

"Jesuit Oath": A Baseless Libel

FATHER LOCKINGTON'S EXPOSURE.

The pamphlet circulated by the Protestant Federation which contained the so-called Jesuit Oath, was dealt with at the Exhibition Building on Wednesday night, October 12, by Father W. J. Lockington, head of the Jesuits in Australia (says the *Daily Herald*, Adelaide).

Archbishop Spence, who presided, said that a certain federation had been very interested of late in the Jesuit oath, and he was sorry to say that the terrible man who was at the head of the Order was going to appear before them that evening, and he warned the audience to take care when the lights went down. (Laughter.) The false Jesuit oath had not been allowed to go unchallenged, as they were aware. The Catholic Federation had written a letter to the Protestant Federation and had published it in the daily papers. They waited for a long time for a reply, but it was not until last Saturday morning that an answer, if it could be called an answer, was received, and in that answer the Protestant Federation said that the "oath" appeared in a certain place, was written by a certain man and was copied into a certain paper. That no doubt was interesting, said the Archbishop, but it was not an answer. However, the Protestant Federation also very kindly said that if the Catholics would produce the real oath they would compare it with their production, and if they found the spurious oath was not correct they would have the great kindness to withdraw it. He hoped Father Lockington would tell them something about the Jesuit oath. He did not think Father Lockington would condescend to say it as any kind of explanation to the Protestant Federation, because those gentlemen were simply beneath contempt. (Applause.) It was not necessary for Father Lockington to tell Catholic people that there was no such thing as the Jesuit oath, but he was quite sure he would do so to enlighten those good Australian Protestants who did not know whether there was such an oath or not. The Archbishop said he hoped they would take care of themselves; he was warning them to look out. (Laughter and applause.)

Before beginning his lecture on "Lourdes," Father Lockington said to meet the wishes of his Grace he would try to cast light into unexpectedly dark places for, he said, the so-called "Jesuit Oath" bears every mark of being the emanation of a diseased mind. "I am a Jesuit," he continued, "and the head of the Order in Australia, and, possessed of full knowledge of the life, aim, training, and work of a Jesuit. I stigmatise that statement as a baseless, libellous falsehood. Crass ignorance is a very difficult thing to deal with; to enlighten it seems impossible. In quite recent times in England Father Bernard Vaughan took legal action against the *Chatham and Rochester News* for making the statement that he had taken this oath. The paper apologised, and paid the cost of the action."

The *Rock Newspaper* at a later date published the so-called oath. Father Vaughan again took legal action, and was awarded heavy damages and costs. A full report of this trial appeared in the *London Times*. Two extracts from the trial are of interest here. The first one is from the address of Mr. Hugo Young, the counsel for the plaintiff:—

"All the constitutions of the Jesuits are public property. Anybody can go and read them in the library of the British Museum. One desire in bringing this action before a public court is that my learned friend may have the opportunity, when he sees Father Bernard Vaughan in the box, of asking him any of these questions and making against him any of the imputations which it is so easy to make in a newspaper, where no contradiction can then be given, and where no explanation can be given as to the alleged sources of information in books or otherwise upon which the allegations are founded."

The second extract is from the address of the judge, Mr. Justice Wills, to the jury:—"Gentlemen of the Jury.—this is an action for libel. It is sufficient to say that a libel is any writing which tends to bring the subject of attack in it into public hatred, contempt, or disrepute. . . . One cannot fail to see that the most offensive things that can possibly be said have been said of the Jesuits. . . . Unfortunately when the subject of discussion

is connected with anything like religious controversy, generally speaking, the spirit which should be the spirit of religion is gone, and all the elements of human passion, hatred, malice, and uncharitableness seem to be let loose, and of course the tone of this article, and the other articles are singular illustrations of this perhaps somewhat remarkable exhibition of the kind of innate weakness in human nature to which I refer." I know my Protestant fellow-countrymen too well, said Father Lockington, to believe that they are moved by such false statements. To any open-minded man the exaggerated criminality of the suggestion carries its own refutation and condemnation.

The Vows

It may not be amiss here to glance for a moment at the training of a Jesuit. He is one of a carefully trained regiment who give their lives for the betterment of humanity. To-day there are 8454 Jesuit priests, 4809 Jesuit scholastics, and 3982 lay brothers for domestic work, in all 17,245 working throughout the world. Their training is slow and searching. When a candidate applies for admission he is examined by four Jesuits, and if judged suitable in talent and character and health he enters the novitiate, where for two years he has everything concerning Jesuit life put before him. He is perfectly free and can leave at any moment. At the end of two years he becomes a Jesuit by taking the three vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, that give stability to religious life. The following is an exact copy of the vows, the one and only tie that binds him to the Society of Jesus:—"Almighty and eternal God, I N.N., though altogether unworthy of Thy divine presence, yet relying upon Thy infinite mercy, and impelled by the desire of serving Thee, in the presence of the Most Holy Virgin Mary and of all the court of heaven, do vow to Thy Divine Majesty, perpetual poverty, chastity, and obedience in the Society of Jesus; and I promise that I will enter the said society to spend my entire life therein, all things being understood according to the constitutions of the same society. Wherefore I supplicantly beg to Thine illimitable goodness and clemency by the blood of Jesus Christ that Thou wouldst deign to accept this holocaust in the odor of sweetness, and as Thou hast given me grace to desire and make this offering wouldst also give it abundantly so to perform."

For two years then he devotes his time to the study of languages, mathematics, science, and pedagogy. After this for three years he studies philosophy, generally in a foreign house to acquire language and to broaden his outlook upon life. Philosophy finished, he acts as professor five or six years, and afterwards studies theology for four years. Towards the end of his theology he is ordained priest. Finally he goes back to the novitiate for one year, finishing a training of 17 or 18 years, "Love God and love your fellow-man, no matter who he is," is the ideal striven for through all. (Applause.)

I have been through this, said Father Lockington, and from first to last the only binding tie is that of the three vows, a voluntary tie taken not by Jesuits only, but by all religious. I know personally the general of our Order and numbers of its heads in many lands, and I can say for them and for every Jesuit as I say for myself, that not one would remain in the Order for a single instant if such a vile oath as the one circulated among you were proposed. (Applause.)

Fellow-Australians, freedom to worship God is a national foundation stone; it is the inalienable right of every man and we must watch that the poison gas of bigotry shall never pollute the free air of Australia, for this alone attacks this most sacred of all rights. The bigot is only an irreligious megaphone. Bigotry has no head, and therefore it cannot think. Bigotry has no heart, and therefore it is pitiless and cruel. Bigotry has no conscience, and therefore it is venomous and false and unscrupulous. Let us then Australians, Catholics and Protestants, work together in charity to this end. There is plenty of work for all to try and make humanity come back to the path marked by the Ten Commandments. (Loud applause.)

Young Lady: "Sure! Can't do the laundry work without it and 'Golden Rule' Soap!"

W. F. SHORT

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