

free not only to read the Holy Scriptures in the version most approved by the parents, but to read out of them or to read into them, the worship of the Virgin Mary, the invocation of saints and whatever is held by the Church of Rome. Now, I would not willingly be a party to inflicting injustice on any section of the community, and there are special reasons why the claims of our French-speaking Roman Catholic brethren should be fairly and, if possible, even generously considered. . . They were early in this western land. They have done much, and at great cost—cost not of money only, but toil and suffering, for the native races. But this claim—the claim to teach the distinctive doctrines and rites of their Church in schools sustained by public moneys—is one, I have no hesitation in saying, and as entertaining much regard for some among us by whom it is made, I say it with regret, which the State ought not to concede, should not feel itself at liberty to concede. It is a privilege, which under the system proposed, is not granted to any other Church. No one desires to have the opportunity to teach the distinctive doctrines of Presbyterianism or Methodism, or even of Protestantism in the public school, or if any cherish such a wish it would be very properly denied them. There is no room, therefore, to speak of injustice to a class who happen to be in the minority, when exactly the same privileges are granted to them which are granted to other classes of the community. If it is a matter of conscience with the Roman Catholic church (it is obviously not with all its members) that the whole body of the faith, as held by it, should be taught even to the youth in attendance on school and in the day school, I see nothing else for it than that they should establish and support from voluntary contributions the schools in which such teaching is to be given.

But it were surely far better that our Roman Catholic fellow citizens should unite with us in securing a distinct recognition of our common Christianity within the public school, leaving what is distinctive, and what many on the one side and on the other feel to be very important to be taught to the children in the Sabbath school, or in the church, or, better still, in the home.

The statement is sometimes made—it has been made more than once of late in our city—that the ground now taken implies a denial of right to the Roman Catholic minority in the province, one as real as if the privilege of separate schools were withdrawn from the Protestant minority in Quebec. But the schools of the majority in Quebec are, as we might expect—distinctively Roman Catholic. The catechisms and formularies of the Church of Rome are taught in them. It is surely to presume on our ignorance to institute in these circumstances a comparison between the position of the minority in our own province and that of the minority in the Province of Quebec. It is to trifle with our intelligence to affirm that the denial of separate schools in the one case would be on a par with its denial in the other. The two cases are really essentially different. No well instructed and impartial mind can put them on a level.

The attempt will no doubt be made to belittle in various ways the importance of such recognition of religion in our public schools, as has been advocated.

It will be said, as it has been recently said by a journal published in another province, but with special reference to the situation in this one, that little importance is to be attached to religious teaching of a general character, teaching, that is, from which the distinctive doctrines of the several Christian bodies have been eliminated.