

Gospel of salvation, do not love Thee well enough to make Thy Gospel known. They feel the burden of maintaining Thy Church and spreading Thy truth too heavy for them to bear. They are afraid that the world cannot come to know Thee unless the unwilling are compelled to take their share of the cost, unless the State comes in to exact a tribute on Thy behalf. If this is not done, Thy servants will be left to starve and Thy Church left to die." Now, it will appear to many, we hope, that this is not an argument that can be stated to Christ. Those who are possessed with this conviction must regard ecclesiastical establishments not as mere inconveniences, not as institutions good for one period and not good for another, but as always and everywhere injurious to Christianity, and in contradiction to its very first principles, and they must at all costs and at all hazards steadfastly maintain that they should be ended.

We are quite willing to admit that there are large numbers of Nonconformists who have declined from this ground, if they ever occupied it, and to whom Dr. Mair's appeal may very reasonably be addressed. There are those, for example, who advocate the acceptance of money from the State for the teaching of religion in schools. Fifty years ago John Bright, speaking as the authorised exponent of English Nonconformity, said, "Nonconformists themselves, in accordance with the principles by which they are so, cannot receive public money for the teaching of religion in their schools." He went on to say that if they did they could never afterwards, with any show of consistency and good faith, say one syllable against the domination and usurpation of the Established Church. Until recently the ancient Dissenters of England were firm in this position. They have swerved from it of late, partly under Methodist influence, and with lamentable results. Many of their leaders now argue that some sort of religion common to all should be taught in schools at the public expense, but what that religion is they are unable to agree. They are in hopeless discord even on the question whether it should include the deity of Christ or not. Their argument when stated to Christ runs thus: "We who have been brought to know and love Thee, we who have been brought into Thy fold, desire that our little ones should be there too. Thou hast said, 'Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not,' and we would obey this gracious call. But we cannot charge ourselves with the burden of teaching them the story of Thy love. Our ministers are too busy to instruct them on the week days, our churches can do nothing, and therefore we have to ask the State to provide some teaching about Thyself. We have to ask the State to find teachers who may not know Thy truth spiritually, but who can teach the letter of Thy Word, to instruct our children lest they grow up in ignorance of Thy salvation. Our children will be lost to Thee unless Thou can do this for us." Is it to be supposed that such an argument needs answering?

There are other signs of the times which deserve a word. As Liberalism has taken a Socialistic drift, the ardour for religious equality has abated in certain quarters. It is argued that after all the Established Churches belong to the nation; that is, their buildings and their funds are public property. They are at present doing good work in restraining crime, in preserving order, and the like. Therefore, say many who profess to be Christians, let us maintain them meanwhile at least. Some use may be found of them by-and-by which will re-unite all the people. These persons have received reinforcement from an unexpected quarter. In a very unsensational volume, "The Ancient Faith in Modern Light," to which some leading Baptists and Congregationalists contribute, Dr. Parker has a sensational essay entitled "The New Citizenship." Dr. Parker is often more instructive when he is wrong than other people when they are right. He has "the presentiment of the eve." In this essay, while disclaiming the defence of Establishments, he urges that the State may do something for the church because the Church is the most reliable and beneficent supporter of the State. He thinks that the State might facilitate the acquisition of building sites, might exempt pastoral salaries from income-tax, might increase every legacy

and endowment by a certain scale of increment, might facilitate clerical assurance and other forms of clerical thrift, and might appoint ministers to places in the House of Commons. He insists that this should not be done by the preference of one Church to another, but by equal treatment of all the churches.

It is obvious that if Nonconformists take up these lines they will be unable to resist the endowment of Roman Catholicism. It is a sign of the times that when in the Free Church Assembly this year a protest was made against establishment of a Roman Catholic University for Ireland from public funds, one of the ablest of the younger ministers took the opposite side. "He was as strongly opposed to sacerdotalism and sacramentarianism as any one, but he could not overlook the fact that the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland was a widespread organization, which had in many ways a beneficial influence on the moral well-being of the people of Ireland, and the Government of the county must take account of that." Of course, our Nonconformist friends who support religious education at the public expense have had nothing effectual to say against the great new endowment that has been given to sacerdotalism in England. They cannot have anything to say that is worth hearing against the further endowment of Roman Catholic education in Ireland. We have paid already an immense price for the maintenance of State religious education in our Board schools, but we have only paid an instalment of what will yet be exacted. The time is not very far distant when, if Nonconformists do not comprehend their own principles better and advocate them with more enthusiasm, we shall be face to face with the question of an endowed Roman Catholic Church in Ireland. By a very large section of the English Church such an endowment and establishment would be viewed with the utmost approval, and men who are in a stupor of bewilderment on the whole subject, and have not a principle to fall back upon, cannot stand up against the inevitable development of policy. Dr. Parker does not tell us why, if the State is to increase the legacies and endowments of Nonconformist churches, it should not take upon it to provide the salaries of their ministers. He draws no distinction between the various churches. Of course he must mean that what the State does for Protestants it will also do for Roman Catholics.

Nor is this the end. Before another century closes it may be that Socialism will gain great victories. In his new novel, "A Rose of Yesterday," Mr. Marion Crawford has some exceedingly suggestive remarks on the religious meaning of the Socialist propaganda. Of course Socialism is a very wide word, and we do not forget for one moment that many true Christians call themselves Socialists. But, as Mr. Crawford says, the Socialists as a whole cannot accept in its integrity the law of Christ, and in particular they cannot accept the marriage law. The divorce law itself is not yet forty years old in England nor twenty-seven years in France. In Italy there is no divorce what ever at the present day, and only a few years ago in America divorce was regarded with disapprobation. We all know how things have changed and are changing. Marriage is a foe to a thoroughgoing Socialism, because it perpetuates families and keeps property together by inheritance. Therefore this full-blown Socialism favors divorce as a means of ultimately destroying marriage. We do not deny that a certain kind of Christianity is in favor with many Socialists. They admire Christ as the champion of the poor, the touch of communism in Christianity recommends itself to them. But this homage to Christ, if it goes no farther, is hollow, and it is easy to pass from the sham worship that says, "Hail! Master," and mocks our Lord to the smiting and buffeting of open insult. New and fearful forms of religion may usurp the Christian name and may clamour angrily for a share in the church support and patronage which is asked for the presently recognised forms of Christianity. People who meet in church and chapel have very little conception of the creed that lies in the minds of the innumerable outsiders. We should like to know how Dr. Parker and those who think with him are prepared to deal with claims like these. In the end of the day their State will be compelled to draw the boundaries of the church. And let those who welcome Socialist