

Thus the Acts and regulations demonstrate to the full the servile conditions of the teachers working under the New South Wales system of compulsory State-taught religion, and they supply an awful example of what to avoid. Let it be borne in mind that harsh regulations such as these are the inevitable corollary of the elevation of Civil servants into officials of religion, for nothing must be allowed in the conduct of the teacher outside the school which would give colour or weight to his religious views. Hence the talk about absence of friction and the silence of the teachers is beside the question, for if first of all you compel the teacher, under penalty of dismissal, to give "general religious teaching," and next effectually gag any spontaneous expression of his opinion of the "system," what can you expect? One should not mistake the silence of the cemetery for the silence of satisfaction.

*The Injustice of the System.*

Here we reach the crux of the whole question. It will be granted, if the system is unjust, that therefore it is immoral and irreligious. Our claim is that the system has injustice at the heart of it and in every part of it. It means a State-taught form of religion. It affirms the principle that it is the function of the State to teach religion. We emphatically deny that the civil authority is competent to teach religion either in school or church, and we deny it in the name of our common Christianity. We affirm the voluntary principle which is at the heart of New Testament teaching, according to which religion is voluntary and as free as the air we breathe. The only service enjoined there is free and therefore voluntary service, the individual's own response of faith and love. The State cannot teach religion without compulsion in some form, and we maintain that compulsion in religion is very anti-Christ. Granting the claim that the State is Christian, the State ceases to be Christian (*a*) when it teaches religion by enforced taxation, and (*b*) when it teaches religion without taking security that it is taught by those alone competent. Further, the history of the past proves that the State has never yet interfered with religion without injuring the cause it wished to serve (New South Wales, as has been proved, is no exception to this) and without riding roughshod over the most sacred rights and liberties of large sections of the people. The best service the State can render the cause of religion is to leave it severely alone. Is it not a fact that the Church has gained her finest victories not in dependence or alliance with the State, but in independence, if not defiance, of the State and when relying upon her own resources and the powers above her? If the State is to teach religion the pertinent question emerges, Whose religion? The reply of the Bible in Schools League is "Our religion"—*i.e.*, the sort of general religion upon which they, the denominations in the League, approve. This means that the general religion of a section is to be accepted by the State, labelled the "State religion," established and taught in the national schools, at the expense of all and in defiance of the rights of conscience of large sections and several Churches in the Dominion. It is simply the State endowment of a particular form of religion—*i.e.*, sectarian favours and privileges are to be granted to certain denominations. The gross injustice of this will soon appear: the form of religious creed belongs to a section; the schools belong to all, yet all are to be made to support what many on grounds of conscience cannot accept. Again, the State is asked to provide the sort of religion that is acceptable to some consciences only, and when the other set of consciences object they are tossed a conscience clause. The only right they have is the right to go without. And this is justice! Is it even the ordinary morality of the marketplace and the street?

In equity and justice there are only two positions possible for a Christian State—to provide religious teaching for all consciences or for none; to accept and teach all creeds or none. Its choice, in equity, is restricted to these alternatives.

Under the secular system the State is strictly neutral, teaching no religion, and this, we contend, is the only known system that is just and equal in its operation. Hence the acceptance by the State of the scheme of the Bible in Schools League would be a denial of liberty and a violation of the sacred rights of conscience pertaining to every man irrespective of majorities or minorities. It would be a flagrant denial of the liberty to believe or disbelieve without the inquisition of the civil authority and without civil penalty. We would point out that this liberty to believe or disbelieve without suffering for conscience' sake is one of our most cherished rights as Christian citizens, and this right was fought and won for us by our fathers at the cost of untold suffering and blood. Are we to value lightly and to renounce at the bidding of the Bible in Schools League what our fathers secured so hardly? Rather let us hold fast to our heritage, resolved that the State shall not usurp the function of the home and the Church, and that the Church shall not usurp the function of the State, but that each shall be sovereign in its own domain. Surely it is not for the Churches to go cap in hand beseeching the State to do their own work, but that the Churches should be true to their divine mission and discharge their own high responsibilities. It will be recognized that our position argues not disregard for the children or disrespect for religion, but the contrary. We are where we are because of our regard for the Book of books, because of our respect for the children, and because of our belief that it is never right to do evil, to resort to injustice, in order that good may come.

*Injustice of the Proposals of the Bible in Schools League and of those embodied in the Religious Instruction Referendum Bill.*

*Injustice No. 1.*—The procedure adopted assumes that the present national system already stands condemned, and that the only question is, What is to take its place? This is far from being the case. Why was not the Bible in Schools League compelled to show cause for the revolutionary proposals it makes? The Bible in Schools League was not called on to petition the House in favour of its proposals; it is we who have been called in to petition in defence of a system that has worked well for thirty-seven years. The powers that be have been prepared to