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What Is a Nation?

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WHAT IS A NATION?

Privileges [the provisions of the Government of Ireland Bill] which, I think, if Ireland be a nation are not nearly enough, and which if Ireland be not a nation, are far greater than you ought ever to have given. Mr. BALFOUR, in the House of Commons, 15th April, 1912.

Irish Nationality, as they [the Irish Party] would have it, can never be anything but shameful to themselves and dangerous to the Empire. Let them feel the real pride of true citizenship in the great nation to which we and they belong. Lord HUGH CECIL, in the House of Commons, April 15th, 1912.

The open secret of Ireland is that Ireland is a nation. Prof. T. M. KETTLE, in "The Open Secret of Ireland." P. 170. (Ham-Smith), 1912.

I have always maintained that in every relevant sense of the term Ireland is a nation. Mr. ASQUITH, in the Theatre Royal, Dublin, July 19th, 1912.

THE word nation is one very glibly used in common speech and in the journalistic literature of the day. Its users, moreover, are untroubled by any consciousness that the idea which this word claims to express presents special difficulties of definition. Yet it seems to be somewhat of a puzzle to the dictionary makers, and to be a still greater puzzle to serious writers on political economy and kindred topics. We see this, at one time by the strange variety of definitions which they give, at another by their despair of being able to give any adequate definition at all. Thus Mr. Asquith, in the speech above quoted from, confessed that to avoid difficulties he thought it well to refrain from a definition. The writer of the article "Nation" in Palgrave's *Dictionary of Political Economy* thinks that "there is no generally received definition of a nation." And not to mention the numberless and various meanings given by the average

dictionary, we find among recent writers definitions that differ radically—from Anatole France's "community of memories and hopes," to the definition put forward by Eugène Richard,¹ "a body of men organised socially in order to realise the best expression of the moral law."

Must we then give up trying to define a nation, and say that it is a word without any reality at the back of it, or merely such reality as the speaker of the moment chooses to put there? What then, it might be said, becomes of your "national" aspiration "Ireland a Nation"? You do not so much as know the meaning of your words. And, of course, this has been said. But, after all, may we never apply a term to an object before knowing the definition of the term? If it were so, we should find ourselves perpetually in the somewhat embarrassing position of a man who should be debarred from speaking of a given quadruped as a dog until he was able to describe the precise physiological peculiarities that distinguish the canine species from all others. No, we call France a nation,² and we are right, even if we are not very clear as to what a nation is. Nationality,³ it has been often said, means for the body politic what personality means for a man. And the two notions are equally elusive. "They have," says Prof. Kettle, "this in common that, although by, through, and for them the entire pageant of our experience is unfolded, we are unable to capture either of them in a precise formula. That I am a person I know; but what is a person? That Ireland is a nation I know; but what is a nation?"⁴

It is not of vital necessity to have an answer to this question. We think, however, that it is of interest and importance. And though we cannot hope to reach a definition which shall be final and decisive, yet we may hope to show that the idea may be expressed in terms which shall apply to all those groups of human beings which men have agreed to call nations, and to those only.

We must preface our inquiry by the following very useful

¹ *Etudes sur les nationalités.*

² And we say the same of England, *pace* Lord Hugh Cecil, who declared in the House of Commons in April last that "no one is idiot enough to believe in English nationality at present."

³ We shall use this term throughout in the sense of "the sum of those qualities which distinguish a nation," *i.e.*, which make it the nation that it is. See Godard: *The Ethics of Patriotism*, p. 20.

⁴ *The Open Secret of Ireland.* Similarly Walter Bagehot: *Physics and Politics* (Kegan Paul, new ed., 1905)—"But what *are* nations? What are these groups which are so familiar to us and yet, if we stop to think, so strange. . . . The question is most puzzling though the fact is so familiar, and I would not venture to say that I can answer it completely."

observation of Bagehot, " Nations as we see them are the produce of two great forces, one the race-making force which acted in antiquity and has now wholly, or almost, given over acting, and the other the nation-making force, properly so called, which is acting now as much as it ever acted."¹ We deal here with the second only. The main influences which contribute to form a nationality are more or less as follows:—(1) The physical environment, (2) race, (3) language, (4) custom, (5) religion, (6) common interests, (7) history and the men who have made it, (8) a national government.²

Let us deal briefly with each.

And first as to the *physical environment* or milieu. Its influence on the development of a people is manifold. The climate of a country; its configuration, the nature of its soil and of its products, its geographical position—all these combine to affect a people's physical constitution, determine its occupations, and so react upon its mental characteristics and its outlook upon life. Its skies and landscapes colour one's imagination,³ so that Wordsworth could say—

" There lives not form nor image in my soul
Unborrowed of my country."

Change a people's environment and you change the prevailing type. The Englishman in India remains an Englishman, but by long residence he acquires an incrustation of new qualities and characteristics that constitute him a type apart. Reading Macaulay's description of the returned nabob,⁴ one can scarcely realise that this strange being first saw the light in some sleepy village of Somerset or Yorkshire. So, too, the French Canadian is already a type far removed from the Frenchman of Europe, the Spanish American from the Spaniard of the Peninsula. This result is largely due to the influence of the physical environment though other causes, no doubt, have been at work.

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 86.

² Besides these influences which are approximately fixed and constant, there are a host of others—education, the theatre, the press, the ballads of a people, national sports, a national capital, and so on.

³ " L'imagination dans ses fantaisies et ses rêves se colore de la teinte même du pays." Lucien Roure, S.J., *Doctrines et Problèmes*.

⁴ Essay on Lord Clive: " People cannot change their abodes, pass from an island to a continent, from the 50th degree of N. latitude to the tropics or the Southern Hemisphere, from an ancient community to a new colony, from vast manufacturing cities to sugar plantations, or to lonely sheep-walks in countries where aboriginal savage tribes still wander, without changing their ideas and habits and ways of thinking, nay, without somewhat modifying in the course of a few generations their physical type." Seeley: *Expansion of England*, p. 15.

But the importance of this influence has been exaggerated, by certain anthropologists, to the point of absurdity.¹ It is possible that, in uncivilised countries, and, in the case of countries now civilized, at that remote epoch when man carried on a hand to hand struggle with the forces of nature, this influence may be reckoned vastly more important.² But in the formation of the great nations of to-day it can have played but a subordinate part. The English immigrant lives in the same climate as the Australian or the Tasmanian, but he has not become like these races, nor is it likely that a thousand years will make him so. Distinct races have for centuries lived side by side in the same environment—witness the Albanian and the Greek in Turkey—yet have not drawn appreciably nearer to a common type. “We find like men in contrasted places and unlike men in resembling places.”³ It is with reason that M. Fouillée concludes—“It is absurd to attribute to environment a preponderating share in the formation of national character. Environment modifies the animal, man shapes his own environment.”⁴

In recent times, chiefly during the past forty years, anthropologists and sociologists have produced a truly vast body of literature dealing with the connection between national character and *race*. Having grouped the races out of which modern society has been evolved into various classes and labelled them Celt, Teuton, Slav, Latin and the rest, they have proceeded to frame for each of these original “races” an ideal and typical physiognomy and mentality. Then they have gone on to trace through history the influence of their several physiognomies and mentalities—so constituted—on the destinies of the various racial types.⁵ They have seen in the history of “Celtic” races the inevitable working out of the racial characteristics of the “Celt,” and so of the “Teutons,” and the rest. Not content with this, many of these writers have carried their investigations

¹ Buckle: *History of Civilization in England*, goes far in this direction. For a criticism of his views see Xénopol: *La Théorie de l'Histoire*, pp. 196 *seqq.*

² Hence, possibly, the now irreducible differences between white and black and yellow races.

³ Bagehot: *Physics and Politics*. And he concludes—“Climate is clearly not the force which makes nations, for it does not always make them, and they are often made without it.” P. 86.

⁴ Fouillée: *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale*, 1904.

⁵ “Le caractère différent de la civilisation allemande, française, anglaise, italienne, espagnole, s'explique, dans sa partie irréductible, seulement par l'élément de la race.” Xénopol: *La Théorie de l'Histoire* (Paris), 1908, p. 171. Precisely the same conclusion had been reached by M. Souffret in his study, *De la disparité physique et mentale des races humaines*, 1882, p. 306.

into the future, and have foretold the destinies of the nations in the ages that are yet to be.¹

Many of these conclusions, by dint of repetition, have become axiomatic, and have even passed into common speech. We have almost accepted the decadence of the "Latin" races and the cureless political incapacity of the "Celt": we have bowed to the "superior" races. It is because upon the track of the theorists and of the men of science have come the journalist and the politician, and these have turned the theories to good account. But the whole structure is little better than a vast cloud-castle—a veritable Nephelococcygia—built by the scientific imagination upon thin air. Such an assertion must inevitably seem too sweeping. But I think that the impartial reader who will study the criticisms of these theories contained in the works of Jean Finot² and J. M. Robertson³ will cease to think it exaggerated. Considerations of space make it impossible to do more than set down in the briefest way their conclusions. The chief of these are as follows:—(1) The words Celt, Teuton, Latin have, at the present day, in the study of national characters, no significance whatever, and whether they had or had not any ethnical significance in the past is now practically unascertainable. (2) "It is impossible to attribute immutable psychological qualities to certain peoples or races. Their virtues or their vices are only the effect of historic circumstances and of the influence of the milieu."⁴ (3) "Modern nations have been formed⁵ outside, and very often in spite of the conceptions of races."⁶ In other words, it is the historic nation working in given conditions in a given environment that has produced the types that we see to-day,⁷ and has wrought them

¹ Cf. the works of Topinard, Lapouge, de Quatrefages, Gumpłowicz, Boesche, Van den Gheyn, Klaproth, Reinach, etc., etc.

² *Race Prejudice*, translated by Florence Wade Evans (Constable), 1906.

³ *The Saxon and the Celt*.

⁴ Finot, *op. cit.*, p. 316. Note that for him the milieu includes "climacteric conditions, composition of soil, social, political, and intellectual life, and the material comforts."

⁵ "La considération ethnique n'a été pour rien dans la constitution des nations modernes." E. Renan: *Qu'est ce qu'une nation?*

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 318. Robertson thus expresses his conclusions: "We ought to look for the differences of national culture and well-being in institutions, political and other, and for the cause of these in preliminary conditions of environment, natural and political—in anything, in short, rather than in primordial and perpetual qualities of race." *Op. cit.*, p. xiii.: "The question of race is insoluble. . . . We can never reach any real knowledge of race characters or types, or original racial speech."

⁷ It is legitimate, then, to speak of the English race and the French race, but only if by these expressions we mean two well defined national types having each its own qualities and defects, its peculiar temperament. Cf. Legrand, *L'Idée de Patrie*, p. 47.

into the social amalgam that we call a modern nation.¹ The briefest consideration of the formation of nations will convince us that, as a fact, not one of the great modern peoples is of even approximately unmixed blood. Let us take France and England. "France," says Bagehot, "is justly said to be the mean term between the Latin and the German races. A Norman, as you see by looking at him, is of the north; a Provençal is of the south, of all that is most southern. You have in France, Latin, Celtic, German, compounded in an infinite number of proportions: one as she is in feeling, she is various not only in the past history of her various provinces, but in their present temperaments."² Yet, this is only part of the case, for M. Finot enumerates countless other elements that have gone to make up the present French nationality. As for England, not to mention the diversity of tribes found within her borders by Cæsar, she has been wholly or partially occupied in historic times by Britons, Romans, Angles, Saxons, Jutes, Danes, and Normans, with a plentiful sprinkling of French, Irish, and Scotch. All these elements the vigour of her national life has welded into the homogeneous nation that we see to-day. But her claim to be by race predominantly Anglo-Saxon can scarcely be said to be established historically. A recent writer tells us that there is as much Celtic blood in Yorkshire or Sussex as in North Munster or Leinster.³ Nowadays we accept a man that is a true patriot without troubling about the origin of his blood, nor even about the place of his birth. Mr. Birrell has expressed it all after his own fashion. "What is a nation? It is not blood, it is not birth, it is not breeding. A man may have been born at Surat and educated at Lausanne; one of his four great-grandfathers may have been a Dutchman, one of his four great-grandmothers a French refugee, and yet he may himself remain, from his cradle in Surat to his grave at Singapore, a true-born Englishman."⁴ We need scarcely call to mind "that roaring whirlpool of America into which a cataract of Swedes, Jews, Germans, Irishmen, and Italians is perpetually pouring."⁵

¹ "Il faut nous émanciper de la servitude ou de la fatalité du sang. Ce n'est pas la race qui dans l'histoire a créé la patrie mais bien plutôt la race française est la créature de l'histoire de France." Brunetière: *Discours de Combat*. "Nationality exists and has nothing in the world to do with race." G. K. Chesterton: *Heretics*.

² *Physics and Politics*, p. 70.

³ *Keltic Research*, by William Byron Nicholson, Bodley Librarian in the University of Oxford. (Frowde), 1904.

⁴ *Essays: Nationality*.

⁵ Chesterton, *Heretics*. Cf. Mr. Dooley in *Peace and War*; On the Anglo-Saxon.

The easiest test of differing nationality as well as the most obvious distinguishing mark of different nations is *language*. "To the grouping of races and nations," says Freeman,¹ "language is the best guide. Nay, for practical purposes, it is the one and only test. We define a nation primarily by language." But language is not merely a superficial mark of distinction between nations. Its influence goes deeper. It has been well called "the intellectual blood of a people."² For it is more than a stock of words and phrases. "The dictionary of a people is not merely the vocabulary of its forms of speech; it is also the storehouse of its ideas."³ That is to say, it embodies, preserves, and transmits the forms of thought peculiar to a nation, the proverbs that crystallize its mentality, the legend lore of a heroic past, the phrases that have made history. "*Le style c'est l'homme*" has become a commonplace. *La langue c'est la nation* might be said with equal justice. As Archbishop Trench said, in speaking of the English language:—"A nation gradually shapes and fashions its language to be the utterance of its inmost life and being."⁴ It is not surprising therefore, that, other causes not preventing, the men who shape their speech by this common tongue, should tend also to shape their thoughts in common, and to vibrate in unison. M. Brunetière is not exaggerating matters when he says: "To speak the same tongue is necessarily to think, to associate and combine one's ideas in the same way, it is to feel together, to experience the same impressions from the same things."⁵ A nation that gives up its language is disinherited, it foregoes the legacy of its past, it forfeits its birthright; nay, to change the metaphor, it goes perilously near to losing its soul. "The last tragedy for broken nations is not the loss of power and distinction, nor even the loss of that independence which is so vital to the common weal. . . . The last tragedy and the saddest, is when the treasured language dies slowly out, when winter falls upon the legendary remembrance of a people."⁶

¹ *Historical Essays*, 3rd Series.

² L. Roure, S.J., *Doctrines et Problèmes*.

³ L. Legrand, *L'Idee de Patrie*.

⁴ *English, Past and Present*. Theodore Meyer, S.J., in an important work, *Institutiones Juris Naturalis*, says that the thing upon which above all others the existence of a nationality depends is the native language, and that if that disappears in all probability the nationality will disappear along with it. Pp. 304 and 306.

⁵ *Discours de Combat*.

⁶ Fiona McLeod: *The Winged Destiny*.

Yet it would be foolish to think that with the language all is lost even to the possibility of a national resurgence. A distinctive language is, indeed, the best safeguard of a distinctive nationality, but it is not an essential constituent of a distinctive nationality. Nations are not mere linguistic groups. A glance at modern nations shows us, on the one hand, peoples speaking the same language divided up, not merely into different states, but into different nations—of the speakers of German, some are Swiss, some Austrian, some Russian, and some, until lately, were among the best citizens of France—and, on the other hand, the citizens of a single nation are divided between several languages—the Belgians between Flemish and French, the French between French and Breton and Basque. Thirdly, there are several unmistakable and vigorous nations which have no language peculiar to themselves. It is so with Switzerland, which borrows its three official languages from three neighbouring nations. It is so, too, with the United States, which is none the less one of the most striking examples of the power of a language to weld into some sort of oneness even such a jumble of races as is to be found to-day within its borders.

By *custom* as a nation-building force, we mean that code of law, unwritten and traditional, which rules the habits of a people, and, by long iteration, furrows deep traits in its character. When you cross the border, you find the simplest things of life, and some of the most important, done in ways that to you are unfamiliar. From its usages of dress and food to its marriage customs and its laws of inheritance, scarcely anything is quite like that to which you have been used. And many of these traditions are immemorial. Few people escape their influence, which is akin to that of fashion. You may despise them, but—one must live. The force, or rather the tyranny, of such customs—often quite irrational—is naturally vastly greater in primitive societies, but their influence is felt even in the most civilized.

It is certain that in early times the influence of a national religion was generally very great. Love of country was almost identical with loyalty to the national religion. A man fought, *pro aris et focis*, for “the ashes of his Fathers and the temples of his gods.” And many writers have seen in the national religion—even in our own days—not only the chief bond that holds together a nation, but the chief element of its nationality. Thus, according to M. le Bon, himself an *incroyant*, “religion has always constituted the most important element of the life of

peoples."¹ Sir John Seeley says much the same—"Religion seems to me the strongest and the most important of the elements which go to constitute nationality."² And Joseph de Maistre would practically identify patriotism with the religion of a country.³ All this is, no doubt, true of those religions which are made by a people after its own image, and so are products of its peculiar mentality. We are witnesses to-day of the power of Mohammedanism to bind its votaries into a kind of national exclusiveness. But we cannot think that the Christian religion is of itself an influence that makes or deepens racial differences. So long as the unity of Christendom lasted, we believe that the idea of a common Christianity was stronger than that of loyalty to separate nationalities. The enemies of Christianity were, so to speak, the national enemies of all. But when this unity was broken by the Reformation, churches, national in a new sense, sprang up, and the characters of the nations have since been strongly coloured by the complexion—often the outcome of seeming chance—of their national churches. Spain, no doubt, owes many of its national traits to its Catholicism, the Scandinavian nations to their Lutheranism, while Newman has pointed out how profoundly its peculiar type of Protestantism has affected the character of the English people.

We recognise, therefore, the part that a national religion plays in the formation of national character. But the experience of modern nations has shown the absurdity of the notion that there can be no national unity without religious unity, or, at least, a dominant religion, that difference of religion prevents devotion to a common country. Not to call to mind instances so obvious as England and the United States, we see in Switzerland the man of Lucerne as good a Swiss as the man of Zurich, in Germany the Catholic Bavarian as loyal a German as the Protestant Prussian.⁴

¹ *Lois psychologiques de l'évolution des peuples* (Paris), 8e. éd., 1907. He continues: "With a new religious idea there is born a new civilisation. . . . All political and social institutions have been founded on religious beliefs. . . . From the political point of view what constitutes the irresistible strength of religious beliefs is that they are the only factor which can for a moment give to a people an absolute community of interests, feelings, and thoughts. Thus the religious spirit at one blow takes the place of those slow hereditary accumulations which form the soul of a nation."

² *Expansion of England*, p. 261.

³ *Oeuvres*, t. I., p. 408. See also Mgr. Freppel: *Sur le caractère religieux du patriotisme* (1858), and Bossuet, *Politique de l'Écriture Sainte, Article VI. De l'amour de la patrie*. See also an article in the June number of *STUDIES* on "Nationalism and Religion in Ancient Judea," by Rev. J. A. Hartigan, S.J.

⁴ The subject is more fully treated in Legrand: *L'Idée de Patrie*, ch. VIII. "The Catholicism of to-day is tending more than ever before towards international brotherhood."

Common interests are evidently a strong bond of cohesion for a group of men. When a number of people discover that they have common interests and needs, a natural impulse is to form an association or a society or a company or a club. Yet, they may have no other bond of union. But when men live together in one country, speak one tongue, share in a common temperament, a variety of common interests, not material only—for a nation, as Renan says, is not a Zollverein—but moral and intellectual also, is certain to spring up. The recognition of these common interests is a new bond of union, and when a people comes to realise that these interests of the nation may, at certain moments, be above the interests of the individual, when to sacrifice on occasion the individual to the general good becomes in their eyes a worthy and a noble thing, then is a people in a fair way to deem itself a nation. This is, perhaps, what Mr. T. M. Healy meant when, in the House of Commons, he defined a nation as “something for which a man will die.”

History. “C’est par les racines qu’il plonge dans le passé qu’un état puise la sève qui l’aide à se prolonger dans le présent et dans l’avenir.”¹ A nation looks back upon its past as a lesson for its national life in the present, and as a justification of its continued national life in the future. Common memories are the nourishment of patriotism, the foundation of national consciousness. These things are almost commonplaces, but they need reiteration. “The Fatherland,” said a distinguished French preacher,² “is the patrimony of memories that unite us to our fathers and unite us in our fathers”—unite us by the consciousness of a common gratitude, and also of a common origin. And another great French preacher has put the same thought into an eloquent page, which I shall not venture to translate:—

“La Patrie c’est encore et principalement cette chaîne radieuse de nos longues et illustres traditions; sillons éclatant de toutes nos gloires nationales, traversant les siècles qu’a vécus la nation et illuminant des plus purs rayons toutes les hautes cimes de notre histoire. C’est qu’en effet la Patrie, ce n’est pas seulement tout ce qu’elle est aujourd’hui, c’est encore et par dessus tout ce qu’elle était hier et avant-hier; car la Patrie n’est pas comme un homme; sa vie n’est pas d’un jour; elle vit de longs jours et ces jours ce sont des siècles.”³

¹ L. Legrand: *L’Idée de Patrie*, p. 58.

² Abbé Stéphane Coubé.

³ R. P. Félix, S.J., *Le Patriotisme*.

This solidarity in time, as it has been called,¹ is no mere sentiment, or, if a sentiment, it is one that is strong enough to hold together in unity of nationhood men that have little else in common. Thus the Swiss have no unity of language, nor of race, nor of religion; their government is most decentralised, their country is divided into well-marked regions that differ in almost every respect, and are well-nigh cut off from mutual intercourse. But the nation has common memories. It has not forgotten Morgarten and Sempach, where it overthrew the Austrians, nor Grandson and Morat, where it ruined Charles the Bold.² Nor must it forget the still more crucial struggles, both internal and external, in the midst of which it weathered the nineteenth century. So, too, the three Imperial Eagles that divided the *disjecta membra* of the fallen Polish State could neither destroy the people nor tear up the pages of her history.³ They cannot debar her during the long night of her captivity from dreaming of the days when she vindicated her right to live against Russian and German and Swede, and became the bulwark of Christendom against the Turk. With these, no doubt, are mingled many bitter memories, memories to be wept for, but also to be used as lessons that must not be forgotten in the day of her deliverance. M. Brunetière⁴ sums up in a sentence most of what we have said: "There is no Fatherland without a long history, which is at one and the same time its stay, its justification, the source of its life, and of its perpetual rejuvenation."

And as nations are held together by common memories, so they are united by the common hopes and aspirations that spring from those memories. If Poland remembers her past, it is because she hopes for a future that shall be worthy of it.

Of the influence, apart from their actual achievements, of the heroes, legendary and real, of a people, upon its history, its character, and its life, suffice it to say that it has been recognized as one of the great formative forces of history. Considerations of space forbid us to say more.⁵

¹ In an article "Sur l'Idée de Patrie," by F. Marguet in the *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale*, 1904, pp. 857-896.

² Readers of Scott's *Anne of Geierstein* will not forget its vivid presentment of the national struggle of Switzerland.

³ "The partition of Poland was the event that forced the idea of nationality upon the world." Stubbs: *Mediaeval and Modern History*, p. 236.

⁴ *Discours de Combat*.

⁵ See Bagehot: *Physics and Politics*, p. 90.

The influence of a *national government* in giving unity and cohesion are obvious enough. It is a central, tangible something to which the most scattered outposts of the nation look as the guardian and champion of the national interests and of the national life itself, and further, if it be a democracy, as the expression, as far as a unanimous expression is possible, of the national will. It is thus, from one point of view, a kind of national brain, from another the heart of a nation, from which life, healthful or the contrary, radiates to its extremities.

We here come up against a question, the answer to which is of great importance to our inquiry. Is the possession of a national government an essential constituent of a nation, can there be a nation without a national government? It is certain that, without a government of its own, a nation—if such it can be called—is truncated, that its means of corporate action are minimised, that its chances of living on as a distinct unit of mankind are much endangered. But does it, by thus partially losing control of its own destinies, cease to merit the name of nation? Is statehood necessary to nationhood?¹

If the answer be yes, what name, then, shall we reserve to designate a great body of men, living within the same borders, one in memory, in hope, in characteristics, who, though deprived of statehood, continue to think and even act together, to be fired by the same enthusiasms and the same hatreds, and who never cease to aspire after a separate national life of their own? It is not a province for a province does not do these things.² It is not a simple geographical expression. It has been suggested that such a people be called a nationality.³ But this is properly an abstract term, and has already specific meanings of its own. It means either the belonging to a certain nation, as when we inquire as to an immigrant's nationality, or the complexus of the qualities which make a given nation what it is.⁴ On the other hand, if we refuse to give the name of

¹ We consider control of its own destinies, autonomy (which does not of necessity mean complete independence) necessary to the *integrity* of a nation. We merely ask whether such autonomy be necessary to its *very essence*.

² "Lancashire, to take any random contrast, is much richer than Ireland . . . but Lancashire is not a "Question." Lancashire is not a "Question" because Lancashire is not a nation. Ireland is a "Question" because Ireland is a nation." T. M. Kettle: *The Open Secret of Ireland*. In any case it is surely necessary to have some word to distinguish Poland from Brittany, White Russia, or Galicia.

³ So the writer of the article "Nation" in Palgrave's *Dictionary of Political Economy*, 1908 (new ed.). Similarly the *International Webster*.

⁴ *Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology*, ed. by Prof. Baldwin (Macmillan), 1902. L. Legrand, *op. cit.*

nation to a body of people having the above characteristics, we identify nationhood with statehood, not only in the concrete reality where they are commonly identical, being but two aspects of one thing, but in the abstract also. Yet this, we believe, is generally admitted to be incorrect. A State has been well described as—"The juridical being, the collective organism which the nation, a *pre-existing* moral person, constitutes for the purpose of assuring its independence and satisfying its needs." It is in times of national calamity, or of civil strife that men see most plainly that the nation is more than its government. A people may smash a dozen governments in a few decades and yet remain identical with itself. Two governments may be set up within the same state by rival claimants to rule, and the nation still live. Nay, without loss of nationhood, government can for a time cease altogether, and give place to anarchy. Poland is a nation, but not a state. Austria is one state, but it contains at least two nations.

To look back, therefore, upon the road we have traversed, what are our conclusions? We have not indeed *proved* anything definitely. We have merely endeavoured to argue, as plausibly as might be, that no one of the elements we have examined, taken severally, is essential to the existence of a nation, with the sole exception of a certain historical basis. We conclude that none of these must necessarily enter into its definition. It is time that we should set forth our own conception of what constitutes a nation. A nation, then, for the present writer, is a large¹ body of men, living together in a common territory² in organized social relations, and held together in a peculiar kind of spiritual oneness.³ There is nothing mystic in this oneness, no more than in that which binds the members of the same family. It is compounded of two elements: Firstly, common memories of historic things wrought in common and suffered in common in the past, and secondly the actual consent to carry on that common life, as a distinct people, master of its own destinies, shaper of its own future.⁴ This spiritual oneness

¹ This largeness is very relative, but we would scarcely call nations the people, say, of San Marino, Andorra, or the Isle of Man.

² The Jews have been referred to as a nation, but, we think, not rightly.

³ "A nation is not primarily nor even necessarily a racial or a linguistic group. It is primarily and necessarily a spiritual unity—that and nothing more, but certainly and necessarily that." Hakluyt Egerton: *Patriotism*.

⁴ This is the conclusion arrived at by Renan in his remarkable study, *Qu'est ce qu'une nation?* (1882). Similarly Rabier: *Psychologie*, p. 501, says (I translate), "All the conditions of patriotism, community of territory, of language, of race, of religion, of historic memories, of hopes, only go to establish that community of will, of desire, of soul, of consciousness, from which is born what may be called the soul of the Fatherland." The writer in Palgrave's *Dictionary of Political Economy* adopts Renan's conclusions, but seems to require a national government.

has been called by various names—the “national consciousness,” a “sense of nationality,” *l'idée de Patrie*, and so on. There can be no precise and final formula. Let us for a moment yield place to a writer who has said all this far better than we can say it:—

“What is it that makes us English folk truly one people? Not the bare fact that for a thousand years and more we have lived together between the Cheviots and the Channel, but because, between the Cheviots and the Channel, we have found a common work, and wrought out a common life,—because the wasteful discipline of war, fruitful co-operation in peace, long fellowship in suffering and endeavour, and comradeship in many a fight for freedom, have overcome the differences which first armed Northumbria against Mercia, Wessex against West Wales, Saxon against Dane, and both against Norman. . . . It is because of these past victories of developing brotherliness over the particularism of class and province, that we who live to-day upon English ground are all fellow-citizens in one free common-wealth, partners in a common industry, inheritors of a common tradition, sharers in a common hope. We are a nation because, in some sufficing measure we have *grown together into unity of life* . . . because the mutual helpfulness of man to man has made this English land of ours truly our home, and because, within that home, we, as members of one family, have become knit together by common interests and by common work, by common purposes and by common hopes, by common sanctities and by common ideals.”¹

Some of us might read this fine page with a certain glow were we to substitute—and may we not do it?—another name for that of the country about which it speaks.

We must end, and it will be with another eloquent page, culled this time, strange to say, from the writings of one² who, in so many respects, we cannot but believe, strayed far from the ways of truth and goodness, yet who could write as few others of his time:—

“To have had common glories in the past, a common will in the present; to have done great things together, to be ready to do more, these are the essential conditions for being a nation. A man loves in proportion to the sacrifices

¹ Hakluyt Egerton: *Patriotism* (George Allen), 1905. Legrand, *op. cit.*, reaches the same conception of the Patrie. According to him, it calls for “une communauté de compréhension, de volonté, et de vibration.”

² Ernest Renan. He says elsewhere:—“Le noeud qui lie ensemble toutes les générations d'un même peuple, c'est la même manière d'entendre et de pratiquer l'existence collective, c'est l'harmonie des sympathies et des antipathies c'est la poursuite d'un même but.” p. 80.

he has gladly made, to the evils he has suffered. A man loves the home that he has built up and which he is handing on to others. The Spartan song: 'We are what you were; we shall be what you are,' is in its simplicity the hymn of every fatherland. In the past a heritage of glory and of regrets to share, in the future the same programme to work out; to have suffered, joyed, hoped together . . . we understand that in spite of differences of race or tongue . . . Man is slave neither of his race, nor of his language, nor of his religion, nor of the course of rivers, nor of the trend of mountain-chains. A great assemblage of men, hale of mind and warm of heart, create *a moral consciousness that is called a nation*. And, so long as this moral consciousness proves its strength by the sacrifices which it claims, it is legitimate, it has the right to be."¹

The application of these general principles to the specific case of Ireland must be reserved for another occasion.

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¹ Vico, an Italian writer cited by Lecky in his "Democracy and Liberty," Vol. I, p. 475, defines a nation as "a natural society of men, who, by unity of territory, of origin, of customs, and of language, are drawn into a community of life and of social conscience." We have not yet met with a better definition, to our way of thinking, than this.