COMPENDIUM

OF

CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE,

IN WHICH

BY
OMITTING ALL THOSE POINTS UPON WHICH CHRISTIANS
ARE UNFORTUNATELY FOUND TO DIFFER,
AN ATTEMPT IS MADE TO
FRAME A SIMPLE

MANUAL OF RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION

FOR THE GENERAL USE

OF

SCHOOLS IN IRELAND,

BY THE

REV. WM. LEE,

Residentary Preacher of the Cathedral of Cashel, and
Rector of Hore Abbey.

"Suffer little Children to come unto me, and forbid them not."
St. Mark, 10th ch. 14th v.

LIMERICK:

PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR,

BY GEORGE M'KERN,

Printer, Bookseller, and Stationer, 106, George-street.

This little Tract had been prepared for publication some months ago, but circumstances not under the author's controul, have delayed it until now; a delay, which the striking and important change that has recently taken place in the public mind, renders perhaps rather favourable than otherwise to its reception.

W. L.

Cashel, April 19. 1825.

INTRODUCTION.

No subject occupies so much of the public attention at the present moment, as the Education of the lower orders in this Country.

It has at length forced itself upon the serious consideration of the Legislature, and a Commission has accordingly issued, from which, results the most important and salutary, may reasonably be expected.

Having been selected in the year 1819—20, by the Boards of Erasmus Smith, the Incorporated Society, and the Association for discountenancing vice, to inspect the Schools throughout Ireland under their respective controul—that employment afforded me the most extended opportunities of observing the subject in all its bearings, and I have never ceased to reflect upon it with the most anxious solicitude.

Without entering at present into any discussion of the question, how far Education may be beneficial or otherwise, to the lower classes of Society—(a question which has long divided the sentiments of men, not less eminent for Political Wisdom, than for their active zeal in promoting the welfare and happiness of their Countrymen) I think I may pronounce with safety, that public opinion as to the necessity of Educating the Poor, does not require any additional excitement in the present day. That the materials of Education are supplied with unmeasured bounty by the higher, and received with corresponding

avidity by the lower orders—that any attempt at present to retard its march or counteract its agency, must be vain; and that it now only remains for the Statesman to give this mighty engine a right direction, and with prudent vigilance to regulate that tide of popular feeling, which may otherwise tear away the embankments, and sap the foundations of Civil Society.

It may be asked, if Ireland be so very extensively educated, whence does it happen that her moral character has so little improved, and why does she still exhibit such melancholy symptoms of the ferocity of untaught and savage nature?

The answer is easy.—Her Education is perhaps the most extensive, but I believe it is the *worst in Europe*; and I think it probable, that this is the conclusion, to which their enquiries will lead those enlightened individuals, to whom this very important commission has been confided.

The system heretofore pursued, has been a bad one, for it has not been founded upon Religious principle, nor sufficiently associated in all its stages, with the fear and love of God;* and

---

*I would except from this remark, those Schools which have been placed under the special superintendance of the Religious Orders of the Church of Rome.

In truth it cannot be expected, considering the supreme importance and multiplicity of their spiritual functions, that the Roman Catholic Parochial Clergy, could bestow sufficient time and superintendance upon the numerous Schools in their Cures.

few I believe will now be found hardy enough to to deny, that Education, if not connected with the hopes and the fears of Religion, must prove a curse and not a blessing, for increasing the moral strength, it then provides no moral restraint for man—it gives him a greater capacity for mischief, and, as it were, gives him another hand.

But besides this fearful aspect in the species of Education which has heretofore prevailed in this Country, let us recollect, what are the instruments by which that system has been carried on? It will be found, that the teachers in Ireland, generally speaking, are of a very inferior order.

A wretched mendicant boy, under the well known appellation of a *Poor Scholar*, (a being peculiar, I believe, to Ireland) who has for years been begging his bread from door to door, and his schooling from hedge to hedge, at length opens this miserable trade on his own account, and now becomes a teacher of youth! and shall we wonder, if "a little learning" thus acquired, prove "a dangerous thing", dangerous to its possessor—but still more dangerous to those whose misfortune it is to become partakers of it, under this self appointed master. Let us look to the judicial records of the memorable year 1798, or of that half extinguished insurrection which has lately left so deep a stain upon the moral character of Ireland, and we shall find that they teem with convictions of School-masters, as

the fomentors and chief leaders of sedition and rebellion.*

If such a system working by such instruments, has hitherto prevailed in Ireland, can we be surprized, that she has not yet reached any degree of moral worth or intellectual eminence; can we be surprized, if her moral, like her natural soil, though the most fertile, is yet perhaps, through the unskilfulness of its cultivation, the least productive in the world, or that, to adopt the striking metaphor of Scripture, a country which has so long "sown the wind," should still continue to "reap the whirlwind?"

The Christian Patriot, who beholds this moral waste, and would introduce a system of sound, practical, religious Education, as an alterative remedy, and pour the sacred oil of Scriptural instruction upon the troubled waters of his country, unfortunately meets at the very threshold of his benevolent design, a formidable obstacle in the opposition of the R. C. Clergy, who seem determined to resist the introduction of the word of God into Schools, by every possible exertion of influence.

I confess, I am not disposed to pass sentence of unqualified condemnation upon this opposition, nor hastily join in the outcry raised against

---

*Two Schoolmasters, whose Schools I have often seen crowded almost to suffocation, have been lately transported under the Insurrection Act, from the Parish where I have lately been Curate.

that body on this account—an outcry often heard the loudest among those who appear the least to know "what manner of spirit they are of."

Deeply as I lament opposition from whatever quarter, to designs so truly Patriotic as the *Religious* Education of our Peasantry—deeply as I lament, that any teachers of divine truth, should be betrayed by that fatal enemy to every good and christian feeling, *party zeal*, into a proceeding so unbecoming their sacred vocation, as I have known in some instances even that of cursing, blaspheming, nay burning that Holy Book, which God in his tender mercies hath caused to be written for our Learning—yet am I willing to believe, that the opposition of the R. C. Clergy to the use of the Scriptures as a *School Book*, arises in the great majority of instances, from principles and motives which, however I may deplore their effects, I cannot but respect; and that it may be traced either to a laudable deference to the authority of their superiors, or to conscientious scruples, (scruples not confined to their body) as to the expediency of such a use of the volume of Inspiration; regarding it perhaps as too sacred and too mysterious a record, to be placed in the hands of youth—they may dread either its present pollution and abuse, or its distasteful association in after life, with the toil and drudgery of a School task.*

---

*I would here earnestly press upon the conductors of every School, in which happily the word of God may be the main

With regard to Catechisms as made use of at present, a yet more grievous stumbling block crosses the path of him, who is anxious to raise the moral character, by promoting the religious education of his poor neighbours.

Nothing in truth can be conceived more inconsistent with reason or common sense, than the practice of the generality of the masters of the smaller schools in this respect.

In the course of my visitorial tour, I had often occasion to observe and to lament this :—upon enquiring what Catechism do you teach? the reply in general was to this effect: "Oh Sir, I am very liberal, I teach them all!"

Hence it is not uncommon, to hear those very liberal persons instructing one boy, that there are seven sacraments, while he teaches another perhaps on the same form, that there are "two only" and another variance may be observed scarcely less palpable, on the subject of the Ten Commandments.

---

object of consideration, the necessity of continual vigilance against the evil noticed above; and whether the whole volume of Scripture, or judicious selections from it, be adopted, that they should ever be made use of, under the awakened conviction both of Teacher and of Scholar; that the reading of it should be accompanied with feelings of the utmost reverence, and that it be regarded, not as an exercise of the memory and grammatical ingenuity, but as that supremely important volume, which leads to the knowledge of the only true God, and of Jesus Christ whom he hath sent.

In so unpropitious a posture of affairs, when two conflicting parties, both I am willing to believe equally anxious to improve the moral and religious character of the people, yet differing so widely, as to the best means of effecting this great object, is there no middle course? Is there no little spot of neutral ground, upon which the Belligerents may meet to arrange the preliminaries of a general peace. I think there is.* I think it not impracticable, (and have accordingly made the attempt) to frame a compendium of Christian Doctrine, (or if it must be so called, a Catechism) which should be strictly limited to *those essential articles* of our common creed, which are held in equal veneration by the Churches of England and of Rome; a Tract, the basis and substance of which, should be, the Apostles Creed—the Lords Prayer, and the Ten Commandments.

---

*Much might be effected towards the attainment of this great object, which must be equally dear to the wise and the good of all parties.—If a few members of the Clerical Body of each Communion, combined to form such a selection from the Bible, as would make a safe and unexceptionable manual for Schools. There are depths in Scripture saith St. Augustine, in which an Elephant can swim, and shallows where a Lamb may wade. If it be considered inexpedient, to place the more *abstruse and mysterious* parts of Scripture in the hands of Children, surely there can be no objection to lead them to those shallows where the Lamb may wade—to familiarize for instance, to their tender minds, the fervid piety of the Psalms of David, or the simple and spiritual morality of Him, who "spake as never man spake."

I am fully aware of the many difficulties attending such an undertaking, and the tender ground on which I tread.

My project may appear to some, a mere utopian scheme of conciliation, and to others, a mark of overweening rashness and presumption; yet, I venture to submit it to the public consideration.

I undertook the task I trust, with sincere and upright intentions, and can truly add with the most profound and trembling sense of my inadequacy to perform it.

I have studiously courted the plainest and most familiar stile in the compilation of it, and carefully avoided every thing like a controversial spirit, and I would venture to hope, that while I offer no offence to the religious tenets of my catholic brethern, of the Church of Rome, I have not been guilty of any unworthy compromise, of the pure and primitive doctrines of the gospel, as they have been embodied in the ritual of the Church of England.

I confess too, that I indulge a very sanguine hope, that the Clergy of each communion may find in this little tract, a safe ground, upon which to lay the foundation of their respective doctrines, in the minds of their respective flocks, upon those occasions of *separate* religious instruction, which there can be little difficulty in arranging in Schools, when once that feeling be established of mutual good will and brotherly

kindness, which should never be wanting in the Ministers of a common Saviour, and the Messengers of a common salvation.

I now humbly commend this little Essay to the blessing of Him, who in the course of his wonderful Providence, often maketh use of the vilest instruments, and often "chooseth the foolish things of the world, to confound the wise, and the weak things of the world, to confound the things which are mighty."

I cannot but hail it as a favourable omen, that I should have been able, in that part of my undertaking, which would seem the least capable of such approximation, viz: the Eucharist—to adopt almost verbatim, one of the answers in Dr. Butler's Catechisms. It is marked with asterisks.

A

CATECHISM.

Q.—What is your Christian name?

A.—N. or M.

Q.—Why is this called your Christian name?

A.—Because I received it when I was christened or baptized.

Q.—What do you mean by being christened or baptized?

A.—I was then adopted into the family of God, being by the Holy Sacrament of Baptism, admitted to the blessings and privileges of the christian religion.

Repeat the Apostles Creed.

Q.—Why is this called the Apostles Creed?

A.—Because the great truths thereof, are those which the Apostles taught.

Q.—What is it that you learn from this Creed?

A.—I learn from it to believe in the blessed Trinity, or three persons in one God—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost.

Q.—What do you believe with regard to God the Father?

A.—I believe, that God created and preserves this wonderful world in which I am living, and that every thing in Heaven and in Earth, visible and invisible, are the workmanship of his Almighty Power and Eternal Wisdom.

Q.—What do you believe with regard to God the Son?

A.—I believe, that the only begotten Son of God, Jesus Christ our Lord, was born of the blessed Virgin Mary, and thus appeared on Earth in the form and substance of a Man, in order that he might teach us the will of God, and by his own pure and spotless life, shew us a perfect pattern of holy obedience. But the chief object of his coming, I believe to have been, that by offering himself to a painful death upon the cross, as a sacrifice to the justice of God, he might redeem us from that punishment, which must always be the consequence of Sin.

Q.—What do you believe with regard to God the Holy Ghost?

A.—That this third person in the Glorious Trinity, is He, from whom every good desire, and every holy thought of our hearts proceedeth; and who, by his gracious inspiration, enables us to serve God, in faithfully keeping his commandments.

Q.—How many commandments hath God given to us?

A.—Ten.

Q.—Who is it that has explained the meaning, and shewn us in what is the sum and substance of the Commandments.

A.—Our blessed Saviour, Jesus Christ, has clearly taught us, that to love God with all our hearts, all our minds, and all our souls, and to love our neighbours as ourselves, is the sum and substance of these Commandments.

Q.—What reason have you for loving God, with

all your heart, and all your mind, and all your soul?

A.—I love God as my Maker—I love him as my Preserver—I love Him, because it is to his kind Providence I am indebted for my daily food, my raiment, and all the comforts and the blessings which I possess—but chiefly and above all, I love him, for his great mercy, in setting before me the prospect of everlasting happiness in another life, which shall be my inheritance, through our Saviour Jesus Christ; if I prove this love towards him, by faithfully observing his Commandments.

Q.—How should you honour God's Holy Name?

A.—By a life of Holiness and Virtue; by keeping his Sabbath Day Holy, and carefully attending my place of public Worship; by pure and chaste conversation, and by carefully attending to the advice of those whom God has appointed as my Pastors.

Q.—How should you love your Neighbour?

A.—By treating him in all my dealings as I would wish that he should treat me—for this is the golden rule which our Saviour has given us, and has further taught us, that by this shall men know that we are his disciples, if we love one another.

Q.—Do you think yourself able to keep all these Commandments, and thus to love God and your Neighbour?

A.—This world is so full of snares and temptations to violate God's laws, and I am natu-

rally so weak and so apt to yield to those temptations, that nothing but the grace or help of God, can give me either the desire or the power to walk after God's laws.

Q.—Have we any encouragement to expect this grace or help from God, if we devoutly ask for it?

A.—Our blessed Saviour has given us the most encouraging promises of such help, and has even mercifully given us a form of Prayer, in which to ask it.

Q.—Repeat it?

A.—Our Father who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy Name, thy Kingdom come, thy Will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven; give us this day our daily Bread, and forgive us our Trespasses as we forgive them who Trespass against us, and lead us not into Temptation, but deliver us from Evil, for thine is the Kingdom, the Power and the Glory, for Ever and Ever.—*Amen.*

Q.—What is the nature of this Prayer?

A.—In the plainest and simplest form, it asks of God all that is needful for our Bodies and our Souls.

Q.—What does it ask for our Bodies?

A.—Daily Bread—that is, whatever God sees to be fit and necessary for our daily support.

Q.—What does it ask for our Souls?

A.—It implores his help, that we may be able to worship his name, and strive to obey his commandments, even as his Holy Angels do in Heaven—that he will mercifully pardon whatever

sins we may have committed against him. It leads us to look up to God, as him, who alone can carry us through the manifold temptations of this life, and save us from that evil spirit, the Devil, who is continually seeking to draw us from God.

Q.—Seeing that all men are prone to sin, and break the vows they made to keep God's law: is there any resource for those, who have unfortunately broken those vows and sinned against him?

A.—Our blessed Saviour and his Apostles, have assured us, that true sorrow for such sin, and lively faith in his intercession and merits, will procure our forgiveness.

Q.—What do you mean by true sorrow for sin?

A.—Sorrow which proves, that it is sincere and true, by causing us not only to forsake our evil habits, but which corrects every tendency and disposition to them, and turns us from the ways of wickedness to the paths of holiness.

Q.—How should we keep alive in our hearts, the remembrance of what our Lord and Saviour hath done and suffered for our salvation?

A.—Not only by continually meditating upon it, but by frequently partaking of that solemn act of Religion, the Eucharist, or supper of the Lord, which he himself hath appointed for that purpose.

Q.—What do you mean by the Eucharist, or Supper of the Lord?

A.—A holy Sacrament, which our blessed Redeemer appointed, the night when he was be-

trayed; when he sat for the last time at the Pascal Supper with his twelve disciples—commanding them and all his faithful followers for ever, by partaking of those holy mysteries, as he then pointed out to them, to do so in remembrance of him—and **"that his children throughout all "ages and nations, might offer this most accepta-"ble service to their Heavenly Father, and take "this most precious food to nourish their souls."

Q.—With what frame and disposition of mind, should we approach this Holy Sacrament?

A.—With deep, sincere, and hearty sorrow for whatever we have done amiss, and every transgression against God or our Neighbour, either by thought, word, or deed; with lively and grateful faith in that Sacrifice, which our Lord Jesus Christ made for our Redemption upon the cross; with hearts free from malice or ill will towards our Neighbour, forgiving and loving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us, and above all, with a firm resolution under the help of God, to pass the rest of our lives in the fear and love of God, and an holy obedience to his Laws and his Commandments.