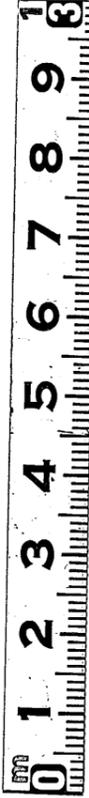


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PROS AND CONS;

OR,

A BRIEF ANALYSIS

OF

THE LATE DEBATE AND DIVISION

ON THE

CATHOLIC QUESTION:

INTENDED

AS A MANUAL TO HONEST AND REFLECTING MEN,

FOR

CORRECTING THEMSELVES,

OR

ENABLING THEM TO CORRECT OTHERS.

WITH A SHORT COMMENTARY.

LONDON:

JAMES RIDGWAY, PICCADILLY.

1827.

PROS AND CONS.

N. B. Each separate topic, as it commences, is distinguished by the mark §, and the arguments under each are numbered in their logical order.

Pros.

§ 1. The Catholics, to a man, demand Emancipation.

§ 1. The Irish members are two to one in favour of Emancipation.

3. Their being elected by Catholics is, on the contrary, the best proof of their disinterestedness; because, if the measure be carried, they will lose their seats.

§ 1. England is the only European State that makes the Catholic religion a political disqualification.

3. The Pope would, no doubt,

Cons.

2. Conceded.

2. Granted; but they are interested, because they are elected by Catholics.

4. No reply.

2. Granted; but other States have permission from the Pope to exercise a Veto on the nomination of the Catholic Bishops.

4. No reply.

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Pros.

allow us the same veto, if our laws permitted a negociation.

§ 1. To refuse Emancipation, is to persist in a breach of the Treaty of Limerick.

3. No one judges of a contract by the interpretation of an interested party.

6. If the Treaty only applied to a part of the people, keep it with that part.

7. The first article of the Treaty, at least, is general.

9. A religion is not free which exposes its professors to civil disabilities.

§ 1. To refuse Emancipation is a breach of the national faith virtually pledged at the Union.

Cons.

2. It is no breach of the Treaty, as interpreted by King William and his Parliament.

4. No reply.

5. It is no breach of the Treaty; because the Treaty only applied to a part of the people.

8. But the first article refers solely to the freedom of religion.

10. No reply.

2. Granted; but the advocates of Emancipation have lost their claim, because they have shifted the ground of their demands in

5

Pros.

3. The advocates of Emancipation have not abandoned the principle of securities; they have only not brought them so prominently forward as formerly; *first*, because their opponents do not demand them as peremptorily; * *secondly*, because these much-talked of securities have been already, with safety, neglected on occasion of the most important concessions, *viz.* in 1793, and in 1818.

§ 1. There is no mode of tranquillizing Ireland but Emancipation.

3. The Catholic priesthood cannot be put down without putting down the Catholic religion, and the Catholic religion cannot be put down without exterminating the population.

* See Lord Liverpool's Speech, in 1825.

Cons.

abandoning the principle of securities.

4. No reply.

2. There are two other modes, *viz.* putting down Catholic Priesthood, or administering equal justice.

4. No reply.

Pros.

of Ireland; and the administration of justice has improved, but the discontent has grown worse.

2. Our ancestors were Catholics, and Europe is Catholic.

2. The King has acknowledged his confidence in the allegiance of Catholics, in Lord Sidmouth's circular letter, on occasion of his visit to Ireland. The Parliament has acknowledged its confidence in the allegiance of Catholics, by 5 Eliz. cap. 1; 18 Geo. III. cap. 60; 31 Geo. III. cap. 32; and 43 Geo. III.; and the allegiance of the Catholics has been proved by their conduct in Ireland, and most remarkably by the adherence of Canada to its allegiance, when the other American States revolted.

§ 1. The Catholics are ready to take the oath of allegiance.

Cons.

§ 1. It is expedient to refuse Emancipation, because the Catholics are hostile to liberty.

§ 1. It is expedient to refuse Emancipation, because Catholics will not bear allegiance to a Protestant King.

2. They are not to be believed on oath.

Pros.

3. Then what good is there in the oath of supremacy being imposed on them?

2. The Catholic religion will not advance the less, for excluding thirty Catholics from Parliament.

2. Our ancestors had a Pretender to fear.

2. We have already abandoned it in part, and to stop where we now are is to adopt a most dangerous policy; namely, that of giving power to the lower classes, and keeping it from the upper.

2. The Catholics could easily elect members for this purpose, or any other, under the existing laws, but they do not.

2. Emancipation would not

Cons.

4. No answer.

§ 1. It is expedient to refuse Emancipation, because the Catholic religion is advancing.

§ 1. It is expedient to refuse Emancipation, because our ancestors deemed the present restrictions the best security for a Protestant King.

§ 1. It is expedient to adhere to the policy of our ancestors.

§ 1. It is expedient to refuse Emancipation, because the Catholics would elect members to subvert the Church of the Empire.

§ 1. It is expedi-

Pros.

give new political power to the Catholics; they already possess all real political power in the elective franchise; what remains to be given is not *power*, but *honour*: to refuse, may insult them, but it can take away real strength only from ourselves.

2. The danger of the Irish Church arises from the magnitude of the Catholic population, and nothing else; and how can the exclusion of thirty individuals from Parliament diminish or check that population?

Cons.

ent to refuse Emancipation, because to give new political power to the Catholics would endanger the Church of Ireland.

§ 1. To refuse Emancipation, is the best security for the Irish Church.

DIVISION.

Pros.

Placemen - - - - 29
Brothers, or Sons of
Placemen - - - - 10
English and Welsh
County Members - 36
Irish Members - - 57

Cons.

Placemen - - - - 42
Brothers, or Sons of
Placemen - - - - 38
County Members:
Welsh and English 39
Irish Members - - 34

COMMENTARY

ON THE

DEBATE OF 5th & 6th MARCH, 1827.

A REMARK that every one will make on this memorable Debate is, that four-fifths of it had nothing to do with the question before the House. The House was called upon to *consider* the condition of the Catholics in Ireland. All parties agreed in representing this as a most momentous object of consideration; and this point being once agreed on, all further debate on the question then proposed ought to have ended, and the resolution acquiesced in: but, instead of this, a long discussion ensued on the merits of the Catholic Question, whereby the opponents of the resolution fell into the gross inconsistency of saying, the Catholic Question ought not to be considered at all,—and yet considering it most fully and at large.

But it may be said, that the *real* question upon this resolution in fact was; whether or no the Catholics should be emancipated? To this I reply, that Parliamentary forms are either good for something, or

not. If they are good for something, let them be supported in practice: if not, let them be abolished. And I may add to this, that whatever interpretation old tacticians in Parliament may put upon these distinctions, the country considers them to mean what they plainly import; and an Irish Catholic will be doubly indignant when he finds, that Parliament will not listen to him at all, to what he would be if they gave him a patient hearing, and rejected his prayer. In support of this assertion, I refer my readers to the comments of the most popular journals in Ireland and England. Since, however, the effect of this strange and devious mode of reasoning probably was, to lead every Member of the House, then present, to consider himself as deliberating on the Catholic Question itself, one is naturally led to inquire, what are the grounds on which the opinion of an honest man ought to rest, upon this important subject? The considerations involved in this inquiry may be ranged under two heads:—1. Matter of Evidence. 2. Matter of Policy. By Evidence, we are to ascertain the evil; by Policy, we are to administer the cure.

First, then, what is the evil? The evil may be considered as compound—part of it may, for the sake of distinction, be called proximate; and part of it, remote. Now, the evidence, as to what is the proximate evil, is most satisfactory. All sides agree in stating the proximate evil to be the discontent of

six millions of Catholics, on the subject of their civil disabilities. The more remote evil, or, in other words, the true *cause* of this discontent, is more disputed; and we have here to judge between conflicting evidence. Some say, the disqualifying laws are the cause, and that the Irish Catholics actually feel themselves insulted and degraded by those laws. Others say, that they do not feel, and cannot feel, any such thing, because the body of them does not *really* suffer at all by those laws; but that they are excited by their demagogues and priesthood to believe themselves injured and degraded. How are we to decide between these two statements? Which are we to believe? We are to believe that which is supported by the best testimony. Now, look to the credit of the principal witnesses on either side; and bear in mind, that their credit rests on two qualities—*disinterestedness* and *knowledge*. Of the former opinion* are, Mr. Plunkett, who may be said to pass his life in Ireland, and who has every advantage for forming a just conclusion on the subject, from his high official situation, great honesty, and great abilities; Sir John Newport, who has also passed the greater part of his long and virtuous life in Ireland, and is admitted, by his opponents as well as his supporters, to be perfectly disinterested in all his views; Mr. Spring Rice, also a resident in Ireland, whose

* I am here confining myself to the Debaters. The balance of evidence, in the Committee of Inquiry, is still stronger.

industry, honesty, and abilities are equally acknowledged.

On the other hand, the only important witness in this debate, who says that the population is only excited by demagogues and the priesthood, and does not, of itself, care about Emancipation, is Mr. Dawson. For it is remarkable, that, as to *this* point, Mr. Peel and Mr. Goulburn, whose knowledge and character place them in the first rank of what are called Anti-Catholics, bear no testimony at all. Now, Mr. Dawson, having belonged to Orange societies, and having headed the faction of the Protestant ascendancy in his county for many years, must have imbibed strong prejudices on the subject, and have a strong *interest* in retaining that power which circumstances have bestowed on him. There is every reason to suppose, also, that he is an *ignorant* witness, since he, for the most part, resides in England. Any one, therefore, who deems this dispute important to the question, must, I think, upon this balance of evidence, be assured that the main body of the Irish Catholics are not merely excited to a sensibility on the subject of Emancipation by their priests and demagogues, but have, themselves, a deep feeling on the question, quite unaffected by the influence of individuals. But it may reasonably be held, that this dispute about the true cause of the discontents is entirely unimportant to the question; for even if it be the priests and demagogues only who excite the

dissatisfaction, it may still fairly be concluded that Emancipation will put an end to it, by taking from these the very basis of their political influence. But whatever may be the *importance* of this dispute, it is at least not the *first* that arises in the discussion of the merits of the question.

The first point to be settled is, that there is *evil* in conceding Emancipation, and the proof of this lies on the enemies of the measure.

If laws had been passed, a century ago, to prohibit Catholics from wearing white hats, and they were now to demand, with one voice, a repeal of those laws (since it could never enter the head of man that *any evil* could result from granting it), should we stop to inquire, what was the *real* cause of the demand? or, what was the real good to result from the concession? or, how long it would serve to content them? So with Catholic Emancipation, the demand is *alone* sufficient to make the concession expedient, whatever may be the cause of that demand, *unless it is shown that some evil will ensue from the concession*. Now I affirm, that this cannot, by possibility, be shown. If I am right, the question of Policy is settled, of course. No man can dispute, that it is *politic* to grant to a people that which they claim, and which, if conceded, can do no injury to them or to others. In this view, therefore, all that can be said on the evils that will result from Catholic Emancipation, may be, for the sake of clearness,

ranged under the second head of the division made above, namely, that of Policy.

What, then, is the grand evil, as it is stated, of granting the claims of the Catholics? The evil is stated, by Mr. Peel, to be the exposure of the Protestant Church and Protestant State (not of Ireland, but of the Empire) to the danger of subversion. Now, in judging of probabilities, what is the principle we go by?—analogy. The argument of analogy is directly against this supposition; for, with what semblance of plausibility can it be contended, that the Catholic religion (the same, confessedly, all over the world) should render its followers more hostile to a predominating Protestant establishment, in Church and State, in our kingdom of Great Britain, than in other kingdoms where that religion prevails? Let it always be remembered, that I am arguing here against the charge made against the Catholics, laity and clergy, of desiring a *total* subversion of Protestantism. I shall presently consider the charge respecting the Irish Establishment alone. I ask, then, if it is not a notorious fact, that there are many states, in Europe and America, where Catholic and Protestant establishments co-exist, without there being any political struggle about ascendancy?—where all that is demanded by either, are rights and privileges *proportioned* to the importance and number of their respective followers—that is to say, rights and privileges to which the wise principle of toleration

entitles them. Do we ever hear of the laymen of these countries fighting for the extension of the territories of their several churches beyond those limits which justice requires? Laymen have, in these times, no zeal about church politics.

Considering, therefore, the character of Catholic statesmen, and the little connexion that appears to subsist between them and the priests of their faith in foreign countries, the utmost that can, in fairness, be maintained by the opponents of Catholic Emancipation is, that this measure might lead to a *co-establishment* of a Catholic church with our Protestant, proportioned to the exigencies of the Catholics, and why not? Have we not abundant reason to conclude, that if such were to become the ecclesiastical constitution of the empire, there would only ensue consequences similar to those which ensue from a like blending of institutions abroad? Why is it more likely, in such an event, that an Irish or an English Catholic should hate an Irish or an English Protestant, on account of his religion; more than a Swiss Catholic is found to hate a Swiss Protestant, or a German Catholic a German Protestant, and so forth? But it is constantly asserted, that the Catholic religion is a religion of aggression; that it still possesses the character of a boundless ambition, to convert or to destroy all those of a different persuasion. Are the persons who assert this acquainted with the state of any European country but Ireland? If they be so, they must know

that what they assert is false; of the religion generally; and, if they have any reflection, they must be struck with the difference in the characters of persons of that persuasion; in respect of a spirit of ambition and aggression, abroad and at home. Now, the tenets of the religion being the same every where, how comes it to pass that Irish Catholics are turbulent, pushing, and ambitious, and others not so? Different effects argue different causes; but the difference cannot lie in the religion: that is the same. Where, then, does it lie? In the difference of their political condition alone.

If analogy be a sound principle for political reasoning, therefore we may safely conclude, that the common idea of the consequences of an establishment, partially Catholic, taking root in this empire, is founded on a very false notion of the state of men's minds on religion in the present age. Such a result could produce no more harm here than it has done elsewhere. It has no where been productive of a spirit of encroachment, and therefore it will not be so here.

But, perhaps, the analogous cases which I have referred to, to show that the very utmost innovation in our ecclesiastical establishment, which could by possibility ensue from Catholic Emancipation, in any view of reason and common sense, is a partial recognition of a Catholic establishment by law, may not appear satisfactory to some minds, because they cannot

refrain from believing, that there is something peculiar in *Irish* Catholicism—that the tenets of that religion work in some new and strange way in the brains of an Irishman, and make him a being totally different in spirit from his brethren abroad. I have stated above, the most rational cause that can be assigned for any perceivable difference in the characters of the followers of Catholicism in Ireland, from their characters in foreign countries, in respect of religious spirit. But it may still by some be believed, that it is not from their condition of civil disqualification, but from their birth and blood, that this difference arises; and that, because they *now, like* all other human beings in similar circumstances, ask for more than they have, they will *always, unlike* all other human beings, ask for more than we give them; that because they now wish, *like* all other men, to be put on a *level* with their fellow subjects, they will hereafter wish, *unlike* all other men, to be *set above* them. Every man, and every body of men, will, no doubt, always desire as much power as they can obtain; but before it can be admitted that the Catholics will, *as a body*—united and co-operating—even *desire* supreme power after Emancipation is granted, it must be shown, by some experience of these days, that an *esprit de corps*, on account of their religion, will continue to subsist among them. What evidence, however, is there of the probability of such a case? Is it their religion that unites them now, as a body, hostile to Protes-

tants, or their state of political proscription? Religion is not now, in any part of the civilized world, a bond of union of *itself* to *politicians*. The political intriguers of the Catholics will, after their political proscription is ended, be no more inclined to co-operate because of their religion being the same, than any Protestant statesmen in Europe; as for instance, Lord Eldon and Mr. Canning are now inclined to co-operate, because *they* are Protestants. It being highly improbable, therefore, that the Catholic religion, of itself, should, in these times, ever form a bond of political union among Catholic laymen, so far Emancipation would weaken their strength; but, for sake of argument, I will suppose that they will still continue politically combined, as unanimously as they are now, although all their civil degradation were ended. I imagine it is not contended that they are *now strong* enough to overturn Church and State, it is only said that they will be then; and therefore it must be supposed, that they will materially gain in strength by the concessions proposed. Mr. Peel has argued this point for the Anti-catholics, as well, perhaps, as it can be argued; I will take it therefore, as the best adversary's case. He says that thirty Catholic Members in the House of Commons, and five or six Catholic Peers in the House of Lords, will *certainly aim* at the overthrow of the Protestant Church and State, and *may* overthrow it. I have shown that, if they ever unite to aim at this, they are unlike all their

brethren in similar circumstances; and not only that, but unlike all other civilized human beings of any religious persuasion in the present age. But if, in contradiction to all the principles of human nature, the Catholic religion united all the admitted Members ever so zealously, for the destruction of the Protestant State and Church, how is it to be accomplished? Let any man look at each successive stage of such a proceeding, and ask himself if there is any probability of any one, or any possibility of all of them being accomplished? One of these thirty Members must be supposed to have the audacity and folly to get up and propose, to a British House of Commons, some measure directly or indirectly tending to undermine the established Church of the *Empire*.

Now, the Anti-Catholics, as well as myself, profess themselves great admirers of our Constitution, and they must therefore be supposed to be great admirers of the House of Commons, as the principal part of that Constitution; and their admiration is either worth nothing, or they must admire it for its justice, for its temperance, for its sensibility to the interests of the people at large, and such other virtues as distinguish a Legislature. But if they are convinced that the House of Commons has these great qualities, with what consistency can they imagine, that it will ever countenance, in any degree, a proposition so monstrous as, that an ecclesiastical establishment adverse to the faith of three-fourths of the people of

this empire, should be forced upon them, in violation of all honesty and justice. But they not only, by adopting this extravagant hypothesis, belie their own opinion of the Constitution, but unconsciously utter the foulest slander against the Protestant religion itself, of which they profess to be the champions. What! are the foundations of our faith so weak, and is the truth of our religion so doubtful, as for the breath of two or three Catholic orators to alienate the affections of the House of Commons from it? and not only of the House of Commons, but of the country at large? And will free Englishmen endure the yoke of a religion in which they do not believe?

Mr. Peel has put the supposed plan somewhat differently; he says, the thirty Catholic Members might have gigantic powers of intellect and eloquence; they might become the principal officers of state; and then they might win the ears of his Majesty; and then they might persuade him that Protestantism was false; and then they might force a Catholic church down the throats of the people. But are those who listen to such arguments aware, that all this is possible at this present moment; that his Majesty's ears are already open to the seductive eloquence of Catholics; that any Catholic nobleman may demand an audience of him to-morrow, and annihilate, by some of those potent charms ascribed to the tenets of the Catholic religion, and the arts of the Catholics, all the frail foundation of the royal faith. Nay, horrible

to relate, his Majesty has already actually had interviews in Ireland with all the Catholic hierarchy, and yet we heard of no remonstrance being made by Mr. Peel, or our bishops, against this hazardous exposure of the Protestant establishment in Church and State; which, nevertheless, has been, somehow or other, miraculously preserved as strong and pure as ever.

Would any Catholic of common sense or sagacity, who had at all weighed the difficulty of obtaining high political stations in this country, or considered the violence of the national prejudice against his religion, ever think of accomplishing the purpose imputed to him in Mr. Peel's argument, by such an uncertain and round-about method, as advancing himself through Parliament to a high office of trust beside his Majesty? Why should not he take one of the much shorter roads, now open to him, to his Majesty's ear—that ear, which is supposed to take such delight in the music of theological controversy? Has he not the press open to him? Can he not prompt the Duke of Norfolk for a few interviews? Where, then, is the evidence of this Catholic ardour for proselytism? The Catholics appear to be so far from feeling it, that they not only make no attempts to propagate their faith, but submit to perpetual attacks from Protestants, without even deigning to give them an answer.

But not only do the Catholics afford us abundant assurance, by their present theological inactivity (if I may be allowed the expression), that they will not

abuse, in the manner supposed by Mr. Peel, the power which he (overlooking existing circumstances and laws) conceives will be, for the first time, placed in Catholic hands by Emancipation; but we know of cases singularly analogous to that of the Catholic Question, where the same foolish prophecies about a spirit of advancement and encroachment were made, and entirely falsified. Swift considered the Union with Scotland as tantamount to the overthrow of the English Church. The hostility of the Presbyterians, in those times, to the Church of England, was certainly not inferior to that of the Catholics now. But have the forty-five Scotch Members ever been deputed to undermine our establishment? Are they *combined* for this desperate purpose? Do they ever think about which Church is uppermost? Are they not divided, like the other Members of the House, among the various political parties?

The repeal of the Sacramental Test was represented nearly in the same way by Swift; and any one who refers to his Letter on that subject, will find that he uses precisely the same arguments about the unreasonableness and encroachments of the Presbyterians, that are now urged against the Catholics. How and when did all this end?—It ended the instant that Presbyterians were treated like other subjects.

I think any one who duly considers these arguments, cannot believe that Catholics, if admitted to Parliament, will either desire, or be able to establish, a Catholic Church on the ruins of the Protestant in

this kingdom. As to the demand of some provision for their Church, proportioned to the amount of its followers, I confess that I never could see any thing unreasonable in it, particularly with the analogous case of the Presbyterians before me; but I beg those who think such a demand unreasonable, or impious, or whatever else they please to call it, to consider, that it is just as likely to be made by Catholics excluded from Parliament as by Catholics admitted to it; and Emancipation can make no kind of difference in the justice or injustice of the claim.

Such is the opinion that common reflection has taught me to form of the Catholic Question. The steps by which I arrive at it are very simple. I observe (a singular and lucky circumstance in so controverted a matter), that one fundamental point is allowed by both parties—namely, the unanimous sense of the Catholics, and the intensity of their feelings on this subject. The range of the discussion thus becomes very much narrowed; and I find I have neither any need of inquiring the advantages such concessions may procure, nor the real cause of the dissatisfaction expressed, till I can discover some evils in granting them. I try to discover them, and I find absolutely none; and if any man will, by a little of what Newton has called patient thinking, solve the question, Why should we refuse? to himself—if he will submit all his favourite prejudices to the torturing scrutiny of reason—if he will argue on the principles of action that work on the living gene-

ration, and not suffer his mind to be led away by terms conveying no true and distinct ideas—if he will not suffer the constitution to be confounded, in his understanding, with a bundle of unjust and useless laws, nor the Pope to fright his imagination with the phantom of a power long since politically defunct, he will soon start from his delusion, and be no more able to trace its causes than to account for a dream, or explain what he has been saying in his sleep.

FINIS.