

amendments of the law. It is rather an important point among all Churches, and I believe many resolutions have been sent to the Right Hon. the Prime Minister and others. There are various resolutions on the subject to which I need not draw your attention, but I want to point this out: that these proposed amendments do not affect the right of a Church to teach their own doctrine in their own Church. The proposed amendments make it an offence to allege, either expressly or by implication, by persons outside the Church, that persons legally married are not truly and sufficiently married. Now, a Church may teach its own doctrine in regard to marriage either in connection with a deceased wife's sister or in connection with any one of the prohibited degrees. They may say that the Church does not approve of such a marriage, and that is consistent with religious liberty and religious freedom. But it is quite different to go outside of the Church. No priest or any other person should have the right to go outside of their Church to a home or to a person and say, "You are living in sin, and your children are illegitimate and are bastards." That is an infringement of both the civil and religious liberty of the parties concerned. If a man has been raised in the Roman Catholic Church, and chooses for his own conscientious purposes to be married either by a Registrar or a non-Catholic minister, that should not give the Roman Catholic Church the right to go to that man and make his life miserable and his home wretched because they happen to regard him as not married according to their doctrine. A case of that kind has occurred just recently in Wellington. That is what is going on. Why should priests of the Roman Catholic Church have a right to persecute and make people miserable and unhappy because of the supposed right of the Church to impose its doctrines over the laws of the country? Now, I contend that the liberty of any Church is not infringed by these proposed amendments. They can teach in their own churches their own doctrines, and that is all the liberty they ought to claim. I want to emphasize that point: that there is every right preserved to the different Churches to teach in their own churches their own doctrines. But it is made an offence for them to go outside of their Church and to say that persons who do not obey their law are not truly married, and that their children are illegitimate or bastards. If that point is kept in mind by this Committee and by the House I do not believe there will be any difficulty in passing these amendments into law.

You consider that there has been some misapprehension?—I am quite sure that there has, according to some of the statements which have appeared in the Press. Take the case of the Nelson Synod: A statement was made that the Bishop of Nelson opposed the proposed amendments to the Marriage Act; and yet that Synod, of which the Bishop is president, subsequently passed a resolution wholly supporting these present amendments. Then, the Rev. Mr. Jolly, in Auckland, questioned very strongly these amendments and called them "preposterous folly"; but his presbytery—that is, the Presbytery of Auckland—published a very strong statement supporting them. The Presbytery of Wellington has passed a resolution supporting the amendments, but suggesting that if there is any doubt as to the liberty of the Churches in the proposed amendments that there should be some safeguard made. But in that respect I want to say that if, on that ground or any other, any attention is given to the suggestion made by Archbishop O'Shea that the word "legal" should be introduced into these amendments, you might just as well cut the whole thing out. You would destroy the value and the effect of the amendments, because Dr. Cleary in his book says, "We do not question its legality, but we call it legalized concubinage."

You say that the Nelson Synod is in favour of the proposed amendments in this Bill?—Yes.

But they add this to their resolution:—

"(a.) That while this Synod recognizes the right of any branch of the Christian Church to teach its religion, and apply its discipline to its own people, it is nevertheless of the opinion that the evidence produced before the Committee of the Legislature which sat recently at Wellington indicates that the Roman Catholic Church declares that the Roman Catholic party to a mixed marriage is guilty of the sin of adultery if such marriage has been celebrated in a registry office or by a non-Roman minister of religion. The Synod holds that such a declaration inflicts a cruel and unmerited injustice on the non-Roman party to such a union, and on the children born of such a marriage. It therefore calls on the Legislature to give such parties, who have committed no offence against the law of Christ or of morality, all the protection and remedy that law can afford.

"(b.) That while it is competent for the State to make its own code for legally valid marriages, the proposed amendments of the Marriage Act appear, as they are worded, to prevent the possibility of a revision of the Book of Common Prayer, and to make it penal for any religious society to set before its own members the ideal of marriage contained in the Gospel. We respectfully beg that Parliament will not impose these restrictions of religious liberty."

Did that appear in the Press?—No. It did not appear in the Press. That is from the Rev. Mr. Coursey. He would probably be the secretary. He would send more in his letter than appeared in the Press. But, anyhow, that point is, I contend, amply guarded against, because it is only an offence to "allege against any person or persons" that they are not lawfully married. That is where the damage is done. Instead of religious teaching there is an overt act, which singles out particular individuals. The rights of the individual should be safeguarded, and these amendments will safeguard the rights of the individual.

*Mr. Harris:* You were not quoting from the second catechism?—No. The second catechism is something very much in the nature of a blind. It is the old catechism, the "pink" catechism, in every particular, except that page 57 has been torn out, and a fresh page substituted with certain alterations, and then it has been placed in a new cover under the imprimatur of the Bishop of Auckland. I may say that the catechism under the imprimatur of the Bishop of Auckland only applies to the Auckland Diocese, whereas the imprimatur of the Archbishop of Wellington applies to the whole of New Zealand, because the Archbishop of Wellington is the Metropolitan for the whole of New Zealand. The fact is that after there had been a definite promise given by Sir John Findlay to the Statutes