

majority is at present only one on paper: we must wait for more than one critical division to see what it is worth. And in the second place, it is a mongrel majority; we must split it up between Parnellites and Anti-Parnellites, Socialists, Disestablishmentarians, etc. These 42 members, which give Mr. Gladstone his nominal majority, have no internal cohesion, and they own practically different leaders. The Parnellites are bound to follow John Redmond; the Antis, McCarthy and Healy; the Socialists have their chief officers in Labouchere and Arch; the Labour representatives in John Burns; while the Disestablishment members are bound to follow their special leaders; and at the same time Mr. Gladstone is supposed to rule all. On the other hand, the Opposition are a solid phalanx, with irresistible reasons to hold and vote together. It was characteristic of Mr. Gladstone to endeavour thus early to insert into their compact body a wedge of difference by suggesting that the Liberal Unionists would be bound to vote for his Liberal measures, but it was not to back up in this way the Old Parliamentary Hand that men like Mr. Chamberlain made such enormous sacrifices and revolutionised the representation of the great midland districts of England.

There is another element in this shrivelled majority that demands attention—withdraw the Irish contingent and it absolutely disappears. England, Scotland, and Wales lumped together have gone against Mr. Gladstone to the extent of 15 members; a majority of the Ulster members are against him, and taking the whole of Ireland, he has to deal with a very respectable and influential minority of 23 Unionist members, or about 1 in every 3 of the Irish representation. England by itself, which means the heart and citadel of the United Kingdom, has cast a majority of 71 against the repeal of the Union, the English counties giving the Unionists a majority of 28 and the boroughs of 38; while the Universities have not given Mr. Gladstone a single representative. In all these considerations there are provided strong reasons why we should not despair, but rather thank God and take courage. Mr. Gladstone has entered on a tremendous struggle, for which he is at best but badly equipped. The sands of time are running against him, and where other men would in the mellow calm of a declining life be making their peace with God and contemplating the slow but sure approach of the end, we see this insatiable old man preparing to plunge into the thick of what promises to be one of the fiercest political contests of the nineteenth century, and which, if it ends as he desires, can only bring shame and disaster to this great empire.

By all accounts Mr. Gladstone's troubles have already commenced. If report speaks truly, his lieutenants are consumed with mutual jealousies, and after their long banishment from the sweets of office, are now hustling one another for the spoils of victory. Up to the present moment no probable Cabinet list has been set forth with any apparent authority, a very different state of things from what prevailed when Mr. Gladstone was last preparing for office. The Prime Minister to be, will have something to do here as well as in England to satisfy the claims of his hungry followers. Lord Salisbury's Government can afford to retire, if need be, with dignity,

and leave the Harcourts, Laboucheres, Morleys, and the bewigged denizens of the Dublin Four Courts to fight it out as best they may between themselves. We can, for our part, see nothing noble or honourable in Mr. Gladstone's present position or in that of his majority. We can only see an utter absence of all lofty patriotism, and the presence of the most unabashed and paltry self-seeking. It is the old game of the Outs *versus* the Ins, and the swing of the pendulum, which has received a fraudulent push for this occasion, has for the moment given the former their innings. As for the immediate question of Home Rule, we have no fears about it. Everyone knows that the question was not before the country, and that the elections have turned on very different issues. It is quite on the cards that Home Rule will presently take a back seat, and that other questions in which the Radicals are much more interested will be pushed to the front. The Gladstonians of Wales and Scotland want disestablishment, while the Socialists all round want legislation on the labour question, paid members, parish councils, and a new Registration Bill. The Gladstonian Radicals are not prepared to see their cherished plans set aside while Parliament is committed to a tedious and indefinite struggle to settle a question that would leave far more difficulties behind it than it could possibly solve. This is the situation then; we may rest assured that it is keenly discounted by her Majesty's present advisers, who will be no idle and listless spectators of the hurly-burly; we believe they are patriotic men, who have at heart the true interests of their country, and we feel confident that under God, whose care and protection we have so earnestly sought at this supreme crisis, we may leave the issue in their hands. They will not allow us, without a fierce and determined fight, to be "thrown to the dogs."

Of all Mr. Gladstone's supporters, the most contemptible are the political Nonconformists of England, who after pretending to a moral shock at Mr. Parnell's adultery, have taken to their bosoms Sir Charles Dilke, with all his shameless lusts unconfessed and unrepented of. While such is the Nonconformist attitude in England, we see the same men the allies in this country of those spiritual despots, Archbishops Walsh and Croke and their truculent and terrorising clergy. At the bottom of all this is the fervent expectation that as a reward for their devotion Mr. Gladstone will proceed, as soon as possible, to the disestablishment and disendowment, first of the Church of Scotland, and then of the Church of England. For the sake of this anti-Christian policy the English Nonconformists have cast off their brethren in Ireland, and have treated their earnest cry not to be betrayed into the hands of their hereditary enemies with a scornful and unbrotherly indifference.

WHAT IS THE VISIBLE CHURCH OF CHRIST?

The question is one pregnant with momentous consequences, and is well worthy of our careful consideration. When I was a lad, and first began the study of geometry, it was impressed upon me that I must master my definitions. And what is true in Science is also true in Theology. What we need, therefore, is an

accurate definition of "the Visible Church of Christ." Now we have such a definition in our 19th Article, wherein it is stated—

"The Visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments be duly administered according to Christ's ordinance in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same."

Observe that the Visible Church of Christ is declared to be—

1. A congregation of faithful men—*i.e.*, of all the *baptised*—for the word faithful is used technically, and does not mean those who are necessarily filled with faith. We have the word used in the same sense in the Church Catechism, wherein we learn that "The Body and Blood of Christ are verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper;" and again, in programmes of religious processions we often read, after mentioning the names of the officials, here follow "the faithful." The Visible Church of Christ is therefore a congregation of of baptised persons.

2. In it the pure Word of God must be preached. Since, then, all the sects, as well as the Church, appeal to Holy Scripture alike, it is necessary that we should know what is and what is not Holy Scripture—in other words, what is and what is not "the pure Word of God." There were many spurious Gospels and many uninspired Epistles extant in the first ages of the Christian religion; but *the Church in the year 325, at the Council of Nicea*, set her seal upon what was Holy Scripture, and from that time we have received the so-called Canonical Books as Holy Scripture, and none else.

3. Besides the pure Word of God, the Visible Church must contain *Sacraments*, and these must be "duly administered according to Christ's ordinance" in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same. Now there is *one* thing that is clearly necessary—*viz.*, persons authorised to administer these Sacraments; and such authority can be derived but from one source—that is Christ Himself. There is only *one* way, unless we have resource to a series of miracles, in which that authority could be conveyed, and that is by *direct succession through the Holy Apostles*. Lest this chain should by some accident be broken, the Church has ever used three Bishops at the least in every consecration of a priest into the Episcopate.

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SCHISM.

The story of the Christian Church in the New Testament abounds with incidents which would have suggested dissent, or secessions, or new communities, or independencies, *if* they could have been justified; but nothing of the kind took place, while the danger of merely internal divisions arising from a personal preference for Cephas, or Apollos, or Paul, or others, is vigorously and severely opposed by St. Paul's letter to the Corinthians, and also in his letter to the Romans. Whatever, that is, undesirable happens within the Church is to be rectified, and all true Christians will seek to promote the reformation necessary. But nowhere throughout the New Testament is the very slightest encouragement