

CHRISTCHURCH CATHOLIC CONGRESS

MR. M. DOYLE'S ADDRESS.

This great gathering of fellow-Catholics which I have the honor of addressing this evening, this first diocesan congress called by his Lordship Bishop Brodie, shows in unmistakable terms not only the strength and vigor of Holy Church in this, the youngest diocese of the Dominion, but it is also an unequivocal sign that his Lordship, in conducting the affairs of this diocese, in battling for Catholic rights, and in safeguarding Catholic interests, may rely with fullest confidence on the deep-rooted loyalty, implicit trust, and whole-hearted co-operation of a united and virile Catholic people.

In this fair land Catholics enjoy the fullest measure of civil and religious liberty. Living under a flag that is being carried so nobly by the sons of New Zealand to-day on the blood-stained plains of Flanders and Egypt's ancient battlefields, every citizen enjoys equal rights and equal privileges, and as a necessary corollary all submit to an equality of sacrifice. But while it is perfectly true to say that all are equal in the eyes of the law, and that the protection of the law is given to all whatever be the color, race, or creed, it is nevertheless a fact that one great service of the State, one great Government department, is reserved for those who agree with the theory that religion should not be a part of the school training. Those, with equal rights to choose, who desire that their children receive religious instruction with their secular knowledge, not only receive no help from the State to carry out their desires, but are furthermore made to pay for the maintenance of a system of education for other people's children which they cannot make use of for their own. This is the negation of justice and equity, and a violation of the rights of the minority with a vengeance.

It is a recognised principle that every man has an inherent right to his own form of belief, and consequently, when the State, which should be neutral, accepts the viewpoint of one section of the community in regard to religious training, it should also give proportionate attention to the opinions of the other sections in the same way as it has made conscription apply to all, with a special reservation for conscientious objectors.

If Catholics, and all who are in favor of the secular schools, be likewise exempted from contributing to their upkeep they will willingly accept the alternative of supporting their own schools. This is all that we ask. This is in brief the Catholic educational position. Education, which Milton says is 'Likeness to God through virtue and faith,' is generally defined as the physical, mental, and moral development of the child. It is that which fits a man to perform justly, skilfully, and magnanimously all the offices, both public and private, of peace and war. Of its threefold branches the moral development is the most important, for without it we are but adding power to the uncontrolled engine, pouring oil on the fire, and making still more cunning the hand of the law-breaker.

Till a hundred years ago education had always gone hand in hand with religious training. History shows us that the Church has ever been the custodian of learning, and the patron of science and art. Its schools and universities upheld the torch of culture in South-Western Europe when the rest of the world was sunk in barbarism, and to-day we see its schools, colleges, and universities scattered over the face of the globe.

But it may be said, why adopt the theory that religion should form part of the educational system? In the first place, New Zealand is a Christian country, and all Christians hold that the child is placed in this world for a time of spiritual trial, hence the religious education of the child to fit it to meet the temptations of after life is logically more necessary than its advancement in secular knowledge, as one decides the soul's eternity, the other is limited to the short span of this life.

The second reason why Catholics cannot adopt the theory of non-Christian education is because it is

against the principles of true education, which aim at the raising up, the elevation of humanity by the harmonious development of the soul and the body. F. V. N. Painter, a great American educationalist, whose history of education is now being used as a text-book for the teachers' examinations by the New Zealand Government, on page 2 of this work says: 'Religion, that ineradicable sense of dependence on a supernatural being, has always exercised a noteworthy influence on education. It is religion that has furnished the strongest support of morals and cherished the loftiest ideals of life. The education of the present day in Europe and America is Christian education, for its universality rests on the worth of the individual as a child of God, and the perfection at which it aims is to be found in the rules and duties inculcated in the New Testament. The schools of the modern world, with their surpassing excellence and many-sided activities, are directly traceable to religious influences.'

The New Zealand Government evidently differs from its official text-book, and wishes its schools to be run in a manner antagonistic to the educational system of the old world and the new. In other words, our paternal Government wishes us to observe the law of the land, which is aimed at securing Christian social relations, whilst in effect denying the necessity of Christianity on which the fabric of these laws and our modern civilisation is based.

The third reason why Catholics cannot accept a pagan basis for the education of their children is because religion is the foundation of the moral law, for if religion be not used as a basis when teaching the child its moral obligations, what reason except convenience, fear, or altruistic motives, which unfortunately only appeal to the few, can be adduced for asking the child to take the harder path. It is in this particular that the secular system of education fails, for when the heart and conscience are ignored, the noblest part of a child—his soul—is left uncultivated, and thus he is sent into the world—a ship without a rudder—without adequate ideas of the reason of his existence and his hereafter.

The brief hour at Sunday school can do little. Every Catholic esteems the zeal for Christian education shown by the Sunday school teachers of all denominations, but with all diffidence we do not consider that the training of a child in Christian knowledge can be adequately performed in one hour a week, for the child is not a fool and judges the importance of the subject by the time bestowed on it. The Anglican Bishop of this diocese, in the conference just closed, gave a lead to his Church to establish parochial schools, thus fully endorsing the Catholic position that religious instruction to be adequate must be made part of the school curriculum.

A Government system of education should be national, should include every section of the community, people of all faiths and creeds. The present system, which in effect shuts off Catholics from its advantages, is thus not a national system; and if the Anglican Bishop of Christchurch is right, it does not satisfy Anglicans for the Christian education of their children any more than it satisfies Catholics. The Protestants of New Zealand number 86 per cent., the Catholics 11 per cent., of the population. Of the non-Catholic churches, the Church of England in point of numbers easily holds pride of place, having 41 per cent. of the whole population of the Dominion in her communion. This Church is showing its disapproval of the secular system so strongly that it is apparently going to tackle in real earnest the question of establishing separate religious schools. In 1913 a commission appointed by this Church to go into the education question reported as follows: 'From every point of view, the Church will never be in a position to carry out its paramount duty towards the young until we possess primary schools of our own, which will not only afford a sound education for many of our children, but will also become training centres for the teachers of the future.' This report admirably expresses the Catholic view. The dissenting Churches likewise are not satisfied with the present system, and they have shown their dissatisfaction by endeavoring, in con-

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