

**THE ENGLISHMAN'S
BRIEF ON BEHALF OF
HIS NATIONAL CHURCH**

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The Englishman's Brief on Behalf of His National Church by Anonymous

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THE
ENGLISHMAN'S BRIEF
ON BEHALF OF
HIS NATIONAL CHURCH.

NEW, REVISED, AND ENLARGED EDITION.

PUBLISHED UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE TRACT COMMITTEE

LONDON:

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1880.

PREFACE TO REVISED AND ENLARGED EDITION.

The first Edition of this book having been very favourably received by the Press and Public, numerous applications were made to the Author—by Clergy and Laity—for a cheaper issue in order to insure a wider circulation.

The Author submitted the book with these suggestions to the Committee of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, and he is glad to say that they have undertaken the publication of this revised and enlarged Edition.

INTRODUCTION.

THE following pages have been written with the view of providing a brief manual for Englishmen, that will in small compass, comprehensively set forth, and plainly deal with the various questions involved in, and arising out of, the consideration of the Church of England in her threefold aspect as a *National, Established, and Endowed Church*.

In the face of much prevalent misunderstanding, as well as wide-spread misrepresentation, on this question, it has been thought that a plain outlined statement, such as the Author has endeavoured to give in the following pages, may prove useful to many—whether friends or opponents of the Church—in removing wrong impressions, and imparting correct ideas on the subject. It will moreover furnish with material for Church Defence, those who may be disposed, whether in conversation, through the press, or on the platform, to advocate the cause of the Church, a needful thing in these times when the attacks made upon her are so numerous and persistent, and in which Disestablishment and Disendowment are becoming such prominent if not 'practical' political questions.

As the tendency to encroach upon the rights and privileges of the Church, and to lay violent hands upon her property, called into existence in ancient times certain advowees or advocates¹, sometimes called Defenders, whose duty it was to plead her cause, and to defend her privileges and endowments; so it seems as if the numerous

¹ See Hook's Church Dictionary, also Hallam's Europe during the Middle Ages, pp. 101, 102.

attacks upon the Church in these modern times, have rendered it necessary that all her true members should, in their place and position, according to the best of their ability, act as Church Advocates, and be ready not only simply and plainly to state the case on behalf of the Church, but also to correct the misstatements, and refute the fallacious arguments, which are so constantly set forth and so persistently repeated, to her great disadvantage.

But as there are many who, having the will, have not the resources at their disposal to do this, the writer has ventured to think, that the answers in reply to the questions contained in the following pages, may serve as a suggestive outline to those who stand in need of such help; and therefore he has ventured to give this book the title of 'The Englishman's Brief on behalf of his National Church.'

Amongst the points to which the Author has endeavoured to give prominence are:—

(a) That it does not appear from the Old or New Testament record that the union between Church and State is contrary to the teaching of Holy Scripture or of Christ or His Apostles.

(b) That the union between Church and State is not the result of a deliberately formulated theory, but is the outcome of their gradual mutual growth, and inter-dependence during the long course of centuries.

(c) That in this way the Church in the early period of Christian history in this country, became established, and therefore was never established by Act of Parliament.

(d) That her Endowments were never in whole or in part derived from the State, but were of private origin—the free gifts of individual members.

(e) That as such they are *not National*, but Corporate property, vested in thousands of separate Corporations, for the spiritual benefit of the populations of dioceses and parishes, and as such cannot in justice be dealt with by the State otherwise than it deals with the property of other Corporations in the country¹.

In preparing this Brief, it has been very far from the Author's intention to write in a controversial spirit, or to make an attack on any religious body outside the Church of England, or to say a single discourteous word of, or impute other than religious motives to, those who may, from their Ecclesiastical standpoint, regard it their conscientious duty to attack the Church. He has however found it to be impossible fully and satisfactorily to answer many of the questions in the Brief, without referring at considerable length to the state of things which exists in some religious bodies outside the Church of England.

To those who are engaged in efforts, the professed object of which is, by disestablishment and disendowment, to liberate the Church of England from State interference and control, the Author has endeavoured to point out:—

(a) That the carrying out of such a scheme is impossible, and that all unestablished and unendowed religious bodies outside the Church of England who have Trust

¹ When Parliament has dealt with Church property in England through the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, or with other Corporate and Charitable Trust property through the Charity Commissioners, its object has been the better application of the property to the objects for which it was originally intended and the greater benefit of those interested in it, and not its confiscation to state purposes. See Royal Commission of Enquiry as to Church Property, Feb. 4th, 1835, also Charitable Trusts' Act, 1853.

Deeds are and must be, alike with her, subject to the supremacy of the State, both in its Parliament and Law Courts.

(*b*) That with reference to their external affairs, such religious bodies are, by various Acts of Parliament, State-recognized, State-privileged, State-protected, and State-controlled.

(*c*) That with reference to the various provisions of their Trust Deeds, in which their doctrines and religious observances are set forth, and by which they hold their property, they can no more alter them without the authority of Parliament, than Churchmen can alter the contents of the Book of Common Prayer without the sanction of the same authority.

(*d*) That in all their internal affairs, in matters of doctrine, religious observances, and cases of discipline, they are amenable to the supervision, and entirely subject to the decisions, of the State Law Courts; and that from this position it is impossible for any unestablished and unendowed religious body to get free so long as it holds Trust property.

Those who so strenuously urge upon Churchmen the great advantages to be derived from disestablishment and disendowment, ought to be able to supply them with satisfactory proof of these alleged advantages, before asking them to take a leap in the dark; and in seeking such proof the natural questions which fairly suggest themselves are—What is the existing state of things in unendowed and unestablished religious bodies outside the Church of England? Is it such as to encourage Englishmen in making a move towards disestablishment and disendowment?

In attempting to furnish adequate replies to these questions, the Author has availed himself of the experience of such writers and speakers as know most, and are best competent to form a judgment, on these subjects.

He has not called as witnesses any but official or semi-official speakers or writers, speaking or writing in an official or semi-official character, at their formal assemblies, and on behalf of the religious bodies which they represent; and he has made no quotation except from official documents, embodied in the authorized reports of the proceedings of these assemblies.

From these various testimonies it will be seen that the state of things in unestablished and unendowed religious bodies is neither attractive nor encouraging; and that it is not calculated to inspire Churchmen with any desire to give up their present real advantages for those which are alleged to be consequent on disestablishment and disendowment, attended as they are with so many serious drawbacks.

From these testimonies, moreover, Churchmen who may feel dissatisfied with existing defects and abuses within the Church, will see that it is an illusion to seek for their remedy in disestablishment and disendowment; and they will recognize that the wise and effectual policy is to get rid of these defects and abuses by timely and well considered reforms, and to endeavour by earnest and united efforts, to bring about such a measure of readjustment as may be necessary and expedient, in the present relations between Church and State, so as to maintain the Church of England, as the great Historical and National Church of this country for ages to come.
