

Current Topics

More About 'Neutrality'

The idea—which was pressed home by Dr. Cleary in his Lenten Pastoral and in his subsequent controversy with the *Evening Post*—that there is no such thing possible as 'neutrality' in regard to religion, where it is a question of education, is now being illustrated and emphasised in all directions. A short time ago we quoted from our able contemporary, *America*, a strong editorial expression of opinion in that direction, the moral in that particular instance being drawn from a review of school legislation in France. In its latest issue the same paper relates an interesting incident in which the same lesson was enforced in a very unexpected quarter—to the surprise, and, let us hope, to the enlightenment of the gathering of Socialist teachers who had invited the orator to bless the 'neutral' schools. *America*, of April 15, thus tells the story: 'A recently organised society of teachers in Brussels, Belgium, composed exclusively of Socialists and having as chief purpose the propagation of socialistic doctrines, was treated to an unlooked-for surprise in its first public meeting, held in the Maison du Peuple in that city. M. de Brouckere, a militant Belgian Socialist, had been invited to address the gathering on the topic Neutral Schools. Expecting an entirely different treatment of the subject, the members of the society were amazed to find themselves listening to a speech proving the flat impossibility of neutrality—i.e., of non-religious training in schools. The orator affirmed the impossibility on two heads: to defend such a system is to follow a vain dream, and in the supposition that the vain dream could be made a reality, its exponents would find themselves forced to close their schools. Neutral schools, he explained, so far from helping to spread the light of intelligence, must plunge their followers into abysmal darkness of ignorance. 'For,' he continued, 'neutrality in the matter of education must have one of two meanings: Either it supposes that its devotees hold no positive and fixed opinions in all the questions of controversy of the day, or it simply forces them to banish from their programmes of study and to ignore such questions and to teach nothing that is in any way subject of discussion. M. de Brouckere, in a very effective analysis of neutrality, then proceeded to show how school training is radically impossible in either of the two suppositions. Whatever the speaker's purpose, he certainly did a good work in pricking a bubble Socialists love to see floating above them.'

Controversial Derelicts

Many a time and oft has the *N.Z. Tablet* exposed the falsity and hollowness of those silly myths and calumnies about the Jesuits, which have been part of the bone and sinew and marrow of the great Protestant tradition regarding the Order for the past three hundred years. Amongst the most famous—and certainly the hardest-worked—of these Jesuit stage-bogeys have been the so-called 'Jesuit Oath'—one of the many forgeries of the notorious Robert Ware—and the alleged *Monita Secreta* or Secret Instructions, which were fabricated by a Polish Jesuit called Zahorowski, who had been expelled from the Society about the year 1611. The first of these has been a particular favorite with no-Popery zealots in New Zealand. It was given (as a genuine oath) at full length in an Auckland paper more than ten years ago; it has appeared, off and on, in various papers during the interval; and it was served up to us only last year in the *Wanganui Chronicle*. Let our Protestant champions take one long last look at these once-prized treasures—for they have now been officially 'retired,' and have made their last authorised appearance on the controversial stage. In the recently issued *Protestant's Treasury*, the English Protestant Press Bureau—of which a Mr. Le Lievre is secretary—which supplies material to the under-strappers and hirelings who carry on, in connection with sundry Protestant Alliances, an unsavory warfare against 'Rome,' has, under pressure of nearly three centuries of refutation, at last expressly disowned these documents as forgeries, and has, so to speak, formally withdrawn them from the Protestant armoury.

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And not these two only—there are others. The infamous 'Letter of the Three Bishops'—which purported to be a letter sent by three Bishops from Bologna, 1553, to Pope Julius III., urging him to prohibit all reading of the Gospel among the people, inasmuch as they were beginning to discover the utter discrepancy between its teaching and the Romish doctrine!—has also been cast to the controversial scrap-heap. Mr. Le Lievre has come to admit—what the late Father Bridgett, C.S.S.R., had long ago demonstrated—that the whole thing is a fabrication, the letter having been

forged by an apostate named Vergerio in Switzerland about 1550, and first published in England by a bitter enemy of Catholicism, William Crashaw. 'Other interesting fables and fabrications,' says the *Edinburgh Catholic Herald*, 'are interred with due formality as dead and done for in *The Protestant's Treasury*, such as the 70,000-100,000 Huguenots massacred on St. Bartholomew's Day; the number of victims of the Spanish Inquisition, Princess Ena's oath, and such like fairy tales.' Some of our contemporaries are disposed to regard Mr. Le Lievre's act of fairness as a sign of grace, and as suggesting that, after all, the Ethiopian may change his skin and the leopard his spots. We would be glad if we could share this charitable view, and could hope that the Protestant Press Bureau is really turning over a new leaf. Whether that be so or not, it is at any rate satisfactory to know that these hoary calumnies and forgeries have been publicly withdrawn; and we, at least, have no tears to shed over their demise.

The Churches and Military Training

The Dunedin Presbytery, the Council of the Churches, the Y.M.C.A., and the majority of kindred non-Catholic religious bodies or organisations (Anglicans excepted) have, definitely, and in set terms declined to avail themselves of the conditions offered by the Defence Department in regard to the enrolment of senior cadet corps, their unwillingness being professedly based on the ground (a) that the proposal is in the direction of denominationalism, and (b) that the Church's participation in this preparation for possible war—even to the limited extent of nominating an officer for a boys' company—is incompatible with Christianity. With regard to the first, we have nothing to say except that—coming from such quarters—it is certainly a mysterious objection. Every denomination presumably believes in itself. By its very existence it proclaims the denominational principle; and for a purely denominational body, such as a Presbytery, to object to a proposal because it appears to be in the direction of denominationalism seems about as reasonable and consistent as for a Socialist to object to a measure because it savours of Socialism, or for a Protectionist to object to a proposal because it is in the direction of high tariff.

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In respect to the wider question, it is certainly the case that the Church—we speak, now, of course, of the historic Catholic Church—while she could not abolish war, has always done everything possible to discourage it. From the first she stripped it of its plumes and frills and gilding and set a stigma upon it. When the defence of public right called for war she rather condoned than consecrated it; and, says Lecky, 'whatever might be the case with a few isolated prelates, the Church did nothing to increase or encourage it.' From the earliest days no weapons were permitted within the sacred walls of her churches; and no cleric was—or is to this hour—allowed to bear arms. The calling of the soldier was not, of course, regarded as sinful. But the calling was distinctly discouraged, partly through the new feeling as to the high value and enormous possibilities of human life, partly through the moral—or rather immoral—atmosphere of camp and barrack life in those days, and partly, no doubt, to the unexpressed or half-expressed hope of the coming of a perpetual peace which would aid in the spread of God's kingdom upon earth.

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Two chief occasions, however, arose in the history of the Church when, in the interests of civilisation and of religion, she had to lean upon the military arm. One was in the days when the northern hordes had swooped down upon central and southern Europe, and there arose that conflict of races and paralysis of all government which followed the fall of the Roman Empire. The other occasion came when the Mohammedans had almost extirpated Christianity from its original home, swept the old civilisation out of a great part of Spain, and threatened to raise the crescent and trample the cross under foot over the whole of central and southern Europe. At a time when the power of resistance to their fierce inroads was paralysed by widespread panic, the voice of the Popes alone was raised to scourge unity in the distracted councils of Christian States and to erect something like an effective barrier against the wave of Saracen invasion which flowed and kept ever-flowing from the east. Through their efforts a limit was at last set to the Saracen incursions, and with their blessing the Crusaders carried the war time and again into the enemy's country. Those were the times that witnessed the rise of those beau-ideals of the Christian soldier—the knights of the Crusades and of the days of chivalry, such as live to us again in the pages of Sir Walter Scott. These were, however, exceptional and abnormal periods in the Church's history. She blessed not so much the sword of the warrior as the sacred cause for which he fought; and the