

vigorous expression, through their foremost Bible-extracts champion, Rev. Dr. Gibb, at a meeting of the Council of the Churches held in Dunedin, and reported in the *Otago Daily Times* of the 17th February, 1903. For the Bible in schools Dr. Gibb said "he would fight strenuously and to the very end, but he would not fight more earnestly for that than he would against any proposal to introduce the priest into the schools of New Zealand. If ever the time came when an attempt should be made to use the schools of this colony as the English Education Act would use the schools at Home—for the purpose of proselytism for the propagation of the tenets of any sect—he would be found standing in the van of those who would resist that to the uttermost." Bible in schools, he reiterated, was one thing; priests in school was another and a very different thing. They were equally united in their determination to obtain the one and to resist the other with all their power." Dr. Gibb is now vice-president of the League. And he favours in 1914 the "proselytism" and the denominationalizing of the public schools which he declared, in 1903, that he would resist "to the uttermost." These frequent and radical changes of policy, these deep mutual contradictions among League leaders, must seriously hamper the earnest and thoughtful petitioner desirous of knowing for what precisely the League stands at any part of its programme.

10. A word may perhaps be here permitted as regards the Catholic attitude towards the right of entry of the clergy during school hours. Speaking personally I would not object to it, provided that the rights of conscience of parents, teachers, and pupils were properly safeguarded. At present, however, I cannot see how this safeguarding is to be effected in single-roomed schools, which are about two-thirds of the entire number. The Rev. T. J. O'Donnell, of Wynyard, Tasmania, informs me that both the teacher's and the visiting clergy's religious instruction works very unsatisfactorily (as regards Catholics) in the twenty-six one-roomed schools in his parish. I am aware that there is a vast body of opinion against it—as far as my information goes, it is opposed by the greater majority of electors; and if this matter be referred to a plebiscite they should, in fairness, be afforded an opportunity of expressing a separate opinion on this separate issue.

XIII. THE CONSCIENCE CLAUSE.

1. The ballot-paper in the Bill states that "any parent shall have the right, if he chooses, to withdraw his child from Bible-reading, or from religious instruction, or from both." These mild-looking words give to the average elector but little idea of the cunning tyranny that is masked in this wretched conscience clause. It is nothing less than the notorious conscience clause devised by astute Irish proselytizers for the purpose of "weaning the Irish from the abuses of Popery." The history of that odious Irish formula is told in "Mixed Education" (Dublin, 1859, pp. 75–201), and in O'Riordan's "Catholicity and Progress in Ireland" (London, 1905, second edition, pp. 438–452), and in "Liberty of Teaching" (Dublin, 1865), by Isaac Butt, the noted Irish Protestant statesman. People in this Dominion can have but little conception of the bitter sense of rankling wrong which that cunning measure of proselytism of the poor has burned into the memory of the Catholics of Ireland. And it is perhaps the feature that, more than any other, has embittered New South Wales Catholics against the system in operation there, and won for it, among them, this standing designation, "the proselytizing system." The Irish conscience clause was long ago abandoned in Ireland.

2. From the beginning the League has demanded or taken for granted this conscience clause, which when driven out of Ireland found its way, with other "undesirable immigrants," into New South Wales. But when seeking support for their still unpresented petition that League declared (on its petition-card) that it gave the parent "complete control of the child's religious instruction in the public school." (The first part of that "religious instruction" was officially described on the League's petition-card as reading "from Scripture books" under the teachers' supervision.) The conscience clause of the remaining League literature is the Irish clause of the Bill. As will presently be seen, it affords the parent anything but "complete control of the child's religious instruction in the public school." Here, for the second time, the ballot-paper of the Bill removes a restriction favouring religious liberty which the League had put upon itself in order to secure petitioners' votes; the ballot-paper offers the League a power which the League's own petition-card expressly repudiates. Yet Bishop Sprott calls that ballot-paper the League's own. The League has apparently never consulted its petitioners in regard to this radical departure from the conscience clause officially "described" in its petition.

3. The ballot-paper in the Bill secures for Government—not for the parent—"complete" positive control of the "religious instruction" and "general religious teaching" imparted by the State teacher (as it is called in Australian laws, departmental regulations, and reports). As in Australia so in the present Bill,—

(a.) The Government draws up and completely "controls" the scheme or syllabus of Bible lessons. In this matter the parent is not even consulted.

(b.) All children (no matter of what faith or unfaith) are required to attend the Government biblical lessons (or, as they are called in Australian law, "religious instruction" and "general religious teaching") unless specially and individually exempted.

(c.) The only relief afforded to objecting parents under the previous Bill and under the "system" prevailing in parts of Australia is purely negative, partial, and "incomplete." The Government merely offers a paltry permission to "withdraw his child." And to secure this contemptible "concession" the wretched parent must go through the humiliating form of setting down (presumably in writing, as in Australia) protests against the State religion. Yet every one knows of this frailty of human beings—how neglectful many parents are in writing; how many (even among educated people) would write a letter, so to speak, only at the point of the bayonet; and how unwilling timid and uneducated people are to submit their poor scrawls and bad spelling to cultured (and presumably critical) men and women of the teaching profession. The intent or effect of the Irish conscience clause of this Bill is to compel the children of all such