

along sectarian lines, do so at your own cost, not at the cost of those who conscientiously object either to pay for or to teach such a maimed view of Christ and of His doctrine and law.

ANSWERING QUESTIONS.

But it is when I consider your answers to the questions that I feel ashamed of our common name of clergymen. What have we come to? Is it becoming our name to leave the people the narrow choice of having to consider us either consciously careless of truth, or gravely ignorant of what we ought to know? Let us consider the very first question you undertook to answer. A written question was sent to you by me a couple of hours before the meeting:—

- (a) 'The Doctor said in Wanganui last evening that there was not the slightest doubt that the priesthood and members of the Catholic Church were opposed to the National System of Education. Will he tell the audience wherein Catholic opposition to the so-called National System differs from that of the League to the same system?'

To this you replied in writing, and read your reply as follows:—'Just this: We think the National System will be perfected by the admission of the Bible into the curriculum of the schools. The Catholics don't. We shall be content when the Bible is made the text-book, and the clergy permitted to teach their children the faith of their fathers; the Catholics will be content only when they get grants in aid of their denominational schools.'

Now, Reverend Sir, this answer is simply untrue. Assuming (as I do) that you did not know it to be false, but answered to the best of your ability, you are gravely ignorant of one of the leading questions of the day, both in England and in New Zealand. My question was not meant to take you unawares; you got due notice of it; and, in a written reply, you give nothing better than, at best, a specimen of inexcusable ignorance! If I ask you to inform an audience how the garments of two fully dressed men differ, I must conclude that you are either reckless regarding fact or very foolish if you reply that one is dressed in a hat and the other in boots. You must mention the principal parts of the dress of each man, that the audience may be in a position to conclude if one is a man of taste and the other a man of mere fashion.

Now it is true that the League wishes, not the Bible, but a few pages mutilated (as stated) from the Bible, and that Catholics wish a grant; but it is also true (and this is the essential difference) that the League demands that men of all religions and of none should pay for these pages, that will be a special gift to the League only; while Catholics (unlike the League) do not demand so much as a penny piece from the public funds for their religious teaching; Catholics do not demand so much as a penny piece from non-Catholics for even the secular results achieved in Catholic schools—they ask for only a fair proportion of the taxes contributed by Catholics themselves to the Education Fund. In New Zealand's own Cook Islands non-Catholic sectarian schools are subsidised from funds supplied by people of all creeds and of none; the Anglican Girls' Friendly Society is likewise thus subsidised for its work among immigrants. So is the Protestant Young Women's Christian Association. So is the Salvation Army for its work among inebriates. Catholics do not demand any such subsidy for their schools from people of other faiths. You, Reverend Sir, as a member of the League Executive, ought to know how Catholics thus differ from the League: Catholics stand for a settlement on the basis of fair treatment of consciences all round; a solution of the difficulty acceptable to them they are prepared to pay for at their own expense; your League demands a solution of the difficulty, acceptable to you, and to nobody else, at the common expense of all, including conscientious objectors.

It was impressed upon you in your early days that a half-truth is the greatest of all lies, that a suppression of a fact may be as great a lie as the suggestion of a falsehood. I would beg of you to be most careful

of this in future, because people who, after the fact, discover that they have been deceived, are very slow to again accept the testimony of the deceiver. Half a truth may win the applause of the vulgar and bring a passing triumph; but the triumph and the applause are short-lived. In such triumphs, in such applause, the Divine Words are verified:—'Extrema gaudii luctus occupat'; 'Mourning snatches at, and makes its own, the latter ends of joy.' But if you have erred more from ignorance than from malice, as I believe is the case, then my advice is: 'Think twice before you speak once; study up the matter on which you wish to speak, and do not be above seeking information.'

With regard to the two parts of question (b): I thought it well, for greater clearness, to keep them well apart; you thought it better to combine them; and, having done so, you make use of what logicians call an Ignoratio Elenchi, and, presuming upon the assumption that the chairman was not a trained dialectician and was ignorant of the rules, you ignored the questions and substituted for answer a couple of pointless platitudes and a couple of statements that were not true.

Let us take these questions again, set apart in the comparative quiet of this letter:—

- (b) 'Does the Doctor hold that, in the domain of conscience, majorities should rule minorities?'

'That the majority must rule is sound legally, but not morally,' said Mr. Balfour recently in the House of Commons. I have tried, without effect, to get a clear statement on this matter from the officials of the League in Hawera. It does not seem to be a principle of their philosophy that the proximate rule of rightness in human action is the practical dictate of the human reason, which is conscience; that a dictate of conscience is more binding than any law of sovereign or superior; that no man or majority of men can stand between a man's conscience and his God; that it is by conscience he will be judged on the Last Day; and that, standing on the firm ground of conscience, one man may oppose the whole world. If this is true, it goes without saying that two men or twenty men, or two hundred men, can, on grounds of conscience, oppose the whole world. It is a mere pointless platitude, therefore, for you to say that seventy-five per cent. can oppose fourteen per cent.

You may fight to win for yourselves what your conscience tells you is right for you, but you may not fight to impose upon others what you believe to be right for you, but what they believe to be wrong for them. If you believe that Protestantism is right, you may fight to have it taught at your own expense to your own children, and Catholics will applaud you; but it is quite another matter that you should endeavour to force Catholics and Jewish and Protestant and other objectors to pay for and to teach to your children a system of religion which such objectors' conscience tells them to be false.

You say, with great unction, that 'You are sorry that Catholics should think you wrong in demanding Bible instruction for your own child'; but you ought to know well, Reverend Sir, that Catholics do not think this, and it is the sheerest nonsense on your part to pretend that they do. Catholics do not hold that you are wrong in demanding Bible instruction for your own child, but they do hold that you are wrong in stating that your assumed majority can force Catholic conscience to subscribe to and impart that instruction, which they cannot accept.

Look up question (b) again, and give it a straightforward answer, and then tell us, as a preacher of Christianity, on what principle of Christian morality your answer is based.

To question (c): 'How does the Doctor justify his challenge to the teachers, whilst he refuses to accept a similar challenge from Dr. Cleary?' you replied: 'I may be somewhat stupid, but I certainly do not understand the question. Dr. Cleary has addressed no challenge to me.' Now, Reverend Sir, there is here a lack of either memory or veracity. Let me, with the greatest possible kindness, put before you what you had said only the previous evening at Wanganui: 'I repeat the challenge issued by the League, that it would pay the expenses of two teachers to go to Aus-

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