

on the Australian System," by Rev. A. Don) the "religious instruction" so given is shown to be of a highly sectarian, dogmatic, and theological character. Indeed, one lesson is described by the Rev. A. Don as being given "in the manner of a first-class Bible teacher."

3. All this corresponds with the provisions of the law and the departmental regulations in the various Australian Bible-in-schools States. Thus section 7 of the New South Wales Education Act expressly provides for "general religious teaching" (by the teachers) as part of the school curriculum. The Report of the New South Wales Minister of Public Instruction for 1909 (p. 38) says that the "general religion" imparted by the Government teacher is a "foundation laid for further religious instruction." Western Australia has copied word for word the New South Wales provision for "general religious teaching" by the State teacher. The Queensland Act (1910) declares that its object is to provide "religious instruction" in the public schools, and in section 22A provision is expressly made for such "religious instruction"—the official margin of this section, the regulations, and Schedule XVIII all describe the Government biblical lessons as "religious instruction." The other Australian Bible-in-schools States have legislation and regulations which, in wording or in practical effect, amount to the same thing.

4. All this corresponds with the demands of the last as well as of the present Bible in Schools League. Thus the League of 1904 stated in an official pronouncement it wanted "simple unsectarian lessons" from the Bible, its leaders holding that "the Bible contains great truths which all Christian men now hold in common" (*Otago Daily Times*, 25th May, 1904). In other words, they demanded the really sectarian compromise styled "common Christianity." The Rev. J. Tait declared about the same time that "the Protestant Churches had a right to insist that the State should, for at least half an hour each day, provide religious instruction" (*Christchurch Press*, 2nd May, 1904). A precisely similar contention was put forward last year by Bishop Averill, then and now a member of the League executive. He said, "It is the duty of the State to include in its system of education provision for the training of the spiritual faculties, the emotions, the conscience, and the will, just as much as the mental," and one of his "reasons for seeking a change in our present education system" is this: "Because the majority are dissatisfied with the omission of Bible-reading and religious teaching from the school curriculum" (*Hawke's Bay Herald*, 19th June, 1913). See also the League's religious dogmas mentioned under Section XI of this evidence. The Right Rev. the Anglican Primate (Dr. Nevill) is now president of the League. In a verbatim report supplied to the *Otago Daily Times* of the 5th August, 1905, His Lordship said, "The terms 'Bible in schools' and 'religious instruction' must be used interchangeably, because the Bible was the sower of religion." A great mass of League and other testimony similar to that quoted above is ready for production on demand. Some of it is given in No. 5 of the Catholic Federation publications (pages 10 to 17), copies of which are herewith handed to your Committee. Judging by the demands of the League at the back of this Bill, the type of Scripture extracts contemplated would be such as is in use in some or other of the Bible-extracts States of Australia. A perusal of those in use there reveals the following: They are taken mainly or altogether from the Protestant Authorized Version. They are selected with a view to excluding all matters on which a group of Reformed denominations are not agreed. They contain a quantity of (mutilated) religious facts, religious doctrines, religious moral precepts, the Lord's Prayer, and other devotions in sectarian form, and they exclude the great mass of texts and incidents to which Catholics appeal in support of the doctrines and practices of their faith. The manuals contain paraphrases, reformed sermon-headings, &c., and are generally made as sectarian as they well can be.

A Change of Mind.

5. Under pressure of controversy two prominent League leaders wrongly denied that the League had adopted the Irish conscience clause or any particular form of conscience. So likewise, under stress of discussion, sundry League leaders denied that under their chosen "Australian" system, also embodied in the Bill, the Government sets up as a purveyor and teacher of "religious instruction" and "general religious teaching." Indeed, some of the leaders went so far as to declare, under the favoured "Australian" system, the Government biblical lessons are given merely as "literature" or as purely secular "morals" or "ethics" quite "devoid of religious significance," and without "application to any other world than the present one." The words last quoted are from a letter written by a "member of the League executive" in the *Otago Daily Times* of the 8th September, 1913.

6. Here again we find the League doing what follows: (a) Contradicting the plain facts of the "system of religious instruction in State schools prevailing in Australia," and demanded by the League; (b) contradicting the plain words of its own petition-card; (c) contradicting its other publications and the declaration of its own trusted leaders. Here again, for the fourth time, we find the League departing in a radical manner from the prayer of its petition, and apparently, as before, without consulting its petitioners. How in reason could any body of petitioners be other than hopelessly confused by these endless self-contradictions? How in reason could they know precisely what they were petitioning for, while not even the League executive knew it from day to day? The schedule to the Bill represents another verbal change, for an obvious controversial purpose. But surely, in a ballot-paper for popular use, there should be no misstatements; there should be no ambiguous expressions such as "sectarian," &c.; there should be no concealments of vital facts; plain words should be used in their plain workaday sense, and not altered in meaning so as to confuse electors or to suit the self-contradictions and lightning changes of any League or section of the community. As the ballot-paper stands it is a riddle which no man can read.