

THE  
IRISH CHURCH  
AND  
NATIONAL EDUCATION.

BY THE  
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I.—To the Irish Church, its ministers and its people, the question of Education is now one of the deepest interest and of paramount importance. So it is universally felt to be. Whatever side men may take in the controversy respecting it, all allow that it is a question on the decision of which depends, in a great measure, the moral and religious condition of our country.

II.—The state of the Church of Ireland on the education question is felt to be most unsatisfactory. The refusal, on the part of the majority of its members, to join the National Board, has placed it generally in antagonism on this great matter to the successive governments of the day : has divided what ought to be a united body into two distinct and opposing parties : and has imposed upon it the necessity of maintaining by private contributions, which often press heavily upon the resources of the contributors, a system of education which is certainly,



in some respects, not as efficient as it is desirable that it should be.

III.—We would all wish, if possible, that this state of things should at last come to an end. We should wish to work in harmony with the Government of our country: we should wish to be at unity amongst ourselves: we would wish that a burden that ought to be maintained by the State should be taken off those who now are forced to bear it; and we would wish, above all, to afford to the young an education in every respect suitable to fit them to discharge well their part in life.

IV.—It is with a sincere desire to help to such a consummation, that I now venture to submit these pages to the public. They are the result of long and careful thought. From the first a supporter of the Church Education Society, I am not now going to desert it; I think it still, as I have always thought it, a necessary institution under existing circumstances. But I also think that it is possible that its supporters and government might, without any sacrifice of principle, come to a mutual understanding, that would terminate beneficially for the country our long-standing controversy. My reasons for thinking so I will now briefly state. Many of them have of course been put forward again and again. But I have not anywhere seen the plan as a whole placed before the public. My deliberate opinion is, that we may conscientiously join the National Board if, by a relaxation of one of its rules, it will take our schools into connection with itself.



V.—The fundamental principle of the National Board is, that no child shall be compelled to receive any religious instruction of which its parents disapprove within any school in its connection. Allowing freely to the patron of every nonvested school to have such religious instruction as he approves of taught at a convenient and suitable hour within the school, it forbids any child, against its parent's consent, to be obliged to be present or to share in it. Thus a clergyman of the Established Church may appoint an hour each day when the Bible shall be taught in his National School by a school-master appointed by himself, but he cannot oblige the children whose parents object to it to be present or to be taught. Now is there here, when fairly considered, anything to offend the conscience of such a clergyman? I do not see that there is. He may regret, or he may condemn, the parent's blindness, but that he himself transgresses any principle to which the Bible pledges him, or to which he has pledged himself, I confess I cannot see. No doubt it is the duty of the Protestant clergy to teach all whom they can influence by moral suasion the Holy Scriptures, whether they be Protestant or Romanist. But surely this obligation is neither violated nor evaded necessarily by one who has placed his school under the rules of the National Board. For such a man acts thus. He establishes a school, of which he is the patron. He proclaims that his belief is that it is the duty of all to have their children taught in God's word, and that it is his own duty to have it taught, adopting Arnold's maxim that, "the business of a school-



master, no less than a parish minister, is the cure of souls." He invites all to send their children to his school, that they may there be taught the Scriptures along with other branches of education. For this purpose he sets apart a convenient and sufficient time in each day, during which he, or some one deputed by him, teaches the Scriptures to every child whose parents do not forbid it. In a case where a parent does forbid it, he does not teach his children, but still he urges on the parent the sin of which he is guilty in keeping his child ignorant of God's word. To all who are permitted to learn he diligently teaches God's word, unmutilated, accompanying it with such explanation as he thinks fit.

VI.—Does such a man fail in his duty to teach, so far as in him lies, God's word to all men? Does such a man sanction any false abstract proposition, such as that parents have a moral right to withhold Scripture from their children? Does such a man in any way infringe any rule of that National Board under which he has placed his school? Is he not acting in a manner fully consonant with its rules and its spirit? He is bound to teach God's word to all whom he can influence! Does he not establish a school for this very purpose: earnestly invite all to avail themselves of it: afford to all a suitable opportunity? Is there anything in his ordination or his baptismal vows to forbid him to teach Grammar and Arithmetic to such as will not allow him to teach them the Bible? I know of no such prohibition. If secular education be in itself a benefit, I cannot understand on what principle it can be



wrong to impart it. God is at every moment giving temporal blessings to those who refuse blessings of a spiritual nature. Our blessed Saviour imparted the gift of bodily healing to multitudes who rejected him as the physician of their souls. We ourselves readily clothe the naked, and feed the hungry, though these may utterly reject us as their religious teachers. In all these cases some good is done, whose proper tendency is to incline the recipient of it to receive a higher benefit, but whether he is so influenced or not he who has done him the lesser good has done a praiseworthy action. On the very same principle surely we may teach young people a knowledge of reading, and writing, and grammar, and arithmetic, and feel that we have done them a good deed, though their parents, on whose heads lies the solemn responsibility of the early culture of children, have refused to permit us to teach them that on which we set a higher value. Our part is surely to do all the good we can : to give the lesser though we cannot give the greater : to feed the body though we cannot feed the soul : if we have schools, to teach children to read, though we cannot teach them from the word of eternal life. Will it not be said to us in such a case, "*they have done what they could*" ?

VII.—But it is pretty clear, I think, that we, the supporters of the Church Education Society, have in another respect conceded the very point in question. I refer to our rule with respect to the teaching of the Church Catechism. The rule is that the Catechism is to be taught to the church children, but is



not to be pressed upon the children of dissenters. Now there can be no question but that we, the clergy, are under an obligation to teach the Church Catechism to all whom we can induce to learn it, just as we are under an obligation to teach the Scriptures. I am not for a moment putting the Catechism on an level with the Bible. One is the production of inspired men : the other of uninspired. But, believing that the Catechism, like the Creeds, is founded on Scripture, the clergy of the Church of England have engaged to teach it to youth as a most valuable part of Christian education. Their obligation to teach the Catechism is co-extensive with their obligation to teach the Scripture, as appears from the questions and answers in "the Ordering of Priests." They have engaged therein to teach "out of Scripture," and according to the "discipline of Christ as this Church has received it," "the people committed to their charge." The very same persons whom they have engaged to teach the Scriptures, they have also engaged to teach the Catechism, which is an essential part of the education of all persons whom they bring to confirmation. The same obligation appears also from the service for "The Ordering of Deacons." The Bishop there, after stating that "it appertaineth to the office of Deacon to instruct the youth in the Catechism," asks, "will you do this gladly and willingly?" The answer is, "I will do so by the help of God." Now what is the conduct of the Church Education Society in respect of this? They teach the Catechism indeed in their schools, as an essential



part of their obligation as ministers of the Church of England, but only to such children as are permitted by their parents to learn it. Other children they do not require to learn it. They would not consider that they had discharged their ministerial duty unless the Catechism were recognised in their schools as an essential part of their education, and as actually taught to every child who is permitted to learn it: but they do not think it any violation of principle to avoid pressing it upon every child who receives instruction in their schools. The prohibition of parents is regarded as absolving them from an obligation to teach what, without that prohibition, they would have taught. Now the case of Scripture is analogous. Every child who can be induced to learn it it is their duty to teach out of Scripture: but the prohibition of a parent discharges them of this obligation, just as it discharged them of the other, by putting it out of their power.

VIII.—Most certainly no conscientious and enlightened man can undertake the education of children, and allow for a moment that the whole, or the main part of that education, is secular. He must bear his earnest, open, undisguised protest that such is but a part, and that the least part of what he considers education. But making this protest in all honesty and sincerity,—watching his opportunities to alter the contrary opinion,—he may surely in that case undertake to give instruction in secular learning, for the responsibility of not giving religious instruction does not lie on him.



Moral persuasion is all that the law of God, or the law of the land, permits him to use.

IX.—But if there be no question of principle to hinder us, it may well be inquired which system is the more likely to bring Romanist children under scriptural instruction. I cannot help thinking that the National System, worked by a man earnest and zealous for God's Word, would be the most likely. The Church Education System stops the Romanist child at the door. It says to him, "*if you enter here you must read the Scripture.*" To such a rule the priest points the parent's attention, and forbids him to allow his child to enter such a school at all. He will mostly succeed, for, to place one's child under the instruction of a Protestant clergyman in the Protestant Scriptures is, evidently, a plain transgression of a first great duty of a Romanist as such. He must have changed his principles, or act in opposition to them, ere he can consent to act thus.

X.—But no such rule meets him in the school under the National Board. If his priest forbid him to send his children there, he cannot point to any rule plainly at variance with his principles. The parent has a plea with which he can meet his priest's opposition, and, without violence to his own conscience, if he be a sincere Romanist, and, with an excuse for his conduct if he be in heart doubtful of the principles of his Church, he places his children in their parochial school to receive a secular education.

XI.—It will be very evident how much is gained by this step in many ways. In the first place



mixed education is a thing which we are all anxious to promote. To bring together classes hostile to each other : to teach them mutual amity : to habituate them to regard one another in a friendly spirit : this we regard as a desirable thing, and this the school under the National Board seems most likely to bring about.

XII.—But there are higher objects likely to be obtained by this means. And, first, you thereby withdraw the Romanist children attending your school from the erroneous religious teaching which would be imparted to them in a national school, of which the priest is patron. This is, by itself, a wonderful gain. If you have not been able to implant religious truth at the age when it is best implanted, you have, at any rate, hindered an immensity antagonistic to such truth from being sown. The Romish Catechism, the perverted texts of Scripture, the Romish emblems of faith, the awe struck into the young mind by the priest and his deputy, all these have been done away. The vast system of error has not struck its roots in the mind, so far as the teaching of the school is concerned. And this I hold to be an immense and positive gain. I hold that a child so brought up,—even though during his school life he has never heard a text of Scripture, or received at our hands any direct religious teaching whatsoever,—is far more likely to open his heart to scriptural truth at an age when he is his own master, than he is who has been imbued at school with the subtle system of Romish teaching.

XIII.—But another advantage is gained. You



have taught the Romanist mind a lesson of independence on priestly authority of a very decided kind. Notwithstanding the rule as to Scripture there is no priest who would not regard it as a most injurious step that the children of his persuasion should attend a school patronised and conducted by the parochial clergyman. He will set his face most steadfastly against it. He will be, I believe, nearly as much disinclined to such conduct as he would be to the children's being sent to a Church Education School. He will feel it to be virtually a setting aside of his authority. And so it is: and so it is felt to be by the parent too. The latter will well understand the bitter heartfelt distaste his pastor has to such a step. Some feeling influences him to the line he takes. It may be the opinion that his child will receive a better secular education: it may be a personal confidence in the parochial clergyman: it may be a secret, scarcely defined or recognised, leaning towards Protestant truth: it may be some personal antagonism to his own priest, for good or insufficient reasons; but, whatever be the reason, he feels that in sending his child to the parochial school he has taken an attitude of independence, that he has asserted a freeman's right, while he does this with a plea which enables him to fight successfully a most important fight, undeterred by his own scruples or fears.

XIV.—Again, such a step brings him under most influential teaching in religious truth of a scarcely indirect kind, even supposing that during the entire time of his stay at school he has never directly



learned a single religious lesson. We fully recognise the danger likely to arise to our children from sending them to a school patronised by the priest, and where the whole tone of feeling is, of course, tinctured with the Romish element, even though they should never have been taught a religious lesson by the priest or his schoolmaster. An influence of this kind, in the opposite direction, is brought to bear upon the Romanist child who attends our schools, though he may not be permitted to learn Scripture. That influence may not be so strong, for error propagates itself more readily than truth, but still the influence will be felt. The element of the place is Protestant. Its associations are Protestant. There is the Protestant patron, and master, and children. The former may not speak of religion to the Romanist children, but the children among themselves will certainly do so. There will be discussion, which priest, or parson, or board, cannot stifle if they would. Truth to some extent,—and that exactly the extent to which we have succeeded in bring the minds of our own children,—will be brought to bear in this manner upon the Romanist children.

XV.—Again, this step will of necessity teach the Roman Catholic parent to look with respect and kindly feeling on the parochial clergyman, whom he perceives anxious in every way to advance the good of his children. He is brought into contact with him at least as regards his secular education. He sees him desirous to promote this. He learns to regard him, not as an enemy, but as a



friend. Personal obligations in matters of which he appreciates the benefit will have their natural tendency to lead him on to look for other and higher benefits of a religious kind. At any rate the youth so educated will not in after life feel the utter estrangement, arising from ignorance and misinformation, which is now felt. And, looking on them as friends in one light, they will feel less hostile to the religion of which they are teachers, more disposed in after life to a free intercommunication of religious inquiry.

XVI.—Once more, the sending their children to the parochial school will open out what we all feel the want of, namely, the means of free, unsuspected, and pleasant intercourse with the parents of those children. The want of this is felt to be a most serious obstacle to the spread of truth among the Roman Catholic population. Now, if a clergyman pays a visit to a farm house, or the shop of an artizan or mechanic, he is looked on as an unwelcome intruder, who can have no other object than that of direct proselytism. The intrusive and strange visitor is looked on with a hostile eye, and, very probably, if he repeats his visit, will find the door closed in his face. But where the children of the house are attendants upon his school all this is done away. The teacher of his child will never be regarded as a stranger by an Irishman. The parent will give him a ready welcome. An interesting subject of conversation—the progress of the child and pupil—is always ready at hand. An answer is provided for the neighbours or for the priest who



may object to this close intercourse. The parent can say, "he has come to talk to me of my child—of his absence—his health—his progress. He has right to come, and I will not shut him out.

XVII.—And who does not see at once that this intercourse, almost of necessity, leads to religious discussion on the very fundamental points of difference between the Churches of Rome and England? The clergyman may—can he, indeed, avoid saying,—“Your child is learning from me secular knowledge; there is a better learning, from which you debar him, but which I am most anxious to be permitted to impart to him.” And here at once rise up these vital questions,—the obligation of all Christians to read and know the revelation communicated to them by God,—the fearful sin of those who deny to man the right which God has given him,—the obligation which lies upon every conscience to obey God rather than man. Are these not subjects which we all feel to lie at the root of the great controversy between us and Rome? Are these not the very questions which we should wish to see agitating the popular mind of Ireland, and which, discussed in a gentle, wise, and loving spirit, would, with God’s blessing, lead to the true emancipation of the Irish mind? What the priesthood of Rome seek and wish for is, to keep us utterly aloof from intercourse with their people. To a very great extent they have succeeded. We move among the Irish peasantry as thoroughly unknown as though seas divided us. Of the unknown man every lie may be propagated and believed, because there is none to contradict it.



Among the more ignorant of the population misconception and falsehood prevail to an amazing extent. Almost everything is said, and almost everything is believed, till the poor children of our country districts actually look on us with dread as we walk, half expecting, half fearing, to see the mark of cloven feet upon the earth where we have walked.

XVIII.—But this could not be the case, so far as the attendance of Roman Catholic children at our schools gave rise to an intimacy and friendship between their parents and us. They could not believe every extravagant and awful story of men who daily saw and conversed with their children, and whose acquaintance they themselves had made. The stories that would be believed of the unknown, mysterious stranger, will not be credited of the man who has been seen and talked to within their own houses. The intercourse of this life will probably lead to the discussion of what relates to the next.

XIX.—Within our own personal recollection have been two aspects of the parochial clergy towards the Irish people. The first was one of close and hostile contact. In the old tithe system each farmer and each clergyman were brought into collision upon the subject of money, and the consequence was hatred, and often assassination. The next aspect is that in which we now stand—ignorance and estrangement. Could a third arise—one of mutual intercourse upon a friendly footing—we might then hope for that which we have hitherto



sought in vain—the religious enlightening of the Irish mind.

XX.—The first conclusion, then, to which we arrive from the previous reasoning is this, that we ought as a matter of expediency, and supposing that no National Board existed, make an alteration in one of our fundamental rules, and henceforth declare that children are free to attend the schools of the Church Education Society, and that they shall not be obliged, without the consent of their parents, to receive the religious instruction which forms a part of the education given therein. No principle is violated by such a change, while the object we all have at heart—namely, the instruction of all the youth of our country in Holy Scripture—would be more likely to be promoted by this than by the opposite system.

XXI.—But is it to follow from the preceding reasoning, that we are to give up the Church Education Society, and to join the National Board? By no means; such a step, under existing circumstances, would be suicidal. There is one of the fundamental rules of the National Board which, while it remains in force, necessitates our setting up a separate Society, supported by voluntary contributions. The rule is this, that before any pecuniary aid can be granted by the Board to any school, there must be an average daily attendance of at least thirty pupils at that school.\* It is not that there must be the names of thirty children on the

\* Twenty-first Report of National Board of Education.—Dublin, 1855, p. 19.



rolls of the school, but that *the daily average attendance* must be thirty, which would require us to have on the rolls of our school about double that number. And now let us inquire how this rule affects us and our duty.

XXII.—Its immediate effect, then, is to exclude *the great majority of schools* under the management of the Established Church of this country from any participation in the aid granted by the Board, for the simple reason that in the majority of our schools we have not an average attendance of thirty pupils. In most of the towns, and in several of the country parishes, we could indeed muster a sufficient number of scholars; but in some few of the towns, and in a large proportion of the country parishes, our schools could receive no assistance from the Board, and, but for the voluntary contributions of our people, would fall to the ground. I am not able to state what number of our schools could, and what number could not, according to the rule in question, receive aid from the Board. The latter are certainly very few, compared to the former. One fact will be sufficient to show this. The average attendance at the country schools of the Established Church throughout the County of Cork is at present *fifteen*, so that, according to this average, the Board could not grant aid to a single country school in the extensive county of Cork. Were we to depend, then, on the aid afforded by the Board, and to give up our Church Education Society, and our appeals to the liberality of our congregations, we could have no parochial schools



in the greater number of our parishes, and our Protestant farmers, our tradesmen, and our labourers, must look elsewhere than to us for the education of their children.

XXIII.—Let us follow out briefly the consequences of such a state of things. The Church School closed, and its schoolmaster dismissed, our children must turn to some other place. Well, there is another school open to them—it is the National School, patronised by the parish priest, under his absolute control, and taught by a master appointed by him, and dismissed by him at pleasure. This is positively our sole resource in far the greater number of cases we have referred to. Should we—ought we—to be reduced to this, when we have the means within our power to open and maintain our own schools? Surely not, so long as we love the truth—so long as we love one another—so long as we regard even our own reputation in the eyes of the world. The Church of Ireland will indeed have come to a position of insignificance, its candlestick well-nigh removed out of its place—if, instead of being in the position that of right and duty belongs to us—namely, to offer the blessings of sound education to all of every persuasion who will accept it at our hands—we shall ever be forced to acknowledge that we are unable even to educate the children of our own faith. That day can never come, except there first come a general falling away, if not from the name of Protestant, yet from all except a barren, useless, lifeless, dishonored, and contemptible name.



XXIV.—But let us pursue our subject somewhat further. We have supposed our Church schools closed, and our children attending at the National Schools patronised by the priest. By the rules of the Board it is required that they should there receive a secular education, and that their religious principles shall not be interfered with. Let us grant that they obtain the first—which yet I am fully satisfied that in very many schools they would not, for the state of education is at a very low ebb in a large proportion of them, according to the reports of the National Board Inspectors themselves; let us even grant that they are secured upon the second point—though of this I am fully convinced that no one who knows human nature and the genius of the Romish religion will believe it possible. Numbers and example have a mighty power over the mind for good or for evil, but most for evil; nor could all the rules of Boards and Parliaments hinder that zealous spirit of proselytism which pervades almost every sincere member, lay and clerical, of the Romish community, unrestrained by any considerations; for, let them say what they will, all history has shown, and it has been often admitted by themselves, that every means is lawful—falsehood, intimidation, persecution—that can secure to Rome the darling object of her ambition, supremacy over the conscience and the mind of man. To send our children to the priest's school would be the preparatory but certain step to giving them up to Rome altogether, and would most infal-



libly, in a few generations, hand over our humbler classes into the power of her priesthood.

XXV.—But let us give free scope to our fancy, and suppose no such danger to exist as that we have spoken of. Let us imagine that numbers have no influence,—example no power,—priests, their teachers, and their pupils, no zeal of proselytism; let us imagine our few children mixed up with a Romish majority, and their religion, their principles, their Church, their Bible, their clergy, unassailed by taunt, by scoff, by argument, or by fear. Let us, in fact, imagine that which never has and never can exist, since such is human nature by the impression of the Creator upon its essence, as even one who pretended to a calm lofty indifference as to variety of opinions, secular or religious, confessed,—that our minds must ever lay hold of every other mind that approaches us,—that we cannot bear contrariety of sentiment,—that we are impatient of opposition even on the most speculative and indifferent opinions.\*

XXVI.—I will not suppose it necessary to argue that secular education is not enough for our children. No one but an Atheist thinks it is. None of us are Atheists. There are, in fact, few Atheists even in man's period of rude health and fancied security, none in the hours of danger and at the approach of death. God, our Maker, has written the sense of his Being on our hearts. We cannot obliterate his writing. Sensuality, covetousness,

\* "Hume's Essays."



reason, or folly, cannot do so. The very fool that says "there is no God," says so "in his heart." He dares not utter it aloud. Each stone that lies beneath his feet, each plant that grows out of the ground, each insect that sports in the air, each star that glitters in the sky would tell him that he lies; for they all declare that there is a glorious God. To know Him, to love Him, to trust in Him, to obey Him, to meet Him at the solemn hour, we must be taught. All science, all knowledge is vain, without the knowledge of God, as revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

XXVII.—Our question then is, how are our children provided, we suppose, with secular instruction, at the Priest's National School, to receive religious instruction?

XXVIII.—*Not at this National School.* Its patron is the priest; its master a member of his faith. He would not teach our children the holy lessons of Scripture; he will admit none into his school to teach them.\* How, and when are they to be taught?

XXIX.—The National Board contemplates this case. It must do so; for it would be a case recurring in most parishes, were we to join it. And what is its provision? It allows religious instruction to be given at some appointed hour not devoted to the ordinary business of the school where the children attend. Suppose the school hours to be from eleven to half after three o'clock, it permits us at any hour we please, before or after, to give religious instruc-

\* Rules, p. 6.



tion wherever we please, out of the school, and by whomsoever we please.\*

XXX.—Here precisely is the provision made in the cases contemplated as drawn from the rules of the Board. During school hours we may not give religious instruction to the children of our own communion; nor are they permitted to absent themselves from school business. We may, before or after school hours, appointed as these would be by the priest, assemble them where we please, and teach them by whomsoever we appoint. The Board provides no place for their religious instruction and no religious instructor.

XXXI.—Let us follow out our arrangements. Let us suppose our children at a school whose school hours are from eleven to half after three o'clock. We are making the most favourable supposition; for, in very many instances, the hour for commencing school business would be fixed much earlier in the day. In that case the slightest consideration will show us that it would be wholly useless to attempt to assemble our children before school began. But we will suppose the time from ten to eleven, a.m., to be available. Now experience tells us how difficult it is to bring the children of a country parish, embracing a circuit of some miles, to attend punctually at their regular school-house at the hour of ten. But how would it be if they had to attend at that hour at some place perhaps considerably distant from their school-house, at which

\* Rules, p. 6.



latter place they must be in attendance at eleven? We may safely say that such would, in very many instances, be the necessary hurry and inconveniences of many kinds that their attendance at the place for religious instruction would be scanty, and often none at all. The case would be just as bad, if not worse, if we fixed their attendance *after school*. The children are tired after a mental discipline of several hours; they have to return home, and the way for many of them will be long; during half the year the evenings close quickly in; bitter cold or drenching rains prevail during a large proportion of our days; perhaps the place where they were to receive religious instruction would lead many in the opposite direction from their homes. It were indeed a vain hope that in country districts we could expect to assemble our children for religious instruction in a place distant from their school. To receive it at all they must receive it beneath the same roof where they receive instruction in other branches of knowledge.

XXXII.—But this is not all. There must be a teacher as well as scholars. We suppose ourselves without a Protestant schoolmaster where we have no school. The religious instruction then of the children during the week days would, in general, devolve altogether *upon the clergyman*. I will not speak of the inconvenience this would be to him, though it would be very great. His part, if he be worthy of his position, is to spend and to be spent for his people, to minister by his time, his labour, and his talents, to the religious well-being of his



flock, old and young. But I say that very frequently other necessary business of his calling would hinder his attendance at the time appointed. What would be the result when it may be as hard to bring the teacher as the scholars to the place of instruction? Punctual, unvarying attendance at his post is a first requisite on the part of a master, and such attendance few clergymen, however willing, are able to give. The avocations of a clergyman would interfere with any such charge as the daily attendance at a stated hour to educate children. His business is wherever he may be wanted. The house where sorrow has entered; the grave of the departed; the affairs, temporal or spiritual, of his parishioners, on which they may wish for his counsel or sympathy; these, and other calls, may require his attendance elsewhere at the very hour fixed for the instruction of the children, and would often do so. It is not possible that the office of a school-master should coincide with the duties of a parish minister. How quickly and how seriously would even attendance upon divine worship on the Lord's day diminish, if it were at all uncertain whether the officiating minister would attend! How much more strongly would such uncertainty tell upon the attendance of children, at a place distant from their regular school-house!

XXXIII.—Nor is even this all. You must have a *fixed place*, as well as an hour for teaching. What is this place to be? Perhaps people will say let it be the Church. But I need scarcely say that this place must not be very far distant from the school



where secular instruction is received. The Church frequently is so. At any rate a cold Church is an unfit place during one half, at least, of the year, for either master or pupil to remain in. You must have some place warm, commodious, and near. I may safely say that a majority of neighbourhoods would not afford these needful circumstances. Near many National Schools there are no houses but such as are inhabited by Roman Catholics. Probably not one of these would be opened to give what they suppose to be heretical and false instruction. Few neighbouring houses, again, supposing they were available, would afford suitable accommodation. The necessary business of the family would interfere with instruction; while, of course, payment would be required. In fact, if religious instruction were to be given to our children in the immediate neighbourhood of the National School, where they received secular learning, we would be obliged, in very many instances, to build a school-house to impart it in, to keep it warmed during the cold season, and, consequently to maintain a person in charge of it.

XXXIV.—It is then, I think, evident that were we to join the National Board at present, we could not in a majority of parishes afford suitable religious instruction even to the members of our own faith. We may not neglect them because they are not numerous. On this account they only require the greater care. They have not the countenance and support of numbers, and therefore require the more earnest and diligent instruction in the principles of



their faith. Were they to attend at the Romish National Schools they could not receive this. It could not be given them in such schools, nor yet elsewhere. It is not then a choice, but a necessity, with us, to maintain in efficiency a society such as our Church Education Society is. In connection with it, and in a great measure supported by it, we have for our children a regular master of their own faith; a school-house where they can assemble in quietness, order, and comfort—all superintended by the parish minister in his proper place, the overseer of this, yet not so confined to it as to hinder his oversight of the other portions of his charge. Our Church Education Society is now, not a luxury which we could do without, but a vital necessity without which we could not live.

XXXV.—What then is it which I would earnestly urge upon the members of our church? It is this: let us still keep our Church Education Society in efficient working, all of us cordially uniting in its support; and, altering that rule which requires all the children in attendance to receive religious instruction, and leaving it optional with their parents, ask Government to take all our existing parochial schools, great and small, into connection with the National Board, and give salaries to our masters, and inspection to our schools. Let us still keep a united body, and as such make an appeal to Government for aid.

XXXVI.—Such an appeal would in all likelihood succeed. There would then be no call upon Government to abandon a principle to which they stand



strongly pledged. All that would be asked of them, in advance of that which they are prepared to give, would be to give to our smaller schools, as the schools of the Established Church, an aid which at present cannot be granted. Everything at present would favour our succeeding. The natural wish of a Protestant Government to help the Protestant community: the natural wish of the Administration to obtain a political support from Irish Protestants, which this very question has hitherto most materially hindered: disgust at the arrogant and dishonest conduct of the Romish Church which, having for years acquiesced in the principles of the National Board, and drawn so largely upon its funds, now pretends scruples of conscience, and seeks to overturn the system it has hitherto supported.

XXXVII.—It is surely not an unreasonable thing that we would ask, while our object is one which will recommend itself as most desirable to the great body of reflecting men throughout the empire. There are now in operation throughout Ireland, and paid for at the public expense, schools in which children *cannot and shall not be taught the Holy Scriptures however much their parents might desire it*. These schools are the National Schools in each parish under the patronage of the Roman priesthood. Is it not then a most fair and desirable thing that throughout Ireland there should also be schools maintained at the public expense, *where every parent may have, if he wishes it, his children taught in Holy Scripture?* If the smaller parochial schools of the Irish Church were closed from the refusal of



the Government to aid them, then it would be the case, in a very large proportion of parishes, that the parents, Protestant and Roman Catholic, would have no school in which their children could be taught the Bible. No matter what were their desire it could not be gratified. Surely this state of things would not commend itself to the feelings, the sense, or the justice of the British people! Surely, if schools are maintained by the State *where the Bible is refused all entrance*, schools ought also to be maintained *where it may be taught*, if any proportion of the Irish people, greater or less, desire it. There is nothing here which may not fairly be asked for in this, an internal part of a Protestant kingdom. Let the Bible be forced on none, but let it be free to all. Let no child be compelled, by any kind of compulsion, to learn God's Word against their parents' wish; but let every child, whose parents may desire it, have the opportunity of learning that Word given to it by the State. This is all that we should be asking, and it is not likely that it would be denied.

XXXVIII.—How happy would such a consummation be? A long struggle ended, neither unsuccessfully nor disgracefully! A long alienation of successive Governments from us, and of us from them, terminated in friendly co-operation. A drawing together of liberal and honest-minded men in a noble cause. The healing of schism among our own body, which seems incapable of healing upon any other plan. The imparting to our parochial schools a vigour, which will place them in secular advan-



tages as much beyond the schools maintained by Rome as they now excel them in religious instruction. The prospect to our country, of such an advance in Scriptural knowledge as will emancipate it from spiritual slavery, and give it that high place in the world of religious truth which is all that is necessary to make the Irish one of the noblest nationalities upon earth.

XXXIX.—The real objections to this plan, if the great one of principle is removed, are few and immaterial. The parochial minister cannot indeed at any hour of the day he pleases examine, either for his own satisfaction or that of a friend, the children of the school in Scripture. But this surely is no objection of a serious nature. He can upon every day of the week, at an hour he has himself fixed on as a convenient hour, go himself, or bring any friend he pleases, for this purpose.

XL.—Nor could the conduct of our schools be affected by any artful management of an adversary. No Roman Catholic, or other children sent to our schools for the purpose, could prevent our giving each day at the appointed hour instruction in the Holy Bible. They need not, it is true, be present at it, but they cannot interfere in the smallest measure with the religious instruction of the remainder of the school. That goes on wholly unaffected by their admission to the secular advantages of the place.

XLI.—Nor is there any danger to be apprehended that the Board, having induced us to join them on terms that involve no violation of principle on our



part, may hereafter alter its rules, and require from us what would really involve a sacrifice of principle. Any alteration of rules that the Board has heretofore made (for my part I cannot see that they have departed in any respect from the essential principles with which they began) have been in the direction of giving greater freedom to the religious scruples of the Protestant communities. Any departure from this tendency becomes daily more and more difficult. The adhesion of the Presbyterian and Methodist bodies have interposed a powerful check to any such reaction. The adhesion of the Irish Church would add another of an almost insurmountable kind. And besides the influence of these powerful bodies we should have at our side the public opinion of free and Protestant England, which would never suffer any such unworthy artifice to be played upon us, supposing for one moment that it could be contemplated. But we have no right to suppose that those who are placed over the Administration of the National Board are capable of any such conduct. Their acts up to this time have not justified any such imputation, and it is therefore unfair to put it forward.

XLII.—But supposing it did happen after a time that the Board broke faith with us, what would be the result? It would be the formation anew of a society to supply the wants thus created, and that, a society that would command the undivided support of every lover of truth and Scripture in this country and in England. There would then be no division in our ranks. There would then be none



convinced that we had needlessly taken up a line of opposition to the plans of Government, and consequently yielding as a faint support or none at all. Every man in the country that loved his Bible ; every man that valued truth and detested trickery ; every man that felt an honest sympathy with those who were determined to stand up for Scripture and God's cause—all these would then yield us a support which we cannot now expect. We should then be placed in a position infinitely more favourable than our present one, and from which no subsequent reasoning could at all remove us.

XLIII.—It is often objected to our joining the National Board, that in so doing we would be giving our sanction to all the erroneous principles which that Board holds, or may be thought to hold, on the subject of religion and the moral duties connected with it. Now I shall not enter into the question whether the Board does or does not hold any such objectionable principles—the inquiry is foreign to our purpose ; it is sufficient to say that no one joining it either gives, or is asked to give, any sanction whatever to any principle at variance with his religious belief. Where or when is such a sanction given by any one who joins the Board ? But neither is it required ; it is, in fact, distinctly disclaimed. In the very first rule of the Board we find it distinctly stated, that the “ object of the system is, to give separate religious instruction to children of all persuasions.” The Board, then, not only admits, but seeks, that all who join it shall give, in the fullest and most unrestrained way, religious



instruction according to their belief. It does not, then, call upon any one joining it to renounce any religious opinion he held previously. It does no violence to any man's conscience. Whatever be the form of his belief, it does not in any way ask him to modify his views of what is right or wrong in religious faith and practice. It takes him as he is into its connection. Be he Protestant or Romanist, Churchman or Dissenter, it does not ask him to surrender one iota of his principles. He enters into connection with it, not only permitted, but invited, to carry out his peculiar views under its sanction. None, then, can say with any justice that any one who joins the National Board is called upon to sanction any principle at variance with his previous faith.

XLIV.—Such, then, are the views which I would earnestly and respectfully press at this moment upon the thoughtful minds of men on both sides of this important question. For myself, I am conscious that my end is a satisfactory solution, if that be possible, of a matter that most seriously affects the well-being of the Church of which I am a member and a minister. That my motives will be misjudged by some is what I must anticipate. Yet, in the plan which I have suggested there is not, when fairly considered, anything that can justly expose me to the charge of interested motives. If upon the Church Education Society I have urged a change in one of its fundamental rules, as involving no sacrifice of principle, on the other hand, I have upheld the necessity of upholding this Society,



unless the Board departs from a rule hitherto acted on. Men on both sides will probably condemn me. To the more calmly judging on both sides I would earnestly appeal, satisfied, at any rate, whether misunderstood or not,

"Quodque vere dicimus, etiamsi a nullo laudetur, natura esse laudabile."



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