

religious test was involved, but Mr Braithwaite's callous statement is significant, as showing the amount of consideration which some, at least, of the League's officials are prepared to extend to the members of the teaching profession in the Dominion. Mr. A. M. Barnett, too, made no attempt to whittle away the quality of the religious teaching to be given, but seems to think that the coercion of the Jewish conscience in New Zealand is somehow justified because England had, at one time, emancipated the Jews. If the ideas entertained by these two League representatives regarding the doctrine of liberty of conscience are at all widely prevalent amongst members of the League, truly there is much need for discussion and enlightenment.

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Dean Fitchett has abandoned, or rather disclaimed, the "only as literature" theory in regard to the Bible lessons, and now tells us that the teacher would use the Bible lessons as a "text-book of morals." That is an ingenious theory to meet a difficulty, but in this matter we want, not the theory or speculation of individuals, but solid and authoritative facts. And the facts on this point are as follow:—(1) There is not a single word in the New South Wales or Queensland Education Acts (or their regulations) to say that the Scripture lesson book is to be used only as a "text-book of morals," or that, in the Bible lessons, religion is to be taught only as morals. (2) On the contrary, it has been authoritatively stated that the lessons, including the religious basis which they supply for the morality they inculcate, have to be understood by the children as intelligently as any other lesson, and the children are examined on the "contents" of the lesson, and not only on the moral element involved. (3) Both the New South Wales and the Queensland Education Acts contain express provisions for the teaching of mere morality, and these provisions are entirely distinct and apart from the provisions for Bible lessons, showing that when the framers of the system meant to provide for moral lessons only they were quite capable of saying so. The directions to the teachers for teaching morality are contained under the New South Wales Act in regulation 33, and under the Queensland Act in regulation 105, and in both cases they are independent of, and apart from, the provision for Bible lessons. The preface to the syllabus in the Queensland Act says regarding the provision for teaching morality that "it must be most clearly understood that in teaching morals, the instruction must be wholly secular"—plainly implying that the Bible lessons are not so limited. (4) Both the New South Wales and the Queensland Education Acts in express words describe the Bible lessons as religious teaching or instruction. The New South Wales Act, as admitted by Dean Fitchett, speaks of them as "general religious teaching as distinguished from dogmatical or polemical theology," and this Dean Fitchett paraphrases into, "in short, it means the teaching of morals." The paraphrase cannot be accepted. First, because the terms of the Act do not warrant such a gloss. Secondly, because "religious teaching" is necessarily, from the very meaning of the term, something more than mere morals. Some of the readings in the New South Wales and Queensland Scripture manuals undoubtedly contain moral lessons, but they are moral lessons on a religious basis, and this religious basis is religious teaching in the ordinary, proper, and accepted meaning of the term. It is not, as Dean Fitchett suggests, a case of "teaching religion as morals," but of teaching religion and morals. The Queensland Act agrees with that of New South Wales in describing the Bible lessons as "religious instruction," and Dean Fitchett is in error in thinking that that is not the case. The extract from the Act given by Dean Fitchett is part of section 22a, and the very passage cited by him is described in the official marginal summary as "provision for religious instruction in school hours." The first clause of this section makes provision for selected Bible lessons, and the second clause for instruction by ministers of religion. The third clause deals with the matter of exemptions and provides that "any parent or guardian shall be entitled to withdraw his child . . . from all religious in-

struction," showing that both the Bible lessons and the ministerial teaching are regarded as, and intended to be, "religious instruction." Similarly, the form of certificate of exemption both from the Bible lessons and the denominational teaching, as it is given in schedule XVIII. of the Act, is entitled "Certificate of exemption of pupil from religious instruction."

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"So much for the statutory provisions on this matter. Both in the New South Wales and in the Queensland Act the Bible lessons are referred to definitely as "religious teaching" or "religious instruction"; and in such a case, as I have already insisted, we cannot accept the special pleading or private views of individuals, but must take our stand on the solid ground of the terms of the Act. I had hoped to complete my reply to Dean Fitchett's contention by showing (5) on unimpeachable evidence that in point of fact the Bible lessons are not being given as moral lessons but on high religious lines; but this letter has already run to a sufficient length, and I will, with your permission, develop the point in my next letter, when I will also deal with Dean Fitchett's reply to my other queries. I shall hope to close my case on this particular point in a further communication by (6) quoting from the lessons themselves, and allowing your readers to form their own judgment as to whether these lessons do not constitute "religious teaching" of a very definite and unmistakable kind.—I am, etc.,

'J. A. SCOTT.

'March 23.'

Concerning Conscience Clauses

Mr. Scott dealt with Dean Fitchett's replies to his two other queries in the following communication, which appeared in the *Otago Daily Times* of Monday:—

"Sir,—I asked Dean Fitchett whether, seeing that the teachers are necessarily themselves the best and final judges as to whether they can or can not conscientiously teach the proposed Bible lessons, the League would be willing to so modify the scheme as to provide for a conscience clause for the teachers, and so avoid the policy of coercion which is such a palpable blemish in their present proposals. Dean Fitchett's reply is: "Needing no conscience clause now, the State school teacher will need none then, his position unchanged." Canon Garland has also replied in the negative to the demand for a conscience clause for teachers, but he does not share Dean Fitchett's hallucination that the position of the teachers will be unchanged when set religious lessons have been added to the curriculum. On the contrary, he recognises that a tremendous change will have been made in their position; and more than hints that some at least of the teachers, if left to their own free choice, would be unwilling to administer the lessons. The matter is dealt with in a leaflet, which I have before me, issued some time ago from the Dominion Executive office of the League, and I quote a few sentences:—"To add a conscience clause for teachers would mean that each teacher would be a perpetually recurring storm centre on the subject. Mr. Smith, on going to Jonestown, would introduce the lessons, and thereby incur hostility from those who did not believe in them, because he would be acting of his own choice and on his own responsibility, and not on the responsibility of the people of the Dominion. Mr. Brown, on succeeding Mr. Smith, would discontinue the lessons on his own responsibility and of his own choice, and thereby give offence to those people who valued the lessons." Thus does one League apologist contradict and destroy the other.

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"Regarding Dean Fitchett's reply to my query, one naturally asks, Where is the evidence for this alleged absence of any need for a teachers' conscience clause? Is it to be found in the fact that one teachers' institute after another has declared against the League's proposals? Is it to be found in the fact that the New Zealand Educational Institute, representing 2800 State teachers, at the annual conference held last January, put it on official record by a six to one majority that both the judgment and the inclination of the teachers