

THE
RESULTS OF OPPOSITION
TO THE
NATIONAL EDUCATION SYSTEM,

IN REFERENCE TO
THE INTEREST, TEMPORAL AND ETERNAL, OF THE POORER
MEMBERS OF THE ESTABLISHED CHURCH:

SUGGESTED TO THE
CLERGY OF THE DIOCESE OF ELPHIN,
IN
OBSERVATIONS

ADDRESSED TO THEM AT THE TRIENNIAL VISITATION OF THE
LORD PRIMATE,

HELD IN THE
CATHEDRAL OF ELPHIN, JULY 30, 1859,

BY THE
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PREFACE.

IN *partial* compliance with the suggestion of those whose judgment in a matter of this kind I prefer to my own, I now offer to the public the following observations on the subject of Education. They were addressed, at the recent Triennial Visitation of the Lord Primate, to the Clergy of the Diocese of Elphin.

I am persuaded that very few, even of those who take the deepest interest in the question, are aware of the *full extent* of the injury inflicted on the poorer members of the Established Church, and especially in those localities where they are few in number, by their deprivation of participation in the National Education grant; and I look with feelings of the deepest anxiety and alarm to its ultimate results. Nor are those apprehensions in any degree mitigated by the report which is abroad—that the late Government had entered into an arrangement by which the National aid was to have been extended to Church Education Schools, though *only* so far as to supply them with school requisites and inspection—which, however valuable where there are *competent masters*, are comparatively valueless where the reverse is the fact. I speak from a long and not unsuccessful experience in affirming, that without a *competent and efficient master* education *cannot* be successfully carried on; and the services of such a master *can only* be secured by pro-

viding for him *sufficient* remuneration. Any concession, therefore, which shall not have the effect of increasing the salaries of the masters, will, in my opinion, only perpetuate the evil which it is designed to remedy.

In declining to comply with the suggestion of publishing the *whole* of the Visitation Sermon, I am influenced by the conviction that the first portion of it contains little of any thing that has not been more ably and better expressed by others; and also, because I am aware that in this practical and working age the more brief a paper of this kind is, the more likely it is to be perused.

In conclusion, I am anxious to avail myself of this opportunity of tendering to the Clergy of the Diocese of Elphin my acknowledgments for the kind manner in which they received observations in which I am aware that many of them are not able to concur.

WILLIAM WARBURTON,
Dean of Elphin.

THE RESULTS OF OPPOSITION
TO THE
"NATIONAL EDUCATION SYSTEM."

"And daily in the temple, and from house to house, they ceased not to teach and to preach Jesus Christ" (Acts, v. 42.)

HERETOFORE I have addressed myself to the subject of "*preaching* Christ;" yet a scarcely less important one is that of *teaching* Him—making Him known, especially to the youthful portion of our congregations, through the means of catechetical instruction; and I need hardly urge upon you the duty of sedulously instructing the young in the doctrines and duties of Christianity.

It is a *trite* observation, but a *true* one, that early impressions are the most lasting; and it is on record that many a wanderer from the path of virtue and holiness has been reclaimed through the instrumentality of a doctrine or precept of the Divine Word instilled in infancy by a Christian mother's teaching, or, at a later period, by that of the parish minister. The Word, taught in such instances, may have long lain hid—apparently smothered by the cares, the allurements, or the pleasures of the world. Yet, it may be in the time of trouble, or on some remarkable dispensation of God's providence, brought to the sinner's recollection, and made the means of bringing back the repenting prodigal to the compassionate Father whom, in the folly of sin, he had forsaken.

Be it our care, therefore, sedulously to inculcate the Gospel truths and the doctrines of our pure and Apostolic Church on the youthful mind—explaining them "line upon line and precept upon precept"—"here a little and there a little;" and intimately connected with this important branch of our duty must, I think, be considered our care and the efficiency of our parish schools.

You, my reverend brethren, who are in the habit of catechising youth, must be aware of the great difficulty of fixing the attention of the illiterate or ill-educated child, or of making him comprehend the simplest truths of the Gospel. To such you will oftentimes be obliged to repeat them over and over again and to no purpose. Instead of an intelligent reply to your simplest question, you will be responded to by a vacant, unmeaning stare, or by an inappropriate or absurd answer, which may, perhaps, extort from the more educated portion of your class reluctant and not reverent laughter.

The mind, from inaction, has become almost incapable of exertion. On the other hand, a well-taught youth, whose faculties have been strengthened and quickened by sound secular instruction, exercise, and use, will readily grasp the religious truth which you set before him.

I do not by any means affirm or believe that this knowledge will always be that which "maketh wise unto salvation;" but I am persuaded it is necessary to that knowledge. "Faith cometh by hearing;" but, I presume, this hearing implies *understanding*. It is not the mere sound of the words, else these words might as well be uttered in an unknown tongue.

And here, too, let me observe, that *reading* is a means, and a very important one, of faith. But, as one cannot *hear* without a preacher, so neither can one *read* without he be taught.

The schoolmaster, therefore, must be a very important auxiliary in breaking up the soil, and preparing it for the minister of the Gospel, whose especial office it is to sow the incorruptible seed. To him we must look for giving to the pupil habits of thought, of reflection—for strengthening the mind and developing the faculties by exercise and use. And it is of the very utmost importance that the individuals selected for that office should be well qualified for it; and that our schools should be efficient, and keep pace with the growing requirements of the age in which we live.

Moreover, ignorance, if not the parent, is, at least, the handmaid of superstition. And, if we send forth our Protestant poor in a comparatively enlightened era with their minds uncultivated—if they are unable to give to every man that

asketh them a reason for the hope that is in them, and to see through the sophistries which may be employed to pervert them—incapable in intellectual acquirements of coping with those of their own class of other, and, it may be, hostile creeds—it appears to me that we expose them to dangers and temptations of no ordinary character.

And what, my reverend brethren, permit me to inquire, is the condition of your parish schools, generally, throughout this diocese?

Why, in eight, or about one-fourth of its parishes, you have, if I am rightly informed—or had when I made the inquiry two years ago—*no* parochial schools at all; and those that you do possess in your country parishes are, I have reason to believe, in general *extremely* inefficient.

There may be exceptions, and I doubt not there are, to this general inefficiency; but these will probably be where you have considerable endowments, or where a landlord, liberal of his means, takes the chief burden on himself.

But these endowments or liberal landlords are not common—at least, I can speak from my own experience; for, during eleven years that I have been the incumbent of this parish, no living landlord has contributed *one farthing* to my schools.

That many of you are fully sensible of, and deeply deplore, this miserable state of things I am most willing to believe; but wherefore does it exist? Because, it will be replied, the clergy, whose incomes are, in general, insufficient for the decent maintenance of their families, have not the means, from their private resources, of supporting, in an efficient state, their schools; and conscientious scruples prevent them from accepting aid from the State.

Far be it from me, on an occasion like the present, to enter into the threadbare and worn-out controversy of the National Education System; but I would venture to observe that if, instead of believing its principles, as I do, to be in *entire* conformity with the Gospel, I were persuaded that they are as godless as they have been characterized by their most violent opponents, still, if I had no alternative between that of taking aid from the National Education Board and leaving the

poorer members of my flock ignorant or ill-instructed, a sense of duty would compel me to choose the former as the lesser evil of the two; that is, so long as the Board enabled me, as it confessedly does, to give the children of my Protestant parishioners a *Scriptural* as well as a sound secular education.

I would not stand gazing, as it were, into heaven, in admiration of an abstract principle, when there was so much work to be done upon earth, and when the children of the poorer members of my congregation were in danger of perishing before my eyes for lack of knowledge. I would certainly protest against what I might consider an unrighteous law; but, as I have no power to control the government of the country, I should not hold myself responsible for its real or imaginary transgressions. On the other hand, I should feel that I had incurred a grave responsibility in permitting the children of poor Protestants to be neglected—the State offering me ample opportunities for their religious instruction—merely because it would not permit me to insist on the instruction in the Scriptures against their will, of the children of parents who refuse to recognise me as their religious teacher, or to allow their children to receive the bread of life at my hands.

And now, my reverend brethren, allow me to ask you what are the results of your rejection of the National aid? Some of them I will describe in language I employed for that purpose several years ago, and of the truth of which I am, if possible, more and more thoroughly and painfully convinced every hour of my existence—"Hence it happens that our Protestant poor who, in education, used to be far in advance of their Roman Catholic fellow-subjects, are now lagging behind them; and for those situations of comparative emolument and responsibility which require an education above the common, Roman Catholics are, in some instances, the only competitors, and in many, the best qualified ones."

Is this, my reverend brethren, a fact? and, if so, is it not one which claims your heartfelt regret in regard to the past, and your deeply anxious consideration in reference to the future?

But—when we were last assembled here on an occasion

similar to the present one, you were highly extolled, from the place I now occupy, for your *consistency* in opposing the National Education System. That consistency is not always meritorious you need not to be informed—nor that it requires a certain amount of moral courage to acknowledge oneself in the wrong. And I mention it to their credit, that the opponents of the National Education System have, if not acknowledged their error, at least departed widely from those principles which, a few years ago, they thought it right, in a very solemn and deliberate manner, to assert; and, in departing from those principles, they have, of course, *practically* acknowledged that they are unsound.

Some of you were not, at that time, in the ministry, and, therefore, you may not be aware of the fact, that, in 1842, an address on the subject of National Education was presented to the late Sir Robert Peel, in which the principles, *at that time*, of the great body of the Irish clergy were thus forcibly and distinctly set forth:—

“Apprehensive,” says the address, “as we are lest silence on our part might lead to misconception of our feelings on a subject we have so much at heart, we would express our earnest hope that, whatever be the *details* of the system ultimately determined on, it may be based on a *principle* that shall enable us cordially to co-operate in the work; and, in so doing, to look for a blessing from on high. With these views we would respectfully state our deliberate and firm conviction, that, in a land blessed with a revelation from the Almighty, *no system for the education of the people can be right which shall not have for its object the communication of the great truths thus revealed, and which shall not adopt efficient means to ensure that object for those receiving instruction from the STATE.*”

Here we have—with all the emphasis that type can confer on language which is in itself unmistakable—the *principle* laid down as that *alone* on which a blessing from on high could be looked for—as the *only* principle on which those who signed the address could lend their co-operation; and that principle is, that “*efficient* means should be adopted” for the

instruction in the Scriptures of *every* child educated by the State.

I may add that this address was signed by 1,700 of the Irish clergy, some of whom now adorn the Episcopal Bench. And to what principle does it pledge them? Why, to the principle of *universal compulsory Scriptural* instruction. But think you that there is now *one* Bishop on the Irish Bench who would require the Government of the country to carry this principle into effect; or that there are *ten* clergymen of the Established Church in Ireland who would call upon the State to refuse education to those of its subjects who should object to be instructed by it in the Word of God?

But *principle* is, you need not to be informed, *immutable*. It involved no obligation when this address was presented to Sir Robert Peel that it does not *now* impose. And have those excellent men who signed this document abandoned principle or “sacrificed it to expediency?” No, my reverend brethren, they have not. They have merely discovered that they were mistaken; and, like upright, honourable, and Christian men, they have ceased to insist on the untenable principle which they then advocated, and which would have required the compulsory instruction in the Scriptures of *every* child educated by the State.

Inconsistent they may have been; but consistency in *error*, when they knew it to be such, is a sin which cannot justly be laid to their charge.

But why do I advert to these facts? Because I am well aware that men in general shrink from the imputation of inconsistency, as if it were a crime; and also because, I think, they should prove a warning to us all that we cannot be too careful in guarding against assumptions of infallibility in regard to the requirements of principle—at least on questions on which good men differ. Moreover, I think it possible also that if in 1842, 1,700 clergymen of the Established Church in Ireland erred in maintaining that the Government of the country were bound by the unerring Word of God to the *principle* of *universal compulsory* instruction in the Scriptures, a smaller number may now err in requiring the *partial* recog-

inition of that principle; and I consider it by no means improbable that in a few years hence, we may *all* concur in opinion that the principle of *non-compulsion* which is, I conceive, that of the National Education System, is also that which is sanctioned by the Gospel.

But, granting that to *you* belongs the *praise* of consistency in opposition to the National Education System, on whom, permit me to inquire, have its *penalties* devolved? *Not* on *you* nor on *your* children, but—ay, and with unmerited severity—on the children of the poorer members of your congregations. You, my reverend brethren, are, happily, not depending for the education of your children on your parish schools; and in making a selection for them, you probably choose those schools where their secular instruction will, at least, not be neglected. No doubt you seek for them “*first* the kingdom of God and his righteousness;” yet it may be that some of you cherish the hope that by means of the education which you bestow upon them, your children may prosper in the world, and even distinguish themselves in a career of usefulness and honour in that course of life to which your care and the good providence of God may guide them. But no such day-dreams gild the prospects of the poorer members of our Church. They have no such power of selection. Deprive them of their parish schools, or maintain these in a state of miserable inefficiency, and, as far as in you lies, you consign them for ever to ignorance and poverty, and expose them to the trials and temptations by which those conditions are beset.

And surely, my reverend brethren, we may reasonably question the merit of a consistency which is productive of such deplorable results—which debars the poorer members of the Established Church *alone*—for Protestant dissenters have no scruples in accepting the National aid—from ascending in the social scale—which threatens to reduce our Protestant poor to the condition of hewers of wood and drawers of water to the professors of other, and it may *be*, hostile creeds, who are, under the auspices of this much maligned system of Education, rapidly advancing in intelligence, in opulence, in importance, and in power. Or else to afford them but the

miserable alternative of seeking in distant countries, and under other national institutions, those opportunities of advancement which your opposition to the National Education System has denied them in the land that gave them birth.

Pardon me, my reverend brethren, if I express with warmth what I feel deeply; but be assured that I would not willingly utter one word which could give just ground of offence to the weakest of my brethren in Christ. Yet called on as I have been, through no seeking of my own, to address you this day, I feel that I should be wanting in the discharge of my duty to God, to you, and to the poorer members of our Church, if I forbore in all plainness of speech, but with all humility and love, to lay before you those painful but conscientious convictions which have long and heavily pressed upon my own mind.

For my part, I avow that I look back with sincere satisfaction to my humble exertions in promoting, through the National Education System, the temporal and eternal welfare of the poorer members of our Church; and I rejoice that in the discharge of this sacred duty to them, I have been also enabled to extend the blessings of sound secular instruction to numbers of my Roman Catholic fellow-countrymen. In the discharge of this duty—second only to that which I owed to the members of my own Church—I candidly avow that I did not seek or expect to make proselytes to the “faith once delivered to saints.” But I did, and I do still, think that sound secular education refines and civilizes; that it supplies pleasures, pursuits, and enjoyments of a far higher and less pernicious nature than those grosser ones in which the illiterate and ill-educated are prone to indulge.

I did hope, and I do still, that it would be the means of softening down those asperities which are inherent in fallen and unreclaimed human nature, and which are a disgrace to the professors of *Christianity* of every creed. That through its influence Roman Catholics, although not rendered less attached to their own creed, might at least become more tolerant of that of others;—in a word, that they might become better neighbours, better subjects, better men, ay, and better

Christians; and thus, though I might be denied the privilege of preaching "Christ crucified" unto them, yet that I might still promote their mental, moral, and social improvement, and even be the humble instrument of advancing the "glory of God in the highest," by promoting through the means of education, peace and good-will among them.

Many of those youths whom it was my privilege to instruct have, through the education they received at my National Schools, improved their circumstances and conditions in life; some of them in the land of their nativity, others have borne their acquirements to a profitable market across the broad waters of the Atlantic.

I trust in procuring these benefits for them I have not been unfaithful to my God, or untrue to my Church.

My own conviction is, that many of these youths, if, in the day of their prosperity, they reflect on the means by which they obtained it, will not think more harshly than their more neglected fellow-countrymen do of the church or of the creed of the individual through whose exertions the benefits of education were bestowed upon them.

I trust I have no inordinate desire for man's praise, yet I own to the possession of human sympathies, nor do I consider it a sin to cherish them; and if ever the humble individual, who incurred no small amount of odium in extending to these men the blessings of education, should be called to their recollection, I hope the remembrance may be associated with feelings of kindness and good-will.

I can fancy more than one of them—it may be in some distant corner of the globe—raised from poverty and hardship to comfort and independence; and the kindlier feelings and emotions of his nature educed by his experience of the goodness of a bountiful Creator, who is the father of all men—in reflecting on the past, reasoning thus:—"he knelt not at our altar; he was not of our church; he denied our faith; he was steadfast in upholding what he termed the doctrines of the Gospel; but he sought to do us good, and he succeeded. He may have been in error—we are taught to believe he was—yet he professed to be the servant of *Him* whom *we*

call master; and assuredly he did not *practically* deny the golden precept in which that master commands his disciples to "do unto others as they would that others should do unto them."

Such, reverend brethren, are the observations suggested by the text, in connexion with the occasion which has called us together, in regard to *preaching* and *teaching* Christ.

Time fails me; yet, in conclusion, I would say a very few words on the necessity of *personal* holiness, or teaching by *example*, in the minister of the Gospel.

Set apart by the imposition of hands for the work of the ministry, it becomes not us to entangle ourselves in the pleasures, pursuits, or occupations of the world. Our time, our talents, and our energies should be altogether devoted to the advancement of those interests whereof we are the regularly constituted guardians; and, in regulating our conduct with a view to this end, we must consider not only what is lawful but also what is expedient; and not alone the general tenor of our lives, but our every action should be framed with the purpose of promoting true religion; and above all things we should take care that, while in our pulpits we preach Christ crucified, we should not in any single act, much less in our lives and conversations, deny him.

Whilst we hold up to others the bright mirror of truth, we should take good heed that our own image is reflected from it.

To firmness in upholding the *leading* truths of the Gospel, we should, I think, unite great moderation in regard to those which are not *essential* to salvation, and in respect to which men of undoubted piety have differed, and "foolish and unlearned questions" we should "avoid, knowing that they do engender strifes."

In dealing with sinners—without being unfaithful to God—we should be tender-hearted, compassionate, and kind, remembering that "the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men; apt to teach, in *meekness* instructing those that oppose themselves."

We should also be very careful not to give just ground of offence, and if any should think us their "enemy because we tell *them*

the truth," and offer us injury or insult, it is our part not to resent it, but rather by kindness, forbearance, and forgiveness, endeavour to disarm hostility and ill-will, and thus promote the recovery of the offender by the exercise of that charity which "hopeth all things, beareth all things," and "covereth the multitude of sins."

Lofty pretensions to authority, or consequence, in virtue of his office are, I need not add, in a high degree unsuitable to the character of the servant of the lowly Saviour, and infinitely calculated to destroy his usefulness. "Whoever will be chief among you," says our blessed Lord, "let him be your servant, even as the Son of Man came not be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."

Moreover, we live in a critical and discerning—I might add, an *exacting* age; and the less *pretensions* of any kind we put forth—beyond the exhibition of a life according to godliness—the more likely shall we be to gain the respect and affection of those committed to our charge, and thus influence them for their own good.

We should indeed "let our light so shine before men, that they may see our good works, and glorify our Father which is in Heaven;" but any parade or display of our claims to consideration can only tend to promote a feeling of doubt of, or disbelief in, their existence.

I said that we are set apart from the world; but, bearing in mind that it is *for* the world, we should be careful not to mistake seclusion for sanctity, austerity for piety.

The ministers of the Gospel are the "salt of the earth," and to answer the ends of their calling they must mingle with the world—in it, but *not of it*.

If, attending to such considerations as I have ventured to submit to you, we teach and preach Jesus Christ, adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things;—if we be zealous in the discharge of the local duties which devolve upon us, attending sedulously to the *secular* education of the children of our flocks, early ⁱⁿ distilling into their minds the principles of religious truth, united with the hallowed precepts of the Gospel;—if we are constant in prayer, and dili-

gent in the study of the Scriptures—then may we hope that God will bless us in our work; that the Sun of Righteousness shall shine upon our exertions, and bring the good seed which we sow to maturity and perfection, in an abundant harvest of “holiness to the Lord.”

That true religion, long since revived in our land, may, even in our own days, acquire an immense additional impetus; that we may have the happiness of beholding *truth* triumphing not only in this empire, but going forth conquering and to conquer throughout the world.

Be assured, my reverend brethren, that the incorruptible seed which we now sow shall not be lost. It may for a while lie dormant or unproductive, but in God’s good time it will spring forth.

Though now “cast upon the waters,” the world “will find it after many days;” and through its instrumentality, under the influence of God’s good spirit, may be hastened, and ultimately brought about that blessed period when universal righteousness and peace shall be established upon the earth; when the “kingdoms of the world shall have become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ;” and when “they shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.”