STER, THURSDAY, APRIL 8, 1886
The following extract from the pastoral letter of the Roman Catholic Archbishops and Bishop of Australasia contains the views of the Church of Rome on the present system of State education:

In godless schools all subjects have their teachers, their hours, their text-books, and their maturely digested systems of instruction; all are provided for, regardless of taste or expense; all are thought for, and well thought for, except what the Founder of Christianity calls the “one thing necessary.” We have no quarrel with the methods which are ordinarily adopted in Australian State schools, for the teaching of arithmetic, geography, and grammar; we believe they are as good—often better—than in far older and more pretentious parts of the world. But, we say, it is a rank rebellion against God to take the young generation from the future men and women of the country; and we feel as if, in schools all the waking hours of their days should be taken of their childhood, and during that time rigidly exclude from them all knowledge of the Supreme Being. A respect for their teacher is impressed on the children’s minds; an affection and a loyalty to their country are inculcated through every page of their earliest history; an esteem for the mother country; and, a sisterly affection for the surrounding colonies are, through their reading and other books, forcibly instilled into their hearts. This is of course right, but from the whole of this training—occupying as it does the principal years of a child’s life—to exclude all mention of God, all recognition of His supremacy, and all instruction as to their duties towards Him, is disloyalty to the Creator and dishonesty to the child. The Catholic Church cannot for one single hour be accessory to such a wrong. Hence we say, even, all over the world, raised her voice and cried “No” to such sapless systems of education. No plan, no prayer, no statesman could devise to overcomes her opposition. It was sought to separate the laity from the priesthood in this resistance, but in vain; her clergy never cease to warn parents of their duty in this matter; and, to their praise be it recorded, her laity have unswervingly answered her “to whom would we go? thou hast the word of eternal life.” Huge bribes have been ready placed to their hand, palatial school buildings have been, everywhere recommended by the State; scholarships and other large monies have been lavishly offered; but the reply of the Catholic of to day has been all through as that of the Hebrew children long ago—“Thy gods, O King, we will not worship, and before the golden statue we will not bow down.” It has been hoped to weary out the faith of the Church and the funds of the people; and statesmen have said—It may be a matter of time, but the Catholics will have to succumb to the rest.” But in no place have they so succeeded, or, least of all, perhaps, here in Australasia.

Within the last ten or fifteen years State aids have been withdrawn from all Christian education in these colonies. The general feeling at the time was that its days were numbered. Some said that it was foolish of the Catholics to contemplate keeping up a
system for themselves; some, that it was despotic of the clergy to "force" the laity into the manifold self-impoveryishment it would entail. Others believed that the mass of Roman Catholics might be willing enough to have Catholic schools as long as they were not compelled to support them out of their own private means. "For a while," such people said, "they will not complain; but by degrees, and with one excuse or another, the calls for funds will be grumbled at, and finally not responded to, and the Catholic schools 'will disappear." It is better," they added, "that the change should thus come unnoticed and through the falling away of the Catholics themselves, than through anything which would seem to savour of persecution. Men who love to find fault with the priest asserted that the zeal of these latter for religious education would be servient as long as supplies came in readily and the organization worked without much trouble; but in the end--either through the unbusiness habit of the laity or the selfishness of the priests--the selfsame men and grumblers fully anticipated the early collapse of the Catholic schools. All human likelihood appeared to support these forebodings of evil.

There were, it is true, a few, even in the hostile ranks, who, like Gamaliel (Acts v. 34), had read history, and they warned their fellow-senators, saying: "Refrain from these men and let them alone, for if this counsel or this work be of God, it will not be driven out; but if it be of man it will be overthrown."

The circumstances of Catholicity at the time these words were spoken were very similar to those in which the Australasian Church has been lately faced with the education of her people. Like the Hebrews, we have gladly taken up the gage thrown down by the "doctor of the law," and with confidence to all honorable men, have declared that God has been largely helpful of His Church during the present day.

Are yourselves the witnesses of this help, and does the Church of Australasia stand alone in this southern world?

Truly, does she address herself to her children in the inspired words of the Prince of the Apostles (Acts iii., 1 Cor. i. 23), "Gold and silver we have not, rich scholarships and stately halls we cannot offer you, but what we have we give, the name of Jesus Christ, a stumbling-block to the Jews, and a folly to the infidels; but unto them who are called, the power and the wisdom of God."

What a consummation of the God-excluding system of education, the firmness with which the Church, both clergy and laity, has ever rejected them, and the special, almost miraculous, manner in which the Almighty has blessed your efforts for religious schools here in Australia, we
There have been, and there will, we are told, to the end be Catholics, who, having opportunities of sending their children to Christian schools, compel them nevertheless to frequent those in which Christ is not recognised. Some do so to curry favour with those in high places, others for the sake of some scholarship, or other petty lucrum. It is the old bartering of Judas with those in high stations at his time (Matt. xxvi. 14, 15), “What will you give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they appointed to him thirty pieces of silver.” Thus is the innocent child’s soul, the cost of the Just One’s blood, peddled away for a worldly woman’s vanity or a greedy man’s pelf. You must not be scandalised or discouraged by such examples. The Church has every year in her history such of her children as St. Paul did of his disciples (2 Tim. iv. 9). “Demas hath left me, loving this world.” No doubt poor Demas gave some excuse to his master, the Apostle, to his companion, St. Luke (Colos. iv. 14, Phm. i. 24), and to his fellow Catholic. Probably he thought he was blinding man and God by his speech. But the Word of God chronicles all so briefly “Demas hath left me, loving this world.”

Almost as dangerous as the example of vain Catholics is the specious reasoning of the supporters of godless education. This reasoning, as reasoning, is easily answered; it is a shadowy make-believe covering, under which men mean to do as they wish, it is, of course, a cloud, on which no impression can be made. Their arguments are reducible to two classes. They say that the arithmetical tables, the parts of speech, the areas of the continents and oceans, Hullah’s scale, and Howard’s gymnastics have no relation what they are introduced into study is almost the same as to bring it into the purchase of merchandise or the making of a watch. This version of men language is a throwing dust in the eyes of Catholics. We do not want to bring religion into the table-book, or the inflections of the parts of speech; neither do we attempt any such folly in Catholic schools. But, while this exclusion of a specific religious element from a number of subjects taken separately and as such, is in a certain sense admissible, the closely consecutive union of them, to the debarring all recognition of God, is to a Catholic intolerable. Let us take these materialists on their own ground. It is not necessary that a school child should eat or drink during an arithmetic or grammar lesson. If, however, you write lesson to lesson, and study to study to the exclusion of a just time for food and drink and sleep, you quickly extinguish the life of the body. So also, we say, if, by a similarly linked union of those secular classes, you shut out all opportunity of learning religion, you kill the life of the soul.

It will be said—“There are the mornings and evenings, and the Sundays, for the worship of God; and there are the parents and the clergyman to teach and conduct that worship.” Such an answer can deceive no
practical person, school child’s moments and evening are almost valueless save for meal time. They are, in a double sense, the twilight of the child’s day—moments of transition only. The earlier hour is spent in breakfast and in the preparation for and the walk to school. The interval between school and sleep time is occupied in needful recreation and reflection; perhaps also some absorbing or compulsory school work for the coming day. What chance has the knowledge or service of the Creator in such circumstances? There is finally, the most insidious seducer of all, the Sunday School. Yes, but what State school teacher would be satisfied with that sole hour, for the imparting to a child a fair acquaintance with any secular subject? And can the Catholic Church accept as sufficient time for training in religion what a schoolmaster would reject as totally inadequate for instruction in grammar or geography? Unhappily there is no gainsaying the fact, that, where the secular system has its way, the child is taught to give more study to the probable derivation of a noun or the analysis of a verb than to the knowledge of Christ or of His law. What a shameful conclusion for Christian fathers and mothers to have to come to!

And, yet, these are not the worst features of this evil. Not only is the whole school time of the child thus craftily monopolized by secular lessons, but all his powers of appreciation are enlisted in their sole behalf. The entire machinery of a healthy and intelligently managed school, its encouragements and its penalties, and the seething and fanning of which permeate it, seize on the boy or girl, and mold them in its spirit. Then there is the eagerness created by constant competition, the stimulus given by the respect of one’s schoolmates, the looking forward to examinations, passes, prizes, and to the publication of “pass” and prize lists.

All these powerful agencies, in a purely secular system, combine in excluding and ignoring every thought of God. What wonder, then, if to a child so circumstanced, God is nothing, or, at least, nothing to be interested in some school subject? Place a boy or girl in these surroundings, and you will find them in this atmosphere, not for one or two, but for all their years from five to fifteen; accustom them, during that long time, to do all their working, all their important thinking, without a notion of God; keep them, from lisp to infancy to the threshold of manhood or womanhood, God-excluding knowledge as the one interest of their lives; and, finally, encircle them for all those years with companions who are being similarly trained, and can you wonder if the result is practical infidelity? What parent, what common-sense man—can the occasional prayer of a tired child or the little Sunday-School hymn have to affect the current, we have been describing?

We believe that before long our fellow colonists of other creeds will open their eyes to the terrible void in public instruction caused by the present absence of religion. An immense number of them are earnest in their desire for the solid good of the young generation, and for the honour and prosperity of Australasia. They cannot expect either the one or the other from systems of education which shut out the Almighty from their lives.
whole school life of the child. But, however it may be with us, we owe it to our God and our Judge, to be unwavering on this point. We endeavour, as it is our duty to speak to you about this important matter in no uncertain accents. You—except the very few Demases—will, we know, do your duty to your little ones and their Redeemer.

One point more, and we shall pass on from the present subject to the primary object of our address, the school-training of His children said of some of them in sincerity: "We would be glad to infuse into our educational system the spirit and practice of religion; but where there are so many denominations, where there is so much disagreement as to what really is the true religion, this is impossible." Let the Churches, says Lord Houghton, when addressing the educationalists of the day, "settle among themselves what religion they wish taught, and let us know: in the meantime we shall instruct the children in reading, writing, and arithmetic". This flippant language goes down with those who welcome any insolence to Christianity. It is unworthy of a logician or a statesman. If the nation or its department of public instruction were asked to teach religious instruction, there might be some appearance of reason in the remonstrance. Even then it might be required of it to take from the heads of recognised religious communities a nomination of fit instructors, and to furnish competent remuneration for the same. But the State, in our case, expected to teach religion.

Now, on one point, what we have been saying is not in any condition, even a Catholic writer can be adduced to show that this is demanded by the Roman Catholic Church. What we do require is that, especially where the guardians, concerned to their natural duties and the parents to provide nurture and education, their children's bodies, be allowed also to select and furnish that of their souls. Permit these rightfal custodians of the young to whom the Lord has brought up. By their schools they wish them to be educated in schools of their own faith, or, if they place them in establishments where God, His Christ, or His law is not mentioned, I shall not pay for their instruction. I shall not pay for the matter how well they are being taught arithmetic and grammar; no matter what examination you might allow me to make of them, no matter what test you let me use as regards the capability of their teachers; no matter, in a word, what satisfaction you give me in dealing with them; as long as you keep them in a school where religion is once mentioned to them the live-long day—I shall not pay for their education in an Establishment of schooling, however secular. Take them from that school of God and send them to one where they will never hear His name, and I shall gladly pay for almost every species of instruction that your soul can crave for them. Send them where the intellect that He gave shall be trained to nearly everything except the recognition of Him. Let them attend the observance of the law of sentences and numbers are anxious over every hour every day, but where all allusion to Him and His is strictly shut out. Send them where the Plantagenet's will be the heroes of history Shakespeare's apologies their rule of conduct, but where Christ and His Gospel will be, even remotely, introduced to them.
and I shall send to the four quarters of the world for professors to teach them. Passage money, yearly salary, capital money, all shall be at my expense, and all shall be promptly and prodigiously disbursed." How base a speech for a nineteenth-century Government to make! What recreant language for Christened men to use! Yet these are the words and the votes in the Australasian Assemblies of to-day.

On Catholic intermediate education we can afford to be very brief. No words of ours could speak more plainly or more strongly in connection with it than the splendid Colleges now at work in most of the leading cities of our colonies. The creating of such establishments by the clergy and laity in this early infancy of our Australasian Church, and under circumstances where so many other grave woes were staring them in the face, is ample evidence that God, who is all merciful, is pleased to hear the sacrifices of such institutions, which are held by all our earnest Catholics.

We exhort you to keep alive your zeal in this important section of Christian education. We trust that these schools for secondary, or, as it were, "intermediate" between primary and University instruction will be multiplied until every town of reasonable size is able to place these advantages at the doors of its children. Your Catholic primary school system, for the perfection of which you are making such exertions, is but half complete as long as its children find no kindred atmosphere to pass on to when they leave its protection. We therefore exhort the clergy and laity to still more zeal in the developing and strengthening of Christian intermediate education. God, who has so miraculously blessed the Girls' High Schools, under the various religious communities throughout Australasia, and brought to so rare and perfect a perfection, even in Europe, will aid you in a like manner and crown your similar efforts with a similar fruit.

The principles already laid down in regard to the primary schools must hold with equal force in the matter of intermediate and University education. All the Australian prelates are most earnest in their desire to see the Catholic youth of these great colonies not only instructed in their religion but perfected in every highest branch of science, for we are convinced that the world holds nothing more precious or more beautiful than the cultivated intellect of man, enlightened by faith. Some scientists indeed in our own days have made it their aim to set science in opposition to Divine faith; but such a purpose cannot be attained except by the travesty of science or the travesty of faith. It is only science falsely so called that can turn us away from God; for God is the source of all truth, and the earnest pursuit of science cannot fail to lead us to Him. The higher the branches of science are the more closely should they be connected with the supreme truth, and the more necessary must it become that they be enlightened and quickened by religion. In many respects the University system is as yet only in its infancy in these colonies. We hope that through the enlightened policy of our statesmen its honours and emoluments and every advantage shall be thrown open alike to all, and that our
Catholic youth, without any sacrifice of religious principle, may be found on a footing of equality with their fellow-citizens of every denomination. We trust, moreover, that the University arrangements which hitherto have proved far from satisfactory, may be carefully amended, and that our Catholic young men may no longer be compelled to look to other countries for that higher education which is denied them in these colonies, or to seek elsewhere for those pure fountains of knowledge which are the surest and surest system shall have closed against them at their own doors.

On the subject of the early employment of children the Pastoral says:

When your children leave school do not permit the spirit and habits there acquired to perish. The years which intervene between the end of school-time and the first dawning of manhood or womanhood are the most important of all one's life. It is then that tastes begin to develop themselves; passions have then to learn whether they are to be the rulers or the ruled; comradeships begin to form--wants which will settle themselves on the heart and the mind; and the spirit, which is to govern the soul during after-life, entrenches itself firmly therein. And yet it is that at this very period that young girls and young boys are most left to themselves. Would to God it was only "to themselves"! Alas, in how many instances are they left to the first unsuitable comrade? This is the period when the wishes of parents are disregarded; the indulgences of religion and morality are set aside; and often the very laws of the State are outraged, till at last the innocent and promising Catholic school child of a couple of years is brought among the people of parents' and teachers' love and hopes, becoming part of the outcast of society. To whom is this great disappointment--to be imparted? To the parents, and to the parents alone. After leaving school, the boy or girl, but especially the former, should be immediately bound to some trade or profession. Let every care be taken to make sure that the occupation selected is healthy and suitable, and that the persons into the company of whom the young person is necessarily brought are virtuous and worthy. Then, once the ascertainment, there be no mistaken kindliness; no time allowed for habits of indecision, want of steadiness, or laziness to take possession of the child. Set him at once in the path of industry and honest occupation, and you will do well by yourselves and by society, and best of all, by your young beginner. Through the ignorance of training and of purpose, very many of our people neglect to place their children in the ranks of skilled labour. If you, after some years, find Catholics abundant in the ranks of the navy, camps, in the charge of public-houses on the wharfs and on the cabstands, damming of fencing in the far interior, or timber getting by the fever-stricken estuaries along the northern coast, in fact, you find those poor fellows wherever the hours are long, the climate merciless, the labour unskilled, the comfort few, and the remuneration small. Why
all this the case? Because their parents brought them up to nothing better. Dearly beloved, open your eyes to this mistake. No enemy could do you more injury than, by this listlessness and shortsightedness, you are thus doing to yourselves, and to those whom you love more dearly still, your own children. Those of you, who are already working on new railway constructions, avoid those curses of large public works, gambling and intemperance. Save your earnings for a couple of years, get homesteads, and make to yourselves some provision and resting-place for the evening of your life. Bring yourselves within the influence and comfort of religion. God never meant the Irish Catholic to be the wanderer that he is over the face of the earth.