

If we take the thirty-six pages of Australian evidence supplied by the Bible in Schools League we find there very few grains among a mass of chaff. It contains ninety-eight opinions of State-school teachers—ninety-eight out of a possible 10,163—not 1 per cent. Of these ninety-eight, only twenty-two refer to any moral improvement resulting from the “system,” and of the twenty-two eight say “I think,” or “I am of opinion, some moral benefit has accrued from the system”! And this is the overwhelming testimony of Australian teachers! This infinitesimal result in the light of the harsh and un-British restrictions imposed upon their free speech is its own best refutation. In passing, the witness of ex-Australian teachers now on the Dominion school staffs goes to show that the general religious teaching “is not taken very seriously by many teachers. Some transfer the compulsory burden to others less unwilling; some dodge it altogether. In fact, many of the teachers do not take it more seriously than do the clerics their ‘right of entry.’”

*The Terrible Condition of the Teachers—Not free Men—Denied Common Civic, Public, and Religious Rights.*

*Regulations under the Public Instruction Act of 1880.*—“Department of Public Instruction, Sydney, 1st November, 1912.—No. 200. Nothing must ever be said or done by any teacher in a pupil’s hearing or presence calculated to offend the religious views of that pupil or any other in the school or of the parents of any pupil.” (N.B.—The teacher must give “general religious teaching,” and yet that teaching must not offend the religious views of pupil or parent!) An old regulation prohibiting teachers from acting as correspondents to the Press, from acting as lay readers and local preachers, was superseded about November, 1912, by the following: “30. Teachers are to refrain from all action in public matters that will interfere with the welfare of the school under their charge or with their usefulness as teachers.”

*Regulations published in the Supplement to the Government Gazette of 2nd February, 1911.*—“1. These regulations, except where otherwise provided, shall apply to all officers of the Public Service.” (Thus teachers are included.) “21. An officer shall not—(a) Publicly comment upon the administration of any Department of the State, or (b) use for any other than for the discharge of his official duties information gained by or conveyed to him through his connection with the Public Service.” “27. Except in the course of official duty no information concerning public business shall be given directly or indirectly by any officer without the express direction or permission of the Minister or the permanent head.”

*Queensland—The State Education Acts Amendment Act of 1910.*—Regulations (to take effect from January, 1909):—

“17. School buildings towards the cost of which the State has contributed may, when not required for school purposes, be used for any lawful purpose other than the holding of religious services.” (A similar regulation obtains in New South Wales—No. 17.)

“84. (a.) Teachers shall not take any office or perform any work which may interfere with the proper discharge of their duties to the Department or with the maintenance of amicable relations with their neighbours.”

“85. Teachers shall not actively take part in public meetings for the discussion of political or sectarian topics; they shall refrain in such matters from conduct likely to offend any section of the community or to impair their own usefulness as teachers; they shall not actively take part in public meetings for the discussion of the merits of the State system of education or its administration; and they shall not officiate as ministers of religion or act as local correspondents of newspapers.” (N.B.—A deputation of Methodist ministers waited on the Premier, the Hon. W. Kidston, in 1910, requesting permission for teachers who belonged to the Methodist Church to act as local preachers. The Minister’s reply was that “it would be eminently undesirable.”)

34. Inspectors: “He shall not take part in public discussions on political or religious topics, or upon the merits of the system of education.”

*West Australia.—Education Amendment Act of 1893.*—Regulations:—

“71. Nor can they [the teachers] be permitted to take any office or appointment, whether honorary or paid, without the consent in writing of the Minister.”

“77. A teacher shall not—(a) Publicly comment, verbally or in writing, upon the administration of any Department of the State; or (b) use for any purpose other than the discharge of his official duties information gained by or conveyed to him through his connection with the Public Service.”

“128. The teacher must ascertain from parents the religious denominations of the children. A child, on notification of the parent, shall attend the class of the minister of another denomination.” (N.B.—(a) The teacher’s inquisition into the religion of the child, and (b) the obvious opportunity for proselytism.)

*Tasmania.*—Regulations:—

“160. Teachers of all ranks are required to abstain from participation in any public meetings or other gatherings on party, political, or sectarian topics, and generally to refrain from all action in such matters calculated to give offence to any section of the community or to impair their own usefulness as teachers. They must not take part in newspaper correspondence in regard to departmental matters.”

The course of instruction for the primary schools: Bible lessons not read, but told:—

Page 6. “Infants: Bible stories should be told; on no account are they to be read to the children.”

Page 31. For all classes “the prescribed Scripture stories should be graphically related by the teacher, and when possible the interest should be quickened by the use of suitable pictures. Teachers are required to confine themselves to the narrative as taken from any version of the Bible they may possess. On no account are they to inculcate any denominational views.”