

A LETTER
FROM
THE LORD BISHOP OF TORONTO,
TO
THE REV. T. B. MURRAY, M.A.,
SECRETARY OF THE SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE,
ON THE SUBJECT OF ESTABLISHING
A CHURCH UNIVERSITY IN UPPER CANADA.

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“ 19, Bury Street, St. James’s, London, 9th May, 1850.

“ REVEREND AND DEAR SIR,—Permit me to approach through you the venerable Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge under circumstances of no ordinary character, and to intreat its sympathy and assistance in shielding the Church in Upper Canada from the consequences of an injury inflicted upon her by the Legislature of that province.

“ The Society is aware that the University of King’s College was opened at Toronto for the business of instruction on the 8th of June, 1843; and notwithstanding the attempts of its enemies, year after year, to bring about its destruction, it proceeded with great vigour and success during the six years and a half of its existence, and was obtaining, through its scholars, an influence which was rapidly increasing throughout the diocese. Parents felt a confidence in its religious character; and, as none but students belonging to the Church of England were expected to attend the college chapel, sober-minded Dissenters were not offended. On the contrary, the knowledge that prayer was offered up morning and evening, and the

services of the Church regularly celebrated on Sundays and holidays, pleased them, because these acts of worship sanctified the labours of the institution.

“During this brief period the degrees conferred were seventy-five, and the number of students, including occasional learners, three hundred. The usual honours were obtained by Presbyterians and Congregationalists, &c., as well as by the members of the Church: for the secular instruction imparted by the institution was open to Dissenters. But these proofs of prosperity and growing usefulness, instead of conciliating the enemies of King’s College, increased their animosity. They became alarmed, lest, if left unmolested for a few years it would acquire a popularity among all the truly religious in the province, and place itself in a position of safety which they could not disturb. Hence they allowed it no peace. Session after session it was assailed: and, after defeating three successive measures for its destruction, its friends became weary and discouraged; and the fourth attempt has unfortunately proved successful. On the 1st of January, 1850, the destruction of King’s College was completed; for on that day the provincial statute by which it was suppressed came into force.

“In the preamble of the act, which destroys King’s College, and establishes a university from which religion is totally excluded, it is averred to be a measure ‘for the advancement of learning, upon principles calculated to insure the confidence of all classes and denominations of Her Majesty’s subjects, and which, under the blessing of Divine Providence, would encourage the pursuit of literature, science, and art, and thereby tend to promote the best interests, religious, moral, and intellectual, of the people at large.’

“But upon what provisions does this statute seek to attain these important objects? In the 12th clause it enacts, ‘That there shall be no faculty of Divinity in the same;’ by the 29th clause, repeated in the 64th, it ordains, ‘that no religious test or qualification whatsoever shall be required of or appointed for any person admitted or matriculated, &c.’ Nor ‘shall religious observances, according to the forms of any particular religious denomination, be imposed upon the members or officers of the said university, or any of them.’

“To speak of the interests of religion being promoted by an insti-

tution from which every reference to it is by law excluded, is a cruel and unworthy mockery.

“ But on this point the people of the colony have already spoken. The three great denominations, as well as the Church of England, embracing, together, almost two-thirds of the population of Upper Canada, and nearly all who require collegiate instruction, have resolved to have no connexion with such an institution.

“ The synod of the Church of Scotland, in their address to the Queen, dated Kingston, Upper Canada, 17th July, 1849, express their grief and disappointment at the attempts that are made to sever religion from public instruction, and add, ‘ We refer especially to the university measure carried through the late session of parliament, and now become law, which, though the university was endowed by one of your Majesty’s royal predecessors expressly for the education of the youth of these provinces, in the Christian religion, as well as in literature and science, does yet so thoroughly exclude Christianity, that there is no security that the men to whom shall be confided the high work of informing and training the minds of our youth shall be men, who even believe in the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom He hath sent. As a Christian Church we should be betraying the cause we are bound to uphold did we not draw your Majesty’s attention to this disastrous measure, and if we did not express our earnest hope that, since it so directly contravenes the intentions of the enlightened founder, while it is regarded with dissatisfaction by all the great religious bodies of the country, means may yet be taken by your Majesty’s gracious direction to amend the provisions of the statute, and so to avert from us and our posterity a calamity so great as its permanent adoption must inevitably bring upon us, if it be true that them that honour God He will honour, while they that despise Him shall be lightly esteemed.’

“ The ‘ Christian Guardian,’ a journal published at Toronto (Canada), and which is the acknowledged organ of the Methodist body, in its impression dated the 13th of February, 1850, says,— ‘ During the progress of the godless University Bill through both branches of the Legislature, and up to the time of its receiving the royal assent, we did all in our power to oppose it, and shunned not to expose its extraordinary provisions and character. The three ex-

isting University colleges, Victoria, Regiopolis, and Queen's,—that is, Methodist, Roman Catholic, and Scotch colleges, have distinctly announced that they cannot co-operate with the framers of this godless scheme; and so long as the measure remains unaltered so long must they stand aloof from the godless university, and, according to the best of their ability, pursue their own course, retaining their charters, and furnishing the youth in their halls with an education established on religious principles.

“ ‘The Lord Bishop of Toronto is taking steps for the establishment of an Episcopalian University, in which he will not only have the virtual, but the acknowledged control, and where he can have the youth of his own denomination educated upon religious principles. His Lordship has addressed a powerful letter to the clergy and laity of the Episcopalian Church, in which he calls upon all to make exertions, by gifts, donations, and otherwise, for the establishment of an Episcopalian University in the Province, and announces that he will immediately proceed to England to solicit aid in carrying out the enterprise.’

“By the census taken in 1848, the population of Upper Canada was found to be	721,000
Members of the Church of England	171,751
The Church of Rome	123,707
The Methodists	90,363
The Church of Scotland	67,900
Those who cannot profit by the New College, having denounced it as irreligious	453,721
Leaving to profit by such institution, but who for the most part place little value on academical in- struction	267,279

“Even this will, in all probability, be found too much in favour of the institution for the Scottish Free Church, and Congregationalists disapprove of the principle of excluding religion from education,

but have not yet declared themselves regarding this anti-Christian University.

“ Having thus deprived King’s College of its religious character, royal charter, and name, the statute proceeds, in the 32nd clause, to confiscate the whole of the magnificent endowment of King’s College, worth about 270,000*l.*, and invest it in the New Corporation; and this in defiance of the faith of the Crown, expressed in the words of three different kings—George III., George IV., and William IV.—and with as much recklessness as if there had been no such pledges, no vested rights, no co-operation, no moral turpitude, in a proceeding which strikes at the security of all property in the colony, and which has been declared by the highest legal authorities to be unconstitutional and revolutionary. The truth of which declaration is proved from the fact, that similar institutions to that of King’s College, founded in the British Colonies, have received from the ruling power ample protection after the countries in which they were established had become foreign to the British Crown. Thus the colleges, founded by the kings and queens of England in the colonies, now the United States, are still cherished and preserved, and their endowments not only held sacred, but largely increased.

“ Indeed, the leading features of the statute are, first : Contempt for the wishes of the people, for it has been proved that almost two-thirds are virtually excluded. Second, bitter hostility to religion, and especially the Church of England. Third, disrespect to the expressed wishes of three sovereigns, and hence to every thing tending to the stability of the Crown. Moreover, the statute evinces throughout a suspicious jealousy of all ministers, ecclesiastics, and teachers, and even prohibits the Crown from selecting them as members of the Senate. Indeed, such an interdiction of every thing religious, as this Act seeks to establish, is without precedent among Christian nations; for it drives away all those who, from their living faith, warmth of disposition, and sincerity of purpose, are best qualified to train the young to all that is lovely and sublime in religion, pure in morals, and noble in science.

“ While the wishes and pledges of three British monarchs are set at nought, more than two millions of acres are carefully preserved by the same Legislature for educational and charitable purposes in

Lower Canada, for the benefit of the French population, as if to show how far British feelings may be outraged, and the wishes of Louis XIV. held sacred. Thus the several colleges have their endowments preserved, and are well supported and cherished; but the single Church of England College is violently suppressed, and an irreligious University established in its room. Not that I desire the confiscation of one of these two millions of acres, or the suppression of one of these French Colleges, three or four in number; but surely it is not too much for British hearts to expect that the pledges of no fewer than three of their own kings should meet with as much reverence at least as those of one foreign prince. At present the contrast is truly humiliating.

“In fine, while the Roman Catholics, the Methodists, and the Church of Scotland have colleges exclusively their own, the latter, under a royal charter, with the power of conferring degrees in Arts and Divinity, the National Church, with as many members as two of them put together, is deprived by this Act of her own college, and is driven to have recourse to a temporary institution for training some of her young men to the Ministry; otherwise her vacancies could not be supplied, or her light extended to the waste places of the Province. It is in truth an Act which evidently seeks to crush the Church of England, and peril her existence in Upper Canada.

“Such are some of the facts and considerations which induce me to endeavour, with Divine assistance, to establish a Church University in Upper Canada from sources of a private nature, with which the Legislature of the Colony can have no pretence to intermeddle.

“I have, in the first place, appealed to my own diocese, and been responded to in a spirit which, considering the distress of my people and their narrow means, has called forth general admiration; upwards of 25,000*l.*, in money and lands, have already been subscribed, and something more may be expected. I have now come to England to supplicate further assistance, for much more is required to establish a university worthy of our Church, and capable of supplying her increasing wants. I begin with the two venerable Societies, the munificent handmaids of our beloved Church, in the hope that my case, which is unhappily stronger than perhaps any that has ever been brought before them, may meet with favourable consideration.

“ At least two hundred thousand members of the Church reside in Upper Canada, and according to the present rapid increase of population, more than five times that number will inhabit that region in a comparatively short time. Indeed, Upper Canada appears destined to be the great seat of our holy Church in British North America.

“ To found a university, therefore, in close and entire connexion with the Church, in order to educate our youth in her religious principles, as well as in the arts and sciences, is a glorious work, and a work that ought not to be delayed ; it is a work which will confer a blessing on all who take a share in it, and, if wisely and firmly carried out, the results will be of inestimable value in time and through eternity.

“ Most respectfully do I submit this my statement and supplication to the wise consideration of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, to which my diocese is already so much indebted.

“ I remain, rev. and dear Sir, yours truly,

“ JOHN TORONTO.”

“ To the Rev. T. B. Murray, M.A.”