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# THE NATIONAL CHURCH

AND THE

## NATIONAL SOCIETY

*FOR PROMOTING THE*

*EDUCATION OF THE POOR IN THE PRINCIPLES OF  
THE ESTABLISHED CHURCH*

### A SPEECH

DELIVERED AT BIRMINGHAM ON OCTOBER 31, 1876

BY THE

RIGHT HON. JOHN G. HUBBARD, M.P.

RIVINGTONS

*WATERLOO PLACE, LONDON*

*Oxford and Cambridge*

CORNISH BROTHERS: BIRMINGHAM

1877

[On the 31st October, 1876, a meeting was held in the Masonic Hall, Birmingham, in connection with the National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the principles of the Established Church, which was presided over by the Right Rev. the Bishop of Worcester. The Bishop, having introduced the subject, called upon the Right Hon. John G. Hubbard, who attended as a representative of the National Society, and who met on rising with a very cordial reception, to address the meeting.]

## SPEECH

MY LORD BISHOP AND GENTLEMEN,

As a representative of the National Society, I accepted with the greater readiness your invitation to meet you here to-day, because that invitation was dated from Birmingham; Birmingham, the capital of the midland counties, famous for her thriving industries, her teeming and prosperous people, and above all for the intelligence and spirit of her public men, evidenced in the interest they take in the education of the people, and especially in that which should precede all education, the improvement of the dwellings of the labouring classes! I can hardly express too warmly the sympathy and approval with which I regard the great effort now being made by Birmingham for the removal of dark and unhealthy dens, and the substitution of healthy and commodious dwellings for the labouring classes. I wish I could express the same sympathy with the line taken by Birmingham on the question of education.

The educational activity of Birmingham has, however, been directed not in harmony with, but

in direct antagonism to the principles of the Society which I represent; and I take this occasion of a public exposition of these principles, because, deeply impressed with the importance of the work of education, I seek to dispel any misapprehension which may separate, or place in hostility towards each other, men who alike profess to seek the welfare of their fellow countrymen. And let me say at once, that I enter this hall with an anxious desire that the proceedings of this day may induce, if not entire agreement, yet an improved understanding, free from the misapprehension and suspicion which often needlessly embitter inevitable differences.

*Preliminary Conditions of Discussion.*

To this end these preliminary conditions must be mutually agreed upon by those who join in the discussion of the question of education.

- (1) They must use a common language.
- (2) They must accept the principle of religious liberty; and
- (3) They must admit history and accredited facts as evidence.

*Historical Sketch.*

A brief sketch of the history of the Society I represent will assist the object of this meeting.

The National Society dates from the year 1811, following by a few years the British and Foreign

School Society, to which the palm of priority must be given. Those two societies, unassisted by any public aid, carried on for many years the great work of establishing elementary schools throughout the country. It was not until 1833 that the Government first thought it desirable to aid and stimulate those voluntary efforts, and not until 1839 did it institute an Education Department, entrusted with the function of assisting those societies with grants and ascertaining the results of their labours. The grants originally divided between these two societies were in 1846 further enlarged, both in amount and in the liberality with which they were distributed, so that from that period any school having a religious basis was qualified to obtain a portion of the Parliamentary grants. That system of assistance by the State was continued with increased energy, and, I would add, with increased success, up to the year 1858. In the following year Mr. Robert Lowe came into office as President of the Education Department. In the year previous to his taking office, the building grants alone of the Education Department had reached the large sum of 140,000*l.*, and I ask you to remember that the Government grants never, I believe, exceeded 1*l.* a head for the children who had to be provided for, and that the lowest scale on which they could estimate the voluntary contributions supplementing that Government subsidy was at

least five times as much. Therefore the grant of 140,000*l.* made by the State for building schools really involved an expenditure of more than three-quarters of a million of money. Mark the marvellous extension, from nothing to begin with, up to nearly a million sterling, and now mark what followed. By the year 1865 the grants made by the State for building schools had fallen step by step from 140,000*l.* down to 19,000*l.*, and why? Because Mr. Robert Lowe, as he had told them frankly, deemed it to be his duty not to distribute the subsidy voted by Parliament for the promotion and building of schools, but to save the nation's money and to do all he possibly could to discourage denominational schools. That principle was effectively carried out; and by dint not merely of the withholding of expected funds, but by withholding all sympathy and imposing the most onerous and offensive conditions—the voluntary provision of schools had been almost paralysed.

During the whole period I have passed under review, and down, in fact, to the year 1870, this feature is noticeable throughout in the part taken by the State in the promotion of education. No school could be aided either with building or annual grants, unless it were either <sup>1</sup> (a) a school in connection with some recognised religious denomination, or (b) a school in which, besides secular instruction, the Scriptures are read daily from the Authorised Version. I desire very particularly to

<sup>1</sup> Revised Code, 1869, Art. 7.

fix your attention upon this fact, that, up to the year 1870, the voice of the Church, the voice of the State, and the voice of Parliament, united in affirming that education was a religious work, and that religious instruction was an indispensable element in education.

Meanwhile a school of educationists had arisen with new views and principles, and its advocates, including those who had done their utmost to discourage denominational schools, turned round upon the supporters of the voluntary system and said, The Church has failed in her mission, the voluntary system has broken down, the education of the people must be placed in other hands; it must be "universal," "rate supported," and "compulsory."

Birmingham is distinguished as being, if not the birthplace, certainly the stronghold of this school; and the year 1869 witnessed the inauguration at Birmingham of the "National Education League;" and under the able presidency of Mr. George Dixon, the member for the borough, a series of meetings were held in the month of October, at which men of marked ability and eminence contributed their counsels towards the constitution of a permanent Society, and the settlement of the principles upon which a Bill should be prepared for the consideration of Parliament.

The object of the League, "to secure the education of every child in England and Wales," bravely emblazoned on the very front of their scheme, enlisted, and still retains, the sympathy

of every patriot; and I follow the course of its proceedings with the desire, not of discrediting the object of its members, but of showing where the means proposed for the attainment of its admirable object come into collision with the principle of religious liberty, and conflict with the assurance in the Chairman's first circular, that, "The new machinery to be provided need not injuriously interfere with those existing schools which are satisfactorily educating the people." The 4th and 5th clauses of the scheme promulgated by the League stipulate that all schools aided by local rates shall be *unsectarian and free*. These clauses attracted much controversy, but with this distinction of treatment: no difference of opinion existed as to what a *free* school meant; no agreement could be obtained as to the meaning of "unsectarian."

In his speech at the first meeting of members, on the 12th October, Mr. Dixon explained: "What we mean by this word 'unsectarian' is, that in all national rate schools, it shall be prohibited to teach catechisms, creeds, or theological tenets peculiar to particular sects." The very next speaker, Archdeacon Sandford, did not like the term "unsectarian;" but as he abhorred "*secular education*," he would prefer the term "undenominational education." The next speaker, Mr. George Dawson, scorned the ambiguity of the proposed words, and enunciated, as the qualities of the education he

required, "*compulsory*," "*national*," "*secular*." Professor Fawcett would have readily accepted either "undenominational, national, secular, or unsectarian;" but he decided in favour of the term "unsectarian," as affording an escape from the reproach of having an irreligious education. Professor Thorold Rogers apparently estimated *secular*, *unsectarian*, and *undenominational*, as equivalent terms; and when the Rev. H. E. Dowson protested against any compromise short of the *secular* education he came to support, Mr. Dixon replied: "We do not use the word 'secular,' but we exclude all theological parts of religion, and I am sure that what is left even Mr. Dowson himself would call 'secular.'"

I need not seek any clearer explanation of the term "*unsectarian*," in the sense of the League; but I take a strong exception to the arbitrary and inaccurate employment of the word. Webster's Dictionary (4to, 1832) defines "Sectarian" as "*one of a sect; one of a party in religion which has separated itself from the established Church, or which holds tenets different from those of the prevailing denomination in a kingdom or state;*" and thus the only unsectarian religious schools are those connected with the Church of England.

*Elementary Education Act, 1870.*

The Education Bills introduced in 1868 by Mr. Bruce in the Commons, and by the Conserva-

tive Government in the House of Lords, were discussed, but withdrawn, and I pass on to the year 1870. In 1870, the Queen's Speech announced a "Bill prepared for the enlargement in a comprehensive sense of the means of national education, and the Government, anticipating the parliamentary action of the League, brought in their Elementary Education Bill, with the object (Mr. Forster said) "to complete the present voluntary system;" but where that could not reach, "to fill up the gaps" with rate-created schools. But that Bill was in its original form a very different measure from the one which ultimately passed into a law, disfigured with provisions felt by Churchmen to be injurious and unfair, and seriously detrimental to the maintenance of voluntary schools. The changes introduced were mainly due to the action of the Birmingham League, and were such as the Government ought not to have permitted, even for the sake of passing the Bill.

The energies of the Birmingham League have been directed, however, not merely to constructive but to destructive ends; and, powerfully aided by the Liberation Society, they have organised, with an unsparing use of both material and intellectual agencies, an attack upon the Church and Church education, which demands through the articles of impeachment nothing short of their entire destruction.

*Hostile Allegations.*

The allegations which I propose to refute are these :

1. The "National Society" for the education of the poor is disentitled to its name, since it teaches exclusively the religion of the Church of England.

2. The Church of England, by ceasing to comprehend the whole nation, has ceased to be a "National Church."

3. The public elementary schools which, being in union with the National Society, teach a religion professed by less than half the population, cannot receive grants from the State without injustice to the non-conforming majority.

4. For the satisfaction of justice and religious equality it is requisite that State grants be made only to "undenominational" and "unsectarian" schools; and that the Church of England be dis-established and disendowed, and its property and revenues originally given by the State be applied to "national" "secular" purposes.

I proceed, my Lord, to deal with this impeachment.

*Reply to Allegations.*

1. As regards the first allegation, I admit the premises, but I deny the conclusion. The "National Society" never has taught and never can teach

any other religion than that of the Church of England, of which she is the handmaid; but that fidelity, far from disproving, confirms the appropriateness of its title.

*What constitutes a National Church.*

2. The undoubted fact, that the Church of England has ceased to comprehend the entire nation, in nowise justifies the inference that she has ceased to be a "National Church." What men's inmost thoughts may be God only knoweth; the religious allegiance of the individuals constituting a nation can be known therefore only through their visible conformity or dissent; but in countries admitting no divergence from the State religion, dissentients, as a rule, must be unknown.

Under the rule of its earlier monarchs England had but one religion. The religion of the Sovereign was the religion of the people; but as our institutions became more free the profession of religious differences became practicable, and individuals obtained the power of giving form and continuity to the sect created by the combination of like-minded dissentients from the State religion. As a pre-requisite to the creation of new sects, "religious liberty," as a principle of government, became essential; and in this country, which thoroughly accepts that principle, no hindrance now exists to the formation of sects, to their organisation, or their public worship; nor does a

sectarian incur any disadvantages in his civil rights as a sequel to his separation from the State religion.

That differences of opinion, inseparable from the innate variety of the human mind, should find free expression on religious as on all other subjects, is an evidence of that liberty which we so highly prize, and we must thankfully allow the blessings of that liberty to outweigh the ideal perfection of a national church visibly comprising an entire nation.

Where shall we find such an ideal realised? Hardly in any civilized country at the present day, but readily enough in the pages of history. Those who argue that the Church of England has ceased to be *national* because she is not co-extensive with the nation, are unconsciously arguing that no church can be national which is not armed with despotic power exercised in the repression of all free opinion; and they must revert for the living picture of their vaunted ideal to England at the time of the Tudors, to France on the morrow of the massacre of St. Bartholomew, to Spain when its sceptre was practically wielded by the grand Inquisitor, or to Italy before the Pope forfeited his temporal dominion.

*Statistics of Religious Denominations.*

3. The proposition that the Church of England comprises less than half the population, is an arbitrary inference from the Report upon the "Pro-

vision for Religious Worship," made in 1851 by direction of the Registrar-General, but without State sanction, and carrying, therefore, no authority in its results. The numbers stated to have attended Dissenting chapels in certain places were such as to excite doubts of the accuracy of the returns; and it was surmised that the friendly exchange of pulpits between Nonconformist ministers may, on this Census Sunday, have been supplemented by the exchange of their congregations, who had thus the opportunity of being counted twice or thrice. Whether to any, or to what extent, inaccuracies may be attributable to such a cause, I do not now inquire. I take the Returns as they are given in Mr. Horace Mann's laborious Report, and what is their result? They are these. Out of a population of eighteen millions the estimated attendants at public service were :

In Church of England buildings .. .. .	3,773,474
In all others .. .. .	3,486,558
Aggregate estimated attendance ..	<u>7,260,332</u>

From these premises, by the operation of a rule of three, it has been computed that—

The Churchmen amounted to .. .. .	9,600,000
And all dissentients to .. .. .	8,640,000

being in the proportion of fifty-two Churchmen to forty-eight Dissenters in every one hundred of the population. But would this computation be reasonable? Certainly not. When every member of the

nation was also nominally at least a member of the Church, the attendants on public worship *at any one day* could have been but a portion, probably a minority of the population, yet the multitude who, from necessity or remissness, were absent on that day did not therefore renounce communion with the Church, or cease to claim her as their spiritual mother. The position of sectaries has been materially different. Whether moved by devotional or less estimable motives, sectaries were in their secession terribly in earnest: every member of the community which gathered round a new religious centre was animated by a zeal which stimulated action, and few would be wanting at their appointed religious meetings. The newer the sect the larger would probably be the proportion of its adherents attending public worship; and it is possible (for instance) that, with a fractional exception, the whole body of the Catholic Apostolic Church, organised by Irving some twenty years earlier, may have attended public worship on Census Sunday 1851. It would be obviously absurd to estimate the followers of Irving at the proportion of eighteen millions, which the number of their own worshippers bore to worshippers of all denominations. Or, to take a still newer sect, Mr. Voysey's followers may have been to a man collected on a given Sunday in his improvised temple of Langham Hall.

The religious profession of the people can only

be learnt from themselves in answer to an official inquiry addressed to them. Such a religious census was proposed by the Government in 1860; it was again proposed in 1870; but it was in both instances negatived by the efforts of the Dissenters. Official returns exist, however, which assist in estimating the proportion of the population disclaiming the character of Churchmen. The returns I allude to are the following :

Children attending Church schools, and schools other than Church schools, in 1870.

Burials in consecrated and unconsecrated portions of public cemeteries.

Marriages respectively solemnised in churches and in the registrar's office.

The religious profession of the army and navy.

The religious profession of inmates of union workhouses.

Taking the latest information I possess, I find the results of these returns to be as follows :

Out of every 100—

	Churchmen.	Dissenters.
The Schools <sup>1</sup> returns show .. .. .	72	28
Cemetery <sup>2</sup> ,, .. .. .	70	30
Marriages <sup>3</sup> ,, .. .. .	75	25
Army <sup>4</sup> ,, .. .. .	63	37
(of which 37, no less than 24 are Roman Catholics)		
Navy <sup>5</sup> returns show .. .. .	75	25
Workhouses <sup>6</sup> ,, .. .. .	79	21

These returns apply to mere fractions of the population, but they are official, and represent, it

<sup>1</sup> Report of Education Department, 1871, c. 406.

<sup>2</sup> Burials Session, 1860, Parliamentary Paper, 560.

<sup>3</sup> Registrar General's Report (thirty-sixth) for 1873.

<sup>4</sup> Army Parliamentary Paper, No. 170, Session 1871.

<sup>5</sup> Navy Parliamentary Paper, No. 132, Session 1876.

<sup>6</sup> Union Workhouses Parliamentary Paper, No. 157, Session 1876.

may be assumed, pretty nearly what would be the result of a real religious census, viz. three-fourths Churchmen to one-fourth dissentients of all classes in England and Wales.

When, last session, correcting Mr. Bright's assertion that the Church was the church of a minority, I cited the Workhouse Census just presented, he rose again to explain that he claimed a majority of worshippers, and added: "I do not deny that the majority in gaols and workhouses are Churchmen, and I make the right hon. gentleman a present of the admission." My Lord, the admission made in scorn, I accept with gladness. The Church of England is the church of the people; and as the ministers of Him who came not to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance, her clergy own, as their special distinction, the office of preaching the gospel to the poor, and of striving to reclaim the fallen. The humble and industrious classes, from whose ranks our workhouses are tenanted, are they not a portion, and a most important portion, of the nation? and have they not a right to claim allegiance with *His* Church, who warned us that the poor should never cease out of the land. A religious census is desirable for this end, that it would conclusively dispel the fiction that the Church is in a minority, an assumption which has unfairly and injuriously influenced the legislation of the last Parliament, especially as regards the question of education.

A remarkable evidence of this influence was furnished by a letter printed in the *Times* on the 15th May of last year, in which Mr. Roby, the former energetic secretary of the Endowed Schools Commission, censuring the Church character of a Grammar Schools Scheme, prepared by the Charity Commissioners, writes: "I protest against ticketing national institutions with the symbols of what is now the faith of only half the nation."

When a fiction by force of repetition assumes the authority of fact, and is cited to justify a revolution in our institutions, it is surely time that its origin be challenged, and its pretensions put to the proof.

*An Established Church necessary to the  
Constitution.*

Upon the question of Disestablishment, the proportion of dissentients in the State has no necessary bearing. The existence of a National Church does not depend upon her *being* or *not being* in a minority, but upon the answer of the nation to this question: Shall this country continue to be a monarchy governed by a Christian sovereign, in whose person the nation makes its religious profession?

There should be no uncertainty as to the constitutional importance of this question. The "Act for settling the succession to the Crown"<sup>1</sup> ex-

<sup>1</sup> 1 William and Mary, c. 2.

cludes from the throne anyone in communion with Rome; but the "Act for the Limitation of the Crown"<sup>1</sup> enacts that for "securing our religious laws and liberties, whosoever shall come to the possession of this Crown shall join in communion with the Church of England as by law established."

Unless the country prefer a republic, the question I have suggested will be answered in the affirmative; and then comes the further question, With what denomination shall the Sovereign be in communion? Put it to the vote, and you will not find that any sect of the one hundred and twenty-one named in the Registrar's Report is selected by the nation in preference to the Church of England. With the religion of the Church of England distinguished as the National Church, no other religion can be placed upon an equality. The professor of every other religion may have, and has, the most entire religious liberty and personal equality before the law, but "religious equality," in the sense in which it is demanded, is an impossibility while England is a monarchy.

*Disestablishment and Disendowment.*

The third allegation, which I have just reviewed, is but the prelude to the fourth; for if the continuance of grants to the schools of the Established Church be an injustice, their discon-

<sup>1</sup> 12 and 13 William III., c. 2.

tinuance and its disestablishment becomes a duty ; but the more the question is scrutinised, the less serious becomes the apprehension of such an event.

The Church of England is the Church of the people, and they will never allow themselves to be robbed of the blessings secured to them by the Christian liberality of former generations. The charge against the Church, that she is a stipendiary of the State, and that those who decline her ministrations are taxed for her support, is absolutely false. Not one farthing of the national revenue is applied to the maintenance of the bishops and clergy ; neither were the estates from which the incomes of the bishops and clergy are derived given by the nation through the State.

After the nation had embraced Christianity at the preaching of St. Augustine, the kings, the nobles, and owners of the soil gave portions of their lands, or of the produce of their lands, for the support of the bishops and clergy ; and they subsequently provided them with houses for their residence, and with churches wherein to minister God's Word and sacraments. The original endowments received the sanction and regulation of the State, but they were not given by the State. Those endowments were seriously impaired at the Reformation, and since the rapid growth of the population in the present century they have been found wholly inadequate to the spiritual necessities of the people.

The Church indeed has not been wholly indifferent to the duty of supplementing the Christian liberality of earlier times; and it has been computed, from recent diocesan returns, that during the last thirty-five years, thirty-five millions sterling have been expended by the voluntary zeal of Churchmen upon the material fabrics of cathedrals, churches, schools, and parsonages.

I say, then, that Church property, whether in its origin or in its extension, has been derived from the bounty of individuals and not of the State. For the fitful gifts of the State, under special emergencies, have been trifling in amount, and have not been confined to the Established Church. Not the less, however, do I call Church property *national property*. It has been committed to the guardianship of the State for the fruition of the nation, or of such members of the nation as are minded to avail themselves of the boon under the conditions essential to its utility.

Parliament has the *power* to deal as it wills with Church property (and with *all* property); but only under a gross delusion could it sanction a sacrilegious misappropriation of property once devoted to God's service, and, even with recent accessions, far from being adequate to supply the spiritual necessities of the people.

Disendowment in the scheme of the Liberation Society means the confiscation of cathedrals, churches, parsonages, glebes, and tithes, or other

sources of revenue (the whole ecclesiastical property in fact), and the application of its realised value to purposes of national utility, or to the discharge of national burthens or liabilities.

*How Disendowment would Work.*

Assuming such a scheme to be realised, what would be its results? Primarily, confusion, waste, and destruction of property; ultimately, a general depression of the religious character of the nation, and a trivial relief in its taxation. But who would feel this relief? not the labouring class, whose cooperation is invoked by the Liberation Society, and who are almost wholly free from direct taxation: they would have lost their Church and their pastors, and would have gained neither higher wages nor cheaper necessary food. The richer classes might, and would, reconstitute the ecclesiastical ministrations of which they felt the need; but who would replace the church and the parsonage, with their living agencies, in the thousands of parishes of which the humble inhabitants are wholly dependent upon existing endowments for the influence, instructions, and ministrations which guide their lives here and prepare them for a life to come?

*Charges against the Clergy.*

The defence of voluntary schools has been described as a struggle for clerical domination, and it has been a constant form of attack upon Church

schools to charge the clergy, who have been their chief promoters, with intolerance and bigotry. On the one hand, they are denounced for their love of proselytising, and on the other, for their habit of persecuting. The Rector of Whitelands invites to his harvest feast all his young parishioners, including not only the children of the National school but those of the Congregational school, who, after being regaled with buns and tea, assist at the harvest service in the parish church, and he is forthwith branded as a proselytiser in the local paper. Warned by the experience of his neighbour, the Vicar of Blackmoor, when he gives his harvest festival to the village labourers and their families, omits those children which were habitual attendants at the Wesleyan schools, and he is forthwith denounced as a persecutor. The clergy who give buns to all are proselytisers, and those who do not give buns to all are persecutors.

I do not think the clergy will be careful to disclaim the charge of proselytism: if to win from ignorance and vice to knowledge and virtue, and to reclaim from the service of Satan to the service of Christ be proselytism, they must accept the duty, whatever obloquy it may entail. And they teach, be it observed, not on their own authority, but on that of the Church, whose servants they are. So, again, with regard to the charge that the clergy are contemptuous towards ministers of other denominations. I have seen instances of this defect

treasured up in Dissenting periodicals, and I lament them, but I believe them to be exceedingly rare ; while I am constrained to declare that I seldom read a report of a Nonconformist meeting of any kind in which abuse of the Church and clergy is not conspicuous. I take up a recent number of the *Times*, and I read that at the Congregational Union meeting at Bradford (on the 11th October) a Wesleyan minister, illustrating the unfriendliness with which he charged the Church towards dissent, dilates upon “ the pettifogging disputes and quarrels that disturb the quiet that should reign in a graveyard ; the prostitution of Protestant places of worship to the services of the priest, the mass, and the confessional ; and the supercilious and haughty contempt of the hierarchy to all ministers who were not of their tabernacle and not of their priesthood ; the lust of influence, power, and wealth exhibited in the administration of the last Education Act, and in the retrograde step of the last Session : ” and this language was cheered.

The charge of contemptuousness is very difficult to parry ; it reaches you whether you are outspoken or reticent, for the attitude of Nonconformity in making it resembles that of a pretty woman, who challenges notice by her eccentricities ; if you notice them disparagingly she is resentful, but if you do not notice them she is mortally offended. Criticism which can be answered is provoking, but neglect which is unanswerable is unpardonable.

*Gravity of the Educational Work.*

My Lord, the Church has a great work upon her hands. It is one needing all her energies; it is one to which the whole religious energies of the country are not more than adequate, if they are directed to the purpose of combating ignorance and vice and raising up in the rising generation the fear of God and the love of man, which must be the controlling influence in all true education. Cannot Englishmen, to whatever denomination they belong, agree to abstain from internecine strife, and strive to fulfil God's will, especially in the work of education. Birmingham has taken a decided line, but it is one which is a deviation from our national traditions: as an experiment it cannot be said to be a success, and yet the Birmingham League seek to impose the same line upon the country at large, in spite of the general repugnance.

The Birmingham system seeks to dis sever religious teaching absolutely from the office of the school teacher in the schoolhouse. We hold that the interests of the child, of the parent, and of society demand that religion shall be the basis of all education; that the schoolhouse is the proper place and the school teacher the proper medium. As contributors to the rates and taxes, we are aggrieved by the application of either to mere secular instruction, which we are convinced cannot alone make the child into a virtuous man,

or a useful member of society; we regard the elimination of religious teaching from the Birmingham board schools as a local grievance, and we should regard the forcible extension of the same system as an intolerable oppression and denial of religious liberty.

*Difficulties of Rate-supported Education.*

The difficulty of applying school-rates so as to give satisfaction to all the ratepayers is insuperable, but it is one for which those are responsible who provided rates for a purpose on which every diversity of opinion exists. One thing, however, is certain: the difficulty is not to be solved by banishing religion from public elementary schools. Upon that point the voice of England is practically unanimous. Sir James Kaye Shuttleworth, the former able secretary to the Education Department, presiding at the inauguration of a new Wesleyan school, remarked to the following effect: "I am delighted to assist at this ceremonial. You do well to provide a school for the training of the children connected with your religious denomination. *The school is the natural adjunct to the chapel.*" That dictum briefly describes the true course of education in the training of the child religiously, physically, and intellectually, to become a healthy, honourable, and intelligent man, the work begun by the teacher in the school is to be continued by the minister in the church and

chapel. Where that natural and beneficent union has been wanting, it has become necessary to establish the more artificial system of board schools. Such as they are, we desire that they be conducted efficiently and without needless collision with pre-existing schools.

And let me press this consideration. Children of higher social standing may be usefully collected for combined instruction in purely secular knowledge, because it may be assumed that their parents supply in their own homes the essential religious teaching; but the children for whom public elementary schools are provided have in a fearfully large proportion homes deleterious alike to their morals and their health, and parents who cannot teach the lessons of virtue and honesty they never learnt. Whatever religious knowledge they may acquire must be learnt at school or not at all.

The State stands now in this position with reference to all public elementary schools; requiring all children to be instructed in secular knowledge, it engages to pay for every child a certain sum defined and qualified by given conditions and results; and it is marvellous that in this process a Nonconformist grievance should be discovered. The State pays for the secular knowledge to a school which imparts, in addition to secular knowledge, the knowledge of God and of His laws. The objection that such State payment does virtually tend to maintain a denomi-

national school is perfectly true, but it is an objection which, if indulged, would effect the odious and anti-social result of exclusive dealing, and contract both public and private transactions to the area of every separate denomination.

*Some Compulsory School Provision Inevitable.*

I do not question the necessity which has arisen for the legislative provision of public elementary schools; but that provision might have been made with less injury to the religious basis of education, and to the voluntary schools generally, than is occasioned by the Act of 1870, mitigated though its mischief be by the legislation of 1876. Neither do I tax board schools with being necessarily irreligious; some, but I believe very few, exclude all religious teaching from the precincts of the school and from the office of the teacher. Such, indeed, is not the case with the Birmingham board schools.

The Birmingham School Board, in their latest rules, exclude from the schools religious teaching given by the school teachers, but they offer the use of the schools upon certain terms and out of school hours to religious instructors of all denominations. This expedient cannot meet with general acceptance; it degrades the office of the teacher, who is debarred from the exercise of the most important of his functions, and it implies an amount

of unoccupied ministerial agency which cannot be found. In contrast with the liberty left to Scotland, I lament the exclusion from English board schools of such distinctive religious formularies as the School Board, in its discretion, might wish to use; but I admit that the restraint applies solely to the formulary as the medium of instruction, and in no degree to the instruction given.

*Inaccurate Language Controversially used.*

Nothing has confused and perplexed this question so effectually as the inaccurate language which has been employed in the discussion, especially in the use of the words "undenominational" and "unsectarian."

When it was proposed to provide in the Elementary Education Act, 1870, "that the religious instruction in board schools should be undenominational and unsectarian," Mr. Gladstone rejected the provision, because it was expressed in terms which, as used, "were incapable of a legal interpretation;" but the words had this effect also, that they could not co-exist. The only religious instruction which can be "unsectarian" is that which is in agreement with the Established Church, and it cannot therefore be "undenominational." It may be true that "unsectarian" has been employed in this controversy, not in its specific and etymological sense, but in its figurative sense,

as implying that which is "liberal," "expansive," and "charitable;" but this definition again (claimed not untruly for the teaching of the Church of England) illustrates and strengthens the specific interpretation.

The difficulty is immense of leading a School Board, comprising men of conflicting religious views, to agree upon a scheme of religious instruction. The best solution is, I think, to act upon Mr. Gladstone's view of the 14th clause, expressed in the following words (on 30th June, 1870):

"It is our wish that the exposition of the Bible in schools should be confined to the simple and devout method of handling which is adapted to the understanding and character of children; but we do not admit that that simple and devout character of teaching can be secured by an attempt to exclude all reference to tenets and doctrines. That is an exclusion which cannot be effected, and if it could, it ought not to be; it is an invasion of the freedom of religious teaching, such as is not to be tolerated in this country."

If school boards would remember that the subjects of this much contested instruction are children from three to thirteen years of age, they would be less anxious to exclude denominationalism, and more anxious to secure teachers of true religious character whom they could trust. For in the words again of Mr. Gladstone: "If

we are to have teachers who are really to teach religion, that religion must spring out of their own hearts and consciences, and it will not submit to be confined by artificial and unreal definitions."

And now, my Lord, I venture to present to the approval of this meeting, in contradistinction to the allegations I have endeavoured to refute, the following propositions :

1. Education is a religious work. A secular system of instruction fails adequately to prepare a child for his duties in the family and towards society, offends the religious convictions of the nation, and constitutes a grievance for those who, disapproving it, are rated for its support.

2. The most perfect system of education is that which combines secular with religious instruction, given in the school by the school teacher under an harmonious management ; and this, the traditional system of the voluntarily founded schools of this country, is entitled (according to the results achieved) to the State aid voted in consideration of the secular instruction required by the law.

3. The Church of England is properly designated the "National Church," not because of the numerical preponderance of her adherents over the dissidents from her ministrations, but because, through her, the nation has ever made its profession of Christianity, and because a fundamental law of the Constitution requires that the sovereign

shall belong to her communion for the purpose of “securing the religion, the laws, and the liberties of the nation.”

4. The “National Society for the education of the poor” has justified its name by the fidelity to the National Church with which it has striven to promote Christian education amongst the labouring classes.







