

XV. THE COST.

Both the League petition and the present "referendum" Bill conceal one highly practical matter from the electors.

1. Biblical extracts, "religious instruction," and "general religious teaching" are to be provided by the Government to suit only one privileged class. These lessons are, admittedly, to be of such a kind that many people would object to them on grounds of religious conscience. Hence the conscience clause—for children.

2. Only one class of people can benefit by the Government biblical instruction: all must pay for the State compiling, State printing, State binding, State storage, State distribution, and State teaching of it. There is no conscience clause for objecting taxpayers. They must pay for teaching which they conscientiously reject, and from which they can derive no advantage. Herein the ballot-paper penalizes conscientious religious belief. It gives to one set of religious beliefs educational and financial privileges which it denies to all other religious beliefs.

3. The cost of the League's scheme has been estimated at from £100,000 to £120,000 a year. No opinion is here expressed as to the accuracy or otherwise of these estimates. The scheme does not necessarily involve additional taxation; it does necessarily mean at least a new application of existing taxation. The principle involved is not affected, whether the cost be £1,000 a year, or £20,000, or £120,000 a year. The Boston tea-tax was a small thing, but it led to the American Revolution. Had this unjust and unequal treatment of religious beliefs been frankly laid before the League petitioners it may be taken for granted that great numbers of them would never have signed the card; but, from beginning to end, they were misled by the great volume of cry from the League executive: "Same footing" for all! "Equal privileges" for all! "Equal opportunities" (Canon Garland's cry) "to all and special privileges to none" (Christchurch Press, 9th June and 25th August, 1913; *Otago Daily Times*, 14th June, 1913; *Hawke's Bay Herald*, 19th June, 1913; and numerous other papers and passages that can be quoted on demand). Such are some of the misrepresentations by which signatures were obtained for the League's petition.

XVI. TRUSTING THE TEACHERS.

1. One of the most odious provisions of the Penal Code was this: that no one was permitted to exercise the office of teacher unless he professed the State religion. The scheme of the League and of its own and "only" ballot-paper is a proposed application to New Zealand of the principle underlying that old repressive legislation. The proposed new legislation would prevent any one in New Zealand holding a State teachership except, in effect, on religious tests devised by the League. In a word it is, in effect, a proposal to farm out the consciences of the State teachers to the League.

2. Till the present agitation all previous New Zealand schemes that I know of protected, in some measure, the consciences of objecting teachers. As late as 1904 the Bible in Schools League of that time said, in the course of a public manifesto, "A great deal is made of the teachers' difficulty. We have done our best to safeguard them in every way. A conscience clause means that we are unanimously and determinedly opposed to anything in the nature of religious tests being applied to them" (*Otago Daily Times*, 25th May, 1904). This declaration was signed by, among others, Rev. Dr. Gibb and Rev. (now Bishop) T. H. Sprott. The former is a vice-president of the present League; the latter a member of the League executive. And both are now "unanimously and determinedly opposed" to "safeguarding" the consciences of objecting teachers.

3. Now, apparently for the first time in New Zealand, the League and the League's Bill refuse honourably objecting teachers even the poor protection of a conscience clause. Nay, intimation has been plainly given that even a conscience clause will not be allowed to safeguard teachers. Here, for instance, is a statement made in a published letter by Mr. Braithwaite, an Otago League official: "To injure the League, he (Bishop Cleary) advocated a teachers' conscience clause; but, if it existed, no teacher would make use of it to bring himself into disrepute with parents and School Committees. And a teacher would stand a poor chance of being appointed if he were known to be against Scripture teaching, so that a teachers' conscience clause would not protect him nor do away with 'hypocrisy'" (*Otago Daily Times*, 20th May, 1913). Evidently the only protection for the teacher is to place him by law entirely outside the teaching of the proposed Scripture extracts.

4. The League—and the ballot-paper in the Bill—refuse to the teacher even the legal recognition that he has a conscience, and that his conscience may object. In fact, both the League and the Bill unite in not even supposing that the teacher or the taxpayer has a conscience. Yet for nearly two years past—and in our present petition—we have made it clear that Catholic teachers object, as a matter of religious conscience, to conducting the proposed biblical lessons. The grounds of their objection are set forth in No. 3 of the Catholic Federation publications, pages 4 to 7, copies of which are herewith laid before your Committee. These objections are doctrinal, doctrinal-moral, and disciplinary—that is, arising out of Church law and discipline. Catholics, for instance, may not use Bibles or biblical lessons unless these have the approval of the proper authority in their Church; they may not explain or interpret them otherwise than in accordance with Catholic principles; they may not join in—much less conduct—any scheme of "general religious instruction," or the League's "common" or "reduced" or "skeleton" Christianity; and by a decree of the Council of Trent the religious instruction of Catholic children must be carried out exclusively under the authority and supervision of the Catholic Church and not under that of any Government or of teachers of all faiths or of none. This decree is substantially violated by the League's conscience clause for children in the Bill. Under the conscience clause the Government compels all Catholic children not specially exempted to receive the Government's