominational schools, or for both. Or if they do not think it expedient to pass bye-laws determining what children shall have a claim to the relief, they can take the course adopted by the London School Board and resolve to deal with individual cases as they arise, either under clause xvii., which enables them to remit fees at their discretion, or under clause xxv., which enables them to pay fees at their discretion, or under both.

Several School Boards—we know of thirteen, there may be more—passed bye-laws providing that very poor children might have free education in the Board schools, but not providing for the

payment of the fees of such children attending denominational schools. The department allowed these bye-laws, for they were clearly covered by the Act; but a letter was addressed to the Boards informing them that:—

“In the opinion of my Lords, it would not be just to deprive a parent of the right to choose the particular public elementary school to which he will send his child, because, while he is compelled by these bye-laws to send his child to school, he is unable from poverty to pay his school fee; but my Lords cannot doubt that the School Board will see the justice of making use of the power they possess under section 25 in favour of each parent.”

The position which the Government has taken is very distinct and intelligible. They declare that whenever a School Board compels a child who is receiving no education to go to school to be taught reading and writing and arithmetic, the rudiments of English grammar and the outlines of English history, the parent has a moral right to demand that the money of the ratepayers should be used for the support of a school in which, in addition to these things, the child shall receive certain doctrinal teaching. There are two powerful churches in this country—the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church—which desire to make the day school an agency for teaching not merely the elements of secular learning, but their characteristic religious creed. An excellent evangelical clergyman in Birmingham declared not very long ago that the Church of England schools are the bulwarks of the Church. In a recent monthly paper of the National Society, school managers were reminded that the efficiency of the secular instruction given in Church of England schools should be subordinated to the religious instruction; by which it is meant that there should be greater anxiety to teach children that they were regenerated in baptism than to teach them to read and to write. (Hear.) The same principle is maintained in the recent charge of the Bishop of London. In the Roman Catholic schools, provision is made for teaching transubstantiation, the infallibility of the Pope, the doctrine of purgatory, and the immaculate conception of the Virgin Mary. The Church of England schoolmaster, the Roman Catholic schoolmaster, is as much a religious teacher as the curate or the priest—(hear, hear); the school is as truly a religious insti-

tution as the church. The Education Department has declared that if the parent wishes it—or rather if, though the parent himself may not wish it, the Bible woman, the Scripture reader, the curate, or the priest persuades him to say that he wishes it—justice requires that when providing for the secular education of a child, the ratepayers should contribute out of the rates to the maintenance of these sectarian institutions. Mr. Forster was out of England when the department assumed this position, but he has made himself responsible for it; and those who maintain that it would be a violation of religious' liberty for a School Board to compel a child to be taught reading, writing, and arithmetic, and to refuse to send the child at the expense of the ratepayers to a school where it would also be taught the theology of the Church Catechism or the theology of the Council of Trent, appeal to Mr. Forster's authority.

In what the injustice would consist he has never yet explained. (Hear.) Nor do I see how it is possible for him to offer any explanation, without confessing that the Elementary Education Act is an utter failure. Catholic bishops may protest that the religious faith of a child will be imperilled if it receives secular instruction from a heretic; but for Mr. Forster to admit that allegation is impossible. One of the chief merits which he claimed for his bill was the perfect protection afforded by the conscience clause to the religious convictions of parents. (Cheers.) He declared that it was his intention to draw a clear and definite line between the religious and the secular instruction in public elementary schools, so that however much a parent might object to the religious teaching, he might, without any hesitation or scruple, permit his child to receive the secular teaching. He maintained indeed that the religious difficulty was largely theoretical; that school managers rarely had any trouble about it; but he said that in cases where the difficulty actually arose, it would be solved by the conscience clause. One great reason which he alleged for making that clause very stringent, was to render it possible to establish compulsory attendance. Mr. Forster, if he adheres to the position which he assumed when the bill was before Parliament, would maintain that the separation between the sectarian and the secular teaching is made so complete, that there ought to be nothing in the secular

teaching of a Church of England school to which a Nonconformist could legitimately object, and nothing in the secular teaching of a Wesleyan school to which a Roman Catholic could legitimately object.

My own conviction is that when a school is under private and denominational management, the mere calling of it a public elementary school will not produce such a measure of confidence in the absence of a sectarian bias from the secular teaching, as to render it easy for compulsion to be enforced. But in the Board schools of the great towns of England—schools under the management of men professing the most various religious creeds, and whose deliberations and acts are open to public criticism—I think it perfectly possible not only to keep the secular teaching free from sectarian bias, but to produce in the public mind a complete conviction that men of every faith may send their children to the schools without fear.

The question we have to ask Mr. Forster is a very simple one—Does he believe that his conscience clause is effective? Is he satisfied that it secures that the secular teaching of a public elementary school shall be free from sectarian bias? If he is not satisfied, let him make it more stringent. If he is satisfied, let him say distinctly that there is nothing in the secular teaching of a public elementary school to which parents can legitimately object on religious grounds, and that he declines to recognise the objections which are being made—not by the parents themselves, but by Roman Catholic prelates and Episcopalian clergymen—to compelling children to be sent to schools under the control of the rate-payers. But if there is nothing in the secular teaching of a Board school which can violate the religious convictions of parents, where is the injustice of compelling a child to receive that teaching, whatever the religious faith of its parents may be? Further, the secular teaching that will be given in a denominational school, ought, according to the intention of the Elementary Education Act, to be precisely the same as the secular teaching given in a Board school. There must be no sectarian bias in the one any more than in the other. What difference can it make to the religious interests of the child, in which school he receives this colourless secular instruction?

One answer which might be given to this question is very obvious. In the denominational school there will be, even in the secular teaching, a certain undefinable influence, favourable to the religious faith of the Church with which the school is connected. If so, then the denominational school is violating the conditions on which it receives the parliamentary grant—(cheers); for the grant is made with a very clear understanding that during the hours which are given to secular instruction there shall be nothing in the school to which any parent, no matter what his religious creed, can legitimately object. If, during the time for secular teaching, there is a sectarian bias in the denominational school, this is a reason, according to the principle of the Education Act, not for giving it additional assistance out of the rates, but for withdrawing the grant which it already receives from Parliament. (Cheers.)

But it may be further contended that, though there may be nothing in the secular teaching of a Board School to which any religious objection can be taken, there are many Roman Catholic parents who desire that their children should receive instruction on week-days as well as Sundays in Roman Catholic doctrine, and many Church of England parents who desire that on week-days as well as Sundays their children should be taught the Church Catechism. There is no injustice, it may be said, in compelling a child to receive secular instruction which has no religious colour in it. The injustice lies in refusing to enable the parent to secure the definite religious teaching which he prefers. This principle is such an astounding novelty, it involves such grave consequences, that I think some attempt should have been made by Mr. Forster and his friends to show the grounds on which it rests. We forbid no man to give religious instruction to his own children; if we did we should violate the principles of religious liberty. We forbid no man to pay other people to give it; if we did we should violate the principles of religious liberty. We forbid no man to receive it gratuitously from those who are willing to give it for nothing; if we did we should violate the principles of religious liberty. But we do not acknowledge the right of the parent to require the community to pay rates towards the support of schools, not under the control of the ratepayers, in order that the child may be taught a

sectarian faith. (Loud cheers.) No one denies the right, of a parent to provide for the religious instruction of his child; what we deny is the right of the parent to compel the State to provide for the religious instruction of the child. ("Hear, hear," and renewed cheers.) No one denies the right of a Church to provide for the religious instruction of the children of its adherents; what we deny is the right of the Church to demand the assistance of public money in order to enable it to make that provision.

It is said in reply, that the private subscriptions of the supporters of denominational schools provide the religious instruction for their children, and that the public money purchases only the secular teaching. If that be true, let the private subscriptions be used for the support of religious teachers, and let the rates be used for the support of schoolmasters who shall not be required to teach a sectarian faith. But everyone knows that if the churches had to provide the religious teaching without the aid which they ask for from public funds under cover of payment for secular education, they would find it necessary to make considerable additions to their subscription lists. Nor is it even true that there is any guarantee that the private subscriptions shall represent that portion of a schoolmaster's time which is consumed in giving denominational religious instruction. A few months ago a deputation of which I was a member pressed Mr. Forster to introduce a clause into the New Code providing that, in denominational schools, at least a sixth of the cost of maintenance should come from voluntary subscriptions. (Hear, hear.) He refused to do it; and it is perfectly possible for a denominational school to be carried on without receiving a penny from denominational sources. (Hear, hear.) The fallacy that the public money goes for the secular instruction and not for the religious is too flimsy for the Education Department to act upon it, by insisting that where there is sectarian instruction there shall be sectarian subscriptions. The public money goes for the support of the school, and the school is a religious institution. The fallacy is too absurd to require serious refutation. Professor Huxley—(cheers)—justly said that a man might as well say that brandy and water should go to his stomach and not to his head. (Laughter and cheers.)

I am perfectly aware that the principles for which I am con-

tending extend very far beyond the question whether fees should be paid out of the rates for children attending denominational schools. If the principles are sound, they should determine our policy in relation to the assistance which these schools receive from the annual parliamentary grant. When there were no other schools in the country, and when it seemed impossible to establish a national system, it may have been a necessity—I think it was—that if the State was to aid education, aid should be given to schools established by religious denominations. If large districts of the country were starving, and it was impossible to organise at once an adequate system of relief, I, for one, should be willing to make the clergy of any church and of every church the channels of administering national relief, although I might know that they would take advantage of their temporary employment in the public service to propagate among the poor, religious dogmas which I regarded with abhorrence. But I should ask that as soon as possible the bread given by the nation for the relief of hunger should be distributed by officers who would not make their merciful functions subordinate to the interests of rival churches. (Cheers.) The true policy for the Education Minister of a Liberal Government was gradually to dissociate the secular education of the people, for which alone he has again and again declared that the State is responsible, from all theological teaching. Instead of doing this, he has systematically strengthened the existing connection between the school and the Church, and has made provision out of public funds for an enormous extension of denominational schools, and for an enormous augmentation of their permanent resources. By continuing to receive to the end of last year fresh applications for building grants for denominational schools—and it should be remembered that no grants are made by Parliament for the erection of Board schools—he did his utmost to stimulate the erection of additional denominational schools and the enlargement of denominational schools already in existence. Upwards of 3,000 applications for grants were sent up to the department within twelve months, being, I believe, ten times the average number of grants during preceding years; and of these no less than 1,700 were applications for new buildings, of which nearly 1,500 were to be connected with the Church of England. He further provided for an increase,

amounting to about 50 per cent, in the annual grants for the maintenance of the schools. Not satisfied with all this, he is now urging School Boards to subsidise denominational schools out of the rates.

We had, perhaps, no right to expect, in the actual condition of the public mind, that the Government would have adopted a scheme in 1870 for diminishing the grants which the Churches were already receiving for the maintenance of their educational institutions. There was great force in the argument that it would be perilous to the cause of education, and unfair to those who had been encouraged to establish denominational schools, suddenly to break up existing educational machinery, although it was being worked for sectarian and not merely for educational purposes. But for a Liberal Ministry to extend and enlarge at the public cost machinery constructed on a principle so vicious—to create new facilities at the public expense for maintaining it—to involve the nation still more deeply in the policy of sustaining sectarian religious teachers out of rates and taxes—this was contrary to all that we had a right to anticipate. (“Hear, hear,” and cheers.) It is a retrograde policy. (Hear, hear.) It is a policy which has secured for the Government, or rather for a particular member of the Government, the enthusiastic approbation of Conservatives—(hear, hear)—but it is a policy which relieves Nonconformists from their old allegiance to the Liberal party—(“hear, hear,” and loud cheers)—and which, requires us so to organise our political power as to prevent the Liberal party from ever inflicting a similar injury again on the principles of religious equality. (Renewed cheers.)

I have said that the policy of Mr. Forster is a retrograde policy. It is contrary to all that we had a right to anticipate from the acknowledged principles and from the history of the Liberal party. If there is one living statesman who beyond every other may be regarded as representing the spirit and traditions of Liberalism on questions of this nature, it is Earl Russell. His name is becoming unfamiliar to politicians of the younger generation, but Nonconformists can never forget the magnificent services which he has rendered to the cause of religious freedom. (Cheers.) Earl Russell has a clear and just appreciation of the true nature



of the struggle in which we are engaged, and he has taken his place at our side. (Cheers.) In a letter addressed a few days ago to Mr. Dixon, President of the National Education League, his Lordship says:—

“A great struggle will be made by the clergy of the Church of Rome and of the Church of England to maintain and perpetuate sectarian schools, aided by rates and by the State.” And he has given in his adhesion to the League because he wishes to rescue the education of the country from clerical ascendancy. (Loud cheers.) With such a testimony I have a right to say, that in organising the political power of Nonconformists in order to resist the policy of the Government, we are but showing our fidelity to the spirit by which till now the policy of the Liberal party has been controlled. (Cheers.)

And there is an urgent necessity why the organisation of our power should be rapid and complete. We have not a month, a day, an hour to lose. Six weeks ago the Roman Catholic archbishops and bishops of Ireland met in Dublin, and declaring themselves “the divinely-constituted guardians” of the spiritual interests of their people, passed a series of resolutions on the subject of national education. The resolutions were addressed to the Catholic people of Ireland and to their representatives in Parliament; but they were intended to influence the deliberations of the Imperial Government and to control its educational policy. The episcopal programme has the merit of extreme simplicity. It is announced in the plainest language. Misapprehension is impossible. A Liberal ministry is about to frame a measure under which Imperial funds will be employed for the creation and support of elementary schools in Ireland; and the Roman Catholic archbishops and bishops declare that the schools must be placed under the control of the Roman Catholic priesthood, and must be nurseries for the Roman Catholic Church. This is the nature—this the extent of their claim. They demand—not liberty guaranteed by law to maintain their own worship and to teach their own creed at their own expense. This they possess already. They demand—not that a church which they abhor should cease to be invested with political supremacy in Ireland and should cease to be endowed with national wealth. The political supremacy of

Protestantism has been overthrown; and the Protestant Episcopalian clergy have ceased to be the pensioners of the State. Equality in the eye of the law—this is their right: it is a right which they already enjoy; or if in any particular it is as yet incomplete, we are ready to unite with them in pressing for immediate justice. But more than this—at whatever cost—I trust that the Imperial Parliament will never grant them. And it is more than this that they claim. They ask for national endowments of the Catholic faith. They ask for legislation which shall place the public schools of the greater part of Ireland under the control of the Catholic Church. They refuse to be satisfied with any measure which will not enable them at the public expense to confirm and perpetuate their authority over the intellect and heart of the Irish people.

The tone in which their claim is preferred is one which has been long unfamiliar to English ears, The assumptions on which it rests the English people have finally and for ever decided to repudiate. The Catholic Archbishops and Bishops of Ireland speak, not as the representatives of the Irish people, but as the divinely constituted guardians of the faith and morals of the Catholic population of Ireland; this is the character they assume when they announce the principles upon which the Imperial Parliament is to construct an Irish Education Bill. We are willing, we are eager to listen to whatever claim any section of the Irish people may prefer as our fellow-citizens, as having equal rights with ourselves before the law, but to a claim of the Roman Catholic priesthood resting on their pretensions to be the divinely-constituted guardians of faith and morals we are not prepared to listen. (Cheers.)

These pretensions have been the cause of many of the worst and most cruel forms of oppression from which Europe has suffered. They have repressed the intellect and corrupted the morals and paralysed the religious faith of great nations. Whenever they are permitted to assert themselves in the sphere of political life, whenever they are suffered to control the legislation and public policy of parliaments and kings, political freedom receives a fatal blow. What are the grandest and most heroic pages in our national history? They are the pages which record the gigantic struggle of the English people against the supremacy of Rome.

Nonconformists are not blind to the evils and imperfections of the English Reformation. We are accustomed to denounce the crimes of which Henry VIII. and Elizabeth were guilty against their own subjects—whether Puritans or Roman Catholics—who refused to submit to the ecclesiastical authority of the crown. But those dark and evil days are made for ever illustrious by the energy, the courage and the sagacity with which our ancestors maintained the cause of English freedom against the craft of Italy and the power of Spain. The constitution of the Established Church of this country is the memorial and monument of the true nature of that conflict. Its organisation—in its very defects—is the expression of the stern and passionate resentment of the Englishmen of those days against the claims of Rome. The English Reformation in its origin was not a revolt against the theology of Rome, but against the authority which as the guardian of faith and morals she claimed to exercise over princes and states. The spirit of the whole movement is concentrated and expressed in the words of the 37th Article of the English Church—“The Bishop of Rome hath no jurisdiction in this realm of England;” and the King, as the representative of the English people, was made the head of the Church, because the real fight, at least in its earlier periods, and to a very large extent till the very end of the 16th century, was not between one system of Christian doctrine and another, but between the English nation and the head of the Roman Church.

In that protracted struggle, the great qualities of the English people were for the first time revealed to Europe. We have never since then touched a higher point. The demands on the temper and courage of the nation were tremendous, but they were magnificently met. Those were the days when the sagacity of our statesmen commanded the admiration of the world. It was then that the daring of our sailors—Hawkins and Raleigh and Drake—began to make the English name terrible on the sea. The spirit of the people was kept high by the sudden development of a splendid literature. Shakspeare, Ben Johnson, Beaumont, and Fletcher, and Edmund Spenser were the fruit of the English Reformation. They were heroic times, and I trust that the descendants of the men who crowned the England of those days

with imperishable glory, inherit the faith and the courage, if not the genius of their fathers. (Loud and protracted cheering.)

The Catholic archbishops and bishops of Ireland, in the pastoral letter which illustrates and develops their resolutions, say—"We cannot surrender to the State the education of our children." They know perfectly well that they are at liberty to educate their children as they please. (Hear.) But if they will not surrender the education of their children to the State, we can only answer that, as far as we are concerned, the State shall not provide the cost of their education. (Cheers.) What they mean is, that the State shall find the money, and that they, the divinely-constituted guardians of faith and morals, shall control the expenditure. (Laughter and cheers.) In relation to an enormous number of the primary schools of Ireland—schools to be supported largely out of the Imperial revenue—they "*demand*"—this is their word—

"The removal of all restrictions upon religious instruction, so that the fulness of distinctive religious teaching may enter into the course of daily secular education, with full liberty for the use of Catholic books and religious emblems, and for the performance of religious exercises, and that the right be recognised of the lawful pastors of the children in such schools to have access to them, to regulate the whole business of religious instruction in them, and to remove objectionable books, if any."

In other words, the Catholic priesthood are to be formally invested with authority over the discipline and management of an unknown number of elementary schools to be established and supported by the Imperial Parliament. They further demand that Catholic training schools should be created by the Government for the training of schoolmasters and schoolmistresses. They also demand that the State should found and endow either a Catholic University in Ireland, or else one or more Catholic colleges in connection with a national university, and in the event of a Catholic college being established they demand that it shall be conducted on purely Catholic principles, and that the bishops shall have full control in all things regarding faith and morals. I want to know whether you, the Nonconformists of Manchester, will continue to give your support to the Liberal party, if the Liberal party show any signs of conceding these demands? (Cries of "No," and

cheers.) I know your mind, and I think I know the minds of Nonconformists all England through, and in their name I will say, rather than concede demands like these, let the Liberal party be utterly broken in pieces and for ever destroyed. (Loud cheers.)

Do you regard such a concession as impossible? I believe that there is the gravest reason for apprehension. In the Elementary Education Act for England the Ministry has shown itself unwilling to provoke the hostility of the clergy of those churches which desire to use national funds for the purpose of educating children in a sectarian faith. In the Elementary Education Bill for Scotland, submitted to Parliament last year, but withdrawn, they made still larger concessions than were made in the English Bill to the same Ecclesiastical pretensions. There is the most serious ground for fearing that concessions larger still will be made to the pretensions of the ecclesiastical authorities in Ireland. The position which I think that the Nonconformists of England should assume is this: Let all the existing elementary schools in Ireland in which the managers insist on teaching their own theological creed be gradually thrown for support on voluntary liberality. Let School Boards be elected in every part of Ireland—at any rate in those districts where voluntary zeal does not provide adequate and efficient elementary instruction, or does not secure the actual education of all the children for whom elementary schools are established. Wherever a school is required let it be under the control of the School Board, and the School Board alone. In the south, the centre, and the west of Ireland nearly every School Board will be certain to consist chiefly of Roman Catholics. The Board will very properly appoint a Roman Catholic schoolmaster; but let it be no part of his duty to give religious instruction to the children. Let the School books be free alike from Roman Catholic and Protestant bias. (Hear.) Let there be no symbols of the Roman Catholic faith on the walls of the school building—(hear); refuse to the priest all authority to interfere with the discipline and conduct of the school. He will be elected, probably in every instance, to a seat on the Board, but absolutely deny his right to claim any position in relation to the school which does not belong to every one of his colleagues.

If the Catholic archbishops and bishops, as the divinely-consti-

tuted guardians of the faith and morals of their people, claim any exceptional prerogatives and powers for themselves and their priesthood in the public schools of Ireland, let this be our answer: Our fathers struggled for years to win for the Roman Catholic people of this empire their political rights, and one of the proudest pages in the history of English Nonconformists is the story of what they did towards winning Catholic emancipation. We ourselves strained all our political power to redress the enormous injustice inflicted on Irish Catholics by the existence of the Irish Protestant establishment. In that struggle we incurred insult and obloquy; We were charged with confiscation and sacrilege; but we were resolved to do our part towards vindicating the principles of religious equality, and we have never for a moment regretted it. We will contend side by side with the Roman Catholics of Ireland for the complete removal of the sectarian restrictions which still exist in Trinity College Dublin. Their freedom to celebrate their worship and to teach their faith, if ever it is endangered, shall be as dear to us as our own; and if the blind passion of Protestant bigotry in Ireland ever threatens to disturb the quiet of a Roman Catholic congregation, or to inflict harm on a Roman Catholic priest, we will give our voice for surrounding that congregation and defending that priest with the whole force of the empire. But with the whole force of the empire also, so far as we have any influence on public legislation and policy, we are prepared to resist any claims on the part of the Roman Catholic priesthood to anything more than religious equality. (Loud cheers.) When they ask for national funds for the maintenance of their religious faith, when they ask for religious authority in common schools supported by the State, then whatever may be the consequences, we refuse to concede their demands.

If you intend to give effect to these principles, it is not enough that they should be expressed in great meetings held in this hall. You must do your part towards diffusing information through the Liberal constituencies in every part of the kingdom. You must assist the Nonconformists of the small towns and of the rural districts to organise their strength that they may be ready to act with decisive effect at the next general election. (Hear.) Nor is it only that we may be ready for the next general election that I

ask you to do this. I do not care to enter into nice calculations as to the precise extent to which the leaders of the Liberal party are indebted to the Nonconformists of England and Wales for their present majority in the House of Commons; but this at least is certain, that we are largely responsible for bringing the present Government into power. We are responsible for its continuance in power. If by conceding the claims of the divinely-appointed guardians of the faith and morals of the Catholic population of Ireland the ministry should inflict an irreparable outrage at once on the dignity of the Imperial Government and the principles of religious freedom, the guilt of the offence must rest partly on ourselves. But for us, it is more than doubtful whether Mr. Gladstone's Government would have been in office at the present moment. If, when Parliament re-assembles, there are any indications that the Irish policy of ministers is to be determined by the demands of the Roman Catholic priesthood, there is only one course before us—to try to secure, at the earliest possible moment, such a defeat of the Government in the House of Commons as shall render it impossible for them to remain in office. (“Hear, hear,” and cheers.) The experience of the session of 1870 has shown us that it will not be safe for us to rely on the effect of the most vigorous protests even of a majority of the Liberal members of the House of Commons against a measure which the Ministry have resolved to carry. I well remember the night when one of the representatives of this city, Mr. Jacob Bright—(cheers)—was followed into the lobby by a clear majority of Liberal members, and the amendment which he moved to one of the most unsatisfactory clauses of the Education Bill was resisted and defeated by the Government in the teeth of the great body of its own friends, (Shame.) We must not, if we can help it, see that game played again in connection with an Education Bill for Ireland, and I call upon you, the Nonconformists of Manchester, to assist in covering this county and the neighbouring counties with a network of Nonconformist organisations, through which, should the occasion arise, the country and the House of Commons may learn that the party ties between ourselves and the Liberal leaders are finally dissolved, and that Liberal members who shrink from using the first opportunity for showing their want of confidence in the Ministry, and dislodging it

from power, must expect to lose the confidence of their Nonconformist constituents. (Cheers).

The immediate necessity which is laid upon us for organising our political power, and determining on a definite line of political action, has been created by the recent policy of the Government. But, year by year, the ultimate question involved in the history and position of the Nonconformists is assuming more definite outlines and attracting larger public attention. Before long this question will divide the great political parties in the State, and the discussions in which we are now engaged are preparing the mind of the country for that supreme struggle. I frankly confess that I never appear on a public platform to discuss the relations between the Church of England and the State but with reluctance and pain. I am far more vividly conscious of the religious sympathies which unite the majority of Nonconformists with vast numbers of the clergy and laity of the Established Church than of the theological, ecclesiastical, and political differences which separate us. To be regarded as an enemy by men for whom I have the deepest affection and admiration, to be charged by such men with pursuing a policy which in relation to the Church is a policy of confiscation and sacrilege, and in relation to the State a policy of Atheism, is to me a source of keen distress. But we have no choice.

We believe that the separation of the ecclesiastical and civil powers would be an act of homage to the principles of political justice, and would contribute to the strength and stability of our national institutions. "We believe that it would diminish sectarian bitterness, increase Christian charity, and greatly promote the energy and purity of the religious life of the country. Should we be successful, the Church would sustain no harm. The only property it would lose is property which it should not desire to keep—property which belongs not to itself, but to the whole nation. After disestablishment the Church will still retain its great traditions. The magnificent succession of theologians, scholars, and saints who have illustrated its history will still be its glory and its strength. Its ancient creeds, its stately liturgy, the devotion of ten thousand clergy, the simple reverence and trust of thousands of the poor, the hearty confidence of the vast majority of the gentry and



aristocracy of the country—these will still remain. Its prayers will still find access to God. Its devout ministers will still be moved by the Holy Ghost. The presence of Christ will still be granted to its congregations when gathered together in His name; and it will rejoice in the consciousness of a vigour and courage which are inseparable from freedom.

The State will receive no harm. For generations the Nonconformists, notwithstanding their disabilities, have been loyal to the throne, and the loyalty of the members of the Church of England will not be impaired by the loss of their political privileges and supremacy. The religious faith of the nation,—the strongest support of private virtue, the noblest inspiration of patriotism, the surest defence of the august authority of law—will not perish with the disappearance of the Establishment. The vices of the rich and the vices of the poor will still be denounced and restrained by the eloquence of the Christian pulpit; and through the gentle ministry of innumerable men and women inspired with the spirit of Christian charity, poverty and wretchedness will still receive consolation. Our political differences will no longer be embittered by theological and ecclesiastical animosities, and Christian men of every Church—their strength no longer consumed in sectarian conflicts, no longer divided by sectarian jealousies—will unite to promote the religion, the virtue, the happiness, and the freedom of all classes of the State.

We utterly reject the dogma that a nation ceases to be a Christian nation when it ceases to assert the Christian faith by the authority of public law and to maintain its ministers from the national resources. Its Christianity depends upon the intensity and purity of the Christian life which dwells in the hearts of its people. If a man is a Christian he will carry with him the whole energy of his faith in Christ and of his reverence for the law of Christ into every province of his activity. The Christian life will reveal itself in the courage with which the elector votes for the man in whose political principles he believes; and the very spirit which has made the memory of martyrs immortal on earth, and has crowned them with a brighter glory in heaven, has been expressed at the polling-booth by men who, rather than be false to their political convictions, have risked the loss of their farms

and the destruction of their trade. The Christian life will reveal itself in the chivalrous honour with which landlords and employers of labour abstain from exerting an illegitimate influence over electors whose fortunes happen to be in their power; and in the determination of working people to protect from insult and injury the men who may conscientiously reject the political creed of their shopmates and neighbours. The Christian life will reveal itself in the honesty with which candidates for seats in the House of Commons will declare their opinions before their election, and the fidelity with which they will keep their pledges after they have been elected. It will control the debates of Parliament; it will neutralise the acrimony of party spirit; it will subdue the personal ambition of statesmen; it will make a nation sensible that the true prosperity of States does not lie in mere material wealth, but in the fidelity of its people and its rulers to the laws of eternal righteousness, which are the strong foundations of the very throne of God. It will render impossible the selfishness and the baseness which have too often disgraced our foreign policy—the domineering and insulting tone which we have assumed to weak States, and the cowardly subserviency of which we have been guilty to successful and powerful wickedness; it will inspire all our transactions with other nations with courageous justice, with frankness and generosity. It will bind together in mutual respect and confidence all ranks and conditions of men.

This is our ideal of national life. We believe it is to be fulfilled—not by conferring on the ministers of a single church or the ministers of all churches, social dignity, political authority, national wealth, but by the devout and earnest work of all who are inspired with the true spirit of patriotism and a hearty loyalty to Christ.

For the perfect triumph of its spiritual power, the Church must be free from the restraints and trammels of that political bondage which is inseparable from political privileges. We are Nonconformist—we are political Nonconformists—not because we wish to make the political life of England less religious, but because we wish to make it more religious; and we intend, God helping us—unmoved by the storm of hostility, of misrepresentation, and of slander which our great enterprise may provoke—to pursue it

until the time shall come—it is not far distant—when the principles of which it is our glory to be the representatives and the guardians shall control the legislation and the policy of our country.

Mr. Dale, after speaking for upwards of two hours, resumed his seat amid loud and prolonged cheering, the audience rising and waving their hats.

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