

The wording of the report of the committee is deserving of particular attention. It was composed of the most distinguished statesmen and lawyers of the country, yet these eminent persons, with a modesty characteristic of superior ability, which it were to be wished had more imitators in Canada, decline expressing any opinion of their own on the precise legal force of the statute, but adhere to that given by those constitutionally called on to determine it—the law officers of the crown.

Another question however was broached which, as it has been thrown into the discussions of the day by the Archdeacon of Toronto, in a way tending to darken what is otherwise sufficiently clear, I may as well allude to here. Doubts had arisen, whether or no the framers of the act understood the real force of that which they enacted—or, if the power of constitutional principles, had not shaped their act into an instrument operating otherwise than they proposed, whether, in fact, they intended its provisions to comprehend only the Protestant clergy recognised by the laws of the land, or that they should extend to all Protestant sects.

On this point too the committee gave their opinion, and came to the conclusion, that the persons who brought forward the measure in Parliament had designed that the proceeds of the reserved lands, should be applicable generally to any Protestant clergy. It is clear that this constitutes no opposition of opinion. The crown lawyers had given their opinion on one point, the constitutional and legal meaning of the term Protestant clergy as applied to Canada. The committee gave theirs in two: 1st, what in Canada is the legal and constitutional meaning of this term, and what consequently the force of the act; 2dly, what were the clergy intended by the framers.

I am therefore surprised that one who has studied the subject so long as Dr. Strachan, should represent these opinions as “conflicting.” On the subject of our rights we have never found any conflicting opinions out of Canada. Whenever fairly brought before the Home Government and authorities they have been fully admitted.

But, besides our constitutional and legal claims, there are others derived to us from the duties imposed on the British Government, as duties are imposed on all Governments, of providing for the welfare of us its Canadian colonists. The simplest principles of Government give us in this way rights, which it were well we had all along fully enjoyed.

I presume it is not necessary for me to set about proving that to the well being of a state nothing

so much contributes as the correctness of the morals of those composing it. Neither I suppose, am I called on to make out, from a collation of facts, that the prevalence of religious principles is the concomitant, and may generally be taken as the criterion, of morality. Speaking politically, experience proves that christianity, preached and practised, is a necessity to the sound social condition of every modern state.

The vast regions of Canada were laid open to Britons. Under the protection of the British Government, they were invited to colonize them. In this enterprise our countrymen were amongst the foremost. Their scattered bands appeared at every point the pioneers of civilization in these then unknown regions. It is much owing to the energies of Scotsmen that Canada is now a fertile and flourishing dependency of the Empire.

This undertaking, this conversion of forest into field, has not been effected by any who entered on it without enduring severe privations. Our countrymen have shared in them all; but, of them all, I believe there is one which they felt more keenly than all the rest—I mean the deprivation of religious ordinances. The returning Sabbath no longer marked by “the sound of the church going bell,” congregating them, as in their native land, to hear the word of life from the lips of one they revered, their stated pastor, whose superintendence restrained from evil, cheered in well doing; whose labors kept glowing in their breasts the holiest desires and most ennobling hopes. The want of this, as it were rallying point, for those sublimer thoughts and aspirations of humanity uniting heaven and earth, which sustain amid wretchedness and misfortune, and elevate above even the terrors of death, has to them been a heart-sinking deprivation. As the sense of it, and of its operation in their families, has come over them, in their seasons of reflection, Canada has indeed seemed to them a foreign land. At these seasons the bordering forest has hung over them more gloomily; the surrounding wilderness has in their apprehensions become more savagely wild.

True, many of our countrymen have allowed listlessness as to these things to creep over them; many have sunk into apathy. But this, alas! only proves the extent of the evil that has been sustained. I feel confident that Scotch Canadians—and happily their respectability as a class enables me thus to speak without offence—I am sure, that they would have been far better and therefore happier men, that their character would have stood higher had it been universally in their power to enjoy even a measure of the religious advantages of their native land—had its church been