

## BIBLICAL INSTRUCTION IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

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SHALL the Bible be taught in our Public Schools as the Word of God? This is the question in regard to which Mr. Le Sueur returns to the charge in an ably written paper in your issue for February. It is, I fear, impossible to arrive at a conclusion on this matter which will be equally satisfactory to the Christian and the Agnostic. Mr. Le Sueur thinks it useless or unreasonable to teach children that God cares for sparrows, or that He sent His Son to save men. The overwhelming majority of the people of Ontario, I believe, desire to have their children taught these and kindred Biblical truths. Shall this instruction be given to any extent in our Public Schools? or shall these schools be practically Agnostic instead of Christian? On the question of the giving of religious instruction in schools there is, of course, diversity of opinion amongst Christians; but I believe it is the desire of the people of Ontario generally to have the Bible read, and, if possible, taught in the schools as the Word of God. There is difference of opinion as to the sense in which the Bible is "The Word of God;" but the conviction of the people is that the Bible contains a message from God such as no other book contains, and for that reason, stands on a different level from any other book, and is an instrument of moral training such as no other book can be.

Mr. Le Sueur states the question under discussion in the following terms:—"We want to know . . . whether in a country like Canada, in which there is no State Church, and, professedly, no State recognition of any particular theology, the Bible

should be used in the schools with a warrant from the State that it is the Word of God." I think that, for practical purposes, confusion of thought would be avoided by omitting all reference to a "State Church" and stating the question somewhat differently, thus:—

Shall the great majority of the people of Ontario have their children educated in the way that they deem best, using the Bible as an instrument of moral and religious training, or shall they be obliged to exclude the Bible at the dictation of a small minority? Toward the close of his article, Mr. Le Sueur makes the following statement, which I welcome, for I am more anxious to find points of agreement than points of difference: "To the reading of the Bible in the schools and to the giving of moral instruction more or less founded thereon, I would personally make but slight objection, were it not for the domineering and tyrannical spirit in which the *right of the majority* to have such readings and teachings has been insisted on by some."

No, I think I speak not simply for myself, but for the great mass of Protestant Christians, when I say that we are as thoroughly opposed to tyranny and intolerance as Mr. Le Sueur. We are anxious to preserve the rights of the minority as well as those of the majority—we desire to interfere with no man's religious convictions. The whole history of our Public Schools is a proof of this assertion. We think, however, that the majority has rights as well as the minority, and there is a growing feeling amongst us that if our school system must be adapted to the demands of