

The Church in Politics

IN ONTARIO

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A VERY prevalent idea among the Canadian people is that in this country absolute separation exists between Church and State. Nothing could be more fallacious.

It is true there is no State-established Church, that absolute religious equality exists that no one church is preferred before another, and that none enjoy privileges that are not freely granted to all denominations alike. And yet there is a close connection existing between Church and State in the Province of Ontario.

It is not that there is discrimination in favor of one religious sect as against another, but that the purely secular functions of the State are diverted into establishing and sustaining a multiplicity of religious factions in the country.

I take it that it is a generally admitted fact that the peculiar office of the Church is quite distinct from that of the State: the one spiritual, the other secular; the one the propagation of certain religious tenets, the other the exercise of the civil functions of government. Hence it is quite true that the Church has no more valid reason for interfering in the public affairs of the State than the State has for intermeddling in the domain of religion. If the Church can be justified in endeavoring to regulate the temporal affairs of the State, then the State is justified in regulating the religious belief of the nation. (Applause.) Such a system as that, while it would establish one uniform national system of belief, would destroy the last vestige of mental freedom, and abolish forever the right of free inquiry and investigation. (Applause.)

There are those, however, who will object to this conclusion and claim that the Church has a perfect right to exercise her moral influence and guidance, in the affairs of the State, as a moral agency. This objection I absolutely deny. The history of the world teaches that when in possession of political power the Church, regardless of creeds, has proved a detriment to mankind (applause), it has been the prolific cause of inter-