

both in letter and in spirit, with the particular point in connection with which I cite it. I shall throughout refer to the Bible in Schools League as "the League."

A Revolutionary Proposal.

Though a number of radical and even revolutionary changes in our State Constitution would be made by the Bill, and made only on assumption instead of by parliamentary enactment, the Bill deals specifically with the present system of education. The proposals of the Bible in State Schools League, as outlined in the Bill and expounded by an accredited spokesman of that League, form a direct twofold challenge to the present secular basis of our education system. Nothing would account for the present sectarian upheaval, the denominational excitement, the indirect attempt to alter the Constitution, the combination of denominations for political action, unless there were alleged to be some great and glaring disastrous defect in our present system. No mere detail, or slight defect or minor reform would justify the excitement aroused by the organizers of the Bible in Schools League in the interests of their movement. The alleged defect seems to be of such an extraordinary character that it requires for its remedy a machinery so abnormal that the ordinary means of legislation by which such great developments of our educational system have hitherto been made are declared to be ineffective.

This apparently formidable challenge to the secular nature of our system may be dealt with from two points of view, which will, I think, cover the main arguments raised in support of the Bill and its proposals: (1) Our secular system is charged with such a failure to meet the needs of the moral nature of the children that positive deterioration of character results; (2) the Bible in State Schools League offers a scheme of religious instruction which would materially improve the character and morality of the children. It must surely be admitted that unless the Bible in Schools League can clearly maintain the above two positions they have no justification for seeking to alter the system, and, above all, to arouse such sectarian divisions and suggest such extraordinary legislative means to bring about a change. My defence of the secular basis of State education will be made in answer to the charge (1) above; my criticism of the proposed scheme will be a reply to the claim in (2).

Secularism.

The mere name "secular" has been very extensively used in an unjustifiable way to brand the system as an objectionable one. A secular system is not a secularist system. It is not anti-religious even in spirit. It is merely an abstention from the teaching of religious subjects owing to the State's inability to give such teaching on the same fair and equitable footing as it gives instruction in non-religious subjects. It is sectarianism, not secularism, that limits the State's teaching to non-religious or secular subjects. Archbishop Temple, when headmaster of Rugby, said, "Secular schools would not be irreligious. I am by no means sure that they would not be more religious. . . . I respect the feeling that makes England shrink from secular schools, but I cannot reverence what is so mere a sentiment." Dr. Parker, the great divine, said, "As a Nonconformist I believe that no education can be complete which does not include thorough religious training, but . . . as a citizen I deny that it is the business of the State to furnish a complete education. . . . Thus I would not exclude religion, I simply would not include it." (*Times*, 18/10/94.) Dr. Fairbairn, the leader in the Congregational Church, said, "The secular may be non-eccelesiastical, but it is not, and need not be, anti-religious. The State is to me a body little competent to legislate in religion." (*Daily News*, 11/1/07.) Similar views have been expressed by such eminent men as Dr. Clifford, Charles Kingsley, Hon. J. Chamberlain, Lords Rosebery and Morley, Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman, Principal Henderson, Rev. J. H. Jowett, Rev. S. Hocking, Rev. R. J. Campbell, Bishop Mitchinson, and a number of Anglican vicars in England. Finally, 557 Protestant ministers of Great Britain issued a manifesto in which they declared—"We, the undersigned Christian clergy and ministers, desire to make clear the grounds upon which we support the 'secular solution' of the education question. Religion should not be taught in the public elementary schools in school-hours nor at the public expense. . . . We consider it (religion) to be of vital importance, and we hold that education in the truest sense is impossible without it. But we hold equally strongly that it is not the function of the State to impart such teaching. We hold that it is contrary to the principles of justice and righteousness, either that Catholics should be forced to pay rates in support of Protestant teaching, or that Protestants should be forced to pay rates for Catholic teaching, or that freethinkers or rationalists should be forced to pay rates in support of any religious teaching whatever. The only solution is that no religion should be taught at the public expense. . . . The attempt would be fatal to the best interests of religion itself. . . . So far from the secular solution endangering or enfeebling religion, we believe that its direct effect would be to awaken the Churches to a sense of the duty and responsibility which are theirs and theirs alone."

In New Zealand the supporters of the secular system of State education include large bodies of Christian people, a large number of Protestant ministers, and a large proportion of the very denominations which are officially supporting the Bible in Schools League. Surely these are not to be branded as secularists, as enemies of the Bible, as those who would forbid the children of New Zealand to have the Bible. We cannot fairly be branded as secularists because we oppose the method or system put forward by any league. On such grounds Luther, Knox, Wesley, the Puritans, and the Covenanters could have been called secularists. We advocate religious instruction under proper methods, by just means, and under the proper auspices, but we oppose the League's proposals.

It is not of choice but of necessity that the State teaches only non-religious subjects. It cannot put into the schools of *all* the people any form of religious instruction that can be utilized