

Waiapu Church Gazette

SEPTEMBER, 1941

GOD—AN EXTRA

Many years ago a New Zealand bishop, now long gone to his rest, got himself into serious trouble by saying that in the New Zealand education system God was "an extra." There was, of course, a storm of indignation all over the country and one very favourite argument was that this could not possibly be an irreligious community, so long as it could turn out such good football teams. To hypercritical minds the logic seems imperfect, but the argument seemed conclusive to very many. Of course, the bishop was perfectly right. Our educational system is supposed to give our boys and girls a right start in life, so that they may learn to think rightly and act rightly when they are grown up. A few silly people may want their children trained to know God or tap dancing, but these are "extras" and the parents must make shift to provide them for themselves as best they can. They have no place in the curriculum. Really, it looks sometimes as if the principal object of education were neither truth nor beauty nor character, but simply money making.

All our civilisation has been built up on the Christian religion, its faith and its morals. There have been mistakes and sins in plenty, but Christ has been for centuries acknowledged as the leader, the example, and the inspirer, even by those who disobeyed Him. To Him we owe homage, trust, and obedience. But little by little we have been getting away from that ideal, and each generation slips a little further. A man brought up by Godly parents, even if he loses his faith, may probably retain a good deal of Christian morals. His children will have less. The next generation perhaps none at all. That, by the way, is what is wrong with

Germany to-day. They began by ignoring the Christian religion. They have now lost Christian morals. Many, like the late T. H. Huxley, have believed that you can retain the morals without the religion. You can't.

In England they are getting much concerned about this, and are trying to find a way to restore the teaching of Christian faith to its right place in the education of the young. It will be very difficult both there and here. Perhaps it will be more difficult in this country. But unless there is to be a general rot, the thing has to be tackled.

Look at the present state of affairs. A well-known schoolmaster, Mr H. A. H. Insull, tells us that once he asked a class of 35 boys in a secondary school to write down the answers to certain questions. Only ten knew who was born on Christmas Day. Twenty-nine had no idea who Jesus Christ was. Some of the others thought He was God (quite right) or that He wrote the Bible (quite wrong). Only four said their prayers. So much for the religion of the rising generation! Clergy must take some of the blame, parents must take more. But some of them can't do the duty and some of them won't, while all are handicapped by religion being scrupulously shut out from the most active hours of the week.

Of course it is difficult, and one of the chief difficulties is the division among Christians. With goodwill and zeal we must find a way through that. Another is the timidity of politicians afraid of losing votes. But every father has a right to see that what he believes to be of the highest importance is taught and properly taught to his children. Every patriot wants to see character trained and built up. We talk a

great deal about loyalty to-day. But all loyalties, to your family, your neighbours, your country and your king are poor imperfect things without the highest loyalty of all, loyalty to the King of heaven and earth.

In his Synod address the Bishop of Nelson said:—"Because Christianity is a creed based upon a knowledge of historical facts, its future mainly depends not upon an amiable state of mind, but upon an educational system in which the teaching of these facts is given the foremost place." Here in New Zealand we are in the grip of an educational system that officially makes no attempt to place before children the basic historic facts on which the Christian Faith is built. Surely it would be incredible, if we were a Christian people, that we could be content with such a system of education—where there is no place in the ordinary curriculum for teaching about God and Jesus Christ; where the children are in real danger of going out into life "armed with no philosophy of life but a half baked belief in physical science and no ideal beyond trivial pleasures."

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 7th.

Everyone knows from the daily papers that the King has called upon us all to observe the first Sunday in this month as a special day of prayer. He has so called on us before, and the call has been obeyed, at least by very many. So, we must rise to it again, and pray, not only for victory over the Germans, but that we may deserve victory and use it rightly when it comes. Let us, also, be sure to remember the heart-breaking sufferings at the hands of the Nazis of the many trampled-on nations of Europe and pray for their comfort and deliverance.

No special forms of prayer will be issued. There are the old forms to be used again, but those concerned may find some useful hints in the letter of the Bishop of Auckland printed in another column.