

Those State Divinity Degrees

'Civis,' of the 'Otago Daily Times,' having once more failed—for reasons that are sufficiently obvious—to make any attempt whatever to sustain his plea for the conferring of divinity degrees by the State at the public expense, the 'Tablet' editor sent the following further communication to our local morning contemporary.—

Sir,—I have once more to remind your contributor, 'Civis,' that the issue between us is the proposed conferring of degrees in the science of divinity by the State University of New Zealand, and that Hebrew, Greek, Church history, and the thing ambiguously called Bible 'literature' are not at all, or not necessarily divinity. They therefore cannot be the 'essentials' of a degree in that 'queen of the sciences.'

Your contributor has asserted that his little scheme of State divinity degrees is the only workable one. The whole burden of detailing, explaining, and justifying it falls upon him. Thus far his 'only workable' scheme has been a proposal to confer divinity degrees without divinity. Does he propose to follow the same principle in conferring degrees in medical or physical science? And if not, why not? I once more invite him to 'first catch his hare'—in other words, to first secure a scheme of divinity. When he has done this, I request him, for the third time, to answer the following pertinent and rather 'awkward questions':—

1. On what principle of statecraft could the New Zealand Government claim the right of dragging theology within its domain? Incidentally, he will help to show that such a proceeding would be the arrogant assumption of a right which no Civil Government possesses.

2. Who is to determine what brand of divinity or theology, and how much and how little thereof, are to be required for the proposed State divinity degrees?

3. If the New Zealand Government has (as 'Civis' maintains) the right to teach divinity indirectly, on what principle may it not also directly teach that 'science of divine things'?

4. If the Government may exercise this alleged right in our highest schools, on what grounds does 'Civis' oppose (as I understand he opposes) the extension of the same principle to the State primary schools of the Colony?

5. At what numerical percentage do minorities begin to enjoy, in New Zealand, this elementary right of conscience—immunity from compulsory contributions towards the propaganda of the theology of faiths in which they do not believe?

The answer to each of these 'awkward questions' will involve your contributor in other and still more awkward ones. I shall continue to press these matters upon 'Civis' until he has overcome his marked reluctance to face them squarely, or until the editorial extinguisher is clapped upon this controversy. In the meantime, I have to thank him for having contributed in such a signal way to show that his patent and 'only workable' scheme of State divinity degrees is, if possible, even more 'fatuous' and 'preposterous' in its way than the pan-denominational absurdity of Sir Maurice O'Rorke. Yours, etc.,

EDITOR 'N.Z. TABLET.'

March 11.

The following further letter on the subject was also sent for publication:—

Sir,—Your contributor, 'Civis,' started this controversy in your columns. He was perfectly entitled to do so. But his contentions, evasions, and self-contradictions are becoming (as Alice said in Wonderland) 'curiouser and curiouser' every week. He began by opening fire on an editorial article in the 'Tablet' in which I adversely criticised (1) a proposal carried by a small majority of the Senate of the New Zealand State University in favor of conferring degrees in divinity; and (2) a preposterous scheme by Sir Maurice O'Rorke (the mover of the resolution) to secure the needful 'theological course of divinity' by boiling down a salmagundi of some odd scores of contradictory creeds to a jellified residuum.

From the first 'Civis' threw Sir Maurice's wild scheme on the scrap-heap as unworkable. He has all along signified his high approval of the scheme embodied in the resolution of the University Senate. But from the very outset he has been, nevertheless, in open opposition to every one of its 'essential' features. And yet he has been all along quacking anarily at me for opposing it also! The Senate's resolution was to seek from Parliament the 'power of conferring degrees in divinity'—placing 'the faculty of divinity on the same standing for obtaining degrees as law and medicine.'

Now to qualify for a degree in law or medicine, the New Zealand University requires students (1) to follow a set and uniform course in these sciences, and (2) to display, on examination, at least a stipulated minimum of knowledge therein. But your contributor's 'only workable plan' excludes any set and uniform course in the science of divinity. Worse still, it sets forth that no knowledge of divinity, and no examination in divinity, are necessary for a degree in divinity, but merely some Hebrew and Greek and Church history and something which he designates by the studiously vague title of Bible 'literature.' Such is 'Civis's' great scheme of

Wooden-nutmeg 'Divinity'

and diplomaed theological quackery. And he declares that 'no other will succeed'!

In his latest paragraph on the subject, 'Civis,' while still professedly agreeing with the University Senate's proposal, breaks out against it in a fresh place. One of my series of 'awkward questions' has driven him into making the following suggestion, namely, that the 'graduates' in his pinchbeck 'divinity' should pay out of their own pockets all the expenses of their sham examinations and quack 'degrees.' But (1) this is not the scheme of the University Senate. (2) It is rather a novel way of placing 'the faculty of divinity on the same standing for obtaining degrees as law and medicine.' And (3) in any case, it would obviously leave 'Civis's' 'only workable scheme' as absurd as ever, and the University Senate's plan as objectionable on other grounds. 'Civis's' mutually destructive contentions remind one of the famous Kilkenny cats, that ate each other up, even to the last vertebrae of their tails.

I am completely at a loss to understand what ground of comfort your contributor can find, in this connection, in the recent Methodist Conference. He states that the Conference approves of the scheme of the Senate of the New Zealand University and favors introducing 'a divinity course into the curriculum.' But (1) I have already shown that 'Civis's' 'only workable scheme' is the very negation of all this. The good man is running amok among those who favor as well as those who oppose the Senate's foolish idea. And all the time he is under the delusion that he is doing valiant battle for the Senate! Again, (2) the

Methodist Conference

is at least consistent to this extent: it apparently maintains (though very erroneously) that the New Zealand Government has as much right and competency to teach religion as it has to sell postage stamps or to grade Aylesbury ducks. But your contributor is consistent only in his inconsistency. He protests against 'an official brand of divinity'; yet, in the same breath he advocates for State approval, a Thing which he calls 'divinity' and wants to have it made the subject of official tests, of official rewards, and (negatively) of official punishments. Moreover, he is in deadly opposition to the Government teaching religion directly in the State primary schools; yet he professes to approve of the indirect teaching of religion in our highest State schools. On what principles of logic or statecraft does 'Civis' adopt these irreconcilable views? Heaven only knows; for he himself absolutely declines to answer my repeated and 'awkward questions' on these points. His subterfuges, his significant reticences, and his self-contradictions show what may happen to a man when he starts a controversy about divinity before he knows the meaning of the word—Yours, etc.,

EDITOR, 'N.Z. TABLET.'

March 20.

Diocesan News

ARCHDIOCESE OF WELLINGTON

(From our own correspondent.)

The mission services at St. Anne's, Wellington South, on Sunday last, were of a most impressive nature. At the first Mass almost the entire congregation approached the Holy Table. Solemn High Mass was celebrated at 10 o'clock by the Rev. Father Clune, with Rev. Father McDermott as deacon and Rev. Father Tymons as subdeacon. After Mass Father Clune addressed the men of the parish on the advantages of the Hibernian Society. As a result of his remarks, fifteen new members were enrolled. Others are expected to hand in their names at the next meeting. In the afternoon a meeting of the women of the parish was addressed by Father Clune for the purpose of forming a strong Altar Society. The evening service was attended