

How many Protestants in England and Ulster, nay, how many Protestants in Canada, know that all Protestant sects were put on a footing of equality with the Roman Catholic Church, in French and Catholic Canada, long before the Church of England was disestablished in Ireland, over a century before that Church was disestablished in Wales? that the civil and political disabilities of the Jews disappeared in Quebec many years before they were totally removed in England? that all citizens, irrespective of creed, were given access to all political or judicial honours not far from a century before the last disabilities against Roman Catholics were removed from Imperial Statutes?

How many of them especially know that one of the grievances of the so-called "rebels" of 1837, in Lower Canada, was that the English Governor, and his creatures in the Legislative Council or on the Bench, persistently refused to the French and Catholic elected representatives of the people the power to put all Protestant Non-conformists on a footing of equality with the Roman Catholic Church and the Established Churches of England and Scotland?

In the last years of the 18th century, the Legislative Assembly had passed several statutes granting to all Protestant sects the right to keep records of birth, marriages and death, in the same manner and with the same legal effect as the Roman Catholic Church and the Churches of England and Scotland. The constitutional validity of those statutes was challenged and upheld by the French judges of the lower court. They were pronounced unconstitutional by the Court of Appeal composed of nominees of the Crown. They were again voted by the Legislative Assembly, and mutilated by the Legislative Council, also dominated by the English Governor.

In 1827, the acknowledged leader of the majority, Papineau, was appealing to the mixed community of Montreal West, to vindicate his resistance to the arbitrary will of the Governor. He reminded his hearers of the circumstances relating to those laws, and then made this declaration:

*"I recall these circumstances only to declare my unalterable creed that men are accountable for their faith and worship to their Maker only, and not to the civil powers; that diversity of religious opinions which creates no resistance to the laws, ought not to be submitted to the oppression of laws enacted merely to prohibit and punish it; that the same freedom in that respect, which I claim for myself, for my countrymen, for those who have the same belief with them, I allow to those whose belief is different; that persuasion, teaching, the practise of virtues, the weight of good examples are the legitimate means of free conversions, without any improper interference of punishment or exclusive temporal advantages offered by the law; that the Governments which, without distinction, impose equal charges on all the citizens, owe them all equal protection, and a common participation in the advantages, as they have it in the burthens; in the public offices as they have it in the public contributions of the community."*

This was *then* as it is *now* the sentiment of French and Catholic Quebec. By a strange contrast, while Papineau and his followers