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O.P

THE
POINT OF HOPE
IN
IRELAND'S PRESENT CRISIS.

BY THE
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"The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple." PSALM cxix. 130.

LONDON.
JAMES NISBET AND CO., 21, BERNERS STREET.
WONSTON: JAMES SHAYLER.
M DCCC LIX.

would not be too much to say that by means of their constant reports, and my conversation in visiting them, I acquired more real insight into the condition of the Romanists in Ireland, than is usually obtained by those protestants who reside entirely in the country. The position thus attained, enables me to feel that I can afford to allow the smile which sometimes rises on the lips of the uninitiated in speaking of my "flying visits" to Ireland.

It was a solemn occasion when these eight messengers separated in Dublin, to enter upon their several districts. Earnest prayer was made in dismissing them to their work; and earnest prayer has continued to ascend from the hearts of a little band of the Lord's remembrancers, who being confidentially informed of the effort that was to be made, undertook to plead before the Throne of Grace from day to day for the Lord's blessing: and many are the lesser tokens that earnest prayer has been graciously heard, besides this greater token that the grand movement which the Lord was pleased to begin by little means, has risen up to that maturity which calls for the larger instrumentality that the Lord will now condescend to use, the requirement of which both removes the necessity for keeping these facts untold, and makes it right to tell them to the christian public, in order that means may be produced adequate to the occasion, now become so pressing, so important, and so extended in its requirement.

As the best means of communicating a proper notion of the result produced by this private effort, I enclose you with the documents above referred to, a sufficient number of extracts from the reports of the messengers.

Similar passages might be multiplied very largely from the heap of reports lying before me, but these may be taken as specimens selected with reference to various parts of the country.

Your faithful friend,

A. D.

The following is a copy of the paper with which every one of the Messengers was furnished upon going forth.

"INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE MESSENGERS."

"May the Holy Spirit of God direct the mind in suggesting these instructions, and enable those who act upon them to do all things to the glory of the name of Jesus Christ.

"1. The object in view is to strive by all holy means to dispel the darkness and ignorance from the minds of Irish Romanists: This is to be done by lifting up Christ and Him crucified alone, and by urging the Romanists to try every part of the system under which they are bound, by the Scriptures, and by the Scriptures alone; and for this purpose, the practical exhortation must tend to make them read, or hear read, the book of God, as a duty and a right.

"This may be summed up thus:

"The one object. The spiritual emancipation of Irish Romanists.

"The essential means. The proclaiming of Christ's salvation. The leading them to search the Scriptures.

"2. Whatever course in detail may be pointed out by providential circumstances, these principles must never be departed from:—the mind of the Messenger must be directed to them, singly, simply, and at all times.

3. Controversial discussions may frequently be necessary; but the Messenger must never permit himself to be drawn into discussion which he cannot direct to these essential points. He must therefore avoid all controversy on secondary matters, not necessarily involving these primary points—Church government, forms of worship, allowable differences, must be kept out of sight; and when they are introduced, must either be directed into the main channels, or the Messenger must give up the discussion.

"4. In the necessary and bold exposure of the abominations of Romanism, a tender and charitable care must be

observed with respect to all expressions that may apply with personality to Romanists. Our blessed Lord's distinction between the sinner and the sin must always be the model. Hopeful compassion should mark all expressions that relate to the persons—uncompromising faithfulness should characterize the denouncing of the thing.

"5. It is intended, if possible, that the Messengers should be sent forth two by two. Whenever this plan is acted upon, one will be considered as the Messenger, and the other as his assistant; while they will consult together, in any case of doubt as to a course of action, the assistant must be guided by the decision of the Messenger. A general district will be allotted to each pair, within which they will act according to circumstances.

"6. Each Messenger must keep a journal in writing, as much enlarged as his time may permit. These reports may be written on separate sheets of paper, in any way which may be most convenient; the pages however must be always numbered. These pages, few or many, are to be transmitted by post, as frequently as may be consistent with safety.

"7. No Messenger, or Assistant-Messenger, must, upon any account whatever, make any statement to any person which may involve the discovery of the source of the movement, or of the names of any of the persons promoting it. As the Messengers are specially charged to avoid all breaches of the law, and all such conduct as would justify any person to require the name of their employers, no occasion can occur in which a Messenger can have any difficulty in following the course thus required.

"8. Whenever the question is asked of the Messengers, Whence they come? Why they come? or Who sent them? &c. &c., the answer must substantially be this—'God sends us; His providence has opened the way; anybody and everybody is bound to stretch out a hand to save a perishing soul; we simply tell you to read the Bible—to look to Christ.

There needs no authority for doing this; everybody who has read the Bible ought to do the same towards anybody who has not. If the Bible justify us, it does not signify who we happen to be, or who happen to be our helpers.

"9. In all difficulties which may occur, the frequent transmission of the reports will afford opportunity for immediate counsel, advice, and assistance, wherever assistance can be rendered; and for this purpose, the Messenger must always arrange and communicate some safe mode by which he may receive the letters addressed to him.

"10. It is of the utmost moment to maintain the notion of mystery which will attach to the work thus carried on; this notion is not only peculiarly suited to the Irish character, but it will tend to excite an increased attention to the main subjects placed before the people.

"11. The circumstances of Ireland are at this moment peculiarly critical, and especially calculated to give effect to the work entrusted to the messengers. But much wisdom and care will be required in combining the two things. The political state, the providential circumstances, and the religious condition of the people, all seem to conspire to produce a most important crisis; in the course of which, great occasion must necessarily occur for the true people of God to be drawn out of the darkness which at present hides them. Men's mind's are in great agitation and excitement, so that, in all the three departments mentioned, there is a quickening of attention, placing the mind in the attitude of expectation; and a general readiness to receive something, will greatly tend to facilitate the reception of the one thing needful. While the young and old Ireland dissensions are rousing the energies of the political class of people,—the providential infliction of severe distress, and prospect of famine by the destruction of the potatoes, interest all classes. It will be the wisdom of the messengers to direct this interest into the channel that will prepare the heart for receiving Christ, by pointing out the

alarming affliction as the just judgment of an offended God, for the continued offences of an idolatrous and superstitious people, who refuse the light of God's truth when it is offered them. A very considerable number of Irish Romanists have suffered greatly from the grievous tyranny of the priests, and are awakened to a sense of shame at the shocking immorality of some of them. The outraged feelings of such as these have prepared the way for an application of the present judgment upon Ireland, which, by God's blessing, may tend to advance the object of the messengers, in separating them from the Romish system. The fitting opportunities for all this must be carefully improved.

" 12. The messengers must endeavour to be exceedingly quiet in their first efforts; carefully avoiding all unnecessary display, while they with equal care avoid the slightest appearance of want of christian boldness in maintaining their principles;—quietness, without fear—courage, without a boast—watchfulness in employing private opportunities—boldness when publicity becomes necessary,—these should characterize the conduct of the messengers.

" 13. The class of society to which the Messengers are especially sent is the middle class, including both the upper and lower divisions of that class,—shopkeepers, and farmers, as well as solicitors, clerks, and others of that grade. It is not intended that they should direct their labours to the poor; and they are especially charged in no way to interfere with the work of the Irish Society, nor to compromise that excellent Society by allowing the notion of any connexion with it to be suggested to the peoples' mind. They are not to do the work of that Society; but rather to prepare the materials of work for its agents, which, by God's help, may be one blessing incidentally resulting from the present effort.

" 14. As some notion of the mode of proceeding generally, it may be suggested that the messengers should together call

first upon some of the most respectable Roman Catholics of a place, and in conversation should, with care, let their object be seen. Then they should endeavour to find some who would invite a few of their neighbours to their several houses to meet the messengers; and upon these occasions much of the work should be carried on. This might be repeated until some general feeling produced amongst the people, should open the way for a more public manifestation, from which the Messengers must not shrink.

" 15. After paying several private visits in one place together, the Messengers should separate, and go singly to such places as may afford facilities for the work. From the very beginning, the Messengers should separately seek occasions for conversations with individuals.

" 16. The towns and populous places within each district should be sought by the Messengers for their work, and not any remote or thinly peopled localities. Where there are most people there will be the greatest facilities for the work, and the surest protection from any danger. Those towns should be more especially chosen where it is known that any priest has shewn some favour to the Bible and Bible readers.

" 17. The greatest care is to be taken to avoid everything which can give the notion, that the Messengers assume any ministerial character, or any official or ecclesiastical authority. They must not be considered by the people in the light of priests, or parsons, or dissenting preachers. The simple term Messenger may be applied to them without any of these characters being assumed. A Messenger is to be one who conveys a message from heaven, and endeavours to call attention to it. To this end, every appearance, whether in dress or conduct, which might connect the Messengers with the ministerial character in the minds of the people, must be avoided.

" 18. Above this, every Messenger must remember that the least occasion for scandal in him will effectually mar the work: this thought must regulate his conduct with the most

scrupulous exactness. He must never allow a debt of the most trifling amount to be justly charged against him in his journeyings from place to place; and he must be careful not to receive obligations from people, beyond the proper limits of kind hospitality.

"19. Having such a work, in such a world, with such enemies, difficulties must be anticipated, both such as are connected with failure, and such as are connected with success. The results may be very painful, and even dangerous; but serving such a Master, with such promises, and such a reward, we may rest assured that He who has the ordering of all things, will supply the courage to support every danger, and arrange all events for the good of his servants. On Him must all dependence be placed.

"20. The constant exercise of earnest and instant prayer, put forth on every step of detail, is most especially required in this work. No Messenger must expect to prosper without it. None who employ it need fear to fail of support and success. While this is especially urged upon the Messengers themselves, they are assured that a faithful band, consisting of between twenty and thirty people, are constantly engaged in earnest prayer on their behalf. And that to secure regularity, twelve of these agree to remember the subject in supplication at the Throne of Grace altogether every Sunday; and then two of the party undertake to repeat their supplications on one day of the week; so that every day a pair of these remembrancers are to be employed in giving the Lord no rest on this behalf.

"And now these dear servants of the Lord, engaged in this special work for God's glory, and the salvation of their countrymen's souls—these soldiers of Christ are solemnly committed to the care and direction of the great Captain of our salvation; with the humble petition that they may be filled with the Spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind, that they may be strengthened and supported in every

step of their way by the power of the Holy Ghost, and blessed with the fullest success, to the glory of the name of Christ Jesus the Lord. Amen."

5th October, 1846.

To convey an idea of the extent of the work, and the manner in which it was set in motion, the following copy of the special directions will suffice; and after perusing them, it will not be necessary to give any indication of the particular localities from which the reports were sent, extracts of which will afterwards be given. These were the

SPECIAL DIRECTIONS

To the Messengers of the South-west district, to accompany the General Instructions.

"The district termed the SOUTH-WEST includes all the country south of the Shannon up to Askeaton; from thence draw a line eastward (excluding Limerick) straight to Kilkenny; from whence draw a line Southward straight to Waterford, and by the Suir to the sea.

"Mr. A. is sent forth over this district as a Messenger, and with him Mr. B. is for the present sent as an assistant.

"Particular attention must be paid to the general Instructions, the paragraphs of which are numbered for reference.

"The place and circumstances in which the work is to be opened will be the subject of special communication and arrangement.

"The time most desirable is fixed for Sunday the 25th of October, on which day some opening effort should be made.

"Four hundred copies of a useful handbill are sent with this, which may be used as occasion shall serve. These with all other papers must be kept most confidentially with great care.

"Two copies of a useful book for reference, called "A col-

lection of texts of Scripture against the principal popish errors" are also sent for the use of the Messenger. A map of Ireland is also sent with the district marked upon it.

"In addition to the general instructions, the Messengers are invited to carry on the most open and unrestrained communications with the director, being assured that their letters will be received with the most lively interest and affectionate sympathy. The reports must be sent as frequently as possible.

Oct. 5, 1846.

Similar Special Directions sent for the Upper West District.

With beginning differing thus :—

"The district termed the UPPER-WEST includes the counties of Sligo, Mayo, Leitrim, Roscommon, and all the northern part of Galway, as far as a line drawn westerly from Ballinasloe to Ahenry, and from thence to the sea at Oranmore, which places however are not included in the district.

"Mr. C. is sent forth over this district as a Messenger, and with him Mr. D. is sent as an assistant."

Similar Special Directions sent for the Lower-West District.

With beginning differing thus :—

"The district termed the LOWER-WEST includes the city of Limerick, the county of Clare, and part of Galway. It takes in all the west bank of Lough-Derg, and the Shannon, to Balinasloe; from whence a straight line is drawn westerly to Ahenry, and from thence to the sea at Oranmore.

"Mr. E. is sent forth over this district as a Messenger.

Similar Special Directions sent for the North-West District.

With the beginning differing thus :—

"The district termed the NORTH-WEST includes the counties of Donegal, Derry, Fermanagh, and Tyrone.

"Mr. F. is sent forth over this district as a Messenger, and with him are associated Mr. G. and Mr. H."

"Memorandum of Special arrangement as to place, &c."

"1. F., G., and H. to begin together on the 25th October, at Strabane, and to occupy about four weeks between that place and Raphoe, Letterkenny, Kilmacrenan, Rathmelton; then Derry, not going further north than Muff in that direction. Then Newtown Limavady, Dungiven, Dunnamanagh. During this time they must keep west of the range of mountains that runs from Coleraine south and westerly to Omagh. They are to go however to Newtown Stewart, Castle Derg, and Pettigo, if time allow, and circumstances permit.

"Within that district F. is to act at his discretion with respect to all three messengers; and after receiving the reports, fresh instructions will be sent in time to act after that period.

"2. D. to meet C. at Tuam, and begin together on the 25th October. They are to occupy about four weeks between that place and Castlebar northerly, and Westport westerly—including Headford, Shrule, Cong, Kilmaine, Ballinrobe, Hollymount, Dunmore, Clare, Ballyglass, Balla, Westport.

"3. E. is to be at Aughrim so as to begin on the 25th October; and to occupy about four weeks between that place and Ennis on the west bank of the Shannon—including Kilconnel, Ahenry, Ballinasloe, Loughrea, Eyrecourt, Portumna, Woodford, Gort, Kinvarra, Tulla, Ennis.

"4. A. will join B. in Dublin, and they will proceed together to Skibbereen, and begin there on the 25th October. They will occupy about four weeks between that place, Kinsale and Killarney—including Roscarberry, Clonakilly, Bandon, Innishannon, Kinsale, Dunmanway, Bantry, Macroom, Kenmare, Killarney.

"5. They will be guided by circumstances as to the course in which they will take these places, and whether singly or together. After receiving the reports, fresh instructions will be sent in time to act after that period.

"6. It is not to be understood that all the places named must necessarily be visited within the four weeks, but that they form the district in which visits are to be paid, as time and circumstances permit.

"7. Letters will be forwarded through J., who will arrange with the Messengers severally as to certain towns where letters may be had on certain days."

10th October, 1846.

The handbill referred to in the Instructions to the Messengers was as follows:—

"READER—whoever you are, in silent communing with your own heart you must have desired to be right in the matters of eternal interest to your soul. Can you lay your hand upon your heart, and declare that you are satisfied, on the best evidence, that you are not wrong now? Whence has this assurance come? By what rule have you measured your faith? Have you inquired where the true unerring standard is to be found by which right faith is to be tested? Have you been unprejudiced in your inquiry? Have you heard that God has declared that his own written word is the ONLY rule of faith? Have you ever heard man say anything to the contrary? Do you think God can be a liar?

"You may perhaps think lightly of these all-important considerations now; but if you were sure that this very night your soul was to be hurried into eternity, would it be so THEN? Would it not be consoling, as that immortal soul trembled between time and eternity, to reflect that you used the reason given you by your Maker to discover the truth?

"Are you desirous of hearing one who has no object but to draw the veil of prejudice from your eyes, while he tells you what is THE TRUTH, and where it is to be found? May

Heaven so judge him as he has any motive at heart but your eternal interest, and God's glory, in thus seeking to put you in the true path! May God send His HOLY SPIRIT with power into your heart, and establish you in the truth!

"Should any who peruse this paper feel inclined to meet together in God's name, they will hear the truth spoken to them in love at

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Here follow the extracts from the reports referred to. It has been very difficult to make any selection from so large a mass of information, in which everything tended to the same result. The view of the state of mind in which the Romanists were found is to be gathered from the combination of the whole amount of evidence collected in such various districts. No adequate conception of this can be communicated from any specimens, and could only be obtained by the recurring impression on the mind, repeated almost daily, upon receiving similar reports from the various messengers, widely separated in locality, and characteristically different in modes of thought and observation. Instead of a voluminous repetition of such reports, the following brief extracts are given. They are only distinguished by the initial letter used to refer to the individual messenger alluded to by the same initial in the special directions already given.

Extracts from Reports of Mr. A.

"I find in this quarter a very bold determined expression of disgust of the conduct and religion of the priests. Yesterday being market-day, I mingled in the crowd and spoke to hundreds of persons. I found all the inhabitants of the parish of A. speak well of Mr. B., the Rector, and badly of the priests. Most of all I spoke to, told me they had no objection to quit Romanism."