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LETTER OF THE MOST REV. PAUL CULLEN, ARCHBISHOP OF ARMAGH, PRIMATE OF ALL IRELAND, UPON NATIONAL SCHOOLS.

Fair-street, Drogheda, 17th August, 1851.

My dear Mr. Boylan—I feel great pleasure in answering the questions concerning education, on which you and some other respected members of the corporation of this town have consulted me. Education is the great question of the present day, and the religion of the rising generation in Ireland, and every other country, must depend, in a great degree, on the character that will be impressed upon it. It may be made the source of great good or of great evil. It was, therefore, most consoling to me to observe that you and your worthy colleagues were determined to proceed with caution and deliberation, and a due respect to the rights and interests of religion in discussing the important matter that had come before you. Too much vigilance cannot be employed in such an affair, for under a bad system of education the souls of those little ones that have been redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus Christ may be exposed to danger, and impressions made on them that can scarcely ever afterwards be effaced.

Before I enter into the subject of your communication, allow me to assure you that I do not yield to any one in a sincere desire to see our people well instructed. You and every true Catholic feel as I do, and our feelings are quite in accordance with the spirit of the Catholic Church. She has been the instructress and civiliser of all the nations of the earth; every noble and useful institution that we possess has originated with her; and to her are due the preservation of the arts and sciences in ages of darkness, and their revival and diffusion at a later period. The man who accuses the Catholic Church of promoting or patronising ignorance, or of being hostile to the improvement of the mind, either does not know her history, or wilfully misrepresents it.

There is, indeed, a sort of knowledge not encouraged by our Church, a knowledge without religion, which, as the Apostle St. Paul says, puffeth up, and is described by St. James as earthly, sensual, devilish. The effects of knowledge of this kind can be easily traced in the history of Europe during the last eighty years. Its fruits have been sedition, rebellion, immorality, impiety, or, at least, an indifference to every sort of religion. Within the last twenty years the occupier of the throne in France and his Ministers became its patrons in their University system, and though that system was altogether under their control, yet they fell victims to the wicked spirit which their favored godless education called into existence and nurtured. 'Et nunc reges intelligite, erudimini qui iudicatis terram.' (B. 2.)

To make these observations more intelligible, I need scarcely add, that we, as Catholics, cannot sanction or recommend any system of education that is opposed to our Faith, or dangerous to it. We believe that there is but one true Faith, without which it is impossible to please God; one true Church, out of which there is no salvation. Any teaching that is hostile to these doctrines, or tends to weaken them in the minds of youth, we must consider as unsuited for Catholics, and worthy of our reprobation.

Without making any further general remarks, I shall now state that it is my conviction that mixed education in its general tendency is dangerous to Catholic Faith, and well calculated to sow the seeds of indifferentism in the tender mind, and that its effects, where it has been tried, has been found pernicious. Such effects may not be immediate—they may not be verified in every individual case—but still, if the system work slowly, like some poisons, it produces it surely and effectually.

The Protestants of this country seem to admit and to act on these principles. The education they give to their children is purely Protestant; their universities and their colleges are altogether under Protestant control. They never send a child to any Catholic college. Would to God Catholics were as cautious as their Protestant countrymen. The contrast in their conduct is rendered more remarkable when we reflect upon their religious tenets. Protestants do not attach much importance to any particular doctrines; they may vary their opinions every week or every month; they may believe a little more or a little less, still remaining good Protestants. The greatest dignitaries in their Church hold contradictory opinions upon the leading truths of Christianity, even upon the divinity of Jesus Christ; and it has been lately decided by the highest authority in spiritual matters—the Privy Council—that a man may hold or deny regeneration in Baptism, without ceasing to be an orthodox member of their communion. Whilst their opinions are so unsettled, and they are tossed about by every wind of doctrine, is it not strange that Protestants should be so anxious to impress certain notions on the minds of their children, and to make

education anti-Catholic? Now, what is the doctrine of Catholics? We believe that if any one wilfully denies, or even calls into doubt, one single article of our Faith, he ceases to be a member of the true Church, and must be regarded as out of the way of salvation. With St. Paul we say, that if an angel from Heaven preached to you a Gospel, besides that which we have preached to you, let him be anathema. —(Gal. i., 8.) Yet, it is a melancholy fact, that many Catholics send their children to schools where our religion is impugned, and which present many awful instances of apostasy. When Catholic children are admitted to such schools, it is the fashion to call them mixed schools, and to speak of the advantages of a mixed education. The truth is that there is no mixture of Catholicity in them. It may happen that a Catholic youth will pass unscathed through such an ordeal, but even then the parent that thrusts his child into the furnace of danger, must incur an awful responsibility in the sight of God.

It appears that in the discussion on education, to which you have kindly called my attention, it has been argued that I must be favorable to mixed education because I approve of the National Schools in these dioceses.

The explanation of this apparent contradiction is quite easy. In common with the other Bishops of Ireland, I abstain from either approving or condemning the National Schools in general. Some of these schools work practically well, and whilst visiting this diocese I was happy to find the children who frequent them well instructed in their religion. But these are not mixed schools; the managers, the teachers, the children, are, I may say, all Catholics—the spirit of the schools is Catholic. There are two such schools in this town. A great deal might be said about the system, on which such schools are conducted; but I do not intend, nor is it necessary, to touch on that matter now. There are other National Schools, in which the managers, masters, and children, are Protestants or Presbyterians, and which are not frequented by Catholic children. It is not in my sphere to interfere with such schools, but I may say that as Protestants are taxed for the support of the National system, it is fair that they should participate in any benefits it confers in a way proportionate to the number of their poor children. But there is a third class of National Schools under the control of proselytising Parsons, or agents of bigoted enemies of our Faith, in which, though the masters are Protestant, and the teaching and spirit Protestant, yet Catholic children, by promises or threats, are induced to attend. Such schools I consider most dangerous. There is no protection in them for the Faith of Catholic children. The parents, indeed, may object to the teaching of Protestant doctrines, and make their representations to the board. But this is in reality no protection, when the parents are dependent on the patrons or managers of the school. It would be necessary to say a great deal about this branch of the National system. I shall for the present limit myself to observe that it is most unjust to tax a Catholic population for the support of schools of this kind that have been, or may be, made an engine for undermining their Faith. It is to be regretted that the original rules of the National Board have been modified in a manner to favor such schools that may be made nurseries of proselytism.

It will not be necessary for me to make many observations about the Model School, which has been the principal occasion of the correspondence. The object of such establishments appears to be the development of mixed education. Protestant, Presbyterian, and Catholic teachers are to be united in them, and children of every denomination are invited to attend them, and thus a mixture is compounded that is anything rather than Catholic. Neither the Catholic Clergy nor any other Catholic body has any control over the appointment or removal of masters or mistresses, or over their teaching in the schools. The whole system tends to inspire children with the absurd idea that all religions are equally good, and is thus hostile to truth, which is one and exclusive in its nature. The system also is directed to throw the education of a Catholic population into the hands of a Protestant government, or at least of a commission appointed by the Protestant ministers of the day. Ought Catholics, or can they, conscientiously take an active part in establishing such schools?

But it will be said that we are living in times of great liberality, and that no teacher would interfere with the religious doctrines of his pupils. This assertion is made every day, and is always on the lips of those Catholics who send their children to anti-Catholic and dangerous schools. But is it borne out by experience? On the contrary, we have the clearest evidence that men who profess themselves liberal are oftentimes most hostile to our religion, and make every exertion to injure it. Whoever enjoyed a higher character for liberality than our Prime Minis-

ter? Yet in his Durham correspondence he treats our practices as the mummeries of superstition, and proclaims that our Church confines the mind and enslaves the intellect. The Dignitaries of the Established Church are also very liberal and enlightened men, but were they not the loudest in their demand for penal enactments against Catholics? I believe that even in this town they got up a petition against us.

Now, when we see that the most liberal of Prime Ministers, and the highest as well as the lowest dignitaries of the Church, as by law established, do not hesitate to display great bigotry when we are concerned, are we to be assured, or are we to believe, that Protestant teachers are quite exempt from the spirit that animates their superiors? Are we over-prudent if we do not wish to commit the instruction of Catholic children to masters, who, for any guarantee given to us, may be, if not open and candid, occult and insidious, enemies of our Faith? But even in the case that the teachers in question are altogether free from bigotry, as it some times happens, still may they not produce a bad effect on Catholic Faith without knowing or intending it? It is generally stated that in Trinity College there is no interference with the religious principles of the Catholics who frequent it. But the example of those in office, the sneers of companions, the spirit of the place, the atmosphere itself produce their effect, and many young men either become open apostates from the Faith of their fathers, or, at least, lose the spirit of their religion, and abandon its practices and observances. The same effects will probably be produced in due time in our model schools, when mixed education will be fully developed in them.

You are well aware, my dear Mr. Boylan, that our Faith is to be prized above every treasure this world can afford. Our forefathers suffered the confiscation of their property, and even laid down their lives rather than renounce it. Shall we be so degenerate as to expose this precious gift of Heaven, without which it is impossible to please God, to imminent danger for some paltry temporal consideration?

Be so good as to communicate my sentiments on this subject to the other Catholic gentlemen who consulted me. Assure them that I feel it my duty to aid them by my counsel on every question connected with their eternal salvation, and the preservation of the Faith of our Catholic children. Having been charged by God, through the Apostolic See, with the care of all the Faithful in this diocese, like the Apostle I must say that to all I am a debtor.—Believe me to be, with sincerest esteem, and best wishes, your devoted servant,

† PAUL CULLEN, Archbishop of Armagh, Primate of all Ireland.

Patrick Boylan, Esq., Ald., &c.

NOTE.—Not having time to explain the several variations introduced into the National system, I wish here merely to state that, particularly with respect to Scriptural instruction, the very principle of the board, or its interpretation of Lord Stanley's letter, has been changed. For, at first, official statements were made that the Scriptures might be taught to children when approved of by the Clergy of their respective persuasions; then they might be taught when approved of by their parents; next, this latter rule was limited to cases where their parents direct; and, next, it was extended to cases where the parents do not object; finally, where before the child was not allowed, he now is only not compelled, to read them.

To explain this matter more fully, I give two extracts from pamphlets written by influential Protestant Clergymen. The first is from a pamphlet written by the Rev. Daniel Bagot, Vicar of Newry, &c., &c., entitled, 'A Letter to a Friend on the Fundamental Principle of the National System of Education in Ireland. Dublin: W. Curry and Co. 1845.'

'There is nothing whatever in the rules or regulations of the National system that puts the slightest restrictions upon the Word of God. Any patron of a National School who desires it may have a Bible class in that school, and may have in that class every child who either freely joins it, or whom he may induce by advice, or persuasion, or by any means short of compulsion to join it. In short, the principle on which the rules of the board, with reference to religious instruction and the use of the Bible are founded, is simply no restriction—no compulsion.'

Again, 'The rule of the National Board is most clear and distinct in its language upon this point. If a parent prohibits his child from joining the Bible class it does not require the Protestant patron to become the instrument of enforcing the prohibition, but only not to have recourse to compulsory means to force the child to disregard it.'

The second extract is from a pamphlet entitled

'A Defence of the Irish Clergy, and a View of their Past and Present Duty,' by J. C. Martin, Rector of Killeshadra. Dublin: William Curry and Co., 1844.

'The National system of education is also relatively to them (i.e., the Protestant Clergy)—though not in relation to the Priests' schools—changed internally. Thus, at first, Scriptural instruction was limited to certain hours of the day; now it may be given at any hour. At first, again, a right was secured to the Priest to teach in the schoolhouse; now both the Priest and every other religious teacher but the Clergyman and his deputies may be excluded; and at first, rules and regulations of the board were suggested, while now the only regulations of the patron may be his own.'

LECTURE BY H. W. WILBERFORCE, ESQ., (From the Birmingham Correspondent of Tablet.)

The above gentleman, a recent convert, and brother to the Protestant Bishop of Oxford, delivered a lecture in the Corn Exchange in this town on Monday week last, on "Reformations in the Catholic Church and Reformers," and on Monday last he resumed the subject in a second lecture, and on both occasions he was attended by a numerous and highly respectable audience, amongst whom were the Lord Bishop of the diocese, the Clergy of the town, and many Protestants. The following abstract from my notes of the last address will give an idea of the very happy manner in which the subject has been treated. He said on the previous evening he took occasion to ask this question—"How is it possible to have a reformation in the Catholic Church, which is infallible?" and the answer to that question was, that there could not be a reformation in doctrine, because if the Church set about such a reformation, she would have to say I have hitherto been teaching wrong upon certain points. I have been in error, and you have been believing erroneously. Now, that was utterly impossible. There never was, never could be, any reformation in doctrine so long as the Church existed. It was necessary, therefore, for them to have that question clearly settled and fixed in their minds, and they would be enabled much more easily to see what sort of reformation could be effected. The Church could effect a reformation in the lives of her children, make bad Catholics good, good Catholics still better, and lead the latter to still higher perfection. It was an unfortunate fact that there were too many Catholics who led lives unworthy of their high vocation, and the great privilege which the Almighty had conferred upon them in calling them to be members of His fold, and upon such persons reformation might be wrought, as had been done by the great labors and exertions of Saint Ignatius of Loyola, and other Saints who, from time to time, had been raised up in the Church for the reformation of morals, and the edification and confirmation of the Faithful. Whole nations had been operated upon by St. Ignatius in a most wonderful and extraordinary manner. If there had not been great reformations effected from time to time in the Church, she never could have maintained that life, and health, and vigor promised by her Divine Founder; but they were very different in their results from those produced by the Protestant Reformers. To every candid Protestant he would put the question in this way:—You say the Protestant Reformation was a good thing, a good work well done and quietly done. Very well, he would take that as their principle, and then they must acknowledge that it was a work which might be done by mere natural means, mere human power, human wisdom and political agency, without any special power and authority from above. It was not the working of such a power as that which effected the introduction of Christianity, because it must now be conceded on all hands that if all the wise men in the world had set themselves to work they could not have established Christianity by the mere force of their human wisdom. None but God could ever have effected that work. Not so with what is called the Protestant Reformation. When Luther commenced his work he found the whole Christian world of one mind upon the great works of Christianity. He told them himself that he had never before heard of his doctrines from the time of the Apostles, and, of necessity, how was he obliged to set to work. Why he had to get a party about him, make private friends, afford special advantages, and apply all the human agencies within his reach, unless, like the Apostles, he could work miracles in confirmation of his new doctrine. Now, that Luther did not evince any supernatural power was evident, and his means were all purely natural, political, and entirely divested of every thing bearing the stamp or appearance of Divine agency. It was true the proper application of natural powers, of political agency, was not improper; on the contrary, they were all good in their way, but still they could not be said to be of that Divine nature by which the establishment