

was 260,009, and the voting resulted as follows:—Yes, 74,238; No, 56,681; informal, 7651; refused to vote, 121,449. Thus, nearly 48 per cent. of the voters refused to vote, and the proposals were actually carried by 28.5 per cent. of the possible voters. Those who were against the proposal and those who refused to vote totalled 178,130, or considerably more than twice the number of those who voted for the proposal. That is the extent to which Queensland has been "converted."

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"There is a further and absolutely conclusive answer to this appeal to the alleged testimony of certain of the Australian States. It is found in the fact that the League proposals involve questions of right and wrong, of elementary morality and Christian principle, and in regard to these issues it is not only our right, but our duty as conscientious people, to judge for ourselves. Wrong does not become right even if the whole Australian continent gave voice in its favor, and in the light of this moral aspect of the movement the suggestion that the Australian experiment disposes finally of the question is seen to be as futile as it is weak. On these moral issues we can, and must, judge for ourselves. In this connection I submit two out of the many questions which must be faced and answered by the League if it is to justify its far-reaching demands in the eyes of fair-minded men.

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'(1) Is it morally right that objecting taxpayers should be forced by law to pay for the propaganda of Biblical and "general religious teaching" at variance with their conscientious convictions? It is not a question of majorities or minorities; for if the conscience of the majority is to be the standard, then there is no such thing as right of conscience at all. It is part of the common teaching of Christianity that rights of conscience are rights of God, and that the rights of conscience of a minority are as sacred and inviolable as the rights of conscience of a majority. Presbyterians fling a glory round the memory of their Covenanters ancestors, who (they say) dyed Scottish hillsides with blood rather than violate conscience at the bidding of ruling majorities. At this very moment Nonconformists in England are allowing their goods to be distrained and sold rather than submit to the very form of persecution now proposed to be introduced into this country—that is, rather than pay taxes for a form of religious teaching in the schools to which they conscientiously object. Do their brethren in New Zealand care less for liberty of conscience? Are they prepared themselves to turn persecutor, and to throw their Christian principles to the winds?

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'(2) Under the existing New Zealand law no one is compelled to conduct Biblical and "general religious teaching" of any kind—much less Biblical and "general religious teaching" at variance with his conscientious convictions. The League proposes to make such religious teaching compulsory, by law, for all State school teachers, of any creed, or of none. The profession, by an overwhelming majority, have declared themselves opposed to the proposal; and my question is, Is it morally right to coerce and force the consciences of the teachers? Ten years ago the Bible-in-schools denominations with one voice answered no; and declared that they would be no parties to such tyranny. At a conference held in Wellington four resolutions (afterwards endorsed by the Council of the Churches) were unanimously agreed to, and were submitted to Mr. Seddon with a view to securing a referendum. I transcribe the fourth resolution as it is given in your issue of May 2, 1903: "That teachers who conscientiously object to give Bible lessons shall not be compelled to give them, and scholars whose parents have conscientious objections shall not be compelled to receive them." The churches represented at this conference were the Anglican, Presbyterian, Wesleyan, Congregational, Baptist, Primitive Methodist, and Church of Christ; and the official report supplied to the press declared that there was the most absolute harmony and unanimity regarding the platform

adopted. If, then, it was by unanimous consent of the Bible-in-schools Christians, morally wrong to force the consciences of the teachers in 1903, has it become morally right to do so in 1913, and if so, how.—I am, etc.,

'J. A. SCOTT.

'April 11.'

BISHOP CLEARY ON BIBLE-IN-SCHOOLS

A FURTHER CHALLENGE.

The following letter, with further challenges from his Lordship Bishop Cleary, appeared last week in the *N.Z. Herald*. The final paragraph is in further reply to the allegation that Catholics are out for subsidies, this being merely for the obvious purpose of creating a prejudice—as if the specific question of moral or immoral conduct hung by the Catholic demand for subsidies. His Lordship writes:—

'Sir,—The burden of justifying its scheme falls upon the League. It is admitted that there is "a strong theoretic objection" to it. The objections really relate to practical moral conduct. The League dares not face them. Let two local examples suffice. (1) As shown in my letter of March 12, not a scrap of "proof" has been advanced in support of the sectarian doctrine that it is the practical "moral right" and "duty" of the Government to teach religion—much less a sectarian view of religion at the expense of conscientious objectors. My position stands unchallenged and unassailable. No such doctrine is taught in the Bible. No Christian Church I know of teaches it. The Presbyterian Confession of Faith denies to the Government "the administration of the Word." There has been literally "no proof." (I did not, as misquoted, here say "no reply.") (2) How is it "morally right" for the New Zealand Government to compel the vast body of publicly objecting teachers to impart a form of "religious instruction" which their conscience forbids? It is obviously no "reply"—and no "proof" of such "moral right"—to assert that all teachers conscientiously acquiesce in such compulsion in parts of Australia! This last assertion is demonstrated fiction. And when did tyranny in one country make tyranny "morally right" in another?

'Such persistent evasions are easy in newspaper correspondence and in "replies to Bishop Cleary" from the safe cover of "private meetings" and gatherings of "friends" and "sympathisers." They would be promptly exposed in the two public "question nights" to which I again invite the League's picked representatives—one night for them to answer my relevant questions, the other for my answers to questions by the League and all comers. Well organised "question nights" are of great practical value in missionary work and in debating and mutual improvement clubs. All my lecture nights have also been public "question nights." Question and answer were invariably conducted with faultless courtesy, and proved intensely interesting and illuminating to Protestant-majority audiences, who readily grasped this subject. We have everything to gain by open discussion. The League has everything to lose. It dares not thus face the public. Its representatives would have either to refuse replies to fair, relevant questions or to make most damaging admissions in regard to the League's sundry anti-Christian principles and its proposed active proselytism and persecution of conscience. No Leaguer could defend the League's pamphlet and other misrepresentations, including the alteration of a New South Wales Government return, for controversial purposes, by striking out one set of words and substituting another set ("Methods of Opposition," pp. 2-3).

'Gifted League electioneers wisely decline the perils of public questioning. I will furnish my list of past questions and demands; will they "discover" their invisible "proofs" and "replies" thereto, and submit them to arbitrators expert in evidence, selected in the customary way, the verdict to be published?

'The question of a subsidy to Catholic schools is not in issue here. (1) We never follow the League's



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