

# Northwest Review.



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## THE TRUTH SOCIETY

### ADDRESS ON "EDUCATION" BY MR. F. W. RUSSELL.

Some Popular Misconceptions Dealt With.  
—The Church the True Teacher—Why  
Manitoba School Law Cannot Satisfy  
Christian Parent.

We have much pleasure, as in-  
timated in our last issue, in publish-  
ing in full the address of Mr. F. W.  
Russell before the Catholic Truth  
Society. Perusal of the address will  
readily lead all readers to the  
conclusion that Mr. Russell has  
given the subject much considera-  
tion, and that it contains many  
points worthy of consideration.  
He spoke as follows:

MR. PRESIDENT AND BROTHERS:

I wish at the outset of my paper to  
state that in preparing it I have met  
with many difficulties, and that there-  
fore if it is presented to you in rather crude  
form you must make some allowances.  
In the first place as you are aware the  
notice I got was a short one; secondly  
most of my time since receiving that  
notice has been taken up in fulfilling  
engagements previously made; and then  
above and beyond all that there has  
been the very perplexing difficulty  
of finding a subject on which I should be  
competent to address such a body as  
this and on which I might be able to  
say something sufficiently interesting  
and original as to make it worth your  
while to spend half an hour listening to  
me. I do not mean to say that there  
is any dearth of topics on which papers  
might be prepared and laid before the  
members of this society, rather on the  
contrary many suggested themselves to  
my mind, but most of them seemed to  
me to require a longer consideration than  
I had time to give them, so at the last  
moment in order not to disappoint you  
entirely, I have somewhat hurriedly  
jotted down a few reflections on the  
important and ever live subject of  
education. I will therefore with your  
permission take up a short period of  
your time whilst I lay these reflections  
before you asking you to bear in mind  
that it is not my intention to go very  
deeply into the subject but rather to  
consider some two or three of the mis-  
conceptions which, judging from the  
secular press seem, to have taken firm  
root in the popular mind regarding the  
general attitude of the Catholic church  
on the establishment of schools for the  
training of the masses of the people,  
and the position that Catholics in this  
country take with reference to the  
educational laws which here prevail.

We often hear people nowadays  
talking glibly on this subject, and we  
are all well aware that the spirit of the  
age has apparently erected the public  
school system as it exists in this coun-  
try at present, into an idol which it is  
little less than blasphemous to criticize.  
One would think to hear these people,  
some of whom are no doubt well-inten-  
tioned and some are palpably not, that  
until the state stepped in and delegated  
to itself the rights of parents in this  
matter there was no organized body  
which took any very deep interest in  
the education of the masses. They  
appear to entirely overlook the fact  
that from the earliest dawn of Chris-  
tianity there has been

### A DIVINELY APPOINTED TEACHING BODY

in the world, and that this body, which  
is the church, has from the first moment  
of its existence safeguarded to the best  
of its power the obligation put upon it  
by its Founder to teach all people. In  
this connection some allusion, which  
must be very brief, to what the church  
has done in the cause of education will  
not be out of place. Despite popular  
prejudices to the contrary those who  
have studied the history of nations, and  
who are as well observers of our own  
times, will not hesitate to say that  
whether we consult the past or the  
present, whether we look to the north  
to the south, the east or the west, where-  
ever we find the church, and that is  
everywhere, we find her always and in  
all places the great and true teacher of  
the people. We who live in an age  
when education has become the univer-  
sal and popular theme, and when facili-  
ties for carrying it on have developed  
to what would a few years ago have  
been considered an impossible extent,  
can hardly begin to realize the diffi-  
culties which those who labored to  
establish and keep education alive dur-  
ing the early and middle ages must  
have had to meet and contend with.  
Passing over the first few centuries  
when the foundations were being laid

with a decree of energy and toil which  
we cannot comprehend we may come to  
the time when those labors began to  
bear fruit. The middle ages were as  
history tells us more or less a period of  
chronic war, but even then we find the  
church maintaining parochial schools,  
and almost everywhere that a cathedral  
church was built, institutes of learning  
and libraries for the use of the students  
were founded. Many universities were  
established, and as early as the 12th  
century we read that universities were  
to be found in most of the political  
divisions of Europe—in fact not only  
were they founded then, but some of  
them had already become celebrated,  
and armies of students of all nation-  
alities literally flocked to them, so much  
so that we are told by modern historians  
that no University of Europe is to-day  
approximately as large as some of those  
in existence about the period I have  
mentioned. There seems to be one  
popular misconception regarding these  
institutions, viz. that they were simply  
places for the education of the members  
of the noble families and those who  
formed the governing and powerful  
classes, so here it may be as well to  
point out that education not only in the  
parochial schools of those days but also  
in many of the universities was free—  
hence to the church amongst Christian  
people in due honor of inaugurating  
free schools. But great as is the credit  
due her as the disseminator of learning  
in those early times, it may almost  
perhaps be said that she is entitled to  
still greater credit as its preserver. If  
we have today not only the scriptures,  
but the classics of Greece and Rome, the  
speculation and the philosophy of the  
ancient world, we owe them to her for  
she preserved them. We find it difficult  
to believe the historians who tell us of the  
numbers of great libraries founded in  
those early times under her auspices.  
Think of a library supposed to have  
contained as many as 700,000 volumes,  
and this at a time prior to the inven-  
tion of printing. The mind cannot realize  
the amount of toil involved in those  
hundreds of thousands of manuscripts—  
and we may well add that neither can  
the brain of man devise means of  
adequately expressing the gratitude the  
world owes to the monastic orders  
whose incredible labors those manu-  
scripts represented. This is indeed

### THE BOASTED AGE OF LIGHT AND PROGRESS,

but what it would have been without the  
labors of the priestly orders of the  
middle ages and the inmates of the  
monasteries speculation cannot say nor  
wisdom answer. We may however  
profitably draw one conclusion from this  
very brief and imperfect consideration  
of a most important and interesting  
subject and that is that the middle ages  
were even from this point of view not as  
dark as some writers have pictured  
them. It is true that in those times  
books could not be issued by thousands  
as they are in those days of steam-  
presses and stereotyping, but reliable  
historians of today say that although  
the whole actual produce of the two  
periods is not to be compared yet as  
regards those books in which real knowl-  
edge is preserved, and which are con-  
sidered as standard works in sacred and  
secular literature the difference is not  
so extreme as might be supposed.  
Hours could be occupied in simply  
enumerating the number of libraries  
which were established prior to what is  
called the "Reformation" in different  
parts of Europe, a good many of which  
were, by the by, afterwards destroyed by  
the followers of Luther and his asso-  
ciates; and it is to be borne in mind that  
most of these libraries were thrown open  
for the general and gratuitous use of the  
public, whilst it is a significant fact that  
many of them were intended by their  
founders especially for the use of the  
poor. As I have said these facilities for  
acquiring knowledge were eagerly taken  
advantage of, and modern critics hold  
that the prodigious number of books  
published about the 12th and immedi-  
ately succeeding centuries proves not only  
the existence of a multitude of readers  
made up of all classes but shows that  
many persons of every station in life  
employed themselves in reasoning on  
the books that they read. Let us not  
therefore be too ready to join with those  
who, laboring under a misconception on  
this matter, are so apt to lavish their  
compassion upon the poor, ignorant  
children of the "dark" ages, but reserve  
a little for these times in which we live  
for it may be that if we proceed, as we  
now will for a short time, to consider the  
stand taken by the powers that be on  
the subject of education we may come  
to the conclusion that although more  
money—and an ever-increasing amount  
may be spent than formerly, and al-  
though, as I have said, the public  
school system is a popular idol, there is

very little reason to be proud of the  
step which has been taken in these  
modern times of substituting the state  
for the church as the guide and teacher  
of the world. There seems to me, and  
there undoubtedly is, a great deal of  
misconception as to

### THE RIGHTS AND DUTIES OF THE STATE

in this connection. In the first place it  
may be admitted that the state has  
the right to insist that the future citizens  
shall receive an education which shall  
fit them for the duties of citizenship, but  
at the same time it must be always  
borne in mind that parents have in this  
matter inalienable rights which no  
power on earth can annul. It is true  
that parents may forfeit these rights in  
consequence of criminal action and by  
neglect, but even in such cases if the  
state undertakes to delegate to itself the  
forfeited rights of such parents it is bound  
also to fulfil the obligations of those  
parents—and those obligations in a  
Catholic parent surely involve a Catho-  
lic education. If the state will not do  
this how can it pretend to invest itself  
with parental rights at all? But if the  
children of criminal parents have rights  
which the state is bound to recognize  
how much more is it so where Christian  
parents have neither by criminal action  
or by neglect done anything which  
warrants the state in stepping in. Such  
parents are ready and glad to accept as the  
divinely appointed teacher, and also by  
the dictates of their own consciences,  
understand that upon them God has  
laid the obligation of rearing Christian  
children, and surely it is not claiming  
anything unreasonable to say that  
neither the state nor any other society  
on this earth has any right to put the  
slightest stumbling block in the way of  
their carrying out this duty. Christian  
parents, too, undoubtedly realize just as  
strongly as others, that children have to  
learn things of the world to enable them  
to develop their minds and fulfill the  
duties of their state, and in this again  
they have the church urging them to see  
that it is not left undone, but at the  
same time they know that it is their  
positive duty whilst seeing that the  
minds of their little ones are formed and  
developed by secular knowledge they  
are also developed by the knowledge of  
God and the way to Heaven. The  
church, the Divine teacher, tells them,  
and they out of their own consciences  
fully appreciate the fact, that the result  
they so ardently desire can be obtained  
in only one way—and that it can very  
rarely be obtained under a system of  
education the fundamental principle of  
which according to its staunchest  
supporters is the exclusion of all definite  
religious influence and motive. It  
therefore follows that a school, the lead-  
ing principle of which is the exclusion of  
all positive religious training and  
instruction can certainly never satisfy  
the conscience of the truly Christian  
parent, for in the first place such a  
school does not receive the commenda-  
tion of the divinely appointed teacher of  
the world, and secondly it must mani-  
festly fall short of what is required in  
the due preparation of a Christian  
youth for all the duties of Christian  
manhood. How it is possible, for in-  
stance, in such a school to fashion the  
budding intellect into molds of Christian  
thought, to store the young mind with the  
treasures of religious truth that will  
equip the man for intelligent under-  
standing of the problems of human life  
and his relations to his master? In  
reply to this it may be answered that  
this education which must not be given  
at the daily school may be given either  
at home by parents or through the  
agency of the Sunday school. Such an  
answer is merely

### A MISERABLE SUBTERFUGE,

and only goes to show that this whole  
latter-day movement regarding educa-  
tion is but an insidious inroad of the  
devil upon the rights and duties of  
parents. The Sunday school is un-  
doubtedly very good in its way, and is  
performing an important work, but after  
all what at its best does it amount to?  
The assemblage for one hour a week,  
sometimes in a class room and some-  
times as those who have lived in large  
cities know full well, in some dark base-  
ment or cellar, of hundreds of children  
who spend the brief time in the recita-  
tion of memory lessons from the catech-  
ism, or similar occupation, amidst gen-  
erally a very babel of sounds and con-  
fusion. The best that can be said of it  
is that under this system less time is  
given to the systematic religious instruc-  
tion of a child than would be expended  
in making that child a musician or a  
type-writer, and it may be added that  
most parents who are apparently well  
satisfied with this are less careful to  
ascertain the competence of the Sunday  
school teacher than they would be in  
looking into the fitness of the instructor  
they would select to enlighten their child  
in the mysteries of typewriting. But  
then this religious education may be

given by the parents at home! This  
means that at the end of the day when  
the child has completed his work in  
school and for school the parent, laying  
aside business cares and postponing his  
pleasures systematically and persistently  
will, if he is fitted to do so which in  
many cases he is not, see to it that the  
child is informed as to the doctrines of  
the church, made acquainted with its  
history, instructed as to its precepts and  
that his will is trained to set higher  
value on the things of eternity than  
upon those of earth and time. Does not  
this presentation of the case sum it up,  
and does not the summing up show how  
absurd it is, and that only blind and  
unreasoning willfulness can fail to  
recognize the insufficiency of religious  
training imparted in such a manner. It  
is indeed astonishing that there are so  
many professing Christians who not only  
say that they are well satisfied with a  
system of education in which religion is  
made to take such a very secondary  
place in the minds of the children, but  
go farther than this and assist in trying  
to force such a system upon those who  
from conscientious reasons abhor it.  
And this leads us to another misconcep-  
tion which has apparently taken root in  
the Protestant mind and which is care-  
fully fostered by certain sections of the  
secular press, viz. that every attempt we  
may make in this province to regain our  
rights is an attack on their pet system of  
education. Let it be well known that  
we have no desire to interfere with  
them. We are sorry for them and we  
are very much concerned about the  
ultimate outcome, as even if we did not  
have the warning voice of authority to  
go by, experience would show us that  
grave fears may be entertained for the  
future of the country in which the rising  
generation shall be trained under such  
auspices. But beyond this we have no  
desire to interfere. We would not quarrel  
with

### THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

but will be forced to support them,  
one of the great inventions of the nine-  
teenth century, and we will be prepared  
to admit that for parents who without  
definite religion themselves may see a  
need for it in the training of a child in  
order that he may become a successful  
man of the world and an upright and  
honest citizen, and who believe that the  
respect which is invoked to render the  
child polite in manner and neat in per-  
sonal appearance will suffice for the  
building up in him of the moral struc-  
tures of honesty and veracity—to such  
parents the system no doubt offers all  
they can reasonably demand—and we  
are content to let them enjoy it. And  
now before bringing my very imperfect  
close permit me briefly to dwell on  
another popular misconception prevalent  
in this province, viz.—that the state  
having usurped the position of the  
church in this matter, having brutally  
steeched in and tried to force us to hand  
over our children to its tender mercies,  
and having established by aid of a  
majority a certain system of education  
which they compel us to help to support,  
that consequently Catholic schools and  
our school system as it once existed,  
have gone forever. Those who have  
studied the course of similar movements  
in the past know that this cannot be—  
for just so sure as the sun will rise to-  
morrow so will the right prevail in this  
grievous nature of our persecution is its  
guarantee in itself that it cannot long  
endure, for nothing so intolerable can  
long exist amongst a free people and in  
this century. Let us do our best to  
educate the majority in this matter. Let  
us lose no opportunity of laying before  
them exactly what has taken place in  
this province since 1890. Let us expose  
to them and insist on their examining  
the line of policy adopted by the local  
government towards the parental rights  
not of bad but of good Catholic parents.  
Is it or is it not true that the rights of  
Catholic parents have been tampered  
with whilst the rights of Protestant and  
non-Christian parents remain just as  
they were? And why was this done.  
Were the Catholic schools prior to 1890  
below the standard of the Protestant  
schools? We can answer boldly they  
were not, and can prove it by the very  
best of tests viz. results. Had then at  
that time all Catholic parents forfeited  
through criminal acts their parental  
rights? No, decidedly they had not.  
Are then Catholics because they are  
Catholics under some legal or political  
disability? Again we may say—no.  
What then is it that has disqualified  
Catholic parents from receiving from the  
government the full recognition of their  
parental rights—rights to which when  
they came to this country were guaran-  
teed them by the constitution? There  
is absolutely no valid reason, legal,  
civil, or political to slow why Catholic  
parents should not receive from the  
government the same recognition, and  
have the same right to their school  
taxes in maintaining schools they can  
use, as non-Catholic, and we may add  
non-Christian parents have. How long  
can it be possible for such an iniquity as

### MANITOBA SCHOOL LAW

to endure? Surely if we are true to  
ourselves we may expect that our Pro-  
testant fellow citizens will soon realize  
that they are participating in an act of  
actual dishonesty in forcing us to help  
pay for the erection of public schools we  
cannot use and to support teachers  
whose services we not only do not but  
cannot conscientiously avail ourselves of.  
Say what they may about it they cannot  
get away from the fact that such a min-  
ority is not only essentially un-British,  
unfair and unsound, but an actual  
crime. Many of them appear to have  
in the impression that we are beggars in  
this matter for a privilege—that we go