

**THOUGHTS ON THE POINTS  
AT ISSUE BETWEEN THE  
ESTABLISHED CHURCH OF  
EDUCATION IN IRELAND**

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Thoughts on the Points at Issue Between the Established Church of education in Ireland by  
Henry Woodward

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**HENRY WOODWARD**

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THOUGHTS  
ON  
THE POINTS AT ISSUE  
BETWEEN THE  
ESTABLISHED CHURCH  
AND THE  
NATIONAL BOARD OF EDUCATION  
IN IRELAND.

BY THE  
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1844.

## PREFACE.

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THE following sheets have lain by me for some days; ready for the press, but not committed to the printer's hand. The truth is, I had great difficulty in making up my mind respecting their publication. I felt indescribable pain at the idea, that many whom I respect and love, and whose friendship I value as one of the most cheering circumstances of life, may be alienated by my thus putting forward sentiments and principles so contrary to what I know to be their long-cherished habits of thinking, feeling, and acting. Nay, I anticipate, with additional concern, that not a few who, from reasons which are in these pages assigned, may have taken it for granted that my views were more in accordance with their own, will meet some of the following avowals of opinion, not only with disapproval, but with surprise. These motives made me hesitate for the present; and probably would have ultimately determined me not to publish, had I not yesterday cast my eye on the following report of the Parliamentary proceedings in the "Dublin Evening Mail:"—

"Mr. Shaw presented a petition from the Bishop and Clergy of the dioceses of Cashel and Waterford, in Ireland, declaring their sincere regret that they could not conscientiously support the present system of National Education in that country—disclaiming all political motives—pointing to the authoritative exclusion of the sacred Scriptures during the hours of general instruction as their great

objection, and praying that the system might be so far altered, as that, while all other religious books should be excluded during school hours, the Scriptures alone might be used at the discretion of the patrons and managers."

Of this petition I had never heard. But it is not my object, as far as I am concerned, to attribute any blame to the conductors. If the excellent Prelate, who of course must have taken the lead, had concluded that, as I have the happiness of agreeing with him on so many points, I concurred with him also in the prayer of this petition; and had he actually put down my name, I should not have been offended nor surprised, but rather have been grateful to his lordship for such a proof of free and friendly confidence. But let this matter stand as it may, —let it be that by an error of the "Evening Mail," "the diocese of *Cashel*" has been mentioned, or that, by a momentary inadvertence on the part of Mr. Shaw, these words were introduced; still the *appearance* of them in the public papers has turned the balance, so as to decide me on the publication of the following pages. If I cannot reasonably suppose that they will have much influence upon others, it will be a satisfaction to my own mind not to be misunderstood on points so frequently discussed; and on which it is so painful either to give an apparent consent by silence, or to engage in endless disputation.

H. W.

*Fethard Glebe,*  
*May 17, 1844.*

## THOUGHTS,

*§c. §c.*

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No man who feels an interest in the concerns of this church and nation can view, without anxiety and alarm, the hostile position in which the great question of popular education has mutually placed a large and influential body of the clergy and the Government of the country. The National Board has received the sanction of two successive administrations. And these may be fairly taken as speaking the general sense of the body politic. The Queen and the two Houses of Parliament have, by the most solemn acts, announced their judgment of the matter. Both Whigs and Tories have, upon this point, been in full agreement. The people have, by their representatives, declared their minds. So that out of the materials of which any future parliament can be formed, no administration could be constructed which would not sanction and confirm the present form of national education. So fully bent is the Government which now sways the



destinies of the country upon carrying out this favourite project, that the Prime Minister is reported to have declared his intention of patronising and promoting those ecclesiastics only who will cooperate with him in the design. This report, however, seems to rest on but slender grounds; and it is well that it does so. For surely it were much to be deplored, that an administration who have hitherto dispensed their Church patronage with such clean hands, should, by a rash determination, tie up those hands from the further prosecution of so good a work. For, among the present opposers of the National Board are to be found some of the brightest ornaments of the Irish Church,—men with whom the few favourers of that system (with some brilliant exceptions, I grant) would but ill bear a comparison. And assuredly, if there are any who would, by the threats of such discountenance, be induced to leave the ranks of opposition, and to support a scheme which they did not conscientiously approve, their promotion would be an awful affliction upon the Church. Indeed, I fear this *imagined* threat (for I trust and believe it is no other) may operate altogether in an opposite way. It may prevent some from giving that free and unbiassed consideration to the subject which the time demands. In the first place, their judgment may be warped by a certain jealousy of themselves; for it is the rule of many conscientious men (and would it not be the safest rule for all?) in doubtful and delicate cases, to lean invariably to-

wards the side which makes against their private interests or selfish wishes. And besides, they may dread the suspicions which any apparent change of view, at such a moment, might naturally create, that they were acting on mean and temporising motives. It is on this account that I have been induced to submit a few brief thoughts, on the subject of national education, to the public eye. Better qualified, in other respects, as many are to call attention to this important matter, and clear as they might be of all *just* suspicion, yet, in one respect, I feel to stand on vantage-ground. The charge of yielding to the supposed threat of Government, of currying favour or seeking patronage, cannot, in the view of prejudice itself, attach to me. In the year 1834, I published a pamphlet on the subject of tithe, in the shape of a letter to the Right Honourable E. G. (now Lord) Stanley, in which the following passage occurs:—

“For my own part, in making these observations, I have no purpose to serve but the discharge of my own conscience. I seek the favour of no party. I expect no larger benefice than the one I hold; nor have I the slightest wish for advancement in the Church.”

Ten years have made no alteration in my feelings or my wishes upon this point. And certainly, at my time of life, ten years additional have not renovated me with new strength to bear the burden of any higher responsibility in the ministry; a

responsibility which I am as unwilling, as I am unfit and unqualified, to undertake. I am led thus to obtrude *myself* upon the notice of the reader, because I do think it would be an awkward thing for a clergyman for the first time to advocate, or even to make any terms for the National Schools, unless he could protect himself from even feigned suspicions, by such a declaration. But even if, after this, my motives could appear equivocal, I think all doubt must be removed, by my proclaiming, that in itself, considered positively, and not comparatively, I do not approve the plan referred to. In a word, I do not like joint education in any form. The best instruction of that kind would be purely secular, without any attempt at religious teaching. It would be reading, writing, arithmetic, &c. taught just as shoe-making or gardening might be, without any reference to spiritual concerns. Even to this, however, there are, I think, great objections. And such a system is sure to act disadvantageously upon whatever sect is in the minority, particularly if the disproportion be very great. In this part of Ireland, it is much against the Protestant religion. In every mixed society the stronger has, *cæteris paribus*, a steady tendency to win upon the weaker party. The law of opinion, the instinct to go with the stream and follow the multitude, the power of attraction by which lesser are invariably drawn to greater bodies—all this is upon the side of *numbers*. These tendencies are and must be felt in schools