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### Canada

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"Canada," for *Encyclopedia of Christian Education*, edited by George Thomas Kurian and Mark A. Lamport. Rowman and Littlefield, 2015.

The first Europeans to inhabit what is now Canada came from Norse countries about 1000 AD to spend at least two winters at L'Anse aux Meadows, on the northwestern tip of Newfoundland. No evidence remains of any Christian religious activity on the part of these occupants. During the age of exploration, Europeans from many nations came to Canada for various reasons, including trade, political expansion, and Christian missions to the First Nations peoples already resident in Canada. As a result of such mission work, and the replication or expansion of churches from the European countries of origin of Canadian immigrants, church-sponsored education was widespread by the time Canada gained nationhood in 1867.

When Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia became the first four provinces to form the Canadian Confederation, the British parliament included Section 93 in the 1867 *British North American Act* (by which Canada was legally created). This section guaranteed provincial control over education and guaranteed members of the Protestant minority of Quebec and members of the Roman Catholic minority of Ontario the right to operate their own tax-supported schools. This protocol and the funding it implies were later extended to some other territories as they became provinces and were also recognized in Section 15 of the *Constitution Act* of 1982 (Canada's constitution). In the case of Manitoba, which joined Canada in 1870, the funding of Protestant and Catholic school systems was guaranteed in the Manitoba Act. But the Manitoba provincial government created a single public school system in 1890, overturning the guarantees to the denominations. This action, now known as the Manitoba Schools Question, led to a constitutional crisis, eventually settled by the Privy Council in London in favor of funded denominational schools.

Section 29 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982) recognizes the right of all Canadians to provide for their children the kind of education they desire, including religious education. Various courts have made clear since 1982 that the *Charter* does not give parents the right not to educate their children; children must be educated. In 1995, the Supreme Court of Canada (*Bal v. Ontario*) declined to rule on an Ontario Court of Appeals finding that Section 15 of the 1982 *Constitution Act* did not imply that the Ontario government was required to fund religious schools other than member schools of funded Catholic boards. That is, the *Charter* right to choice in education does not imply the right to funding

Secularization in Canada has brought changes. Protestant school boards in Ontario, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba have become secularized "public" school boards. Religious practices and religious instruction disappeared in Ontario public schools after landmark court cases in the 1980s and 1990s. Through a constitutional amendment in 1999, Quebec replaced its denominational school systems with linguistically-based

school boards, thereby ending nearly four centuries of full or partial church control over education. Newfoundland, which had a denominational school system since 1843 but only joined Canada in 1949, abolished its denominational system in 1998 over the protests of Roman Catholic and Pentecostal churches and educators.

Parents and churches have established independent Christian schools in all provinces of Canada. Many of these hold membership in one of two major Christian school organizations (Christian Schools International and Association of Christian Schools International). Membership in these organizations is highest in Ontario, British Columbia and Alberta. Other schools are connected to Lutheran, Seventh-Day Adventist, Mennonite or other church denominations. Some independent schools, sponsored by individual church congregations have no affiliation. A few elite academies, mainly in Ontario and British Columbia, are associated with mainline churches. Since the turn of the current century, some Roman Catholic educators and parents in Ontario have formed independent schools, eschewing tax support in favor of greater independence.

Government funding of independent schools varies from province to province, ranging from zero funding in some provinces (New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Ontario) to partial operational support in others (Alberta, British Columbia), depending on levels of teacher certification and adherence to provincial curriculum. Some independent schools have become alternative schools within public boards (notably in Alberta and Saskatchewan), thereby receiving full support for operations and salaries, but not for capital projects.

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