

The Reasonableness of Catholic Belief

(LECTURE BY REV. L. BUXTON, D.D., M.A.)

At a recent meeting of the Catholic University Students' Club, of Dunedin, a lecture on the "Reasonableness of Catholic Belief" was delivered by Rev. L. Buxton, D.D., M.A., of Holy Cross College, Mosgiel, in the presence of a good audience. The president (Mr. R. O'Regan) was chairman.

The lecturer prefaced his address by remarking that if the young men and women of to-day, especially those attending the universities, were to retain a strong grip of the faith of their fathers, at least a realisation of the solid foundation of reason on which their faith was based was necessary. In a single lecture on this subject, it would be impossible to do more than explain the basic position and to trace the general proofs. Others might later develop important points.

Faith was simply the acceptance of truth on the word of God. God's assistance was ever with the man making an act of faith, but God's part in the work did not render man's part unreasonable. The greater part of our knowledge we accept on trust from others—our parents, professors, friends. All we require is to be reasonably certain our informants are not deceived themselves and are not deceiving us. God, we know, knows all truth, and cannot lead us astray. All we have to assure ourselves about is, then, whether God has even asked men to believe anything. This is simply a question of history. But why do we bother about it at all? Here the lecturer made a brief survey of history, and showed that always even among the most primitive peoples, a religion of some sort has been practised. Science, he declared, has not succeeded in proving the existence of a religionless people, and he gave some interesting results from the study of some of the most backward peoples known to-day. Religion, then, is found among all men, and this points to its being called for by the depths of his nature. What a medley of beliefs and practices, however, does the study of the history of religions give us! Left to himself, man seems powerless to propose a system of religion which will answer with assurance the all important questions he wants to know about his origin and his end, or to suggest a system of morality in following which he will have complete trust. Perhaps God, ever mindful of the necessities of the creature of His Hands, has made known to man in what man's end consists and how it is to be obtained. The lecturer showed how there was nothing to take exception to in this idea, and that its truth seemed so probable that, considering the supreme importance of the matter, no one could rightly neglect the question.

Among the figures of history who had declared they had a message from God to man none was so striking as Christ. Could He be believed, was it reasonable for us to trust Him and accept His doctrine and practice His morality? It was not immediately necessary to show whether Christ was God Himself or no; it was sufficient to see whether Christ could prove His claim to be a messenger from God. If He were, then there must be signs by which we can be morally certain, signs which come from God alone.

The lecturer now proceeded to outline briefly the various credentials for Christ's divine authority. The Gospels, he insisted must be taken as historical documents simply, and he showed how the modern critic had been driven to admit that, at least substantially, the Gospels were to be fully trusted. Christ's doctrine, he went on to show, was the completion of the preaching of the ancient prophets, a preaching that, in spite of every human obstacle, maintained its harmonious development until Christ so perfected it that the result, Christianity, so transcended every other system of life philosophy or religion, that the finger of God's Hand was plainly visible. The prophets, too, had, during the space of hundreds of years, added each as it were a stroke to the pen picture of Christ, that God's directive power shone clearly forth. The sublimity of Christ's doctrine, its miraculous spread in a world steeped deeply in vices absolutely opposed to it, the heroic constancy of the numberless martyrs of every age and

condition who fearlessly professed that doctrine and calmly died for it, all this pointed to God's power behind Christianity.

The lecturer now developed more at length the proof from miracles. He showed how a miracle was not opposed to the laws of nature rightly understood. God alone could work a true miracle. In developing the tests of miracles, he emphasised the truly scientific manner in which miracles are treated by the Catholic Church, for still, he declared, this test of divine sanction remains with us.

The lecturer completed this section of his address by the words of St. Augustine: "Either evident miracles were performed in the work of converting the world, and then Christianity is divine and approved by God; or no miracle was performed, and then the very conversion of the world without a miracle is the greatest miracle of all, as altogether contrary to the laws of the moral order." God then guaranteed everything Christ taught and did. One thing He taught was His own Divinity; one thing He did was to set up a society or Church. That Church had several distinctive features, and these features we find reproduced to-day in the Church that claims to be of Christ and in that Church alone. In conclusion, the lecturer pointed out that it clearly followed that to place complete trust in the teaching of that Church to which Christ had promised His unfailing assistance was most reasonable.

At the conclusion, a very hearty vote of thanks was accorded the lecturer on the motion of Mr. J. B. Callan, seconded by Dr. O'Neill.

Diocesan News

ARCHDIOCESE OF WELLINGTON

(From our own correspondent.)

June 30.

The social in aid of the Home of Compassion, took place at the Town Hall on last Monday, when a most enjoyable evening was spent. Mr. J. J. McGrath was chairman and Mrs. D. Gleeson secretary of the committee, which, as a result of the several functions organised, has handed to Rev. Mother Aubert a substantial sum for her very deserving work.

The annual social of the St. Aloysius branch of the Hibernian Society, took place at St. Anne's Hall, Newtown, last Thursday evening, and was most successful.

Rev. Father S. Mahony, S.M., is still adding to the beauty of St. Mary of the Angels' Church. The workmen are engaged in plastering the eastern and western walls. The church has also been considerably changed inside by the addition of two beautiful altars—Our Lady's and St. Joseph's. The former is particularly beautiful, being in alabaster, marble, and precious stones, with a fine statue of Our Lady and Child; whilst the floor of the altar is set with the finest polished marble. The altar of St. Joseph is built of the finest Carrara marble, whilst the statue of St. Joseph is a splendid specimen of plaster modelling. The floor is also set in the same marble. A fine statue of the Sacred Heart chiselled out of the finest marble and weighing three-quarters of a ton adorns the western pillar outside the sanctuary. A splendid marble baptismal font is also being placed in the baptistry, and has been specially designed by Father Mahony, whose ingenuity has overcome a difficulty experienced with most fonts in regard to the lid. Instead of a hinged lid necessitating raising when being used, by the simple device of a solid brass swivel the marble top can, with the lightest pressure, be swung smoothly around. Other additions shortly will be a beautiful statue of St. Anthony, and the Stations of the Cross; the latter will consist of plaster figures representing each station. These, with the beautiful marble High Altar and the stained glass windows renders the Church specially edifying and devotional, and Father Mahony deserves the greatest credit for his artistic taste and his great perseverance and dogged determination in the face of the greatest difficulties—particularly financial—in making St. Mary's the finest church in the Dominion, if not in Australasia.

BULLEIDS

MEN, LOOK HERE! The best value trousers on the market

OAMARU

HARDWEAR TROUSERS 9s 6d per pair

PALMER NAP TROUSERS 12s 6d per pair