

resolutions in favour of the Bible in schools: it will gladly embrace the opportunity of co-operating with other religious bodies in their efforts to obtain some form of scripture-reading in our public schools, subject to a conscience clause, and appoints a Committee, to consist of . . . to confer and act with representatives of the Churches on the subject."

141. What is the date of that?—March, 1893.

142. Where was this Conference held?—In Dunedin. You see it is stated that for many years resolutions have been adopted in favour of the introduction of the Bible as a text-book into the schools. Every year since then a similar resolution has been passed by our Conference. So that this is no new thing. Those minutes from which I have read have been placed in the hands of the people of the Wesleyan Church throughout the colony by the Wesleyan Conference year by year. They have been read at our church meetings, and circulated for the use of the various congregations; and, so far as I know, there has not been a single voice heard in opposition to them. I take it, then, to be evident that these resolutions give the feeling of our Church in regard to this matter. There is a feeling on the part of a great many of our people that we are doing wrong to the children themselves by keeping the Bible out of the schools. In doing this we are educating but one side of their nature, to the neglect of the other, which is the more important. And, besides, we are doing wrong to the State; for if the State is educating the children in order to make them good citizens, then it is to the advantage of the State that this influence, which tends to make them good citizens, should be brought to bear on them during their education. That is the feeling of the Wesleyan Church on this subject. By refraining from bringing this influence to bear on them we are making our children into citizens who will not be so good as they otherwise would be.

143. Have you any further statement to make?—In addition to that I believe it to be the wish of a large majority of the people of the colony that this change should be made. Wherever there has been an opportunity for the people to give expression to their opinion such has proved to be the case. In Otago, some years ago, the people were asked to give a vote on this question: papers were sent round to the householders, and the vote proved to be a very large one in favour of religious instruction in the State schools. The minority was a very small one. The majority was, as I have stated, very large in favour of the change that is now asked for in the Bill that is before the House. I think it is impossible to look at the state of things in connection with the young people of the colony without desiring that some effort in this direction should be put forth. I rejoice in the fact that during recent years there has been a considerable improvement so far as juvenile crime is concerned. I do not think that criminally our people are worse than in other places; but, apart from direct crime, there is a great deal of irreverence among our young people; I am afraid there is also a great deal of immorality. One thing I am certain of: that there is a great deal of lewd and blasphemous talk to be overheard when passing any considerable number of them in the streets.

144. *Mr. Willis.*] Would that be caused by the exclusion of the Bible from the schools?—The Bible in the school would bring about a great improvement in that respect.

145. Do you think that Bible-reading in the school would serve any good purpose without any interpretation?—I believe it would. I believe it to be the Word of God, and I have no hesitation in saying that the result would be good.

146. But the question here is not so much as to the Bible in the school, as to the introduction into the schools of the Irish National Scripture Lesson-books; would the introduction of these books into the State schools serve any good purpose without interpretation?—Practically, it comes to the same thing, because the lessons in these text-books are really Bible lessons; they are the words of Scripture. I believe the Bible to be God's Word, and I believe that God, through His Word, can speak to the hearts and consciences of the children, apart from any human interpretation.

147. Do you think that Bible-reading would have any effect on Roman Catholic children going to the schools without the consent of their priests?—I am very doubtful about that. I am not in a position to answer that question.

148. You do not think it would do away with their demand for denominational teaching?—I do not think it would; they would not, however, have the same claim that they have at present; for one of the objections they have to the present system is that it is a "godless" system; whether true or not, that it is their objection. If this book is introduced, setting forth as it does God's influence over men through our Lord Jesus Christ, I do not think that their claim would exist any longer.

149. What do you mean by the phrase "godless education?—An education that does not set before the children the claims of God.

150. Have you read the books that are now used?—I have not read them through, though I know something about them.

151. Are you aware that there is running through the whole of these books teaching that might be clothed with Bible instruction?—I am aware that there is a high moral tone in many of the lessons; but that is not based on God's Word so far as I remember. There is a difference; there may be exceptional cases.

152. You said that boys and girls were wandering about at night: that there was a great deal of immorality, of lewd and blasphemous talk: do you know whether those boys and girls you refer to may be attending other schools; would that imply a charge against our town schools?—I do not say that that is a necessary result.

153. *Mr. Collins.*] Why did you mention it?—I mentioned it because it is a fact of our daily life.

154. *Mr. Willis.*] Do you think that if there were religious instruction in the schools the children would be better behaved than they are?—I would put it in this way, if you would allow me: I believe that if we had Bible-reading in the schools the effect would be to improve the conduct and manners of the children.