

38. The Bishop spoke a good deal about a conference. I should have supposed that those anxious for a conference would call it. I should like to ask the Bishop why, if the Roman Catholic Bishops are so anxious for a conference on the subject, they have never called one with their friends of the National Schools Defence League, for instance, or with the Churches that are concerned?—I think it is a very fair proposition to assume that the people who are starting a campaign with a view to introducing the Bible into the schools would, if they wished to be fair all round, themselves be the parties to move in this matter, especially as they themselves are of the larger denominations. As they themselves profess a very great interest in this matter they would be naturally the persons to move in it. May I tell you, and Canon Garland through you, that I have moved in this matter? I have many times publicly suggested in newspaper correspondence, even with men of some prominence in the League, that it would be desirable to hold a conference, and I did so before Canon Garland came here—in the secular Press, in my own paper, the *Tablet*, when I was editing it, and at various times since. Only a few days ago I suggested to a reverend League gentleman, who is in this room just now, that I hoped within a short time to be sitting round a table with him to thresh this question out in a friendly way. We have done all we can in this matter to promote a conference. If the Canon wants a conference he can have it to-morrow morning at 11 o'clock.

39. I regret that the Bishop should have said of me that a statement I made was contrary to fact. If he had said that I evidently was mistaken I should not have bothered very much about it. I ask him if he is aware of this book, which he did not quote in his evidence in chief nor in his subsequent evidence, "The Referendum in Switzerland," by Simon Deploige, published in 1898 by Longman's. In it the writer says, "Of all the popular votes which have taken place since the introduction of the federal referendum that of the 26th November, 1882, is unquestionably the most notable, both from the importance of the question voted on and from the large number of electors who went to the polls. The people were called upon to approve a federal decree passed by the Chambers in pursuance of the terms of Article 27 of the Constitution. By that article 'the cantons shall make provision for elementary education, which must be adequate and placed exclusively under the direction of the civil authority. Such instruction shall be obligatory and in the public schools free of charge. The public schools must be so organized that they may be frequented by those belonging to all denominations without prejudice to their freedom of belief or of conscience. The Confederation shall take such measures as may seem necessary against cantons who do not fulfil their obligations in the matter.' . . . The lines upon which this law would be framed was clearly indicated by a Federal Councillor when called upon for an explanation from the platform. Elementary education would be made either non-sectarian or secular. The staff would be laymen, the subjects secular, the methods secular, the schoolhouses secular. Education would be secular down to the most minute details, even in the purely Catholic communes. The publication of the federal resolution was the signal for a general outcry in protest. 'God in the schools' was the motto adopted by Catholics and orthodox Protestants throughout the whole of Switzerland. A vast petition was organized within a short time, to which 180,995 signatures were appended. No demand for a referendum had ever been so strongly supported before. It is easy to imagine the energy with which the campaign was conducted up to the day of voting. The authors and partisans of the resolution used every means in their power to ensure success. They raised a bogus cry against Catholicism, denounced the danger of clericalism, and as a supreme argument represented the Jesuits as waiting to enter the country. It was all in vain. The common-sense of the country asserted itself, and could not be exploited as in 1874. All these intrigues were estimated at their real worth, and on the 26th November the federal resolution was rejected by 318,139 votes to 172,010. 'Catholics, Federalists, orthodox Protestants, and religious people generally united to vote "No."' The minority was composed of German Radicals, freethinkers, and socialists. The referendum on this occasion did good service for Switzerland. It checked the advance of anti-religious Radicalism at the very first step, and saved the country from the educational struggle and its deplorable consequences." Now I ask the Bishop if he still repeats his statement in view of what I have read—his statement that my statement as published was contrary to fact? Here is the book for him. Let him look at it himself. Did he never know of it?—I have heard those extracts read. I have not read the book. I have heard the statement of the Canon. He confirms my statement in every particular. His statement was that there was a referendum on a religious issue, on a question of conscience. There never was such a referendum. The question put to the electors never had in itself one reference to religious instruction in the schools. It had only the one reference. The question was, Should the central Government control the inspection and administration of schools, or should the cantonal Government control them? It was fought out on that.

40. His Lordship does me an injustice when he says that my statement was quite incorrect. He tries to water down the statement made regarding the action of the Roman Catholics in Switzerland. They adopted the cry of "God in the schools." They did not regard the subject of religious instruction as a side issue. If some one here wished our question put, "Are you in favour of an alteration in the secular education system?" we should not regard that as the right point at all. In the same way the men who carried this resolution carried it framed in their own language, but the people were too intelligent to be misled. They quite understood, as the historian shows here, that the real question was, Is religion to be continued in the schools, or is it to be dropped?—I have already answered the question. The authorities quoted by me show conclusively that this was purely a question of State rights *versus* federal rights. It was fought out as such. The religious question was not in issue; it was introduced as a party cry for party purposes, just as the Bible-in-schools party have for party purposes introduced the cry of "the open Bible" and "equal rights for all." There was no plebiscite in Switzerland to promote legislation on any subject, religious or non-religious, in 1882, and no referendum (but only a plebiscite) is proposed in New Zealand in 1914.