Rome Ruler?! 
John Redmond and Westminster's Catholic Interest, 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’.

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.

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 redeemed 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.

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.

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