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RELIGION IN THE SCHOOLS

REV. W. T. HERRIDGE, M.A., OTTAWA.

SO much has been said of late upon this subject that I feel some diffidence in acceding to the editorial request for the present article. The misfortune, however, is that the real significance of the issue has been largely obscured beneath local prejudice and the squabbles of partizanship, so that it may still be in place to try to find the right perspective of vision. We are all interested in considering along what lines the education of our youth should be conducted, and there are great principles involved in the settlement of that matter which lift it out of the realm of mere provincial politics, and claim the serious thought of every citizen.

It is admitted that education of some kind is necessary to the maintenance of a free State, and that it is the business of the State to take measures for providing it. A certain minimum of efficient teaching in what are considered useful branches of instruction is demanded of our public schools before they can be officially recognized. The broad question, then, which we have to face is not one between sect and sect, between Romanist and Protestant; but simply this: Shall religion enter as an essential element into our system of

national education, or shall it be ignored altogether? Subsequent difficulties may arise after an answer has been given, but we must have some answer first of all.

We have been warned often enough to abjure the pernicious doctrine that Church and State have any connection with each other, and I do not think we run any immediate risk of too closely intertwining them. But if those social instincts which ultimately lead to organized government are in their essence the gift of God, then Church and State have this, at least, in common, that both are Divinely-evolved ideas, and that each in its own sphere, the one being exclusive of the other yet mutually harmonious, is bound to consult for the highest welfare of mankind. History furnishes an impressive lesson upon the results of breaking away from fundamental religious obligations, and shows how soon the State which dares to attempt the experiment loses that element of permanence which justifies its name, and sinks into confusion and anarchy. The best minds of the ancient world perceived how closely the national existence was involved in the acknowledgement of religious principles, and foresaw the nemesis of