

## 'STAND FAST IN THE FAITH'

(A Weekly Instruction specially written for the N.Z. TABLET by GHIMEL.)

### QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

**Question.** Catholics look up to Mary as the Mother of God, and invoke her help; is there any plain, positive evidence in the Gospels to justify that attitude?

**Answer.** (a) Our Lord worked His first miracle at His Mother's intercession. Apparently He did not intend to perform any miracles until the beginning of His public life; but at her request He anticipated the hour for the manifestation of His divine power. This incident at Cana is then a clear proof of Mary's position in the eyes of her Son, and Catholics are surely on safe ground in considering her in the same light.

(b) In the Gospel written by St. Luke we have accounts of the Annunciation to our Lady, the birth of our Lord, the worship of the shepherds, and the visit to Elizabeth. The knowledge of these events could have come to St. Luke only from Mary (directly, or at any rate indirectly), for she alone could know them at first hand. Keeping this fact in mind we can appreciate the meaning of the narrative of the Visitation. Mary learnt that her cousin Elizabeth was about miraculously to become a mother, and at once set out to pay her a visit. When she arrived at the house and had greeted Elizabeth, Elizabeth 'was filled with the Holy Ghost, and cried out with a loud voice, saying: Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this unto me, that the Mother of my Lord should come unto me? For, lo! as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. And blessed art thou that hast believed. . . . And Mary said: My soul doth magnify the Lord: and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. Because He hath regarded the lowliness of His handmaid: for behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. Because He that is mighty hath done great things to me . . . and holy is His Name' (St. Luke i.).

What have we here? On the one hand our Christian faith tells us that as Mary hastened on her visit to her cousin she bore her son, Jesus, within her bosom; even at that hour (for she had given her consent to the Incarnation). Our Lady was the living shrine of the Godhead. Yet, on the other hand, we read that Elizabeth, acting, be it noted, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, ascribes the rejoicing of her unborn child to the greeting of Mary: 'So soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears the babe leaped in my womb for joy.'

The explanation? Simply this: Sacred Scripture is here making known to us a new truth—namely, that while all good gifts in the supernatural order come to us from God, and through Jesus our Saviour alone, yet some extraordinary gifts were given in this way at the sound of Mary's voice. And if that was her position on earth, is it likely to be less now, when she is in heaven?

(c) Read again the first chapter of St. Luke and note the many strange statements contained therein. Mary declares that an angel came to visit her; that he told her she would become a mother through the overshadowing power of the Holy Ghost; that this Son would be called the Son of God and Jesus, that is, the Saviour; that she was greeted as the 'Mother of my Lord' by Elizabeth; that as a result of God's goodness to her all generations should call her blessed.

Statements such as these on the lips of any ordinary woman would make us believe she was the victim of gross delusions. But as a matter of fact in this case the statements have been shown to be true! Her Son is worshipped throughout the Christian world as God: He is hailed as the Saviour of men; she herself holds a unique place in the hearts of every generation of Catholics. Divine power surely must be recognised in the prophecies uttered by this unknown maiden

of Nazareth, and in the fulfilment of the prophecies. And if such be the case, as it certainly is, are not Catholics justified in thinking that Mary has been marked out for special honor by God Himself, and that consequently she must ever have a cherished place in their hearts?

## BIBLE-IN-SCHOOLS

### THE DEBATE IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

The following is a complete report, taken from *Hansard*, No. 33, pp. 591 *et seq.*, of the report presented by the Education Committee on the Religious Instruction in Schools Referendum Bill, and of the discussion which followed. Special attention is directed to the division list at the conclusion of the report.

Mr. G. M. Thomson (Dunedin North), as chairman of the Education Committee, brought up the reports of the committee on the following petitions: (1) Nita Park, Lucretia Baker, George A. Page, and others, praying that the Religious Instruction in Schools Referendum Bill be passed into law. The committee reported that the proposals in the Bill introduced this session should not be allowed to become law. (2) August Fromont and others, and fifty-nine similar petitions, praying that the Religious Instruction in Schools Referendum Bill be not passed. The committee was of opinion that the Bill should not be allowed to become law. (3) Most Rev. Thomas O'Shea, and Right Rev. William Henry Cleary, and others, praying that if the petition signed by 140,000 persons, as alleged, in favor of the Bill had been presented to the House, that they might be afforded an opportunity of being heard thereon. The committee reported that as no petition signed by 140,000 persons in favor of the Bill had been presented to the House they had no recommendation to make. (4) Professor Thomas A. Hunter and others, and seventy-six similar petitions, praying that the national system of education on its present free, secular, and compulsory basis be maintained. The committee reported that they had heard evidence on the subject-matter of these petitions, and was of opinion that the New Zealand State system of free, secular, and compulsory education, under which our children had received incalculable benefits, and under which, after thirty-seven years' experience, our people—the immense majority of whom had passed through our schools—compared most favorably, morally, socially, and religiously, with the people of any part of the world, should be maintained. (5) Rev. Professor William Hewitson and eighty-nine similar petitions, objecting to certain provisions embodied in the Religious Instruction in Schools Referendum Bill. The committee reported that it had heard evidence on the subject-matter of these petitions, and was of opinion that the New Zealand State system of free, secular, and compulsory education, under which our children had received incalculable benefits, and under which, after thirty-seven years' experience, our people—the immense majority of whom had passed through our schools—compared most favorably, morally, socially, and religiously, with the people of any part of the world, should be maintained. Further, that the Committee was fully alive to the value of Biblical and religious instruction, and was of opinion that full opportunity should be given for the adoption of a voluntary system, such as that known as the Nelson system, in which the teaching was imparted outside the statutory school hours, under which the State exercised no authority in religious matters, and under which there was no compulsion or violation of rights of conscience. He moved—'That these several reports do lie upon the table, and that the evidence be printed.'

The Hon. Mr. Allen (Minister of Education).—Sir, I wish to express my dissent from a portion of this last report—namely: