

THE CHURCHES AND THE STATE

Under the above heading the following editorial appeared in the *Dominion* of January 31:—

It is impossible to ignore the gravity of the situation revealed by the speeches of Archbishop Redwood and Mr. Martin Kennedy to which we made brief allusion yesterday. Little assistance towards a clear understanding of the rights and wrongs of the position is likely to come from the Government, for although Sir Joseph Ward is already being entreated to 'declare in unmistakable terms' that he will 'stand faithfully by the present law,' the public need expect from him no greater precision nor firmness than he usually permits himself when he cannot decide which is the right side to be on for the moment. Nothing is more certain than that *principles* will be the very last thing the Government will think of as the foundation of any position that it may have to take up. What the public needs most at the present time is a fair statement of the arguments for and against the demands of Archbishop Redwood. The Catholic position rests upon the view thus stated by his Grace: 'There is only one true basis of sound education, and that is religion. Separate one from the other and you destroy real education. If you eliminate God from education, our boasted education will end in failure.' The view held by the State, and by the opponents of the Archbishop—it is the view that has shaped and that maintains the present system of 'free, secular, and compulsory' education—has never been put with equal brevity by any equally responsible authority, but we may put it as a belief that education has no necessary relation at all to religion, and, indeed, is not miscible with it.

The Archbishop holds that it is 'a great injustice' that the Catholics should be 'compelled to pay taxes for public schools to which they cannot conscientiously send their children.' He therefore demands that the money they save the State should be refunded to them 'for the secular knowledge' which they impart to the children taught in Catholic schools. They should not be 'fined and oppressed' for imparting 'one item of education beyond the secular curriculum required by the State when that item is the most important of all.' This is a very fair and logical statement, from the Catholic point of view, of the grievance that Mr. Kennedy threatens us will be made a first-class issue in our politics. Whether the grievance is one that the State must remedy, or one that the State may dismiss as self-imposed and beyond the cognisance of the Government depends, it will readily be seen, upon whether the Catholic or the State theory of Education is the correct one. 'Why,' asks Archbishop Redwood, in effect, 'should we be fined and oppressed, by being forced to pay for the education of non-Catholics, because we add to the secular education of our children an element that we regard as vitally necessary?' 'Why,' retort the defenders of the free and secular State education system, 'should we pay you anything when we provide for all a system of education of which you do not choose to take advantage?' Stated thus—and we think that this is an accurate statement of the dispute—the position is seen to be one of deadlock. Yet it is a deadlock that cannot endure, as Mr. Kennedy's speech makes perfectly clear; and it is the duty of all patriotic citizens, therefore, to do all that can be done to avoid the calamity of a solution through the means which Mr. Kennedy says can be and, if necessary, will be resorted to. The bitter feeling and the harmful strife that will follow the massing of the Catholic vote in the way suggested will not only be bad in themselves but will have the evil result of diverting the public's attention from the other great public questions that are coming always nearer to a decisive issue.

The difficulties only increase when we come to consider what practical means may be devised for a just settlement between the Catholics and the State. The Arch-

bishop did not shrink from facing the largest of these difficulties, and he tackled them with firmness and courage. It might be said, he observed, that 'if Catholics receive grants for their schools, even on the plea of the secular knowledge they impart, other denominations will make similar claims, and thus good-bye to the secular system throughout the Dominion. Nothing of the sort! It is a false and groundless fear. Why so? Because the other denominations have practically accepted the secular system, have no conscientious grievance similar to our own, have made no sacrifices of money for the establishment of separate schools like ours, and therefore have no claim that any wise Government would listen to for a moment.' Who can deny much force to this argument? What 'similar claim' can be made by any denomination which is content with the present system? and for what would or could the State be asked in the way of a grant for that denomination? We note with regret that a contemporary has entirely misrepresented the Archbishop upon this point by implying that he will deny to any other claimant for justice what he demands for his own people. This is the less defensible inasmuch as his Grace was quite explicit in his next succeeding argument. 'But,' he continued, 'but supposing that taught and encouraged by the example of Catholics, they [the other denominations] were in future to begin to make sacrifices and set up separate schools of their own, while sparing the taxpayers vast sums per annum, as they did, why then education would gain, and the country at large would be equivalently benefited.'

When it is urged that 'every denomination will have to be put on an equal footing' in the matter of grants, we are perfectly ready to agree to this, and we feel sure the Archbishop also will agree, provided that every denomination has first put itself on the same footing in the matter of providing the schools to justify the grants. Our attitude upon the equity of the position is that which we stated on February 16 of last year when discussing the proposal that the Junior National Scholarships should be open to the pupils of Catholic schools and tenable at Catholic secondary schools. We then said that 'so far as the Catholic schools are concerned, their separation from the State is surely not an argument for the penalising of those who support them,' and also that it is not the fault of the Catholics that they have done what the other denominations can do if they choose. In another column a correspondent raises a point of no little importance. The case against the Catholic demand rests upon the argument that the State is ready, willing, and able to furnish all the children of the country with the education it approves. If the State is not in this position, its case is flawed at the very beginning of it. Our correspondent suggests that, if the Catholics all at once decided to test this assertion by the State, the national education system would be found hopelessly inadequate. And in view of the frequent complaints of over-crowding and under-staffing at the present time, there seems to be a good deal in our correspondent's point. We wish to say in conclusion that we are anxious only to keep an open mind, and that he is no friend of education, of religion, or of the State who will bring heat or disingenuousness to the discussion of this most difficult problem.

A swellish young man was cutting a dash at a seaside hotel. At the dinner table a quiet-looking gentleman sitting opposite him said:

'How do you do, Mr. Jones?'

'Oh, I am quite well,' replied the young man, haughtily; 'but I really do not recognise you.'

'Dear me,' said the gentleman, 'and yet I used to call very frequently at your mother's house.'

'Indeed!'

'Yes, I was there every week, and your mother always gave me a cordial invitation to call again.'

'And who are you, may I ask?'

'I am the rate collector.'

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