

taken up by modern rationalists and agnostics who reject the Bible as the depository of revelation and 'abjure dogmatic truth.' A totally different stand is also made upon Bible teaching even by denominations 'who take God's revelation as it stands.' The various Protestant creeds reject the living authority of the Catholic Church and adopt, instead, various methods of private interpretation of the Sacred Word—"the most prolific source of division and religious disunion. Nor, indeed," added his Grace, "need we go beyond the members of the Commission to find proofs of the lamentable divisions and differences which the reading of Scripture with private interpretation, or with an unreliable internal standard, is capable of producing."

'The Commission,' said the Archbishop, 'was composed of men who all, in some sense, recognised the authority of the Bible. They must be regarded as favorable exponents of the results of Scriptural interpretation made according to one or other of the methods to which I have referred. And yet how lamentable are the differences and how wide the divisions that exist amongst them! Even in regard to what must be looked upon as the most important truths of religion—such as the doctrine of the Trinity, the Virgin Birth of the Saviour, the Divinity of CHRIST, the inspiration and authority of the Scripture, the Atonement, the constitution of the Church established by CHRIST on earth—on these and other revealed truths an impassable gulf lies between them. How could it be hoped, then, that suitable Scripture lessons could be drawn up by that heterogeneous Commission, or taught with safety in State schools to Catholic and non-Catholic children alike?' The Scripture manual of that Commission—which it is now seriously proposed to place upon the curriculum of our New Zealand public schools—was of a singularly unsatisfactory kind. Their Scripture lessons—which have been accepted by the Wellington Conference—are the result of endless discussion, amendment, and rescission, with the word 'compromise' written large across the face of every page. They are supposed to be consistent with belief in and denial of the doctrine of the Trinity, with belief in and denial of the Incarnation and Divinity of Christ, and with belief in and denial of His Atonement for the sins of the world. In other words, the Victorian Commission's Scripture lessons are (as the Archbishop of Melbourne said) deemed by their compiler to be consistent with 'belief in and denial of Christianity as it is ordinarily accepted and professed by the general body of Christians.' And he adds this damning bit of information: 'By the use of unauthorised headings, favorable selections, capital letters, and italics, an effort has been made, if not to reconcile the jarring elements, at least to give expression to the various views that prevailed among the members of the Commission.'

The Commission might, in fact, be compared to the house which was so divided against itself that it did not know which way to fall. But on one—though only one—point its members were in cordial agreement: in their determination to make the lessons as Protestant as possible by using King JAMES's Protestant version of the Bible, with all its heavy burden of inaccuracies and errors, down even to the exploded Protestant termination of the Lord's Prayer, which is not found either in the Douay (Catholic) translation, nor in the Revised (Protestant) version. 'What is true of the text,' says the Archbishop, 'is also true, to a great extent, of the suggested hymns and forms of prayer—namely, that, in what is omitted, as well as in the general tone of what is expressed, they help to make the whole volume as Protestant as it could well be made in the circumstances.' Such is the manual that—with a 'conscience clause' which, as Victoria's experience has amply proved, could give no practical protection to Catholic children—the members of the recent Wellington Conference have adopted and seriously proposed for use in the State schools of New Zealand. And from its tangled texts—torn from their context—our teachers are supposed to perform a feat of pedagogical legerdemain which its compilers failed to accomplish—namely, to dose the young idea with 'historical and ethical' truth without revealing their own beliefs or unbeliefs! The age of miracles is by no means past.

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Notes

Our Divorce Laws

It is easy to go slithering down a slippery slope. And the path of divorce, like the descent of Avernus, is a smooth and easy one. Our Divorce Act of 1898 sandpapered and greased the track, and made it so easy that 85 couples went down it in 1900, as against 32 in 1898, before it came into operation. We are following fast in the evil track of legislation which is working such fearful havoc upon domestic ties and family life in America. In some States of the Union there is, happily, a revulsion against the scandals of the divorce-while-you-wait laws. The legislature of California, for instance, has (according to one of our exchanges) 'passed a Bill which suspends the action of a divorce decree for twelve months. This object was attempted by a former legislature, but the "Reno" and "tug-boat marriages" defeated the provision. It is said that the present measure is efficacious. Our legislators have in this matter taken a step in advance. They have stopped the giddy waltz from the divorce court to the license office. Nothing has scandalised the people more than the marriages following so quickly on the heels of divorce. Hardened as the public is it could not stomach these frequent and flagrant outrages on decency. Of course,' our American contemporary adds, 'the measure does not abate the nuisance. It merely minimises the smell.'

A Nut to Crack

In last Saturday's 'Tuapeka Times' (Lawrence), Mr. Hugh Craig, who lately returned from a trip round the world, describes as follows Salt Lake City, the cradle and capital of Mormonism:

'The city is alive with industries. Everybody seemed to be occupied and very busy; there were no such indications of poverty as you see in European cities that boast a much higher state of theoretical morality and a loftier form of religion. Mormonism, even as it exists to-day, may not . . . be able to stand the test of criticism and examination; it may indeed be intrinsically bad and as a religion a very unholy and unlovely thing altogether. But from physical and material and worldly points of view it seems to pan out all right, and as it is represented by the people and the homes that came under my observation it seems to agree very well indeed with the Mormons.'

Here is another nut for those callow pulpiteers to crack who maintain that the possession of riches by a community is confirmation strong as proofs of Holy Writ or right faith and godly life. 'If I was asked,' says Josh Billings, 'what is the chief end of man now a day, I should immediately reply "Ten per cent." Only those who are badly bitten by the ten per cent. spirit and innocent of all knowledge of the histories of ancient pagan Babylon, Egypt, Greece, and Rome, could seriously adduce the possession of wealth by a people as an evidence of the truth of its religion. And yet this is a standing argument of a class of disputants who have aired their views from time to time in the New Zealand press. There is only one place in the New Testament where a promise of riches is made: it is where Satan showed the Saviour 'all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, and said to Him: "All these will I give Thee, if, falling down, Thou wilt adore me."'

Happy though Married

Brillat-Savarin's 'Physiologie du Gout' is one of the most curious books ever published. It is the prose epic of gastronomy. One of his sayings is to the effect that the happiness of nations depends upon the way in which their food is cooked. For this reason there was, perhaps, a good deal of philosophy as well as of common-sense in the advice said to have been given by a knowing matron to a young bride as to the secret of happiness in her married life: 'Feed the brute!' An American exchange gives some quaint advice of a more extended kind on the same subject that may be of interest to our lady readers:—

'First be careful in your selection. Do not choose one who is too young, and take only such varieties as have been reared in a good sound atmosphere. When once the selection has been made, let the past remain forever settled, and give the entire thought to the future.

Some insist on keeping the husband in a pickle, while others prefer hot water. It does not seem to be

GEO. T WHITE

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