

PASTORAL LETTER

OF

The Archbishop and Bishops of New Zealand

TO

The Clergy and Laity of their Charge.

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 civilisation 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 recognise 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 organise 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 acquirement 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 mould 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 moulding 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 heathendom 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 assertion 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 civilisation, and to what is she indebted for that civilisation? To Christianity. Remove the cause, and you eventually remove the effect; and as Christianity departs so will true civilisation. 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 Churches 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 anyone 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 facts wanting to support this unfavourable 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 15 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 3467 murders. The Chicago *Tribune*, quoted by Mulhall, says that in the six years between 1881 and 1889 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 murderers the home element largely predominated over the foreign. Out of 4425 white homicidal criminals in 1901, 3157 were born Americans, and 1213 foreign born; while, of course, the 2729 Negro murderers were natives to the soil. If the Negroes had been Catholicised 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, toil-spent 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 can not, 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