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Pellegrino Stagni. *The View from Rome: Archbishop Stagni's 1915 Reports on the Ontario Bilingual Schools Question.* Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002. i + 131 pp. $65.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-7735-2347-0.

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Two Languages, One Faith

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The phrase "bilingual education" has become a political hot button in the United States in recent years, but there is nothing recent about the issue in Canada, for obvious reasons. Controversy over single or dual language education is deeply rooted in the country's history as a federation of largely English-speaking provinces with French-speaking Quebec. And it was probably inevitable that such an educationally-oriented institution as the Catholic Church would share in this feature of Canadian history.

A touchstone of this controversy for Canadian Catholics was the "Ontario schools question" of the early twentieth century, when Francophone Catholics vigorously protested against what they saw as an English-only policy being imposed on Ontario's Catholic schools, where growing numbers of migrants from Quebec were enrolled. This volume contains John Zucchi's English translation of two 1915 reports sent to Rome by the Vatican's Apostolic Delegate to Canada, Archbishop Pellegrino Stagni, along with Zucchi's fifty-page introduction. It also reprints Pope Benedict XV's 1916 letter to Canadian bishops, *Commisso divinitus*, which punctuated the controversy, even if it did not end it, by appealing for Christian unity and charity on all sides.

By far the most valuable part of this work is Zucchi's substantial introduction. More than simply introducing Stagni's reports, it constitutes, in effect, a wonderfully concise history of the whole Ontario controversy within the context of Canadian religious and ethnic history. While Zucchi, at times, alludes to earlier specialized accounts of the affair as if they were common knowledge, or should be, all but the most narrowly engaged expert will find Zucchi's own informed analysis a sufficiently thorough summary and convincing interpretation of the event.

Though long smoldering, the controversy was essentially ignited when a 1912 report of the Ontario Department of Education revealed that a large number of Ottawa's tax-supported Catholic parochial schools, serving migrants from Quebec and largely staffed by French-speaking religious orders from that province, were conducting instruction primarily in French. Subsequently, a "Regulation 17" was issued requiring English instruction, though allowing for French to be used transitionally in the first form (Grades 1 to 3).

Zucchi effectively explains and demonstrates several things about this episode. First, he shows that the local issue in Ontario's Catholic schools exploded not because of any intrinsically religious issue, but because it exposed deeper tensions regarding the ethno-linguistic identity of Canada in general and the Canadian Catholic church in particular. Second, he demonstrates the central role played by Ontario's English-speaking Catholics and their bishops, primarily Irish in background, who were determined that the church's cherished, tax-supported religious schools not become visible targets for anti-Catholic Canadian Protestants (especially "Orange" Irish Protestants), which they surely would if such schools were seen as a vehicle for sustaining a permanently French-speaking culture in Ontario. Finally, he shows how the issue was continually agitated by Quebec Catholic bishops, priests, and journalists, who believed that the future linguistic and cultural identity of the Canadian church, and Canadian society outside Quebec, was at stake. Was all of Canada and its Catholic church really to be bilingual, or were French-speaking Catholics only a subcultural group to be tolerated as long as they stayed within their own province?

While showing how these issues touched raw nerves of Canadian history and identity, Zucchi also nicely sets them within wider contexts of Catholic history. Asking whether the demand for French Catholic schools was "a Canadian version of Cahenslyism," he implies that Peter Cahensly's proposal for permanent national parishes

(and schools) actually made more sense in Canada than it did in the United States, where German Catholics lacked a true territorial base and were likely destined to become "Anglo-American" in the long run. Zucchi also provocatively suggests that the perspectives of "diaspora studies," in which a scattered people retain a primary attachment to a distant "base" that prevents complete assimilation, may be relevant to the French Catholic experience in Canada outside Quebec.

Given the precision and suggestiveness of Zucchi's interpretive introduction and his cogent summary of Archbishop Stagni's view of the affair, the actual text of the Apostolic Delegate's reports to Rome, which makes up the bulk of the book, comes as something of an anticlimax. Stagni's reports sensibly informed the Vatican of the issues and rightly asserted that the matter was strictly cultural and did not involve Canada's official policy regarding Catholic parochial education, which was exemplary. ("That God should will that in many countries known to us in Europe there be at least similar legislation!" he exclaimed [p. 10].) While it is no doubt useful for a few specialists to have these reports accessible in English, one wonders why it is necessary to put between bound covers the full texts of what are, in essence, a pair of bureaucratic reports to headquarters. There is, really, nothing much of wider interest in the documents themselves that is not better summarized and put into context by Zucchi in the introduction. And it also seems odd to title the book *The View From Rome*, since the bulk of its contents consists of Stagni's views of the affair presented to Rome from his post in Ottawa.

Nevertheless, historians or others interested in the dynamics of linguistic and cultural relations within the Catholic church in general, or in Canadian or North American ethnic and religious matters in particular, will find this episode and Zucchi's historical view of it presented here illuminating. And one can hope that, in the spirit of genuine bilingualism that Canada models at its best, this volume–or at least Zucchi's introduction–might eventually appear in French.

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