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THE SYSTEM OF THE NATIONAL  
SCHOOLS IN IRELAND

CONSIDERED,

IN A LETTER

TO

THE REV. DOCTOR SADLEIR,

SENIOR FELLOW OF TRINITY COLLEGE, ONE OF THE COMMISSIONERS OF  
NATIONAL EDUCATION IN IRELAND.

BY AN IRISH CLERGYMAN.

DUBLIN

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1835.

THE SYSTEM OF THE NATIONS  
SOUTHBY IN THE LAND

LETTER

THE UNIVERSITY OF DUBLIN

Rev. Sir—In the announcement of your  
lately published Letter, the Rev. Dr.  
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As you are considered to be a  
respectable friend, and from your  
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person who takes an interest in the

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Houses of the Oireachtas

# LETTER

TO

THE REVEREND DR. SADLEIR.

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PARSONAGE, SEPTEMBER 14, 1835.

REV. SIR—In the commencement of your lately published Letter to the Rev. Dr. Thorpe, in defence of the National Schools in Ireland, you state that “did you think the question at issue between you was even dubious, you would abstain from the advocacy of the National Schools, and withhold yourself from all participation in their management.”

As you are considered to be a man of respectable talents, and, from your situation as commissioner, to be well acquainted with the national system, this strong declaration of yours must arrest the attention of every person who takes an interest in these

matters. If you have examined the question in all its bearings and consequences, with that care and impartiality which its importance demands, and feel perfectly satisfied in your conscience that you are right, of course you are justified in expressing your opinion in the strongest language you could find ; but, to be candid, I suspect that you have not fully examined the question in *all* its bearings and consequences, and for this reason, that in your letter, which professes to be, as well a general defence of the National Schools in Ireland, as any answer to the Rev. Dr. Thorpe, you have not even touched upon some of the most important objections that can be made to the system.

You say “that you considered the almost daily attacks on the national system, rather as the noise of the petty warfare of political party, than as the voice of persons sincerely interested in the subject which they discussed.” When you wrote this sentence, did you recollect that the Irish Bench of Bishops, and the rest of the Irish clergy, with very few exceptions, had repeatedly protested against the system ? If you did, do you think that you were justified in denouncing their solemn pro-

tests, and the reasons upon which they were founded, as “the noise of the petty warfare of political party?” or, did you not believe that there were men among these bishops and clergy, as sincerely interested in the cause of Irish education, and as truly desirous to promote the real interests of their country, as any person connected with the National Board? Your petulant observation may serve as an answer to some of the opponents of the system, and some of its advocates too, for it must be admitted that there are some on both sides of this question—as indeed there are on both sides of every important question of the kind—who are much more anxious to promote their own selfish objects by what they say and write, than to remove error, and promote truth. But there are other opponents, whose objections you have not even noticed in your late pamphlet, who possess as much honesty as you do yourself; and who, from strictly conscientious motives, are compelled, and that with the deepest regret, to withhold their support from the national system of Irish education. I, sir, profess to be one of these opponents. I have considered the subject with the greatest possible care and impartiality—I

have made myself acquainted with the theory and practice of the system—my interest, if I consulted it alone, would lead me to advocate it, and yet, with my present convictions, I feel that, so long as I am influenced by principle, I must withhold myself from all participation in its views and operations. I pretend not, however, to infallibility, and may be wrong. There are very few things that could afford me greater satisfaction than to find that my objections were untenable, and that I might, with a safe conscience, cooperate with your Board in their plans for disseminating the blessings of education through this distracted and benighted country.

I shall now state my objections to you in plain language—I shall endeavour to avoid all bitterness and uncharitable insinuation, so common in controversy. Had you not come forth as the representative and champion of the Board of National Education, I doubt whether I should be justified in addressing this letter to you, and not to the commissioners collectively; but, as you have come lately before the public as *their* advocate, and the advocate of their system, you will not be surprised at my stating my objections to you in preference to any

other of the commissioners, and begging from your hands an answer to each. If you grant my request, I and all those who think with me—and they, I assure you, are many and honest too—will consider ourselves deeply indebted to you. If your answers are convincing, I, for one, shall most gladly cease my opposition to the system; but if, on the other hand, you cannot get over the difficulties I shall bring before you, you will be equally bound, as an honest man, to acknowledge your error, and withdraw entirely from the Education Board, even though such conduct might defeat all your present views of advancement.

In order that I may make my views and objections intelligible to the humblest capacity, and free from any possibility of being misconstrued, I think it will be best to select one case—namely, my own, which in all its essential points is the same as many hundreds in Ireland. Within the last few years I caused a school-house to be built, at considerable expense, for the benefit of the poor children in my neighbourhood; I have had the school supplied with a good master, and every requisite that was wanted; it has been attended by Protestants and Roman Catholics; a sufficient

time has every day been devoted to moral and literary instruction; there is no interference whatever with the peculiar principles of any of the children, but every one of them, whether Protestant or Roman Catholic, that has attained a suitable proficiency in reading, is required to read aloud, in the hearing of the other children, a portion of the New Testament, every day before the school closes. By this simple plan, moral, and literary, *and* religious instruction is given, without a compromise of principle, or an interference with peculiar tenets on either side. The portion which is read of the New Testament conveys to all, those who hear as well as those who read, religious instruction, and, as the New Testament is admitted to be of divine authority by both parties, such religious instruction as cannot, with any show of reason, be objected to. Now, sir, suppose I connect my school with the National Education Board, see how the matter will stand. The morning after it is announced in my neighbourhood that the school has been so connected, I shall, most probably, receive a letter from the Roman Catholic priest of the parish, to inform me that he must have the use of my school during a



considerable portion of every day, and the whole of one day, in the week, to teach the Roman Catholic children the doctrines of his church. I must comply with his demand;\* that is, I must give up my school, during the periods I have mentioned, for the inculcation of the doctrines of the Romish church. Let me, then, ask—and in this question is contained my first objection—let me ask, *can I, being a Protestant, conscientiously patronize and support an institution, and that voluntarily, and not by compulsion of law, which must be devoted the whole of one day, and a part of every other day in the week, to the teaching*

\* The third condition on which aid is granted by the Commissioners is this—“They will require that the school be kept open for a certain number of hours, on four or five days of the week, for moral and literary instruction only; and that the remaining one or two days in the week be set apart for giving, separately, such religious education to the children, as may be approved of by the clergy of their respective persuasions. They will also permit (!) and encourage the clergy to give religious instruction, either before or after the ordinary school-hours, on the other days of the week.” Here it may be observed, that though it is required that a day be set apart for religious education, it is not *imperative* upon the master, or any other person, to attend and give such instruction.

From the 14th quere to be answered by applicants for aid, it appears that it is also necessary, before you apply to the Board, to solicit the sanction of every Romish priest in the parish or neighbourhood.

of what I profess and believe to be dangerous and damnable doctrines? I write not in the spirit of bigotry; I trust there is but little, if any, of that base spirit in my heart; yet, candidly speaking, I do not see how, so long as I profess to consider Protestantism to be the truth, I can consistently support in any way a school, in which popery, that is in my view, falsehood and idolatry *must* be taught. There is one answer, and only one, that occurs to me, which can be given to my objection, namely, see how the Roman Catholic clergy allow, or must allow if called on, the use of their schools for the teaching of Protestantism, which they reckon *heresy*, without making any such objection—if *they* contradict their principles to gain an end, that surely is no reason why others should do the same, and, moreover, we Protestants adopt not the principle with which they are sometimes charged, that we may do some evil, that is in this case teach, or promote the teaching of, some falsehood, that good may come of it, namely, that we may have an opportunity of imparting moral and literary instruction.

You, sir, may be able to show that there are not good grounds for being influenced by this

objection of mine, yet, as I view the question at present, I can see only one way of getting rid of the difficulty. Let the Board establish a rule that the peculiar religious instruction of the members of each denomination shall be given, not in the schools, but in their respective places of public worship, and then no party will have any reason to complain on this head.

My school at present is attended by about forty Protestants, and forty Roman Catholics, and of all these there is not one that does not receive some religious instruction every day, by means of the rule which requires that a portion of the New Testament shall be read aloud before the business of the school closes. But let my school become a national one, and what is the consequence? During school hours no religious book, not even the Old or New Testament,\* will be *required* to be used in the school, and the eighty children *may*

\* Rule 5, as to tuition, says, "The reading of the Scriptures, either in the authorized or Douay version, is regarded as a religious exercise, and as such, is to be confined to those times which are set apart for religious instruction. The same regulation is also to be observed respecting prayer." Times may be set apart for reading the Scriptures and for prayer, but no rule of the Board renders it *imperative* on the master or any other teacher to attend at those times.

return to their homes every day in the year without receiving any religious instruction whatever—is not this the fact? You know it is—and how, let me ask, can you, or any other Christian man, sanction a system of education which does not make religion a component part of it? But, you will say, after or before school hours the clergy or parents of the children may give them religious instruction. Even if they did give such instruction to every child, how does that fact change the character of the system? Do the commissioners really imagine, that the absence of religion from their system is atoned for by their permitting (!) religious instruction to be given to the children after they are dismissed from the business of the school? If they do entertain such a notion, I trust, I may say it is peculiar to them, for I never before heard it maintained, that it should be considered a matter of grace in this country, if the clergy or parents were allowed to impart to the children under their care whatever instruction they deemed most useful. The Education Board cannot, then, take credit to themselves for any thing but what they do, or require by their rules to be done, in their schools; therefore, as they do not make

religious instruction a *necessary* part of the business of their schools, they are fairly chargeable with giving mere moral and literary education, without any portion of religion. From this view of the system, you can at once see what constitutes my second great objection to it, which is this, *that it gives in its schools mere moral and literary instruction without any security that it should be accompanied with any share of religion* ; I know there have been some who maintained, that learning, even without religion, is a good thing for the poor. Will you, sir, advocate that view ? Will you assert that, so long as man continues naturally corrupt and prone to sin, he will not turn to evil the power which learning supplies, if not controlled by the influence of religion ? I think the present state of the peasantry in the south of Ireland goes a great way to decide this question ; they have as much of mere literary knowledge as any peasantry in Europe, more undoubtedly than those of England, and what are they ? You, sir, say they are “ miserable and mischievous savages, proverbial for their violence and hostility to the laws.” Their acts within the last few years fully justify this strong language. Will you, then,

explain to me, how I, or any other person, that reckons a little learning without the control of religion to be an evil, instead of a good, can conscientiously support a system of education which imparts the learning without securing any share of religion to accompany it.\*

\* How different from those of our Education Commissioners are the views of the distinguished M. Victor Cousin, Peer of France, &c. as expressed in his Report on the state of public instruction in Prussia, addressed to the Count de Montalivet, Peer of France, and minister of public instruction and ecclesiastical affairs.

“But,” says Cousin, “if we wish to have the clergy allied with us in the work of popular instruction, that instruction must not be stripped of morality and religion; for then indeed, it would become the duty of the clergy to oppose it, and they would have the sympathy of all virtuous men, of all good fathers of families, and even of the mass of the people, on their side. Thank God, sir, you are too enlightened a statesman to think that true popular instruction can exist without moral education, popular morality without religion, or popular religion without a church. Christianity ought to be the basis of the instruction of the people. We must not flinch from the open profession of this maxim; it is no less politic than it is honest. Popular education ought, therefore, to be religious, that is to say, Christian—for, I repeat it, there is no such thing as religion in general—in Europe, and in our days, religion means Christianity. Let our popular schools, then, be Christian; let them be so entirely and earnestly.” p. 126, Translation by Sarah Austin.

In another place, p. 290, he says, “Religion is, in my eyes, the best—perhaps the only basis of popular education. I know something of Europe, and never have I seen good schools where the spirit of Christian charity was wanting. Primary instruction

Sometimes when discussing this question, and lately in your pamphlet, I have been told that the clergy ought to make up the deficiency of the national system, by coming to the schools, and there giving religious instruction to the children after they are dismissed from the school business. This defence admits that the national system, by itself, standing on its own merits, is untenable, and this it is that, with its teaching of popery, puzzles me and keeps me from giving it my support or sanction. But suppose the clergy not to be influenced by the objections which I have now stated; suppose them to be ever so zealous and ever so desirous to cooperate with the National Board, how, let me ask, could they, circumstanced as they are

flourishes in three countries, Holland, Scotland, and Germany; in all it is profoundly religious.

“The man who holds this language,” as he tells us in the next page, “is a philosopher, formerly disliked, and even persecuted by the priesthood; but this philosopher has a mind too little affected by the recollection of his own insults, and is too well acquainted with human nature and with history, not to regard religion as an indestructible power; genuine Christianity, as a means of civilization for the people, and a necessary support for those on whom society imposes irksome and humble duties, without the slightest prospect of fortune, without the least gratification of self-love.”

in Ireland, do what is here expected from them? The parish in which I reside is about five miles in length and four in breadth, no unusual dimensions of a benefice in Ireland; and though so large, in extent, its income, being a vicarage, is barely sufficient to maintain one clergyman; the Protestant population is dispersed over the whole of it, and there are three national schools within the bounds of it, which will be increased to four, if I should happen to connect my school with the National Board. Now, in this case I should be glad to learn, how any one man could, as is expected by the Board, to make up for the deficiencies of their system, devote a whole day of the week, and part of the other five days, to each of the schools, to give religious instruction to the Protestant children that may attend them? The thing is quite impossible, as you must well know, with a faithful discharge of the various ministerial duties which every clergyman is bound by a previous and solemn engagement to perform. The case I have mentioned is not a rare one in Ireland, and such cases will become much more common, if, as you anticipate, the national schools increase in number, and if, according to the present



views of government, the districts over which a clergyman's duty will extend, be enlarged. What, then, will become of the Protestant children attending those schools? During school hours no religious instruction is required or allowed; the master in most cases will be a Roman Catholic, and, of course, under the direction of the priest; the clergyman, as we have seen, cannot, without neglecting his ministerial duties, attend after the school is closed, and consequently there is no chance of the Protestant children having an opportunity of reading the Bible while at school, nay, there is a certainty of its being altogether excluded from their school education, in the great majority of the national schools in Ireland. In your Letter you stated, "that you would abstain from the advocacy of the national schools, and withdraw yourself from all participation in their management, if the question at issue was even dubious." I think, sir, when you consider the question as calmly and fully as its importance demands, you will scarcely continue to say, "that there is not even a doubt that you are right," and that "there is not even a chance of the national system

preventing the people of Ireland from reading the Bible.”

Here I shall most probably be told that I labour under a most serious mistake, if I suppose that there is no religious instruction given during school time in the national schools, for that the Board have provided two volumes of Scripture Lessons, one from the Old Testament, and another from the New, for the use of their schools. Now, what is the fact with regard to these Scripture Lessons? Why, *they are not required\* to be read at all, and, as might be expected, they are not allowed to be used, during school time, in any, except very few, of the schools under the patronage of the Romish clergy.* This is a

\* “The Commissioners of Education *recommend* these lessons to be used in all schools receiving aid from them. They would rather trust to a simple recommendation, than adopt any rule for their use, even bordering upon compulsion.”—*Preface to the Scripture Lessons.*

“The ordinary school business, during which all the children, of whatever denomination they be, are required to attend, and which is expected to embrace a competent number of hours in each day, is to consist exclusively of instruction in those branches which belong to a moral and literary education. Such extracts from scripture, as are prepared under the sanction of the Board, *may* be used, and are recommended by the Board to be used, during those hours allotted to this ordinary school business.”—*Rule 1, as to tuition in the schools.*

notorious fact, which is always kept in the back ground by those who advocate the system. You did not allude, in your letter, either to the rule which merely recommends the use of the Scripture Lessons, nor to the general disuse of them, its natural consequence; no, nor did the Archbishop of Dublin, in his long and laboured defence in the House of Lords. Both of you left it to be inferred, if you did not assert it, that as these Scripture Lessons were used, it was a calumny to assert that the Bible and every part of it was excluded from the national schools. You denounce the opponents of the national system in no measured terms. Is the omission I have mentioned, let me ask, consistent with candour, is it consistent with common honesty?

But, you will say, though we, the Commissioners, do not *insist* upon the use of the Scripture Lessons, and, therefore, may fairly be charged with not requiring any security that religious instruction shall be given in our schools, yet I, if I connect my school with their Board, may, as patron, insist upon their being read every day, and that during school hours. I am aware that, by the regulations of the Board, I *might*, as patron of the school,

do so, but, on the other hand, if I chose, I might forbid the use of the Scripture Lessons, as most of the Romish patrons have done, and then, so far as the national system itself provides, no knowledge of the word of God, no religious instruction whatever, will be imparted to the children that attend my school. But, I may be asked, why should I not, as patron, direct that the lessons be used every day in my school? The criminality of the Board in not insisting upon their being used in all their schools, is no excuse for my neglect. I have already stated several reasons why I should not connect my school with the national Board, nor in any way support or sanction their system, but suppose for a moment all these reasons to be removed, and that we come to the question of the use of the Scripture Lessons, my answer is, that their character is such, which I shall endeavour to show, that I could not allow their being read in any school of which I am patron.

The language of these lessons is partly from the authorized version, partly from the Romish, and partly from a new translation. At present I will not enter upon the question, as to which of the three versions is most conformable to

the original, farther than giving in a note an extract\* from a letter from the great and good Bishop Bedell, in which the point is ably dis-

\* "What shall we say of that impiety to corrupt the original text, according to the vulgate Latin? See an example hereof in the first promise of the gospel, *Gen. iii.* where the serpent is threatened, that *the seed of the woman shall crush his head.* The vulgate edition leaving here the *Hebrew*, the *Seventy*, and *St. Hierome* himself, as appears by his questions upon *Genesis*, translates *Ipsa, she shall bruise thy head.* So it stands now in the authentical scripture of the Church of *Rome*; and herein *Sixtus* and *Clemens* are of accord. The divines of *Louvaine* observe, that two manuscript copies have *Iipse*, and that the *Hebrew*, *Chaldee*, and *Greek* have it so likewise. Why, then, did not either *Sixtus* or *Clemens*, or they themselves having copies for it, correct it, and make it so in the authentical text? I will tell you:—by colour of this corruption, the devil, envying Christ's glory, like an obstinate enemy, rather yielding himself to any than his true conqueror, hath given this honour to the *Virgin Mary.* To her it is attributed in that work, which I think to be the most ungodly and blasphemous that ever saw the sun—*The Lady's Psalter*, wherein that which is spoken of God, by the Spirit of God, is wreathed to her. In the fifty-first Psalm—*Quid gloriaris in malitia, ó maligne serpens, &c. Why boastest thou in malice, O thou malignant serpent and infernal dragon? Submit thy head to the woman, by whose valour thou shalt be drowned in the deep. Crush him, O Lady, with the foot of thy valour, arise, and scatter his malice, &c.* And in the fifty-second Psalm, speaking to the same serpent—*Noli extolli, &c. Be not lifted up for the fall of the woman, for a woman shall crush thy head.* Yea, which I write with grief and shame, to her doth good *Bernard* apply it—*Hom. 2, Super Missus est*, and, which is more strange, expounds it, not of her bearing our Saviour, but *Ipsa proculdubio, &c. She doubtless crushed that poisoned head, which brought to nought all manner of suggestion of that wicked one, both of temptation of the flesh, and of*

cussed, whether in Genesis iii. 15, “*it*,” or “*she* shall crush,” is the more correct translation.

*pride of mind.* To her doth the learned and devout Chancellor of Paris, *Serm. de Nat. Mar. Virginis*, apply it.—*Has pestes universas dicimus membra serpentis antiqui, cujus caput ipsa virgo contrivit.* And what marvel in those times, when the plain text of the Scripture ran so, in the feminine gender, of a woman, and few or none had any skill in the *Greek* or *Hebrew*? Who should that SHE be, *but she that is blessed among women*? Now, although that, thanks be to God, it is known that this is a corrupt place, out of the fountains, yea, out of the rivers also the testimonies of the fathers referring this to Christ, as *Irenæus, Justine, Cyprian, Clemens, Alexandrinus, Hierome*, yea, Pope *Leo* himself, yet, because no error of the Church of *Rome* may be acknowledged, how palpable soever, they have cast how to shadow this corruption, and set some colour upon it, that howsoever this reading cannot be true, yet it may be made like to truth. So, in the interlinear Bible, set forth by the authority of King *Philip* of Spain, the father of his present Majesty, there the *Hebrew* text is reformed according to the Latin *Ipsa*. There was some opportunity hereunto, by reason that the letters of the text without points, would bear both readings. For the *Hebrew* word may be read *hu* or *hiu*. And this selfsame word, for the letters the base of reading, is so pointed in this chapter, verse 20, and applied to *Eve*—*she is the mother of all living*, and elsewhere. Hereunto, perhaps, was added, that the points are a late invention of the *Rabbins*, as many think, and no part of the *Hebrew* text. Hereupon it was resolved, as it seems, to point this place, *hiu*, feminine. But as boldness is not always as provident, as ignorance or malice is bold, these correctors marked not, *that the gender of the verb, and the affix of the noun following, are both masculine.* So, although the orthography would be framed to consent, yet the syntax doth cry out against the sacrilege. And yet our *Rhemists*, as I am informed, in their lately-set-forth Bible, with a long note upon

The use of extracts as an *introduction* to a more enlarged acquaintance with the word of God I do not object to, quite the contrary; but I do object to them, if they are given as a *substitute* for the Bible, and, in the national schools, they are a *substitute*, for in no other shape is the Bible or any part of it, admitted during the hours of school business, and as to what is taught before or after these hours, why it belongs not to, it cannot be insisted on by the system, it is merely, if any thing is taught, the work of voluntary teachers, in no way under the control of the National Board.

As a *Protestant* I object to the use of these

this place, defend the applying of this text to the blessed Virgin, and the old reading, *Ipsa*. What should a man say? Necessity makes men desperate; and as the apostle saith—“*Evil men and deceivers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.*”—Bedell's Life, by Burnet, p. 343. Dub. 1736.

In one of their addresses to the Virgin Mary, the Romanists are taught to repeat these words—“*Adoro et benedico sanctissimos pedes tuos, quibus antiqui serpentis caput calcâsti;*”—“I adore and bless thy holy feet, whereby thou hast bruised the head of the old serpent.” When it is so notorious that the text in question is applied by the *Romanists* to the *Virgin Mary*, what can be Doctor Sadleir's view in telling us, as he does in his letter, that the clause “crushing the serpent's head” may be referred to *Eve*? He thinks, perhaps, that this interpretation will not be so obnoxious to Protestants as the other, but unfortunately for his view, we are not told in the note to the Scripture Lessons, that *Ipsa, she*, should or may be applied to *Eve*.

Lessons, on the ground that the language in many places is very different from that in our version, even though the sense may not differ much, or at all. If a child, while at school, and while impressions are so easily made, be accustomed to the language of the Lessons, what will he think of the authorized version, when he takes it up in after life, and finds it so very different from what he had read as Scripture while at school? You, sir, may deny it, but I entertain not a doubt that it must materially shake the confidence of the unlearned in the authenticity and authority of the Scriptures. To enable the public to judge between us, I give below a few verses as rendered in the Lessons, and the authorized version.\*

Several of the notes also, in my mind, are

\* Genesis iii. 15, "And I shall put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."—*Authorized Version.*

"And I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and between her seed and thy seed; it shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for his heel."—*Lessons.*

Gen. xlix. 10, "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be."—*Authorized Version.*

"The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a ruler from his posterity, till he come to whom it belongs, and to him shall the nations be obedient."—*Lessons.*



of a very objectionable character and very likely to lead children astray. A note, where there are not many notes, generally attracts more attention than the text. On this ground I object to the long note, p. 14, of the Lessons from the New Testament, on the word "*repentance*," the object of which is chiefly to show, that "*penance*" comes from the Latin word "*pœnitentia*," whereas it is derived from the old French word "*penence*," and that "*repent*" and "*do penance*," have virtually the same meaning, which no man will maintain, who is acquainted with the ideas conveyed by these words in this country. If, then, a Protestant child is taught to believe that "*do penance*" and "*repent*" have the same meaning, will he not, if he really believes what he is taught, consider that it is necessary for him to do what is conveyed to him, in ordinary conversation, by the words "*do penance?*" This cannot be denied, nor that the most mischievous effects have followed from the doctrine of penance as generally received in this country.\*

\* This note on "*repent*," is such a favourite with the Commissioners, that I find it a second time, in page 10, of the Second Number of the Lessons from the New Testament.

The note upon the Lord's Prayer, considering that the Lessons were drawn up for the use of children, is one of the most absurd and dangerous in the whole book. I will first give the text, it is in page 60, and then the note. It would be sufficient for me to refer to the page, but that these observations may fall into the hands of persons who have not near them a copy of the Lessons.

“And the Lord said unto them, When ye pray, say, [our] Father, [who art in heaven,] Hallowed be thy name; Thy kingdom come; [Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth.] Give us day by day our daily bread; And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us; And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.” The following note is subjoined to this prayer: “The passages enclosed in brackets in this prayer, are not found in some manuscripts, and therefore are omitted by many modern critics, as Griesbach, &c. They are supposed to have been supplied from the parallel passages in Matt. vi. They are omitted in the Armenian and Vulgate translations. Origen says that Luke has them not, though Matthew has.” Now, after reading this note, what must an

illiterate child, such as those for whom the Lessons are intended, think of the prayer to which it refers? The child will think thus, "The prayer may indeed be a very good one; but from what I am here told, it is extremely doubtful whether it is our Lord's prayer or not." This, I assert, is the thought that would naturally arise in the mind of any child or illiterate young person, after reading this note; and I cannot conceive for what purpose the compiler of the Lessons introduced in this and several other notes, discussions about manuscripts and various readings, except to produce in the minds of children a want of confidence in the Scriptures generally, and a readiness to believe in an infallible authority superior to the Scriptures. The marginal readings in some copies of our Bibles, are not a justification of these notes, because these copies of the Bible were never intended for, nor used in, schools, whereas the notes to the Lessons were drawn up expressly for the use of children.

There are many other objectionable notes attached to these Scripture Lessons; I shall, however allude to only one more, the note, p. 85, New Testament Lessons, to the text, "There is joy in the presence of the angels of

God over one repenting sinner.” “By this,” says the compiler in the note, “it is plain that the spirits of heaven are interested in our welfare. They rejoice at our repentance, and, therefore, they know when we repent.” Now, it is not said in the text that the *spirits* are interested in our welfare, and rejoice at our repentance, it is merely said that *there is joy in the presence of the angels* when a sinner repents; nor are we told that they know when we repent; if they did, they must know what is in our hearts, a principle this, which goes to justify the practice of *mental* prayer to saints and angels, but which directly contradicts the assertion of Holy Writ, “that God only knoweth the hearts of the children of men.” The fact is, the meaning of the text is disputed among critics; and the compiler of the Lessons selected that interpretation which seemed to sanction the Popish doctrine and practice of praying to saints and angels.\* It is the very interpretation given

\* *Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.*—Luke xv. 10. Hence, says Whitby on this text, interpreters conclude, that the angels and blessed spirits are acquainted with the conversion of a sinner, and seeing true conversion is wrought in the heart, hence the *Romanists* infer, that they must have knowledge of

in the note to this verse, in the 8vo edition of the Rhemish Testament, published in Dublin, 1825, with the words somewhat altered, but the sense exactly the same. This is the note—  
 “By this it is plain that the spirits in heaven have a concern for us below, and a joy at our repentance, and consequently a knowledge of it.” The change of words, without any

that also. But, first, here is not one word of blessed spirits, but of angels only; and whereas, papists argue for an equality of knowledge in them to that of angels, because it is said, *they are as the angels of heaven*, Matt. xxii. 50. I answer, Christ doth not say, they are equal to angels now, but at the resurrection they shall be so. Nor doth he say this absolutely, or as to the faculties of their souls, but as to their freedom from secular actions and passions, and as to the state and condition of their bodies; for so the text runs, *they that are counted worthy of the resurrection neither marry, nor are given in marriage, neither can they die any more; i. e. they are equal to the angels as to immortality, and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.* Luke xx. 35, 36.

Secondly, This text affirms not, that the joy here mentioned, is the joy of angels, but only that it is the joy of God, *ἐνώπιον τῶν ἀγγέλων*, *before*, or in the presence of the angels, which stand continually before his face. Now, as an earthly king may rejoice before his court, and they know not the special motive of his joy, so may the King of heaven rejoice before the angels of his presence, and they know not the reason of that joy, and much less the particular convert that gave occasion to it. In a word, it is confessedly God, who is compared to the shepherd, seeking his lost sheep, and to the father rejoicing for the return of his prodigal son; and, therefore, the similitude requires, that the joy conceived when a lost sheep is found, or a prodigal son comes home, should be ascribed to him.”

change of sense, is obvious, and also the deceitful motive for making such a change. How contrary all this to the declaration in the preface to the Lessons from the Old Testament, "That no passage has either been introduced or omitted under the influence of any peculiar view of Christianity, doctrinal or practical."

I believe, sir, when you have cast over in your mind, the few objections which I have here brought forward against the Scripture Lessons recommended by your Board, you will admit that the question at issue, so far as relates to them, is at least somewhat dubious, and that a consistent Protestant has some reason not to be quite satisfied with them. I think too, you will agree with me, that the Protestants of Ireland are quite right in refusing to send their children to the National Schools, from which the Bible is excluded, and into which Scripture Lessons with such obnoxious notes are admitted. It has really puzzled me beyond measure, how the Protestant commissioners could have given their sanction to them; and, I only hope that, if these Lessons are to be continued in the Schools, these and such like offensive passages will be expunged. You are probably aware that something of the kind was done

in publishing a second edition of the spelling and reading books, recommended by the Board; for the sake of gratifying the Roman Catholics, some passages which they objected to as being rather Protestant were left out.\* But, to be candid with you, sir, the Protestants of this country do not expect this even-handed justice from the Board as at present constituted. There are, it is true, three out of the seven, that are professing churchmen;† but who are they? Are they men in whom the Protestants of Ireland do or ought to place confidence? I answer most distinctly that the Protestants of this country neither do nor ought to confide any of their political or religious interests to the keeping of such men.

\* For instance, the words in *italics*, in this extract from the Second Book of Lessons, p. 137, "Mr. L. You will want books then?—Boy. Yes, *the boys have a Spelling-Book and a Testament,*" are omitted in the 2d edition, 1834, and for an obvious reason.

† The other four commissioners are, the Rev. James Carlile, a Presbyterian minister, the compiler of a considerable part of the Scripture Lessons, a Whig and something more in politics; The Right Rev. Dr. Murray, a Romish Bishop and patron of *Dens' Theology*; Anthony Richard Blake, Esq. a Jesuitical Romanist, and a Whig-Radical in politics; and R. Holmes, Esq. a reputed Socinian!! Here is a precious medley of Commissioners, but not one among them in whom a consistent Protestant can place any confidence.

Their conduct in sanctioning a system of education from which the Bible is excluded, and approving a set of Lessons with such notes as I have now exposed, is alone sufficient to render them unworthy of confidence from any Protestant. When, therefore, you inform us, as you do in your Letter, that “the *people* of Ireland reckon you, the Commissioners of National Education, among their best friends, and hail your institution as one of the most grateful gifts to this country,” you have only fallen into the common slang of the demagogues and agitators of the day, which excludes the nearly two million of Protestants from the people of Ireland, and reckons them as [unworthy of notice or regard.

The Duke of Leinster we may all admit to be an amiable and even well-intentioned man, but every body knows the extent of his capacity, and that he is quite unfit for the management of a national system of education, or to contest any point of importance with men of some learning, and who are practised in the arts of sophistry. To the Archbishop of Dublin no person can deny the possession of talent, of learning, and a knowledge of the ways of mankind; but he is so totally ignorant of Ireland,



so much of the partisan, political and *ecclesiastical*—so *latitudinarian* in most of his views—so determined upon every important question to think differently from his brethren, that we conceive he ought never to have been made a commissioner of a National Education Board, if the government really wished to obtain for it the character of impartiality. If such were their desire, they would have given, at least, one representative at the Board, to those Protestants of Ireland, and they are the great majority of them, who conceive that the word of God should not be banished from the school education of their children; they would have appointed such a man as the Primate, or the late ever-to-be lamented Bishop of Ferns, in whom the Protestants could really trust. But no; like almost every other commission that has been filled up by our Whig and Whig-Radical governments of late years, the Irish National Education Commission reckons among its members none but those who are either lukewarm or hostile to the Protestant institutions of the country. As to yourself, sir, we consider you neither “weak nor wicked,” to use your own words, but we look upon you as—what Hannah More calls—a borderer, a

waverer, who, for some reason or other, would be as likely to yield as to maintain a point which your reason would pronounce to be right. This opinion we have been led to adopt from a survey of your public conduct during the last few years, and especially from the fact that you, who were at one time a secretary to the Bible Society, are now the most zealous advocate of a system of education which excludes the Bible from its schools. A man certainly may see reasons to change his views upon any subject, but he should be very cautious, if he wishes to preserve in the eyes of the public, a character for integrity, when his new views are the most likely to procure for him advancement in rank and income. Besides the peculiar grounds of objection to each of these three commissioners, there is one that is common to them all, namely, that they belong to, and support with all their energies, that party in the state which, leagued with English Radicals and Irish Papists, are endeavouring to rob the Irish branch of the Protestant church of its revenues, and to devote them to the support of a system of education which denounces the Bible, and encourages Popery, and which, therefore, virtually drives from its schools the

children of every consistent Protestant in the land.

You, sir, conscious that the national system is indefensible in not insisting upon religious instruction being given in its schools, have chosen to say that the clergy ought to make up that deficiency ; and you have, at the same time, dared to taunt them by saying that “they are paid for this duty by their country.” Where and when did they engage to support, or in any way sanction a system of education which excludes the Bible from its schools, and encourages the teaching of Popery ? Where or when did they engage at any time to give up their hostility to falsehood and superstition ? Before you ventured to accuse, as you have done, the clergy of an unwillingness to do their duty, you should have looked at home—you should have considered that while you have been actually paid at the rate of between three and four thousand a year, for a plurality of offices greater than was ever held by any clergyman in even what is called the most corrupt times of the Irish church, they have been faithfully discharging their duties in their respective parishes, and that too, though the most of them have been reduced to a state of

destitution, by means of that truckling system of government which has been pursued in this country, by your friends and patrons, within the last few years ; and latterly, because they would not, by consenting to accept the insidious boon offered to them, sacrifice, for their own personal interest, the means of supporting hereafter Protestant worship, and Protestant instruction, in one third of the parishes of Ireland. Had they, sir, turned traitors to the church, whose interests they are bound to protect at all hazards ; had they sold themselves to a government that was most ready to purchase them, they would probably for a while be flattered by their enemies, and paid a part of their incomes, but they would have lost the high character which they now possess, for disinterestedness, and ministerial fidelity. This, however, they have not done. Though they are in number above 2000, they have all, with the exception of some three or four, continued faithful to the cause of religion and truth. There is not, I firmly believe, another body of men on earth, that would have passed unhurt through such an ordeal, or resisted so manfully the influence of such strong temptations.

What strange times we live in, and what

strange maxims of legislation have we seen promulgated, and acted upon, within the last few years ! In former times whenever any important measures were proposed to our legislature, they were recommended upon the ground of being called for by the claims of justice, as being likely to promote the legitimate interests of the community at large, or some considerable portion of it ; but now it is not so, for our present ministers, disregarding the claims of equity and justice, of honor and of truth, endeavour to force the legislature to sanction measures the most iniquitous, merely because they are called for by a faction that has the power of driving them from their places, and whose ultimate objects are the dismemberment of the empire, and the overthrow of all our institutions in church and state.

Another peculiar feature in modern legislation has exhibited itself within the last two sessions, and that is, a determination on the part of the same ministers to carry some of their measures, not by the force of argument, not even on the grounds of expediency, but by the force of *starvation*, by reducing to beggary and destitution those who are more immediately concerned in their measures.

This is the force which they have used, and seem still resolved upon using, in their efforts to carry the Irish Church spoliation bill. If they really wished to have the tithe question settled, and the clergy enabled to recover their incomes, they would have adopted the bill as amended by the House of Lords, and in the next session have brought forward the Appropriation question, and have it discussed and settled upon its own merits. This, however, they would not attempt, because they feared the influence of the Popish faction in the House of Commons, to whom they are indebted for their places; and who, instructed by the Popish priests that returned them, must exert all their power chiefly for the overthrow of the Protestant church in Ireland.

Another point, which is connected with the subject of this letter, is expected to be gained by starving the Protestant clergy. If they are deprived of their incomes, the schools which they support must fall to the ground. Now it is notorious that the great majority of the Scripture schools in Ireland are maintained in whole or in part by the clergy. If, then, their incomes are withheld, it follows that these schools must cease altogether, or be conducted

in a less efficient manner than heretofore. What must the clergy under these circumstances do? The Whig-radical government says, we will give them the public money, if they only consent to exclude the Bible from their schools, and allow Popery to be taught in its stead—or, we will enable them to recover their own income, if they only agree to take it on the condition of our confiscating, after their lives, the property of one-third of the parishes of Ireland. When these things are read, in after times, in the records of history, with what justice will it be asked, how could the legislature of Protestant England suffer, even for a year, her money to be devoted to such purposes; or how could they sanction, for even a shorter period, the nefarious schemes of such enemies to her power, her constitution, and her religion?

I trust, however, that the ascendancy of these unprincipled politicians is fast drawing to a close, and that England has at length opened her eyes to their dangerous projects. If they are suffered to proceed, they will not be satisfied till they have destroyed the church and the monarchy, and established in their stead some system of revolutionary govern-

ment, compounded of democracy, infidelity, and popery, which will eventually resolve itself into a confused mass of demoralization, anarchy, and plunder. But, however gloomy in some respects the prospect, we may still hope for better things. The God who rules over all, has heretofore rescued the liberty and religion of England from worse dangers than have yet presented themselves to us. Trusting in that God, let the friends of political and religious freedom, the friends of the constitution, and of Protestantism, only do their duty, and all will yet be well.

I have the honor to be,

Reverend Sir,

Your obedient and humble servant,

AN IRISH CLERGYMAN.



