

of a lop-sided system of public instruction which is set up as a fetich, but which happens to be fitted like a glove to the peculiar religious beliefs of the Secularist and the infidel. The very variety and futility of the rival remedies proposed at synods and assemblies may even result in our separated brethren coming at last—and may it not be too late!—to learn that the one remedy is just that which Catholics have long ago found and acted upon. The latest pink pill for the disorder is the prescription of the Anglican Bishop of Wellington. It was approved by the Recess Committee of the General Synod and found favor with the Auckland Ministers' Association and their confreres in Wellington. It was brought up this week, discussed, and passed at the Anglican Synod in Dunedin, in the form of the following resolution:—'That the Synod of the Diocese of Dunedin is of opinion that it is in the best interests of this Colony—(1) To demand such alteration of the Education Act as will prescribe: (a) That Government schools be opened daily with the Lord's Prayer; (b) that on certain days of the week simple lessons on selected portions of the Bible be given by the teachers during school hours. Provided: (i) That these lessons be of a strictly undenominational character; (ii) that teachers who conscientiously object to give these lessons shall not be compelled to give them, and scholars whose parents have conscientious objections shall not be compelled to receive them. (2) To urge members of Parliament and candidates for election thereto to press the above alteration upon the Legislature.'

*

The scheme outlined in the motion just quoted labors under many and fatal disadvantages. (1) It is admittedly a lame and inconclusive and unsatisfying project—a compromise put forward 'for the sake of uniformity' in the hope of finding a common ground of agreement in seemingly hopelessly divided counsels. Even its mover was apologetic for its shortcomings and felt called upon to explain that 'it was not ideally what they desired.' Dean FITCHETT regarded it as a 'singularly inept motion,' but in the face of the hopelessness brought on by twenty years of vain battling, 'he was ready to support anything that made an attack on the Education Act.' And Archdeacon ROBINSON reminded the Synod that 'when they had passed the resolution, let them not lay any flattering unction to their souls that they had done anything to promote the cause of their Church. It would not, he added, 'make their children morally or spiritually better,' for 'Christianity did not solely rest on the reading of the Bible, but on the facts of their religion, which were shut out by the motion.' It would be very difficult to induce Parliament to listen seriously and with patience to a scheme in which its very framers have apparently so little faith. (2) Another vital objection to the scheme is this: that it is an attempt, by our separated brethren, to partially abdicate one of the chief functions of the Christian Church, that of instructing others unto justice, and throwing the burden upon the State, of which it is neither a right nor a duty. (3) Genuine religious instruction must, by its very nature, be based upon a doctrinal foundation. The late Cardinal MANNING couched this idea in happy phrase when he said that 'religious instruction without dogma is like a house without a foundation or a triangle without a base.' But this, like many other 'unsectarian' and 'undenominational' schemes aims, in reality, at nothing less than the pasty and amorphous, but hopelessly sectarian Thing known as non-dogmatic or undogmatic Christianity, which somebody has described as 'the residuum of all the heresies.'

*

(4) We do not suppose that our Protestant friends of the synods and assemblies would consciously do Catholics an injustice on the matter of this 'unsectarian instruction.' But do they ever pause to reflect that 'unsectarianism' is, in point of fact, a condition that exists only between various divisions of Protestantism in their relations with each other? Protestantism is, to their eyes, unsectarian; Catholicism, sectarian. It does not seem to strike them that in relation to their Catholic fellow-citizens—who represent the overwhelming majority of all Christian peoples—any and every form of Protestantism, and the principles upon which they rest, are sectarian. We are glad to note, however, that many of the members of the Anglican Synod

of Dunedin so frankly recognised the necessarily denominational character of religious teaching. 'It was impossible,' the Rev. Mr. KEWLEY said, 'to give an undenominational character to religious teaching.' Dean FITCHETT 'could not see how there could be any undenominational teaching that was not denominational in its relation to the Anglican Synod.' And Archdeacon ROBINSON declared that the proper name of the proposed 'undenominational' teaching was 'pan-denominational.' For Catholics, the introduction of Bible lessons into the State schools would merely replace one grievance by another. Reading them without note or comment and leaving the child to puzzle over their meaning as best he could, would mean the acceptance, by the State, of the bed-rock principle of private judgment which separates all the Reformed Churches from the Catholic. Explanations by the teachers would, instead of mending, aggravate matters, for it would afford these the opportunity, if they so desired, of insinuating by word or action their own peculiar beliefs—or want of all belief—in the inspired Word. In very easily conceivable circumstances a teacher, or a group of teachers, might, in fact, under theegis of the State, almost as effectually denominationalise a public school as if it were the Sunday-school of a particular sect. As regards the conscience clause in favor of teachers: it would nullify, in so far as it would be acted upon, the purpose of legislation in favor of Bible-reading in the State schools. As regards the children: cases have occurred within the past few years both in Victoria and New South Wales which go to show that a very appreciable degree of practical compulsion might be exercised even under the supposed safeguard of a conscience clause. But even were it put into effectual and constant operation, it would mark out the Catholic children as a class apart—a sort of separate caste—and make them the butts of the more numerous pupils of other religious denominations.

*

Our Anglican friends have once more stumbled upon an inept and worthless remedy for the godlessness of our public school system. They have yet to learn the lesson that in the battle of Christianity the school plays nowadays, in one very real sense, an even more important place than the church. We Catholics have long known and acted upon this, and, while not abating one tittle of our just claims upon the State for the secular instruction imparted in our schools, we will never relax our efforts to rescue, year by year, more and more of the children of our Faith from the Secularistic spirit which is being force-pumped by Act of Parliament into the minds of the youth of the Colony.

Notes

Why Did He Die?

The arrival of the American papers by the last mail from Frisco has revived the interest in the lamented death of the late President McKinley. The pulpit references to the dreadful crime, both by Protestant and Catholic preachers, were, in almost every instance that we have noticed, marked by a measured dignity and well-guarded restraint and moderation which, in similarly melancholy circumstances, no country could well have surpassed. Only two pulpit harlequinades of any consequence seemed to have been played, so to speak, around the dying bed of the murdered President. A thoughtless and theatrically-inclined Rev. Twing, after having denounced anarchism and anarchists with overwhelming energy, took the American flag from his pulpit, laid it across the altar or communion table, and shouted to the full extent of his available wind power: 'Cursed be the man who shoots down the leader of your men!' But the climax was reached in the amazing declaration which, according to a Press dispatch, was made by one Rev. John Bunyan Lemon, of Manchester (N.H.), who seems to hob-nob with the Almighty on terms of easy confidence such as an archangel would scarcely aspire to. According to the dispatch, this all-knowing preacher 'took the ground that in the attempted assassination of President McKinley he saw the hand of God, because the President had an opportunity to suppress the liquor traffic in the Philippines, but failed to do his duty. Mr. Lemon said God had not only manifested his displeasure in this way, but was teaching an impressive lesson to the American people.' Both reverend gentlemen have probably cooled down to their normal temperature by this time, and their own hearts are, let us hope, their worst accusers.