

SOME MISUNDERSTOOD PHASES OF THE PROPOSALS FOR DISESTABLISHMENT EXPLAINED TO A PARISHIONER.

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YOU ask, "But was not the Roman Church in England disestablished and disendowed by Henry VIII. ? and was not such Disestablishment and Disendowment of that Church confirmed by the subsequent legislation of the English Parliament in the reigns of Edward VI. and Queen Elizabeth? And was not," you ask, "the present Church of England put in the place of the deposed Roman Church, and given possession of her endowments? And, further, you want to know, assuming that it was lawful and right for the then reigning sovereign and Parliament of England to disestablish and disendow the Roman Church, "why should it not also be lawful and right now for the present Sovereign and Parliament of England to disestablish and disendow the present Church of England?"

First of all, my friend, let me inform you that you are sadly inaccurate in your knowledge of English and Roman Church history.

The Church of Rome was never established and endowed in England, and therefore never could have been disestablished and disendowed by Henry VIII. and his Parliament, nor by any other Sovereign and Parliament of England.

You allege that, "if the Roman Church was never established and endowed in England, it is strange that so many people should hold and cling to the idea that she was so established and endowed, and who believe that there was no national Church of England until after the Reformation."

No doubt it is strange indeed that such a perverted and utterly false view of history should obtain currency, and should even be held by people who are otherwise fairly intelligent.

Nevertheless, we must face the fact that such is the case, and that it is most difficult to get many people, unacquainted with the true history of the Church, to understand that, throughout the whole history of England, the Roman Church was never in any ancient charter or statute of the realm recognised as the Church of England, or even as having any lawful, absolute jurisdiction over the English Church and realm.

So that, granted that she was never recognised as the Church of the kingdom, she certainly never could by any Act of Disestablishment of Henry VIII. have been deposed from that position.

In the same way, if the Church endowments of England had never been given to the Roman Church—which they never were—they never could have been taken from her.

You will see, therefore, that the popular, but very fallacious, saying, that "Henry VIII. took away from the old Roman Church in England her property, and gave it to the new English Church which he at the same time created," has absolutely not an atom of truth for its foundation.

The facts are that, from the time the Church was first founded and organised in the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms—on their conversion to Christianity—she was in royal charters, in the laws of the kingdoms themselves, and afterwards in the statutes of the one united realm of England, called the "English Church" and the "Church of England" or the "Church of the realm of England," or was designated by some such title to distinguish her as the national Church of England from the Church of Rome and from every other national Church.

It was, then, this "Church of England" or this "English Church" that was recognised, legalised, and established; or, in other words, confirmed, or made firm, in her position by the laws of England, which laws did not create her and did not claim to have created her, or profess in any way to have called her into being, but simply protected her, and guaranteed to her her constitutionally acquired rights and privileges, as they did to every other lawful institution within the kingdom.

And it was to this Church of England that Englishmen, individually as members of her communion and not as subjects of the State, gave liberally of their property—lands, charges on lands, buildings, and moneys which constituted her endowments—endowments which have been thus given to the Church throughout the successive centuries of her existence; though they have been handed down to us sadly diminished by the sacrilegious spoliation of certain rapacious English sovereigns, amongst whom Henry VIII. occupies the most unenviable and notorious position.

It is evident, then, on whatever grounds it may be attempted to justify the proposed Disestablishment and Disendowment of the Church, either in England or Wales, such proposed Disestablishment and Disendowment cannot be justified on the false assumption that Henry VIII. and his Parliament disestablished and disendowed the Roman Church in England and, at the same time, created a brand new English Church, to which they gave the endowments hitherto possessed by the Roman Church.

"Well, granted for the moment," you say,