

291. Have you not shifted from the opinion of others to your own opinion? What I asked was, Whether you do not think that, for those who would make this a stepping-stone to something further, it would not be their interest to sign the petition?—If they thought this the stepping-stone to their ultimate object undoubtedly it would.

292. Might not that explain why the Roman Catholics have signed this petition?—It might as a matter of argument, but as a matter of fact I do not think it would.

293. If it were known that suggestions were made to Roman Catholics to sign with this view, would you not be disposed to think that this accounted for a number of the Roman Catholic signatories?—I think if that were so, that this was to be regarded as a stepping-stone to an ulterior purpose, the priests would compel them all to sign: where that is not the case, that it would be a stepping-stone to something more, they would be opposed to their people signing it.

294. Have you known of any cases where the Roman Catholics refused to sign?—No.

295. *Mr. Lang.*] Suppose this were established and another movement proposed for explaining the book, would you support those who would ask for further extension of what is now asked?—It would depend. I would not urge anything that would break up the unity and harmony of those who are now agreed.

296. You are in favour of religious instruction in schools?—Yes.

297. Would you consider reading this without comment religious instruction?—It would be very helpful; good so far.

297A. Suppose this were established, and it were thought desirable,—as many do think it desirable,—that these lessons should be explained, would not anyone now in favour of religious instruction in these schools be bound to support that movement?—The whole thing is a practical question. Would such a proposal meet with general approval?

298. What effect would that have upon the system? Would it stir up opposition in others, and take us much further than we would wish to go?—The question would then be whether it were not better to continue what we have already got.

299. Do you think that, if the State undertakes to provide for the school, it is too much to ask the Churches and the parents to do the rest that may be wanted?—I think it is only right for the Churches and parents to do all that they possibly can; yet, when they have done all they possibly can, I think there is room for more being done in the public schools. I think that religion is an essential part of the education of young people. I think that as regards national education, where there is no religious instruction—I mean no direct religious instruction, no recognition of the fundamental truths of religion, or of the Bible—there is no sound national education. That may be contrary to the Act. The Act says that the education of the State schools is to be exclusively secular. I say, that exclusively secular education is not the true education of the people of the colony. I maintain that we ought to have some element of religious instruction in the schools.

300. Do you think the instruction is better that is given at home?—In many cases it is. But let us consider the position of the ordinary head of a family; the father usually leaves home early in the morning, and does not return to his home until late in the evening. He hardly sees his children, except when they are going to bed. What time has he to give to their education, to give them religious instruction, or any other instruction? Besides, a great many parents are careless, and do not trouble themselves about it. The Church finds, even when it has done its best, that what they have done falls short of what is most desirable.

301. Suppose there were two teachers applying for a situation under the Education Board—a Roman Catholic and a Protestant: With this system of reading in the schools, other things being equal, would the preference be given to the teacher who would read this book?—Possibly. Why should it not be if parents desired it, other things being equal? Do you think if the parents wished it it would not be right to do it, and to appoint a teacher who was in sympathy with their views or wishes?

302. *The Chairman.*] You have referred to an address delivered by the Bishop of Wellington to the Diocesan Synod on the 2nd October of the present year?—Yes.

303. Has your attention been called to this paragraph in that address? “We are giving up nothing that we have or hope to have.” What interpretation do you put on that? Do you think that in that passage he is voicing the opinion of the Church of England?—“Or hope to have.” I believe that he has come to the conviction that special church teaching in State-supported schools is a hopeless thing.

304. That is not exactly an answer to my question. Here is what is published by authority: [Paragraph read again.] He has no hope. Is it that he is not giving up the hope, or that the Church of England, which he represents, has not given up the hope, of returning to the denominational system?—I am afraid, Mr. Chairman, you must ask the Bishop to explain his own address; he best can.

305. What would be the attitude, in your opinion, of those who characterise the present system as “godless,” supposing this Irish text-book to be introduced into the schools? Would they not characterise the system as distinctly Protestant?—I think not “distinctly” Protestant; but they could not say it was “godless”; they could only say it was, in a broad sense, religious.

306. You know the attitude of the Roman Catholic Church both to Bible-teaching and to the teaching in this book: you are aware they are opposed to it?—On this ground: not that there is anything in it opposed to their doctrines or principles, but that it does not go far enough for them—does not teach their church catechism. I do not think they can lay a finger on anything that is opposed to them, but that the book does not go far enough.

307. Do you not think they would have good reason for agitating for a grant in aid of their schools, upon the ground that our system had become distinctly Protestant?—I do not think that, on account of the introduction of this book, they would say it had become “distinctly Protestant.”

308. Do you know what has been the effect of the introduction of this book into the national schools of Ireland?—I cannot say.