

Current Topics

The Liberal Leadership

Sir Joseph Ward had hardly handed in his resignation as Prime Minister when the political prophets began to predict that sooner or later he would be again called to lead the Liberal forces in New Zealand. This view has now been quite frankly—and, so to say, authoritatively—expressed by the Premier himself, in an interesting speech delivered a day or two ago at Eltham. Says the Press Association report: 'Referring to the cheers given for Sir Joseph Ward, he said their opponents had succeeded in driving Sir Joseph Ward from the councils of the country for a time, and now he was gone they said there was no one fit to take his place. If so, why concentrate on him sectarian intolerance and abuse? Why say he pocketed £100,000 of loan money? Sir Joseph Ward's name stood high and honored, and though pigmies wished to discredit his idea of an Imperial Council, that ideal, though perhaps advocated before its day, would become law. The time would yet come when the country would once more call in his assistance in its affairs. The speaker had accepted the responsibility of stepping into the breach, and they would hold the breach. The greater the breach the greater the honor.'

The Sole Solution

Over and over again in this country during recent years have the press and politicians who stand for secularism in education been challenged to state on what educational principle—as distinguished from grounds of mere expediency—they, professing Christians, justify the exclusion of religion from the fateful and formative processes of the school life of our future citizens. Attempts have been made to coax, persuade, press, and even to goad them into an answer to this fundamental and vital question—but to no purpose. They reply with some such irrelevance as that 'they are not educational experts,' or that they defend the existing system because the various denominations cannot agree as to the quality or quantity of religion that ought to be imparted. In other words, in so far as setting forth any *educational principle* is concerned, their 'reply' is no reply at all.

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On the other hand the supporters of religious education are ever ready to give a full and clear-cut statement of the groundwork principles on which their position is based; and the difference, in this respect, between the two parties is significant. Of the many notable declarations that have been made of the principles governing the attitude of the friends of religious education, the following recent utterance of Mr. A. J. Balfour, late leader of the Conservative party in England, is not the least admirable; and is well worthy of him as a Christian and as a statesman. 'I have always,' he said, 'cherished the hope that our elementary State schools eventually would be so conducted as to secure to every child the kind of religious instruction his parents desire him to receive. This is the sole solution that appeals to me as strictly compatible with our ideas of religious liberty, of parental responsibility, and of the primordial necessity of religious training in children's education. I hold it to be an evil, aye, the greatest of all evils, to permit children to be brought up in schools in which no provision is made for religious formation. And I solemnly express to-day my hope that England will never accept the responsibility of public instruction without religion.'

A Busy-body Committee

At the meeting of the Presbyterian General Assembly held in Dunedin in November last, through the too easy acquiescence of members in a proposal which emanated only from a handful of zealots, a committee on 'Romanism and Ritualism' was set up. The Christchurch Presbytery was appointed the Assembly's committee for the purpose; and that body has now adopted its first report. Here it is: 'Firstly,

that in view of furnishing a report to the Assembly, the following questions in circular form should be sent to all ministers and missionaries of our Church: (1) Does Ritualism or Anglo-Romanism prevail to any extent in your district? Does it stand as a barrier to ministerial fellowship and Church union, and as a hindrance to co-operation in common work against prevailing social and other evils; (2) Does the evil of mixed marriages prevail in your district? Have there been any cases of perversion to Rome through such marriages? Has the *Ne Temere* Decree been so applied as to disturb the peace of homes? (3) Do convent and other Roman Catholic schools draw into them the children of Protestants, and do Protestants support by their money the appeals made to the public on behalf of such schools? (4) Is the meaning of the Reformation generally understood by your people, and do they know what Sacerdotalism is in the light of the Gospel? What steps might be taken to remove the ignorance that obtains in many places on these subjects? Secondly, the Assembly in its deliverance directed the committee to encourage the study of the Reformation and of Reformation principles in our Bible-classes, by offering prizes for essays and examinations on text books. To give practical effect to this direction the sub-committee recommends:—(1) That an appeal be made through the *Outlook* and by circulars addressed to congregations, for subscriptions to form such a fund, and that as soon as funds permit two subjects for essays be announced this year. (2) That the sub-committee be requested to communicate with the Youth of the Church Committee, with the view of making the study of Protestant texts part of the Bible-class course of study.'

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The setting up of such a committee and the presentation of such reports are in themselves a confession of weakness. 'The Protestantism,' says a *Scotsman* article of April 8, 1911, 'which is continually demonstrating its "godly attitude towards the Papacy," and continually raising the cry "We are betrayed," is a Protestantism no longer assured of its own strength.' The foregoing document does not call for any serious notice or for lengthy comment. It will suffice to point out (1) That it is conceived in a spirit of narrowness and small-mindedness. The grudge shown by the Presbytery that Protestants should 'support by their money the appeals made to the public on behalf of such (Catholic) schools,' tells its own tale. (2) In so far as it involves direct inquisition, with hostile motives, into the forms of worship practised by other religious bodies, it is an interference on the part of the Presbytery with matters that do not concern them. The writer of an entertaining letter in the *Lyttelton Times*—who signs himself 'Much Amused'—roundly declares that 'the Assembly are making "Meddlesome Matties" of themselves in this matter.' (3) By drawing attention to the success of the Catholic schools, by emphasising the prevalence of 'Romanism,' and by its procedure generally, the new committee will give an excellent advertisement to the Catholic Church and to the Ritualistic movement in the Dominion. (4) The setting up of this committee, and the spirit displayed in its operations, will lower the prestige of Presbyterianism in the eyes of all cultured and broad-minded men. New Zealanders, as a whole, have little time for the bigot and the strife-monger. A further paragraph in the committee's report recommends 'that a petition to Parliament against the *Ne Temere* decree be drawn up, and that the Presbytery of Wellington be asked to arrange for a deputation to the Premier on the subject of the petition.' This, also, will be quite harmless; and may be regarded with perfect equanimity. As we have said, whatever Church stands to gain by this latest no-Popery departure, the Presbyterian Church certainly does not.

Ritualism—In New Zealand and Elsewhere

Christchurch papers for days past have been filled with letters of protest, written by indignant Anglicans, against the appointment by Bishop Julius of a Ritualist clergyman to one of the Christchurch parish churches. The letters have been vehement and vigorous; and the