

The following reply appeared in Tuesday's *Otago Daily Times*—

'Sir,—In a local in your issue of Thursday last you quote from a letter submitted to you by the Rev. R. E. Davies, in which, *inter alia*, the following sentence occurs:—"With regard to the attitude of the Roman Catholic Church, it is, of course, the same as always: they do not recognise the right of any secular person in education." This last statement, as it stands, is wholly and absolutely false; and I cannot but express surprise that the minister of Knox Church should have made himself party to an appeal to ignorance and bigotry, both of which qualities are conspicuous in the utterance of this anonymous "educationist."

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'I have good reason for my feeling of surprise. (1) It is only a year ago since Mr. Davies, in an interview given to a representative of the *Christchurch Press*, admitted that the Catholic theory—that "education must be permeated from top to bottom by a religious atmosphere"—"is ideally correct," and went on to say: "The Roman Catholics of New South Wales are agitating for grants to denominational schools. They are doing noble work, and at considerable sacrifice they are carrying on their own schools for the instruction of their own children." (2) It is less than two years ago since the reverend gentleman announced his readiness, under certain circumstances, to pay to the Catholic example in the matter of religious education the sincere flattery of imitation. At the meeting of the Presbyterian General Assembly held in Dunedin in November, 1911, he spoke as follows: "If the State could not do it (i.e., provide Christian education for the children) then it was high time the Church should face the question and consider whether it should not commence a movement and establish schools of their own—schools permeated with a religious atmosphere from top to bottom." According to the *Outlook* report, from which I quote, this statement—it is significant to note—was received with "hear, hear" and applause. (3) It is only a Sunday or two ago, as I am credibly informed on the authority of several citizens—and the information was given, I confess, not without a chuckle—that his Holiness the Pope, on the occasion of his recent critical illness, was affectionately prayed for from the Knox Church pulpit. From some points of view the incident doubtless has a humorous aspect, but I prefer to look upon it as a truly Christian display of fraternal charity. I am sure that it was only Mr. Davies's modesty which prevented him from submitting this item also to your reporter. In this matter Knox Church has, so to speak, been "doing good by stealth," and its pastor—I have not the slightest doubt—will now "blush to find it fame."

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'Joking aside, there is one remark in the otherwise banal communication of Mr. Davies's correspondent with which I entirely agree: "If a measure is right, then let it be enforced." How does it fare with the League's proposals, when this test is applied? I have read most of the controversy which has appeared in the daily papers of Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, and Dunedin, and I have noticed that without exception, League apologists have broken hopelessly down when called upon to face the moral issues involved in their scheme. Perhaps Mr. Davies will have better luck. I have already shown that the League proposals are flagrantly unjust in their treatment of the teachers and of objecting taxpayers. I invite Mr. Davies to try his hand on the following further queries.

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'(a) Is it right for Christian churches to hand over to the State the authority to teach religious truth and to concede to the civil government the right to decide with all the infallible power of an ecumenical council upon the doctrines of religion? Where is the organ, where are the instrumentalities, by which the Government is to discover religious truth? To whom shall the State apply when it wishes to ascertain that fundamental, undenominational, universal, neutral, achromatic truth which, according to the claim of the League, it must teach the children in the public schools?

To Canon Garland? to Bishop Cleary? or to the Jewish rabbi? By what rule of maxima or minima will it determine the least or greatest quantum of religion which it can safely administer to the children of the 40 odd denominations which make up our New Zealand population? Was it to the State or to the Church that our Lord said, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature . . . teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you"? The *Confession of Faith* (chapter xxiii., s. 3) emphatically denies to the civil government "the administration of the Word"; and if Mr. Davies gives me the opportunity I will prove that no Presbyterian minister or elder can support the League's programme without flying full in the face of that venerable and authoritative document. The most glorious event in the history of Presbyterianism—the Disruption of 1843—was a memorable and magnificent protest against this very principle of State intrusion into the spiritual domain.

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'(b) Is it right to take money from the common fund—provided out of the pockets of all the taxpayers—for the purpose of teaching the League's view of religion, without at the same time making provision for teaching the view of religion held by the other religious bodies contributing to the fund? Common decency forbids the mere majority to grab the whole treasure of the State and turn it into its own coffers. If the League has the right to have its religion taught and paid for out of the common taxes, have not Congregationalists, Baptists, Jews, Catholics, Unitarians, etc., precisely the same right? Is it right to plunder the education fund to the extent of £100,000 yearly to teach the League's view of religion, and then to tell all dissenting denominations that if they want provision made for teaching their religious views they must get it elsewhere and at their own expense?

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'(c) Is it right to decide such grave questions of religion and conscience as are involved in the League's scheme by a mere count of heads? Does Mr. Davies really think this a sound principle? Would he accept it if the majority in this country were a Catholic, a Jewish, or a secularist majority? These are some of the questions which Mr. Davies is called upon to face if he is to show that the scheme proposed by the League is right. When these have been disposed of—if they ever shall be—there are others.—I am, etc.,

'J. A. SCOTT.

'April 26.'

BIBLE-IN-SCHOOLS 'STATISTICS'

TO THE EDITOR.

Sir,—Gravely erroneous statistical matter supplied, condensed, to a section of the Dominion press, has been enlarged in a widely circulated League leaflet, *Methods of Opposition*. The 'statistics' are advanced to 'prove' Bishop Cleary a prevaricator in accusing the League of aiming at 'prohibiting the Roman Catholic religion' by reviving 'the penal code of Ireland.' (1) The penal code 'of Ireland' was not mentioned by me. (2) I neither said nor suggested that the League is intent on 'prohibiting the Roman Catholic religion.' (3) I did not (as also alleged) treat 'as a revival of the penal code' the Catholic clergy's right of 'visiting and instructing' Catholic children in the public schools of New South Wales. In my two utterances touching the 'penal code' I specified the penal principles advocated by the League—majority rule of consciences, enforced contributions from conscientious objectors for State 'religious teaching,' compulsion of teachers' consciences, and the Irish proselytising conscience clause (*Auckland Star*, October 2, November 7, 1912; *N.Z. Herald*, October 28, 1912). There was no accusation of 'prohibiting the Roman Catholic religion.' (4) The League writer proceeds to 'prove' Bishop Cleary a prevaricator by 'proving' that 'the Roman Catholic religion' is not 'prohibited' in New South Wales!