

the Church objects so to divorce, to cremation, etc., and, for the life of them, they cannot see what the Pope wants any temporal power for. The Catholic paper is a frequent force for instruction, correction, edification, and encouragement in the Christian life, and the parish in which it has a large circulation is sure to have a large number of members who prize the gift of faith and who live up to its requirements.

That 'Malicious Falsehood'

It was like a snail of the good (or bad) old times to find the other day, in the columns of our local morning contemporary, a fighting letter from the Rev. Dr. Gibb, Chairman of the Bible-in-schools Conference. Since his departure to other fields of labor the ring of controversial steel on controversial shield has been seldom heard in the southern provincial capital, and an almost unbroken theological peace like that of Nirvana has wrapped us round about like a blanket of fluffy silk. This time the emphatic Doctor has been essaying to blister the epidermis of the editor for having pleaded on behalf of the rights of conscience of minorities and opposed the proposed Protestantising of the public schools at the public expense. It was, no doubt, a heinous crime, and the punishment was presumably designed to fit the offense. It was a hot torrent of remonstrance that tumbled down half a column deep, with a fine spray of rippling r's and hissing s's and voluminous o's: a Rotoruan Ladore that would scald your ordinary mortal to the bone, but leaves editors as cool and comfortable as the fish that live and thrive in the boiling springs of Switzerland. For editors seldom step out of hot water and, like salamanders, rather enjoy high temperatures, especially when the snow mantles the ground and grim winter rules the inverted year.

Incidentally the Chairman of the Bible-in-schools Conference hosed 'the Roman bishops' of New Zealand with a dash of the same mixture that he had brewed for the editor. It so happens that not a solitary bishop, Catholic or Protestant, in New Zealand is a 'Roman,' and that no member of our Hierarchy was born in the Eternal City, or even in any part of the Italian peninsula. However, let that pass, for the Conference Chairman is not to be trammelled in controversy with such trifling considerations as accuracy of statement. The sole interest of his reference to the bishops centres in his angry denial that the exclusion of the story of the Virgin-Birth of the Savior of the world from their proposed Scripture lesson-book was 'for doctrinal reasons.' 'We now say,' avers the Rev. Dr. Gibb, 'that if they (the bishops) again repeat this charge, it will be a "malicious falsehood," and so it surely will be in the judgment of even the most mealy-mouthed of men or newspapers.'

All this sounds very valiant, to be sure, and comes with comical inconsistency from one who protests against the use of 'invective' in controversy. However, a glance at the history of this 'malicious falsehood' will reveal some interesting points which the Bible-in-schools Conference would do well to mark, learn, and inwardly digest.

1. In their first manifesto the Bishops stated (a) that the Conference's proposed Scripture lessons, 'except for "slight modifications," are identical with the Scripture lesson-books drawn up four years ago by the Victorian Royal Commission on Religious Instruction in State Schools'; (b) that the Victorian scheme of Biblical instruction was 'drawn up as a compromise by a heterogeneous assembly of representatives of various Reformed denominations, who, while unanimous in rejecting Catholic principles of interpretation, differed profoundly among themselves upon the most fundamental truths of the Christian religion'; and (c) that in the book which they compiled 'the basic dogma of Christianity—that of the Incarnation and Virgin-Birth—is out-

lawed from the New Testament narrative, and the Christ that is presented to the mental eye of the little ones is not the God-Man of Holy Writ, but the Christ of the Unitarian.' In their latest pronouncement the Bishops accuse the Victorian Protestant Commissioners of having 'flung aside everything—even the story of the Virgin-Birth of the Savior of the world—that might seem to contradict their respective conflicting beliefs or disbeliefs.'

In all these four statements of the Bishops there is not so much as the trace of a 'falsehood,' whether malicious or otherwise. The authority for the first assertion (a) is no less a personage than the Rev. Dr. Gibb, Chairman of the Bible-in-schools Conference. The other three statements are so notoriously true that neither the Victorian Commissioners nor the Rev. Dr. Gibb have ventured either to deny them or to call them into question. The acute religious differences that tore the breasts of the thirteen Protestant Commissioners—twelve clergymen and one lone layman—were matters of public notoriety and public comment. The situation was rendered keener by resignations and scarcely improved by replacements. The word 'compromise' is written large across the results of their deliberations. An agreement was finally arrived at (as the members officially intimate in their report) only by a number of the members of the Commission sinning their preferences and objections in respect to certain 'Scripture teachings' and 'lessons.' And within a short period after the publication of the lesson-books at least two out of the thirteen commissioners were out in open and public opposition to the whole scheme to which they were signatories.

2. No direct reference was made by the Bishops to the exclusion of the narrative of the Incarnation and Virgin-Birth from the book of Scripture lessons adopted by the Bible-in-schools Conference. The Conference leaders, however, saved trouble by admitting that they too, had flung aside this most vital fact of the whole inspired record. But they plead that, nevertheless, 'probably' every member of the Conference believes in 'the proper deity of our Lord,' and 'that the omission is advisable in a book to be read by children in the public schools.' The reader will note with a merry sadness the studied vagueness and sweet indefiniteness and yes-no indecision of this double-barrelled statement. 'But one thing it does not do' it does not deny that the exclusion of the basic fact of the Christian faith was dictated by doctrinal considerations; for it is obvious that this might take place without the actual surrender of 'the proper deity of our Lord' by every, or even by any, member of the Conference. In their latest document the Bible-in-schools Executive commit themselves with angry and enthusiastic positiveness to the declaration that this scandalous 'omission' was NOT dictated by 'doctrinal reasons.' But they are moving just a little too fast—carried away, no doubt, by an exuberant impetuosity that clogs the wheels of the thinking gear. A moment's consideration would have shown them that the question as to whether that outrageous mutilation of the sacred narrative was perpetrated 'for doctrinal reasons,' is a sheer matter of inference. When we know what reasons, in point of fact, dictated the rejection of the story of the Incarnation, then we shall be in just as good a position as the Bible-in-schools Executive to infer whether or not this outrage was dictated by considerations of doctrine.

But this is a question that cannot be settled by mere negations, even if they fall from the Conference's joint mouth as hot as the shot that rained from the old smooth bores of Gibraltar in 1782. The rejection of the Incarnation narrative must, in its last resort, have been based on positive, not negative, motives. And these