

THE HIERARCHY OF NEW ZEALAND ON CHRISTIAN EDUCATION.

Venerable and Beloved Brethren of the Clergy, Beloved Children of the Laity:—

In our Pastoral on the occasion of the First Provincial Council of Wellington, three years ago, we set before you a number of weighty matters for your edification, guidance and practice, and among them stood out with peculiar prominence our solicitude for the education of the laity. To-day we deem it our duty to recall your attention to some points on which we then dwelt, and to supplement them with other momentous considerations. "In all ages," we told you in that Pastoral, "a chief object of the Church's care has been popular education; and the history of her work is the history of civilization and education. In consonance with this spirit, we clearly perceive and emphatically affirm the fact that all men need education, but we steadfastly hold to the principle that a system of instruction which fails to recognize that religion is essential both to right thinking and right living is necessarily defective, and may, in a given set of circumstances, be a curse rather than a blessing. We have sought to organize and perfect our parochial schools, so that, while we assiduously train the heart and the conscience and the character, we afford ample opportunity for the requirement of secular instruction on a par with that which prevails in the best primary schools of the colony, as tested by public inspection and examination. We have also insisted, and do insist, that it is the urgent duty of priests and people to provide Catholic schools for Catholic children; because a Catholic congregation without a Catholic school is like a family without a mother. Formal service there may be, but where is the deep heart of love and wisdom? Where the power to shape and mold character? The parish church, the material building, may stand, but beware lest in time the showy temple become a monumental mockery in the midst of an unbelieving generation."

MAN IS A RELIGIOUS BEING, made such by his Creator, and any system of instruction which excludes the teaching of religious truth and morality rests upon unsound principles, and must prove hurtful to the strength and permanency of free government, particularly in an advanced democracy. The originators of the public school system of this colony had, we would fain believe, no irreligious intention. But this does not affect the necessary tendency of such instruction to produce religious indifference, and consequently to destroy the power and influence of religion; and hence, be the intention or purpose of the upholders of this system whatever you please, they are in point of fact the most effective allies of the propagators of unbelief. These latter are logical in their opposition to religious education; and since they reject all positive religious doctrines as superstitious and absurd, they are at least consistent in seeking to exclude them from the schoolroom. The Fathers of this Provincial Council—be it well known—are not opposed to universal education, nor to free education, nor to taxation for the support of schools, nor to methods and contrivances of whatever kind for the diffusion of knowledge and enlightenment through the masses of the people; but they are opposed—necessarily and unalterably opposed—to any and all systems of education which either ignore or exclude religious knowledge, since they believe and hold this knowledge to be the prime and most essential element of true human culture; and consequently that it should form the basis of instruction and discipline in the school, as in the family and in the Church. The development and molding of human character is difficult enough, even when these three centres of influence are in harmony and co-operation; but to throw them into antagonism is to undermine the work of each, and in a society where this state of things exists the Church will lose its sacredness, the family its authority, and the school, acting upon the intellectual faculties alone, will but serve to show again, as in heathenism of old, how little and helpless man is when his life is not breathed upon by love and hope and faith in higher things.

Apart from other arguments, a glance at contemporary history gives ample warrant for our reiterated as-

sertion that religion is an essential factor in primary education, because it is absolutely necessary for the welfare and preservation of society. For many centuries Europe has been in the van of civilization, and to what is she indebted for that civilization? To Christianity. Remove the cause, and you eventually remove the effect; and as Christianity departs, so will true civilization.

SOME ILLUSTRATIONS. — A remarkable proof of this contention is afforded by the great Republic of the United States of America, which looms up to the advocates of democracy as the model to be admired and imitated, but many signs indicate that Christianity is fast fading away from that highly favored land. No doubt it yet gives many tokens of its Christianity. But, on the other hand, a dark, ominous shadow shrouds its future, and one appalling fact is calculated to alarm and sadden its best friends and most enthusiastic admirers; out of 75,000,000 people only 25,000,000 profess to belong to any Christian denomination, Catholics included. Further, the startling and ever-increasing emptiness of American churches (the Catholic Church excepted), coupled with the scandalous revolt of so many ministers of religion against the authority of the Bible, and the rejection by so many of them of the doctrine of the Divinity of Jesus Christ, whom they accept merely as a religious teacher, forces upon us the dreadful conviction that what Christianity there is in that country is fast disappearing. This means that its existence as a nation is menaced. For, what right has any one to expect any other result than that which has happened elsewhere under similar circumstances? As that great man, Washington, said with prophetic warning: "Reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principles." And where national morality is not, there is national ruin. Nor are the facts wanting to support this unfavorable outlook. Not to mention two very potent causes of national decay, a corrupt literature and an immoral stage, we have three reliable indicators of the failing influence of Christianity, namely, godless education, divorce and the increase of crime. (1.) "Godless education," causing the majority of the school children never to hear a word of Christianity during the whole school week, and never to enter a place of worship on Sunday. What will be the Christianity of these future men and women? Nay, what is it now? Yet in their hands are the destinies of the United States. (2.) "Divorce," a wholesale apostasy from the spirit and law of Christianity—something shameful and appalling. The United States, with seven times less population than Europe, have one hundred thousand more divorces. (See Mulhall's "Dictionary of Statistics.") That was fifteen years ago; and since then the descent into the abyss is immeasurably deeper. Remember that the world-wide Empire of Rome, the most stupendous structure ever reared by human genius and endurance, dated its destruction from the multiplication of its divorces. (3.) "Increase of Crime." In 1890 alone 3,467 murders. The Chicago "Tribune," quoted by Mulhall, says that in the six years between 1884 and 1890 there were no less than 14,770 murders and 975 lynchings, which, of course, are murders in an aggravated and atrocious form, with the guilt of blood on all the abettors. And in these murders the home element largely predominated over the foreign. Out of 4,425 white homicidal criminals in 1901, 3,157 were born Americans, and 1,218 foreign born; while, of course, the 2,729 negro murderers were natives to the soil. If the negroes had been Catholicized they would not now be regarded as little better than wild beasts. How is the danger ahead to be averted? Not by the churches, which are becoming empty.

"Let men think, and their reason will guide them aright. Each man is a law unto himself, quite competent to formulate his religious views and frame his code of morals." That is the present national religion, if there is any. This assumption decidedly flatters self-conceit, but it flatly contradicts reason and experience. Each man thinks out his own religion. Can the weary, grimy, toiling laborer, stumbling home to a

wretched tenement and a swarm of squalling children to snatch a few hours' rest for to-morrow's toil, do any independent thinking on the abstruse matters of morality or religion? Can the mechanic, the clerk, the merchant, or even the lawyer or physician, absorbed by so many anxieties, sit down and ponder the deep mysteries of the spiritual world? Take men as they are, led by passion, engrossed in business, apathetic from constitutional sluggishness, and averse to anything outside the domain of sense, though they may acquire some religious information, there are a thousand chances to one that they will not bestir themselves at all, while there are more chances that if they do they will blunder in the most elementary truth. But, above all, there are mysteries unfathomable to man, for which instruction is absolutely indispensable. Do we not need a policeman to guide us in a great, strange city? Does not the meanest handicraft, as well as the most learned profession, require an instructor? Surely, then, the acquisition of the sublime truths of religion demands similar instruction. This is in the very nature of things. We cannot evolve knowledge out of helpless ignorance. The plant and flower in the cold earth need the sunshine from above; so the darkness of man's mind must have the sunlight of the knowledge of his fellowman, and of preceding generations; and in many things God Himself must illumine.

WHO, THEN, WILL TEACH religion, and where? The Church, the home, or the school? Not the Church—for the churches are fast becoming empty; and the Sunday school is woefully deficient, especially when the home is indifferent or irreligious. The home will not, and cannot, for want of zeal, time and ability. There remains only the school. But, they say, we must not teach religion in the public schools, because that would be tampering with the Palladium of our democratic liberty. Why, there can be no true liberty without religion, and godless schools are a descent into paganism, with its horrible and necessary tyranny of soul and body. Instead of the Palladium of liberty, irreligion and irreligious schools become the fatal engine, the "wooden horse," which will destroy the city. Some people are wildly enthusiastic about the public schools on the groundless assumption of their superiority. This is a delusion. For it is conceded by the best judges of the popular education in the United States, where the public schools have had a long and most favored trial, that their "popular education is superficial," and does not develop mind and character. On the public school system the average American is strangely superstitious; might we not say the same of the Colonial? Yet what is the fact? Catholic schools, as a rule, everywhere, are not below grade. Catholics all over this colony, though unfairly burdened by school taxes for other men's children, have been conscientiously compelled to burden themselves besides with heavy outlays of their own. Aided by large numbers of religious men and women, who have without pecuniary compensation consecrated themselves to the work, they have built and they support efficient schools on a par with those of the States, and, while they form honest and enlightened citizens, and guarantee their good citizenship by all the light and aid of religion, they save the State and taxpayer large sums of money annually. In so doing, Catholicity, far from conflicting with the patriotic spirit, fosters and protects it. Is an Irishman less Irish because he is a Catholic? An Englishman less English—a Spaniard less Spanish, a Frenchman less French, because he is a Catholic? On the contrary, their nationality is intensified because of their faith; for Catholicity inculcates patriotism, not as a mere sentiment, but as a duty; and if a New Zealander is a Catholic, or rather because he is one, he not only does not yield to any in his love of his native land, but, impelled by the teaching of the Church, will be more loyal and more self-sacrificing in time of peace or stress of war than others who are not of this faith.

The Catholic Church—we wish this to be clearly and emphatically understood by all classes—has no design on the public schools. She is satisfied to leave them as they are "for all who wish them;" but she

does not want, and she will not have for her children, in the period of their defenseless childhood, an education which she knows will ultimately make them a curse to their country by robbing them of those principles of morality which are indispensable and pure men and women. She has lost too many men by contact with irreligion; she has lived too long in the world not to be aware that religion is necessary to prevent the ruin of a nation, and she has too many horrible examples in the crimes of apostate governments of the day to allow her to sit idly by without a strenuous attempt to prevent similar disasters here. She will not be satisfied with the odious hours after school which in the child's mind makes religion penal, but she wants the atmosphere of her schools to be such that religion will enter as a motive and a guide of what is to be done or avoided. She wants the child to begin to be what it ought to be in after life, honest, pure, faithful in its duty to God and men, as the light of religion directs, and as her sacrament helps assist the child to become. She does not want the child to fancy that religion is an affair of Sunday, and has nothing to do with the rest of the week. Faith is not truth alone, but life.

SEPARATE SCHOOLS. — But we are told in positive and aggressive tones: "Separate schools are absolutely out of the question. What we want is homogeneity of education to blend the diverse nationalities of the land into one common New Zealandism." We reply The homogeneity of education is absurd; it is undemocratic; it is un-Christian and irreligious. As well try to make the forest trees have the same sized leaves; or to make all men belong to the same political party, pursue the same occupation, live in the same kind of homes, wear the same style of dress, think the same thoughts, and reach the same conclusions with the same methods. Is not your great social desire the production of dead levels? Besides, who assures you that your type of the homogeneous is correct? And lastly, why are you continually proclaiming that your aim is to develop individuality, while in the same breath you demand homogeneity? The two qualities are contradictory. You are blowing hot and cold at the same time.

Again, the scheme is "undemocratic"—violently so. If you must have homogeneity, close all expensive private schools, which are so many sacred and inviolable preserves, intended as they are for the children of the rich; or dismiss your private tutor or governess, or be ready to let the public official knock at your door and inquire if what he or she teaches corresponds in time and matter with the programme of the State. If your rich man does not send his children to the public school lest they should sit side by side with the children of his servants, or of the mechanic, or the laborer, why should not we Catholics be allowed to withdraw our children for greater than social or sanitary reasons? Or does the scheme propose that only the children of the poor should be thus homogeneously huddled together? If so, it is class legislation; it is undemocratic and unjust.

Let us state the unvarnished truth. The homogeneity brought about by these godless schools is a homogeneity, a sameness of irreligion; a practical negation of all Christian beliefs during five consecutive days of every week of the child's life, with nothing adequate to counteract it on Sunday; for these children, like their parents, are not churchgoers. It is the canceling of Christianity from the life of the nation.

Again, we Catholics teach our children the same things that are taught in the public schools, and oftentimes teach them better, and add over and above of our own volition, and at our own expense, an element which not only improves their characters as men and women, but which is absolutely necessary to the country's salvation; we base their patriotism on a more solid foundation; while you are compelled to accept any teacher that may be foisted on you by political or other influence, whether he be a Christian or a scoffer, and about whose manner of life we have only your guarantee, which we possibly may not value, we can select those of whose abilities and exalted character we are almost absolutely sure; you are guided in your choice by men whose whole time is

mostly taken up in commercial pursuits or political schemes, while we are enjoying the privilege of the learning and experience of those whose whole life is not only devoted but consecrated to the work; with all that we are perfectly willing to admit Government inspection either of the structure of our schools or as regards the requirements of hygiene, or also of the studies (barring, of course, religion, with which the State has nothing to do). Why, then, we ask, when we are conferring such inestimable advantages on the State, which even those who are not friendly to us acknowledge, why should we not get the benefit of the school tax which we pay to the State? That we are Catholics is none of your business, but that we are New Zealanders ought to secure us our rights. The United States separated from England because they were taxed without representation. We Catholics, in regard to the education funds, are left without the power of determining how the taxes levied on us shall be applied; nay, our money is given to somebody else. Yet we are not criminals, but, as a rule, honest, hard-working men and women, for whom every shilling counts, who have the true interest of our country at heart, who never can get away from it like our rich friends, who have never stopped at any sacrifices to bring up our children well; and if we have spent thousands and thousands of pounds for the education which the wisest men in this and every other land, Catholics and non-Catholics, admit to be not merely the best, but the only safeguard of our country, because it inculcates religion, why should we not be fairly and squarely dealt with, and get the benefit of what is levied on us for education? Such a fair distribution to us is quite feasible. England, Germany, Protestant nations, have denominational schools supported by the public purse. With them education without religion is inconceivable. In the several hundred neutral or mixed schools in Germany religion is part of the curriculum. The same holds good for colleges or gymnasia, where religious education is obligatory.

Religion is indispensable for the salvation of the nation. Now it is not taught to the vast majority of the people by the churches. It can be taught only in the schools. And the religion which must be taught is not a common medley of all religion, or a neutral religion, which the most competent authorities pronounce to be "fatuous," and, after being tried, a miserable failure. Lastly, it is beyond all question that the establishment of separate religious schools is feasible; for the most intensely Protestant nations in the world insist upon them; have no difficulty in adjusting themselves to the diversity of creeds; and have found by experience that instead of dividing the country they weld it together, by permitting men to have their dogmatic differences, and thus inciting these very divergences to send from every direction their multitudinous streams that pour down from a thousand different sources, and swell each in its own way the great common current of morality, which thus reaches every condition of society. Something is enormously wrong in our public educational system, and must eventually be righted.

PUBLIC OPINION in this country is not yet prepared to redress this great grievance, and seems callous to our efforts to bring it to a sense of the glaring injustice which the present public school system inflicts upon one-seventh of the Colony's best and law-abiding citizens. But we need not despair; taught by sad experience, society in many places is becoming alive to the evils brought upon it by the non-religious character of the schools, and a change will come day certainly come. As far as our schools are concerned, we have often indicated an easy course for the Government to satisfy us. It would be to acknowledge our schools as public schools, paying them, under Government inspection and examination, for their results in purely secular instruction; leaving their religious teaching entirely to ourselves. By this proposal we claim "an equal wage for equal work;" we claim that public moneys contributed by all classes of the community, from whatever source they come, shall be paid equally to all schools which fulfil the standard educational requirements; we claim that no one

should be compelled to pay taxes in support of schools of which he cannot conscientiously make use; that no one should be fined by reason of his religious opinion; that schools doing the common work of the nation must be placed, as far as secular instruction is concerned, on the same basis, and not be fined because they give instruction in one extra subject—religion.

Meanwhile, we enjoin our Catholics to be registered, and to be ready to take an intelligent interest in all public matters; we enjoin them to exercise most faithfully and conscientiously their rights and discharge their duties as good citizens.

Any candidate of our faith who by word or act opposes our just claims in educational matters is wholly undeserving of our support, and should be treated as an enemy. As for non-Catholic candidates, many earnest-minded men recognize the injustice done to the Catholic body, and are willing to redress this injustice without interfering with the present public system of instruction; we exhort all Catholic voters to give their support to such honorable and fair-minded men.

Not a few of our non-Catholic friends, who looked some years ago with folded arms at the introduction and progress of secular education, are to-day making an effort to remove from themselves the reproach which they had deservedly incurred. They are striving for the introduction of Scripture lessons or Bible reading into the State schools. This we deem a decidedly ineffectual remedy, for the absence of religious education; we also consider it as dangerous to Catholic children, because if any State school happened to have a teacher of another denomination strongly attached to the tenets of his own Church, there is every reason to believe (human nature being what it is) that he would not unconsciously use the opportunity of inculcating the special religious principles which he himself liked, and which he believed were contained in the Scripture lessons. Catholic children, as well as others, would come under such teaching, and therefore would rightly object to the introduction of such lessons within school hours. If such lessons were given outside school hours, we should not think of opposing them, provided that Catholic children were not affected. On the contrary, we should rejoice that non-Catholic parents were thus enabled to adjust the course of instruction to their requirements. Our great and supreme aim is to keep the faith of our children intact and stainless. A conscience clause would be no effectual protection to our children, because, as we know by experience in the schools of the North of Ireland, where there are people of mixed religions, the people might openly defy the rule respecting the conscience clause, stating (as they did in the above locality) that they could not conscientiously request any child not to attend whilst the Scripture lessons were being read.

In conclusion, we again remind all Catholics of this Colony that they are bound to manfully follow their conscience and do their duty by sending all their children to schools where religion can have its rightful place and influence. No parish is complete till it has schools adequate to the needs of its children, and the pastor and people of a parish should feel that they have not accomplished their entire duty until the want is supplied. But we must continue to perfect our schools; and, with its able and devoted teachers, no Catholic school need be inferior to any other school. We must not relax our efforts till our schools have reached the highest educational excellence. With these cheerful hopes, and with hearts full of charity towards you and wholly devoted to your service, we fervently pray that the blessing of the Almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, may descend upon you and abide in you for ever.

Given at Wellington, on this 19th day of March, in the year of Our Lord 1902.

†FRANCIS REDWOOD, S.M., Archbishop of Wellington and Metropolitan.

†JOHN JOSEPH GRIMES, S.M., Bishop of Christchurch.

†MICHAEL VERNON, Bishop of Dunedin.

†GEORGE M. LENIHAN, Bishop of Auckland.

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