

while I would do nothing to infringe the rights and feelings of Roman Catholics, I cannot be a party to depriving Protestants of the text-book of their faith—the choicest patrimony bequeathed to them by their forefathers, and the noblest birthright of their children.”

5. The inviolable right of each parent in regard to the religious instruction of his children.

6. The right of each Clergyman or Minister to visit each School within his own charge or prescribed field of labour. The 33rd section of the School Act of 1850, specifies the rights and duties of School Visitors, and provides for the formation of associations among them for promoting education and knowledge.

7. The right of each Clergyman or Minister, or his representative, to the use of each School-house within his charge, during one hour each week, from four to five o'clock in the afternoon, for the special religious instruction of children of his own persuasion attending the School.

I have attached the greatest importance to securing the confidence and co-operation of the Ministers and Members of several religious persuasions of the country in support of the system of public instruction. In the letter above quoted, addressed by me to the first Law Officer of the Crown for Upper Canada (the late Hon. R. Baldwin), dated 14th July, 1849, it was remarked:—“Be assured that no system of popular education will flourish in a country which does violence to the religious sentiments and feelings of the Churches of that country. Be assured, that every such system will droop and wither which does not take root in the Christian and patriotic sympathies of the people,—which does not command the respect and confidence of the several religious persuasions, both Ministers and Laity,—for these in fact make up the aggregate of the Christianity of a country. I think there is too little Christianity in our Schools, instead of too much; and that the united efforts of all Christian men should be to introduce more, instead of excluding what little there is.”

But while our public schools should be invested with the highest Christian character possible, the accomplishment of this object depends much less upon general regulations than on the exercise of the powers with which the law expressly invests the County Boards of Public Instruction and the local managers of the schools, to whom alone appertains the licensing and selection of Teachers and the oversight of each school. I am also aware that the religious teaching by the teacher of a mixed school, even supposing him to be ever so well qualified, must be determined by what is held in common by the religious persuasions of the parents supporting the school,—chiefly the Ten Commandments and our Saviour's summary of them,—embracing indeed the whole duty of man; but that the teaching of the Catechism of any religious persuasion (if taught at all) must be a matter of private arrangement between the parents of each child and the teacher, and cannot be a part of the official teaching in a school supported by public grants and taxes for all classes of citizens in common, but not for any religious persuasion in particular.

In addition, therefore, to the general spirit and character of our school system, it assumes that the special religious training and nurture of children,—that which, under the Divine blessing, prepares them for the Church of God on earth and in Heaven,—appertains, not to the Government, or the day-school teacher partly supported by Government, and partly by public taxes, but to the parents and Pastors of the children in their domestic and Church relations. This accords with the inherent rights of parents and Pastors; with the teachings of the Holy Scriptures and of the canons or formularies of the several religious persuasions; with the appropriate functions of a mixed day school; with the best interests of youth and of religion throughout the country.

With these remarks I beg to refer you again to the appended Regulations; and should there be no meeting of the authorities of your Church between this and the 1st of next January, may I request that you will have the goodness to communicate to

me, as early as convenient, your own views on the important subject herein submitted, and what you believe to be the views of the members of your Church in Upper Canada.

I have the honor to be,
Your obedient servant,

E. RYERSON,

Chief Superintendent of Education for U. C.

EDUCATION OFFICE,

Toronto, 31st May, 1859.

REGULATIONS IN REGARD TO RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION IN THE SCHOOLS.

Adopted by the Council of Public Instruction, 3rd of October, 1850, as authorized by the Act 13th and 14th Victoria, chapter 48, section 38.

I. GENERAL REGULATIONS IN REGARD TO RELIGIOUS AND MORAL INSTRUCTION.

“As Christianity is the basis of our whole system of elementary education, that principle should pervade it throughout. The fourteenth section of the Common School Act of 1850, securing individual rights, as well as recognizing Christianity, provides ‘That in any Model or Common School established under this Act, no child shall be required to read or study in or from any religious book, or to join in any exercise of devotion or religion which shall be objected to by his or her parents or guardians: Provided always, that within this limitation, pupils shall be allowed to receive such religious instruction as their parents or guardians shall desire, according to the general regulations which shall be provided according to law.’

“In the section of the Act thus quoted, the principle of religious instruction in the schools is recognized, the restrictions within which it is to be given is stated, and the exclusive right of each parent and guardian on the subject is secured.

“The Common School being a *day*, and not a *boarding* school, rules arising from domestic relations and duties are not required, and as the pupils are under the care of their parents and guardians on Sabbaths, no regulations are called for in respect to their attendance at public worship.”

II. OPENING AND CLOSING EXERCISES OF EACH DAY.

The following regulations in regard to the opening and closing exercises of the day were adopted by the Council on the 13th February, 1855, and apply to all Common Schools in Upper Canada:

“With a view to secure the Divine blessing, and impress upon the pupils the importance of religious duties, and their entire dependence on their Maker, the Council of Public Instruction recommends that the daily exercises of each Common School be opened and closed by reading a portion of Scripture and by Prayer. The Lord's Prayer alone, or Forms of Prayer provided, may be used, or any other prayer preferred by the Trustees and Master of each school. But the Lord's Prayer should form a part of the opening exercises; and the Ten Commandments be taught to all the pupils, and be repeated at least once a week. But no pupil shall be compelled to be present at these exercises against the wish of his parent or guardian, expressed in writing to the Master of the School.”

III. MINUTE ADOPTED BY THE COUNCIL OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION FOR UPPER CANADA, AND PRINTED ON THE INSIDE COVER OF EACH SCHOOL REGISTER, ON THE 22ND APRIL, 1857, IN REGARD TO RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION:

“That in order to correct misapprehensions, and define more clearly the rights and duties of Trustees and other parties in regard to religious instruction in connection with the Common Schools, it is decided by the Council of Public Instruction, that the Clergy of any persuasion, or their authorized representatives, shall have the right to give religious instruction to the pupils of their own Church, in each Common School house, at least once a week, after the hour of four o'clock in the afternoon; and if the Clergy of more than one persuasion apply to give religious instruction in the same school house, the trustees shall decide on what day of the week the school house shall be at the disposal of the clergyman of each persuasion, at the time above stated. But it shall be lawful for the Trustees and Clergymen of any denomination to agree upon any other hour of the day at which such Clergyman or his authorized representative may give religious instruction to the pupils of his own church, provided it be not during the regular hours of the school.”