# The Examiner.

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EDWARD WHELAN] This is true Liberty, when Free-born Men, having to advise the Public, may speak free.—EURIPIDES. [EDITOR AND PUBLISHER

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## Colonial Legislature.

### HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY.

FRIDAY, March 19, 1858.

### BIBLE QUESTION.

PETITIONS RELATING TO EDUCATION.

(*Continued.*)

At the request of the Hon. E. Palmer, the resolution submitted by the Hon. T. H. Haviland was again read by the Chairman.

Hon. Mr. PALMER.—I second that resolution; and, before going into the subject matter of it, it may be as well to remark, that whatever difference there may be in the petitions now under our consideration, literally considered, the intentions, the object, the prayer of all are perfectly identical; and all that they set forth or pray for is supposed to be comprised in the resolution which the chairman has just now read. Unless, then, some other resolution, based on similar grounds, shall be submitted, I shall confine myself to a support and advocacy of the original resolution, which, I think, is calculated fully to carry out the views and wishes of the petitioners. Therefore assuming, for the present, that hon. members who are prepared to support the petitions are satisfied with the resolution, and do not wish to go beyond it, and that no other will be submitted asking for more, my observations shall not now exceed its very obvious scope. The resolution itself is couched in the most moderate language; and must defy the ingenuity of those who may oppose it to put upon it any other construction than the very clear and plain one which it is intended to bear. It merely states that it is inexpedient that any law or rule should exist by which the use of the Holy Scriptures should be excluded from the Central Academy and Normal School of this Island, in any case where the parents or guardians of any scholars placed in those institutions may require such Holy Scriptures to be used or read therein by such scholars; and provides that, if any such law or rule exists, it shall be annulled or rescinded. With respect to the religious scruples which may be conscientiously entertained by some of my Roman Catholic fellow subjects, concerning the reading of the Bible in our pubic schools, I can only repeat what has been said by my hon. friend, the mover of this resolution (Hon. T. H. Haviland), that I duly respect those scruples, and would not be a party to any legislative measure which I thought would have a positive tendency directly to interfere with the due exercise of any of their civil or religious rights and privileges; but that the resolution of my hon. friend has any such tendency, either immediate or remote, I positively deny, and defy any man to prove that it has. The resolution has been drawn up with due regard to the religious feelings and principles of all whom, should it be agreed to, its operation could possibly affect; and I do not see how the legitimate and important object which the petitioners, and they who support them in this House, have in view, and its attainment, could have been declared or proposed in language, or in a manner more guarded and delicate, whilst at the same time sufficiently explicit, than has been done in that resolution. As long as any law or resolution is in force which may exclude the Bible from the Central Academy and Normal School, so long is the propriety or the expediency of that law or that resolution liable to be called in question. Now, if we are Christians and live under a Christian government, I positively deny the propriety, the expediency of the law or resolution, under the colour or sanction of which the conductors of those institutions have, or may claim to have, the power to exclude the Bible from them; and I maintain that it is at once morally and politically wrong to allow any such law or resolution to exist. It is very true that it is better to place the Sacred Volume in the hands of the parents, for the instructing or teaching from it of their children, than to place it in the hands of schoolmasters for the same purpose; but it is to be remembered that in this admission there are two things implied as presupposed; first, requisite ability, and then needful time and opportunity, for the fulfilment of the duty. For every family in which the blessing of such parental scripture teaching is enjoyed, there are in this community, as I think all must admit, scores, if not hundreds, in which, either from want of education or of time, and on the part of parents, in too many instances, for the want of both, it is altogether impossible. It is not in the power of many of the poorer classes to impart religious instruction themselves to their children; and, consequently, unless it be communicated to them in the public schools which they attend, they must grow up without it; and how far individuals so uninstructed are likely to prove inoffensive, useful or valuable members of society, I leave those who know the value of Bible or Christian education, or who have beheld amongst their fellow men the lamentable consequences of the want of it, to determine. It is clear enough that parents who cannot read cannot assist their children in the reading and study of the Scriptures; and it is also nearly as clear, I think, that even they who have had some advantages of education themselves, but who are obliged, for the maintenance of themselves and their families, to labour hard from an early hour in the morning until late at night for six days in the week, cannot afford fifteen or twenty minutes at a time, even for only two or three days a week, to impart Biblical knowledge to their children. But parents of this class, who wisely desire that Bible learning should be communicated to their children, think that, as, out of their hard earnings, they pay rates and taxes for the support of our public educational institutions, they have a right to expect, nay to demand, that that knowledge, without which all other knowledge is vain, the knowledge of the Word, of the revealed will of God, shall, in those institutions, be regularly imparted to their children, by their being therein taught to read and reverence the Bible; and, in so thinking, they think justly: and if this can be done, if this can be accomplished, without giving offence to others, as we maintain and are prepared to shew that it can, we ask that it may, and insist that it should, be done. Now, sir, in this there is nothing intolerant, arbitrary or compulsory; for, instead of seeking to practise or rouse a spirit of intolerance, all we desire is toleration. We ask only that, in any case in which the parents or guardians of any children placed as scholars in the Central Academy or the Normal School, may require the Holy Scriptures to be used or read therein by such scholars, such use or reading of the Holy Scriptures shall be tolerated or allowed. I am well aware, sir, that a great deal of ingenious argument was used, in various ways, to make it appear that the resolution of the last session, on this subject, was conceived in an arbitrary spirit, and would, had it been agreed to, have been carried out in a manner that would have been offensive, if not positively unjust, to a portion of the community. In the spirit or intention of that resolution, I have always said there was nothing arbitrary; and have always maintained that its operation could not have been unjust, inasmuch as there was nothing compulsory in it upon any party or parties. It merely proposed that it should be declared by the Legislature that the reading of the Scriptures in our public schools shall or may be allowable to scholars whose parents shall or may desire that they shall therein read them; that is, simply that such reading should be tolerated by law. Certain parties, however, who looked upon the object of that resolution with a jealous eye, or who were positively inimical to it, succeeded in making a very unfavourable impression upon the minds of many concerning it; an impression which is not yet, in every instance, wholly obliterated. The same parties, or any others, may now, however, be safely defied to make a similar impression upon any intelligent and truly liberal portion of the public mind, concerning the present resolution of the hon. member for Princetown (the Hon. T. H. Haviland.) The words which express it are plain and unmistakeable. It merely says that it is necessary to provide by law that the Holy Scriptures may be read and used by any scholars, attending either the Central Academy or the Normal School, in all cases where the parents or guardians of such scholars may require the same to be so used by them, while attending such institutions respectively; whether it be for ten, fifteen or twenty minutes daily. It does not say that, during the reading of a scripture lesson in school, any of the scholars whose parents do not desire that scriptural knowledge should be so imparted to them shall be compelled to sit and listen to such lesson. No such thing; and the internal accommodations, both of the Academy and of the Normal School, are such that arrangements may easily be made in either, or both, by which the mere appearance even of such compulsion might be avoided. The amendment by which it is proposed to supersede this simple and unpretending resolution, which has here at the desk been penned without any studied preconcert, is certainly a very ingenious and pretentious document, and one the construction of which has evidently cost much time and consideration. But ingenious and cunningly devised as the preamble of that amendment may be, I hope it will not have the power to blind the judgment of any who have already been able, or who may now be disposed to take a fair, calm, dispassionate and independent view of the question. That resolution is based upon the supposition that the permitting of the use or the reading of the Bible in the Central Academy and the Normal School, would be the establishing of a religious test therein. [Hon. Col. Secretary. The petitions admit it.] No: but that is the view which they who are opposed to the use of the Bible in those institutions wish the unwary to put upon it; and all the arguments which have been used by the Hon. the Colonial Secretary, in opposition to the original resolution, are intended to establish that view of it as the correct one. The Academy Act, with respect to religion, merely provides or enacts, That no religious test whatever shall be used in that institution; and in the resolution of the hon. member for Princetown (the Hon. T. H. Haviland), there is nothing inconsistent with that provision of the Act. The meaning of a religious test, as used in the Act, is clearly conformity to any particular church discipline or teaching; or the acknowledging or subscribing of any particular religious doctrines or tenets, as a rule of Christian faith and practice; with which, if any parent or guardian, on behalf of any young person, for whom he sought admission as a scholar into the Academy; or with which any young person, seeking such admission of himself, refused to comply; then such young person, in either case, would not or could not be admitted. But our resolution neither requires any such conformity or compliance at present, nor contemplates the necessity of it in any time to come; and, therefore, it is quite evident that it seeks not the establishment or the imposition of any religious test whatever, either in the Academy or in the Normal School; for, surely, the requiring liberty simply to read the Bible for such of the scholars in these institutions as may be required by their parents or guardians to do so, cannot with propriety be called a religious test in a community professing to receive and venerate the Bible as the Word of God. Look at the original resolution, however, and compare it with the resolution submitted as an amendment—a document which, as I have before said, has, I doubt not, cost its authors much consideration, time and trouble—and it will be quite evident that the latter has not and can have no direct reference to the former; but has been ingeniously drawn up as a specious device, whereby to persuade the unwary and the less thinking portion of the community, particularly amongst the Protestants, that the intention of the petitioners, and of those who are friendly to their petitions in this House, is to establish a religious test, to the subversion of the rights of conscience of members of the Roman Catholic Church, and to the retardment of the cause of education. Than this nothing can be more unjustly assumed and set forth as the object of the petitioners and of those who are prepared to support their views in this House; for nothing more is sought by them, or on their behalf, than that it shall be acknowledged that their children have a right to read their Bible in our public schools, provided it shall be done with a due regard to the religious scruples of those who belong to a different Christian Communion, but who have, with them, a common interest in these schools. The petitioners who, most undoubtedly, constitute a very large portion of the intelligence, education and substance of the community, are compelled, through the wrong construction put upon a certain clause of one of our statutes and the operation of a certain resolution founded in error, to present themselves before the Legislature in the humiliating position of Christians suing for liberty to enjoy what they justly account their dearest privilege—the privilege of having their children educated and trained in the morality and religion of the Bible—and what I once thought was their inalienable right. They who oppose the petitions say they have been got up by means of unnecessary agitation. They say that, after the close of the last session, due enquiries were made, and it was found that the Bible was read in nearly all the district schools, even in some of which the majority of the pupils were the children of Roman Catholics; and they ask us why we seek to disturb or alter the arrangements through which such agreement or unanimity of feeling, with respect to the question, has been produced. We answer, that we have not the least desire to disturb such agreement or unanimity; but, on the contrary, we wish to perpetuate and secure it by law. All that we at present seek is that the Bible may be as freely introduced into and read in the Central Academy and the Normal School, as they who oppose the petitions say it has been and is in the majority of the District Schools. The Hon. the Colonial Secretary says the petitioners wish to have the Bible introduced as a class-book into the Academy and the Normal School. In reply, I say that in that point he is mistaken. To require that the Bible should be made a class-book in those institutions, would be to require that it should be read, in common with other class-books, by all the scholars therein who were capable of reading it. But this we do not require: we only ask that all the scholars whose parents or guardians may wish them to read the Bible in those schools, may be at liberty to do so. The Hon. Colonial Secretary says we ought not to enforce by law the reading of the Bible in our public schools. I reply, that we do not desire the enactment of any such compulsory law: we merely wish to have repealed a clause of a statute which, as some contend, gives power to the trustees or governors of the Academy to prohibit the reading of the Bible by the scholars in that institution. The Hon. the Colonial Secretary says the use of the Bible is permitted in the Normal School; because it may be read by any of the scholars whose parents desire that they should read it, ten minutes before the opening, or ten minutes after the closing, of the school. But I beg leave to tell him that such permission cannot possibly be satisfactory to those who desire that the Bible shall be read in the school. School commences when the business of tuition commences, and school ends when the business of tuition ends. Therefore, allowing the Bible to be read, either before or after school, in the school-house, by any of the scholars who attend the school, is not allowing the Bible to be read in school. For so preposterous and inconvenient an arrangement as this there should be no necessity; and even were it acquiesced in by parents who desire that their children should read the Bible with their schoolmasters, it would be a very injudicious one, inasmuch as it would, by an increase of school hours, naturally render the generality of children averse to that portion of their education, in connexion with school, which, to Christian parents, is dearer and more eagerly desired for their children than all merely secular knowledge. The Hon. the Colonial Secretary has also said that the petitions are all from the country, and expressed his surprise that whilst the people in the country have reason to be satisfied with the existing arrangements, concerning the reading of the Bible, in their own District Schools, they should busy themselves about the government or discipline of the Academy or the Normal School in Charlottetown. I reply, that the principle which actuates the petitioners and them who, in this House, cherish the same sentiments which they entertain concerning the necessity of the early initiation of their children in the morality and religion of the Bible, is a principle which pervades the whole of the British dominions; and all throughout their wide extent who truly regard the destiny of man, or who, in any measure, duly estimate what constitutes true worth or true happiness on earth—and none but Christians can do so,—must and do admit that, for whatever line of life or profession, public or private, any individual may be intended, nothing can afford a guarantee for peace and enjoyment in the prosecution of it, or for the final attainment of honourable success or distinction therein, but a religious education. I have made notes of some other remarks made by the Hon. the Colonial Secretary, with the intention of replying to them; but as others are doubtless waiting to give expression to their sentiments on this most important question, I shall, at present, say no more.

Mr. H. HAVILAND.—The observations which I shall offer, on this occasion, will be very few and very brief: not so, however, because I am either unable, or indisposed to speak to the question; but simply because the hon. and learned member for Charlottetown (Hon. E. Palmer) has so happily anticipated me in most that I would, otherwise, have said. With the doctrine laid down by the Hon. the Colonial Treasurer, (Mr. Warburton), in the preamble to his resolution, I cannot by any means agree. By that preamble it is declared, as an axiom, that the state has no right to interfere with national educational establishments, for the purpose either of causing religious instruction to be imparted to scholars therein, or even of providing by law that it shall be allowable to impart it therein, to those by whom, or for whom, it may be desired [Hon. Col. Treasurer—Yes, in mixed communities.] Well, take it so; let your axiom be so limited then; I reply that secular education, unless it be based upon, or founded in, the doctrines of the Holy Scriptures, is worse than no education at all; because secular learning, unless controlled, rectified and directed, by religious principle, betrays its possessor, in almost every case, as is but too well and sadly known, into practices most certainly injurious to the best interests of society, if not positively destructive of them; but also, too often in the end, fatal to himself. In youth, in childhood, the human mind, as we all know, is most open to receive initiatory lessons, whether of good or of evil; and if it be not, at a very early period, pre-occupied by what is good, evil will take possession of it. Influenced by this consideration, therefore, the petitioners and we, in the House, who support their views, desire that our children may, in school, as well as at home, be regularly taught, by reading the Bible, to know, regard, and observe those truths, on the right knowledge and observance of which, depend both their temporal and everlasting welfare. But, whilst we are anxiously earnest to secure this blessing to our own children, we are, at the same time, very far from insisting that others, of another Communion, who do not think with us on this subject, should, in any way, be constrained to unite with us in the performance of that, which, although we hold it to be a duty most highly obligatory upon us, they conscientiously regard in a very different light. But the doctrine of the Hon the Colonial Treasurer is not tenable in any way, unless he can show (which we well know he can not) that, in any Christian or civilized country, there exists any sect, society, or body of men who say that religion should not be admitted as an element into education. Catholics, as well as Protestants, think that their children cannot be properly educated, unless religion be the primary element of their education; and, therefore, religious instruction, being deemed as needful by the one as by the other, is equally desired by both. This being the case then, it is quite evident that the enjoining, the sanctioning, the permitting of the instructing and training of our children in the principles of Christianity, by the State, is positively required, nay absolutely necessary, provided that the members of any particular church or denomination shall have no authoritative power to interfere with the religious teaching of those of another: and this privilege, this birth-right of men born in a land of freedom, is all we now ask for, without seeking to prejudice in any way the rights of others. The Hon. the Colonial Treasurer has said that the people are quite satisfied with the liberty, as respects the Bible, which is at present silently accorded to our public schools, and this assertion has been vouched for, by the Hon the Colonial Secretary, as an indisputable fact. But that it partakes very little indeed of the qualities of a fact, there is ample evidence in the petitions which are at present before this committee; one of them which I have just accidentally taken up, having no less than 1342 signatures—signatures which should the committee choose to investigate them, would I feel certain, be all found to be genuine: the question is of too serious a character, and they who have anxiously agitated it, in any section of the Island, have done so with feelings too solemn and conscientious to admit of any trickery and deception being practised in the obtaining of signatures to the petitions. They who oppose the object of the petitioners—which object is simply the right of the petitioners, and of all who desire it, to have their children who may attend our public schools, educationally trained in the knowledge of God's Holy Word, by being allowed to read the Bible therein—say that the introduction of the Bible, into our educational establishments, would be the establishing of a religious test therein. But I say, that they who really believe, and seriously assert, that the declaring, by law, that it shall be allowable, for parents who may require it, to have their children, who may, as scholars, attend either the Central Academy or the Normal School, therein taught from the Bible, by reading it therein, do not know what is meant by a religious test. In my opinion a religious test purely means an act which must positively be performed as a condition precedent to an individual's entering a Christian sect or institution. If it is optional in all scholars attending the Normal School and Central Academy, whether they shall read the Bible or not, it is a delusion to call the Bible a test-book. We all, both Catholics and Protestants, believe that the Bible is the Word of God; that it is the revealed Will of God to man; but we differ as to which of the versions, the Catholic or the Protestant, is the correct one. The resolution, however, does not say which is the correct one; but, so far as its contemplated operation extends, leaves every one to exercise his own unfettered judgment upon that enquiry. If it did otherwise, it would be intolerant, and subversive of liberty of conscience. I certainly do not wish to force Catholics to read the Protestant version of the Holy Scriptures, or to deprive them or their children of the right of choosing what version of them they shall read. My wish is to leave them perfectly uncontrolled and unconstrained in the matter, as they have a right to be; but the same liberty which I willingly concede to them, on that subject, they ought to be equally willing to extend to me, and all other Christians who are not of their Communion. We wish that our children shall be at liberty to read our version of the Bible in our public educational institutions; but we neither wish to force their children to do the same; nor do we wish that ours should do so in a way that would operate to what they might esteem the prejudice of the religious creed or opinions, which they desire that their children should entertain. Opposition, on their part, to the concession to us of a Christian privilege which we claim for our children, and the granting of which involves no innovation of any right, either civil or religious, of theirs, would be surely most unjustifiable. We ask that our children shall be permitted to read the Bible, in the Central Academy and the Normal School; and not that their children shall be forced or compelled to read it therein. Their opposition to this fair and inoffensive demand of ours would be no more in accordance with justice and reason, than was the conduct of the dog in the manger, who would neither eat the hay himself, nor suffer the ox to eat it. All that we ask, in fact, is the liberty of having our children educated in the way which we believe the most likely to ensure their becoming good citizens. To say, as the Hon. the Colonial Secretary has done, that the Bible is not excluded from the Normal School is mere assumption. To say that the Bible is read in that institution, because it may be read in the school-room by young persons who attend it, either before the business of tuition commences, or after it closes, is to say what is not correct; for, as has been shewn by the hon. and learned member for Charlottetown, (Hon. E. Palmer), if it is not allowed to be read therein during school hours, it is positively excluded from the school. With one observation, however, made by the Hon. the Colonial Secretary, respecting the Bible, I fully agree. He has said that the Bible, if let alone, will find its way without any legislation in favor of it. So say I; but I would, at the same time, observe that there is a wide difference between legislating in favor of the reading of the Bible, and legislating against it. All that we desire is that the Bible—the Word of God—shall have free course, and that no legislation shall obstruct it; and that is the entire object of the petitions now under our consideration.

Hon. Mr. MOONEY.—Mr. Chairman, I feel disposed to state my sentiments, concerning the Bible question, in the plainest and most undisguised manner; and I hesitate not to say at once that the agitation of it had its origin in any thing but Christian charity, and that it has been sustained by bigotry and promoted by duplicity. It is not religion, but the want of religion and rank intolerance, which are at the root of it. Veneration for the Bible has had nothing to do with it; but pretended regard for the Scriptures has been found a very convenient political engine, whereby a faction hope to arouse sectarian prejudices, and to enlist and engage them as allies in the prosecution of their own selfish projects and designs. The bigoted intolerance by which some of the leading agitators of this question are apparently influenced, seems to be much of the same nature and spirit as that which caused Sam Grey to boast that he had killed four priests; and the insulting expression which has just been used by the hon. and learned member for Georgetown (Mr. Heath Haviland), in which he compares the Catholics to the dog in the manger, who would neither eat the hay himself nor suffer the ox to eat it—meaning thereby that the Catholics will neither read the Bible themselves nor allow others to read it—is a gross and unwarrantable calumny, and too much akin to the spirit of Sam Grey. But I can tell that hon. and learned member, and them whose sentiments, on this occasion, he represents in this House, that the children of Catholic parents are not, as he seems to believe, brought up in ignorance of the contents of the Bible; and neither is the reading of it prohibited to them in the manner in which he seems to suppose it is. As a proof of what I now say, I could bring forward a little girl of the Catholic communion, whose knowledge of the Bible, from the first to the last, from the beginning of Genesis to the end of Revelation, is such as, upon a trial, would, perhaps, make the learned gentleman blush for his own; and would, I feel pretty confident, greatly surpass not only that of many of those who have signed these petitions, but of some of those who have been the most busy in agitating the country upon the question and getting up the petitions. No, Sir, the children of Catholics are not, by any means, as a rule, brought up in ignorance of the Bible; but we do not think that they ought to be allowed to read every portion of it; and as respects myself, I hesitate not to declare that there are portions or passages of the Bible which ought not to be read by young persons; and if I found my daughter reading any one of them, I would at least very quickly find her something else to do. And as for making schoolmasters Scripture teachers or expounders of the Bible, nothing, in my opinion, can be imagined, in connection with school education, which, in its operation, would be more absurd and mischievous. [Hon. Mr Palmer. It is neither proposed nor intended to make schoolmasters teachers or expounders of Bible truths.] Yes; it is all very well to say so; but let the schoolmasters be authorised and commanded to have Bible classes in their schools, what consideration will prevent the most incompetent, who will generally be found the most presumptuous, from arrogating to themselves the right and duty of explaining every Scripture lesson which is read to them. All, I think, will admit that the diversity of opinions now existing among Christians, on points of religious doctrine, is already great enough; but if every incompetent, although conceited, schoolmaster were, in his school, to have full license to inculcate his own crude ideas of Bible truths upon the young minds under his tuition, the winds of doctrine would soon become more numerous and conflicting than they are at present. Indeed it would soon be found that, to the Bible in the hands of such men, and as expounded by them, there would be but too much reason to apply the sarcasm directed, on one occasion, by one man to another, with respect to it, in the North of Ireland. Their conversation had been respecting the Bible, and what it teaches or does not teach, each of them having maintained his own peculiar views thereon, (for they were not of the same persuasion), by reference to the Bible itself; and as it grew to a close, each of them being of the same opinion as he was at the commencement of the r

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