

characters outwardly be such as to entitle them to respect, we assume them to be fit. Any irreverence in word or manner would soon come to light, and be dealt with by School Committees. We know that many are eminently fit and desirous of the privilege. Some, probably, are not; they would be relieved of the duty under the conscience clause.

7. *The State should have nothing to do with Religion.*—Were the Government of the State different in nationality, status, and religion from the people of the State, as in British India, there might be truth in this. But here the people and the State are one. In this country all questions are decided by majorities, with due regard to justice towards minorities. We contend that the majority of the people here desire to have their children taught the Holy Scriptures in the schools, and that this should be done accordingly, with full freedom for those who think differently to be absent from the lessons.

We hold that to educate the young without any religious foundation is a serious danger to the State. Here a young person may grow up without knowing why it is wrong to steal, &c., or do any wrong to the community; or, if asked in a Court of Justice if he knew the meaning of an oath, would reply that he had not been taught it. There is nothing, so far as I know, in the present system of education to teach young persons that it is wrong to perjure themselves, or to know the meaning of an oath.* The whole system of law depends upon the Bible. I do not see how we can rationally withhold it from the children. I would like to mention two examples which occur to me of the consequences of laxity or indifference in this particular. I have referred to India: we have a striking example there of the effect of a purely secular education. The British Government had a very peculiar question to solve in British India. They wished to elevate the people, and they did not wish to interfere with their religious beliefs. So they started schools and colleges for the purpose of giving a purely secular education, the same as we give. The result is that the educated Hindoos form the most dangerous class in India at the present time. They have the native Press—a scurrilous Press—very much in their hands, and are leaders in all sorts of sedition; for they have lost the restraints of their old religion, and nothing else has been put in its place. They have no moral guide or restraint against anything that is wrong. That was a very difficult case. We had clearly no right to impose our religion on the people. I believe, however, that missionary schools and colleges in India show a very different result. The other example is the case of France. You know that some time ago education in France was mainly in the hands of the Roman Catholic clergy. I do not know the exact date, but sometime after the war of 1870–71, the whole system was altered, so that education became secular as it is here. The report of the Head of Police in France published last year, stated that since the change criminals have been springing up like weeds in the crevices of the pavement. Such has been the result in France of a purely secular education. Here, I believe, crime has diminished of late years; but there are many reasons to account for it. Much has been done by the clergy and Sunday-schools, and by the Salvation Army. All and each have produced marked effects, and I believe that crime would have further diminished if we had what we ask for—the teaching of the Bible in our schools. We are a slower people than the people of France. They are more excitable than we are, and changes take place more rapidly there than among ourselves. I might refer, further, to how we came to be in New Zealand: There is no doubt that it was the Bible that opened up New Zealand to colonisation; so it is the Bible that is opening up Uganda. It was the Bible that opened up Polynesia. We consider ourselves as a people more civilised than Russia; and yet the Russian Government gives free passes over the whole of her railways and water communications to the agents of the Bible Society, so that the Bible may be spread throughout Russia in every direction. They know in that country that people who read the Bible become good subjects. They want the Bible disseminated as widely as possible, notwithstanding the fact that their method of government there leads to a great deal of religious persecution.

329. *Mr. Willis.*] What effect do you suppose the reading of the Bible in schools would have if read without comment and specially supervised by the teacher?—I presume you have heard my previous statements on this head. I believe that the word of God is so powerful for good that, although taught imperfectly, it will still have its effect. This Scripture text-book is, of course, not the best medium of religious instruction; but it explains to any one in sympathy with Bible truth, however imperfectly, the foundations of the Christian religion. Even if it be an imperfect form of giving religious instruction it is better than none.

330. Do you consider that in our State schools our children are not moral?—I have no means of making a comparison. To answer that question I would require to go into statistics, which I have not the means of doing; and I have not made personal examination into the question.

331. Is there any reason for this demand of the Churches, when this instruction has been regarded as unnecessary for so many years?—I think the feeling of this want has been in existence from the first; it has been a growing thing. I think the formation of these associations has raised the hopes of people that something can be done now; therefore, it has now come more prominently forward. It must be seven or eight years ago that this question was raised in the north of Auckland, where I was living at the time. The people were canvassed in a large district at that time, and 80 per cent. of the population wished this change to be made. We are a law-abiding people, and full of patience. When a thing is settled by law people simply say, We cannot help it, we must bear it. This question of religious instruction has not hitherto been brought before them strongly; but it has been constantly said with regard to our present free compulsory secular school system, you must not touch it lest you destroy it, and the people value free education very highly. Now they have learned, however, that there is no fear of losing our system of free education by the introduction of Scripture lessons, and therefore they ask for them.

* Since I made this statement I have accidentally discovered that the subject is well explained in a moral lesson at pp. 11, 12, 13, Royal Reader No. III., Sequel.—H.S.