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Edited by T. ARNOLD HAULTAIN, M.A.

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TORONTO, DECEMBER 9, 1886.

THE "Bible in Schools" question is again being hotly contested. Mr. Kerr's letter to the *Mail*, explaining the origin and history of the Scripture Selections, which we republish in another column, will interest our readers, and the writer may be relied upon—this cannot be said of all the correspondents who have of late written on this subject to the journals.

THE *Mail* in its issue of November 20th, quoting from the *Westminster Review*, arguing on behalf of the whole Bible in schools, says that because "a great part of civil history consists of the history of religious controversy, and of events arising out of religious controversy, it is difficult to conceive any teaching of civil history from which the history of such controversies could be excluded. The history of

England, France, or even of Canada, would be unintelligible without the history of religion or of religious controversy. The religious elements of civil history would be equally unintelligible without some historical instruction as to the tenets of the religions which were the subject of such controversies." This reasoning is perfectly logical thus far. But the *Mail's* conclusion is a *non sequitur*. What the *Mail* is trying to prove is that because civil history and religious controversy are woven together, *therefore*—the Bible in its entirety should be read in schools. But by extending precisely the same argument a little further, the *Mail* could prove that the Koran should be read in schools, the Talmud, the Pali books, or the Vedic hymns even, and, if we like to accept "Theosophy" as a newly-born religion, it might with equal propriety and perfect logic prove that *The Occult World* or *Hints on Esoteric Theosophy* should be read in schools. The fallacy is concealed in the fact that teaching certain theological tenets in elucidation of civil history is a very different thing from teaching theological tenets as a ground-work of a particular system of morals; in the fact that in the one case sacred texts have an authentic, in the other case merely a literary and historical, value.

THIS "Bible in Schools" question is after all only a party cry. Politicians, finding at hand a powerful weapon which had already begun to sever the community into parties, laid hold of it and turned it to their own use. The origin of the discussion is in all likelihood to be found in the religious section of society, and more especially in the leaders of religious thought. These cannot but recognize the fact that the Bible does not now wield the influence it did half a century ago, that it no longer is seated on the throne of unquestioning belief, that it has lost its former powerful hold on the sceptre of verbal inspiration—that it has, in short, been compelled to abdicate. Seeing this, the loyally orthodox have attempted to reinstate it by calling attention to the ques-

tion of the reading of Scripture in schools. At once, naturally, was created a noisy disputation. In a country possessing no state church, where almost every creed was represented, and where these different creeds strove with each other for state favour, nothing else was to be expected, and no more useful weapon existed for use in political combats.

But for the country's sake, say we, let an end be put to this interminable struggle. Everybody cannot be suited: we cannot have the whole Bible, "Ross's Bible," and no Bible, all at once. One party must give in. There is no compromise, no alternative, possible. Cannot the morals, the creed, the religion of our youth be safely left in the hands of those in whose hands alone they should be placed—in the hands of the parent, the pastor, and the Sunday-school teacher? The State has nothing to do with different bases of morals. It cannot recognize creed. It merely punishes crime. Must our educational system be forever distracted by the perpetual struggles of interested parties to gain their own ends? Surely anything, the whole Bible or no Bible, is preferable to incessant bickerings and janglings.

Does it signify overmuch whether to the pupils of our schools are read connected or disconnected passages of scripture, or whether no scripture is read to them at all? If parents are desirous that their boys and girls should be made familiar with the Bible, let them read it at home. If they do not, there is an end to the matter. What are our churches and our Sunday schools for, if one of their most important functions is not to teach the children of Christian parents biblical truths? Whether is it preferable—to spend five minutes, not necessarily in hearing texts of scripture, but in sitting still while texts of scripture are being read, or to spend half an hour in actually reading texts of scripture at the family table? And this latter can be done by ninety per cent. of all who lift up their hands in horror at the idea of what they term "God-less education."