

BISHOP CLEARY, GLADSTONE, AND THE BIBLE-IN-SCHOOLS PARTY

The following letter appeared in the *Wellington Evening Post* of April 7:—

Sir,—May I, with your good leave, deal in a separate letter with two matters, first introduced by you, which do not strictly belong to the present phase of the discussion on the education question?

1. In your issue of March 16, you unintentionally did a wrong to Gladstone, by omitting a number of important qualifying words from a letter of his, and thus making him appear to be an advocate of the banishment of religion, by Act of Parliament, from the schools. You now correctly quote the following extract from another letter of his, that of November 4, 1869, to Earl de Grey: 'Why not adopt frankly the principle that the State or the local authority should provide the secular teaching, and either leave the option to the rate-payers to go beyond this sine qua non, if they think fit, within the limits of the conscience clause, or else simply leave the parties themselves to find Bible and other religious education from voluntary sources.' And you say, editorially: 'The second of these alternatives squares exactly with the policy which New Zealand adopted in the Education Act of 1877.'

Let us see. The first alternative suggested by Gladstone was this: (a) the provision of secular instruction from the public funds; (b) local option for the rate-payers to add religion (at the expense of the rates) if they so chose; (c) a conscience clause for dissidents.

The second alternative suggested by Gladstone was this (a) the provision of secular instruction from the public funds; (b) the parties interested in the schools 'to find Bible and other religious education from voluntary sources.' This squares exactly with what Catholics have been so long demanding in every part of Australasia. If the New Zealand Act of 1877 had accorded us this right, there would have been no 'religious difficulty,' so far as we are concerned. Gladstone's letter to Earl de Grey is given in Morley's *Life of Gladstone*, vol. I., p. 934. There is not in it so much as the breath or hint of a suggestion that the 'Bible and other religious education' should, as in New Zealand, be banished, by Act of Parliament, from the working hours of the schools. No such proposal was contemplated by Gladstone. On the contrary, his measure of a few months later included provision for religious instruction, 'the teaching of the Scriptures,' and the Apostles' Creed, as a regular part of the school work, and the doubling of 'the old parliamentary grant to the denominational schools'; and Morley shows that in 1843, 1853, and in 1863, as well as in 1869 and 1870, the great Liberal statesman was a strong advocate of religion in the schools (*Life of Gladstone*, vol. I., pp. 933, 934, 937, 938, 940, 941). But even if Gladstone were, instead, an advocate of the legalised ostracism of religion from the schools, his action would not in the least relieve you of the burden of justifying that system in the discussion at present running in your pages.

2. (a) In your issue of March 22, you refer to the State's admitted incompetency to teach religion, and you say that Dr. Cleary 'actually approves of' the "godlessness" of the State school system. Will you be good enough to show how, and in precisely what words, I 'approved' of a thing against which I have all along been in express terms protesting? (b) In the same issue, and in the same connection, you say that 'what many fierce Protestant critics have dubbed as State atheism is approved by the Roman Catholic Bishop of Auckland.' Who, pray, are these 'many fierce Protestant critics'? And what, precisely, have they 'dubbed as State atheism'? And when, where, and in what particular form of words, have they so dubbed it? And when and where, and in what terms, textually, have I 'approved' of the thing which they have 'dubbed as State atheism'?

(c) In your issue of March 29, you furthermore say: 'The exclusion of religious teaching from the State schools is denounced by the Bible-in-schools Party as "godless," but this species of "godlessness" is approved by Dr. Cleary on a ground which we are glad to be able to share with him—viz., that the State has no right to teach religion.' Let me here say that I do not accept, as solutions of the school question, any of the schemes thus far submitted by the Bible-in-schools League. They believe in the competency of the State to teach religion in the schools. But neither they, nor the present writer, have proclaimed that the failure or refusal of the State to teach religion there, really constitutes the godlessness which we all alike deplore. If our public school system legally admitted into its working hours any real form of religion—no matter of what kind, no matter by whom imparted—no League or 'Party' would be so chuckle-headed as to apply to it the odious, but now well-merited, term 'godless.' But I am heart and soul with the Bible-in-schools League in denouncing WHAT REALLY CONSTITUTES THE GOD-LESSNESS of our secular system—namely, THE EXPULSION OF GOD AND RELIGION, BY ACT OF PARLIAMENT, FROM THE WORKING HOURS OF THAT SYSTEM. When you represent me as 'approving' of the form of godlessness which the Bible-in-schools Party denounce in our secular system, you thereby represent me as 'approving' of the very form of godlessness which I

denounce as strongly as they—in other words, you represent me as 'approving' of our secular system as I find it. In all these things you do me a grave, though, I feel sure, unintended wrong.

In your issue of March 16 (last paragraph), I protested against your assumption 'that, unless the State itself directly teaches religion in the schools, there is no possibility of such teaching being imparted there at all.' Again, in your issue of March 22—in the very paragraph from which you were quoting above—I issued four challenges to you to make good that undue assumption of yours. These challenges you ignored. Here is one of the four—arising, like the rest, out of the doctrine that the State is not competent to teach religion: '(c) On what Christian principle does it, furthermore, follow that it would be immoral for the State to empower those who are competent and willing—as in Germany, Belgium, England, Canada, and so many other countries—to make religion what it has been from time immemorial, the very soul of education?'—Yours, etc.,

* HENRY W. CLEARY, D.D.,
Bishop of Auckland.

March 31.

FEDERATED CATHOLIC CLUBS OF NEW ZEALAND

The following is the annual report of the executive of the Federated Catholic Clubs of New Zealand, to be presented at the tenth annual conference, which opens at Christchurch on April 15:—

Since last annual Conference three new clubs have been admitted to the Federation—viz., Otahuhu, Queens-town, and Waimate. It is to be regretted that, during the year, the Timaru Club found it necessary to disband. The executive has, however, reasonable hopes that this club will be re-established during the incoming year. There are now twenty-three clubs affiliated to the Federation—namely, Auckland, Onehunga, Otahuhu, Thames, Napier, New Plymouth, Hastings, Palmerston North, Wellington, St. Anne's (Wellington South), Blenheim, Westport (St. Canice's), Hokitika, Greymouth (St. Columba's), Christchurch, Ashburton, Temuka, Waimate, Dunedin, South Dunedin, Queenstown, Gore, and Invercargill. The executive is in communication with the following clubs, with a view to their affiliation:—Newton (Auckland), Waihi, Gisborne, Mania, Oamaru, and Wanganui—the last two clubs having been re-formed. Efforts are being made to establish clubs in Levin and Taihape. Judging by the lack of correspondence and reports from several of the affiliated clubs, they have not led a very active existence during the past season, and these clubs are enjoined to infuse more zeal into their efforts during the forthcoming term. During the year your Executive has awarded diplomas as follows:—For oratory—Messrs. F. O'Gorman (Westport), J. C. Carroll (Auckland), A. F. O'Donoghue (Greymouth), F. Quinn and E. Anderson (Christchurch). For debating—Messrs. J. Dwyer (Auckland), J. C. Cooper (Ashburton), J. P. Boland (Onehunga), P. McNamara (Christchurch), A. Kirby (Westport), and C. L. Rasmussen (Greymouth). The Executive's offer to award diplomas for skill in oratory and in debating should have drawn a greater response than the above list represents. An improvement in this matter, for the future, is strongly urged. For essay writing (papers read at last conference)—Messrs. L. T. Reichel (Wellington) and M. J. Burgess (Ashburton). Only two papers were submitted, both of which were of average merit, and showed evidence of original thought. The Executive consequently decided to award a diploma to both contributors. Meritorious service—Messrs. R. W. Collins and E. B. L. Reade (St. Anne's), A. H. Casey and M. O'Kane (Wellington), D. O'Dwyer (Blenheim), J. Radford (Westport), A. V. Patten (Onehunga), C. Fottrell and F. Rowe (Christchurch), J. J. O'Grady (Ashburton), B. Cox (Hokitika), Thos. Knight (Timaru), C. A. Carmine and J. R. Tryon (Greymouth). During the year Messrs. B. A. Guise and W. J. O'Neill, of St. Anne's Club, were elected to the Executive, owing to the resignation of Messrs. E. J. Leydon and D. Butler. The balance sheet shows the subscriptions of several clubs to be in arrears. This is an important matter, and clubs in default should give the settlement of arrears their prompt attention. A report showing the present state of the liquidation of the affairs of the *Catholic Magazine* will be submitted to the conference. Your Executive desires to record its appreciation of the *N.Z. Tablet* Company's generous offer to set apart one page each week for the use of the Federation. Club correspondents are specially enjoined to forward their reports regularly to the editor, Dunedin, and by way of practical appreciation, an effort should be made to increase the circulation of the *Tablet* among club members. Since last conference the rules and regulations of the Federation have been revised, and all additions and amendments, passed to date, inserted. Rule books are now available at nominal cost, and every club member is urged to procure a copy and familiarise himself with the objects, aims, and constitution of the Federation. Your Executive would again urge the necessity of more enthusiastic support by individual members of affiliated clubs. Whole-hearted co-operation is absolutely essential to the ideals of Federation, which ideals will

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