

EDUCATION SYSTEM

CATHOLICS' POSITION.

The following letter from the Right Rev. Dr. Cleary, Bishop of Auckland, appeared in the *Wellington Evening Post* of April 17:—

SIR,—(1) In your issue of April 5 you assert (1) that 'religion has not been banished by the State from the school-training of children' in New Zealand. To have even a conditional argumentative value, your assertion must suppose that the ruling majorities found religion quite outside the school system, and simply refrained from inviting it to 'come in.' But you well know that they found religion in possession, as an intimate part of the school system, by legal right and old and accepted prescription. The ruling majority dispossessed religion, drove it out of the schools. They ejected it by public act—and this is the meaning of the term 'banish,' both in its personal and literal sense and in the figurative sense in which it is here correctly employed. They left the school system 'absolutely secular' (Bowen), 'entirely secular' (Act of 1877)—in dictionary phrase, they entirely 'stripped' or 'threw off' from it religion and religious teaching and influences. (2) The State (according to you) merely 'declines either to teach religion itself or to subsidise the teaching of religion.' As a matter of notorious fact, it goes vastly farther than this. It makes it an offence against the law for any person whosoever to 'teach religion' to Christ's 'little ones' during school hours—even to tell them that there is a Personal God Who sees and loves and rewards and punishes. The Act of 1877 is, in a very real way, an 'edict against religion'—in the school. It is for you, as the Christian champion of our secular system, to justify these things, if you can, on moral and educational principles which believing Christians can accept. The burden of proof is upon you. And unsupported assertion and denial are not proof.

II. At last you have something to say in defence of the secular system, from the view-point of a 'philosophy of life.' This 'philosophy' is a repeated quotation which (again without any reference) you attribute to Dr. Parker. But (1) the extract is not at all a statement of a philosophy of life—that is, of a view of the origin, duties and destiny of life. (2) I find the Parker extract in a much more extended form, in a misleading and bitter attempted 'defence' of our secular system, by a Wellington professor. Leaving aside, for the present, the question of the textual and contextual correctness of the extract, I may summarise its contents as follows: (a) Dr. Parker (as quoted) declares that 'no education can be complete' without a 'thorough religious training.' This is good Catholic doctrine. (b) Dr. Parker declares that 'it is not the business of the State' to furnish that religious training. This is likewise sound Catholic doctrine. (c) 'The State,' adds Dr. Parker, 'might very well stop when it has paid for a thorough knowledge of reading, writing, and arithmetic. Thus I would not exclude religion; I simply would not include it. And his 'reason for not including religion in rate-supported schools' is 'simply' his objection, on Nonconformist principles, 'to support it (religion) by rates and taxes, and thus by possible penalties.' (I may state that 'rate-supported schools' were built by religious and other bodies or private individuals, and received grants from public funds). Nonconformist principles apart, we have Dr. Parker here advocating what Catholics have been so long demanding in Australia and New Zealand—namely: grants-in-aid to denominational schools, but for secular knowledge only; non-interference by the State in religious instruction; non-inclusion of religious teaching among the subjects to be 'supported' by 'rates and taxes'; and absolute refusal to countenance the positive 'exclusion' of religion from education. Heaven bless your 'philosophy of life.' (3) I have before me the words of such great leaders of British Nonconformity as Matthew Henry, John Fester, Robert Hall, and Hugh Owen—all of whom stand stoutly for the essential union of religion with education. But (4) even if you had a barnful of divines huzzinga for the exclusion of religion from the schools, this would in no way 'refute' or mitigate the 'un-Christian implications' of the secular system, or relieve you of the duty of justifying it, on Christian and educational principles—if you can.

(III.) The first Godless schools were those founded, in the French Revolution, on the principles laid down by anti-Christian philosophers, such as Diderot, Voltaire, Rousseau, etc. (1) Now it is for you to show, if you can, in what substantial way (if at all) the professedly 'neutral' New Zealand secular system differs legally from the still professedly 'neutral' secular system of France. (2) To be 'neutral' in regard to religion is to refrain from taking sides thereon. Now, for Christians, religion is (a) a body of truths regarding God and our relations to Him; (b) flowing from these, a collection of duties, which have God as their primary object; and (c) a virtue of justice towards God. Will you explain just how any sane adult, or any educational system, can possibly be 'neutral' in regard to religion; or how, in this connection, there can be any possible alternative between religion and irreligion? (3) I am all along dealing with what is involved in the godless system—and not yet fully realised by its well-meaning Christian supporters. It is no justification or 'refutation' to assert that the ruling majority in New Zealand excluded religion from the schools, merely because some

people 'upon British soil' or elsewhere differed as to the kind and amount of religion to be imparted in the schools. (a) You again assume, without proof, that this is the only 'solution' of the difficulty. Why cannot New Zealand as well as Germany and so many other countries unite religion and education, without State-teaching of religion? And do you propose to suppress all land tenure because the bitter war of opinions as between the leasehold tenure and the freehold tenure? (b) And why do you assume, again without an atom of proof, that any political majority has, on Christian principles, a moral right to legislate religion out of its prescriptive and immemorial place in education.

You always get back to this: The burden of proof 'is upon you.' But the outstanding feature of this discussion, from the very first, has been your complete inability even to attempt, on Christian and educational lines, a justification of the exclusion of religion from the schools. My object in entering upon this discussion has thus been amply achieved. I thank you greatly for your space.—Yours, etc.,

* HENRY W. CLEARY, D.D.,

Bishop of Auckland.

April 8.

P.S.—Your procession of unsupported assertions of April 7, just to hand, concerns two personal side-issues, and contains at least nine errors in matters of fact—one of them the amazing statement that I term our secular system 'godless' BECAUSE it does not endow private religious schools! I have reached, if not passed, the limit allowed by you, but some of these matters will be included in a public pronouncement which I propose to make at an opportune time.

* H.W.C.

April 10, 1911.

DIOCESE OF DUNEDIN

His Lordship Bishop Verdon, who is going on a visit to Rotorua, left for the north by the *Monowai* on Tuesday.

The Rev. J. Tobin, who was ordained last December at Holy Cross College, Mosgiel, has been appointed assistant priest at Gore.

On Easter Sunday ninety pupils of the Sisters of Mercy, South Dunedin, made their First Communion in the Basilica. The majority of the children were barely seven. After Mass and thanksgiving the happy little ones were entertained at breakfast in St. Patrick's Schoolroom, and received mementoes of the day's impressive ceremony.

At the competitions held recently in Christchurch, Miss Daisy Hall, a student of St. Philomena's College, South Dunedin, took the first prize for the soprano solo. The remarks of Herr J. Wieleaert, the judge, as reported in the *Lyttelton Times and Press* are as follow:—'The song chosen for this case was far from being an easy one. The competitors gave a generally excellent rendition of the song, and three sang the difficult music artistically. Miss Daisy Hall, a very young performer, undoubtedly showed to the best advantage, and with more tuition, she will develop into a really fine soprano.'

In addition to the early Masses in St. Joseph's Cathedral on Easter Sunday there was Pontifical High Mass at 11 o'clock, his Lordship the Bishop being celebrant, Rev. Father Cahill (Huntly) assistant priest, Rev. Father P. J. O'Neill deacon, Rev. Father Scanlan (Holy Cross College) subdeacon, and Rev. Father Coffey, Adm., master of ceremonies. The sermon on the day's festival was preached by the Rev. Father Coffey. The music was rendered in a finished manner by the choir, under the conductorship of Mr. Vallis, Mr. Stokes presiding at the organ. At the early Masses unusually large numbers approached the Holy Table. In the evening the preacher was Rev. Father P. J. O'Neill. After Vespers the members of the choir were entertained by his Lordship the Bishop in St. Joseph's Hall. His Lordship and Rev. Father Coffey eulogised the work of the choir, and Mr. Vallis briefly replied. The high altar on Easter Sunday and the Altar of Repose on Holy Thursday were decorated with much taste by Misses White and Murphy.

There were large congregations at all the Masses and devotions in St. Joseph's Cathedral during Holy Week. His Lordship the Bishop was celebrant of Pontifical High Mass on Holy Thursday. Right Rev. Mgr. Mackay, V.G. (Gamaru) being assistant priest, Very Rev. Father O'Donnell (Gore) and Rev. Father P. J. O'Neill deacons at the throne. Rev. Father Delany (South Dunedin) deacon of the Mass. Rev. Father Woods (Gamaru) subdeacon, and Rev. Father Coffey, Adm., master of ceremonies. The music was rendered by the Dominican Nuns' choir. His Lordship the Bishop was celebrant of the Mass of the Presanctified on Good Friday. Very Rev. Father O'Donnell being assistant priest, Rev. Father Delany deacon of the Mass. Rev. Father Woods subdeacon, and Rev. Father Coffey master of ceremonies. The Passion was sung by the Rev. Fathers Liston and Morkane (Holy Cross College) and Rev. Father Collins (Lawrence). The Rev. Father Buckley (Holy Cross College) was celebrant of the Mass on Holy Saturday. Rev. Father P. J. O'Neill being deacon and Rev. Father Corcoran subdeacon. The music of the Mass was sung by the Dominican Nuns' choir. The sermon on the Blessed Eucharist on Holy Thursday evening was preached by the Rev. Father Morkane, that on the

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