

Rome Ruler?!

John Redmond and Westminster's Catholic Interest, 1900-1918



John Redmond, chairman of the Irish Parliamentary Party (1900-1918).

Irish constitutional nationalism and the Irish Catholic Church have always enjoyed a close, if not always convivial relationship. From the false dawn of the Home Rule movement in the 1880s, Ulster Unionists picked up on this close alliance, fearing that 'Home Rule' would result in oppressive and theocratic 'Rome Rule'.



Archbishop, later Cardinal, Francis Bourne, Archbishop of Westminster (1903-1935). Bourne presented Redmond with a dilemma between his loyalties to his political allies, the Liberal Party, and the Catholic Church over the 1906 Education Bill.



A caricature of Redmond engaged in one of his characteristic oratorical denunciations. Pen and ink drawing by Francis Caruthers Gould, undated.

This project aims to explore the relationship between John Redmond, the chairman of the Irish Parliamentary Party from 1900, and the Catholic Church in both Ireland and Britain. Redmond was the political heir of Charles Stewart Parnell and the leader of the Parnellite faction that stood in defiance of the clerical wing of the Home Rule party after the bitter saga of Parnell's divorce scandal, political demise, and death between 1889 and 1891.



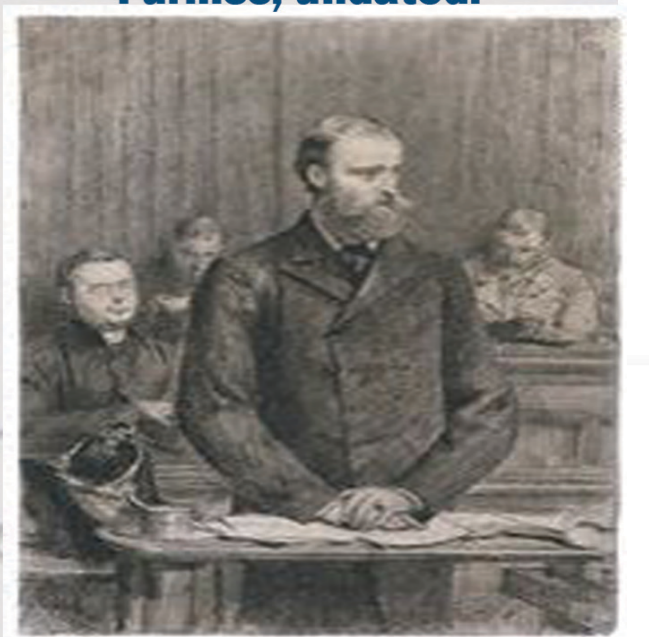
Augustine Birrell, Chairman of the Board of Education (1905-1907) and chief instigator of the 1906 Education Act which was extensively revised and challenged by Redmond in Parliament under the advice and backing of the Catholic hierarchy in both England and Ireland. Pen and ink drawing by Harry Furniss, undated.

Following the turbulent and divisive 1890s, Redmond re-emerged as the leader of a party held together by compromise and a will to once more hold the balance at Westminster. This project shows how Redmond quickly re-deemed the favour of the Catholic Church and how he and his party repeatedly represented the interests and concerns of the Catholic hierarchy, on both sides of the Irish Sea, in Westminster between 1900 and Redmond's death in 1918.



While most of this project deals with Redmond's relationship with the Irish and English episcopacy, there is also a significant corpus of correspondence between Redmond and lower ranks of the Catholic Clergy. Here Redmond is pictured conversing with a Jesuit priest outside his old alma mater, Clongowes Wood College SJ, Clane, Co. Kildare.

This period saw Redmond come into conflict with both Liberals and Conservatives in his defence of the episcopacy's views on contentious issues such as education, labour laws, and the treatment of political prisoners to name but a few.



William Walsh, Archbishop of Dublin (1885-1921), seated behind Charles Stewart Parnell as the latter is cross-examined during his divorce trial, The Graphic, 11 May 1889. Walsh went on to work closely with Redmond on the University Question prior to the Irish Universities Act of 1908.

