

It has to be said that I do not intend to cast a vote in my life on party issues, but I do protest against the dragging of religious feuds into a question which ought to give the sincerest rejoicing to all parties—the extended reading of Bible truth in all our Public and High Schools.”

The following letters, by various prominent clergymen of different Protestant denominations, clearly show what they think of the effort to make a political cry out of the use in our Public Schools of the Scripture Readings :—

From Rev. Principal Caven.

SIR,—The Minister of Education is attacked from various quarters in regard to the book of “Scripture Readings” for the use in the Public Schools. This attack seems to me quite groundless, and such as no exigencies of party warfare can justify. I am certainly not anxious to intervene in the political conflict, but I think it my duty to make a brief statement regarding these Readings.

The Education Department, in authorizing selections of Scripture, acted in conformity with representations made to the Department by the Churches of Ontario and by the Provincial Teachers’ Association. A large deputation of the Church of England and of the Methodist and Presbyterian Churches submitted to the Attorney-General a resolution of which the following is part :—

“That this conference pledges itself to press upon the Attorney-General the making of the reading of the Holy Scriptures by the children and teacher . . . an obligatory exercise at the opening of the Public Schools of Ontario, the passage of Holy Scripture to be read each day to be prescribed by the Department in conformity with the recommendations of the Committee of this Conference, or some other representative of the various Churches of Ontario, etc.”

The Teachers resolved :—

“That the reading of selected portions of Scripture as a part of the regular daily exercises of the school, would be a material aid to teachers in the discharge of their duties in respect to moral training,” and “that the Educational Department do make a suitable selection of Scripture readings for the schools under its charge.”

A selection of readings was accordingly made, and before receiving authorization was submitted to a large joint committee of the Churches, each member of the committee had a copy sent to him for examination in advance. When the committee met, its first action was to approve of the principle of a book of Scripture readings; afterwards free and general expressions of opinion regarding the proposed selection took place, and a sub-committee, representing the several Churches, was appointed to examine the selections carefully in detail. The writer of this letter, while not a member of the sub-committee, was present at the meeting of the general committee and knows what was done. The Minister in issuing this maligned book was but giving effect to the strongly expressed wishes of the Churches and the teachers. I am not here arguing for the use of selections in preference to the use of the entire Bible, but stating the circumstances under which this selection received approval; and it will thus be seen how little ground there is for accusing the Department of proceeding in opposition to, or in ignorance of, the opinion of the Churches.

The regulations approved in 1884 do not require “the reading of the Holy Scriptures” by the children and teachers, which I think the committee of the Churches desired, and which seems to me decidedly preferable to reading by the teachers alone; and to this extent effect has not been given to the views of the Church Committee; but in regard

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The Annual Conference Scriptures in this request point urged by optional, it should be agreed upon the united body joint resolution

And that Scriptural and Education Department instruction:

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After full approval and appointment of the proposed