

criticism—is quietly sneaked out of view of the free and independent elector. (c) The text-book (an importation by the way) is 'an emasculated caricature of the Bible'; it throws overboard, for instance, the history of the Virgin-Birth of the Saviour of the World—a concession to the 'views' of certain lay and clerical members of a Victorian Commission who drew it up, and who, as it turns out, do not believe in one of the fundamental mysteries of the Christian faith. (d) The unsuspecting elector is, moreover, not informed that this Bowdlerised and mutilated compilation of Scripture lessons is taken from the Protestant (Authorised) Version of the Bible; that it is packed with dogmatic teaching and bristling with unauthorised doctrinal headings; and that 'in what is omitted, as well as in the general tone of what is expressed, the lessons are made as Protestant as they could well be made in the circumstances.' (e) The term 'teaching,' too, is a word of Protean meaning. It may mean anything and everything from the merest grammatical explanations, on to the most exaggerated forms of unscientific 'higher criticism,' and the wrangling contradictions of Reformed denominationalism. And (f) underneath it all there lies, all the way, the bed-rock principle of Protestantism—the all-sufficiency of the Bible, a doctrine that is rejected by the vast majority of all that bear the Christian name.

Mr. Sidey's voting-paper is, briefly, a flagrant and clumsy attempt to hoodwink and mislead electors. It places before them, not one false issue, but several. It is studiously vague, reticent, and ambiguous. It amply merits the following severe reproof administered by our Hierarchy to another and substantially similar reference: 'It is difficult to avoid the conviction that the form of ballot-paper to which we allude was deliberately intended to confuse the electors of the Colony, and to snatch a victory by a ruse de guerre rather than by a straightforward appeal to the country on a clear-cut and definite issue.' Questions involving rights of conscience should, for reasons already stated, never be submitted to popular vote. But if this matter of the Bible-in-schools should ever be forced by the clamor of clerical politicians upon the democracy of New Zealand, it should be on the one fair and straight and honest issue that lies at the root of the whole question. We Catholics have no love for the secularism of our Education Act. But, as our Bishops said, 'we would rather see it retained in its integrity until modifications are forthcoming which would confer a substantial benefit on the rising generation, without endangering the faith and exasperating the feelings of a large class of children who frequent our public schools.'

Notes

State 'Divinity' Degrees

An uninterested House is being bored just now with Sir Maurice O'Rorke's fatuous Bill to enable the Senate of the State University of New Zealand 'to confer, on examination, the degrees of Doctor and Bachelor of Divinity, and the same ad eundem degrees also.' Section 4 of the Bill is a gem of purest ray serene. Here it is:—

'It shall be the duty of the Senate as soon as possible to frame the curriculum for divinity degrees, such curriculum to be so framed as not to favor any particular denomination, but to suit all religious denominations; provided that, in prescribing the subjects of examination and the course of study, no special favor shall be shown to any religious denomination, and no religious test shall be imposed on professor, lecturer, or student.'

We have already stated our objections to Sir Maurice's preposterous scheme. It will be appropriate to repeat the substance of them now.

(1) On what principle of statecraft has the Civil Government, which controls the New Zealand University, the moral right to drag theology within its domain? And—being a secular institution for secular purposes only—how and when did it acquire competency to draw up and regulate, whether by itself or by the University Senate—any curriculum of religious teaching, or to reward proficiency therein by official distinctions? And if it possesses this right for our highest State school, why not for the middle and primary schools as well? Moreover, if it has the right of indirect religious teaching (namely, by setting up or adopting standards of theology, testing candidates therein, and awarding State distinctions for proficiency), on what grounds is it to be denied the right to put on the white 'choker,' turn parson, and impart direct religious teaching? (2) But let us suppose, just for argument's sake, that such right and competency exist (and they emphatically do not) in the Government. How is it to exercise them, even through a University Senate, in the circumstances of this country? Sir Maurice and the Senate may square the circle; they may trisect a right angle; they may discover perpetual motion; they may even find the mummy of the cow that jumped over the moon. But it is not in the power of human wit or wisdom to discover or evolve a curriculum of theology that shall be 'so framed as not to favor any particular denomination, but to suit all religious denominations.' Not to mention Jews and others who, as citizens, have equal rights with Sir Maurice and his friends in this matter, the 'curriculum of divinity' which would 'suit all religious denominations' of Christians alone, might be easily engraved on the rim of a three-penny piece. And that would not be 'divinity'; for divinity is a science, not a mere hazy proposition or two. It is the science of divine things—the queen and mistress of the sciences. The conferring of sham degrees for Sir Maurice's sham 'divinity' would turn graduation into a farce worthy of Barataria. And—not to mention 'all religious denominations'—any and every attempt to stow down even the Christian creeds of New Zealand into a jellified residuum could, at the very best, only result in a few vague and lifeless philosophical propositions, and in the loss of real and intelligent faith.

But there are other aspects to Sir Maurice O'Rorke's preposterous proposal. (3) Any and every scheme of State divinity degrees would inevitably lead to contention and strife. And (4) It would compel conscientious objectors to pay their share of the cost of those April-day degrees. The injustice of such a principle in New Zealand is not affected by the amount of the enforced levy. Whether it is a penny or a pound, it is a wrong to compel objectors to contribute for 'the teaching of the theology of faiths in which they do not believe. Sir Maurice O'Rorke's Bill seems to have been dictated by memories of the State Church and the State Protestant University in which he was brought up in the Green Isle long ago. We want no Established Church in New Zealand. And his Bill is the thin end of the wedge of Establishment. It is the upstairs variant of the Bible-in-schools scheme.

Ulster

A New Zealand religious contemporary publishes—no doubt in perfect good faith—certain interesting bits of misinformation for the edification of its readers. The 'authority' for some of these is none other than the oft-exposed No-Popery zealot, Michael McCarthy, Esquire. The object is to point the moral and adorn the tale of the general chuckleheadedness and perversity of 'Papists'; and the story runneth in general substance thus: (1) That Ulster is the wealthiest part of Ireland; (2) that its industrial success is due to 'the Irish Scots, or the Scots Irish'; and (3) that it sets an example of virtue and 'the active practice of pure Christianity' to the parts of Ireland that are infested

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