

BIBLE READING IN SCHOOLS DISCUSSED BY BISHOP

Bishop Richardson Replies to Article in Chatham World—Claims Good Good Citizenship Cannot Readily be Taught Without the Use of the Bible.

His Lordship Bishop Richardson has sent the following communication to Commodore J. L. Stewart, ex-M. L. A., publisher of the Chatham World, who objects to Bible reading in the public schools:

My Dear Sir:—By the courtesy of one of your subscribers, I have been privileged to read the leading article upon "Religion in the Schools" which appeared in your issue of April 17th. In view of the fact that the article refers at some length to the action recently taken by the Diocesan Synod of Fredericton in regard to this important question, you will permit me, I am sure, to say a few words in reply. If I do so, it is not with any desire to enter into a newspaper controversy upon the subject, but in order to make a little more clear certain facts, which you would appear to have overlooked. I need not refer at any length to your statement as to the origin of the present system, other than to say that it is difficult to doubt that the spirit of the compromise to which you refer—of which certain peculiar privileges were granted exclusively to one religious body, has been long since disregarded. When, as you rightly point out new schools are started, and the claim advanced for them—a claim that would seem to have been recognized as readily as it has been advanced—that not only shall they be accepted as part of the public school system, but that the interest charges involved in the erection of magnificent buildings shall be paid out of public funds, one begins to understand how "lightfully elastic" in its interpretations a compromise can be. But for the present I am content to let that pass.

I must claim the privilege, however, of correcting you upon one or two important points. You speak of two powerful forces working against our common school system, one of which desires separate schools, in which its doctrines may be inculcated, whilst the other wants to make the common schools objectionable to half the people by having the Scriptures read and expounded in them. It is quite true that from the one side there is the expressed desire for separate schools, and even as was recently made quite clear by an authoritative statement upon the subject, the expressed determination to get them so soon as circumstances make a change in the law possible. But, Sir, there has been no demand from the other side to have the Scriptures expounded in the public schools. That is an assumption upon your part, for which there is absolutely no foundation. It might have been wiser for you to ascertain the facts before making such an assumption the gravamen of your charge against the non-Roman Catholic bodies. It is true that there was some two years ago an organized effort, and not to be remarked by the Church of England alone, but by the Baptists, Presbyterians, Methodists and Congregationalists also of the province—to have made obligatory the reading of selected passages from Holy Scripture, together with the ramifying of and examination upon, certain portions, but that was all. There was to be no exposition.

The point is of considerable importance, for it makes quite clear the unquestionable fact that the granting of the memorial in question would have imposed no new disability upon any one. As the law stands at present, the teacher is left free to read or not to read the Scriptures and even more important still, he is at liberty to make his own selection of passages for reading. Under this provision, I think that I am right in saying that in the great majority of schools the Scriptures are read with more or less regularity. The object in view, then, was not the introduction of the reading of the Bible, for that to a considerable extent is in the air already, but to make such reading obligatory, and thus to place the Word of God at least upon a like level of importance with the subjects of secular study that are upon the curriculum. In the judgment of the memorialists, law in itself would have been a great gain. It would at least tend to remove a danger that under present conditions does undoubtedly exist—that of creating in the child's mind the impression that the Bible, and that for which it stands in human life, is after all of very secondary importance compared with the other elements in a sound education. It may be, of course, that

such an idea represents your own opinion in the matter, but I feel safe in saying that it does not represent the opinion of multitudes of men who, whether clerical or lay, are not lacking in reason, logic, or even common sense. But there would have been another gain in the granting of the memorial, and one whose force, it would seem from the reading of your article, you should appreciate. You speak feelingly of the danger of such passages being read as would be objected to upon one ground or another. But, as I have already pointed out, the danger to which you refer, exists under the present law, for the only arbiter in regard to the fitness for public reading of this passage or that is the teacher. As the law now stands the teacher can read any part of the Bible that he likes, I am happy in believing that the trust placed in him is not abused, but the fact remains that there is no guarantee to that end other than that which exists in the teacher's common sense. In the light of your own arguments, therefore, the authorized selection of certain passages for reading, so far from tending towards difficulty and discord, would have a precisely contrary effect.

Upon one more point let me touch, and I have done. You assume, and once more, it is an assumption that has no foundation—that it would be impossible to make such a selection of passages as would be generally acceptable. Yet the Conference from which the memorial to the Board of Education came—representing, as I have said, the Baptists, Presbyterians, Methodists, Congregationalists, and Anglicans in New Brunswick—readily agreed upon a syllabus of Scripture readings. You will remind me, perhaps, that the Roman Catholics of the province did not assent to that selection. That is quite true, but I may tell you, Sir, what perhaps you do not know—that in a letter which, on behalf of the Conference, I had the honor of addressing to the Bishop of Chatham, the offer was made to submit the proposed readings to him, and to his brother, the Bishop of St. John, and the assurance given that we should be ready to accept the elimination of any passages of which they might not approve. The offer was refused, or, at least, was not accepted, but the fact that it was made affords ample evidence, one would suppose, that rejection of the memorial by the Board of Education was not because there is any insuperable difficulty in the matter of selecting Scripture passages for reading.

One word more. "The Scriptures in the public schools?" you say. "No, * * * teach honesty, truthfulness, manliness, patriotism, good citizenship, and character in the schools." Sir, it is because we desire to thus educate the children of our land, because we want them to become honest, truthful, manly, patriotic citizens, and to have in their hearts "that most excellent gift of charity, the very bond of peace and all virtues," that we plead for the authoritative reading of the Bible in the schools; for the pages of all Christian history are clear-voiced in their witness to the insufficiency of even the best moral teaching without the support of some supernatural sanction. It is in the Word of God that we find such a sanction.

Faithfully yours,
JOHN FREDERICTON.

GENERAL IDEA OF WORLD GRAIN CROP NOW AVAILABLE

The numerous advices received from the various governments by the International Institute of Agriculture have now reached a total rendering it possible to form a general idea of the extent of winter sowings in the northern hemisphere. With respect to wheat, it is ascertained that the area sown during the autumn and winter was, for the sum of the countries brought under review, a greater one than in the previous season, and further that this increase is far from being negligible. In Denmark, where 57,900 hectares were sown, the increase is 2.4 per cent. over that of the winter of 1916; in France the increase is 7.5 per cent. with an aggregate area of 4,597,040 hectares winter sown in 1917. In England, Scotland and Luxemburg, with areas of much less importance, the additions were respectively 15 per cent. 21.3 per cent. and 4.8 per cent. Spain is alone in reporting a decrease; the winter sowings have taken place on an area of 3,614,394 hectares, which is less by 5.6 per cent. than the corresponding area in the previous year.

Turning to America, the area sown with winter wheat is 17,065,771 hectares, or 105.2 per cent. of the corresponding area in 1917. On the other hand, the data for Canada show a decrease of 4.8 per cent.: 287,772 hectares as compared with 302,255 in 1916-17. It may be well to remark that winter sowings in Canada are no more than one twentieth of the total area under cereal crops.

In Asia, winter sowings were considerably larger. In British India they took place over an extent of 13,723,508 hectares as regards wheat, against 12,514,634 hectares in the previous year affording an increase of 9.7 per cent. In Japan the advance was 18 per cent. with an area of 590,000 hectares of winter wheat.

Finally in Tunis the increase is remarkable, as it reaches 13.2 per cent. winter wheat being sown on 600,000



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JUST an ordinary cup of coffee! Surely nothing could be more commonplace to you. But—

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Is there a man, woman or boy in all Canada to whom these heroes would appeal in vain? Will you help the Y.M.C.A. supply the coffee and the thousand and one other needs of body, mind and spirit "over there?"

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