

teacher to explain certain passages in that text-book?—I said that I myself would have no hesitation to do it.

209. That implied that it might be advisable?—I might think it advisable.

210. That presumes that liberty was to be given to explain what might appear obscure to the children? I think it amounted to that, though it does not give that liberty; it simply provides for reading, and then for asking certain questions, which are printed in the text-books.

211. Do you say that the advocates for the text-book would be satisfied that there should be no door open for any explanation?—That is our position distinctly.

212. They do not advocate that any permission should be given to explain any passage?—If they did that, they would open the way to denominational teaching at once. I would be opposed to that.

213. That would appear from your answers?—I certainly never intended that.

214. You said you did not think that the Jewish persuasion, and the members of some other persuasions, would object to the reading of this text-book?—I have no knowledge to that effect.

215. Do you know that in the evidence adduced before this Committee it is distinctly stated?—I should be prepared to accept it if stated by those who know. I am always ready to accept information from those who are better informed than I am.

216. *The Chairman.*] You stated that you were here to represent the Wesleyan Methodist Conference?—That is so. Allow me to explain: I am not here by request of the Conference. I say I represent them, inasmuch as year after year they had passed these resolutions.

217. The Wesleyan Methodist higher Courts are elected on a broad representative basis?—Not on the broad basis that we have in election to the House of Representatives; at the same time, I believe that the officials of our Church are representative in regard to such a question as this.

218. Are the representatives in your lower Church Courts elected by the people?—Not elected by the members of the congregations.

219. Have you read the Irish National Scripture Lesson-books yourself?—Not the whole of it.

220. What evidence do you give us that the Wesleyans are acquainted with these Scripture Lesson-books?—I know that many of them have had it in their hands, and are in favour of it being used in the schools.

221. In other words, the Wesleyan people who have signed the petition have done so upon the representation of others?—I suppose that is so in regard to all petitions.

222. They have lately, in circuit meeting, passed resolutions in favour of religious education in the public schools?—They have in several places.

223. To what extent?—I cannot tell; I have no information.

224. What have you done to ascertain whether they are in favour of the present movement?—I have taken no direct steps here, simply because I felt it was needless to procure petitions now, seeing that no action was likely to be taken by the House this session. I believe that 80 per cent. of our people would sign the petition willingly.

225. To what extent have ministers taken advantage of the Act of 1877 to give religious instruction in the State schools?—In several parts of the colony ministers have attended after school-hours to give religious instruction. One minister at Woolston, near Christchurch, continued to do so for more than two years. He told me that at the beginning he believed it could be done, but eventually he came to the conclusion that the attempt was a comparative failure; the people there were favourable, the teachers were favourable, and remained while the lesson was given; he had everything to assist him that could be desired, but the attendance gradually fell off, and there was no means of enforcing it.

226. Do you know to what extent the clergy of all denominations have taken advantage of the Act of 1877?—I am not aware to what extent; but all over the colony, to some extent, ministers have endeavoured to take advantage of it.

227. Are you aware that a return was laid on the table of the House of Representatives for 1893, showing the number of clergymen of all denominations who attended to give instruction in the schools amounted to 7 per cent.?—I can very well believe that, inasmuch as we are convinced, the majority of us, that very little can be done in that direction; and, so far as many of us are concerned, the necessary work that comes to our hand every day is such that it would be impossible for us to give the time and attention that such additional work would involve.

228. If this text-book is introduced, do you think the Roman Catholics would take up this position: that, inasmuch as the State has made its schools distinctly Protestant, they are entitled to a grant in aid of their schools?—I imagine they might take up that position.

229. They would use that as an argument in favour of their application for a grant in aid of denominational schools?—Probably they would.

230. Would other denominations follow their example?—I do not think so; however, if grants were given to Roman Catholics, I do not think you could withhold similar grants from other sections if they applied for it.

231. You have said that this book would lead to a higher state of morality?—That is my opinion.

232. Inferentially, that those who passed through the schools would be law-abiding?—Yes.

233. Are you aware that from a return laid on the table of the House in 1893, showing the number of children committed to the Industrial Schools of the colony, that 209 children were committed by the Resident Magistrates to the Industrial Schools; that of these 43 per cent. represented the Church of England, 40·51 per cent. of the total population; that 38 per cent. were Roman Catholic, or 13·96 per cent. of the total population; that 11 per cent. represented the Presbyterian Church, or 22·62 per cent. of the total population; the Wesleyan 5½ per cent., or 8·49 per cent. of the total population. Now, what I want to ask in connection with this is: how it comes that the two denominations that have their own denominational schools in which they impart reli-