

CATHOLIC MARRIAGES

In view of recent happenings in Belfast and of comments thereon made in some of the papers in the Dominion, we give the following brief explanation of the legislation introduced by Pope Pius X in the matter of 'Catholic Marriages':—

The decree dates from August 2, 1907, but came into force only at Easter time, 1908. The chief point so far as the present matter is concerned, is to be found in the following words of paragraph III:—'Only those marriages are valid which are contracted before the parish priest or the Ordinary of the place, or a priest delegated by either of these, and at least two witnesses according to the rules laid down in the following articles, and saving the exceptions mentioned under VII and VIII.'

The subject may be considered under three heads:

1. What is the nature of the change introduced by this legislation?
2. Has the Church power to make such legislation?
3. Why has Pope Pius X introduced this legislation?

1. Up to Easter time of 1908 a marriage between two Catholics or between a Catholic and a Protestant in these countries was considered by the Church to be a valid and a true marriage, even though it had been celebrated in the presence of the registrar or of a Protestant minister. The Church, of course, did not in any way approve of such marriages, and regarded them as sinful because the law of the Church had been violated and the sacrament profaned, but at the same time she held that the marriages were real, and that the parties thus joined were man and wife. Now, here is the change. After Easter, 1908, the law of the Catholic Church stands thus: If a Catholic wishes to be married validly, either to a fellow-Catholic or to a non-Catholic, he or she must be married in presence of the priest of the place, or the Bishop of the diocese, or some priest delegated by either and two witnesses. (A special exception is made for those cases where a Catholic priest cannot be obtained.) If, therefore, a Catholic so far forgets himself as to go to a Protestant church or the registry office for the purpose of being married either to a fellow Catholic or a non-Catholic, the marriage thus contracted will, in the eyes of the Church, be no real marriage at all, and the persons who have gone through that ceremony 'will be no more man and wife after it than they were before.' This legislation, then, is very plain, and a simple reading of the decree makes it clear that the law (a) binds all Catholics, (b) that it has nothing whatsoever to do with non-Catholics, whether baptised or unbaptised, and that the marriages of such among themselves are regarded by the Catholic Church as truly valid marriages provided the contracting parties are otherwise free to marry; (c) that Catholics may still get married to non-Catholics after a dispensation has been obtained and certain other conditions have been complied with, and be validly and lawfully married in the presence of the priest and two witnesses.

2. Has the Church power to make such legislation? Outsiders generally recognise that the Catholic Church has through her long history, taken up a very decided attitude in regard to Christian marriage, and many thoughtful men in modern times have come also to see that the Church's attitude has brought untold blessings to the Christian family. While philosophers and rulers have often tried to make Christian marriage a merely natural or civil contract, the work of man, the Church has always looked upon it as peculiarly sacred, the work of God. 'Christian marriage in the eyes of the Catholic Church is not merely a covenant of two between a man and a woman who take each other, but a covenant of three—the man and the woman and God, who joins both, and accepts into His own immutable hand the consent of both and seals it by an infusion of the Holy Spirit into their souls. Christ has thus exalted the contract of Matrimony into a sacrament or Christian Act, one in which He Himself is the writer, binding together two souls in a bond which is a type of the union between Himself and His Church. Hence the unity and indissolubility and sanctity of Christian marriage in which God Himself joins together what man may never dare to put asunder.' (London Tablet). And if Christian marriage is thus God's work and Christ's sacrament, on whom will devolve the duty of safe-guarding its dignity and the right of fixing the conditions according to which it shall be celebrated? On the State? But where is the evidence to show that our Lord ever committed one jot or tittle of His law or His sacred institutions to its custody? He did indeed say something about 'rendering to Caesar the things that are Caesar's,' but He added that the things of God must be rendered to God, and if marriage, especially Christian marriage, is not a thing of God's, what is? Marriage is a sacred thing, and therefore does not fall under the jurisdiction of the State which deals with things temporal. 'The State may, indeed, by its legislation, declare what are the conditions under which it will accord to marriage civil recognition and civil effects as to civil status and inheritance, and other temporal consequences. But over the making or unmaking of the marriage bond itself

it has no control. It cannot make two persons man and wife before God; neither can it unmake them.' Marriage, then, being a sacrament of Christ, was naturally handed over by Him, along with the other sacraments, to the care of His Church, and she, therefore, alone has the power of fixing the conditions governing its valid reception.

3. Why has Pope X introduced this legislation affecting the celebration of Catholic marriage? This question may be answered in one word. The Catholic Church, looking upon Catholic marriage as a most sacred and blessed institution, naturally wishes that it should be entered into in the holiest and most becoming way possible, and in these days of open disregard of religion, she wishes to mark her sense of the fitness of things by insisting that it shall be celebrated before her accredited ministers.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

ADDRESS BY THE ARCHBISHOP OF WELLINGTON

A new school-chapel was opened on Sunday afternoon at Wadestown by his Grace the Archbishop of Wellington. The Rev. Father Hickson, S.M., Adm., made a statement as to the financial position. He stated that the total expenditure on land and buildings had been £900, of which £650 had been received, leaving a debt of £250.

His Grace the Archbishop then addressed the meeting. He said:—Education is a preparation for life—the life of the child, the youth, the man—consequently the true goal of education is determined by the true goal of life. What, then, is the true goal of life, what is man's ultimate or last end? Has man no other life-aims than some form or other of utilitarianism or of mere enjoyment, and then the blackness of extinction? Has man no other ultimate destiny than that of the ape, or the ox, or the pig? No, he has not, if we are to credit that shifting 'Proteus' called modern philosophy, in the shape of positivism, pantheism, agnosticism. Yes—he has according to Christianity, according to that noble system based upon the deep-seated religious instincts and intellectual needs of man, and the beliefs and practices which are the immemorial possession of our race. Man is made for a supernatural end, to serve God for a time in this world and to be happy with Him for ever in the other world to come. The child, then, has a religious as well as a social nature and destiny. Therefore, in any complete education, the religious nature of the child, still more than the social, must receive its due development and direction; the child must share in the spiritual as well as the domestic and social and political inheritance of the human race. And the first, the greatest, the most precious of the spiritual inheritances of mankind is that of entering into right relations with God, our Creator, our Preserver, our Judge, our first beginning and last end.

Thus religion is no mere part of general education, no mere department of life, no mere special training as for law or medicine. Religion belongs to man as man. It deals with the ultimate ground of our being and of all contingent things; with the Divine plan of the universe, the fundamental idea by which we are to understand and measure everything that is; it penetrates into every relation of man, and touches his every ideal and aim and act. It should therefore penetrate the preparation of life (education) as it penetrates life itself. Religion is simply education in the complete sense of that term. It is the bone of the bone and the flesh of the flesh of education. Rich or poor, beggar or king, bond or free, the child is the heir to heaven. All his faculties—physical, intellectual, moral, religious—were given to him as a means to that end, and are to be developed harmoniously—not with the lop-sided development of the Spartan or the Athenian, but with the full perfection of Christian manhood and womanhood. No doubt physical and intellectual training have their importance in education. But vastly more important is the formation of character by the training of the will in habits of virtue. Bodily weakness and ignorance are evils, but vice is a far greater evil.

To us Christians the knowledge of duty and its grounds comes to us through Christian philosophy and the Divine Revelation with which it is in full harmony and ultimate association. That Revelation is a body of truths respecting God and our relations to Him; and, flowing from them, a collection of duties which have God for their primary object. The duties towards God affect and color all other human duties. The doctrines define and provide an intellectual basis for duty, and are the only solid foundation of morality. The whole training of the child is bounded by Christian Revelation. The Christian idea of child-progress is to 'seek the kingdom of God and His justice,' to 'advance in wisdom and grace before God and men'; and the highest wisdom is to 'know Christ and Him crucified.' The training of the Christian child centres round the personality of Christ. He loved children, tenderly caressed them, blessed them, and declared that 'of such is the kingdom of heaven.' He is the peerlessly perfect ideal to set before children, the highest inspiration of noble thought and

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