

1838

National Education
Sermon Bp London

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Aug. 1838

National Education.

A SERMON,

BY

CHARLES JAMES

LORD BISHOP OF LONDON.

1838

Houses of the Oireachtas

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NATIONAL EDUCATION.

A SERMON

PREACHED IN THE CHURCH OF ST. MARTIN IN THE FIELDS,

ON SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 1838,

IN COMPLIANCE WITH

THE QUEEN'S LETTER

ON BEHALF OF

THE NATIONAL SOCIETY

FOR EDUCATING THE CHILDREN OF THE POOR IN THE
PRINCIPLES OF THE ESTABLISHED CHURCH.

BY

CHARLES JAMES

LORD BISHOP OF LONDON.

LONDON:

B. FELLOWES, LUDGATE STREET;

J. G. & F. RIVINGTON, WATERLOO PLACE; AND HATCHARD AND SON,
PICCADILLY.

1838.

NATIONAL EDUCATION.

A. BARNON.

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND IN THE FUTURE.

LONDON: R. CLAY, PRINTED BY THE

PRINTERS, 1881.

THE NATIONAL SOCIETY

FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE

CHURCH OF ENGLAND IN THE FUTURE.

THE NATIONAL SOCIETY

LONDON: R. CLAY, PRINTED BY THE

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1881.

THE
QUEEN'S LETTER
TO THE
ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY.

VICTORIA R.

MOST Reverend Father in God, Our Right Trusty and Right Entirely Beloved Councillor, We greet you well: Whereas the Incorporated National Society for promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church, throughout England and Wales, did, by their Petition, humbly represent unto His late Majesty William the Fourth, that the President and Governors of the said Society have zealously laboured to carry into Effect the Objects for which they were originally incorporated, and have expended, in promoting the Education of the Poor, the Resources entrusted to their Disposal by Royal Munificence and the Liberality of the Public:

. That the Produce of the Collections made under Authority of King's Letters, which have been granted

on their Petition from Time to Time, and the voluntary Donations and Bequests of charitable Individuals, have been expended in promoting the Erection of School-rooms, permanently secured for the Education of the Children of the Poor; while the principal Portion of the Annual Subscriptions, which the Society have received, has been appropriated to this Purpose in carrying on its Central School, where the System of mutual Tuition is in actual Operation on a large Scale, and where a number of adult Teachers, both Male and Female, are practically instructed in the Manner of applying the System:

That the general Principles upon which the Society has conducted its Operations have now received the Sanction of the Legislature as well as the Approbation of Our Subjects at large:

That the System upon which the Society has always acted, of promoting Local Contributions by granting moderate Sums of Money in Aid of the Erection of School-rooms, has been adopted by Our Government in distributing the Grants lately voted by Parliament in Furtherance of general Education; and that with respect to the Approval and Co-operation of the People in general, it will be sufficient to observe, that the Number of Children now being educated in Schools in immediate Connection and Correspondence with the Society exceeds 516,000:

That lest it should be thought that the Parliamentary Grants already adverted to have rendered unnecessary another Appeal on the Part of the Society to the

Liberality of the Nation at large, they beg to state that the Effect of those Grants has been to increase considerably the Appeals received for the Society's Assistance :

That the Number of these Applications for Grants of Money in Aid of Local Subscriptions, to enable the Parties to fulfil the Conditions required by the Lords Commissioners of Our Treasury, has gradually increased during the last Three Years, in the Proportion of 65, 122, and 230; and that it would not be possible that the Parliamentary Bounty should continue to produce the same Benefits which it has hitherto done, unless an Institution, such as the National Society, existed, with the Power of succouring the most destitute Places, and thereby qualifying them to claim the Encouragement offered by the Legislature for the building of new School-rooms :

That notwithstanding the great and growing Demand upon their Funds, arising out of this State of Things, the Governors of the Society have been led, by the Prospect of a Continuance of these Supplies from Parliament, and by the increasing Desire of Education in all Parts of the Country, still further to extend the Sphere of their Operations, and, in addition to National Schools for Children above the Age of Six or Seven, to undertake the promoting of Infant Schools in large and populous Towns :

That to this End an Establishment has been recently opened in the immediate Vicinity of the present Central School, and Arrangements are making for the proper

Training and Religious Instruction therein of Female Teachers of Infant Schools; and that under such Circumstances they earnestly hoped that His late Majesty would be graciously pleased, by issuing His Royal Letters directing Collections to be made throughout England and Wales in Aid of the Funds of the said Society, to place in their Hands the Means of carrying on the great Work for which it was incorporated, until the Opportunity of obtaining sound Religious Instruction for their Children has been offered to every poor Family in the Kingdom:

We, taking the Premises into Our Royal Consideration, and being always ready to give the best Encouragement and Countenance to Undertakings which tend so much to the Promotion of Piety and Our Holy Religion, are graciously pleased to condescend to their Request: And do hereby direct you, that these Our Letters be communicated to the several Suffragan Bishops within your Province, expressly requiring you and them to take care that Publication be made hereof on such Sunday, and in such Places within your and their respective Dioceses as you and the said Bishops shall appoint; and that upon this Occasion the Ministers in each Parish do effectually excite their Parishioners to a liberal Contribution; whose Benevolence towards carrying on the said charitable Work shall be collected the Week following at their respective Dwellings by the Churchwardens or Overseers of the Poor in each Parish; and the Ministers of the several Parishes are to cause the Sums so collected to be paid immediately to the Treasurer for the Time being of the said Society, to be accounted for by him to the said Society, and applied to

the Furtherance of the above-mentioned good Designs :
—And so We bid you very heartily Farewell.

Given at Our Court at Saint James's, the Thirteenth
Day of September 1837, in the First Year of
Our Reign.

By Her Majesty's Command,

J. RUSSELL.

To the Most Reverend Father in God, Our
Right Trusty and Right Entirely Beloved
Councillor, William Lord Archbishop of
Canterbury, Primate of all England and
Metropolitan.

PREFACE.

THE following Sermon is published at the request of several persons, who were present when it was preached. I have the more readily complied with that request, because an opportunity is thereby afforded me of renewing, as a minister of the Church, the protest which I have already made, as a member of the Legislature, against all attempts to introduce into this country a system of general education, which excludes, or omits, all direct instruction in the Bible.

Upon the occasion, to which I allude, I stated, that the introduction of such a system was contemplated by a Society, which calls itself the "Central Society of Education." In answer to this statement it was alleged, that no such object was avowed by the Society in any of its rules, or official

publications ; in reply to which allegation I remarked, that whether that object were *avowed*, or not, it was undoubtedly *aimed at* by the Society ; inasmuch as the sentiments, which its leading members, those who are in fact the managers and conductors, or the agents and advocates of the Society, entertain on this head, are matters of notoriety, having been proclaimed by them both in print, and at public meetings. But the truth is, that the Society does, in its own publications, recommend, that religious instruction should be entirely separated from the regular course of instruction in our schools, and left, not to the schoolmaster, nor to any common teacher, but to the respective ministers of the different sects to which the parents of the children belong, *in case they should be disposed to undertake the task*. This has been so clearly shown by Mr. Dunn,* that nothing further need be said in proof of it.

Against this Society, which argues for the exclusion of religion from the *regular* intellectual instruction of schools, intended

* As quoted in Educational Tracts, No. 1, p. 10.

for those classes, to which a knowledge of religion is especially valuable, I here repeat my protest; and I should be justified in doing so, even without reference to the acknowledged opinion of one of its leading members, that "the idea of basing education upon doctrinal religion is an utter absurdity," and that the arrangement, which wholly shuts out the Bible from what he terms "the secular school," is a "*sine qua non* to a general system of national education."*

For a fuller exposure of these dangerous principles, I refer the reader to the published correspondence of Mr. Colquhoun, M.P. with Mr. Simpson, the gentleman to whom I have just alluded; to the Letters of the Rev. Francis Close, published in the *Times* newspaper; to an able pamphlet, and sermon, by the Rev. Richard Burgess; and to a very powerful discourse by the Rev. Thomas Dale.

Strongly, however, as I deprecate the admission of what I conceive to be a neces-

* Mr. Simpson's Evidence before the Committee of the House of Commons in 1835. Nos. 3171, 3180.

sary part of the system, recommended by the Society in question, I am not disposed to deny them the credit of sincerity, nor the praise of collecting useful information. But then that information is mixed up with so much of unfair representation, and partial statement, with respect to existing Societies, as to wear the appearance of having been collected and published, for the purpose of decrying and overthrowing every system of education, which lays a due stress upon religion. If such be the object of these friends of knowledge, they will assuredly be disappointed. Neither the Central Society, nor the Government itself, were it disposed to make the attempt, (which I do not believe to be the case,) could succeed in forcing upon the people of this country such an education as the former contemplates. I entirely agree in opinion with Mr. Dunn, when he says, "I am stating the sentiments of thirty-nine fortieths of the religious portion of the community: and it is on this ground I hold, that for the present ministry to sanction any system of national education, in

which a Bible class should not form part of the daily intellectual instruction of the school, under the schoolmaster, would be to commit an act of political suicide." But I go further than this, and venture to say, in which I fear Mr. Dunn will not agree with me, that no system of education can be forced upon the people at large, which shall not be in conformity with the principles of the Church of England, and worked by its instrumentality. It will be our own fault if it be otherwise.

But I wish not to be misunderstood. I am not prepared to maintain that our present system of national education is perfect, or even very near to perfection; nor am I indisposed to take hints for its extension and improvement from the Central Society, or from any other quarter which may furnish them. In a Charge, delivered to the Clergy of the Diocese of London in the year 1834, I expressed a strong opinion, as to the importance of mixing instruction in different branches of useful knowledge with scriptural reading, to a greater extent than had been generally

recognised as necessary in our National Schools. But the fundamental principles of the National Society are right ; and from *them*, by God's blessing, we will not recede. Reading the Scriptures, and instruction in the Scriptures, according to the doctrines of our Church, and the formation of devotional habits in accordance with her offices, are features of the system, which, far from relinquishing, we must endeavour to carry out still more fully and effectively ; and we will do so, if we are furnished with the means. It must not be forgotten, that one main reason, why the National Society has not done all that some persons expected of it, has been the want of sufficient resources ; a want, which has seriously crippled its energies in many directions ; but especially, as having made it impossible, in most cases, to raise the salaries of Teachers to such an amount, as might have secured the services of able and well-educated persons.

I have said, " reading the Scriptures," and " instruction in the Scriptures ;" for I do not think, that the mere mechanical

reading of the Bible, or learning portions of it by rote, is that kind of religious teaching, which is sufficient for the purposes of even elementary education. The Central Society says, that our "scriptural teaching is a mere stringing together of half-understood, or altogether misunderstood, phrases ;"* and it is possible, that some such teaching may have been discovered in some one or other of our National Schools. We have not had the means of securing ourselves, in every instance, from incompetent, or careless teachers. But such is *not* the scriptural teaching, which the National Society professes to give ; nor is it such as may be witnessed in those of its schools, where its principles are rightly understood, and its system properly carried out. Indeed such teaching can hardly be found in *any* schools, where the Clergy have leisure to superintend the process of instruction. But this will no doubt be a correct description of scriptural teaching in those schools, where no provision is made for more than the bare *reading* of the Bible : and there-

* See Mr. Burgess's " Inquiry," p. 24.

fore it is, that I set but little value upon that clause in Lord Brougham's Education Bill, which provides "that in all schools to be established, or authorized, under the Act, the Holy Scriptures shall be read as a part of the reading therein;" especially with the neutralizing addition, that "no children of Roman Catholic or Jewish parents, shall be obliged to be present at the reading of the Holy Scriptures, unless such parents are willing;" a proviso, which ought, in all fairness, to be extended to the children of Unitarian parents, unless they are permitted to use the "Improved Version" of the New Testament.

The objections to Lord Brougham's Bill, though not perhaps *all* the objections, have been very clearly and temperately stated by Mr. Horner, in the able Observations prefixed to his Translation of M. Cousin's Report on the State of Education in Holland. Some of Mr. Horner's observations are diametrically opposed to the projects of the Central Society, especially the following:—

"The forms of Christianity, established

by law in England and Scotland, constitute the religion of a great majority of the people of Great Britain, and more especially among that portion of the people, for whose benefit the contemplated measure is chiefly intended; for, with the exception of the Roman Catholics, the poorer classes of the community form a comparatively small part of dissenting congregations, especially in rural districts. When there is an Established Church, the legislature ought to embrace every fit opportunity of maintaining and extending the just influence of the Clergy of that Church, as ministers of religion; due regard being had to complete toleration; and as the religious instruction of the children of their congregation is an essential part of their duty, the recognition of the resident established ministers in connexion with schools in any manner provided by the state, and which can in any way be considered as government schools, seems to be called for, both by consistency and expediency. Great care must, however, be taken, that the connexion be of such a

nature, that it shall not prevent the free use of the school by children who do not belong to the Established Church, in consequence of the introduction of any rule or practice at variance with the religious principles of their parents, *if there is no other school in the place, offering equal advantages, as a place of general education, to which the children can be sent.* It is surely much to be desired that inducements should be held out to the ministers of religion to take an interest in such schools; and that the children and their parents should see the influence of their pastor exerted in that way.”*

It appears, from the words which I have printed in italics, that Mr. Horner sees the true method of conducting religious education in this country, so as neither to compromise principle, nor to incur the risk of dissension. The great bodies of different religious persuasions must have each their own schools; and if, in any small parish, those, who dissent from the Established Church, are not numerous enough to have

* P. xxxvii.

a school of their own, it is too much to require, that the Established Church should forego the inculcation of its own doctrines in its own schools, out of tenderness for the few who dislike them.

This view of the question appears to have struck Mr. Slaney, who says, in his Speech on the State of Education in the Larger Towns, that “a separate place of Education must be provided for Churchmen and Dissenters.”

It is but fair to state, that the example of Holland may be quoted, as favouring, to a certain extent, the views of the Central Education Society. Speaking of the Normal School at Haarlem, Mr. Prinsen says, “The religious instruction is independent of any dogma or creed peculiar to this or that communion: but Bible history, as the basis of the religion of every sect, is regularly taught, and the moral precepts which occur in the course of the reading are then inculcated.” M. Cousin observes, “If we combine this statement of Mr. Prinsen with what Mr. Van den Ende said on the same subject, we shall

have before us the great distinctive feature in the primary schools of Holland; namely, the total absence of all special instruction either in religion or morals; and that too in the schools of a people, that may fairly be classed amongst the most moral and the most religious on the face of the earth.”* This description may perhaps be true as to the middle classes in Holland: but whether it be so as to the lower, there is very good reason to doubt. The number of *criminals* in that country, is certainly small, in proportion to the population; but it is not the opinion of those, who have had better opportunities of judging, than M. Cousin, that the labouring classes are remarkably *moral* in their habits. But admitting the instance to be in point, the force of it is very much abated by a consideration of the local and physical peculiarities of Holland; and we have, *per contra*, the example of Germany, where, says M. Cousin, “the practice is quite different, and the difference originates in the opposite natures of the excellent

* Mr. Horner's Translation, p. 40.

people of the two countries. In Holland, every thing which is purely theoretical or speculative is studiously avoided, as an unproductive luxury, especially in matters of education; and they adhere to that which is real in its nature; that is, they devote themselves to the acquisition of those habits, which are the fruit of continued exercise. On the other hand, in Germany, where the genius of speculation is dominant, there is not a single elementary school, in which the Christian truths, which were made for the poor in spirit as well as for the learned, are not taught in a manner the most simple and clear, in all their general doctrines and moral consequences, as the great foundation of morality both private and public. I lean to the side of the Germans. I confess that the absolute separation of the school and the church is, to my mind, in no degree better, than an undue interference of the one with the other would be. There is a happy medium in this matter, which Holland is far from being in any disposition to adopt.* It is not to be for-

* P. 42.

gotten, that this system of education, which rejects doctrinal religious teaching as “an unproductive luxury,” was established during the time of the “Batavian Republic.”

M. Cousin admits, that the “abstract and philosophical instruction in Christian morality,” which is given in the Dutch schools, “can only be very superficial and very vague.” “But,” he adds, “we must test the soundness of the principle by the results; if these are good, the Dutch system is good, at least in Holland.”* This concluding limitation is important; for even if we admit the results to be such as M. Cousin supposes, it would not be difficult to show, that there are peculiarities in the case of Holland, which weaken, if they do not destroy, the force of the argument drawn from that precedent.

M. Cousin himself maintains, that the religious instruction given in national schools ought to be direct, and particular. “In Germany,” he observes, “in the Protestant as well as in the Catholic parts of it, there is an intimate alliance between the church

* P. 155.

and the school. In order that the school may have a Christian character, the teacher is required to give instruction in the Christian faith ; and that, not derived generally from moral considerations only, but moral and doctrinal, Protestant or Catholic, according to the communion to which the children belong. If the school contains children of two different communions, the religious instruction is given by the ordinary master, according to the communion of the majority of the pupils, and that to which he himself belongs ; and the special or doctrinal religious instruction of the rest is given by a minister of their own persuasion, at certain hours, but always in school, who attends for that purpose. Most assuredly, besides the moral and religious instruction in school, there ought to be the instruction which belongs to, and is given in, the church itself, accompanied by the usual exercises of religion, and imparted under the exclusive authority of its ministers. But there ought to be a preparation for that instruction by moral and religious tuition in school, less special, but still Chris-

tian, and consequently embracing, within proper limits, the essential parts of Christianity, namely, the most general and the most indispensable duties of religion ; above all, moral obligations, and the foundations upon which they rest ; that is to say, the truths upon which Christianity itself is founded.”*

M. Cousin should have said, “the truths, of which Christianity consists;” for these are the only real foundations of morality. It is manifest, that however well this system may work in Prussia, it would be wholly impracticable in this country. The admission of four or five ministers of different sects into the school, each for the purpose of giving doctrinal instruction to the children of his own persuasion, all the others being, of course, for the time excluded, is an expedient, admirably fitted to produce discord and confusion. The Dutch system is more consistent with itself, where “the master gives in the school, the education common to all; and *out of school*, the ministers of the

* P. 154.

different persuasions take charge of the religious instruction.”* But then this system is liable to the grave objection, that “the schoolmaster, from not having to give any direct moral and religious instruction, would be apt to lose sight of it; and thus, in spite of the principle recognised in the 22d Article (of the Education Law), religion, being wholly unrecognised in the school, the education of the mind of the child, which, to be genuine and impressive, must be single in purpose, might suffer considerably by subtle distinctions.”† And not only by subtle distinctions, but by the slight put upon religion, in thus thrusting her out of the cycle of education, and by an arrangement, which must be continually reminding the children of their religious differences.

I cannot conclude these prefatory observations, without citing another passage from Mr. Horner’s book, deserving, as it appears to me, of the most serious attention.

“It would be proper also, that there

* P. 155.

† P. 154.

should be primary schools of a better sort for the children of the working classes, in which the general education should be carried farther than in the *gratis* schools for the poor, and where some higher branches should be taught to those who desire it. An arrangement for evening schools for the benefit of young persons who have gone into a trade, and yet wish to continue their education, is highly desirable. In all the last-mentioned schools, the pupils ought to pay."

The fact is, that very few of our national schools are now, in the strict sense of the term, *gratuitous*; for a small weekly payment is very generally made by the scholars, an arrangement which is advantageous both to *them*, and to the schools. I entirely agree with Mr. Horner, in thinking that an effort should be made to establish schools of a better sort; not merely, however, for the children of the working-classes, as we commonly understand the expression, but for the class next above them, the little tradesmen and artisans, for whose children a good and useful educa-

tion, comprising sound religious instruction, might be provided at as small a price as that which they now pay for the worst possible kind of tuition.* I have long been desirous of seeing this effort systematically made, and I now rejoice in the certainty of its being made, either by the National Society, or by some kindred association, acting upon the same principles.

I may, I trust, be permitted, in conclusion, to repeat a statement, which was addressed by me to the Clergy of my Diocese in 1834. "The extension and improvement of the National System will probably decide the question, whether the education of the poorer classes shall be suffered to remain, where it ought to remain, in the hands of the parochial clergy; or whether an attempt will be made, to place it under the control and direction of the Government, with a compulsory provision for its maintenance. The political constitutions, as well as the ecclesiastical

* This suggestion was made by the Rev. T. Short, Rector of St. George's, Bloomsbury, in a valuable Tract published in 1835, on "National Education, and the means of improving it."

systems, of those countries, in which this plan has been carried into effect with success, are so widely different from our own, that we can hardly reason from one to the other, with sufficient correctness of analogy, to justify us in breaking up a machinery, which is, on the whole, working well, and which is every year working better, for the sake of substituting another, which may perhaps, in theory, be more systematic and complete; but which is certainly more complicated, and less in accordance with the habits and feelings of the people. At any rate the experiment would be one of great hazard; and if it should go to deprive the Clergy of any portion of their legitimate authority and influence in the education of the country, it would be productive of incalculable evil."

A SERMON.

ECCLES. VII. 12.

*Wisdom is a defence, and money is a defence ;
but the excellency of knowledge is, that wisdom giveth life to them that find it.*

It appears from this passage, as from many others in the writings of the same inspired author, that the praises, which he bestows so profusely, and with such variety of expression, upon knowledge, are intended for that sound, and substantial, and well-directed knowledge, the consummation and fruit of which is *wisdom*. Various are the provinces, through which the human mind may expatiate, to gather the materials for reflection, to store the memory with facts, and to furnish the reasoning faculties with the means of arriving at abstract truth. And none are to be slighted, or passed over, by those who have opportunities

of investigation: but yet all objects of inquiry ought to be subordinate to one, and that one, the great object of our being, that, for which all our faculties, and powers, and affections have been given to us, our preparation, as moral agents in a course of discipline and trial, for a more perfect state of existence. All real knowledge is good: it cometh down from the Father of lights, all of whose gifts are perfect and excellent: but the best, infinitely the best kind of knowledge must be that, which bears directly on our duties and our hopes, as heirs of immortality. *The excellency of knowledge is, that wisdom giveth life to them that have it.* There can be no doubt as to what the sacred writer means by *wisdom* in this sentence. We have him for his own interpreter; *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.** I propose to consider, in this discourse, the comparative value of this kind of wisdom, with reference to the great ends of human life, and the duty incumbent upon all men to seek for it themselves, and to impart it, where they have opportunity, to others.

The same inspired writer, who speaks of a lifegiving wisdom, has laid down a maxim of universal application, *that the soul be without knowledge, it is not good.†* And we are now at

* Prov. ix. 10.

† Prov. xix. 2.

an age of the world, when the truth of this position is generally admitted. It is no longer necessary to establish by argument the value of knowledge to all classes of men, and the benefits of education both to individuals and to society at large. The only question, which will now bear discussion, is, not whether the people are to be taught, or not ; but *what* they shall be taught ; and what are the readiest and most effectual methods of teaching them. The latter of these questions is matter of speculation and experiment, involving no important principle of action ; but the former bears upon the very essence and objects of education, and upon the highest interests of mankind. It is at this point, that they, who travel on together towards a common conclusion, that increased efforts should be made for the diffusion of knowledge, separate from one another, and follow two different roads. The one party maintains, that the objects chiefly, if not solely, to be aimed at, by those who take the work of education in hand, are, the cultivation of the intellect, and the general enlargement and improvement of the mind, by communicating to it a knowledge of facts, and of their application to the ordinary purposes of life ; and the formation of such moral principles and habits, as can be imparted without the light and sanctions of the Gospel ; while the work of religious

teaching and training is left wholly unattempted, as a work to be taken in hand by the ministers of religion ; and as forming no part of what they are pleased to call *education*. The other, and, happily, far the more numerous party, do not exclude, nor even undervalue those branches of knowledge, upon which so much stress is laid : but they do assert the superior, nay the supreme importance of religious instruction and discipline, as being that, which alone, in its results, is of power to secure the ends of man's existence, to ensure his real happiness, and to promote the great objects of society ; as being that, without which many other kinds of knowledge may be hurtful to man, and none can be relied on, as sufficient to ascertain his right conduct, his personal well-being, or his social usefulness.

To this last-mentioned class of persons, I need hardly say that we, the ministers of religion, belong. That there should be any, not belonging to it, amongst the professors of that religion, is a thing to wonder at and lament ; nor do we understand, by what process of reasoning they can reconcile the objects and requirements of their religion with its disparagement and omission in any system of education. But it is of great importance, that the precise difference between us, in this respect, should be rightly understood. In general terms

it is this : *We* would assign to religion, that is to the religion of the Bible, the *first* place in our system of education ; and we would teach, in addition, as much of useful knowledge, commonly so called, as time and means permit. *They* would devote all their energies to the communication of secular knowledge ; formally excluding all *direct* teaching of Christianity ; and leaving *that* to the care of others, whom a sense of duty may impel to undertake the task. And they urge against *us* two objections ; the first, that we spend a great deal of time upon instructing poor children in that, which is not the most important thing for them to know, with reference to their future callings in life ; the second, that we are exclusive and sectarian, as they term it, in our religious instruction ; teaching our own opinions, and giving our own interpretation of the Bible.

The first of these objections applies to *all* schools, in which the Scriptures are read and explained ; the second is directed against the National System of Education ; but it is, in truth, applicable to every school, where the Bible is explained, by a teacher of any religious persuasion whatever ; it being impossible for him to interpret and lay open a single passage, involving any point of doctrine, without impugning the opinions of some one or other of the almost

countless sects into which the Christian world is divided.

Let us examine the question, whether, as believers in the Gospel ourselves, we are at liberty to promote any scheme of education, which omits instruction in the truths and precepts of that Gospel; or whether it be not our bounden duty, to make such instruction the basis, and essential part of the whole system; the one thing indispensable; that, which may on no account be passed over, nor treated as a matter of secondary moment, whatever other branches of knowledge may be dispensed with.

The faculty of acquiring knowledge is that, which constitutes the immeasurable superiority of man over the brute creation; and it is, in itself, an indication of the divine intention, that the intellectual powers should be cultivated, and exercised; and the mind gradually stored with the treasures which are spread around it in boundless profusion by the Source of all light and wisdom. An acquaintance with truth, of whatever description, or in whatever direction, can never be otherwise than advantageous to the mind, provided that the mind is trained to make a proper use of it. We therefore do not object to the utmost possible communication of knowledge to the poorest of our brethren; regarding all real knowledge as the materials of enlarged

usefulness, when sanctified and guided by Christian principles and feelings. On the contrary, having laid the foundation, where it ought to be laid, we would add, to the more solid part of the superstructure, some of those embellishments and appliances, which furnish the means of intellectual refreshment, and improvement; and supply a void, which would otherwise perhaps be filled by grosser, and more debasing recreations. But it is about the foundation that we most anxiously employ ourselves in the first instance, labouring to make it deep and sure; and then about the fabric itself, that it be firm, and well compacted, and proof against the winds and rains.

We are desirous of expanding, cultivating, storing the mind: but we are more solicitous about the training and preparation of the soul, by methods of God's own appointment. We bear in remembrance, that man is not only an intellectual being, but a moral agent; that he has passions to be tamed, and affections to be regulated, and purified, as well as faculties to be sharpened: that conscience is of more value than memory; that it is of unspeakably greater moment to himself, and others, that he should be taught the principles of Christian faith and duty, that he should be imbued with holy and charitable feelings, that he should be formed to

habits of virtue and industry, than that he should be enabled to penetrate the secrets of nature, enriched with the varied treasures of literature, or skilled in the mechanical arts. We remember, that man was originally placed in this world, to know and worship God ; that he is fallen, and in danger of perishing ; that he has a soul to be saved, as well as a mind to be enlightened ; the one being the very end and object of his present life, the other but subsidiary thereto ; and therefore knowing (if indeed we do know) the value of our own souls, and the methods of salvation which God has appointed, we are urged, by far higher and more constraining motives than the mere desire of promoting their usefulness as members of human society,—although that motive has its weight, and is quite compatible with higher views,—to take measures for bringing to God, through Christ, those who are perishing, for lack of knowledge, the knowledge of his Gospel ; and whose most urgent need is, of one who shall be to them at once a teacher and a Saviour.

But let us not be misunderstood. We do not undervalue, nor disparage, even with the breath of unkindly suspicion, the worth, or usefulness of those pursuits, in which the mind is exercised and strengthened, by investigating the hidden truths of philosophy ; or instructed, by revolving the experience of past times ; or refined, by a fami-

liarity with the monuments of genius and taste. On the contrary, if it be possible to impart, even to the labouring classes, a relish for such pursuits, (and I am far from thinking that to a certain degree it is not so) we should confer upon them an inestimable benefit, in the elevation and refinement of their tastes ; and in providing them with a substitute for those immoral and degrading pleasures, in which they are too apt to seek for a relaxation from toil, and a forgetfulness of care, but in which they are sure to find an aggravation of all the evils which oppress them, even to the destruction of bodily health and strength, and of mental energy, and moral principle ; and to the everlasting ruin of their souls.

Undoubtedly it is better, better for himself and for society, that a poor man, even if he be not truly religious, should spend his leisure hours in rational pursuits, in study, or experiment, or the exercise of mechanical skill, than that he should resort to the customary haunts of idleness and intemperance, to be the companion of the drunkard, the gambler, and the thief. His mind is at least kept in a posture of activity and wakefulness ; it is not stupified, nor blunted by sensual indulgence ; its tendencies are those of inquiry ; his reason is accustomed to weigh the value of arguments ; in short, the whole moral agent is in a state more consonant with the objects of his

existence, more accessible to the proofs and motives of religion, and more open to the operation of those means, by which the Spirit of Truth may perform his work, and create him anew unto holiness, than the unhappy being, in whom ignorance is fixed, and strengthened, and rendered impenetrable, by a long continuance in vice.

It is therefore by no means unimportant, to furnish the objects of our charitable care, where we have the means and opportunity of doing so, with the rudiments of that knowledge, which *will* in fact be acquired whether we desire it or not, by many of their equals and companions. Such knowledge, even if religion should fail of obtaining its proper influence over them, may be the means of preventing them from falling into the lowest depths of intellectual and moral degradation. But still we assert, that *this* is not to be the main and primary, much less the sole, object of our endeavours, in educating the youth of this country, of whatever class they may be. It is not for this purpose that we feel it to be our duty, to put forth the most strenuous efforts of Christian benevolence; and to call, with the authority of Christ's ambassadors, upon every one, who prizes the privileges and blessings of his religion, or who is solicitous for the welfare and safety of his country, to become a fellow-labourer with us, who are more specially bound,

and more directly commanded, to stretch out our hands, and to put the sickle into the great harvest of souls. That sickle, the implement by which alone the harvest can be reaped and gathered in, is the Bible ; applied to the purposes, for which it was given, by those who are commissioned to perform the task ; and the garner, into which the harvest must be gathered in, are those of the Church. These are the methods which God himself has ordained for the salvation of mankind, for applying to individual sinners the benefits of that common redemption, which Jesus Christ has purchased for all.

Every man is in process of training and preparation for eternal life, from the very first moment, at which conscience makes itself heard, and a difference is perceived, or felt, between right and wrong. But eternal life is attainable only through Jesus Christ ; and He is to be approached, as a Saviour, through his Word, which is the word of truth and life ; and therefore it is, that a knowledge of his Word, a practical knowledge of it, is the one thing needful for man. Many things, no doubt, there are, which are useful to him, as a denizen of this world ; many things ornamental, and agreeable ; but this, we repeat it, is the one thing needful for him to know ; and therefore the knowledge of it is the first object to be aimed at in the process of

instruction ; the Alpha and Omega of education. Give to your pupil, if you can, all the materials and resources of knowledge ; expand his mind ; sharpen his reasoning powers ; elevate his tastes ; multiply his resources : but do not forget, that he has a soul to be saved ; and that it will profit him nothing to place in his hand all the instruments and methods of self-advancement, or social usefulness, if you do not give him the means of becoming *rich towards God*,* and of working out his own salvation. *Wisdom is a defence ; and money is a defence ; but the excellency of knowledge is, that wisdom giveth life to them that find it.*

But it does more than this : it not only giveth life eternal ; but by the same process of culture and discipline, which trains up the moral agent to a fitness for his inheritance with the saints in light, it imbues him with all those principles and sentiments, and forms him to all those habits, which most conduce to his present happiness, and to his usefulness as a member of society. *Bodily exercise*, says the Apostle, *profiteth little*, that is, the cultivation of those faculties and arts which concern the welfare of this bodily state of existence ; *but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.*† Soberness, temperance,

* St. Luke xii. 21.

† 1 Tim. iv. 8.

frugality, contentedness, quietness ; these are the possible, and *only* the possible, results of an education, which seeks to attain its ends solely through the medium of reason, and judgment, and proof of expediency : but they are the direct, and immediate, and durable fruits of religion ; for they are the work of God's Holy Spirit himself, blessing the use of his Word, and his Church. Religion, by knowledge leading to grace, goes at once to the fountain-head ; purifies the waters at their sources, and directs them in a thousand channels through the body politic, to strengthen, invigorate, and fertilize the whole.

Convinced, then, as we are, that the Bible, rightly interpreted, is the mighty engine, by which alone the power of the prince of this world can be beaten down, and sinners rescued from his dominion, and truth established, and holiness promoted in the world ; can it be a matter of wonder, if we, who are the Lord's watchmen, appointed to wield that sword of the Spirit, and to deliver the message of reconciliation, and to bring men to an almighty Saviour, are loud and earnest in protesting against all attempts to introduce a system of education, which advances to the highest rank, in value and importance, all the arts, and sciences, and inventions, which minister to the comforts, or pleasures of this present life, but have no bearing upon the interests of eternity ;

while it thrusts religion, the science of salvation, the secret of godliness, into obscurity and neglect; and leaves to its *casual* lessons (for it makes them no essential feature of instruction) a few vacant hours, of which the teachers of different creeds may take advantage, if they please. Is not this to dethrone the majesty of God's truth, from the pre-eminence assigned to it by Himself? Is not this to remove, as it were, the very fulcrum, upon which the great moral lever of education must rest, if it is to do its work completely and effectually, as the instrument of removing ignorance and vice, and of replacing them with that knowledge, the *excellency* of which is, *that it giveth life to them that find it?*

Upon the second objection to our National System of Education, that it is exclusive and sectarian; that we teach our own opinions, and our own interpretation of the Bible; much need not be said. The Bible is a system of truths; and religion, which is drawn from the Bible, must, of necessity, be a system of opinions. This is true, even of the moral precepts and prohibitions of the Bible; the interpretation and application even of *them* must be matter of opinion. There is not a sentence of that holy book, relating either to the counsels or nature of God, or to the duties of man, which may not be so interpreted as to favour or oppose some doctrines, which are

believed, by those who hold them, to be drawn from Scripture. The very being of God of himself, and his attributes, the revelations of his nature, and the mysteries of his various dispensations, nay even many of the historical parts of Scripture, as bearing upon some point of doctrine, are the subjects of conflicting opinions ; and therefore, unless the teaching of Holy Scripture in our schools be strictly confined to the mere mechanical exercise of the eyes, the tongue, and the memory, *some* system of opinions *must* form a part of that teaching. Nay, even when it *is* so limited to reading and repetition, the same observation holds good ; for that translation of the Bible, which one body of Christians adopts as correct, another impugns as erroneous ; so that, in truth, if the Bible be admitted at all into our schools, some particular doctrine must be taught. Such being the case, it is not only justifiable, but our most sacred duty, as believers in the Word of God, and as holding fast the sound form of words once delivered to the saints, to teach, as truth, vital and essential truth, that which we ourselves are persuaded is the genuine sense of that Holy Word ; and sedulously to inculcate those doctrines, which we believe may be proved thereby. Were the Church to stop short of this, as the depository of God's truth, and the instructress of his people, she would be guilty of a dereliction of the sacred trust

confided to her by her Divine Founder. That, which it is her manifest and unquestionable duty to do, in the case of her adult members, it cannot be wrong to attempt, in the case of those, whom she is training up, as a common parent, *in the nurture and admonition of the Lord*.

This is the duty, which the Church has endeavoured to discharge, for the last five-and-twenty years by her system of National Education; for more than a century by her Parochial and Sunday-schools; and ever since the Reformation, in her catechetical ordinances: and it is to assist us in the more effectual performance of this work of love, that we invite your contributions. I do not mean to say, that the system, of which I speak, is perfect in all its parts, and incapable of improvement, whether as to its machinery, or the mode of working it; but its principle is the right principle. It never loses sight of the fact, that it has in training a moral agent, an accountable being, a servant of God, a follower of Jesus Christ, an heir of immortality: and whatever enlargement, or improvement of the system may be attempted, this principle will be carefully adhered to. We will endeavour to make the education, given to the children of our poorer brethren, more truly scriptural still; and to supply, from our own schools, a want, which has lamentably crippled our exertions, the want of intelligent and pious teachers,

who may be competent and effective assistants to the Clergy, in conducting the work of instruction. But in order to the attainment of this end, our resources must be greatly augmented; and I would mention, as an additional reason for your increased liberality, that the National Society is not only training instructors for charity-schools, on a more extensive scale than heretofore; but that it has undertaken to perform the same duty for Infant-schools, that most useful, I may almost say that indispensable branch of our educational system.

These then are the grounds, upon which I claim your assistance to the Society for which I plead. The education, which it offers to the poor, is the education of the Bible; an education, which teaches, when the system is properly carried into effect, not merely the letter of Holy Scripture, nor merely a memorial knowledge of the facts which it records; but its truths and doctrines, its principles and motives, its promises and blessings. It gives to the young Christian a precise and definite knowledge of Christianity. It teaches him the value of his privileges, as a member of Christ's Holy Catholic Church, and accustoms him to the use of those privileges. It desires to give, in addition to this, as time and opportunity permit, such instruction in the elements of general knowledge, as may be useful to him in that state of

life to which it shall please God to call him : but its groundwork is religion. *This*, my brethren, this is the reason why it is disparaged, and opposed, and reviled, by the friends of what I may without uncharitableness denominate, an unscriptural, if not an anti-scriptural system of national education ; and this is the reason ; because it is so constituted, and so opposed, that it has, at the present crisis, a peculiar claim to the united and energetic support of all those, who believe that the safety of this country depends upon its Christianity, and its Christianity upon the diffusion of scripture knowledge, by means of Bibles and schools and churches.

We are assured, by the Holy Spirit speaking to us through his prophets, that there will be a time, when *the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.** We know too, that Almighty God is pleased to employ the agency of man in the accomplishment of his purposes of mercy ; and we have therefore reason to believe, that the coming of that blessed time may be hastened, or retarded, by our diligence or neglect. What solemn thoughts does this suggest to us, of our responsibility, as fellow-labourers with our Divine Master, in preaching the Gospel to the poor ! What other consideration should be so effectual, to warm our hearts,

* Isa. xi. 9. Hab. ii. 14.

and to open our hands ; to call forth our wishes, and prayers, and gifts ? Yet there is another promise in the word of God, most encouraging to every faithful labourer in his harvest-field, but most awful to the negligent and the careless ; the promise of that day, *when many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake ; some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. When they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament : and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.**

* Dan. xii. 2.

THE END.

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