

A LECTURE ON THE  
ANTECEDENT CAUSES  
OF THE IRISH FAMINE IN 1847  
BY BISHOP JOHN HUGHES, NEW YORK 1847

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A  
L E C T U R E  
ON THE  
ANTECEDENT CAUSES  
OF THE  
I R I S H F A M I N E I N 1 8 4 7,

DELIVERED UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE GENERAL COMMITTEE FOR  
THE RELIEF OF THE SUFFERING POOR OF IRELAND,

BY THE RIGHT REV. JOHN HUGHES, D.D.,

BISHOP OF NEW-YORK,

AT THE BROADWAY TABERNACLE,

March 20th, 1847.

NEW-YORK:  
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151 FULTON-STREET.

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# **A Lecture on the Antecedent Causes of the Irish Famine in 1847**

**Delivered under the auspices of the  
General Committee for the Relief of the Suffering Poor of  
Ireland**

**By the Right Rev. John Hughes, D.D.,**

**Bishop of New York**

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**THE** year 1847 will be rendered memorable in the future annals of civilization, by two events; the one immediately preceding and giving occasion to the other, namely, Irish famine, and American sympathy and succour. Sympathy has, in its own right, a singular power of soothing the moral sufferings of the forlorn and unfortunate. Where is no heart so flinty, but that, if you approach it with kindness, touch it gently with the magic wand of true sympathy, it will be melted, like the rock of the wilderness, and tears of gratitude on the cheeks of the sufferer, will be the prompt response, to those of interest, of pity, of affect in imagination, he will have discovered on yours. Who will say that Ireland is not an unfortunate sufferer? But since her sufferings have become known to other, and happier nations, who will say that she is forlorn? America offers her, not a sympathy of mere sentiment and feeling, but that substantial sympathy which her condition requires. When the first news of your benevolence, and of your efforts, shall have been wafted across the ocean, it will sound as sweetly in her agonized ear, as the voice of angels whispering hopes. It will cause her famine-shrunken heart to expand again to its native fullness, whilst from day to day the western breezes will convey to her echoes of the rising wing, the swelling chorus, the

universal outburst, in short, of American Sympathy. The bread with which your ships are freighted, will arrive too late for many a suffering child of hers; but the news that it is coming, will perchance reach the peasant's cabin, in the final hour of his mortal agony. Unable to speak, gratitude will wreath, in feeble smile, for the last time, his pinched and pallid countenance. It is the smile of hope, as well as of gratitude; hope, not for himself, it comes too late for that, but for his pale wife and famished little ones. He will recline his head more calmly, he will die with yet more subdued resignation, having discovered at the close of his life, that truth which the whole training and experience of his hard lot in this world had almost taught him to deny? namely, that there is humanity in mankind, and that its blessings are about to reach even his cabin, from a quarter on which he had no other claim, than that of his misfortune.

But I have not come here to enlarge upon the feelings of sympathy that have been aroused in our own bosoms, nor yet on those of gratitude that will soon be awakened in the breasts of the Irish people. I come, not to describe the inconceivable horrors of a calamity which, in the midst of the nineteenth century, eighteen hundred and forty-seven years after the coming of Christ, either by want or pestilence, or both combined, threatens almost the annihilation of a whole Christian people. The newspapers tell us, that this calamity has been produced by the failure of the potato crop; but this ought not to be a sufficient cause consequence: the potato is but one species of the endless varieties of food which the Almighty has provided for the sustenance of his creatures; and why is it, that the life or death of the great bode of any nation should be so little regarded as to be left dependent on the capricious growth of a single root? Many essays will be published; many eloquent speeches pronounced; much precious time unprofitably employed, by the State economists of Great Britain, assigning the causer causes of the scourge which now threatens to desolate Ireland. I shall not enter into the immediate antecedent circumstances or influences, that have produced this results Some will say that it is the cruelty of unfeeling and rapacious landlords; others will have it, that it is the improvident and indolent character of the people themselves; others, still, will say that it is owing to the poverty of the country, the want of capital, the general ignorance of the people, and especially, their ignorance in reference to the improved science of agriculture I shall not question the truth or the fallacy of any of these theories; admitting them all, if you will, to contain each more or less of truth, they yet do not explain the famine which they are cited to account for. They are themselves to be accounted for, rather as the effects of other causes, than as the real causes of effects, such as we now witness and deplore: for in the moral, social, political, and commercial, as well as in the mere outward physical world, there is a certain and necessary connexion between cause and effect, reaching from end to end, through the whole mysterious web of human occurrences. So that, in the history of man, from the origin of the world, especially in his social condition, no active thought, that is, no thought

which has ever been brought out into action or external manifestation, is, or can be isolated, or severed from its connection with that intricate universal, albeit mysterious, chain of causes and of consequences, to which it is, as it ever has been, the occupation of mankind to add new links every year, and every day.

Of the attempt, then, be not considered too bold, I shall endeavour to lay before you a brief outline of the primary, original causes, which, by the action and reaction of secondary and intermediate agencies, have produced: the rapacity of landlords, the poverty of the country, the imputed want of industry among its people, and the other causes to which the present calamity will be ascribed by British statesmen. I shall designate these causes by three titles; first, incompleteness of conquest; second, bad government; third, a defective or Vicious system of social economy. Allow me first, to say a word of the country itself.

Ireland, as you-know, is not larger in its geographical extent, than two-thirds of the State of New York. An island on the western borders of Europe, its bold coast is indented with capacious bays and safest harbours. For its size it has many large and navigable rivers; and it is said that no part of the island is more than fifty miles from tide-water. Its climate is salubrious, although humid with the healthy vapours of the Atlantic; its hills, (like its history,) are canopied, for the most part, with clouds; its sunshine is more rare, but for that very reason, if for no other, far more smiling and beautiful than ever beamed from Italian skies. Its mountains are numerous and lofty; its green valleys fertile as the plains of Egypt, enriched by the overflowings of the Nile. There is no country on the globe that yields a larger average of the substantial things which God has provided for the support and sustenance of human life. And yet, there it is that man has found himself for generations in squalid misery, in tattered garment often as at Present; haggard and emaciated with hunger; his social state a contrast and an eye-sore, in the midst of the beauty and riches of nature that smile upon him, as if in cruel mockery of his unfortunate and exceptional condition.

The invasion of Ireland took place toward the close of the twelfth century, under the Anglo-Norman King, Henry II. An Irish chieftain had been expelled from his country by the virtuous indignation which a flagrant act of immorality had aroused against him, in the minds of his countrymen and of his own subjects. He had recourse to the British monarch: the king merely gave him letters patent, authorizing such adventurers as were so disposed, to aid him in recovering his estates. Such adventurers were not wanting. They embarked and landed under the banner of invasion, upheld by the criminal hand of an Irish traitor. They succeeded in effecting a partial conquest. The native population were driven out of that portion of the country which stretches along the east and southeastern coast, which afterwards became known in history as the English Pale. This portion of the kingdom, less than one-third, may be considered as having been really conquered by the adventurers; but the rest of the island

continued as before, under its ancient princes and proprietors; some of them having simply recognized the monarch of England as their superior lord, by agreeing to pay a mere nominal tribute. Here is the real point in history, at which the fountain of Ireland's perennial calamities is to be placed. Many a tributary streamlet of bitterness came afterwards, to swell the volume of its poisoned waters; but this is the fountain which supplied and gave its direction to the current. The king displayed, when he visited Ireland, an authentic or a forged document from the Pope, authorizing the invasion. There is no evidence, however, except what rested on the royal testimony, that such a document had been granted; but whether or not, it had no more effect in the success of the invasion, than if it had been so much blank Parchment.

The success of the invasion was due, on the one side, to the superior skill of the adventurers, guided, if not led on by an Irish chief; and on the other side, was owing to immemorial, and apparently interminable, divisions among the Irish leaders themselves. They prosecuted their own private piques against each other, as I fear they would do again, no matter how formidable the common enemy of the common people that might be thundering at their gates. If the invaders had prosecuted the contest to a final issue, that issue might possibly have united them for once; but the English, whether from weakness or from policy, were satisfied with what had been already achieved.

The conquest was thus cut short, almost at the opening of the book; and the calamities that have resulted to Ireland, from that time until our own days are but so many supplements, many of them bloody ones, to complete the volume. The invaders were pleased to consider themselves as having conquered the Irish nation; and as having acquired right of supreme dominion over the Irish soil. The king divided the lands of the whole kingdom into ten sections, or regions, and bestowed them upon as many of his principal followers. Having flung this apple of discord between the old and new race of the Irish people, he sailed back to England, - had the emerald gem of Erin's sovereignty set among the jewels of his crown, and called himself Lord of Ireland. The consequence of his distribution was, from this time that every portion of the Irish soil, every estate, had two sets of owners; the one, owner by justice, hereditary title, and immemorial possession; the other, owner by assumed right of conquest, and the sign manual of Henry II. If Henry had conquered the country, he might have made these grants a reality; but as it was, they were simply as royal letters-patent, authorizing the iniquities and disorders of all kinds which make up the history of the relations between the Irish people and what was called the English Pale.

The invaders regarded the natives as illegal occupiers of the soil -- as barbarians, who stood between them and the peaceable possession of their property. To attempt to dispossess the native population, however, by force, would have been a dangerous experiment; and it makes

one shudder to see the persevering ingenuity with which the aid inhuman legislation was invoked, with which laws for the protection of cruelty and treachery of every description were enacted, to accomplish by piecemeal and by and, the complete conquest which they were too feeble or too politic to refer, once for all, to the more humane decision of the battlefield.

If we look at the legislation of the Pale for the entire period of four hundred years, we will find the tone of its enactments to be always in harmony with this purpose- laws against intermarriages with the natives -- laws against their language - laws against their manners and customs - and even laws making criminal for a liegeman of England to allow a native horse to graze on his pasture. In the minds of the invaders,- in the acts of Parliament,-in royal proclamations, during all those centuries down to the reign of Queen Elizabeth, the natives are designated as aliens and Irish enemies. No part of the soil of their country was recognized as theirs. They were denied all share in the benefits of English laws; the iniquities of the royal grant, supported by the iniquities of legislation, made it lawful for the invaders to kill or rob "the mere Irish," as the accidents of opportunity, or the caprice of expediency, might direct. If any of the natives appealed to the law for redress, it was enough for the defendant to prove, that the would-be plaintiff was a mere Irishman, and did not belong to any of the five families to whom the protection of the British laws had been, by special favour, extended. This plea arrested all farther proceedings in the court. Frequently, during this long interval, had the natives petitioned and implored to be admitted into the Pale, and under the protectorship of the laws; but as often was their petition rejected. On the other hand, their own sovereignty was paralyzed and rendered impotent by the invasion, and the disorders which resulted from its incompleteness. They were broken up and divided, so that they were deprived of all opportunity for social or physical improvement, by any legislative organization of their own. This sketch conveys a taint idea of the condition of Ireland, during nearly four hundred years after the invasion.

The English Pale, meantime, instead of enlarging its boundaries, had often been obliged to curtail them; and as late as the reign of Henry VIII, it was restricted to only four counties out of the whole kingdom. Enough has been said, I think, to illustrate the principle with which I set out, that to assume the fiction of a conquest; to accomplish it by halves; to leave it incomplete; to repair its deficiency, which must be repaired, by other means, which must be fraudulent, is the most cruel policy, as well as the most injurious to both, that a strong nation can employ in the subjugation of a weak one. If it must be done at all, it will be mercy to do it thoroughly so that the sword shall have determined, to the conviction of all parties, the reality of the new relations that have sprung up, by its decision, between the conquerors and the conquered. The bad policy of the incomplete conquest of Ireland had to be repaired, or rather completed, in the sixteenth century, by commencing the work anew: for, it was only

under Queen Elizabeth, who was no half-way ruler, but who, whatever else she may have been, was, I had almost said, a king every inch of her, that Ireland was finally crushed, if not conquered.

It would have been, however, too humiliating to British sovereignty to supply the original defect, under the original name, of conquest. It was, therefore, now to be accomplished under the title and form of "reducing insubordinate and rebellious subjects:"- although it required the help of a strong legal fiction to regard as rebels, those who had hitherto been repulsed from the protection of the law. But even this reduction could not be accomplished, it seems, without cruelties, for which the annals of mankind, in the most barbarous ages of the world, furnish no parallel. It is a singular coincidence and full of admonition, that in this second conquest, British statesmen recommended-and military officers employed-and lords deputies approved of -- FAMINE as their most effectual instrument and ally in the work of subjugation.

The occupation of the troops, from year to year, was to prevent the cultivation of the land, to destroy the growing crops already planted, for "famine," says the English historian who records the fact, "was judged the speediest and most effectual way of reducing the Irish." The consequences were, that whole provinces were left desolate, without an inhabitant, except in the towns and villages; that those whose misfortune permitted them to escape the sword, sometimes offered themselves, their wives and children, to be slain by the army, rather than for that slow, horrid, death of famine and starvation, which had been reserved for them; for we can all conceive that, compared with the deliberate use of this instrument of war, against a rural and scattered agricultural population, the Indian's tomahawk becomes a symbol of humanity. Meantime, the old chieftains of clans, the owners of the soil, the leaders of the people, the "great rebels," as they were called, were becoming fewer and fewer. Some perished on the battle-field -- they were the most fortunate; others gave themselves up on the word of honour and protection, and were then impeached and executed. Some were slain at the festive board of the invading commander, whose invitation to the banquet they had accepted, thinking foolishly, that the laws of truce and hospitality made ad their rights not only secure, but even sacred, under the tent of a true soldier; and thus, in few years, the Irish aliens, the Irish enemies, or the Irish rebels if you will, were indeed reduced; and now there was a prospect of the invaders being permitted to enter into peaceable possession of those estates which, by right of conquest, as they understood it, had been theirs from the first invasion.

Elizabeth proposed to colonize the whole province of Ulster with English settlers, but she did not live to accomplish her project.

The plantation of Ulster remained to be carried into effect by her successor, James I. He secured to himself a new and better title; he confiscated to the crown sixteen counties of Ulster, in one day; and parcelled themes out, chiefly among his Scotch rather than his English friends, the native, the hereditary population having been, of course, sent adrift. The king and his ministers congratulated themselves, and compared this act of his Majesty to the conduct of a wise and thrifty husbandman, who transplants his trees according to the soil in which they will grow best. After James came Charles I, and the civil wars in England. When other resources failed the monarch, the fragments of property, real and personal, that still remained to the Irish people, were strained into the supply of his empty coffers. He obtained from them, by royal promise, £120,000 sterling, for what was called "Graces;" the principal of which was, what every American inherits by birthright-liberty of conscience.

He pocketed the money, but I am sorry to say he refused the "Graces." His deputy in Ireland projected and carried out a system for the confiscation, in detail, of private estates, under a "Commission "for inquiry into defective titles. The jury that refused to find a verdict for the crown, under this system, was punished and ruined; and as to the judges, the lord deputy writes to his royal master, that he had got them to attend to this business, as if it were their own personal affair, by promising four shillings in the pound to the judge who presided at the trial, out of the first year's income from all confiscated estates. Under the Commonwealth, Ireland is the scene of new exterminations, -new confiscations,-new foreign settlers, amidst the wrecks and ruins of the native population. On the Restoration, the loyalists of England and Scotland were reinstated in their rights; but in Ireland, the loyalists were abandoned by the crown; and the followers of Cromwell confirmed in their possessions. Nay, James II came in on the title of a Cromwellian, and appropriated to himself, in one instance, no less than from 70,000 to 140,000 acres, that had been confiscated by Cromwell to punish the fidelity of its rightful owners for adhering to the cause of that miserable James' unfortunate father. Finally, that Country which had been conquered so often, submitted at last to William III, successor to James on the English throne-submitted, but still not to the sword of a conqueror, but to the faith of a king, stamped on a written instrument, mutually agreed upon by him and the last representative of unconquered Ireland, called the " Treaty of Limerick." But every article of it, autograph, royal seal, and all, was repudiated the moment it was safe to do so.

The enactment of the entire penal code, soon afterwards, is evidence of the entire and deliberate violation of all the articles of the treaty of Limerick. By that code, the inhabitants of Ireland were again divided into two classes; the one consisting of those whose conscience we allow them to take the State oath, on the subject of religion: to them high privileges were secured. But penalties were enacted against those who could not, or would not, swear that oath. The great overwhelming majority of the Irish people refused the test; and the penal law

came quickly to punish them, even in their family relations and domestic circle. It invested any child, who might conform to the test prescribed, with the rights of property enjoyed by his father. It invested the wife with rights of property over the husband. If any of those who had refused to swear, purchased an estate for any amount of money, any of the others, who had taken the oath, could dispossess him without paying one shilling for such estate. Of any of the former class owned a horse worth fifty or one hundred pounds, any of the latter class had a right, by law, to tender five pounds and tell him to dismount. If any of the former class, by his skill and industry in agriculture, raised the value of his land, so as to yield a profit equal to one-third of the rent, any of the latter could enter on the Profits of his labour, and take possession of his land. These laws continued for between eighty and ninety years, down to the period of American Independence. And in this enactment we see what a penalty was inflicted on the agricultural industry of the Irish-what a premium was held out to encourage that indolence which British statesmen impudently complain of.

The same system has been continued to the present day: as if some cruel law of destiny had determined that the Irish people should be kept at the starving point through all times; since the landlord, even now claims the right, and often uses it, of punishing the industry of his tenant, by increasing the rent, in proportion to the improvement the tenant makes on his holding. If then it be true, that the Irish are indolent, which I deny, the cause could be sufficiently explained by the penalties which a bad government has inflicted upon them, in their own country, for the crime of being industrious. Then, if it be said, as a reproach, that the Irish are ignorant, let it be remembered that this same code of penal laws closed up the schools of popular education; that the schoolmaster was banished for the crime of teaching, and if he returned he was liable to be treated as a felon. If ignorance of the people, then, be the cause of the famine, enough has been said to point out the cause of the ignorance itself.

The melancholy training of so long a period of oppression served to bring out, in the shades of adversity, virtues which perhaps would not have bloomed or borne fruit in the sunnier atmosphere of national prosperity. Filial reverence, domestic affections, always congenial to the Irish heart, had here ample opportunity of proving themselves, and were never found wanting. The law put it in the power of any son, by declaring himself a Protestant, to enter immediately upon the rights of property enjoyed by his father and his family; but no son of Irish parents was ever known to have availed himself of the law. As a matter of expediency, it was customary for the Catholic proprietor, for the protection of his property, to vest the legal title in some Protestant neighbour, and again it is consoling to know that, notwithstanding the temptations presented by these iniquitous laws, there is no instance of that private confidence having been violated. These laws originated at the close of the seventeenth century, and continued in force until two years after a British general, Burgoyne, turned the point of his sword to his own breast, and presented the hilt to the hand of his

conqueror, after the battle of Saratoga. Then came the only brief, bright period of Ireland's history: the period of her volunteers, of her statesmen and orator - her illustrious Grattan rousing the patriotism of his country, and emancipating her long enslaved Parliament. The period of her Bushe, her Flood, her Curran, add the other great names that have made Irish eloquence as immortal as the Anglo-Saxon tongue. But the sun of her brief day soon declined and set, shrouded in clouds of blood, for it closed by the banishment or martyrdom of her patriots - her noble-hearted Emmets and Fitzgeralds. It was brought to an end by a new policy, conducted in the old spirit. A rebellion had been deliberately fomented by the agents of a foreign government, until it reached the desired point of and then it was crushed with promptness and with cruelty. Martial law for the people, gold for the senate - a bayonet for the patriot who loved Ireland, and a bribe for the traitor who did not, led to the Act called the Unions in which the charter of Irish nationality was destroyed, but I trust not for ever.

The rest you are all acquainted with; it has occurred in our day, and within our memory. It will be manifest from what has been said that the causes which have prevented the prosperity of Ireland, the development of her material resources, the cultivation of her mind, have existed from an early date; and, under one form or another, have been in perpetual activity. She has hardly been permitted to enjoy repose sufficient even for a fair experiment of improvement. During the first four hundred years after the invasion, her people were outlawed because they were mere Irish. Afterwards, when the English laws were extended to her, in 1610, her people were again outlawed or worse, not now because they were Irish, but because they were Catholics. By adhering to their old religion, their rulers supposed them to have shipwrecked their hopes of happiness in another world, which would have been misfortune enough, without inflicting punishments for their mistake so well calculated to destroy their prosperity here. At the commencement of these changes the law required them to attend the church and service of the State religion; if they attended, did not understand a syllable of that service, which was conducted in the English language: if they did not attend, their property was seized by fines for their nonattendance, £20 a Sunday. Then, either by grants or confiscations, under Charles the First, to whose cause they were loyal, their property was still diminished. Under Cromwell, they were punished and plundered both as idolaters, and because they had been faithful to their king. Under the Restoration, all preceding iniquities as regarded the ownership of property were confirmed. Under William III and his successors, the penal laws were applied in the same way, not to the body politic at large, but with an ingenuity of detail, to every joint, and sinew and muscle, as if the object were to paralyze all effort at national amelioration. Just in proportion as the struggle of these colonies for independence was successful, in that proportion did the policy of the British government relax the pressure of this weighty bondage of the Irish people.

We sometimes hear comparisons instituted between the prosperity, industry, and moral, or at least, intellectual condition, of the Scotch, and the poverty of all kinds of the Irish; and the conclusion is generally adverse to the latter, either on the score of national character or of religion. Some even assert that the Catholic religion is in reality the cause of the poverty and degradation of Ireland. I have said enough to show that it has been at least an occasion; but I am willing to go farther, and admit that in one sense it has been a cause too; for I have no hesitation in saying that if the Irish, by any chance, had been Presbyterians, they would have, from an early day, obtained protection for their natural rights, or they would have driven their oppressors into the sea. The Scotch escaped nearly all the calamities I have described; they were never conquered; their soil was never taken from beneath their feet; they merged themselves spontaneously at their own time, and on their own terms, into the State of England. They kept also, the property of their old religion for their own social and religious use. Already, before the change, parish schools were established in Scotland; after the change these were multiplied, improved, and endowed out of the old church property.

But in Ireland, everything was the reverse: church buildings, monasteries, glees, tithes, from year to year, all went by the board: all were subtracted from the aggregate of the national wealth. And even in modern times, we read of incumbents appointed to ecclesiastical livings, entering on their cure or rather sinecure, penniless, and after a few years, by the probate of their own wills, leaving to their foreign heirs, in some instances, as much as three, and four, hundred thousand pounds sterling, if they ventured to suggest a defective or vicious system of social and political economy as the other great cause of Ireland's peculiarly depressed condition. By social economy I mean that effort of society, organized into a sovereign state, to accomplish the welfare of all its members. The welfare of its members is the end of its existence-" *Salus populi, suprema lex.*" It would be a reproach to say that Christianity conceived a meaner or a lower idea of its obligation. This idea, it may not, perhaps, be possible to realize fully in practice under any system; but it should never be lost sight of the system which now prevails has lost sight of it, to a great extent. It is called the free system,- the system of competition,-the system of making the wants of mankind a regulator for their supplies.

It had its origin in the transition of society from that state of mitigated slavery which was called feudalism and serfage, as they prevailed in England. As regards the mere physical position, food, clothing, lodging, of the entire people of England, there is no doubt that the old system provided better for it than the present one. The old Barons never allowed their serfs to die of a hunger which they were not willing to share. As the latter emerged from serfdom, and before they were able to take their ranks with advantage, in a more honourable sphere of free labour, the church property, of its great means constituted a Providence of protecting for this class. When the church property was distributed among the nobles of

England this resource failed, and then it was that Poor Laws were enacted, and taxes began to be levied by the State, from the poor, for the support of the pauper. Until then, the aggregate physical comfort, if not the aggregate wealth, of the English people, taking them altogether members of one State, was greater than it ever has been since, or so far as we can see, is likely ever to be again. There were not, indeed, those colossal individual fortunes which now exist, but neither were there on the other hand those abysses of physical and moral destitution, which are now yawning on every side for the new victims, whom the pressure of the present system is pushing, every day, nearer and nearer to their fatal brink. By this system England has, I admit, become the richest country on the globe; but riches are by no means synonymous with prosperity, when we speak of the social condition of a whole people. And this system, though it may work well, even for national prosperity, in certain given times and circumstances, yet carries within it, in the palmiest days of its success, a principle of disease, which acts first on the lower extremities of the social body; and with the lapse of time will make itself felt, at the very heart and seat of life. It is an appalling reflection that out of the active and productive industry of Great Britain and Ireland, provision must be made for the support of between four and five millions of paupers. This number will be increased by every depressing crisis in commerce and in trade; by every blight of sterility which Providence permits to fall on the fields of the husbandman; and the experiment of Sir Robert Peel, in imposing on the wealthy an income tax, may be regarded as a premonitory warning that, although the time may not yet have arrived, it is approaching, and, perhaps, at no very remote distance, when the mountains of individual wealth in England shall be made comparatively low, and the valleys of pauperism will be partially filled up. I am aware that in speaking on this subject, I will go as it were in opposition to the almost universal sentiment of this age, but for the expression of my opinion I will offer you this apology, that provided you do me the honour to hear, I will not ask you to coincide in so much as one of the conclusions at which my mind has arrived in regard to it.

I know that no living man is accountable for the system of which I am about to complain; it is older than we are, it is the invisible but all-pervading divinity of the Fiscal, the unseen ruler of the temporal affairs of this world. Kings and Emperors are but its prime ministers, premiers and parliaments but its servants in livery; money is the symbol of its worship, we are all its shows, without any power to emancipate ourselves; the dead and the dying in Ireland are its victims.

It will not be disputed, I presume, that the present system of social and political economy resolves itself, when analyzed, into a primary element of pure selfishness. The principle that acts, the mainspring that sets all its vast and intricate machinery in motion is self-interest; whether that interest assume a national form in the commercial rivalry of States, or an individual form in the pursuits, the industry, and enterprise of private persons. The

conqueror, indeed, carries off great spoils from the contest; but his enjoyment of them would be disturbed if he could only hear the cries of the wounded and the dying who have fallen in the battle.

The true system, in my opinion, would regard the general interest first, as wholly paramount, and have faith enough to believe that individual interest would, in the long run, be best promoted by allowing it all possible scope for enterprise and activity within the general limits. Then individual welfare would be the result and not the antecedent, as it is when the order is reversed. The assumption of our system is, that the healthy antagonisms of this self-interest, which, as applied to the working classes, its advocates sometimes designate pompously "the sturdy self-reliance of an operative," will result finally in the general good. I am willing to admit, that in the fallen condition of human nature, self-interest is the most powerful principle of our being, giving impulse and activity to all our individual undertakings, at in that way, to the general operations of life. But unfortunately this system leaves us at liberty to forget the interest of others. The fault which I impute to it, however, is that it values wealth too much, and man too little; that it does not take a large and comprehensive view of self-interest; that it does not embrace within its protecting sphere, the whole entire people, weak and strong, rich and poor, and see as its first and primary care, that no member of thy social body, no man shall be allowed to suffer or perish from want, except by the agency of his own crime. The fault that I find with it, it that in countries of limited territorial surface and dense population, by a necessary process it works down a part of the community, struggling with all their might to keep up, into a condition not merely of poverty, but also of destitution; and then treats that poverty, which itself had created, as a guilt and an infamy.

The fault that I find with it, is that whilst it allows, and properly so, competition to be the life of trade, it allows it also to be, oftentimes, the death of the trader. The premier of England is reported to have said not long since, "that nothing prevented him from employing government vessels to carry bread to a starving people, except his unwillingness to disturb the current of trade." Never was oracle of a hidden and a heartless deity uttered more faithfully, or more in accordance with the worship of its votaries, than in the language here imputed to the British minister, who may be fairly regarded as the living high priest of political economy. To put public vessels in competition with merchantmen, in the low business of mere trade, would indeed have been wrong and unworthy of a great ruler; but if the profits of trade had been curtailed in the proportion of three or four per cent per annum, during this crisis of the famine, it would have saved many lives, and yet not have inflicted a wound or a scar on the health of commerce.

The fault that I find with the system, then, is, that it not only allows but sanctions and approves of a principles which operates so differently in two provinces of the same State, divided only by a channel of the sea. It multiplies deposits of idle money in the banks on one side of that channel, and multiplies dead and coffinless bodies in the cabins, and along the highways, on the other.

The fault that I find with it, is, that it guarantees the right of the rich man, to enter on the fields cultivated by the poor man whom he calls his tenant, and carry away the harvest of his labour, and this, whilst it imposes on him no duty to leave behind at least food enough to kee that poor man alive, until the earth shall again yield its fruits. The fault that I find with it, is, that it provides wholesome food, comfortable raiment and lodgings for the rogues, and thieves, and murderers, of its dominions, whilst it leaves the honest, industrious, virtuous peasant, to stagger at his labour through inanition, and fall to rise no more! O! if this system be all in all, why did he not, in his forlorn state, entitle himself to its advantages? Why did he not steal or commit murder? For then the protection of our modern Christian governments, would be extended to him, and he would not be allowed to die of want.

I may be told that I avail myself unfairly of an extraordinary calamity to prove the defects of our present system; I may be told that the famine in Ireland as a mysterious visitation of God's providence, but I do not admit any such plea. I fear there is blasphemy in charging on the Almighty, what is the result of his own doings. Famine in Ireland is, and has been for many years, as the cholera in India, indigenou. As long as it is confined to a comparatively few cases in the obscure and sequestered parts of the country, it may be said that the public administrators of social and political economy are excusable, inasmuch as it had not come under their notice; but in the present instance, it has attracted the attention of the whole world. And yet they call it God's famine! No! no! God's famine is known by the general scarcity of food, of which it is the consequence; there is no general scarcity, there has been no general scarcity of food in Ireland, either the present, or the past year, except in one species of vegetable. The soil has produced its usual tribute for the support of those by whom it has been cultivated; but political economy found the Irish people too poor to pay for the harvest of their own labour, and has exported it to a better market, leaving them to die of famine, or to live on alms; and this same political economy authorizes the provision merchant, even amidst the desolation, to keep his doors locked, and his sacks of corn tied up within, waiting for a better price, whilst he himself is perhaps at his desk, describing the wretchedness of the people and the extent of the misery; setting forth for the eye of the first lord of the treasury, with what exemplary patience the peasantry bear their sufferings, with what admirable resignation they fall down through weakness at the threshold of his warehouse, without having even attempted to burst a door, or break a window.

Such conduct is praised everywhere; even Her Majesty, in a royal speech, did not disdain to approve of it; and it is, in truth, deserving of admiration: for the sacredness of the rights of property must be maintained at all sacrifices, unless we would have society to dissolve itself into its original elements; still the rights of life are dearer and higher than those of property; and in a general famine like the present, there is no law of Heaven, nor of nature, that forbids a starving man to seize on bread wherever he can find it, even though it should be the loaves of proposition on the altar of God's temple. But, I would say to those who maintain the sacred and inviolable rights of property, if they would have the claim respected, to be careful also and scrupulous in recognizing the rights of humanity. In a crisis like that which is now passing, the Irish may submit to die rather than violate the rights of property; but on such a calamity, should it ever happen, which God forbid, the Scotch will not submit; the English will not submit; the French will not submit; and depend upon it, the Americans will not submit. Let us be careful, then, not to blaspheme Providence by calling this God's famine. Society, that great civil corporation which we call the State, is bound so long as it has thy power to do so, to guard the lives of its members against being sacrificed by famine from within, as much against their being slaughtered by the enemy from without. But the vice which is inherent in our system of social and political economy is so subtle that it eludes all pursuit, that you cannot find or trace it to any responsible source. The man, indeed, over whose dead body the coroner holds the inquest, has been murdered, but no one has killed him. There is no external wound, there is no symptom of internal disease. Society guarded him against all outward violence; it merely encircled him around in order to keep up what is termed the regular current of trade, and then political economy, with an invisible hand, applied the air-pump to the narrow limits within which he was confined, and exhausted the atmosphere of his physical life. Who did it? No one did it, and yet it has been done.

It is manifest that the causes of Ireland's present suffering have been multitudinous, remote, and I might almost say, perpetual. Nearly the whole land of the country is in the ownership of persons having no sympathy with its population except that of self-interest - her people are broken down in their physical condition by the previous calamities to which I have directed your attention. Since her union with England, commerce followed capital, or found it in that country, and forsook the sister island. Nothing remained but the produce of the soil. That produce was sent to England to find a better market, for the rent must be paid; but neither the produce nor the rent ever returned. It has been estimated that the average export of capital from this source has been equal to some 25 or perhaps 30 millions of dollars annually, for the last seven and forty years; and it is at the close of this last period, by the failure of the potato, that Ireland, without trade, without manufactures, without any returns for her agricultural exports, sinks beneath the last feather, not that the feather was so weighty, but that the burthen previously imposed was far above her strength to bear. If it be true that the darkest



# The New York Times

January 4, 1864

## DEATH OF ARCHBISHOP HUGHES.; HIS SICKNESS AND LAST MOMENTS. SKETCH OF HIS LIFE.



**His Grace Archbishop JOHN HUGHES** expired at his residence in Madison-avenue, last evening, at 7 1/2 o'clock, after a lingering illness, in which he suffered much, but endured with fortitude....

### SKETCH OF ARCHBISHOP HUGHES.

**JOHN HUGHES, Archbishop of New-York**, was born in the North of Ireland, in the year 1798. In 1815, his father who was a respectable farmer, emigrated to the United States. In 1817, JOHN HUGHES, then a youth of nineteen, unable to endure the trammels under which his religion was placed at home, followed his father. On his arrival in this country, he was placed with a florist to learn the art of gardening, but his tastes being more literary than horticultural, he devoted most of his time to study, and in his twenty- first year he entered the theological seminary of Mount Saint Mary's

at Emmetsburgh; Maryland, remaining there as pupil and teacher for several years. In 1825 he was ordained, in Philadelphia, as a Catholic Priest, and was settled over a parish in that city. While resident in Philadelphia, he was challenged by the Rev. John BECKENRIDGE to discuss the question, "Is the Protestant religion the Religion of Christ."

This controversy was the first of many of a similar nature, which the subject of this sketch carried on with various eminent divines of this country. It attracted so much attention when first published in the newspapers that the articles were collected and had a wide circulation in book form. In 1832, Father HUGHES founded St. John's Church, Philadelphia, and was its Rector until he removed to this City. In 1837 Bishop DUBOIS, of New-York, having become too old and infirm to attend to the duties of his office without assistance, at his request Father HUGHES was appointed his coadjutor. He was consecrated in this City Jan. 9, 1838, and in the following year was appointed by the Pope administrator of the diocese. Although he did not succeed to the Bishopric until the death of Bishop DUBOIS, yet from that time the government of this portion of the church was entirely in his hands. He at once proceeded

energetically to bring about necessary reforms; to rescue the churches from the debts which encumbered them; to remove them from the management of laymen, and to secure the titles in his own name. In these reforms he was violently opposed by the trustees, and only partial success crowned his efforts. In 1839 he visited France, Italy and Austria to solicit pecuniary aid for the Catholic churches in New-York. In 1841 he established a college in Fordham, Westchester County, under the name of St. John's College.

About this time Bishop HUGHES came prominently before the public on the school question. The Catholics charged that the public schools were sectarian in their character, and complained that they were taxed for the support of institutions to which they could not send their children.

A petition was sent to the Common Council to designate seven of the Public Schools as Catholic schools.

Remonstrances were sent in by the School Society and some of the churches, and the parties appeared before the Common Council, Bishop HUGHES making an elaborate address in favor of the petition, but it was rejected. The Catholics carried the matter before the Legislature, and it became a prominent feature of the ensuing political campaign, Bishop HUGHES advising the Catholics to run an Independent ticket, which they did. Bishop HUGHES was the master spirit in this exciting controversy, and defended himself against the many attacks of the religious press with great ability.

In 1845, Bishop Hughes again sailed for Europe to procure the services of some of the Jesuits and Sisters of Mercy. He returned in 1846, and a few months after was requested by President POLK to undertake a special mission to Mexico, but declined. In 1847, at the request of both Houses of Congress, he delivered a lecture in the Hall of the House of Representatives at Washington -- subject, "Christianity the only source of Moral, Social and Political Regeneration." In 1850, New-York was raised to the dignity of an arch-Episcopal See, and Archbishop HUGHES went to Rome to receive the pallium at the hands of the Pope. He soon afterward became engaged in a discussion with Dr. MURRAY, of Elizabeth, who attacked the Catholic religion in a series of letters over the signature of "Kirwan." Archbishop HUGHES replied, and the celebrated Kirwan controversy ensued. In 1854, the Archbishop made another visit to Rome in order to be present at the definition of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. On his return he became involved in a controversy with EBASTUS Brooks, editor of the Express, growing out of the church property question. Mr. Brooks being at that time State Senator, in the course of a debate stated that Archbishop HUGHES owned property in New-York to the amount of \$5,000,000. The Archbishop at once attacked Mr. Brooks through the newspapers, and a long discussion took place, in which it is generally conceded that the divine had the advantage of the editor. On the 15th of August, 1858, he laid the cornerstone of the new cathedral on Fifth-avenue, which is designed to be the finest edifice church in the United States. When the rebels fired upon Fort Sumter, and the citizens of New-York assembled in a grand mass meeting at Union-square, Archbishop HUGHES, unable from indisposition to attend in person, wrote a letter to the Chairman, in which he

declared himself firmly and unalterably the friend of the Union, and the advocate of all and any measures necessary to put down treason and sustain the Government.

From the stand taken by him on that memorable April day he has never receded, but has continually, by precept and example, enjoined the duties of citizens in maintaining the Union and enforcing the laws. During the July riots, Archbishop HUGHES was confined to his bed by sickness, but he announced that if the people would meet him at his residence he would address them from the balcony. An immense assembly gathered there at the appointed time, and he spoke to them as announced, requesting them to obey the laws, to assist in enforcing obedience if necessary, and if wrong had been done to seek redress through the proper channels, and not by riots and turbulent outbreaks.

The prominent place he has occupied in public and the Church will not soon be filled. While he strove earnestly for the good of his own Church, he was always proud of the City which had been chosen as his adopted home, and its prosperity, as well as that of the whole country, was a constant desire. He has built up the Catholic Church in this City, dignified it, rescued it from debt, and been its untiring champion. Although he has all his life been engaged in controversies with someone or other, yet he has also enjoyed the warm friendship of many of the most eminent men of this country, and to them, as well as to the majority of our citizens, his death will be a source of unfeigned regret.