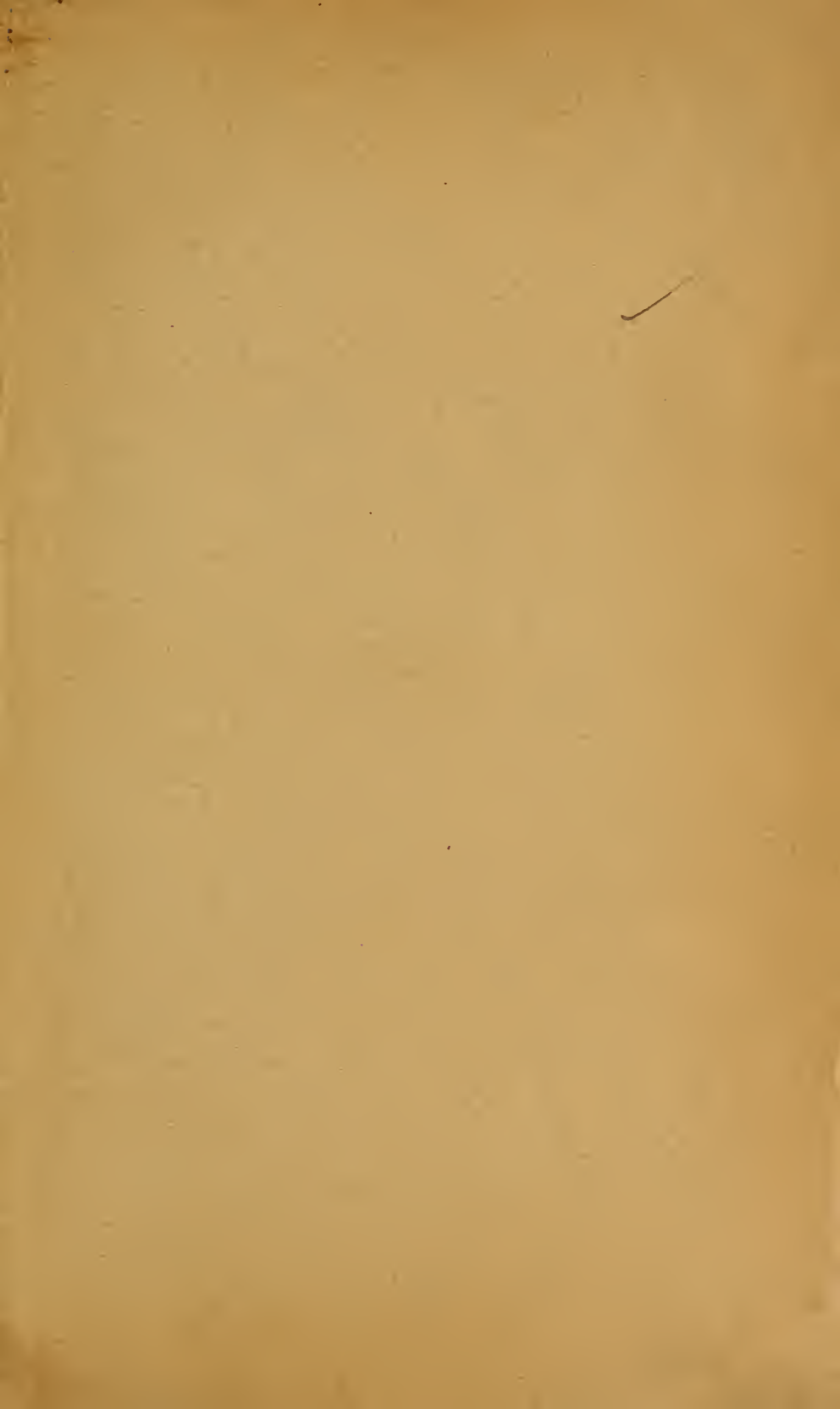




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14
"FEED MY LAMBS."

A SERMON

ON THE BISHOP'S PASTORAL LETTER

PREACHED IN

HAWARDEN PARISH CHURCH,

ON SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 17th, 1905,

by the

REV. CANON DREW (Rector),

Being the Sunday preceding that chosen by the Lord
Bishop of St. Asaph for Collections throughout the
Diocese on behalf of the Diocesan
Association of Schools.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

PRICE ONE PENNY.

PREFACE.

THIS Sermon is printed in deference to the wishes of some whose desire I was bound to respect.

I dedicate it, such as it is, to all Hawarden Parishioners, whether Churchmen or Nonconformists, who value our Schools for what they have done in the past, for themselves or for others, who desire them to continue that work in the future, and who are ready to stand together for that purpose to-day.

HARRY DREW.

HAWARDEN RECTORY,

Sept. 20th, 1905.



Pastoral Letter.



MY DEAR PEOPLE,

At a Meeting consisting of myself, the Dean, the Archdeacons and the Rural Deans of this Diocese, on Tuesday, July 25th, it was unanimously resolved to ask the Incumbents and the Churchwardens of every parish in this Diocese to devote the whole of the Offertories on Sunday, September 24th, to the Diocesan Association of Schools.

In commending this appeal, I venture very earnestly to ask for the prayers and support of the whole Diocese of St. Asaph. Our Schools are a sacred trust, and the generosity and the devotion which created and maintained them in the past, will nerve us to do our duty by them to-day.

This Diocese is nobly proud of its Church Schools, numbering as they do a larger proportion of pupils than the Schools of almost any other Diocese in the Country. In 1870 there were 11,663 children in average attendance in the Church Schools in this Diocese, last year, there were 23,953 in average attendance, 25,594 present at the religious examinations and 30,003 on the books. The population of the Diocese in 1870 was 257,098, and in 1901 282,900, so that the numbers in our Schools have increased very much more rapidly than the population. The following figures will enable all to realise the magnitude of our debt to the past.

During the 40 years from 1850 to 1890 the sum of £268,755 was spent upon the building, enlarging and maintaining of our National Schools. From 1890 to 1905 £184,918 has been spent upon the same object. The Diocese, therefore, has spent upon its Schools, during the last 55 years £453,675. In publishing this figure I desire to say that it represents only the larger items of expenditure of which a record has been kept. It does not take

account of small expenditures which would represent a large total, much less does it give any estimate of those voluntary services which elsewhere involve a staff of paid officials.

Why all this expenditure of money and personal services? The answer is clear, "Feed my lambs" was our Lord's command to His Church. Nothing less than this could have inspired and sustained the Clergy and the Teachers through good report and evil report in carrying on the work of our Schools. I remember the crisis of 1870. If the vast majority of Church people had not then stood resolutely by their Schools we should have had to-day a system of secular Schools in this Diocese. It must never be forgotten that the Church Schools have not only maintained religious teaching within their own walls, but their existence and example have silently and irresistibly weakened the cry for secular Schools. Let me warm your imagination to-day with the recollection of the courage and devotion shewn by Churchpeople in 1870. The cry then was "You must recognise facts, and surrender your Schools." Few, very few in this Diocese, heeded that cry. But there is not a parish which yielded then, where the Churchpeople to-day do not deeply regret the loss of their Schools.

The cause of our Schools fully justifies this unique appeal, and I feel sure that the Churchpeople of this Diocese will be thankful that a Sunday has been set apart for their prayers and offerings on behalf of their Schools. God grant that we may always have printed in our remembrance how great a trust is committed to us in the education of our children, and that we may never cease our labour, our care and our diligence in providing that the children of this generation be virtuously brought up, to lead a godly and a Christian life.

A. G. ASAPH.

THE PALACE, ST. ASAPH,

August 9th, 1905.



TEXT :

THE PASTORAL LETTER

*Read on Sunday, September 17th, 1905, in all Churches
throughout the Diocese of St Asaph.*

MY DEAR FRIENDS,

It would be impossible, and indeed out of place, for me to take any Text this morning, other than the words which I have just read, and which, by the express desire of our Bishop are being read in every Church in his Diocese to-day.

The fact that this is the first occasion within living memory on which a Pastoral Letter has been so read within this Diocese, ought of itself to convince Churchmen of the gravity of the situation and the supreme importance of the subject. It is an appeal from the Head of the Diocese—expressed in the most authoritative way that lies open to him—to all who call themselves Churchmen and by so doing acknowledge his authority. It is an appeal to every parish to recognize its membership in the body and to render its loyal support to the Diocese which, in return, desires to do all that lies in its power for each individual parish according to its need. It is for us here and elsewhere to consider how best we can respond to that call.

It so chances that this appeal from the Bishop falls, in our case, upon our Dedication Sunday, and it might seem at first sight an unsuitable subject for such an occasion. I think a very little reflection might convince us that it is just the other way. Because a Dedication Festival is that which calls up, year by year, all the memories of the past, and reminds us of our oneness with that past. In it, and through it, we offer thanksgiving to Almighty God for all that the past has done for us; for the gift of this ancient House of Prayer; for the preservation of the Faith within and around its walls by each succeeding generation since the far distant day when Deiniol, as we may believe, first proclaimed it on this hill top. And among the benefactors of the past, they are assuredly by no means the least, who, in their time planned and built by personal sacrifice those Schools around us in which during the past century the children of this parish have received daily and systematic instruction in the Truths of the Christian Faith. As we look around and within to-day,

only too conscious, alas! of our grievous shortcomings, we may well ask ourselves what sort of place Hawarden would be to-day if it had not been blessed with these efforts of the past. It might seem hardly necessary to say that the Diocesan Association of Schools, to which our offerings are to be devoted next Sunday, includes all the Church Schools in the Diocese (numbering upwards of 70 per cent. in our own County of Flintshire), our own of course among them. That being so, you will I hope forgive me if I speak this morning with special reference to the Hawarden group of Schools, occupying as they do a most important place in the Diocese—in importance surpassing that of any other parish within its borders.

We are face to face with a problem, the full meaning and gravity of which I am very anxious that Hawarden parishioners and Churchmen should understand. It is nothing more nor less than the retention or abandonment of our Schools—the decision to be made is whether we will, or will not—make sacrifices which will secure that definite Church Teaching shall continue to be given in them. The Schools were built for that purpose. They have been handed on to us as a Trust. Shall we hand them on to those who come after us as we have received them, or shall we not? That is the simple question. It is of the utmost concern that we should not take a merely parochial view of this question which so deeply affects the character of our nation in the time to come. We stand everywhere for a great principle and we must take care lest we allow any private or selfish interests to obscure that principle. It is the principle of religious liberty—of liberty for all alike—that we should be allowed to give to our own children in Schools which we have built and maintained at great cost and personal sacrifice, that definite Teaching of the Christian Faith as we have received it in our Bible and Book of Common Prayer. We are not asking for a liberty which we are unwilling to grant to others. On the contrary our contention is that the *Parent* (and not the ratepayer as such) is the proper person to decide what religious teaching his child should or should not receive. With a view to that, I hope there will very shortly be issued throughout the Parish a letter from the Foundation Managers asking the parents or guardians of all scholars who are not attending any of our own Sunday Schools to let us know if they would prefer their child to receive a plain Scripture Lesson instead of the Church Catechism and other portions of the Book of Common Prayer at such times as our own children are being instructed in those subjects. In other words whether they wish them to have denominational or undenominational teaching. It seems to me to be doing to others exactly what we should wish them to do to ourselves if we were in their place. I acted upon that principle to the best of my ability at Buckley before the present Act came into force and when I was solely responsible, in accordance with our Trust Deeds, for the religious teaching within the Schools. It was greatly appreciated by the Nonconformist parents and it was certainly a relief to myself. It gives the parent that responsibility and that opportunity which rightly belong to him. It should remove all suspicion that we have

any desire to unsettle the children from their parents' convictions. It should make it clear that what we really do care for is freedom to teach our own children and religious liberty for all alike.

"A city set on a hill cannot be hid." Therefore I am anxious beyond everything that the Churchmen in this famous and historic place should realize their personal responsibility at this time with regard to the children of the parish. Our attitude at this moment, what we do or decline to do, is bound to have a far-reaching effect upon others. The Diocese is looking anxiously towards us. Shall we flinch from what is required of us? I trust not, for our own sakes as well as for the honour of the parish. But it is idle to speak of a desire to retain the Schools if that desire does not stir us to make such effort and sacrifice as is necessary if it is to be fulfilled. It would indeed be a lamentable reproach if the result of all the gifts and labours of the past; this Parish Church with its daughter Churches; the revenues attached to the Benefice by reason of which parishioners have hitherto been entirely absolved from contributing one farthing towards the stipends of the Clergy; the Schools that have been built and maintained very largely by the munificence of one family—I say it would indeed be a lamentable reproach if the result of all this munificence of the past should be the production of a generation that showed itself incapable, in easier and more luxurious days, of rising to any serious act of sacrifice when the call was made upon it.

What is the history of our Schools? Briefly this:—Early in the last century, when the State neither did nor cared anything about Education, Schools were built in this parish, in some cases entirely, in others very largely, by the generosity of the Glynne family. The Boys' School was erected in 1816. In the same year the Tithe Barn belonging to the Benefice was adapted, so far as was possible with such a building, for School purposes, and has been so used ever since, first for girls and infants, and then, since the seventies, for girls alone. In 1825 Broughton School was built within a year of the erection of the Church. The same thing happened at St. John's in 1844. These four Schools are privately owned, and their owners might at any time close them for Day School purposes if they so desired. Three out of the four were built by the Glynne family, and were maintained by that family for a length of time. In 1840, 1848, and 1856, the present Schools in Buckley (then an integral part of this parish, just as Broughton, St. John's, and Sealand are to-day) were erected; the first entirely, the others largely by the contributions of the same family. So things continued until the passing of the first great Education Act of 1870 in Mr. Gladstone's first Ministry. That Act brought about the first Education Crisis in this parish, just as the Act of 1902 has brought about an even greater crisis. There are those here to-day who can well remember what happened on that occasion; how it was mainly if not entirely owing to the personal advocacy of Mr. Gladstone himself that the existing Schools were saved to the Church, and how the parishioners by united effort built the Supplementary Schools that were needed at Shotton, Ewloe, Sandycroft, and in Hawarden itself.

A still greater crisis is upon us now, and the future character and welfare of this parish is dependent upon our answer. Everywhere school fabrics are required to be brought up to a proper standard of efficiency and sanitary condition. We have travelled a long way in educational and sanitary knowledge since the time when the Hawarden Boys' School was erected. No one who had any practical knowledge of School life and School work would tell us that our fabrics are in a satisfactory condition to-day. Indeed, we ought to be profoundly dissatisfied with them as they now are, and we owe it to those who laboured so hard for them in the past to deal with them thoroughly and without delay.

Let anyone visit a modern Elementary School, such as he might find in Wrexham or Liverpool, and then come back and see the conditions under which our Teachers and our Boys and Girls in Hawarden itself are working. He would see how manifestly unfair it is to them that such conditions should continue—how impossible to expect it can any longer be permitted. There is no body of public servants in this Country doing a more splendid and responsible work than the Elementary School Teachers. In their hands lies very largely the moulding of the generation that is to succeed us, more largely than perhaps some of them suspect. They are entitled to our warmest sympathy and to our best support. Neither is there a greater duty incumbent upon us all than to see that our children have in their School surroundings, in which so many of the critical years of life are passed, the best possible chances of growing up to be good and useful citizens in body, mind and spirit. I say without hesitation, that at present in our Parish, neither Teachers nor Scholars have what is really due to them. Do not misunderstand me or think that I am making any kind of reflection upon the past. Far from it. Nobody knows better than I do how courageously and persistently the late Rector struggled for the Schools both in maintenance and enlargement: what toil and anxiety it involved. I will go further and say that but for his courage and persistence, the Schools would not be ours to-day. But owing to the heavy burden of annual maintenance, which now is entirely removed from our shoulders, it was not possible to do things then in such a way as to mean finality. That is what we ought to aim at now. I want to look it fairly and fully in the face in the case of all our Schools, and in the case of each and all so to deal as that they may be numbered among the best Schools in this County; a happiness and comfort to those who are obliged to spend their days within them, and a just source of pride to ourselves and to those who come after us. If I have any knowledge about anything, I can really claim to know something about the practical working of Schools, and what they ought to be. I have had the closest daily experience for upwards of 20 years, and have spent an immense amount of time and labour on the subject in the last 8 of those years. I think I may say I know better than anyone else what is the true condition of the Hawarden Schools, and what ought to be done. I am confident we can carry it through if the parishioners will support me. I want at

any rate to make my own position perfectly clear to all. I was well aware of the impending crisis months before I came into residence. Indeed it was because I knew of the difficulties, and felt that it might be less hard for me than for a stranger to find a way through those difficulties that made it seem right for me to come and try to carry on a work so consecrated by the toil of others. To expect me to come here, after our struggles (thank God an entirely successful one) in the daughter parish of Buckley, and negotiate the surrender of any of the Schools in the mother parish, would be to expect an impossibility. I am ready to make any personal sacrifice that lies in my power, but I am not prepared to sacrifice the Schools. With them I stand or fall.

Profoundly convinced as I am of the future welfare of this parish being vitally connected with their continuance, I could not with any sense of happiness or hopefulness attempt to discharge the duties of what is from the nature of the case, a difficult and onerous responsibility if what I regard as the central fortress for the maintenance of religion and morality is taken from me.

Can we raise £5000 amongst ourselves for this purpose? I feel almost ashamed to ask such a question as if there could be any doubt about it. Of course we can if only we have the will and set about it determined to see it through.

Will you allow me to make a suggestion as to the kind of way in which, by united effort, such a task can be faced and accomplished? There is no novelty about the plan. It has been adopted again and again and with success by others not more fortunately situated than ourselves. There are some 9000 people in this Parish. Let us spread our contribution over a period of say three years. If 500 individuals would undertake to give 10/- annually for the three years (*i.e.* a little more than 2d. weekly); if 100 would in the same way give £1; if 25 would give £2; if 20 would give £5; 10 people, £10; 5 people, £25; 3 people, £50; 4 people, £100; and one could be found ready to give £250 for four years, then our goal would be practically reached. I do not of course mean these numbers and figures to be rigidly followed. Smaller as well as larger sums would be thankfully received. I merely suggest them as lines upon which we might successfully work.

It is perfectly true that if we stand together in this matter and contribute as God has blessed us, we must not expect to receive 5% for our money. But there are investments better, more blessed and more enduring than those that add money to our income. There will be the abiding happiness of knowing that we have done our best as Christians and as Churchmen, in the gravest crisis that ever confronted us, to bring up our children in the faith we have received from our fathers.

Could we make a better resolution in this our Dedication Festival, when we recall what has been done for us in the past, a resolution more acceptable to God, more bracing to ourselves than this—that we will, with His grace assisting us, together take up this task and carry it through?

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