

THE SCRIPTURE READER

"SENSELESS AND DISHONEST."

REV. HUGH JOHNSTON

Denounces the Cry Against the Scripture Readings.

At the Carlton street Methodist Church on Sunday, the 19th December, the Rev. Hugh Johnston, M.A., B.D., preached an able discourse to a large congregation, taking as his subject "The Sincere Milk of the Word," his text being I Peter, ii, 2. He spoke of the Bible in its relation to the individual, the family, the school, and to every day life. Under the third heading he said:—"There is the Bible for the school—I had almost said a political Bible. I am disgusted with shams and dishonesties. And the biggest of all shams are these cries and stirrings up of religious animosity at election times. What is all this row over the book of selected readings for our Public Schools? Anybody who takes the trouble to go to the bottom facts will find, it seems to me, **a senseless and dishonest cry. Has the Bible been ordered out of the Schools?** No; you know it is left to the discretion of trustees and parents to say whether or not the Bible shall be read in the school; but here is a Government regulation in addition which makes it imperative that a selected portion of Scripture shall be read. The result is that a portion of the Word of God is read daily in **98 per cent. of our Public Schools, whereas before it was not read in half of them.** Yet the wail is sent up that the Bible has been driven out of our Public Schools to make room for this book of authorized selections. That is not so. If the whole volume of the Bible be desired, well and good; any school can have it in addition to these Scripture Readings. What is there then to complain of? 'Why, it is a mutilated Bible!' We have just shown that it is not intended to displace the Scriptures. It is to help inexperienced young teachers that suitable selections have been made for them as a part of the regular course of school instruction. Is the Bible I have read from this morning mutilated because in selecting my lessons I have had to omit all the rest of the Bible? Is the Book of Common Prayer a mutilated Bible because the lessons appointed to be read in the churches do not include the whole Scriptures? Wherever there is selection there must be omission, but omission is not necessarily mutilation. Is it the character of these selections that is objected to? Then you impeach the loyalty, judgment and competency of the committee, made up from all the Protestant Churches to co-operate in this work. The selections have been prepared with a view to the needs of children, they are fairly representative of every portion of the Scriptures, and are a complete and varied collection for devotional reading. The first time I ever saw a copy of these much-abused readings was in the home of our lamented father, Mr. Robert Walker. At family prayer he put it into my hands as a convenient form of the Bible, and said that he was using it in family devotions. **I was struck with the beauty, appropriateness and range of the selections.** But the great trouble is the book has the endorsement of Archbishop Lynch and the Roman Catholic clergy. Why don't we object to the doctrines of the Trinity, the Divinity of Christ, and the personality of the Holy Ghost because these also are endorsed by Roman Catholics? Let us have charity and fair dealing. I rejoice that two thirds of the Roman Catholic children of Ontario are in our Public Schools and that they are growing up under the influence and teachings of Bible truth. It is very well to champion Protestantism, but when we cry out against Roman Catholic dominancy, do let us find something a little more rational than this Scripture Reader controversy, for in this all the churches must take their share of the odium along with the Government and the Minister of Education. **Party politics is getting pretty low when it has to trade on prejudice and religious antipathies.** I never gave 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 relation to the use of "Scripture Readings" for the use in the Public Schools. This

to the principle of the Minister of Education. Congregation

It is scarcely selected by to have been submitted above a change of "with the Archbishops

Have the Rome have of the consequences embracing a committee who gave adequate basis selections I am faith distinctive

It was full should not give should refuse

An able job the Minister, having adopted New Testament with the greatest

My objection for use in to express Ross by mis and laymen opponents of Government of public men in its most authentic book), they prompted to without em party attack

Toronto, 26

SIR,—As lished and Education Department of the matter, justice to ed of this v It has been the scheme rejection of the As one of the such a volume these "Scripture