

state why I think so. It seems to me that certain sections of the community—the Jews and Roman Catholics, for instance, many of whom are in our schools—would object to this kind of religious teaching, and, consequently, the State having recognised this book and placed it in the ordinary syllabus, it would be regarded as religion, and there would be further calls upon the State to give additional relief in that particular direction. As to the teachers, I myself as a teacher would object to such a backward step from our present system, which is working admirably. The only result of this movement can be denominational education, to which it would certainly, I think, lead. In order to strengthen what I have just said, I might state that I have heard a clergyman declare that he was prepared to accept this book as a temporary measure, but that he was not prepared to accept it as the whole of his demand; that he would be satisfied with the introduction of this book into the schools until denominational education should be recognised by the State; until he had his own school in his own parish, and the children should be taught the Church Catechism. I would also like to point out, from the teacher's point of view, that this book in the schools will be useless unless it is taught by some one that has a conviction in respect to the religious instruction which it purports to give, for a man must be thoroughly convinced as to what he is teaching if his instruction is to be effective. Now, the teachers in our State schools have not received that training in religious teaching that would warrant them in giving religious instruction in the schools. Then, again, there are teachers among us who have conscientious objections. There is, I admit, a conscience clause, which will have some effect in protecting the conscientious teacher; but, with your permission, I will state a case. Take a country school: a teacher has sole charge of a school; he or she conscientiously objects to the reading of this book; he or she may be a Roman Catholic or a Jew or Jewess. The result would be in such a case that the book would not be used. The people of that district, if they were in earnest in requiring this modicum of religious instruction, would make things very unsatisfactory to that teacher. I do not think it is fair that a teacher should be placed in that position. I should like to say that, to my mind, the conscience clause in the present Act meets all the circumstances likely to arise if clergymen will only take advantage of it. There are many teachers who have strong religious convictions, and would be glad to give the clergyman assistance in many ways in the direction of religious education. But we are never asked. The clergy have, in most cases, allowed this matter of religious instruction to lie by, and have not taken advantage of the provisions in the present Act; and consequently I do not think it is fair to ask that we should do what they have failed to do—or, rather, failed in the attempt to do. I would like here to emphasize the fact that bitterness will be created in districts where teachers have conscientiously objected to carry out this instruction. That, I consider, from a teacher's point of view, is a very strong point. Then, I would ask whether this book is to be read or to be taught? For there is a great distinction here. If it is to be taught we must explain the matter. Here, I think, a great danger comes in. If we have to explain things you will have great difficulty in preventing dogmatic teaching. However carefully the book may be compiled, there are points that will be raised which it will be very difficult to deal with. If it is only to be read it will be valueless. The teacher will be sorry to have the book read to the children and to be not allowed to explain. From the teacher's point of view that will be rather stupid. Then, again, it will be a pity to disturb the harmony of the schools. We have now seated on our school-benches children of all denominations and all sects—Jews, Roman Catholics, and others. To my mind, this will disturb the harmony which at present exists in the schools. It would be better to leave religious instruction to the clergy of the churches. I would like also to put before the Committee one or two more practical views of the matter. It is proposed to give half an hour's religious teaching per day. That will be two hours and a half a week. Practically, then, there will be given more time to this subject than to three such other subjects as history, geography, and science, which would run into about two hours and a half. We will be required to give two hours and a half of the week to this one subject. This will take up a great deal of the time now available for ordinary instruction. I should like to ask what is to go out of the syllabus to make way for this. We have already heard that the syllabus is overburdened with the subjects put into it. We will have very great difficulty in meeting the requirements of the State in other directions if we are to give half an hour a day to religious instruction. Then, under the conscience clause, many careless parents will avail themselves of that for various reasons, so that after a time this will have the effect of disarranging the school work. Then, again, this book is not suitable to all children; to the younger children it will be of no value, for it can only be a reading-book for the Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Standards. What, then, are you going to do with the younger children?—you must give them moral instruction. That is the difficulty; you are practically limited by this book. It will possibly resolve itself into this: that this book will become in the hands of the teacher an ordinary reading-book. But it is not suitable for an ordinary reading-book. It is objectionable, inasmuch as the teacher, however anxious to do his duty as a school teacher, will not be allowed to explain the subject-matter, and at the same time if the school is to be examined on it he will have to get it up to the satisfaction of the Inspector. If you make it a part of the school curriculum it must be examined on. This is an objection. I do not know that I can give the Committee any information that should make me detain them any longer.

71. *Mr. McNab.*] You are a teacher having a wide experience; do you think the children of this colony are irreverent, or disobedient, or rebellious in their disposition and manners?—I can speak strongly on that point; first, because I was a denominational teacher at Home. I had charge of a large school in Birmingham, and was Headmaster of St. Phillip's National School. I, therefore, say plainly, that I have found the children of New Zealand very amenable to discipline; very conciliatory in their conduct and behaviour, and altogether superior, from the teacher's point of view, to the children he has to deal with at Home. I have said this to clergymen in New Zealand, and I say it now without fear of contradiction. I have observed and have had to deal with in New Zealand less irreverence, less rebellion, less disobedience, less misconduct generally than I had to deal