

“common” or “general religious instruction.” This is a violation of the Catholic principle (based upon the Scriptures) that the Church—not the Government—shall direct and supervise the biblical and religious instruction of Catholic children.

Oppressing Teachers.

5. The doctrine and discipline of the Catholic Church hereon are quite clear. Equally clear is the duty of the Government to protect those sacred rights of conscience of teachers and in the words of the League of 1904 to oppose “anything in the nature of religious tests being applied to them” (*Otago Daily Times*, 25th May, 1904). This declaration is signed by, among others, the Rev. Dr. Gibb (a vice-president of the League) and the Rev. (now Bishop) Sprott (a member of the League executive), both among the promoters of the present Bill. They are now “unanimously and determinedly in favour of a real form of religious tests for teachers,” and equivalent tests are provided in the ballot-paper supplied by the League to the present Bill. Moreover, numerous members of that League affirm in direct, or equivalent, or implied terms that conscientiously objecting teachers persisting in their objection will be driven out of the Public Service, forced to resign, be considered unfit for the position, &c. See, for instance, the “New Zealand Journal of Education,” November, 1912, p. 225; the *Lyttelton Times* of the 1st and 2nd January, 1913; *Otago Daily Times* of the 20th May, 1913; Dean Fitchett (a member of the League executive) in the *Otago Daily Times* of the 14th June, 1913; Rev. W. F. R. Fitchett in the *Otago Daily Times* of the 4th July, 1913; Rev. A. Millar (League publication secretary) in the *Waikato Times* of the 30th April, 1913; Canon Richards in the *Bay of Plenty Times* of the 27th June, 1913; the *Nation* (Orange Lodge organ) of the 10th February, 1913; and, among others, Rev. Dr. Gibb (a vice-president of the League) at Wanganui (*Wanganui Chronicle*, 1st August, 1913) and at Invercargill (*Southland Times*, 25th June, 1914). The ballot-paper supplied by the League to the present Bill provides, in effect, that the objecting teacher must either conform to the State religion or be driven out of the Public Service. The alternatives which the League and the Bill place before him are three—(a) Conformity with the State-edited State-Bible scheme or State religion; (b) acting a part or playing the hypocrite before the pupils; or (c) dismissal, as surely as if he were a convicted malefactor. Men with families will be sorely tempted to sell their souls for bread-and-butter. This is, in effect, the plea of a Board teacher similarly placed, as stated in the *Democrat* of the 23rd February, 1901: “But one must make a living somehow, so I personally comply with the terms of my agreement, and let conscience go hang.” The Bill, in effect, farms out teachers’ consciences to the League; it allows no one to occupy a teachership except on religious tests devised by the League; it puts a premium upon hypocrisy; it penalizes fidelity to conscience; it uses public funds, in effect, to bribe people into disloyalty to their faith; and it deprives a large and honourable body of men and women of rights of conscience which are accorded as a matter of course to the worst criminals in our prisons.

6. This serious oppression of conscience is concealed or glossed over in the League’s ballot-paper in the Bill. It is concealed in the League’s petition. It is seriously misrepresented in the League’s declaration: “Trust the teachers”; “equal rights”: “equal footing”; “equal opportunities to all and special privileges to none.”

7. Had the League, in agitating for this Bill, frankly told the public how it proposed to oppress and persecute religious conviction in the teaching profession, it may be reasonably deemed very doubtful that it would have secured the signatures of any but a handful of violent extremists. It is due to Parliament and the public that these penal provisions against conscientious religious conviction—these State financial inducements to disloyalty to Church connection—should be frankly stated in the present Bill.

XVII. MAJORITY RULE OF CONSCIENCE.

1. The Bill now before Parliament interferes in the following purely personal matters of the purely personal conscience: “What views shall I hold regarding the Bible and ‘religious instruction’? What views thereon shall I contribute to? What views thereon shall I teach?” Moreover, the Bill proposes to fling these personal matters of personal religious liberty and personal religious conscience into the area of political strife, to be decided by electoral majorities amidst the varied passions of an electoral contest.

2. No Parliament, League, or majority has the moral right to interfere between the private conscience and God, Who (in the words of the Presbyterian Confession of Faith) is “sole Lord of the conscience.” In democracies such as ours the people are free to designate the persons who are to exercise the civil power, but on biblical and Christian principles the power or authority itself is “of God” and “ordained of God” (Rom. xiii, 1-5). His moral law binds Parliaments as well as individuals, majorities as well as minorities, to the eternal principles of justice and to that righteousness which “exalteth a nation” (Prov. xiv, 34, R.V.).

3. The measure now before Parliament is *ultra vires*—it oversteps the proper limits of the civil authority. It might, if placed upon the statute-book, create a “legal right” for an electoral majority to coerce the consciences of electoral minorities; it could never create a “moral” right or a right in justice to do so. Legal rights are only a fraction of human rights. The civil law rules only that part of us which comes to the surface in civil and social life. It has no right of interference or control, for instance, in the numerous things which concern the individual alone, and his personal relations with religious conscience, and with the Divine Law-giver at the back of religious conscience. The civil law is a social code. It is not a personal code to regulate or coerce the personal religious conscience.