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The proposed Modification of the
Non-vested System.

A LETTER

FROM

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TO

REV. JAMES MAC IVOR:

WITH A REPLY.

DUBLIN:

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LETTER.

MOUNTJOY SQUARE,
Thursday.

MY DEAR MR. MAC IVOR,

THE continued pressure put upon me has dispelled all hope of a more formal communication than a letter "*currente calamo*," and you are quite at liberty to make any use of it you please in public or private.

I have no sentiments on the subject which I would not freely submit to any candid man of any party; and I trust, in all our communications, nothing has escaped from me inconsistent with the simplicity of truth and the candour of sincerity.

I have carefully read your pamphlet; I sent to the office of the Commissioners, in Marlborough-street, and obtained copies of their Reports, and various books published for the use of such of the schools as may choose to make these books available; and I have also read the Charges of his Grace the Archbishop of Dublin, and that of the Bishop of Limerick.

I think it is manifest the question has assumed a totally new form. It appears to be conceded that the original project of having a *united* system has failed of its purpose; a

result which I cannot but say always appeared to be inevitable. It is also conceded that the system has gravitated into what is technically termed the Non-vested system; and this is the department to which I think our attention and judgment should be applied.

An exclusive system has been rejected; a united system is impracticable; a comprehensive system has claims at least on those who think that religious liberty has higher demands than any section of religious truth.

That I may not be misunderstood, I would observe that in discussing the true constitution of a comprehensive system, I do not assent to any policy which advisedly assists education avowedly separated from the basis of the word of God; although it may be quite proper to assist general education in itself, when given as an acknowledged integral part of a scriptural whole.

The Non-vested system then is proposed, not for united, but comprehensive education; not to interfere with conscience, but to assist in promoting the general or secular department. The plain common sense, and general consent of the English people, solved this problem of a comprehensive system, exactly as it appears to have been solved by the late Dr. Chalmers; that on an impartial principle aid should be given to each school, to enable the general education to be improved, but there should be no interference with the religious policy of the school, or the machinery by which its peculiar instruction in the religious department might be imparted.

The English system is framed on this equitable and impartial plan; it may be chargeable with exalting error up to the level of truth, but it is peculiar to the Irish plan to elevate every system which is willing to abjure the sufficiency of the word of God, or deny the duty of all to search and study its divine contents; and yet the effect of the plan

is to depress and exclude all who refuse to bind themselves to modify religious instruction, to give, reduce, or deny it, according to the dictation expressed by or through the parent or guardian of any child attending at the school.

As I understand the defence now relied upon, for continuing the conditions which subject the reading and use of the Scriptures in either versions, the use of prayer, the use of the Scripture Lessons, and all religious exercises, to an interference of which the parent is to be the formal mouth-piece, it is this. It is not denied that, as a *matter of fact*, a large body of the bishops, clergy, and laity, of our Church, consider it against conscience and duty to bind themselves to any such conditions. So do the Wesleyan Methodists, and others to whom I need not more particularly refer. But, it is said, this objection, however conscientious, is so unreasonable, it ought not, on principle, to be allowed. It involves compulsion; and, although it is admitted that it is the right and duty of all to read the Scripture, and it is neither the right nor duty of any man, or set of men, to forbid or deny the sacred and inalienable privilege of a free appeal to the word of God, yet it is said, that in a school which *offers* education to all who are willing to receive it, but by the fundamental rules of which the reading of Scripture is an integral and essential part of the education so *offered* to all, the principles which you allow to be truisms and axioms of Protestantism are made compulsory, and, therefore, the system ought not to obtain sanction or support.

This is, as I conceive, the very pith and essence of the question involved in the education controversy, and on the right apprehension of which the whole case depends.

A parochial school is a part of the parochial charge of the incumbent, and is, I think, an essential part of the agency by which the sacred duty of the parochial minister is to be made available in his Master's service. On what principle

does it offer education? And can you show me any warrant for giving to one child, with either the formal or real assent of its parent or guardian, what you would not give to another, because you believed it to be an unsanctified and unprofitable instruction? What is demanded is, that the objection of the Church of Rome, in reference to the Scriptures, should be allowed, if put forward in the mouth of the parent; what in the parochial, and any scriptural school, is regarded as integral, vital, and fundamental, shall be severed and separated by foreign interference; and the remainder given, not as good education provided on fixed principles, and according to a standard of accredited truth, but as imperfect instruction demanded in its reduced dimension, in a school, and from a patron, whose very position is, or ought to be, a protest against the rejection of the word of God as the sufficient basis of faith and morals.

This view of the case has made me feel its importance as a matter of the most serious moment. The great principle of parochial ministration is put upon its trial under a charge of compulsion. My whole confidence in its divine constitution and character is vitally connected with this peculiarity, that it defies the caprice or corruption of those to whom its sacred message is announced or offered. But it is said that in the school it is unfair to tempt the children, or their parents, to receive, in opposition to their faith, what is made a condition of giving general education. If this be so, no temporal advantage of any kind should ever be connected with the message of religion to a community. Can we read the history of our Great Head, in His life of charity and truth, and affirm a principle so much at variance with His mercy and truth?

If the objection be sound, the whole system of parochial education is rotten, and should be superseded; if the objection be merely the spawn of voluntarism, it ought not to

be urged against those whose very character and position are opposed to that which gives life to the objection.

Here, then, is our simple case:—There are a number of schools conducted under the sanction, and according to the constitution of the Church of which we are members. The education offered to the children is such as is consistent with truth and toleration, in the judgment of the Church. The parochial patrons are asked to co-operate with the State in improving the system of general education; they express their willingness to apply public aid in making the general education more useful in every reasonable point of view. But then it is required that, in the event of any Roman Catholic child attending, it shall be entitled to receive as much secular, and as little religious instruction, as may be dictated by the priest through the parent. Here the patron holds his hand; he says, “No—if the religious element and leaven is to be under the dictation and control of the priest of the Church of Rome, do not ask *me*, in a parochial school, to be his agent in enforcing an interdict against that use of God’s most blessed word, which it is the very glory of my Church to testify under all its ministrations to be the patrimony of every parishioner.”

And this brings me to the last point which I can now notice, namely, that I am not considering the claim of the parochial system to exclusive support, but its equal title in a comprehensive plan.

Is the English system *compulsory*? The Wesleyan Methodists in England embody in their trust deed of their schools, as the condition on which they obtain public aid, that every child attending their schools shall every day read a portion of the Bible in the Authorized Version.

The Roman Catholics in England insisted on the right of exclusively regulating both *religious* and *moral* teaching, asserting that this was a matter of ecclesiastical monopoly in

both departments, with which their Church *would not allow their own laity to interfere*. (A good comment, by the way, on the objection from the parent.) *Their right was conceded*. Can a system, then, which is so comprehensive as to embrace such a claim, afford no argument or analogy, based on justice or consistent equity, for allowing the case of the parochial and scriptural schools of Ireland, as one which ought to be provided without any interference with the fundamental rule, which places in its right position the blessed word of God?

But policy sometimes suggests its logic; and I have heard it urged that it is better on the whole to submit to conditions which are more adapted to fetter the energies of error than the exertions of truth.

I always trust the Church of Rome as wise in its generation. Conditions which fetter the use of the Scripture must of necessity be worth a greater sacrifice than that Church has made, or professed to make, under the National Board.

It is said the general publications of the Board are excellent, and I willingly allow they are.

I had many specimens sent to me, in the kindest spirit, by Mr. Mac Donnell and Mr. Cross, and I shall neither be so uncandid or dishonest as to deny that I consider these books in many respects to contain a large amount of religious, moral, and useful instruction. They are, however, only *offered*: they are not made the necessary text-books for teaching the children. "*Almost*" offered, for any who choose to take it, is somewhat different from "*altogether*" provided for all under fundamental regulation.

We should be honest and consistent in whatever plan we accredit or defend. I cannot go with those who profess to treat the Church of Rome on terms of equal claim to assistance in education, and yet in secret, and by the contrivances of policy, hope eventually to undermine her foundations.

My honest conviction is, that it is by the plain and simple use of the agency of the Church and the word of God, that we can hope to prevail. And I think we shall be more respected for consistent uprightness, and less liable to be circumvented by the treachery of secular contrivances, if we take our stand on this. The Church is not made to be the engine of party policy; it is not a state association to be brought under secular bondage. Its duties are defined by a higher charter than the convenience of a cabinet, and its discipline secures for all its ministrations a standard propriety.

If it be right to assist education without interfering with matters of conscience, in the schools of the several sections, I do not see with what consistency a condition can be imposed to which a *bonâ fide* conscientious objection may be made on the admitted ground, that the interference is involved in the condition. The system goes too far, or not far enough: it has the vice of exclusiveness under the colour of comprehension.

If we really desire to extend education without interfering with the obligations of conscience, how can any system be more safely aided without antecedent condition than the parochial schools under the Church.

The Romanist may shelter his system under the unpublished orders of his Church; the Dissenter may shift with the exigencies of the season; but the parochial school, and its patron, are bound by a discipline and a duty which cannot be strengthened, and ought not to be snapped, by any conditions of state contrivance.

Here, then, I take my stand: whether you yield to truth or to liberty, the parochial school has the first claim on the friends of education. If any of its fundamental principles be wrong, let them be altered by the authority of the Church

itself: they are not more or less erroneous by reason of a public grant being given or withheld.

If they are consistent with the very constitution of the Church, and obligatory on all who regard it in its true character, conscious of its right position, and anxious for its usefulness and permanence in our land, I can only say that, so long as I am a member of that Church, I shall endeavour, under the guidance of its great Head, to maintain its cause, urge its duties, and protect its rights. What may be the best policy, as a question of diplomacy, in dealing with the Church of Rome, I shall not inquire.

In the position in which God in His good providence has placed me, it is my desire, in a spirit of unaffected kindness, but uncompromising fidelity, to do my duty. At His bar must I answer for the testimony given or withheld to His truth in the land, as occasion may require from me. And I can assure you, dear Mr. Mac Ivor, it is my earnest wish that this and every question connected with the cause of truth, may be considered and decided by every man in a spirit of pure and peaceable wisdom; without imputation of unworthy motives, or the use of harsh or severe criticism, but in the honest search for truth, and the faithful resolve of being satisfied with no specious substitute.

Believe me, very faithfully and sincerely,

J. NAPIER.

REPLY.

MY DEAR MR. NAPIER,

I regret that you have been prevented from carrying out your former intention, and publishing, as from yourself, the letter you proposed writing to me.

I also regret that, instead of the formal and precise exposition of your proposition, which you had designed, and in part executed, you have been obliged to substitute a more loose statement of it, "*currente calamo*;" and that you have, in consequence, mixed up both it and your arguments with discursive declamation upon topics which, however important and inspiring, are yet extraneous to the question, and, I trust, common to us both. However, your letter is a forcible one. The proposition that it involves,—that, I presume, which you and your colleague will this session lay before Parliament for the adjustment of the question,—goes to the root of the controversy; and your arguments are, I suppose, the strongest and best that can be adduced in its support. I cannot hesitate, therefore, to publish your letter, adding the following remarks, which, I trust, will render it on the whole more useful.

Let me, in the first instance, gather up the heads of your letter, and concentrate attention upon the proposition itself.

1. On the national aspects of the question you do not enlarge, but what you say is reasonable. You are not a *laudator temporis acti*. You allude to the past without expressing any wish to revive it. With the exigencies of the present you are willing to grapple; and that which you would *accept* as calculated to deal with these is a *system of comprehension*; a system which would embrace schools of different religious complexions on a principle of *non-interference with the alleged conscientious views of each*. "An exclusive system has been rejected. A united system is impracticable. A comprehensive system has claims at least on those who think that religious liberty has higher demands than [the enforcement, upon those who do not willingly receive it, of] any section of religious truth." For such a system of comprehension you quote also the authority of Dr. Chalmers, and the *analogy* of the present system of English education. And to such a system you find the present National Education in Ireland to be "gravitating;" the original Vested system [united education] being left behind, and the Non-vested system [conditional separate grants] becoming more popular, and more prominent. This you conceive, and I agree with you, gives a new aspect to the controversy.

2. Refusing, with a reasonableness which I wish were universal, to confound the *integral education* of a child with that *assistance towards his education* which alone the State can pretend to give, or the teachers of daily schools be rationally intrusted with, you justly view the Non-vested schools as "a system of comprehension designed to render this assistance on a principle of non-interference," and you would accept it as such, if it were altered to your mind.

It needs this alteration, for its offer of assistance comes burdened with a condition which [you think] *does interfere* with consciences in the community, and excludes that class of schools which, of all others, has the *first* claim to be

comprehended, "the parochial system." You demand, then, not in violation of the proposed principles of the system, but in pursuance of them, that these schools shall be included.

Thus, your proposition differs somewhat from that of the Church Education Society, either in its original [national] or in its present [semi-national] aspect, and is more moderate than either.

It is not that the principle of the present National System should be condemned as vicious, and that of the Church Education Society instituted in its room.

Nor is it that the Society should receive from Government a separate grant for its own exclusive use, not passing through the hands of the Commissioners.

But it is, that the present National System, or rather the Non-vested part of it, should be so administered on its professed principle of Non-interference, that what you designate "the parochial system of schools" shall be "comprehended" in it.

3. Now, you are aware, and you concede, that these schools, [if their patrons *do* object to the condition], could not be included otherwise than by removing the condition altogether; and that this would have an effect, and a very important one, on the *other* schools of the system; and that the whole of this effect, so far at least as we are capable of measuring it, would be far from favourable to the objects of the parochial schools themselves, to those which you and the Protestant clergy and Protestant laity have at heart. These evil consequences, however, or apparent evil consequences, you are willing to abide by. You will regret them, but *you* cannot help them. The intricacies of worldly policies you leave "to those who are wise in their generation." With principles you have to deal; and if principle require the removal of the condition, let principle answer for the con-

sequences. *Fiat justitia.* Some how, and some time, or, if not in time, in eternity, it will compensate itself.

It remains, then, that we attain a distinct conception of what you mean by *the parochial system*, and of *the condition* by which, as you suppose, they are excluded from the Non-vested system of the Board.

4. By the parochial system of schools, then, which it would not be necessary to define, but for the mistake into which you fall of confounding it with the Church Education Society, you mean, I presume, schools under the management of the parochial clergy, and designed for the special instruction of the Church children, and of those who may be willing to be trained as such, and allowing no interference with, and no degradation of, this Church purpose and Church character of the school. What the special instruction should be in each separate school, for circumstances might make it unreasonable to insist that they should be all absolutely alike, you would leave, perhaps, pretty much to the discretion of the individual patrons, who would act under the direction of their ecclesiastical superiors; at least, you would wish no *State* interference, so long as it was confined to the Bible and standards of the Church.

Such schools, you presume, there are, or ought to be, and ought to be multiplied; not one for each parish merely, and under the wing of the parish church, but one for each valley and mountain side; a radiating point for Protestantism, and education, and the progress of truth, among the mixed, and generally ignorant and bigoted population. Such schools you think ought to be *the first* to partake of the Government assistance.

And so do I. And so, as far as I can judge, do the Commissioners. In fact these are precisely such schools as the Non-vested system was designed to comprehend. To all such its advantages are offered, and *by many such are they*

received; the Commissioners stipulating for one condition, to which we now proceed.

That inasmuch as such schools may be, *in very many cases certainly are, and will be*, the only schools available for the mixed, and ignorant, and bigoted population of the district, the patron of each shall, while receiving the Government benefit for his own children, be willing to confer a portion of it on the rest of the community, and admit to these general and secular advantages which the State has mainly furnished, *along with those who are willing*, the children also of those who are *unwilling* to receive the special religious instruction of the school.

They do *not* presume to interfere or meddle with the special religious instruction itself. They do *not* expect the patron to modify or alter it in the least, *nor to withhold it*, whatever it may be, from any one child whose parent is not unwilling that he should receive it. They only require, that, as in a Church Education, or in any other decently regulated, school, the hours for imparting it shall be specified in the time-table; and that, when those hours arrive, the children of those parents who have positively expressed their unwillingness to receive it, shall be permitted, not to interfere with or disturb it, but, *simply to retire*.

5. Two questions here arise:—

1. *Ought* the Protestant clergy entertain any conscientious repugnance to this condition, as interfering with the special purpose and character of their parochial schools, or impairing their own ministerial dignity and usefulness? and

2. *Do* they entertain any?

You seem inclined to answer both questions in the affirmative; *I answer BOTH in the negative*.

I cannot pretend to deny that the great majority of the clergy *do* refuse the advantages of the Non-vested schools; but I do deny that it is in consequence of their feeling, *indi-*

vidually, any serious repugnance to comply with this condition.

Were the individual clergy convinced, as you are, that *this is the sole condition* required of them, in return for that assistance which would render their schools efficient; were they satisfied that, by accepting it, they do not compromise *in other respects* their own position, or that of their brethren; satisfied that they do not thereby, *in other respects*, sanction evil or assist it; or, desert one another and degrade the Church, by yielding, either in appearance or in reality, to the influence of Government patronage; were they, in fact, left *free*, by the Government on one hand, and by the *management* of the Church Education Society on the other, to ascertain the facts, and to act singly upon their own individual judgment;—if all this were so, I am fully persuaded that not only would the clergy generally, or universally, accept the advantages of the Non-vested system, but that they would *approve* of this condition, *and, perhaps to a man, resist its removal*.

Before proceeding to discuss, however, whether they *should*, or whether they *do*, entertain objections to it, we shall both be asked by very many readers, “*Is it a fact that this is the sole condition required of the parochial patrons?*” I answer here, and I trust you will be careful to answer every where, “Yes, this is the only condition, and the whole condition, required by the Government Commissioners.”

6. Now as this is the final fact upon which the controversy must ultimately hinge; as multitudes plainly are ignorant of it, whom we should beforehand have expected to know it well; as many who *must* know it seem to make it a “principle” to dissemble their knowledge of it, to involve it mysteriously in all sorts of ambiguous wordings, to throw dust in the eyes of the public, by declaiming upon anything and everything else, you will excuse my stating it over again,

both in the text and the appendix (see note A), so fully as, I hope, to preclude mistakes.

In fact the fixing public attention upon it is *the public benefit* which, I hope, will accrue from the publication of these two letters. It is incredible in my eyes that the controversy can substantially exist longer than until this one fact comes to be fairly understood.

Let me first make plain a subsidiary point, without which the main one could not be seen in its proper light.

I have retained pointedly the word "*special*" before "religious instruction," for I wish to mark what you have yourself the candour to allude to, that the secular and general, the "literary and moral" instruction furnished by the Board involves within itself a *general* religious instruction. You have been furnished [lately] with these books; you have read them; and you find, perhaps to your surprise, I have no doubt to your satisfaction, that they contain, what *even you* "consider a large amount of religious, moral, and useful instruction." And you are mistaken, I will add, in supposing that these books are only "almost offered" instead of being "altogether provided." They *are* altogether provided: in fact, a grant is made gratuitously to every school, and periodically renewed, independently of any wish on the part of the patron; and, although the use of no one of them is made compulsory, they *are* universally accepted, and used in *all* the schools, without, I believe, a single exception. What misled you, perhaps, is, that the "directly religious" books published by the Board (i. e. the four volumes of Scripture Lessons, the Sacred Poetry, Easy Lessons on Christian Evidences, and Lessons on the Truth of Christianity), are, as you say, only offered, without being supplied gratuitously, unless expressly desired by the patrons.

This *general* religious instruction, *actually imparted* in the

ordinary secular course, is not to be mistaken for the *special* religious instruction *expected to be given* in each several school according to the appointment of its own patron. It may assist that given by the Protestant clergyman, and it may improve that of the Roman Catholic, but it is not intended to supersede either. It is involved in the "*literary and moral instruction*" *as such*; that being a strange literary course, so the compilers of these books have thought, which should omit to give in its just prominence an account of the Christian revelation, and that a strange morality which should not proceed, expressly and authoritatively, upon the broad principles of the Christian religion.

Those who have not read the books have curious fancies concerning them, but any one who has will acknowledge that you much understate both their religious character and general excellence, when you allow it to be extorted from you that they contain "a *large* amount of *religious*, moral, and useful instruction;" and this large amount forms the leading and prominent part of what all the children actually do learn in all Irish National Schools.

Now, I presume, you consider this a benefit. A benefit to those children admitted to the schools, whatever be the special religious instruction which, either at home or at school, in church or in chapel, they may receive besides. Plainly, you do so consider it. You complain that it is not made compulsory; you ask it as a benefit for those to whom you design the good instruction of your parochial schools, *a fortiori*, then, you consider it such to those who should get a worse religious instruction, or who could get none at all. At least you cannot be surprised that the Government should think so, and the public at large; that they should deliberately judge its general dispensation among the masses in Ireland to be a national blessing; not a perfect good, indeed,—what is?—but a *very great improvement* upon the barbarian

“innocence,” ignorance, and superstition which those masses have hitherto enjoyed.

THIS it is, then, which the Non-vested System aims at dispensing, on the principle of non-interference with the actual consciences of the people.

THIS, considered *not as education*, but as ASSISTANCE TOWARDS EDUCATION: considered not even as *school instruction*, but only as a part of it. The Commissioners expecting, and tendering further assistance towards, an express and definite religious teaching to be imparted besides.

To all, of every denomination, who are locally interested in promoting education, this assistance is offered, with the single condition annexed which I here restate.

With the definite religious instruction ITSELF they do not interfere. Within the limits of the Bible and the standards of the churches, it may be whatever the patron pleases.

They do *not* ask or expect it to be “reduced” either in quality or amount, “altered,” “modified,” or “lowered,” in order to please them, or to please *any* one.

They do *not* ask or expect it to be “withheld from,” or “denied to,” any one person of any denomination whatever.

With the discipline of REQUIRING it, i. e. by exclusion, or any other school penalty, *they do, in some measure, interfere.*

The patron *may require it*, or as much of it as he pleases, to be learned by all children of all denominations whose parents are willing that they should be taught it.

All are to be supposed willing *except* those who actually come forward and declare the contrary.

The children of those who do *are not to be required* to learn it: these may not interrupt, disturb, or interfere with the rest, but, when the hours for teaching it arrive, *they may, in obedience to their parents' directions, retire.*

In all other respects the patron is left perfectly free to conduct his school and himself as he pleases; and he may

refuse this assistance, and terminate the connexion of his school with the Board, *whenever he sees fit*.

7. I have been thus careful in stating the fact, because even your letter countenances the extreme carelessness with which even good men express themselves on the subject; their words conveying to nine out of every ten readers exactly the opposite of what they mean, or at least can mean, with truth.

Be it known, then, that all such statements, even of your letter, as that, in the Irish National system, "they are depressed or excluded, who refuse to bind themselves to *modify* religious instruction, to give, reduce, or deny it, according to the dictation of" *any one* (p. 4), or, that its "conditions subject the *use* of the Scriptures, prayer, and religious exercises, to an *interference* of which any one is the mouth-piece" (p. 5), or "conditions which fetter the use of the Scriptures" (p. 8), as any ordinary man would understand the words, *are simply untrue*; they are aberrations of your *currens calamus*: no more. And your declamation about "abjuring the sufficiency of the word of God, and denying the duty of all to search and study its divine contents" (p. 4), "forbidding or denying the sacred and inalienable privilege of a free appeal to the word of God" (p. 5), or "enforcing an interdict against the use of God's most blessed word, which it should be the glory of my church to testify to be the patrimony of every parishioner" (p. 7), *means no more than this*, that people are not, in this system, *obliged by others* to learn it, and in a particular form, *irrespective of their own will and individual conscience*. That those who believe, as they and their fathers have been taught, that the Bible itself is dangerous, our version of it onesided and unfair, and our teaching of it heretical, are not, in consequence of these deeply rooted and deeply injurious misapprehensions, to be deprived of the means of gradually learning that *they are* in error,—

are not to be *required*, either, all at once, to break through their conscientious belief, for the sake of obtaining some education for their children, or else to see them brought up, as they have been themselves, in unmitigated Popery and social servitude, in material, and mental, and religious bondage.

Not the Bible instruction itself, but only the discipline, or, as you express it (p. 4),—I thank you for the word,—“the *religious policy*” of requiring it, is interfered with; and this last only in reference to those who actually express their conscientious unwillingness to be taught it in the form in which it is offered.

This unwillingness arises from the priests’ “interdict,” or the Pope’s, perhaps. True: but is *our* weapon to be, therefore, a counter-interdict; an interdict from that large educational and social benefit which the people *can* receive; a second interdict, which will certainly enhance and envenom, and as certainly perpetuate, the power of the first? Priests’ or Pope’s interdicts *live* simply by the ignorance and superstition which causes them to be respected and obeyed. To remove the ignorance and superstition is the only effectual, as it is the only Christian, way of condemning them to die. The National system proposes to us a large assistance in effecting this. It asks, however, that we should attack them, not by secular exclusiveness and counter-interdicts, but by instruction itself. Our definite and special, and [*unlike* that of the Church Education Society] our *unmodified* scriptural and church instruction *to all who will receive it*; a part of it, *if we choose*, to those who are willing to take a part; to the rest, whom deplorable inability of conscience, and terror of the priests’ interdicts, forbid to learn any, that “large amount of religious, moral, and useful instruction,” which they can, with a good conscience, receive at our hands. To ALL an effective and manly and Christian school-instruc-

tion, and the steady diffusion and advancement of *education among the masses*.

If Popery and interdicts are enforced by this, nay, if they can long survive it, Protestantism and the Bible and God's government of the world are not what they were.

8. This condition, then, being strictly stated and understood, it is asked, HAVE the Protestant clergy individually any considerable objection to it; or, would they hesitate to adopt it were their *other* difficulties, real or imaginary, removed?

I do not believe it. I know of very many of them individually (I mean opponents of the Board), I know of large sections of them collectively, I believe of them, as a body, and I am not a stranger to their feelings and modes of thought, that, if they felt at liberty to isolate themselves, and consult merely their own personal judgment and the wants of their own locality, *they would not object to it*; they would personally regard it as no grievance, but a good; no impediment *to them*, and a great advantage to the system in general.

For instance—I sent you, some time ago, the papers of the Robertson's schools. These are, I may say, the parochial schools of Raphoe diocese, are under the strict and careful superintendence of the clergy and bishop, and are most highly thought of by the clergy themselves, who are almost to a man opponents of the system. Now, what are the rules of these schools? They are [or ought to be] posted up in each school on a large sheet, signed by the bishop of the diocese; and the eighth rule is: “The children of other denominations [than the Church] are not to be *required* to receive religious instruction;” the word “*required*” being in *italics*. And these are not rules which others have imposed upon the clergy, and to which they merely submit; they have themselves constructed them, voluntarily, for their own guidance; and they certainly embody the spirit, though

they are not actually required by the letter, of the excellent founder's will.

Again, to take a larger instance. You remember the Derry and Raphoe movement of 1836. The clergy of these united dioceses carried, by a very large majority, "propositions," the basis of which was this principle of non-compulsion, that "attendance upon the Bible classes (though this was the *only* religious instruction contemplated in the schools) should not be required of those children whose parents should object thereto;" and, though generally, if not universally, disavowing any change of sentiment, these men have been as steady in supporting the organized opposition against the Board as their brethren in the rest of Ireland.

Nor do they, in views and principles, differ from the rest of the clergy. Whatever will explain *their* adhesion to the Church Education Society, for your supposed conscientious repugnance to the condition is actually disclaimed, will explain that of the clergy at large. The *rule* of the Society is, indeed, diametrically opposed to the condition, and takes no cognizance of conscientious scruple; but its administration is not so; this depends upon the individual patrons, and they have a better mind; they feel themselves at liberty to *make exceptions*, in those cases in which they really believe that it would operate as a hardship, *and do make them*. I know that many would not, and I do not believe that one clergyman out of one hundred would, enforce this rule rigidly in his own school; that he would actually exclude from its general advantages those of whom *he* was convinced, 1, that they could not procure them elsewhere; and, 2, that they could not, with a clear conscience, receive his religious instruction.

In fact, this seems now to be acknowledged by the organs of the Society, and the case is made to hinge upon "the difference between a rule and its exceptions: the rule is one

thing, the exceptions from it, like those admitted by Trinity College, are *only exceptions*, and nothing more."

Be it so. Why not, then, like Trinity College, or any straightforward institution, *avow the willingness to make these exceptions, and specify the circumstances* under which they will be made; classify and comprise under a second rule, or a by-rule, the exceptions to the ordinary usage?

This is all that is required by the Board. When the Society has done this, the sole point of difference between the schools in which its rules are obeyed, and those which the Protestant clergymen may have, if they choose, under the Non-vested system, shall have vanished.

And *until* it has done this it does not represent, in *this point*, the actual sentiments of its individual members.

Are there then other points?

Yes; and no. Many other points of *feeling*, many of *misconception*, and some of *history*, but no other of *existing fact*. Much to *explain*, and much, so the best men think, to *justify*, at least *historically* and up to a certain point, the course taken by the clergy.

But, *on a present comparison*, no other basis for the Society's existence, at least with its present object of supporting an opposition class of schools; no other actual difference that can be alleged between the schools that the clergy *have* under the one, and those they *may have* under the other system: no other point, consequently, upon which the Society can rest its antagonism, if it be willing to submit to a system of comprehension at all. So far as the present controversy is one of argument, the discussion of this single difference must go to the bottom, and reach to the end of it.

10. It is to be inquired, then,—*Whether* the Society, or its individual members, be right; whether *IT* be "in advance" of its members, or *THEY* of it. For in this they do *not* agree together. You will misrepresent the Irish clergy in

the House, as you mistake them in your letter to me, if you exhibit their agreement in supporting the Church Education Society, and in signing its ambiguous petitions, as an agreement in disliking this condition, or in wishing to have it removed.

OUGHT the clergy object to this condition?

Ought they to repress, as a human weakness, their individual respect for parental authority; their personal willingness to descend to those spiritually beneath them, and to deal tenderly and liberally with the conscience that knows no better, and dares no higher, than to obey a priest's interdict against the Bible? Ought the committee of the Robertson's schools to reconstruct their rules, the unchanged Derry and Raphoe propositionists to change, and all those institutions for the better classes in which the clergy have themselves been educated, and in which they take a part,—most public and private seminaries, the diocesan schools, the royal schools, and Trinity College itself,—to be condemned as “unfaithful,” and remodelled on the *un-enforced* principle of the Church Education Society?

You seem to answer, for yourself, in the affirmative, with some mystery, but much resolution. “Your whole confidence in the divine constitution and character of *your* parochial system is vitally connected with this peculiarity,” which you describe as “its defying the caprice or corruption of those to whom it is offered:” that is, defying their actual state and necessities to extort any benefit except one which they do not appreciate; insisting that swine shall not be fed at all, unless they will accept the pearls. And I do know some excellent persons who really seem to think themselves forbidden, by their views of Church and State, to offer to the lower Irish peasantry any other alternative than this.

Such persons, generally, propose a conclusion consistent with their premises. Either,

That the *whole State education shall be made conformable to their views*, as being those just principles which a Protestant state is bound to insist on. Or, that,

Should any mean and temporizing system be upheld, they, at least, should be specially exempted from its rules, or should receive a separate grant, *not having any relation to this pseudo-national system*. A special favour, a premium and honour in fact, in public attestation of the value of their better Christianity.

Their axioms and arguments you seem to countenance, but your conclusion draws back and deserts them. From a feeling that "religious liberty" is adverse to the first, and that English "fairness and impartiality" would dislike the second, you do not press "their claims to exclusive support," but come down to a more humble platform, and assert "their equal title in a comprehensive plan." Thus you take the system on its own ground, and urge it with its own arguments: religious liberty, and fairness, and impartiality, require this; and the very proposed principle of the measure, "non-interference in matters of conscience," which is still to remain, demands that the consciences of these patrons shall not be interfered with.

10. I fear, dear Mr. Napier, that in abandoning the greater part of the transcendental conclusion, you abandon the whole of the transcendental arguments, and that their place will be badly supplied by those you find in our more everyday conceptions.

Your parochial patrons are to be comprehended in the system.

That they may be so, the condition is to be withdrawn: withdrawn, not from them merely, but from all patrons, equally and impartially: removed from the system altogether.

And still the basis of the system, non-interference in matters of conscience, is to be preserved.

You desire impossibilities. Your very proposition is a contradiction in terms.

The only scheme which could effect this is one of those Anglo-Irish systems, which profess one thing to the English Parliament, with the Irish avowal that they will practise the opposite at home. If the basis of the system is still to be non-interference with the actual consciences of the people, whether Protestant or Roman Catholic, the condition is essential to it. If the condition be given up, so must the basis too.

For what is this condition? Simply, a *guarantee that the professed principle shall be locally carried out*: a guarantee which is asked simply *because it is known to be needed*; because it is known that the people are largely in the power of the local patrons, and that these *would use* their power, not according to the principles of the system. Only for this condition, the public benefit, proposed on tolerant views, would be *intercepted in transitu* by the avowed religious exclusiveness of the several bodies of clergy, and doled out to its intended recipients on the principles of a vigorous and unsparing, a conscientious, sectarianism. Non-interference would be the paper-principle in Marlborough-street: interference, or rather *interferences*, and those of the most painful and oppressive character, would be the felt reality of its local administration.

The system is one of comprehension. Many of the patrons are clergy of the Established Church: many more are Protestant Dissenters: most of all are Roman Catholic priests.

A school under any one of these may be, in the general case will be, the only school practically available for the mixed population of the district. Remove this condition, and the patron may leave to the Protestant or Romanist parent, as the case may be, no alternative but either to have

his children taught authoritatively, as true, tenets which he believes to be most hostile to their eternal good; or else to see them excluded from the only school practically within his reach; a condition tantamount in Ireland to condemning them for life to the ignorance and crime, the semi-barbarism and semi-beggary, which are now proverbial.

But some one will say, "though they might do so, there is no probability that they would." Alas! that man has not lived in Ireland, has not seen how party strife and "religious" animosity have rent and perverted even Christianity itself. The opposite is notorious. Even the Protestant clergy, and in a body, declare that they would, argue that they ought; and the representative of the clergy and of the University of Dublin condescends to write a letter to me to prove the principle of it. I respect my brother clergymen too highly to believe that they would individually act upon the inconsistent and un-Protestant principle which they allow the Church Education Society to profess for them. I know that they would not. But what they are not ashamed, *inconsistently*, to assert, other denominations would not hesitate *consistently* to practise: and the general result would be, that while the Romanists in many places might—in some places, perhaps, would—be "compelled," against their will, to submit to Protestant instruction, the Protestant parents, in a great many more cases, should submit to have their children indoctrinated with hostile Dissent and very special Romanism.

This single condition of the system is the only protection a parent has; and until the religious zeal of the patrons shall have so far bettered itself *in kind*, that they will trust to *education itself* rather than to *their present power over its administration*,—that they will consent to waive even this [historically more moderate] use of the secular arm, and rely upon those slower and less pretentious, and more laborious

means, which we commonly designate "moral," such a condition must be looked on as indispensable.

11. It may be very wrong, to be sure, to recognise the existence of any consciences in the community but those of the patrons of schools. It may open the door to liberalism and freethinking, and I know not how many evils besides, to suppose that parents of the humbler classes, whether Protestant or Roman Catholic, have, or ought to have, any option as to what religious instruction should be imparted to their children; and there are those who will deride and denounce such notions, and sigh for the days that are past. Those, however, if there be any, who love such Popish Protestantism, must, if they would be consistent, seek aid for their schools elsewhere. They cannot, by the very terms of the question, be comprehended, *as local administrators*, in a system whose basis is non-interference with the actual consciences of the people.

"Such persons, then," you say, "are excluded from the system."

They are not excluded *from the advantages* of it; these they may receive on the same terms as the rest of the community; but they are excluded from its *administration*.

"The system, then, fails in comprehensiveness?"

Yes. It does not comprehend every one; it does not include indifferently *both those who will, and those who will not observe* its professed principle. It only pretends to include the former, and requires the guarantee accordingly.

"But this is inconsistent; the system goes too far, or not far enough; it has the vice of exclusiveness under the colour of comprehension; *for* there is a *bonâ fide* interference with conscience involved in the condition itself."—(p. 9).

Indeed. *It does interfere*, you think, with the conscience of patrons *to be asked not to interfere*—not to convert *their present administrative power* into an engine of interference—with the conscience of the people!

That were a wide and capacious comprehension, an elastic and Anglo-Irish non-interference, which could include these, and yet preserve the principle unchanged.

Your problem is, as was replied to you in Parliament in 1848, to theorize a liberty of conscience which shall comprise *both* Louis Quatorze *and* the Protestants.

"It is against our conscience, Sire," they urged, "to be persecuted for our religion."

"And it is against *my* conscience," he replied, "not to persecute you; and whether am I to respect your conscience or my own?"

Louis thought he had a right to obey his own conscience, without dreaming of being able *at the same time* to satisfy their's: but Mr. Napier is more impartial; he proposes that we should gratify *both*. The system which does not do so "either goes too far or not far enough:" if it profess liberty of conscience at all, "it has the vice of exclusiveness under the colour of comprehension." I know of no theory that promises so fairly to effect this as the *ισονομία* of Epicurus, "*æquilibrium, æqualis tributio, ut omnia omnibus paribus paria respondeant*,"—an equal distribution of atoms of *opposite* tendencies, so as to preserve an equipoise, and prevent things from going *all the same way*. This doctrine you remember he applied to the moral world, and by means of it proved the existence of his numberless gods: "*Ut innumerabilia sunt qui perdunt ita quoque innumerabilia sint qui conservent*," &c. Similarly, in your comprehensive system, as there is a large number of patrons who *do not* interfere, so there ought to be a large number who *do* interfere; and as there is a large number of parents who *do not suffer* in conscience by the administration of the National Education, so there ought to be a large number who *do suffer*; just to preserve fairness and impartiality, and prevent the non-interference men from having it all their own way.

It is with the greatest pain that I write, on this subject,

anything bearing the semblance of levity. But what alternative have I? Year after year you bring forward this absurd fiction of patrons suffering in conscience, because they are asked to allow the poor man's conscience an option in the religious education of his child! You ask, in the name of religious liberty, for the sake of the rights of conscience, you ask, that these shall be gratified! You complain that, because they are not gratified, they are ill-used and aggrieved; they are almost martyred, because they are not allowed to administer the national grant so as to oppress every conscience, if indeed that be a conscience at all, which differs from their own!

Who are these patrons, and *where* are they? Did I believe that this representation of the Irish clergy had even a remnant of truth, that there existed even a small section of my brethren to whom it applied, I would treat it gravely and respectfully; I would be amazed at it, I should mourn it, but I dare not turn it into ridicule. But, I am satisfied, the picture represents *no* reality. Such patrons exist *no where* but in your fancy: in your radical confusion between "the parochial system" and the Church Education Society. As to the latter, in some of its attitudes, and in some of its petitions, it does hold: but, as applied to the individual clergy, it is a *fiction*, an absurd one, a degrading one. Place not, I entreat you, the Irish Parochial Church before the Parliament, and before the world, in any such attitude as this.

"If," you ask, "we really desire to extend education without interfering with the obligation of conscience, how can any system be more safely aided, without antecedent conditions, than parochial schools under the Church?"

None more safely, *none* so safely. Were *they* alone to be considered, and were that party spirit at rest within which *no* Christian is himself, such conditions might be altogether dispensed with. The clergy of the Church, as I believe,

like the clergy of Raphoe, wherever they saw this condition needed, *would impose it upon themselves*. And in so doing they would feel, like the clergy and bishop of Raphoe, that they were *neither* “strengthening the discipline and duty of the Church, nor snapping them,” (p. 9) but only *explicitly* stating, and courageously obeying, what we all *feel* to be the spirit of our Church and of our religion.

It is not “any of the fundamental principles *of the Church* which are wrong and need to be altered by authority,” but only the principle, and sundry other regulations, of the Church Education Society; and it is not the Church, but only the Society, that puts the question—“WHETHER we are to yield to truth or liberty?” these are not contrary in *her* eyes: for she is content with *that liberty* which is not antagonistic to truth, and leaves to others *that* [penal enforcement of] *truth* which *is* subversive of liberty. But are the other denominations in Ireland equally considerate? In the present excited state of party feeling are even the best of Christians safe? Alas! Peter himself once required, “to be withstood to the face,” and “even Barnabas was carried away by their dissimulation.”

Better both for them and for us to be explicit. The sentiment, “et qui nolunt occidere quenquam tamen posse volunt,” is a childish one after all, and scarcely innocent. If we do not wish—and which of us does wish?—to use the administrative power as an engine for forcing a present acceptance of our religious teaching, let us hasten to say so, and set ourselves to teach, with more efficient and more extended agency, all those who are willing to hear us.

12. This proposition, then, in the form in which you present it, is, as well as I can judge, self-inconsistent in the highest degree: its two leading parts plainly refuse to cohere: to do away the condition and yet preserve the principle is, in the present state of Ireland, impossible. If the

consciences of the people are not to be interfered with, those patrons *must* be omitted who conscientiously believe such non-interference to be a sin.

But I think it likely that you have meant something different from what your words convey; probably, you would wish that the non-interference of the system should be *interpreted* to have reference to the *patrons only*, the embarrassing consideration of parent's consciences being left altogether out of view. You would propose that all persons, impartially, indifferently, should be admitted to become patrons, without any inquiry as to "the discipline and religious policy of their schools;" the condition being simply removed, and the professed principle being, indeed, adhered to in Marlborough-street, but allowed locally to take its chance of being observed or not, according to the discretion or conscience of the individual patron.

Such a proposition does not differ essentially from that to which the Church Education Society has latterly been descending,—that of UNCONDITIONAL SEPARATE GRANTS,—in detail, however, there are some serious differences, which are much in favour of this proposal.

a. It would secure to Protestant patrons a much larger proportion of schools.

Separate grants would be in the ratio of the numbers acknowledged to belong to each communion; and this would allot to us, and to the Protestant Dissenters the means of supporting *one* school each, out of, perhaps, ten or twelve; whereas this, offering a just premium to activity and earnestness in promoting local education, would more than double this proportion of Protestant schools.

b. It would give in *all* the schools of the system a much better general education than *some*, at least, of the separate grants might be spent in procuring.

Yet, even with these advantages, your proposition, if I

mistake not, will be condemned by reason, and, I am sure, is thoroughly adverse to the views of the Protestant clergy.

All separate grants for education *ought* to be restricted by this condition, either explicitly or by common understanding; and where, as in Ireland, there is a mixed population and strong sectarian feeling, it were folly and wrong not to insist upon it. To those who have learned Christianity aright it will be unnecessary indeed, they will impose it upon themselves; but, for the same reason, it will give them no offence; rather, they will rejoice that the powers that be have commanded what they ought. Those of inferior views will recognise many reasons for a conscientious *submission* to it, as a regulation imposed by authority, and plainly operating for the public good: and no one in the whole community can *conscientiously* object to it, except those extra-conscientious patrons you have invented, who conscientiously believe that no conscience ought to be tolerated except their own.

13. In the language of my unpublished tract, this condition is *the non-compulsion clause*. To remove it were not indeed all at once to make the system compulsory, but it were to allow it to become so, to leave it in the power of the local patrons to make it so, and that in the worst possible sense, by breaking it up into a number of separate local compulsions; a permission which would immediately become a practice, and the result would be this:

In *one* school Church teaching—in *one* school Protestant dissent—in *four* schools (at least) special Romanism—all *made compulsory*. Each school (except in towns) having, in general, sufficient command of its own locality to make its compulsion felt both as a snare and an oppression.

Who will deliberately advocate a system like this?

One grand compulsion, such as that originally sought by the Society, where one knows beforehand that it is the Bible teaching, Protestant Bible teaching, *and that alone*,

which will be made compulsory, is a thing, if not to be insisted on, at least to be treated with respect.

The Bishop of Ossory's two principles which you quote,—

1. That the Bible should be made the basis of all education furnished by the State; and

2. That it is the duty of all to read it, and that no man, or set of men, no power, ecclesiastical or civil, has any right to forbid its being read;—

Are, as we all agree, Protestant axioms.

His and the Society's inferences from these,—

1. That [consent to read] the Bible [in the Protestant authorized version] ought to be made the necessary condition of receiving *any* State education; and

2. That any body of men have a right to *make others* read it, in any form, against their will and against their conscience;—

Are indeed *illogical* as inferences, and untenable, so I believe, as positions, but they are clearly well intentioned; they indicate an abstract anxiety for the spread of Bible knowledge.

And when the Society, standing on these axioms or inferences,—for it always steps *at once* from one to the other, like a mediæval angel passing from point to point without being conscious of the intermediate void,—adopts the “regulation” of previous Societies, and sets itself in antagonism to Government *on the principle of National Education*,—demands that no one shall be allowed to receive any State education but those who are willing to read the State Bible, and that the rest of the people (known to be a large proportion) shall be excluded altogether, as a just punishment for their unreasonable superstition, and an excellent and expeditious method of bringing them to reason;—when the Society does all this, even those who reject her conclusion, and are dissatisfied with her argument, can reverence her

Bible-zeal, and attribute "to the purest motives" even what they judge to be mistakes.

This is that National aspect of the Society in which alone it is consistent or respectable; in which it can pretend to represent a principle, or claim any considerable adhesion of the clergy. Whether this principle be a good one, or the best arguments in its favour sound, is what I endeavoured to examine in the tract you allude to.

I have found fault with both.

The arguments, as many beside me have shown, and as it only needs steady attention to discriminate, proceed upon the very common confusion between *truth itself* and the *different modes of its propagation*; between the [real] duty of *giving* the Bible, and the [imaginary] duty of *compelling its reception* by means of secular penalties.

And the "fundamental position" itself, however arrived at, is, I have been bold to say, "untenable because intolerant; it is based upon a denial of the rights of conscience to a certain class in the community: it asks the secular power to make them submit to what the Society's conscience, *not their's*, thinks good for them." This principle "never can or will be proved by any arguments which, when examined, an intelligent public will not reject, as being those upon which rested, as far as they rested upon argument at all, the Protestant penal laws and the Romish Inquisition."

The Society adopted it from the very inferior educational establishments which historically preceded it, and in doing so has striven to preserve a remnant, and a very searching and oppressive one, of those "pains and disabilities" which have left their curse, in many a form, upon the heart and mind of Ireland; have stamped a deeply injurious influence upon the hereditary opinions and principles, and, in a less degree, upon the conduct, not merely of the worst but of the best classes of the Irish people.

But, while rejecting both premises and conclusion, one is still free to concede to them consistency as a whole, and to respect the grounds which have procured the Society in this, its original and proper aspect, the support of the clergy: one is bound to remember that it is *the Bible*, our version of it, and our teaching of it, *and this alone*, which the Society would render compulsory; and that it would make this *universal*. One must sympathize with the fond anxiety which would, if it could, make this the necessary part of *every* child's education; and no one who knows the Irish clergy can fail to see that it really is their earnest and unfeigned *desire to give* the Bible that has caused the unsound arguments for its compulsory reception to pass through their minds as just.

But it is no longer so when the Society comes down from its national to a semi-national, or a demi-semi-national, aspect, and demands that the Bible shall be made, not a compulsion, but *a part of a compulsion*; *the other parts* being such special modifications of Dissent and Popery, as individual patrons in all parts of the country may choose to insist on. Neither the argument *nor the motives* of the Society, I fear, will be much respected when it demands that *we* shall be at liberty to make the Bible reading compulsory in *some* schools, on the understanding, and as the condition, that, in *other* schools, the great majority of schools, the priests shall be at liberty to make special Romanism, or as many special Romanisms as they see fit, compulsory, under penalty of exclusion, both upon those who are willing to be taught it and upon those who are not.

Some have been indignant at the disrespectful tone in which I have spoken of a certain portion of the clergy, and would discredit and prejudice what I have said, by [most falsely] representing this as directed against the clergy at large. I should deserve their indignation could I conceive

my brethren capable of seriously intending to urge a proposition like this. But *they* have no such intention, and it is only the management of the Society that gives them the appearance of it. There is a party in this Church, which, sooner than not be thought to have gained what they looked for, would deliberately, or undeliberately, use the name and authority of the clergy, to procure something which *they* did *not* intend; and which, under the guise of being *part of it*, is in reality part of *something else*; part of a *new whole*, which were the direct subversion of what the clergy have sought and striven for,—a heavy blow to the cause of the Bible and the Church, which they would sooner lose their right hands than be made the instruments of inflicting upon this country.

14. One cannot suppose that any ministers of the Church would intentionally set this end before them, we must, therefore, think, that this confusion of aspects by which they strive to influence the public has imposed upon themselves. They deal with the Society as though they played a thaumatrope: change and interchange it from aspect to aspect, and pass it rapidly from one to the other, until the spectators are mystified both as to the objects sought and the reasons for seeking them, and those who are nearest and most attentive blend in one view, by an optical illusion, really incongruous parts from the opposite sides of the card.*

* Unconditional separate grants are plainly inconsistent with the Society's principles. To illustrate the mechanical logic which manages to make them cohere, take a card and write, either on opposite sides of it, or, which will be more simple, in parallel columns on the same side,—

1. The Society's national axioms (those in last section) in *large* letters; and beneath them, *but in small* letters, the Society's universal rule of national education, the "principle" to which they legitimately lead.

2. In the second column write, in small letters, the parti-national maxims (those of this section), and below these, in large letters, the parti-national—the separate-grant—conclusion to which *they* lead.

Then move the card rapidly back and forward until the small letters become

In the midst of this confusion they use different aspects to influence different classes and gain different ends; forgetting, or concealing, that these aspects are really *adverse* one to the other. It is of prime importance, then, that we should keep them distinct. The Protestant clergy, after having laboured so long to maintain the Society in its national aspect, as embodying the principle of "the Bible for all," would think themselves strangely out-generaled if they found compulsory Romanism "made a necessary part of State education" in four-fifths of the National schools, and then were coolly told that *this* was the success *they* sought.

Be assured in time, my dear Mr. Napier, they seek no such thing. Little as allusions to "general duty and ordination vows" may mean in the declamation of the Society, they do mean something in the breasts of the individual clergy, and we are not yet prepared to appreciate this method of fulfilling them.

This parti-national aspect omits all that has rendered the Society acceptable to the clergy, and carries with it, by directest implication, the palpable violation of our plainest duties and most clearly expressed desires. In descending from the first to the second position it leaves behind its body of supporters, its consistency, and respectability; it bears contradiction and condemnation upon its face.

How will the axioms, for example, of the Society, look when we amend them so as to suit this new conclusion?

Instead of, "The Bible [i. e. the reading of it] ought to be the basis [a necessary part] of all education furnished by the State," we shall have the following formula: "A compulsory Bible, *one part*; compulsory Dissent, of various forms, *one part*; compulsory Romanism, of various shades, *four*, or

illegible, and the large letters will appear to occupy the whole. By this simple contrivance, and without much expenditure of brains, separate grants may be made to cohere with the axioms of the Society, and to follow from them.

six or eight, *parts*;—ought to be the basis of all education furnished by the State."

And so with the other axioms:

"It is the duty of all men to receive [each man's share being determined *for* him, not by his own conscience, but by the accident of his locality] the aforesaid amalgam; and no man, or set of men, no power, ecclesiastical or civil, has any right to forbid it to be received."

And the other axiom we sometimes hear,—

"A Protestant State, to be consistent, can give *only* Protestant instruction to its people,"—will become, in its amended form, an equally imposing theorem:

"A Protestant State, if it give any National education, must, to be consistent, leave to four-fifths of its people [geographically determined] no option but either total ignorance or special Popery."

All this is too absurd; yet the climax is not reached until we have imagined the Society vehemently urging such maxims as these *in the name of* its scriptural views, its principles, its conscience; and bepraising itself, *ex more*, all the time, for the noble stand it is making, and the almost martyrdom it is enduring, for "the Bible, the whole Bible, and the Bible alone!"

You will be careful, I trust, not to attribute such conduct as this to the clergy at large. Aggravate not the difficulties of this Church, in this critical period of its history, by holding it up to the world as the subject of such a picture. Write not "raca" on the body you represent. Are these the maxims, think you, that the clergy have united to defend, have created an institution to enunciate? Let him say so who believes it, and let him believe it who thinks the clergy such as he is himself. To a few, a zealous, I suppose, and unreflecting few, but to them alone, is this contradiction due; to that want of discrimination which can mistake aspects of

the Society so widely different, so totally opposed; to that carelessness or skill which would press this confusion upon the Legislature and the public; which would elicit the authoritative expression of the Church's voice in favour of the Society in its national [universal scriptural education] aspect, and then would press this upon you first, and with your assistance "make it tell upon the play of parties in the House," so as to manage a success to the Society in the second aspect.

Believe me the clergy desire no such victory; God forbid it! Were it explicitly proposed to them they would reject and fear it. But their opinion has never been very directly sought, and for the most obvious of reasons.

"But," some have said, "if we cannot obtain the whole, should we not get as much as we can? Is not a part better than nothing?"

No; not a part like this, which will bring *SUCH other parts* along with it. It were better for us to support our schools by appealing to the public from day to day, than run any risk of entailing such an educational system upon the country.

"But these other parts may not follow; at least it is not *we* who bring them."

Yes, it is *you* who bring them, and you alone who are responsible for them. If you know the nature of the weapon, and are aware of the consequences of what you do, you are responsible for those consequences, though you *only* load the gun, level it, and pull the trigger. You are not responsible either for the powers of nature or the principles of the present British Constitution, but you are responsible for the part you act towards them, knowing them to be what they are, and being forewarned and fully aware of the result which *will follow from* your voluntary proceeding.

"If we cannot get the best, surely we ought to seek the second best."

Certainly; but even supposing the Bishop of Ossory's axioms to be the best, are "the amended axioms" the second best? Few will say so. Even those who think that "a power of enforcing Bible reading" *is* the best, will acknowledge that "free opportunity to teach it, without compulsion, to all who are willing to receive it," is the second best. Follow this course, and perhaps you may find it *good*.

In answering these queries I have been reasoning with others, not with you; for you have the manliness and candour to acknowledge the consequences, and look the responsibility in the face. Principle, you say, requires it, and *you* must obey principle. What principle? Even those who think that the Society, in its national aspect, has a principle, will acknowledge that in descending to this lower platform it leaves the principle behind. The principle is no longer that of a compulsory Bible, but of a compulsory *something*,—a compulsory *anything*,—COMPULSION ITSELF, *irrespective of the thing compelled*; nay, compulsion, where it is known that four-fifths of the thing made compulsory is objectionable in the last degree; is, what *we believe*, and what some of those who shall be obliged to learn it believe, to be "blasphemous fables and dangerous deceits." Principle! the only principle that brings you to such conclusions is one which is like its progeny.

15. You ask "is the English system compulsory?" Yes, if its local administrators choose to make it so. In the system itself, as you describe it [for it is now undergoing modifications], there is no guarantee to the contrary; and if it be not compulsory, nay, if it be not an aggregate of separate compulsions, the patrons deserve the praise, and they alone.

The theory of the system permits that a Roman Catholic parent might be obliged by the accident of his locality to submit his children to the special instruction of the Church clergyman or the Wesleyan Methodist; or that a Protestant

yeomans should, as the part-price of their *National Education*, have his children taught to suspect and dislike their mother Church, or, perhaps, to bow to the crucifix, make obeisance to the Madonna, and then be carefully instructed in such special Romanism as the zealous and cool-headed superior may judge good for their soul and useful to "the Catholic Church." Such things might happen; I am mistaken in my surmise if sometimes they do not happen, even in England.

But the question is not what such a system *is* in England, where the great majority of the patrons are the clergy of the Established Church, and where there is general enlightenment, and a pervading spirit of English fairness, to restrain and influence those who might be exceptions to the general usage; but what it *would be* in Ireland, where the great majority is on the other side, where there is little general enlightenment to restrain any one, and where the perpetuation of religious strife can raise from among the best of ourselves advocates of *the principle* of that to which we and our fathers have been long accustomed.

Those who doubt about the principle of the English system do not doubt its *impolicy*, and acknowledge that to impose it on Ireland were one of the most disastrous specimens of unfit legislation with which we could be afflicted.

Even you shrink from proposing it, at least without large mitigations (sect. 13): you merely press the *analogy* of its fairness and impartiality. Out upon such fairness and impartiality! Could you mean to imply that the Irish system is partial or unfair, there would be something in your analogy. But no such thing can be pretended. *To the patrons* both systems are alike impartial; the Irish requires its guarantee indifferently from all, the English from none. The Irish system extends this non-interference *to the parents also*, giving them some protection from the caprice or conscience of an unreasonable patron; the English assumes this pre-

caution to be unnecessary, and distributes the public benefit unconditionally, leaving the patrons free to deal with parents as they please. Now if this system be fair and impartial in England, as, in the main, I suppose it is, we must thank the patrons and not the system; they might make it different if they pleased; and *here* we know they would please; those who ought not will assert the principle, and parade the precedent; those who need no example will yet be glad to shelter their practice beneath the apology we have furnished; and the impartiality will be, if we are to call things by their proper names, but an equipoise of oppressions, a compensation of opposite intolerances; its fairness, that of blow for blow, when each blow separately is unchristian and unfair; an aggregate of thrusts at liberty of conscience and parental rule; each pretending, or intending, a zeal for his peculiar "truth," and all violating individual religion and social order in the name of "the Church" or "the Bible."

It is not needful *for me* to add, that in this strife the great numerical majority will be against us: this is an after consideration for compulsionists to settle among themselves. If the strife be lawful, I for one will say, let us not fear the odds; if the weapons be fair, in God's name, let all have their fair proportion of them; if compulsion be a principle, a duty, let all compel, we with our £8000, they with their £40,000, or their £80,000; and you are quite right in "trusting the Church of Rome as wise in her generation;" if you get the first, impartiality and she will soon secure the second. But if, as I believe, and, along with many others, have endeavoured to set forth, the weapons be unlawful and unfair, no fairness of distribution—for this is *all* your impartiality comes to—can make them better: if secular compulsion of conscience be an error and a wrong, even when used to propagate the Bible, it will not become a good by being used *also* to propagate error. I have objected to it as claimed by

the Church Education Society in its best, its national, aspect; I cannot consistently object to it the less because you are impartial enough to descend from the higher platform, and to offer to Archbishop Mac Hale a similar and greatly extended power of enforcing, in despite of conscience, his ultramontane Popery.

16. "But policy," you say, "sometimes suggests its logic, and I have heard it urged that it is better, on the whole, to submit to conditions which are more adapted to fetter the energies of error than the exertions of truth."—p. 8.

Has POLICY found this out? Thanks to the Almighty God! experience of His world and of His doings is not the worst of teachers. Perhaps *principle* may follow, and, accepting the logic which it cannot answer, recall to mind that those are no *legitimate* exertions of truth which are equally, or more than equally, the energies of error. Carnal weapons are best left to those who are wise in their generation; they know how to use them; we could not use them conscientiously, we would use them inexpertly, and do ourselves much more harm than good. "Put up thy sword into his sheath, for all they that take the sword *shall perish by the sword*." "If any man have an ear, let him hear. He that leadeth into captivity *shall go into captivity*; he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints." Principle ought never to have forgotten this. If common sense, recording and reading the common experience of mankind, can replace it in the Church's attention, let us be deeply grateful; let us heed their voice in time. Like truth and liberty, policy and principle are not opposed; if both be good they are both alike, they are both the same; that ought to be condemned by both which is condemned by one.

And so the clergy will judge. To acknowledge that in the strife with Rome any measure would be impolitic, would be

practically against us, would extend the range and enforce the despotism of the adverse system, will be, in the eyes of the clergy, to confess it wrong. It will save abstract argumentation, and confute, by a practical *reductio ad absurdum*, whatever premises or principles are alleged in its support. No reasoning could explain away, and no declamation shroud from view, the manifest impropriety of the conclusion itself.

And such is the extravagant impropriety which overwhelms the proposal for a system of separate money grants; distributed, as we know they would be, in the ratio of numbers, and *all equally* unconditional:—£8000 for us, enough to dry up our present considerable resources, and to leave us powerless for anything; £8000 to Protestant Dissenters, and £80,000 to the Roman Church, without any control upon her teaching, discipline, or religious policy,—is a proposition for National Education upon which comment were thrown away. To affect to seek this in the name of the Irish clergy were a hardihood which one cannot suppose to have much real existence.

You know, and I thank you sincerely for making your sentiments explicit, that to ask a *separate grant* differs *only in form*, and in order of time, from asking that system of separate grants upon which one must forbear to comment. The two propositions differ not at all, in substance or in principle, as long as we know the present British Constitution and its impartiality to be what they are, and while we are thus forewarned and aware of the consequences of what we seek. And to affect to shut our eyes upon those consequences, were but to add puerility to rashness; to pretend to hold ourselves *irresponsible* for them, were but to add hypocrisy to all. We do foreknow them, we can measure them, we must look them in the face; our proceeding will render them inevitable, and we must answer for them to our fellow-subjects, to our posterity, and to God. A separate grant means

our share of a system of separate grants, *or it means nothing*. It was so with the English grant, it would be so, *a fortiori*, with an Irish one. It is only in this sense indeed that the motion would be entertained by Parliament, or could be argued there; and so it *must* be regarded by us. A grant to us would be to affirm the principle and establish the precedent, and would leave to other denominations no trouble but to demand their share.

17. But do not the Non-vested schools themselves constitute a system of separate grants?

Yes. Separate grants of that "large amount of religious, moral, and useful instruction," to which no one has objected, and to which no one can object [except those who are ashamed to express it], together with such salary and inspection as will help, and in some measure secure, its being really and efficiently imparted; and separate grants of more definitely religious books [excellent, indeed, but not thought altogether unexceptionable,—I have enumerated them], which the patrons may, if they choose, incorporate with the special religious instruction of their schools.

Separate grants not of money—which separate religious bodies might spend as they pleased, but—of actual assistance towards the people's education; guaranteed to be actually imparted on the basis of non-interference in matters of conscience; a non-compulsion clause being insisted on, which does not interfere with the special religious instruction itself (within the reasonable limits of the Bible and the standards of the Churches), but which does forbid the discipline or policy of excluding from the other advantages of each school those who cannot conscientiously receive it.

Separate grants—1, *of instruction itself*; which are—2, *restricted*, in every case, by the guarantee that even this shall be administered on the principles of Protestant toleration.

A system under which no child of *any* denomination in

the whole island is required to learn any religious tenets to which his parents object; and under which *every* child in the island may learn at our hands as much Scriptural and other Church instruction as his parents are willing that he should receive, and we are ready to give. A system, besides, in which all may occupy the proportion due not to their numbers, but to their actual zeal and activity in promoting education; in which we might, in the commencement, had we not driven it from us, have possessed two-thirds, or perhaps three-fourths, and of which we may still, if we see it right, occupy—not one-tenth, but—one-third or more.

This Non-vested system, then, in its present improved form, preserves largely the benefits [convenience, adaptability, non-interference] of a system of separate grants, while it avoids its most obvious disadvantages. It would be, indeed, absurd to say that, even in this form, it is unobjectionable,—what is?—but public feeling is rapidly gravitating towards the impression that it is the best, on the whole, which the circumstances of Ireland admit. Those who still think differently are called on to propose a better: and *all* ought to be interested in any serious proposal for its farther improvement.

The only objection you have found to it is the non-compulsion condition; the only amendment you propose is its removal.

This would not be an improvement: such an alteration would affirm no principle that is good, would entail many consequences which are bad in the last degree.

The condition is essential to the System; is required by the circumstances of Ireland; is necessary to secure that non-interference of which you profess to approve, and which, without it, would be but a false profession. Without it the actual consciences of the people, individual religion whatever be its grade of doctrinal enlightenment, social and domestic

order, and the sacredness of parental rule, would all be set at nought by religious animosity and sectarian zeal; and the educational assistance itself would be made an engine or a bribe to subserve and perpetuate the disorder.

Extreme men of all parties,—Joseph Napier, shall I say? for instance, and Archbishop Mac Hale,—object, either in theory or practice, to this condition: the Archbishop, indeed, consistently; what he preaches he would practise: consistently also with the genius and history of his Church, and with that avowed teaching and policy which, scarcely in a softened form, you notice (how triumphantly!) (p. 8) was successful in England,—“Such things are matter of ecclesiastical monopoly, with which the Church will not allow even its own [and *a fortiori* heretical] laity to interfere.” What business is it of their’s? If their conscience be right, it will agree with the Church, and if it be wrong, how is the Church to agree with them?

But you, inconsistently; you would not enforce what you seem to recommend; and the religion of your Church and heart seriously impedes or contradicts your very exposition of it.

Inconsistently, too, with the real objects of the Protestant clergy: in seeking its removal, you ask for them a power which they would not exercise: they have not done so, and they would not; their individual humanity, their felt, and preached, and practised Christianity, would ignore their abstract party “principle.” Other denominations are not so, and the “consistent uprightness” with which you offer it to them would be badly rewarded by your finding out that you had conferred a power that *they* could use, and use consistently; a power which is congenial to their system, and uncontradicted by any education that they have themselves received, or any training they have witnessed; a power which they *would* honestly and unsparingly exert.

This second and real form of your proposition, therefore, does not, indeed, like the first form of it, contradict itself, but it does contradict things better than itself; the sense and duty of the clergy, the real policy and real principles of Protestantism and the Church.

We *ought not* to entertain any objection to this condition; and, I believe, the clergy *do not*. Those who think the system in other respects so objectionable that they cannot accept it, and would leave it still in Romanist hands, will think this condition to be a redeeming point; and if any should be convinced that there is no other sustainable objection, he will acknowledge that there is none at all. This condition is not an evil, but a good.

18. What is it then that the clergy mean? What is to be concluded from the fact of their opposition to the System? If this condition be the *sole difference existing* between the schools they have under the Society, and those they may have, if they choose, under the Board; and IF they neither OUGHT to feel *nor* DO feel any repugnance to it,—their conduct is a paradox: their opposition is not only unjustifiable, but it is inexplicable and unintelligible.

No. Whatever causes will explain the conduct of the parochial clergy of Raphoe, or of the propositionists of Derry, will explain that of the clergy at large. And these causes are not far to seek.

In *the first place*, it is very possible for the best of men to be mistaken as to essential facts. And,

In *the second place*, it is very possible, and it is comparatively easy, to sustain an organised opposition after its real grounds have vanished, and the causes which called it into being have ceased to operate.

Both these things have happened here. Acting and reacting upon one another, they furnish a sufficient, as I believe they are the just, explanation of the course taken by the clergy.

To understand the position of the Society we must look back to its origin.

a. The establishment of the National System of Education at all was an affront to the Irish clergy. It was the formal and express withdrawal of the State Education out of the exclusive hands of the [still so called] National Church; and, being concomitant with those measures which terminated the political supremacy of Protestants in Ireland, it is not strange that it should have given to the natural feeling of the time a "religious turn."

b. This feeling was enhanced and pointed by features in the measure itself. The System, as first offered, was not the Non-vested schools—which the patrons may regulate to their own minds, excluding all interference—but the *Vested schools, and these alone*; schools respecting which the clergyman was obliged to bind himself, in perpetuity, to share the hours of religious instruction with the teachers of all other religious denominations, and actually to allow the priest and the dissenting minister to enter his schools, along with himself, and teach their special tenets to all who were willing to learn them. When I look round upon my present acquaintances, and reckon up how few, how very few, could, at this moment, conscientiously comply with this regulation, and what difficulty I should feel in doing so myself, I refuse to wonder that it gave the clergy of the time the gravest and most substantial offence; that, in fact, they found it actually impossible to accept the Government scheme, and felt themselves bound in duty to organize an antagonistic System.

c. This was aggravated by the inaccurate wording, and a more careless reading, of the passage of Lord Stanley's letter, which enunciates the failing point of the previous Societies; and the alteration of which, he intimates, was to characterize the new System.

In former times, not *very* long ago, in Ireland, it was a felony to educate a Roman Catholic at all.

To this succeeded the milder days of open and intentional proselytism: education, State education, being the avowed inducement. This System worked badly; it was found unsuccessful, inexpedient, impolitic; they made but few proselytes, and those few were often found, as in our Lord's days, to have been made only so much worse than they had been before. Experience and human feeling recalled to mind a better Christianity, and the Charter-schools, with their minor imitators, ceased to be.

The State then bethought it of hoping some good result from instruction itself, and gave grants to voluntary associations which disclaimed any purpose of present proselytism. One point, however, remained; all, irrespective of individual conscience, were *required*, under pain of exclusion from all education, to read the Bible.

Great practical laxity and irregularity were allowed, in order to mitigate the felt severity of this regulation. *Any* version of the Scripture might be used, and the teacher might be of *any* communion; so that there might be seen, and very often were seen, Protestant and Roman Catholic children in the class *together*, taught by a Roman Catholic master out of *different* versions of the Bible.

This was their way of bowing before the necessities of the case, and endeavouring to come down to the actual beliefs or prejudices of the people. It is a bad way, and really proved satisfactory to none: thus to "lower the standard," to dilute and vitiate *the thing taught*, in order to make it palatable to all, was injurious to Protestants; while the requisition itself was contrary to the professed views of Romanists, and, independent of local abuses, really a grievance, an exclusion, to many of them.

The new System altered this. The patrons were no

longer expected to lower the standard in order to please any one; the parents, however, were allowed to have a conscience also, and might decline its acceptance. And Lord Stanley frankly avows the object of this change: it was to meet the conscientious objections of those Romanists who defer to, and feel bound to obey, the known teaching of their Church.

“ The determination to enforce in all their schools the reading of the Holy Scriptures without note or comment, was undoubtedly taken with the purest motives; with the wish at once to connect religious with moral and literary education, and, at the same time, not to run the risk of wounding the peculiar feelings of any sect, by catechetical instruction, or comments which might tend to subjects of polemical controversy. But it seems to have been overlooked, that the principles of the Roman Catholic Church (to which, in any system intended for general diffusion throughout Ireland, the bulk of the pupils must necessarily belong) were totally at variance with this principle; and that the reading of the Holy Scriptures without note or comment, by children, must be peculiarly obnoxious to a Church, which denies, even to adults, the right of unaided private interpretation of the Sacred Volume in articles of religious belief.”

By the very common confusion [not altogether avoided in the wording of the above passage: Lord Stanley ought to have said, “ peculiarly oppressive, or offensive, *to conscientious members of a Church,*” &c.], between things and persons,—*principles* and *those who profess them*,—this was represented as a concession not to Romanists but to Romanism; an obedience to the teaching of the Romish Church, instead of a courageous deference to that of our own, a simple application of the first law of Protestant toleration.

A Popish weapon is not the less Popish because Protestants use it and Papists are aggrieved by it. To require

Romanists, as such, either to learn the Bible, or else to be excluded from all the rest of that education provided by the State *for those who need it*, is precisely that principle of compulsion, that last remnant of the penal system, which, *though* in the hands of Protestants, and loudly *professing* the Bible, has robbed Protestant Christianity of its natural growth, and forced *Romanism* into luxurious development.

This last remnant Lord Stanley proposes to remove; and in doing so, *though* relieving Romanists, he yields not to Popery, but to that toleration which is a vital part of Christ's religion and *the essential method* of its propagation.

However, the feeling of the time did not recognise or remember this; and in organizing the opposition which more substantial reasons had made inevitable, they took for their ostensible basis, wrongly, indeed, but naturally, the rule, or "principle," of the previous Societies.

19. They intended, I have no doubt, to remove their laxities of practice. The Church Education Society uses *only* the Authorized Version; and one would expect from its name and other circumstances, that, whatever regard should be paid to other denominations, nothing would be allowed to interfere with a just and careful attention to the instruction of Church children. This intention, however, if it were an intention at all, is most indifferently carried out. In order to increase the number of schools, &c., they formed a junction with one of the previous Societies; and, to carry it out, deliberately and knowingly received on contract a large number of Roman Catholic schoolmasters. On entering this parish I found *two* in connexion with the Society, *and two more* only awaiting the local application to be received; and these *all* present, as I believe they generally do, the strangely anomalous grievance of being in *the most Protestant districts*.

And, even under a Protestant master, the standard is so lowered, the instruction is so reduced, in order not to offend

those who are forced to be present at it, as to seriously impair the just Church teaching of any child. *Even I* think so, who am, you know, the opposite of [what is called] a *high* Churchman.

The Society disclaims all proselytism, all immediate interference with sectional beliefs; it requires all to take part in the Bible reading, *because* this is, the Society theorizes, common ground, to which none of them can* consistently object. It is different with the Church teaching; this is peculiar to ourselves, and, by the Society's rules, is expressly to be reserved for the Church children, if any such be in attendance. During the time of the Bible reading the Church teaching is not to be introduced at all, not even so far as to be *stated*: it is not to be deduced from it; not to be proved or established, explained, illustrated, or enforced by it; nor is it to give back any illustration and enforcement in return. The teaching of our Church, even in those broad and essential features which distinguish it from Irish Romanism, is not placed, or *allowed to be placed*, in any connexion with the Bible reading [or Bible teaching, if indeed *teaching*, and not simply reading, be pretended to, for this is a question] of a Church Education school. *Neither*, then, as I think, can be effi-

* Even in theory this is untenable. Even were the Bible itself common ground—and who, in any just sense of the words, will acknowledge this?—still is the “teaching of the Bible,” i. e. *by some person, and in some version*, common ground? Which of us would say so were it proposed, that the priest or his agent should teach our children the Douay or Rhemish Version? Not to mention that the *general and promiscuous* reading of the Bible, in any version, not only *is*, but is known and authoritatively acknowledged to be—*not* common ground, but—a very special engine in favour of our Protestant heresy.

* * The account in the text of the Church Education Society, like any account that could be given, is rather a view of what it aims at being than a strict statement of what it is. However it may frame its rules, it *cannot* require an implicit deference to them on the part of the clergy; and the exceptions are numerous, even from those regulations which are supposed most fundamental.

ciently or justly imparted. *Both* are “reduced,” “lowered,” “modified,” by being systematically disjoined: both are impaired and injured, *so far as the Church children are concerned*, by the enforced presence of Romanists and Dissenters at one.

It is different in the Non-vested school; here, as no one is obliged to be present at, so no one is obliged to clog by his presence, any religious instruction to which he conscientiously objects; no religious instruction need be reduced or lowered in order not to offend his unwilling participation therein. The patron may consult the actual wants of his children without being obliged either to break the laws of the Society by a series of recurring exceptions, or else to oppress one class and defraud another in order to observe them. He may have his classes and books such as they are in a Church Education School, if he prefer them, and find them applicable; he may make his special Church teaching at once more “Scriptural” and more full, definite, and just, should his own discretion direct, and the exigencies or the dangers of his neighbourhood seem to him to require it.

20. This defect may, perhaps, in individual cases, be supplied elsewhere,—in Sunday Schools, for instance; and even in the general case, considering the design of the Society, some might think it a judicious self-denial to sacrifice something of what is due to Church children, in order to render its Bible reading inoffensive to those of other denominations who are required to share it. This is the Society’s method of descending to that Roman Catholic population whom she desires to teach. It is not the best way, and, considered as a system universally enforced (which the Society desires to make it) is highly objectionable. Wise, however, or unwise, the fact is so, and we must not forget it; else we shall commit very serious blunders; as you do, for example, in allowing yourself to mistake the Society for the parochial

system of Church schools. A Church parochial system, with a number of Roman Catholic schoolmasters! A Church parochial system, with fundamental rules which render the natural or full instruction of *any* Church child difficult or impossible; which lower, out of regard to others, *his* Bible and Church instruction; which forbid his Bible reading to be illustrated by the authoritative exposition of his Church, and prevent his Church teaching from being evolved, and seen and shown to derive itself, from the natural tenor of [what we hold to be] its sole ultimate foundation!

This is, as I have mentioned before, a mistake of *your's*. The Society makes no profession of being such a Church parochial system, and it would be an hypocrisy if it did; it is not a special Society for supplying the definite wants of the Church children; these are very few, almost none at all, in very many parishes in Ireland, which the Society would yet be most unwilling to resign. It aims at a more extended usefulness. It is, as it has been expressed, not a Society *for* Church Education, but a [general, a national] Education Society, to be conducted *by* the Church. It is an opposition system of schools intended to reach the people at large; an opposition organized *by the clergy*, BECAUSE *they recognised it to be their duty*, as it certainly is, *to tend the religious, superintend the general, education of the people*; AND BECAUSE *they could not conscientiously accept the system* [originally] *offered by the Government*. And the practical design of the Society is, to give to all as good a general education as its means will admit, and to combine this in *every* case with *some* amount of actual Bible reading, with as large an amount in all cases as can be conveniently given and received.

This is the genuine object of the Society, and all theories which lose sight of it misrepresent the whole. It occupies this general and "low" ground, not, certainly, because its members are "indifferent" to more definite expositions

of truth [this were to argue like some of the Society's advocates], but because its primary design is to deal effectually with the bulk of this sunken people; to go down to them, bearing such good as it thinks they can receive, and to elevate them a few steps upwards, towards those higher and better things, which she does not profess to teach *to them*, because she could not oblige or induce them to learn.

21. These, the real and positive objects of the clergy, no one can undervalue, nor any one deny that, while keeping their schools in connexion with the Society, they actually do in some considerable measure effect them. God forbid I should disparage the measure of this effect, but it is manifest, and it is not denied, that it would be immensely increased did they see it right to accept the Government assistance.

Wherever, therefore, the Society, considered as an association of working clergy, effects good, there, considered as a sustained antagonism, it *inflicts a greater evil*, for, by inducing us to persevere in refusing a more effective machinery, it prevents and *intercepts a greater good*.

Wherever the clergyman's exertions can now sustain one, generally weak, almost universally inefficient, school under the Society, he might have, if he chose, *one, or two, or three*, efficient schools, under the Board: he might have a good supply of most admirable books; might have inspection, and training, and some adequate remuneration for the master; retaining the religious instruction, and, indeed, the whole, under his own *exclusive* control and management, with no restriction imposed upon him except one that every Protestant clergyman feels bound to impose upon himself: freely and honestly *offering* the Scriptures to all; *actually teaching* them (more unrestrictedly than under the Society) *to all who are* willing to receive them [i. e. to that large number who do now read them; a number which, in all human probability, and, as far as experience enables us to judge, will be *not di-*

minished, but largely increased by his placing his school in connexion with the Board—see Appendix]; imparting to the rest, *without injurious additions*, that large religious and social benefit which they can receive; coming into kind and friendly contact with them, winning a door of future access to them, and an afterhold of moral influence upon their gratitude and regard; and, by furthering the general enlightenment, helping rapidly to dispel that impenetrable suspicion and bigotry which has hitherto debarred the masses from the direct ministrations of the Church.

All this more efficient machinery for compassing *our own positive objects*, the Government offers—*what right* have we to refuse it; what right to cut off from our people the best instruction we could procure them; what right to deprive the nation generally of our best influence upon the education of its masses; what right to defraud the future Church of the opportunity of exerting or regaining it, by forcing into other, into inferior, into unfriendly hands, that most powerful and most abiding of influences?

To these questions a just answer can *no longer* be returned. Replies which might have been given in time past can be given no more; the circumstances are altered, *the things offered to us are not what they were*, the essential facts are changed, and it is only an inconsistent consistency backed by perpetuated misconceptions which would preserve the conclusion after its premises have vanished.

The Vested schools, instead of being the system exclusively, are now scarcely the system at all; they are but one-fourth of the whole, and even this proportion is diminishing; the Non-vested schools have been developed and improved, and the whole System is “gravitating” towards them.

This, of itself, as you acknowledge, causes “the question to assume a totally new form;” places, *consequently*, *our duty* in a new position, and demands, with an ever increasing seriousness, a corresponding alteration of our conduct.

The other causes have also gone. The lapse of twenty years has removed the religio-political feeling, at least from the breasts of the clergy: and has given them time to discriminate between things and persons, to reconsider their hasty "principle," and to acknowledge that it is *right* to do, what all of them would do,—*make exceptions* in the case of those who really do conscientiously object.

This is ALL the Board requires.

All substantial cause then for this ruinous conflict is at an end. It is only misconception of the actual facts that renders its continuation possible. And this misconception, in spite of the means taken to perpetuate it, is quickly breaking up, and the necessary, the inevitable, alteration of our conduct is felt to be approaching.

The causes of our antagonism have departed—our antagonism itself must cease: the reasons for our *opposition*, as distinguished from our *organization*, no longer operate—our *opposition*, therefore, must be allowed to fall.

The Church Education Society, considered—not as an association of clergy working out positive benefits, but—as an antagonistic and obstructive institution, must be withdrawn: its present design must be altered, and its energies redirected to those ends legitimate and peculiar to a body of clergy. Its object must be defined to be, not to oppose the National System in that which a National System *can effect*, but to supply, continuously, energetically, and well, that which *it cannot*.

No Government system, in the present constitution of these kingdoms, can give *education*, or even school instruction, *as a whole*, and this system does not pretend to it. There is, then, *room* for our organization, and there is *need* for it: let us husband our resources to supply that need: let us accept the Government assistance as far as it goes, and devote our energies to *supplying* in our own, *and in all* the schools of the System [so far as a door of entrance is allowed

to us,—*in all Vested schools* for instance], that scriptural instruction, and that Church instruction, which the Government cannot give, but which the people, who need it, and who now cry audibly for it, might surely expect at our hands.

22. There are those who suspect the whole National System of shuffling and dishonesty, and believe the Non-vested schools themselves to be but an instance of this. They do not deny that such schools supersede, for the present, the necessity for our own school organism, by offering us all we have a right to seek, and really have sought, but they hold these offers to be insincere, and part of an underhand design: the Non-vested system, they affirm, will not be permanently bestowed; it is intended as a lure to disarm suspicion and disorganize opposition; and if this were once done, and the clergy reduced to a rope of sand, the Commissioners would revert to the original system of Vested schools, and force us to accept them.

So we are to be antagonistic to the Government System, lest *some time* our antagonism should be needed! We are to refuse all that assistance which our schools deeply need, lest, some time, that assistance should be treacherously withdrawn, and they should be left worse than before! What position could be more self-injurious than this,—what more weak and undignified? A vigorous and patriotic Church should seize, without hesitation, all those opportunities for good *which it could conscientiously occupy*; should use them for the public weal; and trust to God, and, under God, to itself, to its felt usefulness, and to that public gratitude it had deserved and won, to preserve to it these advantages, or to procure greater.

But there is no need that we should become a rope of sand; though our *antagonism ought* to cease when the alteration of the adverse system has rendered it unnecessary,—

and for what more honourable cause is it *ever* to cease?—there is no reason that our *organization* should terminate. Let *it* be preserved: let one of its functions and an object of its preservation be, to watch and guard, to protest against, and force to be altered, whatever we find amiss; let it be a sentinel or an army of reserve, since for these purposes also it is supposed to be needed: but *it is needed* for purposes of more direct and immediate value, for purposes more becoming to us and more beneficial to the kingdom; not warfare but peaceful help; not to obstruct and decry what the Government can give, but to fill up that which it leaves, and perhaps, from the nature of the case, must leave, undone: if indeed that be *by the Government* left undone, which, being the proper office and calling of the Church, the Government leaves it *in the power* of the Church to do.

Let us, then, heal this unnatural schism,—the National Church against the National Education! And if we cannot place the Government, let us at least endeavour to place the Church in its rightful position with respect to the people. Let us make the Church no “engine of party politics,”—I trust the days for this are past,—nor “consult the convenience of a cabinet;” but let us cause it to assert itself, to remember its mission and its duty, and to execute, *as far as in us lies*, a just and most vital function of the National Church, by supplying the Church and Scripture element of the National instruction.

23. May I presume to close this tedious letter by one or two remarks, with respect to your mode of conducting the question in the House.

a. We cannot but be aware that, in the present dislocation of parliamentary bodies, convenient points for party conflicts are often sought for, and votes given, not to mark the sense of the House upon those individual questions, but for the sake of an indirect influence upon *other* matters. Now this,

however perfectly understood by the House, is yet extremely perplexing to those interested in the actual subject, and often misdirects their present energies by leading them to cherish expectations which the Parliament will never realize. May I entreat, then, that you will not allow this question to be converted into such a battle-field.

This entreaty, perhaps, is needless, and is scarcely becoming in me; few could wish to trifle with the present critical position of the Irish Church: yet I may, without overstepping my province, assure you that the result of a division influenced by such extraneous power *would be misunderstood* by the clergy, and *would* seriously mislead them: and I may remind you that, some years ago, the same thing happened in reference to this Education question, and that the effects of it are visible to this day.

b. Whatever measure you bring forward, make it single and distinct to the House, so that the result may be distinct to the clergy.

Do not mix the English and Irish questions on the one hand, or the adverse aspects of the Society on the other.

However analogous the English and Irish questions may be in theory, the different circumstances of the two countries make them totally unlike in practice. The system which the English clergy contend for, *uncontrolled* separate grants, by its very definition depends upon its local administrators; it will vary with its actual patrons; be good or bad, tolerant or intolerant, scriptural or *anti-scriptural*, according as *they* please. This system in England falls necessarily into the hands of the Protestant clergy; and, notwithstanding the existence of a few genuine Popish schools with crucifixes and Madonnas, may be *on the whole* extremely good, and well worth contending for. In Ireland it would fall as necessarily into the hands of the Romish priesthood; and, notwithstanding a considerable number of Scriptural Schools, would

be *on the whole* extremely bad, and well worth contending against.

Again, the different aspects of the Church Education Society are neither alike nor analogous, they are really opposed to each other; they rest upon opposite principles, and lead to opposite results. Bring, then, either you please, or bring both before the House, but bring them separately: let there be a vote upon either, or upon each, but not a vote upon both together, i. e. virtually upon none.

And in pleading the authority of the clergy I trust you will remember that their voice has only been given distinctly *as in favour of the national aspect of the Society*, universal Scriptural instruction; and against the Board, *as under the formal impression* [justly or unjustly, let men judge], *that the Board is adverse to genuine and unmutilated Bible teaching.*

There are those who would wish you to use that authority *as in favour of a separate grant* to the Society; and if you think that this could be procured *without leading to separate grants*, given on the same terms as our own, *you are entitled* to plead that authority. But I deny that any man has received or has any right to use the name of the Irish clergy in pleading *either virtually or expressly* for the latter System, or even, in a minor degree, in favour of the proposition unfolded in your letter to me. The clergy, if tested, would be found to be opposed to both.

c. There is one point, however, which with the utmost advantage you could bring forward. The withdrawal of the [supposed] influence of Government patronage from the question altogether.

Let it be known that able, pious, and industrious men will be promoted by Government in the ratio of these qualities, and let this, and all party questions, while they are such, be esteemed light in proportion to them. Let us be

left free to inquire, free to examine, and free to judge, without the irritation of a proffered inducement; and free to express ourselves without the imputation of being influenced by it. True, the other side have been *more* exclusive than the Government, and have used a power which the Government does not possess: have desecrated the pulpit and platform, and have abused the Press, to bring personal obloquy to bear upon the question and upon individuals.

But this is wrong: and men are sorry for it. Let it not be repeated on either side. Let the Government express its sentiments explicitly upon this point, and I know of no one thing which would more tend to the candid consideration, and so to the settlement, of the question.

d. If you see that the controversy is still to last, if the Church Education Society is still to be kept up *as a School-Society*, there is a minor point on which good might be effected. The Society's supply of books is inadequate and poor, and the children suffer largely in consequence. The books of the Board, the excellence of which you have freely acknowledged, are used in some Church Education schools, but they must be purchased at considerable, though not the highest, prices. Propose that those who support *bonâ fide* schools, and *ARE labouring for the education of the people*, but who cannot conscientiously comply with the Board's regulations, or place their schools in connexion with the system, may yet, on sufficient application, receive grants of the National books, and may be allowed to purchase them at the lowest prices marked.

This would practically amount to a separate grant to the Society, and one of very considerable value, without entailing any *injurious* separate grants: if others can establish a similar claim, let them receive a similar benefit; this would do harm neither to them nor to us, nor to any one.

Such a proposition, I think, ought to be, and would be,

accepted: it would be in the spirit of the Irish education measure as a whole, and has a precedent in the proceedings of the Commissioners; by improving the education of that large section which the Society's schools embrace, and to which the Legislature cannot be indifferent, it would be a boon to the nation at large: and it would, I am certain, neither embitter this disunion while it does last, nor in any sense tend to its hostile perpetuation.

Hoping you will excuse the tediousness and the freedom with which I have written,

I remain, my dear Mr. Napier,

Your's, very faithfully,

JAMES MAC IVOR.

MOYLE GLEBE, NEWTOWNSTEWART,

April, 1850.

APPENDIX.

No one can come into any intimate contact with the mind of the clergy without being convinced of this, that the true account of their continued opposition to the National system is *misconception of the essential facts*.

They view their own position as follows.

a. They are anxious for Scriptural Education; they believe it to be *their duty* to give this *to the people*; i. e. to all whom by any just means they can influence to receive it at their hands—

b. They believe the Board to be opposed to this—

c. *Therefore* they are opposed to the Board: on duty, on principle, they sustain an antagonism to it, *though* it be supported by the powers that be.

They have reasoned right, *and they have acted right*, *if the second proposition be true*. If the Board be opposed to their giving Scriptural instruction, if its rules be formed so as seriously to hamper and impede it, much more to forbid, or exclude it, they have had no alternative but to do as they have done.

2. But this is totally untrue: it has no foundation but in the misconceptions of the clergy: misconceptions which, in despite of the efforts made to perpetuate them, are, thank God, rapidly vanishing away.

Along with the Bishop of Ossory, many have already found out, that by placing their schools “in connexion with the Board, they may, so far as *THEIR OWN children are concerned*, conduct them with little, if any, inconvenience arising from their rules.”

And the next point of vital consequence is rapidly making itself understood; that the *Board's definition* of "OUR OWN CHILDREN" is, not those of our own communion merely, this, in many places, might be but a paltry proportion of the people, but "*all children, of all denominations, whose parents are willing, are not unwilling, to submit them to our instruction.*"

This definition gives us all we ought to wish; gives, as I believe, all we *do* wish. By placing our schools in connexion with the Board we may give to all, of all denominations, who are willing to receive it, as much Scriptural and Church instruction as we please: and without any inconvenience arising from the Board's rules, nay, rather with this considerable convenience, that we are not limited to Bible reading, forbidden to explain and teach it, or obliged in other ways to reduce and modify it, in order not to give offence to any who are [supposed more or less unwillingly] *required* to be present at it.

3. So far with respect to that portion of the people in whose instruction we have any right to interfere: those who are willing to receive it at our hands.

But the Protestant clergy have a duty also to those who are, ever so conscientiously, *unwilling*. We ought to bring all our personal and ministerial influence to bear upon these so as to place them also in connexion with scriptural truth. "Necessity is laid upon us; nay, woe is unto us if we preach not the gospel"—and *to all*, all whom by our most diligent exertions *we can reach*.

Unquestionably. But the clergy will readily admit that this influence, and these exertions, ought to be directed towards *removing the conscientious scruple*, not towards *causing them to violate it* while it does exist. And it is manifest that to admit their children to learn in our schools that "large amount of religious, moral, and useful instruction" which they do wish, affording, as it does, constant opportunity of friendly if not of ministerial contact, presents us a choice mode of labouring for *the first*: whereas to exclude them from our schools and force them either to do without it or to seek it elsewhere, is really to inflict a serious evil

upon them, to close the door of moral access against ourselves and to forfeit our opportunities, by way of fruitlessly endeavouring to secure *the second*.

4. Thus stands the case, then, *theoretically*, with regard to the rules of the Board.

As to those who are willing there can be no controversy; we have every facility under the Board for teaching them what we please.

As to those who are unwilling, the question is—"ought they, or ought they not, in consequence of this unwillingness, be excluded *also* from the *other* advantages of the school?"—because they are unfortunate enough to defer to the authority of their Church, and to *debar themselves* from our scriptural instruction, ought they *also be debarred by us* from that large religious and social benefit which they do desire, and which we have "freely received" from the Government to give them?

The Board says—they ought not.—It speaks, as I believe, the language of Protestantism and the Bible.

The Society says—they ought.—It strives to perpetuate the most oppressive "ill-principled," and "impolitic," portion of that system of Protestant Anti-Protestantism and Anti-Christianity,—the Penal Laws.

It is a calumny on the Irish clergy to say that it is their attachment to this "theory," this "principle," of the Society, or their dislike of the opposite principle of the Board, which has caused them to support the one and oppose the other.

More substantial reasons originated their opposition, and misconception of the actual point *now* in dispute, has continued it. This misconception is rapidly correcting itself, and, in spite of "mutual pledging," and "nailing of colours to the mast," they are correcting *their conduct accordingly*. Nothing, I am persuaded, so much retards the progress of this correction as the present rule of Government patronage. To place men, in other respects fitted for promotion, under secular disadvantages or "disabilities" in consequence of the side they take in a present controversy, is at all times inexpedient: to apply this "inducement,"

this "compulsion," for it is such, to men beginning to doubt about the propriety of their past conduct, and anxious to find means of correcting it, without shocking the public mind and injuring that influence which they have no right to sacrifice, is harmful to the public, is a cruelty, and a wrong.

5. Before leaving the theoretical view of the case, it may be well to mention one or two minor "misconceptions."

"Should we not," it is often asked, "by accepting the Government assistance, become bound to the Board, and identified with those other proceedings which we do dislike?"

Not at all. You have only to receive the assistance which their rules offer, and to answer, periodically, while drawing the master's salary, that those rules have been observed; in all other respects you are perfectly free to act as you please: you may be the Board's greatest friend, or you may be their most resolute antagonist. Many clergymen do, in fact, place "dying schools" under the Board, and yet sign the Church Education Society's petitions, and take part in its proceedings, as before.

"Is this constitutional or right?"

Whether it be *right* in each particular case, the individual must judge; but *it is constitutional*. These are Government Commissioners: they administer the public funds: *if* our schools require their aid, *and if* we can conscientiously comply with the conditions on which it is offered, we are under a positive obligation to accept that aid: it is our *duty* to do: we injure our schools, our people, and the future Church, by refusing it; and our accepting it, no more implies, or ought to imply, any approbation of the System generally, or even of those particular conditions themselves, than our accepting the aid of the Court of Chancery, or of the Encumbered Estates Commission, identifies us with these Courts, or implies that we approve of either their policy or their principle.

6. "The religious instruction of a National School depends upon the patron: within the limits of the Bible and the standards of the Churches, it may be anything—Popery, Dissent, or Churchism—or it may be nothing at all. The System, then, is one of

‘religious indifferentism’ with which we should have nothing to do.”

a. Even though the System were indifferent to all these things, each separate school need not be indifferent, but may have its own special religious character: this is what concerns us and our people; and *if we require* assistance to our definite scriptural and Church school, it is as much *our duty* to claim it from the “indifferent” Board, as it was St. Paul’s duty, when he needed it, to call in the aid of his Roman citizenship, which was surely very indifferent to his Christianity; or as it is our duty thankfully to accept the sunshine and the rain which our Bountiful Father sends “indifferently” upon the evil and the good, upon the just and the unjust.

b. It is generally absurd, and very seldom innocent, to represent persons or institutions as indifferent to those things on which it is not their direct or immediate object to pronounce, or which, from the nature of the case perhaps, they must leave to the discretion of their individual administrators. Let us take for an instance the pulpit ministrations of our Church. These are left very much to the discretion of individual ministers, and they often preach opinions very different from each other, even upon the most important and vital questions. Now, is it fair to say of our Church that she is “indifferent” to all these different and opposite opinions, that she “holds them all equally good, i. e. equally good for nothing,” that her “deliberate intention is to create a dark in which, like the colours of the rainbow, they may be all alike?” What but a preconceived determination to find fault could render such statements tolerable to any one? Nay, as a fair opponent would acknowledge—

1. The very nature and purpose of the institution itself, as a Church, is opposed to many of these opinions.

2. The actual service which is read and joined in daily *before* the sermon, is opposed to many more.

3. The actual assistance towards the pulpit ministrations themselves which is *tendered* by the Church, i. e. its homilies, is opposed to others.

Let the Church be judged as a whole, and the charge of indifferentism is absurd and wicked.

Let the National System be similarly judged, and let us see whether it be, *on the whole*, indifferent.

As between Popery, then, for instance, and Protestantism—

1. Is the nature and object of the institution itself, the efficient diffusion of general education, equally favourable to both?

2. Is the “large amount of religious, moral, and useful instruction,” actually taught *before the hours* of special religious instruction, equally favourable to both?

3. Is the actual assistance *tendered* by the Board towards the special religious instruction [i. e. the Scripture lessons, the admirable little book of Sacred Poetry, Whately’s Easy Lessons on Christian Evidences, and Lessons on the truth of Christianity], are these equally favourable to Protestantism and Popery?

He is a strange Protestant who thinks so.

It would save all this not very rational, nor very harmless, declamation, were we to remember, *first*, that the System is one of *comprehension*, and that it has a definite object—to impart assistance towards education, on the basis, as far as is practicable, of non-interference with the actual consciences of the people; and, *secondly*, that objections to its supposed indifferentism lie with multiplied force against the English System, against that System proposed by the Church Education Society, and even, though somewhat lessened, against that urged by Mr. Napier.

7. But one need not follow these speculative misconceptions further. What practical results would follow from our placing our schools generally in connexion with the Non-vested System it is not easy to predict without larger experience.

One fact, however, is prominent. It is undeniable that very many Romanists *are willing* to receive our Scriptural instruction, and would do so even in despite of obstacles. Previous Societies have shown this: the Church Education Society shows it, having near 50,000 Romanists attending its schools: *more signally* the Non-vested System itself exhibits the fact, for the little experience we have allowed ourselves to gather has thrown forward

this second fact—that, by placing our schools in connexion with the Board, we *do not diminish, but largely increase*, the willingness to receive our Bible instruction.

When a Protestant clergyman does so not only do Romanists in the neighbourhood send their children more freely, but they allow them to receive the Scriptural instruction more willingly, than before; in the North indeed it generally happens that *all*, without any exception, participate in the Bible instruction.

To quote a striking example from an authority *adverse** to the Board. “What makes this [willingness of Romanists to learn the Bible] more manifest is, that in the National School above referred to, in which there are above one hundred Roman Catholic children, and though it is a poor district, where an hour of a child’s work might be of value at home, *not ONE parent* has withheld his child, nor any children absented themselves, during the appointed hour of Scriptural instruction?” And this, though not of course so remarkably as here, is the general case; it is so in my own parish; it is so in the neighbouring parishes; it is so generally, as far as I have been able to find, in Ulster; that is, when the patron is the clergyman of the Established Church: under Presbyterian patronage, the same thing happens *often*, but not at all so generally; Romanists being much more willing to receive religious instruction from us than from them.

Such cases make it “more manifest,” because here an option is allowed to the parents; there is no rule excluding their children from the other benefits of the school in case they should be unwilling to read the Bible. It cannot be said of them, therefore, that they read it through any bribe or compulsion, *in order* to secure any *other* advantage, or escape some other penalty; as the Society’s rule enables adversaries to say of those attending its schools, and as indeed those [friends] do virtually assert, who ascribe its Bible reading *to* its rule. But this is untrue, and a

* “Facts and Reasons,” in reply to Mr. Woodward’s “Thoughts” on the Education question. By the late beloved and respected Rev. Alexander Ross, rector of Banagher, Diocese of Derry.

calumny upon both parents and patrons ; they read, not because of any rule threatening exclusion, but because they are anxious for scriptural instruction ; and were the rule withdrawn, and an option allowed to them, they would, as the non-Vested schools make “ more manifest,” read more willingly than before.

8. On the other hand, if 50,000 Romanist children *do* attend Church Education schools, ten or twenty times that number *do not* attend its, or any scriptural, schools ; and, if we inquire among these, as little can we overlook the other fact, that a very large number of Romanists [from whatever *cause*, for this is beside the purpose ; of course, it is chiefly or altogether owing to the priests,] who *are unwilling* to receive our scriptural instruction.

What happens, therefore in Ulster, could not be expected in the rest of Ireland ; and except in some favourable localities, it would not happen : but what *would happen*, as far as we can judge, is this. The efficiency of our schools would be vastly, the number of them largely, increased ; the number of Romanist children receiving the general instruction would shortly be doubled, perhaps much more than doubled, and the number of those who receive our scriptural instruction rendered greater by fifty per cent. than it is at present.

Concerning more remote results it were idle, as perhaps even about these it is needless, to speculate. The main fact is, that the Board gives us every facility to teach all who are, or who ever may be, willing to receive our instruction : and it is transparent to spectators, and rapidly forcing itself upon the cognizance of the clergy, bringing with it the conviction of our serious practical mistake, that by contending for some [imaginary] *right of compelling* the Bible we are depriving ourselves of *the power of giving it*, of the means of increasing men’s willingness to receive it, and of conferring, at the same time, and without any inconvenience to ourselves, a great religious and social benefit upon the public at large ; of carrying out, in fact, by most powerful machinery, the Apostle’s admonition, “ *while we have time*, let us do good unto all men, specially unto them who are of the household of faith.”

9. What opposite statements are made concerning this education question. Do we not often hear it asserted, and on the best authority, that the Board not only hinders, but actually forbids and excludes the Bible—nay, that they have a rule withholding aid from any school where the Bible is read?

Yes, often, and apparently on the best authority, and the ignorance or the courage of those who venture on such statements is the most astounding fact in the controversy.

Sometimes they condescend to explain themselves, intimating that the sense they put upon these words is somewhat different from that in which the uninitiated public understands them, and hence the discrepancy!

Very likely; let us hear the substance of the explanations.

a. The Bible is excluded from the school, i. e. from “the school proper,” i. e. from the secular part of it; and confined to the hours set apart for religious instruction.

Even this is not true. In very many (principally Presbyterian) schools, the Bible is used as a common reading book at all hours of the day, and that in direct pursuance of the rules of the Board.

“But if any parents object to this custom it should cease, and the Bible be confined to the specified hours.”

Yes—and *then* the school would correspond to a Church Education school;—the Society’s time-table and rules specially requesting that the Bible-reading should be confined to “specified hours.”

b. But under the Society these hours are “school hours proper,” for all children are obliged to attend; under the Board they are not “hours of school-instruction proper,” for some of the children may not attend.

By a similar phraseology it might be asserted that Trinity College not only gives no catechetical or divinity instruction, but that it actually excludes them altogether, i. e. from its curriculum, i. e. from its collegiate instruction proper, i. e. from that on which all are obliged to attend.

c. If the Board does not actually exclude, yet it *makes provision for the exclusion* of, the Bible; i. e. by permitting a patron to ex-

clude it from his own school, or a parent to withhold his child from it if taught.

Similarly it might be asserted that the Board makes provision for the exclusion of every book; because it leaves it in the power of a patron to exclude any book that he pleases, and so *all* books; and allows a parent to exclude his child from writing, or from arithmetic, or from any branch, and so from all branches: and the Board is quaintly to be described as "the no-light Board, which excludes all education," i. e. by making provision for the exclusion of it.

But it is needless to pursue this curious phraseology farther; it is manifest that any untruth could be asserted in language susceptible of similar "explanation." For instance, that "Dublin is situated on the west coast of Ireland," might be easily explained to mean that "it is on the coast of Ireland," and "is west of some parts of it," the Hill of Howth, for instance; or that "green is white," might be explained by saying that "green is a pet-name we have for gray," "which is nearly the same as white." Now these are not one whit more false than the assertions which are made, "upon the best authority," about the Board's withholding, denying, or excluding the Bible, nor is the explanation of them one whit less valid or less respectable.

The use of harsh expressions, however, must be avoided; and it is clear, that most of those who make such statements do so in good faith, being themselves in ignorance of the facts; and that others, who *cannot* be ignorant, are imposed on by their own ingenious phraseology. The severest censure upon the carelessness of both is the only effectual one,—to remove the misconception itself,—to make the actual fact known to the public, nakedly and distinctly, in language that the public does understand. When this is done, if those who rely upon the authority of these men confide in their veracity and judgment, and look up to them for instruction and guidance, will be satisfied with such explanations as they can give of statements which their hearers *have* thoroughly misunderstood, it will be the more pleasant for all concerned.

10. Not only individuals, however, but even the Church Education petitions, though somewhat more guardedly, speak the

same language, i. e. language which *does* convey to nine out of every ten readers, or perhaps to ninety-nine out of every hundred, positive and flagrant misrepresentation. I append as examples the petitions of the present year.

No. I.

PETITION FROM THE IRISH CLERGY.

“That Parochial Petitions containing statements of conscientious objections which your Petitioners entertain against the National System of Education in Ireland, have frequently been laid before your Honourable House:

“That schools against which no such objections lie have been established, in connexion with the Church Education Society for Ireland, and under the superintendence of the Prelates and Clergy of the Church:

“That these schools derive no assistance from the funds granted by Parliament for the support of Education in Ireland; but are left wholly dependent on the inadequate support of voluntary contributions; yet, notwithstanding these discouragements, and the pressure of famine and wretchedness, the children attending 1861 Church Education schools, as stated in the last Report of the Society, amount to 120,202, including 15,713 Protestant Dissenters, and 46,367 Roman Catholics, being an increase of 3,234 above the previous year, of whom 1,729 are Roman Catholics, 1,016 Protestant Dissenters, and 489 Church children:

“That your Petitioners submit to your Honourable House, that they are, and have been for several years subjected to disadvantages under which they ought not to be any longer suffered to lie, and to which no other Christian denomination in the British Empire is exposed; and, trusting that your Honourable House, taking the premises into consideration, will be pleased to devise means to relieve them from this grievance of which they complain:

“Your Petitioners will pray.”

a. One does not know exactly what is meant, in the second clause, by "no such objections," but, without going much into detail, one suffering from the fact may fairly ask,—Is it no objection in the eyes of the Society, that many of its schools are taught by Roman Catholic schoolmasters?

For instance, enter this parish [Ardstraw, diocese of Derry], from the north-west, by the old Dublin road, you find yourself in the village of Douglas Bridge; the hamlet much decayed, the neighbourhood still occupied by a most respectable Protestant yeomanry. Seek out the Church Education school [existing there since the origin of the Society, and better supported by *local* funds than any other school in this district of the parish, a salary being paid to the master by the Marquis of Abercorn]; you are directed to about the most miserable hovel in the village. Enter it, you find neither school nor school requisites, desks, benches, nor books; the master squats over the fire with five or six,—once I saw as many as ten,—little children about him. You ask for the class books; you find this state of things is not much worse than what has been for *many* years. Of course the people could not rest *for ever* satisfied with this, so they and the Presbyterian clergyman have built for themselves a respectable schoolhouse, and have a large and efficient Non-vested school in operation.

"Oh! no one denies that the *efficiency* is on the side of the Board, they have the books and the money; but *the principle is with us*." Perhaps so; the National schoolmaster, however, is a Protestant, and teaches the Bible; the Church Education schoolmaster is a Roman Catholic, and teaches——!

But this is a solitary case, perhaps?

Nay, so far as the Society is concerned, she is answerable for *four* such cases *in this parish*. Not, indeed, all equally "trying" [unpublished tract, p. 60], for it is here alone that improvement is hopeless, but all equally, or more than equally, anomalous, in assigning the Roman Catholic masters to the most Protestant localities.

Such things, however, though kept tolerably quiet, not only

are, under the Society, but, as this petition affirms, are deemed, by its modest self-esteem, no objection whatever, or at least "no such objection," to its schools.

The Society's real friends will scarcely think so.

a. But the gist of the petition is in its last clause.

"Disadvantages to which no other Christian denomination in the British empire is exposed."

Now in the sense in which this would be understood by any ordinary reader, and in the sense, I will venture to say, which it was intended to convey to the Legislature [for no other sense means anything], one has no alternative but to pronounce it a downright and groundless misstatement. *All Christian denominations in Ireland* are subject to exactly the same conditions, to identically the same restrictions, by the National Board. There is but the non-compulsion clause, and this is required indifferently *from all*.

Perhaps, however, this, though a theoretical restriction to all is a practical restriction *to us alone*: non-compulsion being congenial to the known tenets and religious policy of the other bodies, and a taste for secular interference with conscience being peculiar to us! The persons who think so may indeed sign the above petition; no one else can sign it, without, knowingly or ignorantly, endorsing an egregious misrepresentation of fact.

But perhaps the thing intended to be asserted is, that the Church clergymen *in Ireland* are laid under conditions which are not required of any denomination *in England*, or in the other parts of the empire. This is true, but nothing to the purpose; Presbyterians *in Ireland*, and Romanists *in Ireland*, might urge the same, and with precisely the same truth: and if our prayer for relief be listened to,—"*Hoc Ithacus velit*,"—they *will* press the same, and be equally successful. For the present, however, all are impartially under the same restrictions; each may urge this as a hardship if they think it such, but none of them can urge it as a *peculiar* hardship, unless, like this petition, they are willing to state an untruth.

This language, however, reacts upon those who use it, they

come presently to believe in the grievance they have imagined, and condole with each other accordingly. It is lamentably ludicrous to hear clergymen complaining that they are "singled out for peculiar obloquy," "are placed in an actually worse position than the Dissenters and even Romanists in England," and so forth: "What have we *done*," asks a *Bishop* of our Church, "What have we done, to deserve such treatment?"

What would be thought of the English clergy if they sent petitions to Parliament complaining of the *peculiar* trial under which they labour in being subjected to the Income Tax, "whereas their brethren in *Ireland* are not?" "Should we be put," they might ask, "in an actually worse position than the Irish Presbyterians and Methodists—nay, even than Archbishop Mac Hale? What have we done to deserve such treatment?"

Yet, the peculiarity of the grievance and the pertinency of the complaint are, in both cases, identical.

No. II.

THE PETITION FROM THE PARENTS.

"That the School [above mentioned] is in connexion with the Church Education Society for Ireland, one of the rules of which Society is, that 'the Holy Scriptures, in the Authorized Version, shall be used in the daily instruction of every child in attendance, who is capable of reading:'

"That your Petitioners approve of this rule, as tending to 'train up their children in the way they should go:'

"That in consequence of this rule, the school in question is precluded from participating in the advantages of the Parliamentary Grant for promoting the education of the poor of Ireland:

"Your Petitioners therefore humbly pray your Honourable House to take such measures, as that the school above-mentioned,

with others of a similar kind, may participate in the Parliamentary Grant for National Education in Ireland, without being required to abandon this rule:

“And your Petitioners will ever pray.”

a. The grammatical construction of the second clause mixes up things extremely unlike. Quere,—is it the *Bible instruction itself*, as actually imparted to their [own] children, or *the rule* requiring their [neighbours'] children, however unwilling, to participate therein, which the petitioners approve of as tending to train up their [??] children in the way they should go?

Each person will read the ambiguities according to his previous impressions.

b. However, let us see what is the actual grievance of the petitioners.

They wish their [own] children to be trained up in the way they should go, and to this end approve of their receiving daily scriptural instruction.

Now *this* does *not* preclude them in the least. If this much would content these parents, the only grievance they suffer is, that the Protestant clergyman refuses the Government aid, and deprives them of its advantages. He might, if he chose, place his school in connexion with the Board, and impart his scriptural instruction *to them* more freely and better than before.

Now I will venture to say that this much *would* content the petitioners; that, were they assured that the Board would throw no impediment in the way of *their* receiving this, ninety-nine out of every hundred would consider the petition unnecessary. But, because they believe this *not* to be a fact—because they have been instructed, and upon authority that they would scorn to doubt, that, if the school were made a National School, the Bible would be *excluded*, the scriptural instruction would be *withheld* from them, and so forth,—*therefore* they consider the petition necessary, and therefore they have signed it. Nay, the fact of their being asked to sign it, most of them will understand as an authoritative endorsement of the truth of these groundless misconceptions.

c. At the clerical meeting in 1849 the clergy were urged by one of the chief leaders, "if they did change their minds upon the education question [which the speaker believed they might do *honestly*], *not to let it be known*, as, if they did, all the water in the Liffey would not be sufficient to wash them clean in the estimation of their flocks," and this sentiment was cheered by the majority.

A dignified attitude this for the men of "principle!"

How ingeniously is it enhanced and stereotyped, by the device of sending each round to his own parishioners, to procure signatures to the above petition!

Perhaps the perusal of the foregoing petitions and explanations may suggest some answer to the question which is often asked,—"Can that be an honest Board (?), the facts concerning which are as hard to determine as the colours of the chameleon?"

The next petition, however, is of a different character.

No. III.

PETITION FROM THE ENGLISH CLERGY.

"We, the undersigned, have patiently reconsidered the present position of the question of National Education in Ireland. We approached the subject with an earnest desire to be in this, as in all things, not by constraint, but willingly and cordially, subject to the powers that be. We have considered the great difficulties in the way of any National System which shall give due consideration to the peculiarities of creed and condition among the people of Ireland, and, at the same time, recognise and respect the great principle of our National Church and our common Protestantism, viz., the paramount claims of Holy Scripture. We give the Government credit for an honest attempt to meet and overcome these difficulties, but we are compelled to the conclusion, that their present system has not proved successful. We do not feel ourselves competent to determine, or give any definite opinion, as to whether the difficulties in question are or are not insurmount-

able. But, however this may be,—whether a system of education at once National and Christian, be or be not impracticable,—we cannot withhold a warm expression of our sympathy with the members of the Irish branch of our Church, whose position in this matter we deem one of great and unmerited hardship. They seem to us to be driven to the cruel alternative of an unseemly opposition to the constituted authorities of the State, or a betrayal of a higher trust than any human authority can impose.

“ We have considered the arguments by which it is attempted to show that their objections to the Government system of education are needlessly scrupulous, and that what is confessed to be its partial failure is to be attributed to their consequent neglect.

“ Our conviction is, that those arguments, however cogent in some respects, do not reach the real turning point of this question, and that the members of the Church in Ireland ought not to be satisfied (as we could not ourselves be satisfied), without the unrestricted use in their schools of the sacred Word of God.

“ It is not, of course, our intention to enter at large into any argumentation on the subject in a paper like this, but we feel that very sense of Christian duty as Churchmen and Protestants, demands this expression of sympathy: combined with an earnest entreaty, most respectfully urged upon our Government, that our brethren of the Established Church in Ireland, may be relieved from a position as incongenial to their hearts and habits, as good citizens, as it is oppressive to their principles as sound Churchmen. We feel our union with them to be something more than a name. We would look upon ourselves as unworthy of our high privileges if we could forsake them in their present adversity. We imagine what our own feelings would be, if placed in circumstances similar to their's; and we invite all our brethren in this country to such a co-operation in this expression of sympathy as will practically reveal what very largely exists—a real Christian brotherhood in the members of the United Church of England and Ireland.”

A copy of the above was sent me by a influential friend in Liverpool.

It is impossible for us not to feel warmly grateful for the kind and brotherly spirit which animates this document. I shall only make one remark as to the "turning point." Our brethren have been misinformed as to the fact. We are less "restricted in the use" of the Scriptures under the Board than we are under the Society. Both require a time-table; but the Society clogs the actual *teaching* of the Bible by the enforced presence of those to whom she pledges herself not to teach the doctrines of the Church, i. e. in fact forbids any distinct or expository teaching of the Bible at all; whereas the Board does restrict the [supposed] right of *requiring* unwilling Romanists to share it, and but leaves *the teaching itself* unclogged, unrestricted, and altogether free; and leaves us perfectly free to teach it without any inconvenience to *all who are willing* to receive it at our hands. The English clergy would not have signed this petition had they been aware of this fact; and the statement of it will be reckoned, I have no doubt, even by themselves, a sufficient answer to its prayer.

THE END.