

the Rev. Mr. Coffey said he would not accept reading without comment ; he must have dogmatic teaching.

122. *Mr. Willis.*] Have the clergy made any attempt to get religion imparted in the schools outside school-hours?—Not during the week. So far as I know they have never attempted under the conscience clause to establish classes ; we could not refuse them if they did, there is provision in the present Act for it.

123. Is it a matter of convenience with them?—I should say so ; they say the teacher must do it. That is undoubtedly the feeling in my Church.

124. Then, with regard to the morals of the children, do you find that you can depend on your children?—Yes ; as a whole.

125. Generally speaking, you would say they have a good moral tone?—Very pleasing as a whole ; but you will get bad eggs in every basket.

126. Have you seen a statement to the effect that, in consequence of the “godless” system, the morality of the children is not as good as it should be?—Constantly I have heard that ; I have asked people why they said so, and sometimes got very absurd answers. I once asked a minister whether he considered that Catholic children made better citizens by the religious instruction they got, and he replied that they would not. I then asked him why, and he answered, “Because it is not the right kind of religion.”

127. Have you had experience of the other colonies, comparatively, where religious instruction is imparted in the State schools—New South Wales, for instance?—No ; I have no experience as a teacher of anywhere but here.

128. You are quite satisfied with the moral tone of your children?—I am satisfied that what is now proposed will not improve it.

129. *Mr. Collins.*] Do you think that the introduction of this book will be likely to make parents take advantage of the conscience clause and withdraw their children from the school?—I think so.

130. Do you think it will introduce into the schools religious differences?—I am quite certain of it.

131. That it will tend to destroy the harmony of the present system?—That will be one of its effects.

132. Do you regard the intercourse of these children and parents of different denominations in connection with the schools as an advantage?—I think that is an admirable effect of the present system, the old denominational prejudice is dying out.

133. *Mr. Lang.*] It has been stated that among the children there is a great want of reverence : Supposing that to be so, do you think the introduction of this book will make any difference?—I do not think this text-book will have any effect at all ; my private opinion is that it will tend to lower the estimation in which the Bible is held, and will become a mere school-book.

134. *Mr. Collins.*] Do you think it can be introduced without acting directly on the present system : would it be detrimental to the system?—If you are going to read this book during the school-hours something else must go out of the syllabus. If you take two hours and a half out of the week something else must go ; two hours and a half is one-tenth of the time.

135. *The Chairman.*] Is it your opinion that the introduction of the “Irish National Scripture Lesson-book” would be a final solution of the religious question?—No ; I am sure it will not ; I am positive it will not.

136. You have stated that you are a member of the Anglican Church ; have you heard or read the address which the Anglican Bishop of Wellington delivered on the 2nd October, 1895, and which was put in evidence yesterday? I will read the passage to you : “First, this application cannot be justly stigmatised as a compromise. We are giving up nothing which we either have or hope to have.”—That clearly points to the fact that this will be only the beginning.

137. Which must ultimately lead to what, in your opinion?—The “hope” for the return of denominationalism, by which they would have control of the school, or at any rate of the religious education in the school.

138. Do I understand you to say that 90 per cent. of those who signed the petition were not aware of the contents of the book?—I do not think it is possible they could have been aware of its contents : it was with great difficulty that I was able to get a copy.

139. Do I understand you that this series cannot be obtained from the booksellers in Wellington?—I do not think there is a copy left in any shop now ; there have been only a few copies received here.

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THURSDAY, 17th OCTOBER, 1895.

Rev. W. BAUMBER examined.

140. *The Chairman.*] After hearing evidence on Tuesday the Committee thought it advisable that the evidence should be taken down in shorthand, and accordingly the evidence was taken down in shorthand : therefore we have thought it only right and proper that the gentlemen who gave evidence on Tuesday might have the opportunity of repeating their evidence so that it might appear side by side in the minutes of evidence to be laid with the Committee’s report on the table of the House. (To the witness :) Is the Committee to understand that you appear here as the representative of the Wesleyan Church for the whole of New Zealand?—That is so, Mr. Chairman, I represent the Wesleyan Church throughout New Zealand, inasmuch as our Conference, which is the chief governing body of our Church in the colony, has for years been asking that some such change as this should be made in our national system of education. If you will allow me I will read a resolution come to in 1893 bearing on this question, which will show very clearly what the feeling of our Church is on this matter : “Whereas this Conference has for many years passed