

*arrière pensée* at all; we see but one way, and that is this way, of giving religious instruction in the schools; we know that the people are asking for it.

38. In your opinion there are none who desire it as a means to an end?—None, so far as I know.

39. Have you formed an opinion?—My opinion is that we are all doing this as a means for good; certainly not as a means to denominationalism. That is an end against which we declare. I know this is said to be the “thin end of the wedge.” It is so, of course, but it is also the whole of the wedge to bring about what we all desire; but we say it is the strongest thing that could be done against denominational education.

40. *The Chairman.*] You said you had read the Irish National Scripture Lesson-books?—I have.

41. You have spoken to the large number of signatures attached to the petition; are you aware to what extent those who have signed have read the book?—I think, probably, only a small proportion have read it; but those who have not have confidence in those who say they have read the book and are satisfied with it: the probability is that most of the petitioners who have long desired that some form of Scripture lessons should be taught in the schools are satisfied with this form, as recommended by the three principal religious bodies in the country.

42. You have referred to Ireland, where this book originated; has it been retained as the means of religious instruction there?—It was used for a certain number of years in the Irish National schools; then the system of those schools were altered. So many changes have occurred in poor Ireland that I am not able to follow them.

43. Are you aware of the circumstances which led the Commissioners of National Education in Ireland to the exclusion of this book from the schools there?—No; I am not.

44. *Mr. G. J. Smith.*] With reference to the question asked by Mr. E. M. Smith, as to introducing the book without reference to the people, I want to ask you whether it is not the fact that the associations only desire this after a poll of the people shall have been taken?—That is the special provision of the Bill to which we all have agreed.

45. It is not the desire of the associations to introduce this of their own motion?—We believe that we speak the voice of the majority of the colonists; we wish that to be made plain, by having the matter referred to the voice of the people.

46. *The Chairman.*] Is the Committee to take it that the Bill now before the House is an accurate and correct reflex of the mind of the organizations you represent on this question?—I think I may say confidently that it is.

47. *Mr. Collins.*] You said that very few people had taken advantage of the conscience clause, though a good deal had been made of it; do you not think that the reason for that is that people hesitated to make any invidious distinction between their own children and others? Is that a reason why fewer people have taken advantage of the conscience clause?—I am not prepared to say; my own knowledge is that people do not, as a rule, take advantage of it; the cases in which they do take advantage of it are rare.

Rev. J. REED GLASSON in attendance and examined.

48. *The Chairman.*] I understand you appear before the Committee to make a statement as a minister of the Congregational Church, in regard to the proposed introduction of the Irish National Scripture Lesson-books into the State schools. In making your statement, do you represent simply your own views, or the whole of the Congregational Churches of New Zealand?—I represent the Congregational Union. Would you allow me to read the resolution that was passed last year by our Union at its Conference held in Dunedin: “That it is neither the duty nor the right of the State to teach or control religion; and that, in view of open designs and covert attempts to establish denominational education, it is not desirable to alter the present educational system.” I may state, Mr. Chairman, that our Committee meets in Auckland, and that I have a telegram from the Committee asking me to appear before this Committee, if I should have the opportunity, to read that resolution and to support it. This is the position we have always taken as a denomination: It is not the duty or the right of the State to teach or control religion. Our principal reason for assuming this position is that the Lord gave to His Church the work of evangelising the world, and teaching man the truths and principles of His religion. The spiritual life which is in the nation or community should be left free to express and organize itself as the Spirit of God moves it: and we may fairly leave the destinies of mankind to Him who in many ways is working for the purification of society and the extension of His kingdom. This, we believe, is Christ’s method: work from the centre; purify the springs in individuals, &c. The method is long and difficult—all true reformatations are long and difficult in such a world as this; but there is absolutely no other way to the end. The Churches could do all this work if united. In my judgment, they had better try to get a little nearer to their common Master, and get to understand Him; then they will get nearer to one another, and then they might conserve and utilise all their forces in doing their Master’s work, instead of wasting a great deal of them in sectarian rivalries. We maintain that we have no right to use the powers of the State to extend our own, or any other, religious opinion. This principle has been accepted in these colonies and in America. The whole tendency of modern movement is in the direction of separating the functions of the State and the Church. This is the position we take up as a denomination; we have fought for this throughout our denominational history. Religious freedom depends on this, which has been accepted in these colonies. Now, if we are going to alter and go back again on these questions, you ought to have good reasons for doing so. So far as I am concerned, I have not heard any sufficient reasons. I have said to persons who are in favour of the introduction of this book into the schools, I am waiting for arguments; and I have not had them. The practical aspect of the question is this: it will be exceedingly dangerous to interfere with the present system. We