RELIGIOUS TEACHING

IN

SCHOOLS,

A SPEECH BY

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WITH SOME PREFATORY REMARKS.

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RELIGIOUS TEACHING IN SCHOOLS.

It was not my intention to publish my speech in defence of the secular portions of our Education Act. I am convinced that our system of education needs no defence with the great mass of the community, and if there had been a call of the House on Mr. Anderson’s motion, it would, I feel sure, have been defeated by something like three to one. As it was it received its quietus upon the voices, in a thin and listless attendance of a bare quorum of members. Mr. Anderson had stated his position temperately and well, but no power of argument could convert a bad case into a good one.

Unhappily, the little party which is trying to act on the country through the Bible in State Schools League announces through its organ, the Daily Telegraph, that it is not satisfied with its defeat; claims to have established certain charges of “cooked quotations” against me, and suggests that the “overwhelming” replies of Professor Rentoul and Mr. Andrew Harper be circulated by thousands throughout the colony (D.T., August 3). It also taunts me with having had to sit “ingloriously silent” while the charge of “cooked quotations” was established against me (D.T., Aug. 3).

A word upon the personal character of these charges may be permissible. By the rules of the House it was not in my power to do otherwise than sit silent while two or three members were repeating the crude charges of error which had been originated in the columns of the Daily Telegraph.
To tax me with silence as a crime when silence was unavoidsable seems to me not a very honest form of controversy. With regard to the charge of "cooked quotations," I hope to show, in the compass of half-a-dozen pages, that I can substantiate everything I have said. Meanwhile, I must admit that I give Dr. Rentoul the benefit of a doubt, and am very far from being convinced that the report of a conversation with him given in the *Daily Telegraph* of August 3rd represents the Professor's real words. I have some experience of how the *Daily Telegraph* can report a conversation. On the 22nd of March last, when it was trying to influence the elections, it reported Mr. Andrew Harper to have said of me "That he (Mr. Pearson) had deprived the schools of the right to have Biblical teaching, if they wished it. 2. That he had gradually expunged Bible history from the Irish National school books as adapted to the colonies. 3. That he had expunged the name of Christ from Nelson's Readers; and (4) that he had attempted to pander to the Buddhist doctrine of the Chinese by excluding from the books the account of an event which finds a place in the history of every civilised nation." I was naturally startled at these charges. Needless to say that I was not even in the colony when the Education Act forbade Biblical teaching during the time allowed to secular teaching in our schools. I was not mixed up in politics when Mr. Ramsay substituted Nelson's school books for the Irish series, and went on, unadvisedly as I think, to expurgate the Nelson Readers. I am quite unconscious of any bias towards Buddhism, or any wish to pander to it. On the motion of Mr. Zox (July 10, 1877) I was required, in 1887, to report whether the school books used in the State schools "contain religious dogma contrary to the provisions of the Act, which provides for secular education only, and if so, to what extent." Under the order of the House, I was compelled to consider what might offend the susceptibilities of Buddhist parents, and I reported accordingly, giving no opinion on the general policy of the expurgations adopted,
about which I was not asked for an opinion. When the *Daily Telegraph* speaks of this as a "suppressed report" (July 31, 1889), it makes a very palpable mis-statement. I have no power to suppress an official report if I wished, which I do not, and the report may be found in all the papers presented to Parliament in 1878. Mr. Andrew Harper wrote to the *Daily Telegraph* explaining that he had been mis-reported, that the three first charges he had brought referred to former Ministers, and to me only in so far as I had not tried to reverse their action; while in the famous Buddhist question, he admitted that what I had done was a right and just application of the principle upon which the former expurgations were undertaken. In short, Mr. Harper had not made one of the four charges which were represented as being the special counts in the indictment against me. With the recollection of this, I may be permitted to express the hope that similar reports upon my late speech are not more trustworthy than this one was; and that I shall be excused if I avoid dragging names into controversy. Meanwhile, I propose to reply to every charge that has struck me as of any moment, and incidentally to deal with some assertions that have played a great part in our school controversy, though it has not been thought prudent to revive them during the last month.

The first statement, impugning the accuracy of my assertions, is in connection with certain extracts from the Irish Scripture Lesson Books, which I regarded as objectionable from their coarseness. I quoted from a chapter dealing with the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and said that I found this question, "Why did God destroy Sodom and Gomorrah?" And the answer quoted from St. Jude, "Because the inhabitants had given themselves over to fornication, and had gone after strange flesh." The reply is that there is no such answer anywhere in the Irish Scripture Lessons, that "not one word is inserted in the narrative that could not be spoken in any drawing-room or in any girls' school," and that the answer intended is "because their sin is very grievous."
Opinions will, of course, differ as to the propriety of teach­ing the story of Sodom and Gomorrah under any disguise of words in a drawing-room or a girls' school. It may be that a superficial teacher would be satisfied with the answer sug­gested. What is certain is that the words I have quoted appear among the proofs, or illustrations, appended to the narrative, and are meant to be examined upon, and a child who had committed them to heart would undoubtedly get more marks than a child who answered in the briefest pos­sible manner. The statement that there is no such answer is of course true only in the sense that throughout the Reading Books the matter to be examined upon is given first, and the questions follow without answers appended. It would strike most persons that the words in which an answer is to be given, or from which an answer is to be extracted, are an answer, whether for catechetical purposes they precede or follow the question. I objected to a question, “who accused Joseph of wickedness in Potiphar's house,” and am told that “only an unnaturally priggish or prurient person” could object to the narrative. I venture to think that many persons who would not scruple to put the whole story of Joseph, as told in Genesis, into their children’s hands, would shrink from ques­tioning them on that particular point, lest they should force the learner to give shape and form to a story of guilty passion. However, it is, at least, well to know that a story of this kind, with questions upon it, is deliberately included in the programme of some of our opponents. I quoted the word “fornicator” from a passage about Esau (Lesson 22), and was met with a reply that it does not occur in the lesson about Sodom and Gomorrah! I said that one lesson turns entirely on the controversy about circumcision, and was answered that “there is no such lesson.” The lesson I re­ferred to was the 13th in the second part of the New Testa­ment series, and its title is “Disputation excited respecting the Gentile Christians being circumcised, and keeping the law of Moses. The Assembly at Jerusalem to decide this
question and the issue of the conference.” I nowhere said, though I am represented as saying, that these passages followed close upon one another. I purposely took them out of different parts of the series, and I gave the references on the paper which I sent up to the reporters’ gallery. I have nothing to retract and nothing to modify in what I said.

The second point in which my speech has been controverted (if we follow it in its order) is with respect to the extracts made from Mr. Senior’s report of certain conversations with Dr. Whateley. I am told that “it is a musty polemical relic” *(D.T., July 26)*, that it has been explained away in the London *Spectator*—though the explanation cannot be produced—and that Dr. Whateley’s life, by his daughter “conclusively shows that he had no intention to proselytise when he introduced the books.” No passage of the kind alluded to is to be found in Miss Whateley’s biography of her Father. What Mr. Graves read out to the House was simply a statement that Dr. Whateley tried to extend Scriptural knowledge among his adopted countrymen of all creeds; and this has I think, never been impugned. As to the Archbishop’s first intention, that, of course, is legitimate matter of controversy, and it may be that I have laid too much stress on the facts that the lessons are certainly compiled with a Protestant bias, and that Whateley admitted making use of them for proselytising purposes. Meanwhile, of the truth of Mr. Senior’s record there can be no doubt. Himself, a very distinguished man, and a man of high character, it was his practice to submit his journals to the correction of the friends whose words he reported. Miss Whateley, who must have known her father’s opinions, has published these conversations without a note of correction, and did not, I believe, disown them when they were severely handled. Personally I can give some evidence on the matter. I was well acquainted with the late Provost of Oriel, Dr. Hawkins, who was one of Archbishop Whateley’s most intimate friends, and I, one day, discussed the
subject of the Archbishop's conduct with him. Dr. Hawkins expressed a very deep regret that such a conversation should ever have seen the light, but intimated no doubt whatever that the report was correct. Let it be added, that so much importance did Archbishop Whately attach to the use of these books that he resigned his place on the Commission when the Board, in 1853, determined to discontinue them.

The third point brought forward against me is that I have spoken of essential differences between the Douay Bible and the Protestant Bible in the matter of the Lord's Prayer and of the Ten Commandments, when in fact there is only one great difference in the rival versions of the Lord's Prayer, and none of significance in the Decalogue. Now, as a matter of fact, I have not said the particular thing imputed to me, either in the speech I am now printing, or when I was interviewed by a deputation of Wesleyan ministers three years ago. (Age, August 26, 1886.) What I have said has been, that there were substantial differences between the Churches and within the Churches on matters that seemed to be of considerable importance, but that if the Churches could agree upon common forms, I would submit their proposal to the Cabinet. It is perfectly true that the Douay version of the Decalogue corresponds very closely with that which Protestants use, though it is hardly fair to suppress the fact, that the Douay version has a long note explaining the command about graven images, so that unlearned persons may not confuse the use of images or pictures as aids to devotion in a church with idol worship. The Douay version of the Decalogue, however, is not the one found in the catechism of the Council of Trent, or in any of three popular catechisms which Catholic children use in Victoria,—the Maynooth Catechism, a shorter catechism extracted from it, and Butler's Catechism. The Ten Commandments in all these follow substantially one and the same form, and a glance will show how they differ from Protestant versions:—
1. I am the Lord thy God; thou shalt not have strange gods before me.
2. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.
3. Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath day.
4. Honour thy father and thy mother.
5. Thou shalt not kill.
6. Thou shalt not commit adultery.
7. Thou shalt not steal.
8. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.
9. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife.
10. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's goods.

It will be observed that the first and second commandments of King James's version are represented by only one; while the tenth commandment is split into two. English Protestant versions, so far as I know, commonly agree, but modern criticism has introduced at least one doubt as to the true rendering of a commandment. We translate the third commandment as if it were directed against blasphemy, and two popular catechisms I have before me, the Anglican Church Catechism broken into short questions, and the Presbyterian Shorter Catechism, adopt this rendering, The Maynooth Catechism, I am glad to see, extends the command so as to make it embrace perjury; and Gesenius long ago pointed out that the true rendering directs it against deliberate lying. "Utter not the name of Jehovah upon a falsehood" is his translation. While these are the chief points of verbal difference between versions of the Decalogue, it must be borne in mind that there is also a difference between Christians and Hebrews, and between Christians themselves, as to the true significance of the commandment about the Sabbath Day. Hebrews refer it to one day of the week—Christians to another. Among Christians some hold that it only forbids unnecessary servile work and such occupations as interfere with religious worship; while others consider that it forbids every form of recreation—and it may be letter-writing.
The case of the Lord's Prayer is a very simple one. There is one difference that is striking, perhaps important, between the Douay and the Protestant versions of St. Matthew: the DouayBible rendering the word ἐπιοίκων as "supersubstantial," while King James's version gives the popular rendering of "daily." To myself, the Douay version appears to be the more literal and correct, though I apprehend that the word "spiritual" gives the sense more intelligibly. Keble has, I think, indicated the true meaning when he warns Christians "nor by 'our daily bread' mean common food." A second difference of some significance has been introduced by the Revised Version which converts the petition "deliver us from evil" into "deliver us from the evil one." To many the doctrine of a personal spirit of evil is highly repugnant; and while no one can doubt that it is asserted or implied in many passages of the New Testament, persons of this kind would shrink from a translation that seemed to give it the direct authority of Our Lord.

I have never said that the differences presented by any of these variations are an insuperable barrier to the painting up or teaching of the Decalogue and of the Lord's Prayer in our schools. What I have said is that a politician who knows of the existence of these variations cannot take upon himself to introduce or advocate introducing a version that is not unanimously agreed to, and that may be regarded as an attempt to proselytise. If the differences between the Churches are so unimportant, as it pleases a few gentlemen to say, there ought to be no difficulty in arranging a concordat. If a concordat cannot be arranged, surely such a fact goes far to prove that the impediments in the way of a combined religious teaching are insuperable. My suggestion that the Churches should come to an agreement in this matter was made three years ago. It is idle to say that the Churches had no hope of receiving favorable consideration from the Cabinet. No Cabinet, that I can remember, has ever undervalued the importance of the religious question,
Our Cabinet, at the time I made the suggestion, was particularly strong in members who inclined to making some concession; and, if its decision in this matter had been unfavourable, the League would have gained, what they never yet had, a plausible ground for saying that the State refused a small and simple change, which the Churches agreed with one voice to demand.

Let me now turn to a few other cases in which erroneous statements have been habitually made about our Educational system.

When Dr. Dale wrote an article in the *Contemporary Review* on our Educational system, and noticed the fact that it was falsely called godless; the Rev. J. F. Ewing, of Toorak, wrote up to the *London Spectator* and asserted that “no competent critic has called our present system godless.” I cannot of course say what a competent critic is in the estimation of Mr. Ewing. What I know is that within twelve days, in the month of the general election, the charge was brought publicly by four gentlemen of more than ordinary position. On March 3, Mr. Edward Langton is reported to have said at South Yarra that “a Minister of Education went the length of obliterating the name of God and the name of Jesus from the school books—that was secularism run mad.” On the 11th of March, Canon Goodman addressed a meeting at Geelong, with a protest that “it was not the intention of Mr. Wilberforce Stephen to banish even the name of God from the school.” On the 13th of March, the *Argus* published a letter from a retired M.L.C., who said—“the very name of God has been authoritatively expunged from the school class books.” Canon Goodman was followed by several speakers, who supported the general tenor of his address, and not one of them corrected the misstatement he had made. Mr. Langton’s speech and the retired M.L.C.’s letter were both reproduced in the *Southern Cross* (March 8 and March 15) with words of high praise and without a line to indicate that this particular charge was
absolutely baseless. It is scarcely wonderful to find that what men like Mr. Langton and Canon Goodman said emphatically, was repeated in more general terms by a Catholic prelate, who no doubt had trusted, like the others, to common rumour. The annual pastoral address of Dr. Moore (Daily Telegraph, March 11) denounced our educational system as "godless and heartless." Can anyone who reads these extracts, extending over a few days only, doubt that Dr. Dale constantly heard the charge of Godlessness brought against our State Schools? Will anyone who has studied the articles in the religious press of the last few days be astonished if that very charge is revived whenever the exposure of its falsity has been forgotten?

The charge now adopted appears to be that of "a thin Theism." I do not profess to understand these words, but I presume they mean that the religious allusions scattered rather liberally through the Readers refer only to God as the creator of the world, and not to God as Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Did we attempt to teach religion, I can conceive that it would be reprehensible to omit so much as we undoubtedly do. As, however, we profess only to give secular knowledge, and to remit the teaching of religion to parents of families and to the churches, I think the frequent references to one great doctrine in which all men agree cannot fail to have a slight influence for good. At any rate, the difference between our present text books, somewhat largely expurgated as they have been, and the old ones which they have replaced, is exceedingly slight. The old Readers were not intended to inculcate Christian doctrine, even indirectly, and the places in six books where a passage really Christian has been cut out or a Christian hymn or narrative replaced by a simply religious one, do not amount to more than twelve, altogether. It ought to be thoroughly understood that the Irish Readers, invariably used in our Board schools, taught nothing but Old Testament history in very meagre outlines; and the Nelson Readers, which replaced
these, contained no abridgment of Bible history whatever. The State secular system was introduced because under the denominational system, aided and subsidised as it was by the State, the secular teaching was lamentably inadequate to the demands of the population, and religious teaching was scarcely given, or only in the most superficial way possible, in Protestant schools. Within a year after the passing of the Education Act, the attendance had increased from 68,456 children to 99,536. Almost complete efficiency had been substituted for comparative failure.

It remains only that I should deal with two other statements. It is asserted that the Irish Scripture reading books are used without trouble in the schools of New South Wales, and it is inferred that they could be safely introduced here. The matter is one on which I have expressed no opinion, for the simple reason that I have no safe and exhaustive data to go upon. I do not know, for instance, whether the Protestant churches have accepted these books as sufficient for the spiritual needs of their children. My impression is that they have not, and I should be very sorry for them if they have; but I desire to express no opinion upon the matter. Meanwhile I know two things which are very significant. The first is that by the statistics of crime, New South Wales with its spiritual teaching stands far below Victoria with its secular schools. The second is that the New South Wales system is quite as strongly denounced by Catholics as the Victorian. It is only the other day that the Coadjutor Bishop of the Catholic diocese of Sydney used these memorable words:—"Hence we have the public school, to which Catholics are invited to send their little ones and to sacrifice them to the Moloch of Godlessness; and I give it as my humble opinion that the day on which Catholics so far forget their duty to their children as to accept the invitation, they sound the death-knell of their children's faith and innocence."

This leads me to my second point. I reminded the House that Bishop Moorhouse and Mr. R. Harper have proposed giving a
subsidy to Catholics, and I argued later on that if we adopted the use of religious text-books, it would unquestionably lead to a war of sects struggling with one another for supremacy. I am told in reply, that Bishop Moorhouse was prepared to give an official guarantee and pledge that the Anglican Church in this colony would never claim for itself any separate grant or educational endowment, "even though the Roman Catholic Church were subsidized." Need I say that no Anglican bishop can give an official pledge of any kind except for what he will himself do, and that no Church can bind the generation which is to come after it. Do I need to remind the world that five members of the Royal Commission of 1882-4 recommended a concession to Catholic claims, and am I to imagine that these gentlemen stood absolutely alone in their views, or that their supporters, such as they are, are not to be found among the members of the Bible in State Schools League? Is it not a fact that at this very moment, the Presbytery of Melbourne North is preparing to consider a motion for recommending a capitation grant to Catholic Schools?

I must ask pardon if I have trespassed a little beyond the limits of what was necessary in my own justification. As the attack on our State School system is concerted and inveterate, the defence requires to be explicit, and I am compelled now and again to write for persons outside the colony. Before ending, I wish to make one observation. It seems to me impossible to imagine that men, some of whom are theologians by profession and many of whom have entered for years into this controversy can have made all the statements they have made in carelessness or ignorance. Some of them at least must have known that the Irish Scripture Lesson Books were long ago given up in Ireland, and were scarcely at all used in the Board Schools of Victoria.* Some of them must have known that Archbishop Whately valued these books as a potent instrument of proselytism. No single person who

* Note.—Teachers were allowed, but not obliged or directed to employ them; and they were very rarely used.
looked in the Scriptural Readers can have believed for a moment that my quotations were in any possible way unfair. Many again, probably all who are clergymen, must have known that the Decalogue taught to Catholic school-children differs essentially from the Protestant Decalogue. The men who first started the statement that the name of God had been expunged from our Readers must have known that they were propagating a deliberate lie. From first to last it is the same miserable record of slander or reckless insinuation. How could we trust men of this stamp if they approached us with offers of a concordat? And how can men who come to us with the statements of the religious press in their right hands affect to speak with any authority upon morals?
Dr. PEARSON.—Mr. Speaker, the question which the honorable member for Villiers has brought before the House is one which, I think, it will be admitted is of the last importance, and I am convinced that the motion, as he has formulated it, though, as I believe, it is quite impracticable to carry it out, is, nevertheless, the best that could have been devised. In other words, I think the difficulties attending the re-introduction of religious teaching are so insuperable that any scheme, when it is once analyzed, is certain to be shown to be inconsistent, illogical, and self-destructive. In answering the honorable member, I should like, in the first place, to clear away a little misconception which I think, his words may have caused—I am certain he did not intend it—with regard to the Readers that have been in use. He spoke of the expurgated passages which have been struck out of Nelson's Royal Readers, and declared that he would be personally satisfied if I would undertake to restore them. Of course, I have no authority to make a promise of that kind; but I am glad to have the opportunity of saying again what I have said before, that I always thought the late Mr. Ramsay went either too far or else not far enough in those expurgations. If he had intended to weed the books absolutely of all allusions to religion whatever, he should undoubtedly have gone further, for there are some passages still left in which allusions may be detected that would be offensive to the faith of some of our fellow countrymen, or naturalized countrymen. But I have always held that religion, being as it is interwoven with our political, social, and family life, is a thing which cannot be left out of account—that to profess to ignore it is absurd; and that to strike out passages that allude to Christianity from great literary works
is to mutilate the sense of authors in the most unpermissible manner, and to seriously detract from the value of the reading book. Accordingly, one of my first acts when I took office was to write home and see if I could not stop the issue of a new edition of Nelson's Royal Readers; and if I had been able to do that I should have applied to the House to restore some of those expurgated passages, the excision of which has given so much offence. I say at once that to strike out a stanza from Burns' "Cotter's Saturday Night," another from Longfellow's "Wreck of the Hesperus," another from "The Wreck of the Birkenhead," and another from Tennyson's "May Queen," simply because of an allusion in them to Him whom 999 out of every 1,000 among us reverence as God, was to say the least of it a most lamentable blunder. However, we are now preparing a new series of reading books; and I shall be able, when the time comes, to take the instructions of the House as to what may be done concerning them. It is certainly not a matter on which I should wish to act without direct authority being given me. Again as either the Irish books, I think the honorable member for Villiers made a mistake himself, or used language which may lead others into mistake. As I understood him, he spoke of our schools as having used the Irish reading books, to which he refers in his motion, for some years—The Irish National Scripture lesson books. Now, I am assured by the Inspector-General, that we never did use them, and I know we have not a copy of them in stock.* It was by a mere accident that I had a single copy in my possession which I could lay on the table of this House, and I have had to send to Sydney for other copies. What we did use for many years was an Irish Reader which contained a number of chapters about Old Testament history, not employing the phraseology of the Bible. It contained no lessons dealing even historically with

*Note.—This was too strongly stated. The Permanent Secretary tells me, as I have noticed above, that the Scripture Lessons were permitted and occasionally though not often used.
Christianity or Christian matters. That, it will be seen, is a perfectly different thing from the Scripture series—the Irish National Scripture lesson books—which were used extensively in the Irish schools for something less than 30 years—between 1837 and 1853 or about that date—and were afterwards discontinued by a vote of the Board of Education because the Catholic Primate of the day objected to their use. Now, as those who wish to introduce religious teaching into our schools have taken these books as the best text-books they can find for their purpose—and I can quite understand why they have taken them; they have precedent in their favour, having been used for many years, and they have been drawn up with a view to school use—I wish to go a little into the question of those books themselves, and to give some reason why I think they may be most undesirable books to use. The honorable member for Villiers deprecated, with very proper feeling, an attempt which he thought some honorable members might make to ridicule passages in those books. I hope we will regard a subject of this kind in the solemn manner which its nature and importance demand, but that must not preclude us from criticising books which it is proposed to put into the hands of the very young, and examining whether they are books which we would wish our children to be taught from. I find in one of the books—and I have only been able to make a cursory examination—this question, "Why did God destroy Sodom and Gomorrah?" And the answer quotes from St. Jude, "Because the inhabitants had given themselves over to fornication, and gone after strange flesh." Now, I think, Mr. Speaker, those are matters which are better kept out of the school. There are other words, again, which are unavoidably used, of course in the Bible. Our forefathers had a rugged simplicity, and those words do not affect them in the same way as they would be likely to affect the present generation. But such a phrase as Esau being spoken of as a "fornicator" it seems to me would be likely to mislead those who heard or read it; and it calls for an explanation from the teacher, which it
would be difficult for most teachers to give. Again, the book contains the story of Joseph and Potiphar’s wife, and the question is asked, “Who accused Joseph of wickedness in Potiphar’s house?” Another question is, “Explain the word circumcision;” and one lesson turns entirely on the controversy about circumcision. I do not wish to dwell too much on these matters. It may be said, of course, that the teacher could use his discretion and not ask some of the questions. Or it may be said, “You can change the book.” But the point is that this particular book is recommended, and this book in its present state is, to my mind, absolutely unfitted, on account of passages of the kind I have quoted, to be used in mixed schools. There is a second point about these books which I may dwell on at greater length if necessary, and with less risk of giving offence to any one. I have a very strong feeling that one of the great recommendations of our English Bible is the magnificent English in which it is written. I know of no monument of our language to compare with it; and when I reflect that some of the writers of the most nervous and pathetic English—men like John Bunyan and John Bright—were trained upon the language of the Bible, I feel that the use of the Bible may be made a great means of education to children. For myself, I desire to see the Bible used as largely as possible in families, so that it may be a common repertory from which all may draw, and from which their minds may be instructed. But these Irish Scripture lesson books, for some reason which I am puzzled to comprehend, are not the version of King James. I have this morning been collating one of the finest passages in the Acts of the Apostles—the speech of St. Paul to the people of Athens—with the different versions of King James and the Douay Bible, and with what is known as the revised version, which, was recently issued by the Revision Committee of Protestant churches. I find that the Irish lesson book differs more from any one of these than the three differ from one another—incomparably more. I am not now professing to go into matters of
scholarship. That is a matter which professed scholars and theologians must be left to deal with, as to which is right or wrong. But I cannot imagine myself that these three other versions are widely wrong. In fact, I know enough to say that they are not, and I know that, in every case I have examined, where the Irish lesson book differs it differs by substituting bald and bad English for what is nervous and strong in the old version. I say, therefore, that if it is proposed to say, as I have often heard it said, that we are to introduce the Bible as a means of literary culture into our schools, by all means let us banish the Irish Scripture lessons out of the very colony. But there is a third point on which the compilation of these books deserves more than a passing examination. Of course the honorable member for Villiers faces the fact that he is preparing to change a national into a denominational system by his motion.

Mr. ANDERSON.—No.

Dr. PEARSON.—It has no meaning if it has not that. If the honorable member does not mean that, it must be because he will say that these Scripture lesson books have been drawn up with such splendid impartiality that children of every religion may use them, as undoubtedly children of two religions and their teachers did use them in Ireland under the pacific counsels of Archbishop Murray for 30 years. It might have been possible to say that at one time, but I venture to think, Mr. Speaker, that it is impossible to say it now. The publication of Archbishop Whately’s life has shown us in what way the Primate who represented the interests of Protestantism in Ireland regarded those lesson books. In the report of conversations which the eminent Mr. Senior had with Archbishop Whately—and as it was Mr. Senior’s practice to get these reports corrected by the persons with whom he had talked they may be regarded as history in the most complete form—he tells us that, being on a visit to Archbishop Whately he inquired in what way the Archbishop accounted for the conversions to Protestantism which were
then going on in Ireland, and the answer he got was as follows—I am not reading consecutively, but I believe I am not doing any injustice to the speaker's meaning:—

"The great instrument of conversion is the diffusion of Scriptural education. Archbishop Murray and I agreed in desiring large portions of the Bible to be read in our national schools; but we agreed in this because we disagreed as to its probable results. For 20 years large extracts from the New Testament have been read in the majority of the national schools, far more diligently than that book is read in ordinary Protestant places of education. . . . Those extracts contain so much that is inconsistent with the whole spirit of Romanism, that it is difficult to suppose that a person well acquainted with them can be a thorough-going Roman Catholic. . . . The education supplied by the National Board is gradually undermining the vast fabric of the Irish Roman Catholic Church. . . . I believe, as I said the other day, that mixed education is gradually enlightening the mass of the people, and that if we give it up we give up the only hope of weaning the Irish from the abuses of Popery. But I cannot openly to profess this opinion. I cannot openly support the Education Board as an instrument of conversion. I have to fight its battle with one hand, and that my best, tied behind me."

Mr. Speaker, it is with a feeling of profound humiliation that I have read out those sentiments expressed by a prelate of my own church. I feel that if, instead of Archbishop Whately saying this it had been Archbishop Murray saying that he had introduced a book which was so edited that it was proving a vast instrument for weaning the people of Ireland from their errors of Protestantism there would have been one cry throughout the Protestant world that "it was only what you might expect from a man trained in the teaching of the Jesuits." I do not know what other interpretation we can put upon this language but that these books were deliberately, as I believe, drawn up to promote conversions, and were used because it was supposed that they promoted them. I ask the House now whether, in face of these extracts, showing the deliberate opinion of Archbishop Whately, and of the fact that the Catholic Church in Ireland has objected to the use of these lesson books ever since the death of Archbishop Murray, it can be said that by introducing these books
into our schools we should not be introducing at once a torch of discord. The plain fact is that these Scripture lesson books mean nothing but that from beginning to end. It is not, of course, that the passages in them may not be interpreted in many ways, but that any one who can read will find that although the Douay Bible is quoted occasionally, it is only in very trivial matters, and that for instance, an important passage which Roman Catholics appeal to as bearing on one of the main articles of their faith is suppressed altogether. I refer to the famous passage in which our Lord is supposed to commit to St. Peter the keys of His church, with the words, "Thou art Peter, and on this rock I will build my church."

Mr. MUNRO.—That is in the Protestant Bible.

Dr. PEARSON.—Yes, but it is not in this book. The translators of King James did not suppress or mutilate, but the men who drew up these extracts did mutilate; and did it because they intended to use the book as a means of proselytism.

Mr. ANDERSON.—Are the passages immediately adjoining given?

Dr. PEARSON.—They have taken the narratives of Luke and John, omitting the narratives of Matthew and Mark, in the edition I have, and in that way they get out of the difficulty. It may be said that these objections apply only to this particular book, and that we may easily correct them, either by editing the book again, or by finding some other book. In reply to that, I would point out, in the first place, that for many years the question of finding a suitable book of this kind has been the great difficulty; and in the next place, that it is this particular book, and no other, which has been steadily urged on the department and on Parliament, in petitions and on the platform. It is too late, therefore, I think, to come now and alter the book, or to say that some other may be introduced. But even assuming that that could be done, I would ask whether the difficulties are not still insuper-
able. A deputation of clergy waited on me some years ago who came with what they considered an exceedingly moderate compromise. They asked that I should apply for authority to put up the Ten Commandments and the Lord's Prayer in the different schools of the country. I was compelled to answer them—"Gentlemen, if you will come to an agreement among yourselves what Ten Commandments and what Lord's Prayer you mean, I will immediately bring the matter before my colleagues, that we may consider whether we shall bring the proposal before Parliament." The simple fact is that differences of interpretation may enter into almost everything. I do not wish to go into Theology, but even in the Lord's Prayer there are two very important differences—one between the Douay Bible and the Protestant Bible, and another between two versions of the Protestant Bible—differences of words involving two important differences of doctrine. I have seen it said lately that, after all, these matters are not essential. Be it so. But if they are not essential, then let the churches, one and all—not simply a confederacy of a few churches—agree to say they are not essential. We are waiting for their agreement—and secular society all over the world has been waiting for the agreement of the churches. If religious instruction has not been more universal than it has been it is because of the difficulties which the discords of the churches have caused; and when we are asked to adopt a system which a certain number of Christian churches will accept, but which will drive the members of another Christian communion out of our schools, I say that the State, which is bound to be far more tolerant than any of the religious bodies, ought to hold its hand. I know that a great many of those who support this motion—I do not say the honorable member for Villiers, for I do not know what his intentions or his views are—desire to believe that they can get a union of the Protestant churches on this point, and would be perfectly content to give a subsidy to the Catholics, so that they should have distinctive teaching for themselves; and that, I have no
doubt, is one reason why this motion will receive a certain amount of support.

Mr. ANDERSON.—That is not my view at all.

Dr. PEARSON.—I do not say it is the honorable member's view. I should have guessed that it was not his view, but he is well aware that Bishop Moorhouse supported that view openly. It was also put forward in this House by the gentleman who preceded the honorable member in agitating this question, and I am certain that it is the view of a great number of those who take the honorable member's side of this question. I am aware, of course—and it is a matter of most sincere regret to me—that we are not quite at one with the authorities of the Catholic church in this matter of education. The clergy of that communion hold—and are compelled to hold, by orders which they cannot disobey, whatever their own opinions may be—an entirely different view from us as to the propriety of teaching in mixed schools. But, while I own that, and regret it—because I think it would be an inestimable advantage to the community if we had the enormous influence of the Catholic clergy employed to draw children into our schools—I am bound to remember, also, that the great mass of the Catholic laity acquiesce in our system because it is absolutely fair. By the last census, the proportion of children in Catholic schools was less than 27 per cent. of the Catholic children in the community of school age. For some reason or another, which I do not understand, that statement I think, understates the real facts. The numbers had been larger the year before the census, and were larger the next year, and I believe that, as a matter of fact, something like 20,000 out of more than 50,000 Catholic children are being educated in Catholic schools at this moment. But from these we must deduct—first, the children of comparatively wealthy people, who would go to denominational schools under any circumstances, just as the children of wealthy Protestants go to private schools; next, a certain number of children whose parents send them by preference to the State schools,
but who are withdrawn about the time of their first communion, in order to receive a few months' education in the Catholic schools; and thirdly, we must make allowance for the fact that in some places where it is more convenient, or where the Catholic school has a good teacher, a certain number of Protestants attend Catholic schools. When we make allowance for these cases, I believe it is perfectly correct to say that we educate two-thirds of the children of the Catholic community. And I would add that I think we are doing a great moral work in that education. I believe nothing serves more to destroy the bitter feeling of religious animosity which has existed in the old country than for children to grow up together—Protestant and Catholic learning their lessons at the same bench, playing together in the same playground, and altogether regarding one another as God's creatures and fellow countrymen, instead of looking on one another as enemies and natural opponents. I know that while the feeling of religious animosity is unfortunately much stronger than I could wish among men of the generation that is dying out in this colony, it scarcely exists at all amongst those who have been educated at our national schools. And when I am told that our national schools are hot-beds of immorality, that the children they turn out compare badly with those of former times—when, if we can trust the evidence of a Royal Commission, the Protestant children of this colony were nearly as much, it would be almost as true to say quite as much, without religion in the common schools as they are now—I may comfort myself with the reflection, first, that, as a matter of fact, the worst forms of crime are diminishing amongst us; next, that as the State is multiplying its interference with liberty in many directions, offences of a small kind naturally increase in number, while greater police vigilance, also accounts, to some extent, for swelling the roll of offences; and lastly, with the great fact, which more than compensates for any off-sets, and shows that we are actually improving, that it would be impossible at the present moment
to promote a religious war in this community. For a single generation to have arrived at that point within 20 years of common school teaching is to have a result of which we may well be proud, and which we ought not rashly to abandon.

Mr. ANDERSON.—We have had the religious passages during a great portion of the twenty years.

Dr. PEARSON.—The honorable member is referring to that belief of his that we had religious teaching, which has been abandoned. I can only remind him of the evidence given before Mr. Higinbotham’s commission. The Church of England Bishop stated that “in many schools there was very little religious instruction afforded,” and that in more cases than one he had found “a large proportion of the children utterly ignorant of the rudiments of Christianity.” Mr. Fletcher, with regard to the Congregational schools, said he found the religious education given to be “generally very small.” Mr. McMillan stated that he had found “no system of religious instruction in any of the common schools, except in the Roman Catholic schools.” The Inspector-General gave evidence that “in 39 out of 100 schools visited no religious instruction at all was given, while in three schools only was religious instruction given by the clergyman.” As a matter of fact the religious instruction given in the old schools, unless all records and oral testimony are false, consisted in the gabbling over of a few passages from the Bible, which was followed by no teaching whatever to see whether the passages read had been properly understood. I will now point out one or two difficulties—practical difficulties which the House will immediately recognise—in the way of carrying out any religious teaching at all, without changing the secular character of the Act altogether. I will assume for a moment that the honorable member has overcome all the preliminary difficulties, that this project has been adopted by the House, and that half-a dozen country districts have, by a plebiscite, determined to introduce religious teaching into their schools. What is to become of the teachers? Are they or are they
not to be protected under a conscience clause? Does the honorable member mean that the teachers should be compelled to teach religion? I think he does. Now, though I hold strongly that the State has a technical right to compel this, I think the State ought to pause before it attempts to do so. One-fourth of our teachers, speaking roughly, are Roman Catholics, who are not deterred by their religion from teaching in our schools, who rise to be inspectors, and to hold the highest places in the department, and many of whom I know to be most cordially attached to the system. Are we to demand of these Catholic teachers that they are to give lessons out of the book which Archbishop Whately says was the great instrument for undermining the Catholic church? Would it not be monstrous to demand anything of the kind from them? But even if we put that book aside, are they to give lessons out of a Bible which the Catholic church, for reasons of its own, has declared not to be the best that could be produced, which it disowns, and for which it has substituted another? I think that any teacher who said that they went against the rights of conscience would be justified in saying it. And putting the Catholic teachers aside as being a minority, how many of the other teachers would not object in the strongest manner to have this obligation forced upon them by this House? Remember what happened the other day at Sandhurst. There was a representative conference of teachers being held, and the Bible in State Schools League sent a deputation and asked to be admitted in order to state their views to the teachers in conference assembled. The teachers actually passed a resolution that they would not even receive the deputation, so strongly did they feel on this matter. I have no hesitation in saying that if this obligation is laid on the teachers it will prove a great source of heartburnings. I do not say it will drive many men out of the service, because there are very few who can afford to throw up their profession, but I do say that it will cause great difficulties. Again, a teacher is entitled to promotion—not by the will of the Minister any longer, and not by the choice of
the department as to the place he is to be sent to. Supposing a teacher to be promoted, and that his promotion is to a school at Warrnambool or Geelong, or any other place which I will assume for the sake of argument to have adopted the system of Scripture lessons, is he to give up his promotion, or else to go to that place with this repulsive obligation saddled upon him? As I have said, I do not think that many teachers can afford to give up their profession altogether, but I am convinced that a great many would give up preferment sooner than have a thoroughly distasteful obligation placed upon them.

Mr. BURROWES.—That does not say much for them.

Dr. PEARSON.—If a man conscientiously objects—if he thinks, as many think, that it is a desecration of sacred things to be gabbling over passages of the Bible in a school-room where the children have to pass a moment afterwards to a totally different subject—if he believes religion to be the best inculcated in another manner—are you to compel him, who entered the service believing it to be a secular service, and with the wish to teach only secular subjects, to turn himself into a sort of involuntary clergyman?

Mr. ZOX.—Why should you do it?

Dr. PEARSON.—Why should we do it? Lord St. Leonards held that the clergy of the Church of England were bound to marry divorced persons, but the Parliament of England refused to adopt that. It is a tenable position to hold that those in the service of the State are bound to perform any duty, within limits, which the State chooses to put upon them; but, without denying that, I would say that Parliament ought to pause before it puts a duty of such magnitude, and to which so many may reasonably object, upon a body of between 2,000 and 3,000 teachers. The honorable member for Villiers, if I understood him rightly, said he did not think a conscience clause would be needed for children.

Mr. ANDERSON.—I did not say so.

Dr. PEARSON.—At any rate he said he was prepared to give it, and that is part of his proposition. Now, I want to
know how we are going to work a conscience clause. We have got 1,200 schools, speaking roughly, which consist of only a single room, and the country children come to them in all weathers. Are the children whose parents object to religious instruction to stand out in the rain or the sun while the religious lessons are being taught?

Mr. ANDERSON.—There is no necessity for that whatever, the honorable gentleman knows very well.

Dr. PEARSON.—I do not know it very well, or know it at all. If the honorable member means that these children should come later the clergy will object to that. They will say that to put the lesson at the beginning or end of the day is giving a premium to the children to come late or go away early, and in that case they will miss what the league regards as the most important part of their teaching. Whatever the honorable gentleman, as a reasonable man, may be satisfied with, his friends, I can assure him, would not be satisfied with any concession short of giving the Scripture lesson in such a part of the day that it could not be evaded. But assuming it to be given at the beginning, if a child comes five minutes too early, what is to become of it? Is it to stand out in the weather, or, if it goes inside, is it to hear the exact teaching its parents object to?

Mr. ANDERSON.—What does a boy do now when he comes five minutes before the teacher?

Dr. PEARSON.—He goes into the porch or the school.

Mr. ANDERSON.—He has often to stand outside.

Dr. PEARSON.—No doubt there is a case now and again where the child arrives before the teacher and finds the school locked, but we try as far as we can to avoid difficulties of that kind; and they bear only a very slight proportion indeed to the number of cases which would occur under this proposal. Now it has been said also—and great stress was laid on this—that religious teaching is given with the greatest ease in England, and that very little objection is taken to it there. We have had lately a most valuable report by a Royal commission on education in England, which was composed,
entirely I think, of gentlemen favourable to religious teaching in some form, and mostly of those who were favourable to religious teaching in schools. The great body of that commission, I freely admit, saw nothing in the English system to object to as regards this matter; but a minority—and an important minority—drew up a counter report in which they pointed out that the conscience clause was a perfect fraud and farce in England. I will take a few of the cases they quoted amongst many that were given in evidence. One was the case of a Mr. Smyth, who was a delegate from the London Trades Council. He spoke generally as to the fact of the conscience clause giving no protection, and he said that, in his own case, both he and his wife had gone to the schoolmaster to protest against their child receiving religious instruction. I don't know whether they objected to religious instruction altogether, or to the particular form of it given at the school. With great difficulty the master yielded to their remonstrances, and the unhappy boy was put up at the end of the room in front of all the school while the religious lesson was going on. He was made a young martyr in fact, and the other boys looked at him, no doubt, as a kind of atheist; and at the same time he had to listen to, or must have heard, a great deal of, the objectionable lesson. A Baptist clergyman, named Williams, gave it as his opinion, based on very extensive travelling through England, that parents were marked and annoyed if they withdrew their children from religious instruction. Mr. Snape, a Methodist, that boys were flogged for being away half a day from a church school to attend a Methodist school treat. Mr. Waller, a Wesleyan clergyman, said that Catholics and Jews were compelled to receive Protestant and Christian instruction in their schools, and he admitted that the conscience clause might be fairly described as "inoperative." Mr. Powell, a visitor under the London School Board, said the clause was unknown—that it was as dead as anything else, and never alluded to. That is a little of the evidence that was given. The simple fact is that in England, as everyone knows, the power of the squire and the
clergyman in a country parish is enormous—you might almost say absolute. Children there are compelled to attend religious instruction. A Nonconformist child, whose parents wish him not to attend is marked, and his parents are marked. His father is the first man thrown out of employment, or, if he is a local tradesman, the squire's and the parson's custom is withheld from him. Because parents who hardly dare to call their souls their own do not care to claim complete religious liberty for their children, are we to be told that the conscience clause has worked admirably in England?

Mr. ANDERSON.—That is no reason why it should fail here.

Dr. PEARSON.—The honorable member is thoroughly Australian. The conscience clause is said to succeed in England, but it only does so in so far as it is inoperative. It is not complained of because no one dares to complain of it. Not only that, but the great mass of parents in England are so thoroughly secularised, in spite of the State Church and denominational influences to which they are subjected, that they care not what their children learn provided they are getting good secular instruction. That is the opinion deliberately expressed by two of the commissioners, and I am bound to say that I think it is borne out by the evidence. Mr. Speaker, I have tried to briefly put before the House some of the difficulties connected with such a change as the honorable member for Villiers proposes. What I am most anxious to establish is this, that it is not a matter which can be looked at in the least degree lightly. It is upsetting the policy of 1872 altogether. It is destroying the school system we then established, so far as it was made plainly secular. Then, if we adopt this proposal we are certain to have a religious war in every district. The whole colony will be divided by religious factions, some clamouring for the introduction of one religious text-book and another for another, while a third will go for the old system; and when election time comes round the contest will be keen and bitter. In short, we shall undo, to a great extent, the wholesome system of mutual religious
toleration we have hitherto enjoyed. But, beyond that, I think that if the House consents to the honorable member’s motion it will make a serious sacrifice of its constitutional position. I have held as strongly as any one that there is an undoubted place for the plebiscite—that it is unfair, whenever the two Houses differ from each other, as they inevitably must at some times, and the difference appears to be irremediable, to punish only the members of the Assembly by sending them to their constituencies, when the whole matter at issue might safely be remitted to the country itself. But, in a matter of this kind, on which the country has repeatedly expressed its opinions we have no right to divest ourselves of the duty of administration. If we are to ask the citizens of Geelong or of Warrnambool to remodel the Education Act, I really do not see where we are likely to stop. Is every single Act on the Statute-book to be submitted to a plebiscite in the same way? It has been said that we have adopted the same principle with respect to local option. But that is not the case. Parliament distinctly refused to accept the principle in the form propounded to us by an honorable member as extreme in his views as the honorable member for Villiers is in his. Our local option law lays it down that, although the majority in a district may be strongly opposed to the consumption of ardent liquor, still they shall not be allowed to impose their will upon the minority. They can only limit the number of public-houses, they cannot extinguish them. This, therefore, is only a very slight deviation from the general principle that in matters of legislation the right of deciding what the law shall be, and how it shall be administered belongs to this House and to this House alone. If we depart from that principle, if we once invite the clergy and the fanatics of every denomination to traverse the different districts of the colony, setting man against man, family against family, and church against church, not only will the consequences be most lamentable from the religious point of view, but Parliament will have ceased to deserve to exist as a body charged with important functions and great duties by a free people.