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LETTERS AND EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS,

FROM THE

Lord Bishop of Australia,

*To the Rev. the Secretary of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel.*

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*Extract from a Letter, dated, SYDNEY, 5th May, 1843.*

By the "HAMLET," on the 26th of *March*, I forwarded to you a copy of a Protest, which I had publicly delivered against the erection of an Archiepiscopal See in this Colony by the Bishop of Rome, as also of the Circular Letter, which, in forwarding that Protest, I addressed to my Clergy.

It is not necessary that I should enter into any extended observations upon those documents, which will speak for themselves. The effect on the minds of our fellow-Churchmen, has been decidedly beneficial; and I trust will still work for good, in keeping their thoughts fixed upon the question, and leading them to enquire and reflect.

The efforts making by the Roman Catholics here are *scarcely to be conceived by those at a distance*; and there is much going on, which is not meant immediately to meet the public notice. Dr. Polding introduced eight or ten additional priests on his return from Europe, some of them Irish, others Foreigners; and his resources are very great. I am not in any degree shaken in my confidence as to our own cause; but in means of action I labour under very serious deficiencies. At this moment the state of the Colony in its pecuniary affairs is such, that persons of the most extensive *property* cannot raise money, even to a small amount; and the consequence is, that all, or nearly all the Churches and Parsonage Houses, which were in course of erection, have been suspended, from want of funds to carry on the works. In other cases, where they have been finished by means of loans, the Trustees who had made themselves responsible, are now reduced to considerable distress to raise the sums required, as their promises of payment become due. At the same time, unless the Churches can be completed and made fit for service, there is great reason to apprehend that the Government may avail themselves of that failure to *withdraw the stipends* granted to the Clergy.



The whole series of occurrences has been such, during the last half year, and the claims and burdens cast upon me have been so urgent and weighty, that I must have given way under the difficulty, had I not been supported by firm reliance upon the goodness of God in maintaining His Church, and upon the liberality of the Society, as the great instrument in His hands for raising up in this country the bulwark of a pure and scriptural Faith against the hostile assaults, to which the principles of the Reformation are here even now exposed. If we remit our exertions, the danger is extreme; and our overthrow would not be long delayed.

Feeling therefore all the importance of the position which Providence has assigned to me, and relying implicitly on the determination of the Society to support me in every lawful exertion, I have, after careful reflection, determined *not* to forsake the cause of those, who cry on every side. Having carefully examined every separate case, and formed my plan of operation, with as much prudence as I could command, I am proceeding to take the principal share in finishing the Churches and Parsonages where the necessity is most urgent. St. Mark's Church at Appin, I consecrated on the day of the Patron Saint, *April 25th*; and St. John Baptist's, at Ashfield, may be ready, I trust, by *24th June*. The expense attendant on these measures may require, it is probable, an *extra* expenditure of £1000. during this, and the succeeding year. But my conviction of the necessity of making good our position here, in opposition to the very formidable confederacy by which we are assailed, is so decided, that I shall not dread the disapproval of the Society, if I should even incur that charge; and if need be, I must beg its permission to appeal, on behalf of myself, my Clergy, and people, to the love and veneration of the English nation for its Church; and implore for its succour those resources, which at the present moment the Colony itself cannot supply; but wanting which, we are in danger of losing much of the advantage which we have acquired during the past seven years.

It may be proper to add, that although the ability of the Settlers in general to contribute towards the service of the Church is reduced greatly below the medium of former periods; yet, so far as they retain the power, I believe the will is not wanting. In two of the Churches in this city, during the year 1842, upwards of £1200, was collected by voluntary offerings at the conclusion of the services, principally towards completing Christ Church, in the parish of St. Lawrence. There is evidently a growing disposition of that kind; and it affords a most encouraging symptom.

(Signed)

W. G. AUSTRALIA.

Sydney, May 17th, 1843.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

Under any difficulties attending my situation, I turn for relief to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel; knowing well, from the experience of many years, that nothing necessary for the support of the Church here will be withheld, if in their power to grant. At the present moment, two subjects of uneasiness have arisen. The first of these is the decided and vigorous effort which the Roman Catholic Church is making to extend its influence, and to establish its supremacy in this hemisphere; its operations commencing from this city as their centre. My communications of 25th March and of the 5th inst. will have informed the Society of the steps which I had taken in protesting against the establishment of episcopal sees, by Papal authority, in provinces where those of the Church of England have been already instituted.

My own observations, and the communications made to me from all quarters, convince me that the measure has already done much good, by awakening attention, and giving rise to discussion among the Roman Catholics themselves. In the mean time, whatever the final result may be, I trust that the position which has been taken, is that which becomes the Church of England; and will always furnish a point for us to fall back upon in that extended contest, which all the signs of the times foreshew is about to arise in this Colony and in this hemisphere, between our Church and that of Rome. Owing to these and other circumstances, the difficulties alluded to in the opening of this letter have risen upon me; for while Dr. Polding has returned, thus armed with all the dignity and influence which the See of Rome could confer upon him, attended by a numerous train of priests and other teachers; and with a command of resources enabling him to carry out most extended designs, the general circumstances of the colonists here have fallen into such a state of depression, that it is literally *impossible* to raise those funds which a year or two ago, in times of greater abundance, were promised towards completing our several churches. When I speak of greater abundance, it should be understood that abundance of *money* is alone intended. With every kind of produce, and the gifts of nature, the country was never within my recollection so amply supplied as at the present time.

What is felt is the want of a market: and so universally is this experienced, that it is scarcely possible to find even one owner of land or flocks, who is not so suffering. I really do not suspect any decay of inclination to go on with Church works.



It is an actual failure of power and means. By the occurrence of such a crisis I have been reduced to a state of inconceivable perplexity, and even distress, in consequence of the multiplicity of applications for assistance, which have poured in upon me from all quarters. Either there has been an urgent intreaty for the preservation of roofless walls going to ruin, by remaining in so exposed a state; or to relieve the Trustees from obligations contracted by them under more flattering prospects, but now falling upon them as a burden which they cannot support; or else to provide shelter for the Clergy and families, where Parsonage Houses are from necessity left incomplete.

To accomplish the whole, or even the half, of what was thus required *at once*, was evidently an impossibility. At the same time, I felt that to stand aloof from all interference, on the plea of wanting means, and so to reduce the people to despair of ever having their Churches finished, would not only lead to the sacrifice of much of that advancement, which by previous exertions we have already made, but would expose the scattered members of our communion under great disadvantages to the enticements of those, who are always on the watch to lead them astray from their principles.

Such seducers would more surely speed in their endeavours, if they could step in and offer to build up to completion, where we had laid a foundation, but had abandoned it, being unable to finish. My deliberations were long and anxious. It was impossible for me not to see that I was taking upon myself a very serious responsibility, if I should pledge the Society to further efforts, where so much had already been done. On the other hand, I considered the urgent wants of the people, and their present inability to do more for themselves; the great danger which was to be apprehended from the activity of adverse communions, in cases where our activity should be altogether suspended; the reproach I might perhaps incur of want of sufficient confidence in the generosity of the Incorporated Society, if I should permit so many undertakings to fall to the ground for want of temporary support; and the regret which afterwards, and when it was too late, might be experienced, in finding that the outlay, required to uphold our cause, would not have been refused. Under these circumstances, I determined to put my trust in God, who can incline the hearts of men according to his purpose; and, depending upon the Society's support, to go on in succession, taking up the most urgent cases; especially where the interests of religion were likely to suffer permanently from want of temporary support. It is the possibility of taking them *in succession* which inspired me with hope that our difficulties may be successfully met: because although it is indisputable that more must be expended than I have calculated upon, or contemplated, the sum may be diffused over a period of considerable extent—for example, over this year and the next.

I am really not in a condition at present to state with exactness what the required amount may be. There are but few separate cases in which the demand is large; but the aggregate of so many together is somewhat serious,—I should fear not less than from £1,000. to £1,500: but without more extended personal investigation, I would not pledge myself to the accuracy of the calculation. If the Society will so far extend its confidence in me as to honour such drafts as under the pressure of this necessity and for the reasons stated I may be constrained to make, I will pledge myself that they shall be of as small an amount, and as gradually required, as shall be found practicable. There will be no necessity to exceed that limit, which it appears to me may not lie beyond the competency of the friends of the Church to advance to, on an extraordinary occasion of this nature.

Our great distance, and the consequent delay in obtaining a reply, will forbid my waiting for the express sanction of the Society, if anything is to be done; and I must take upon myself to act on its behalf, and to act promptly, where great evil or inconvenience would arise from delay.

On the 30th of next month, I shall forward as usual a half-yearly pecuniary account; and the statement of what has been done up to that time may afford an index for the future. I have just completed and consecrated *St. Mark's Church at Appin*, and am now similarly engaged on *St. John's, at Ashfield, near Sydney*. These were the two cases which required the most serious expenditure, without which there was not a prospect of their ever being finished. In several cases, the Trustees (from over-zeal perhaps, with which it is difficult to find fault) have built their Church by borrowing money, where the subscriptions fell short, and making themselves personally responsible. I have felt it absolutely necessary in some such cases to promise them assistance towards paying the interest on their debts; while the same are in a course of gradual reduction by such collections and contributions, as may be raised towards that object year by year. The most urgent case of this kind is that of *St. James' Church, at Port Philip*; which is so far completed, that Divine Service is regularly solemnized in it under my License; but there is a debt upon it of a considerable amount. The Parsonages hitherto undertaken are all I believe thoroughly completed, except at *Appin*, which I feel it indispensable to render habitable with as little delay as possible. This should be done, were it only in justice to the Rev. H. D. SPARLING, who, on embarking, received a promise of a decent residence; but has been compelled ever since his arrival here to inhabit a dwelling so incommodious and unsuitable, that I never visit him without a painful sense of the hardship and impropriety that a Clergyman should be so situated. At the same time, I have never heard from him a single complaint upon the subject.



The Government have lately granted a very excellent Glebe of 40 Acres there; and I hope, as there is abundance of good stone close at hand, to be able to put up a small residence on very reasonable terms.

Every day presents to my observation more practical and convincing proofs of the blessings attendant on a settled ministry throughout the country. Where the influence of such a ministry is felt, there the habits of the people visibly improve; and the fear of God takes possession of many hearts, descending to children's children. Where the Church is absent, the sanctifying influence of religion decays, and there is confusion and every evil work. Too many parts of the country are still exposed to that misfortune and reproach. My endeavours are bent upon removing them with the least possible delay; and I thank God with all my heart, that He has raised up so inestimable a friend and supporter as the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel.

I remain, Rev. and dear Sir,

Yours very faithfully,

W. G. AUSTRALIA.

Singleton, on Hunter's River, N. S. W.

3rd July, 1843.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

Your Letter of the 13th February, 1843, reached me on my progress to this place, where I arrived to-day. At this time I am engaged in an extended Visitation of the Hunter's River and Bathurst Districts, which will still occupy me till the middle or latter end of next month.

My last communication to you, (of which I cannot at this distance from home, and from my papers, ascertain the exact date,) may, I fear, occasion some uneasiness to the Society, as it contained a statement of my pressing necessities and embarrassments, arising from the diminished or exhausted resources of many here, who had engaged for the erection of Churches and Parsonage Houses, with other parochial appendages, and of my sense that the completion of these *must* mainly depend upon the Society's bounty. My persuasion to that effect is every day confirmed; but after the receipt of your very explicit statement of the deficit in the resources of last year, I cannot for a moment hesitate in relinquishing every such projected improvement, rather than press in an unreasonable and unbecoming proportion

upon funds, which have been with so much generosity extended to the Church in this Diocese.

We have at this time about sixteen Churches in an unfinished state,—not roofed in! and I therefore feel *very sensibly* the painful necessity of abandoning them in that state to the dilapidating effects of the weather, as well as surrendering the hope which I did entertain, of their proving so many sources of light and edification to the dark and uninstructed districts in which they are generally placed. I have, however, already taken measures for discontinuing all further operations; and shall undertake nothing more until I may again hear from you, (which may be by March or April next,) as to the degree of assistance which I trust it may yet be in the power of the Society, through the augmentation of its resources, to hold out to us hereafter. In the mean time, I shall confine myself strictly to the terms which the Society enjoins, or to such sums as I consider absolutely necessary to meet the religious wants of the Diocese. God knows its religious wants are pressing indeed! But under present circumstances, I will limit my judgment upon that subject, by surrendering all cases *except* those of the following description: *viz.*—where a contract has been actually entered into, and a failure to fulfil the terms of it would entail a risk of personal hazard to the Trustees who have undertaken the responsibility; or the buildings might be seized in satisfaction of the demand; or the stipend of the Clergyman might be withdrawn by the Government, upon the plea of non-fulfilment of the conditions of the Act of Council. I am happy to say, however, that owing to the measures taken during the past six months, there remain at the utmost, (so far as I can speak with certainty at this distance from the documents,) not more than three or four such cases; and none of them separately of any serious amount.

The origin of these cases I may explain to the Society, by stating, that during some years past parties who entertained an exaggerated persuasion (as experience has proved) of the extent of their resources, took a commendable pleasure in providing durable, and somewhat expensive Churches; for the completion of which, they laid themselves under extended obligations. Many such persons have since failed to continue their subscriptions, and the Trustees, as I have stated, may now be sued, or the building seized. To such cases of necessity I shall confine myself: and I trust that the Society, considering what detriment would be occasioned to the individuals so suffering, as well as to the general credit of the Church of England, will not impute to me the taking up of any obligation, which I could with honor or security have avoided. At the same time, however, that I withdraw from so many hopeful undertakings, it would be doing an injury to the cause of truth, if I were not to add, that this abatement of exertion will be *seriously* felt. Wherever we are compelled to abandon a position, I see others



prepared to fill it. The resources of the Roman Catholics are quite inexplicable. I will refer to one instance:—Dr. Polding has at this time proceeded to *Moreton Bay*, (the new Settlement, in the County of *Stanley*, to the Northward,) with *four priests*, to form an extended Missionary establishment, for the conversion of the native blacks; but I need scarcely observe, that the conversion of the *whites* also would not be unattended to. I have placed there the Rev. JOHN GREGOR, whom I recently admitted into Holy Orders, he having been a Presbyter in the Church of Scotland. But his presence there, to oppose the strenuous attempt at proselytism now in progress, would be totally ineffectual, without some place in which his congregation might assemble for public worship. This therefore is one of the obligations which I have taken upon myself; but how to provide a place of residence, exceeds my utmost capacity.

I may observe, that during my present progress, I have been in one County, (*Durham*,) in the whole extent of which, there is not a Church, and but one Clergyman. In the adjoining County of *Brisbane*, there is one Church and one Clergyman! no more! After that, I shall pass through three entire Counties, in which there is neither Minister nor Ordinance of Religion; and the five Counties included in this enumeration, contain a fourth part of the area of New South Wales, and from a sixteenth to an eighteenth of the entire population. Going along, without even the attendance of a Clergyman, (for indeed I cannot spare one to accompany me,) it cannot be expected that I can practically do much for the benefit and instruction of the scattered inhabitants: but it may afford them proof that they are not overlooked or forgotten; and it is of great importance to keep alive among them a feeling of attachment to the Ordinances of the Church, until the time shall arrive for their enjoyment of some better provision, which the mercy of God may have in reserve for them.

Believe me, that I feel very deeply and sensibly the expressions of satisfaction with my humble efforts in the cause of the Gospel, which you convey to me, on behalf of the Society. There is no day of my life, in which I do not dwell upon the benefits conferred by it upon this extensive and far-distant member of the Church of Christ; and I earnestly pray, that the spirit which has made those benefits co-extensive with the limits, not of this single Diocese, but almost of the world itself, may not be checked by a decay of zeal or liberality on the part of those, whom God has blessed with means and resources for contributing to so excellent a work.

I am, Rev. and dear Sir,

Your very faithful Servant,

W. G. AUSTRALIA.