

Presbyterian body, the Wesleyans—they are all strong bodies: which, or any of them, do you suggest as likely to accept a proposal for the control of religious teaching by the State in the public schools?—I think it is possible, if any were strong enough; but it is not likely. All I say is, that this is a step in that direction.

84. So far as denominational schools are concerned, if the gentlemen advocating the introduction of this book into the schools say they are averse to denominational teaching, I suppose you would receive their statement as being given in good faith?—That goes without saying; I hardly think that a question of that sort is necessary. I do not charge any one with improper motives, although I may disagree with him most strongly.

85. You next say that not one of the denominations are unanimously in favour of this movement. You know there are divisions in most bodies, as well as in Churches?—Yes.

86. That there is a majority and a minority?—Yes.

87. So that it is not to be wondered at that there should be disagreement?—Yes.

88. You say that is the case in the Methodist denominations?—The old Methodists and the Wesleyans are not unanimous.

89. Do you gather that from their official reports?—I know that they are not unanimous.

90. Then, speaking of the Churches generally, you know that there are certain members—individual members—who are not in favour of this movement?—So far as the Wesleyan body is concerned. I would not go further than that, but that is sufficient to substantiate my statement. But I believe, if you polled the Wesleyan body, there is a very considerable number of them would be found opposed to it. I know that the smaller bodies and the Primitive Methodists have not declared yet. But the question of smallness has nothing to do with questions of conscience and liberty, nor that of majority or minority. I never take into account number, when it comes to a question of personal liberty in matters of religious belief.

91. What I want to get at is: whether a large body of these Churches are in favour of this text-book being introduced into the public schools?—I believe that, if a vote were taken in New Zealand, public opinion would be found to be against what is now proposed; but the gentlemen here must know better than I do. I should say, on broad grounds of principle, nobody has the right to interfere with the religious convictions of other men; I do not want to be in the position of attempting to interfere with the religious convictions of any one.

92. *Mr. McNab.*] From what you have said, Mr. Glasson, it is affirmed that you have great experience both in the Old Country and in the Australian Colonies. The young people of New Zealand have been charged as being irreverent, and disobedient towards their parents, and also impatient of proper restraint: what do you think of that?—That is a very difficult question to answer; that question was put to me before. My honest conviction is, so far as my observation goes, that the children in South Australia and New Zealand are no worse in that respect than they are in the Old Country; making, as I said before, certain allowances. People who come here from the Old Country have broken up old associations, have cut themselves adrift from the old style of life in which they were born and grew up. When they come to New Zealand there is an absence of all that restraint that grew up about them in the course of ages. You have not such things in New Zealand, and consequently the parents feel themselves a little freer. It is only natural that children of such parents should have the same sense of personal freedom from restraint. I do not look with any thing like alarm on this, as the growth of disobedience or irreverence. With regard to South Australia, respect for those in authority, if they be respectable, is not, in my judgment, declining. But I do think that respect for authority, in the old sense of bowing down to it without seeing good reason for doing so, is dying out. And I think that is right. The moral sense of the community is stretching out in various directions. This is influencing character a great deal more than was formerly the case, and I think our public men will be made sensible of that before long.

93. If the schools have thorough religious instruction inside, even though they were denominational schools, do you think the reverence of children would be changed for the better?—I am opposed to denominational schools altogether.

94. Suppose you had an independent text-book?—I believe that reading Scripture texts without note or comment will have no appreciable effect on the morals or the religion of the children. I was brought up in one of the old national schools in my early years. In school we used to have the Church Catechism and the Bible. I should say from recollection that my reverence was not increased either for the Bible, or the catechism, or for the teaching. I can trace no distinctive influence one way or the other from reading those books in the National school. Other men's testimony might be different; it is not easy for us to go back and gather up all the influences that have been brought to bear upon us. Another person might disagree with me, and say "Your experience is not the same as mine." I believe it will be found—I do not know that I am permitted to say this—by all practical men, it has been so with all that I have conversed with, that they are opposed to religious instruction in the public schools.

95. *The Chairman.*] What is your opinion as to the effect likely to result from teaching the Irish National Scripture Lesson-book in the schools, viewing it from a Roman Catholic standpoint and the charge which they would prefer that our system had become distinctly Protestant?—The Roman Catholics do not believe in putting the Bible into the hands of the people unless it is interpreted by their Church. They have never, as far as I know, been in favour of putting an open Bible before the people without interpretation. They will say, "We have not supported the introduction of this book into the schools. We do not believe in reading the Bible without interpretation. If this book is to be introduced it must be properly interpreted." Then, they will have reason to say that those who were in favour of this movement were distinctly Protestant, and that this is simply endowing Protestant teaching, that they do not agree with it; that they want a grant for their own schools since the system of public education has become dis-