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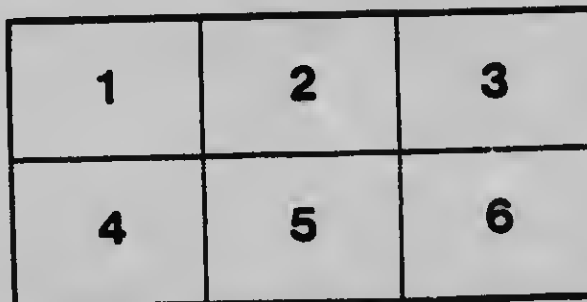
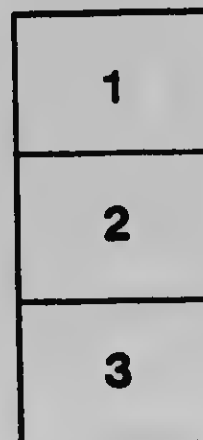
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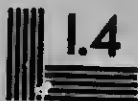
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The Teaching of  
Religious Knowledge  
in University College  
Ultra Vires.



Toronto  
1909

## ***The Teaching of Religious Knowledge in University College ultra vires***

### **PREFATORY NOTE.**

The appended letter of Hon. S. H. Blake to Chancellor Burwash, which it has been decided to publish in order that the public may have a full understanding of an acute situation in University College, was sent me by Mr. Blake himself.

The genesis of the present situation may be briefly described as follows: Nearly two years ago my attention was called to the teaching of Religious Knowledge and to the character of such Biblical teaching in University College by one of the professors of an affiliated College. He informed me that he had obtained very definite information from a scholarly minister who attended some of the lectures in Religious Knowledge, that the students were being indoctrinated in the most radical type of Higher Criticism.

Soon after this a brilliant young student of the University complained to me personally regarding the attitude toward the Bible as taken by the lecturer in that subject. In the meantime, other students had made similar complaints to the Hon. Mr. Blake himself.

A deputation, consisting of Dr. N. W. Hoyles, K.C., Rev. Principal McLaren, Rev. Dr. Carman, and myself, waited on the President regarding the illegal and clandestine character of this teaching. The President was extremely courteous, but has not seen fit to take any action in the matter. Hence the only recourse was to approach the Board of Governors themselves through

the Chairman, Dr. Hoskin. The matter has been drifting along for a considerable length of time, and, as an alumnus of the University of Toronto, I think that immediate action should be taken to put an end to an illegal state of things. The religious teaching and examinations in both Old and New Testaments were introduced into University College through the Department of Oriental Languages, and in contravention of the Federation Act of the University of Toronto; and it does seem very strange that there should be a disposition on the part of some of the prominent University leaders and professors to go on in the same illegal manner. By men of the world this action might be designated in strong terms.

The appended letter of the Hon. Mr. Blake is concerned, first of all, with the technicalities of the Federation Act, in which, of course, he is an expert; and the latter part will be found to have a very practical bearing on questions that are agitating the Christian public in our city.

Let any one look into the Calendar of the University of Toronto and he will find that there is no provision made for teaching the option of Religious Knowledge in University College, and yet it is carried on clandestinely through the Department of Oriental Languages, and the "minds" of our youth are being "corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ."

ELMORE HARRIS.

# The Teaching of Religious Knowledge in University College *ultra vires*

Toronto, 11th February, 1909.

Chancellor Burwash, Victoria College, Toronto:

My Dear Chancellor Burwash,—I am obliged to you for all the trouble you have taken in going over the matter covered by my letter of the 22nd of December last to Dr. Hoakin, a copy of which I sent to you. Your letter appears to be divided into two parts—the first leading up to the conclusion at which you have apparently, after full consideration, arrived as to the position formulated by me concerning the illegality of religious teaching in University College, which is thus clearly expressed by you: "I quite agree with you that it is *ultra vires* in University College."

You make a further statement in which I trust all interested in this matter will heartily agree: "I am sorry that it should be transferred to the department of Orientals, as, if this work is done at all, it should not come in by any back door."

Those who undertake "Religious Teaching" must surely repudiate the motto, *Si possis recte; si non quocunque modo!* But does not your letter clearly state, not only that those responsible for the work complained of have acted illegally, but that they have used the "back door" as a means of carrying out their illegal



acts? Surely, as attention has now been called to the matter, this stigma should not be allowed to rest on those affected by it longer than may be necessary to remove the illegality.

No more need have been said on this part of the subject, with which you seem to have so satisfactorily dealt, but for your statement: "I think there are some aspects of the question which have escaped your notice." But I do not find any such "aspects" in your carefully prepared resumé. On the contrary, I find all the points taken by me verified by you, as follows:—

"From 1849 the prohibition against the teaching of Divinity was in force. In 1850 a power was given, limited to instruction by each religious body, to its own students. In 1885 an option was given to affiliated Colleges, other than University College, whereby their certificates that students had attended lectures and passed examinations in certain defined subjects should be accepted as a portion of their general examination work. This was the origin of the recognition of theological work in the University. I suppose that the action was legal or not *ultra vires*."

In all this I agree, but up to this point the only "recognition of Theological work in the University" was that from that date the affiliated Colleges might teach, examine, and give certificates in certain subjects, which certificates should be accepted without question in the general University examinations of the students presenting them. This will not, however, lead us any distance in the conclusion that Toronto University or University College was empowered to "teach, examine, or give certificates in Theological subjects or Religious Knowledge." The then Chancellor and Vice-Chancellor, to whom you have referred, knew too well the principles on which the University was founded, and the basis

of the affiliation of the Colleges, to permit any invasion of the rights of these bodies by any more extended "recognition of Theological work in the University" than is found in the infinitesimal recognition as above set forth, which merely allowed certain Theological subjects to appear in "the curriculum" without permitting "the teaching or examination" in such subjects, either in the University or University College. This is not merely left to surmise, but, in 6 Edward the VII., Cap. 55, Sec. 127, Sub-sec. 2, where reference is made to the "University College Courses," and liberty is from time to time given to extend the subjects "by Statute in that behalf," there is the express limitation—"but not in Theology." If there was any question in this matter, it is removed by the fact that Section 127, defining the work to be done generally by the University and University College, refers to "the course of instruction," but when it comes to deal with the question of "Theological subjects," it merely says: "The curriculum in Arts of the University shall include the subjects," and does not deal with the "examination and instruction in the same"; but, observing the foundation principles of the University and University College, withdraws from these institutions the question of "examination and instruction in the same."

The mistake you appear to me to make is in assuming that because certain options in Theological subjects are included in the *curriculum* of the University (while, so far from provision being made for *teaching and examination* in the same, this work is relegated to the federated Universities and Colleges), the University has liberty to *teach and examine* in such subjects! That is, virtually to give the University and University College a power to "teach and examine in Theological or Religious subjects," though the Act only permits these

subjects to be placed in a "curriculum," and so far from empowering these two institutions to teach or examine, expressly relegates that branch of the work to the federated Universities and Colleges.

Referring to Trinity College, with which institution you say you are working in this matter, you state that the position you contend for "was made a *sine qua non* of federation by Trinity." You say further, that it asked "that the option should be offered in all four years, and, as there was a prejudice against the term "Theological Options," that the Oxford designation, "Religious Knowledge" should be substituted; but, although by Sub-section 2 of Section 29 the options referred to are extended over all the years of the course to be taken, yet you do not find a substitution of the words "Religious Knowledge" introduced into the Act, but you have there the words, "in Theology" and "certain Theological subjects." In the closing portion of your letter you have succinctly stated your "position as to what has now been done in respect of this matter."

"I quite agree with you that it is *ultra vires* in University College. I am sorry that it should be transferred to the Department of Orientals, as, if this work is done at all, it should not come in by any back door."

"The legal and political objections are:—

"First: Public funds must not be employed for this purpose;

"Secondly: University College is ruled out of the work by the Acts;

"Thirdly: A secular body like the Board of Governors cannot guarantee the character of the teaching."

May not the result of this branch of your letter be shortly and correctly summed up as follows:—

(a) There is no provision in the Statutes governing the University or University College for instruction in "Religious Knowledge" or "Theological Subjects" by either of these bodies;

(b) Instruction in both of these subjects is being given;

(c) This work was allotted to the federated Universities and Colleges;

(d) These latter bodies have therefore ground for complaint and the right to demand that this illegal interference with their rights shall cease.

#### BIBLE TEACHING.

You refer to the large number of students who are attracted to the lectures above referred to. As the minds of an increased number of young men and women are turning to the mission field, there will no doubt be more students from year to year ready to take advantage of the options or instruction referred to. The Theological Colleges may for this reason look forward to many additional students.

I believe that this is the cause of the increased interest in legitimate Bible study, which I hope may continue, notwithstanding persistent efforts made in and outside of our Theological and other institutions to frustrate such study by seeking to make the Word of God of none effect by the ever-changing notions of a noisy class of men who take for their motto: *Quantum est quod scimus*, instead of the more lowly one—the mark of the truly learned, as he picks a pebble on the vast ocean of learning—*Quantum est quod nescimus*. It will be an evil day for our Ministers, Missionaries and Teachers should God permit that what appears to be about the only sure standing ground left us in the world be shaken to its centre; that the statement, "The Word of God which liveth and abideth forever" is pro-

claimed as an hallucination, and that being born of "incorruptible seed by the Word of God" is an old-fashioned delusion, to be rejected with as little compunction as if it were a heathen fable. If we pursue this process of disintegration so that the wonderful cohesive power of this Book shall cease, its author may well write over this wreck, "They have sown the wind, they shall reap the whirlwind."

You refer to the class of teaching of which you approve as something to be commended rather than that found in our Sunday schools. Will not many people differ from you in this conclusion? The latter method is truly a study of, and an instruction in God's Word.

The humble teacher reverently approaches the Sacred Volume as "the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God," and, believing the statement of the Book that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned," pleads with God that the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, Who in and through the Volume reveals the will of God, be made the key to the true comprehension of the words he is about to study. He pleads for this special spiritual discernment, leading his class in the words of the Psalmist, "Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law." He unhesitatingly accepts the statement of Him who came from the bosom of the Father as the Light of the world, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away."

I have never been in the least shaken in the simple creed as to the Bible given to me as a child over sixty-five years ago.

(1) Nothing is more probable than that our Creator, who is hereafter to be our Judge, should give to His

creates a revelation of His will concerning them, and lay down rules and regulations for the conduct of their life, for obedience to which they shall one day be answerable to Him.

(2) A Book is found which purports to come from Him, and which gives such a revelation. This Book wherever found, and made the guide of life, has raised the individual and the people so using it to a position not reached by those ignorant of its contents or who refuse its guidance.

(3) The God who created the universe and all the wonders therein found and preserves them in their places, could undoubtedly give with accuracy such a revelation and could preserve it to His people for the purposes intended without error.

(4) No other book has ever been found purporting to be the Word of God, and which could answer the purposes above set forth.

(5) "When the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us . . . the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth," there was a well authenticated Volume in existence to which "the Light of the world" continually referred, saying, "Search the Scriptures"; "The Scripture must be fulfilled"; "The Scripture cannot be broken." He ever referred to this Volume as the Word of God, as the infallible rule, test and touchstone. He thus endorsed in the most unmistakable manner all the Scriptures as the infallible Word of God.

I thankfully acknowledge the immense debt I am under to this simple presentation concerning our Bible, from which standpoint I have never been in the slightest degree moved by the ever-changing and never-to-be-relied-upon attacks of those who, not looking or asking for spiritual discernment, merely kiss the Book that

they may endeavour to persuade people that their hostile attacks are made in a reverent spirit of investigation. Amidst the perpetual attacks made by the Clergymen of our various Churches, and especially by those in our Theological Colleges, upon the Bible, it is refreshing to turn to the writings of a well-known Clergyman of the Church of England—the Reverend John Wesley, whose use of the Bible wrought so marvellous a change in England at a period when it was nearly drifting to a revolution which might have paralleled that in France of the eighteenth century. He says in the third volume of his writings, page 504:—

“It would be excusable if these menders of the Bible would offer their hypotheses modestly. But one cannot excuse them when they not only obtrude their novel scheme with the utmost confidence, but even ridicule that scriptural one which always was, and is now, held by men of the greatest learning and piety in the world. Hereby they promote the cause of infidelity more effectually than either Hume or Voltaire.”

Again, he adds this most pregnant statement as to the study of the Word:—

“In all cases the Church is to be judged by the Scripture, not the Scripture by the Church. And Scripture is the best expounder of Scripture. The best way, therefore, to understand it, is carefully to compare Scripture with Scripture, and therefore learn the true meaning of it.”—Wesley, v. 10, p. 143.

“Serious and earnest prayer should be constantly used before we consult the oracles of God; seeing ‘Scripture can only be understood through the same Spirit whereby it was given.’ Our reading should likewise be closed with prayer, that that we read may be written on our hearts.”—Wesley, v. 14, p. 267.

You will probably recognize the following, found in Volume XI., pages 478-9 of the same writer:—

"I beg leave to propose a short, clear and strong argument to prove the Divine Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures.

"1. The Bible must be the invention of good men or angels, bad men or devils, or of God.

"2. It could not be the invention of good men or angels; for they neither would nor could make a book and tell lies all the time they were writing it, saying, 'Thus saith the Lord,' when it was their own invention.

"3. It could not be the invention of bad men or devils; for they would not make a book which commands all duty, forbids all sin, and condemns their souls to hell to all eternity.

"4. Therefore, I draw this conclusion, that the Bible must be given by Divine Inspiration."

No one can feel more strongly than I do the benefit, I might even say the necessity, of young men and women mastering the Bible for their Sunday school and other work as Teachers, and for their own edification, "and that our educated young people should be as proficient in religious as secular knowledge"; but where I differ *toto coelo* from you is in the conclusion that the course of study which you describe as "not an ordinary devotional and ethical study of the Bible," but one conducted in "a candid search for truth" with "exact scientific methods," will give the results which you appear to desire. I also differ entirely from you, and believe a very large body of our laymen will concur in the conclusion that the "non-devotional" "candid search for truth" and "exact scientific methods" employed in the course of studies, to which I am objecting, instead of having "done an immense service to the cause of Biblical interpretation," has shaken the faith of many in this Book, has caused others to discredit the whole



Volume, to reject such portions of it as may be offensive to their lives, to refuse to receive the history of the Creation as given therein, to manufacture mistakes, to exaggerate supposed differences, to ridicule the Book of Jonah, to teach that the works of our poets are inspired as is the Word of God, and therefore that we may take Byron or Boccaccio for our morning service in our homes, to teach that no such person as Abraham ever lived—although his name is mentioned over one hundred times in the Bible—and that this was the name of a tribe in the southern portion of Palestine, to reject the first eleven chapters of Genesis—the key to the whole Book, the story of Satan, the Temptation, the Fall, the promised Saviour, the typical sacrifice, and that wondrous scarlet thread that runs from Genesis to Revelation.

Which of the so-called Higher Critics are we to follow? Our laymen have not time, if they had the inclination, to follow out the irreconcilable differences of their crude utterances. When these men have fought these out amongst themselves, and if there be any of them left—representing the survival of the fittest—let them at least send forth some pronouncement in which there is a union of thought and utterance, and then for the first time will it be reasonable to ask us to compare their conclusions with those of the Bible.

Which of the scientists are we to follow? And the scientists of which period? It is said that a scientific library of seven years ago is only fit to be relegated to the dust heap, because of the changes in the views of the scientists of to-day as compared with the earlier period. Is it the volumes of seven, fourteen or forty-nine years ago by which we are to mould and alter our Bible? A scientist leaving a meeting of wise men, in passing home picks up a shell which upsets the conclu-

sion at which they had just arrived, and so proclaims to the public. Another scientist who rejected the deluge, wandering on a mountain, enters a cave in which the various bones collected convince him of the truth of that which he had absolutely denied. You will remember the time that contemptuous laughter was poured out upon those who believed that Moses wrote certain books of the Bible, because, as they affirmed, writing at that period was unknown. You will remember the ridicule that was passed upon those who believed the statements made in the second and third verses of the first chapter of Genesis. Impossible, said they, and we pledge our scientific reputation to the fact, that there could not have been light until the creation of the sun. The more learned man of to-day says that the second verse of the first chapter of Genesis, which has stood for over three thousand years, teaches all men, learned or unlearned, that motion gives light, and that therefore the supposed wisdom of the early scientist was but "the oppositions of science falsely so-called"—foreseen by the Apostle over eighteen hundred years ago. It is a cruel thing to fill the minds of our students with these vagaries and crudities which century after century disappear and are relegated to the paradise of fools, leaving the Word of God the same impregnable Rock that the humble, unsophisticated man, not stifled with the wisdom of the world, will ever find it to be.

No, my dear Chancellor, I abhor the thought that our Toronto University should aid in the work of shaking men's confidence in the Bible as being the Word of the living God, and so take from them that splendid all-powerful weapon absolutely needed in fighting aright the battle of life.

You have presented a strong appeal to me in your letter. Will you permit me to urge upon you the two

following requests? The first is, Will you use your best endeavours, as Chancellor of Victoria College, to place Toronto University and University College in their true position under their incorporating Acts, by preventing in either of them, through a "back door" or by any other mode of entrance, teaching and examination in "Religious Knowledge" or "Theological Subjects"? This will remove a just ground of complaint as to an *ultra vires* act in respect of the very foundation of these institutions; and will also remove, in ending the class of teaching now given, the grave charge justly made that our Provincial University is used as the instrument of systematically attacking the foundation on which is based the religion of the large majority of those for whom the University and University College are brought into existence and who are its students.

The second is, If the Theological institutions in affiliation with the University insist on instruction in these subjects and on the lines above referred to, then in common fairness let the laymen, whose money is demanded to support such instruction, know exactly what is the teaching that is insisted upon. Let there be a meeting of these new lights, and insist upon a positive statement showing clearly—

(a) What books of the Bible, in addition to Jonah, do they think should be eliminated as not being the inspired Word of God, to be accepted as such by their students;

(b) What chapters in the other books of the Bible they consider should be treated in the same manner; what portions of the books are—

(c) Merely myths;

(d) What allegories;

(e) What poetical effusions, to be merely admired;

(f) In what way do they replace the story of the Creation;

- (g) Was there any Garden of Eden;
- (h) Was there any Adam and Eve;
- (i) Was there any Satan;
- (j) Was there any sin;
- (k) Was there any punishment for it;
- (l) Was there any promise of a Saviour;
- (m) Was there any Deluge;
- (n) Was there any Abraham;

(o) By what means is the ordinary reader to know what portions (if any) of this Book are to be taken as the absolute Word of God, to be accepted and acted upon at the peril of the reader, and when does the apparent Word of God pass into scientific subjects, unreliable history, poetical effusions, myths, allegories, parables, etc., which are withdrawn from the region of inspiration and are merely human utterances, to be dealt with as the reader pleases?

Do you not think, my dear Chancellor, that it is but fair to those who are asked to pay for this teaching, that they should be presented with the emasculated and mutilated Book which proceeds on the consensus of thought of the representatives of the Higher Critics? It would remove much doubt and uncertainty. At present the answer is so frequent in this school: "Oh, I have read the Encyclopædia Biblica, but I do not go so far as some of the writers there." What those interested in this matter are desirous of knowing is exactly how far these people making this statement do go. This should not now be difficult to people who claim to have been using for years "exact scientific methods" and to have been engaged for long in "a candid search for truth."

It would be a matter of very great relief to a large number of Christian men if the result of these investigations to which you refer were put into the concrete shape of a real Bible, showing what portions (if any)

are the inspired Word of God, to be accepted as such, and putting as an appendix the errant human portion, including "mistakes of Moses." This would go far to settle the minds of many people and to prevent controversies. In all honesty and seriousness, I am of opinion that it is due to the old-time lovers of the Bible to know distinctly what the "exact scientists" accept, giving us the books, the chapters, and the verses; what is rejected, and the reason for it; what (if any) they admit to be "the Word of God which abideth forever," and what is only the word of man, to be dealt with as the reader pleases. They might, also, in issuing this new and up-to-date Bible, inform us, with their knowledge of the advance of science and research and the corrections which have in past years been made, whether the revised versions of the up-to-date Bible, corrected from time to time and modified so as to suit the exact but ever-varying conclusions of the "scientific rationalist," will probably be issued every seven or fourteen years. I fear that it will be very expensive to keep pace with the issues of the work. This opens a very interesting subject for consideration, but I fear that neither of us has time to go into it at present.

What a blessed consummation if you and I could persuade these scientists and rationalists to listen to the voice of the Prophet to the same class of people living twenty-five hundred years ago!

"Thus saith the Lord, stand ye in the ways, and see and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls."

Would it not be well, my dear Chancellor, that speedy action should be taken on the subject covered by our communications? With all best wishes,

Faithfully yours,

S. H. BLAKE.





