

THE DUTY
OF THE
MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND
RESPECTING THE
CLERGY RESERVES:

AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED IN ST. PETER'S CHURCH, SPRINGFIELD,

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BY THE

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AN ADDRESS.

Although the subject which I am about to take up may withdraw me a little aside from the usual track of a Church Society address, yet what concerns the church at large concerns us, as a part of it ; and my hope and prayer has been, that, in speaking of what affects the church, however deeply I may feel, I shall be enabled to speak with charity and with truth.

We have met to exhibit our unity of church feeling,—to confirm and build each other up in attachment to our church principles,—and to show how needful it is that we should strengthen the hands of the church by our gifts and contributions. This is right ; but it is, also, needful that we should strengthen the hands of the church, by keeping for her what she has—by assisting her to preserve what she already possesses. The one thing is allied to the other ;—the one duty involves the other. How are churchmen doing their duty, even though they give to the church with one hand while they help to despoil her with the other ? How are they doing their duty, if they look coldly on, and see the plunderer doing his work upon her without stretching out a hand to stay the crime ?

And now, without further preface or hesitation, I take up the question of the Church Reserves of this province.

Oh ! but, perhaps, our opponents will say—“ Yours was “ to be a religious meeting—a Church Society anniversary—“ you are making a political agitation—this is a matter for the “ hustings, not for a church.”

Now, this is but one of their usual artifices,—“ a weak invention of the enemy.” They would tie us hand and foot and tongue, with the plausible, but deceptive, cry of religious peacefulness ; they say, “ you, as good christians, should not stir up strife and agitation,—you should be submissive—unresisting—*peaceable*, while we *plunder you at our leisure*.”

They, forsooth, are to seize every opportunity of pushing on their schemes—*they* are to take every occasion of denouncing the church, and of stirring up hostility and hatred

against her—*they* may hound on the revolutionist and republican against her sacred possessions, and yet *we* are to sit still—our hands behind us and our mouths shut!! No, let them call what I am doing political agitation if they will. If the cause and interests of religion have become implicated with the politics of the country, it is *their* fault, not ours; and we will not be deterred from our duty by any such shallow artifice.

It is *they*—the demagogues of a faction—who have dragged religion upon the platform of debasing political strife, and we must rescue her from the hands which would fain dismember her, and sacrifice her to their ungodly passions. We are driven to agitate in self-defence; in this we may take a lesson from our foes, and if we are to win, we must beat them with their own weapons. Agitate—yes, I do agitate—and I trust that my example will be followed by every man among you who knows his duty to his church, his country, and his God. I trust that man will speak to man, and neighbour will inform and teach his neighbour, till but one christian feeling, and but one christian determination shall pervade the whole length and breadth of the church—viz., that such a piece of injustice as the secularization of her Reserves shall *not* be perpetrated while, by any lawful means, it can be prevented.

To agitate in a righteous cause is an honour, not a reproach; it is a course, of which no man need be ashamed; I, for one, am not.

Are we told that it is our duty, as christians, to be submissive? We will be so, when there is no other christian alternative; when the evil shall have been done, *then* we shall deem it a duty to submit, rather than stir up strife and violence. But is it a christian duty to take no steps to meet and avert a vast approaching misfortune—to take no precautions against the gathering cloud—to seek no arms when foes are marshalling their strength against us, with every demonstration of evil intentions? No! This were base cowardice—a contemptible lethargy, arguing utter ignorance of our duty, or indifference to the sacred interests entrusted to us. I repeat, let us seize every legal method which the constitution of our country places within our reach, for the preservation of our church endowments.

I have called the Reserves—“the *Church* Reserves;” and this, advisedly, and with a purpose. They are often designated the “*Clergy* Reserves;” and under this title people are

led indirectly and unintentionally, perhaps, to suppose that the clergy are the chief persons interested in their preservation, and that the evils of their loss will fall only, or mainly, upon them. But this is a mistaken inference. A mere *name* often has weight; therefore I call them *Church Reserves*, not *Clergy Reserves*—because there is not one lay member of the church but is as deeply interested in their safety as the clergy.

Upon whom does the burden fall,—or rather, I should say, upon whom does the duty devolve—(for it should not be deemed a burden) of supporting the clergy and the ministrations of religion? Upon the members of the church at large. During the infancy of our colonial church the duty is voluntarily and nobly performed by our fellow-churchmen at home—but by one class or other it has to be done—by churchmen here, or by churchmen in England: but *their* help is only for a time, and only while our infant and struggling state gives us a claim upon their christian beneficence. But, as it is even in part now, eventually the church in Canada must be *wholly* sustained by yourselves. Think you that one integral order of the church—the clergy—can be attacked or injured, and the whole church not suffer with it. The Reserves are yours. They belong to the whole church. They are your patrimony, and if taken away, *you* are robbed of your birth-right and inheritance. The thing is obvious. The Reserves, or the fund accruing from them—diverted from the sacred uses of the church, *you* have at once to supply the deficiency. Perhaps *some* could do their share of this, but most could not; I speak of the church as a whole—of its members as a body, without referring to what some wealthy individuals or congregations might do. But in whatever degree the church is now assisted and sustained by those Reserves, in the same exact degree will you be compelled to make up the deficiency of their loss from your own private funds and property. A clergyman, or incumbent, has but a temporary and life interest in glebes or church reserve funds; but a parish or congregation has a perpetual interest in them; it is from the parish and its property that not only the present incumbent, but *future* incumbents, must derive their stipends, wholly or in part. And in suffering those reserve funds to be alienated, it will be upon the parishes and congregations—upon the church, as a whole—upon the laity most especially—that the evil will eventually fall.

It seems to me the grossest infatuation for a churchman to look upon this matter in any other light. The

laity of the church find it quite task enough at present to furnish half, or less than half of the stipends of their ministers, while the other portion is obtained from the reserve fund, or the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. How then, in the name of common sense, will they like to be forced to provide the *whole* stipend? The *whole*—yes—there is the alternative that will be placed before you—the *whole* of your clergyman's salary—or *no* clergyman,—no church—no religious ministrations—your church shut up—your holy ordinances discontinued.

What churchman is there so insane as not to see the double hardship involved,—and that, in surrendering the reserve funds, he is virtually doubling the demands upon his own resources.

A few wealthy men, indeed, may say —“ We would rather double our present payments than have this constantly-renewed, harassing, and disturbing question kept up.” It may do for a *few* to say so ; but it will not be said by the majority of churchmen—by the farmers, mechanics, and labourers, who form the numerical body of the church. It may do for some who have ulterior objects in view, to wish to set aside, at any sacrifice, a question which seems to stand in the way of favorite plans, or of their own political ascendancy : but it will not do for the majority of churchmen to reason in this way : and I would think scorn of that man, whatever his position, who would surrender a principle like this, and the possessions and interests of his church, to please a constituency, or to perpetuate his own popularity.

If the Reserves, or a certain portion of the reserve funds, belong to our church by every security that law can give, it is a crime to take them away, or to yield them up. If they are not ours, let them go—if they *are* ours, let us be resolved to keep them.

Some may think that policy and expediency would justify the surrender. But “ *expediency* ” is often used as a miserable fallacy, and an excuse for doing just what suits one-self : permit me to recall its proper meaning. Where there is a choice of several courses, all equally lawful, one may through circumstances, be more expedient than the others ; but—when the choice lies between right and wrong—the *wrong* can *never* be expedient.

I would recall to your recollection—I would urge you as churchmen not to forget—the features of gross *injustice* which have marked every step of this attack upon the pro-

perty of the church. In obtaining the parliamentary addresses and votes which are paraded, as indicating the wishes of the Canadian people, the plainest principles of justice and fair dealing have been violated. The decisions of our parliaments have not been the decisions of those who were mainly and rightly interested in the matter—namely, of the representatives of Upper Canadian Protestants; but such enactments or addresses have been achieved by the votes of the Roman Catholic Lower Canadians. The mere fact of their having a voice at all in legislating upon the question, is a startling and palpable injustice;—that measures affecting or destructive of the religious rights of the Protestants of Upper Canada, should be carried or decided by the votes of Roman Catholic Canadians, is an outrage of every principle of fair dealing, which may yet be remembered against them when *their* day of retribution arrives.

The hostile interference of Roman Catholics in matters affecting the religious rights of Protestant communities, was considered so evidently *wrong*, that at the passing of the celebrated Act of the Imperial Parliament which admitted Romanists to seats in that house, precautionary oaths and pledges were required, intended (though how vainly) to secure the interests of the Church of England from being affected by the votes of members who were by very principle hostile to the church. Yet in the management of this Canadian church question, this most obvious axiom of justice has been set at nought. It was for this very thing—to prevent such interference—that the distribution of the reserve fund was settled *before* the union of the two provinces was permitted. If it be but a common matter, before a jury in a court of justice, and if, among that jury, there be any known, or on good grounds supposed to be previously committed to a hostile view of a defendant's case, they may be challenged and excluded. But rights conceded to the most degraded felon are denied to us. *We* may not have an impartial jury; and the cause of the Protestants and churchmen of Upper Canada has to be pleaded before an assembly, composed in a large proportion of Romanists; and to be adjudged and decided upon by their votes. Give us but the fair field of an unbiassed court—give us but a fair tribunal, and we ask no other favour? Let the question of the religious endowments of Upper Canada be tried before an assembly of Upper Canadians, and we will contentedly abide the issue.

But when a matter, involving the most serious interests of

the community—not only of the present, but more especially of the coming generations, is thus, in the very constitution of the adjudging court, most unjustly dealt with, it is enough to make the very coldest burn with indignation, and to drive the most peaceable to resistance. It is persecution of the worst kind; it is the exercise of mere power, heedless of right and truth and justice; it is tyranny laying its iron grasp upon the weaker; it is acting upon no other principle than may be found in this—“*We can oppress you, and we will.*”

It is too late a date now to revert to the grants by which those reserves were secured, as it was once thought, to the church for ever. It is too late now to appeal to the moral weight and binding force of former royal grants, and imperial enactments. The people have been stirred up to cry, “*Let these go for nothing;*” and they have gone for nothing. The statutes which secured our rights are but as so much waste paper, or so many old almanacks, or like old abbey ruins,—sad but useless records of the piety of those who have gone before us. Useless, did I say?—No. By those records they, being dead, yet speak to us, and seem to ask,—*Why should you be less sedulous to preserve our gifts, than we were to bestow them? If it were piety in Britain’s good old christian king to grant this inheritance, it is impiety in us to let it go without an effort or a struggle.*

It is, indeed, too late to base any arguments upon the supposed force and intention of any such grants: their obvious intention has been set aside by mere clamor, and irresponsible power. The question will not be a trial of justice, but of strength, between churchmen and anti-churchmen; and I do trust that it will not be lost by the apathy of our own people.

It is to churchmen I address myself—not to the church’s enemies. We might as well plead to the winds as to them. They *will* do their worst; and we need look for no forbearance at their hands. Let but our own people—all who call themselves churchmen—be true to the interests of the church, which are, indeed, *their own* interests, and we may not be overpowered. But if, while the anti-church party includes not only dissenting Protestant bodies, but non-religionists of every class—those who are secretly indifferent to religion, as well as those who openly disavow it; and while, with these may be combined, a Romanist party, who have hitherto shown themselves too willing, as well for political purposes as through anti-Protestant principle, to vote against us,—if

such a formidable coalition be met by no unity of feeling, purpose, or action in ourselves, our defeat is certain.

But, though the majority of the Roman Catholic Lower Canadian members *have* hitherto acted unjustly in combining and voting with the enemies of the Church of England, I am far from assuming that they may not yet become sensible both of the injustice they have committed against us, and of the peril in which they will place their own endowments in aiding in the spoliation of ours. They may yet be open to the plain dictates of justice and common sense, and may compensate for their past mistake, by forbearing to take any part in the legislation upon our reserves, or by taking such a part as will shew that they will not sanction even tacitly such a gross act of spoliation, even though the sufferers may be men of other doctrines, and opposed to them on many religious points. To be just, even to an enemy, is a noble and exalted principle, which we may well trust holds a place in the bosom of many of our Roman Catholic fellow-subjects. Still, whatever course they may think proper to pursue, whether hostile, neutral, or friendly, there is but *one* course incumbent upon, or available to *us*, namely, union among ourselves, and energy in the defence of our church's endowments.

Some churchmen are weak enough to say, give up the reserves, if it were only for *peace* sake. Such peace would be too dearly purchased. And what right have we to surrender our children's inheritance for the sake of our present comfort, and to escape the trouble of defending it? The living generation of churchmen are but the trustees of the church's rights and property; and they should be faithful to that sacred trust. But will there be peace, even if the reserves be surrendered? Will not religion always have its enemies, and the church, too, for its religion sake? If the reserves belong to the church, to yield them up were wrong; and are we to do evil that good may come?

Of a like nature is another argument used by some—viz., That, while churchmen have their reserves, they will not exert themselves; when they know that they have *nothing* else, they will learn to support their church with proper liberality: the church will, in reality, become more prosperous. Now this is just the same sort of argument you might use for burning your neighbour's house down—namely, that it would probably cause him to redouble his own industry to retrieve his misfortune, and the sympathy of his friends would more than make up his loss. You wish to see the

church prosper,—therefore deprive her of more than half her maintenance!! I cannot understand either the logic or the charity of this argument. Such churchmanship is too refined for my comprehension: so let it pass.

But, indeed, so far from securing *peace*, I am prepared to affirm that the alienation of the Protestant Church Reserves will be the turning point, upon which is staked the peace and integrity of these at present happy and prosperous provinces.

If Protestant church endowments are wrong, and by all means to be extinguished, so are Roman Catholic endowments. If the one be taken away, the secularization of the other will be demanded, and justly, by every Protestant. Let it not be supposed that it is a question merely of Church of England property which is at issue: it is a larger and more general question—the good or alleged evil—the permanence or abolition of *all* religious state endowments. If ours go—theirs must go: the principle will have been affirmed—the war will have been declared.

While the various religious bodies of the country are permitted to hold their respective endowments unattacked and uninjured, we are not disposed to look with jealousy upon the shares enjoyed by others; they came by theirs in the same manner as ourselves; they hold by the same tenure; but that any government, or faction in a state, should be allowed to alienate the endowments of every religious body but *one*; and that one a church, whose preponderance we deem inimical to the interests of pure religion,—that such a body should be maintained in possession of vast state endowments, with all the exclusive power and means of propagandism which such wealth will give—this is a perversion of justice which will *not* be tolerated,—which no principle of charity or religion requires us to tolerate.

But in the issue there will be this marked difference—the Romanists will not passively yield up their church's rights and properties. They are a united body; they acknowledge no bond of union so abiding and binding as their church. For it and its endowments they will sacrifice everything; colonial union—British connexion—civil peace: and, looming through the clouds of this portentous struggle, we may see the fearful forms of political convulsion, intestine anarchy and strife,—the dislocation of the whole frame of our social fabric—the probable dismemberment of our colonial empire.

Let us not be lulled into a false security by the delay

or apparent reluctance of the present ministry to bring on the question—this is mere policy ; it suited them a little while ago to push it forward : it suits them now to hold back : but are we to be fooled by their subtlety, or be thrown off our guard by their apparent forbearance? Before another anniversary the question may have been referred to the country by a general election. Let churchmen meet the evil simply by the constitutional rights which they possess : let them do their duty at the crisis : fore-warned is fore-armed. Let them act as with one purpose, and give their support and votes to no man, be his political creed or principles what they may, who will not do all in his power to preserve to the church her property and endowments. Let us do this ; and trust to Divine providence for the issue ; and if we are to lose, at the least, let us be able to reflect that we have contended with honour, and have not been vanquished through our own supineness or neglect.