Various events and phenomena over the past decade have shown that, even in societies swept up in the seemingly inexorable current of secularization, religious affiliation has remained a significant marker of identity. In Europe, for example, there was a debate in 2004 between those who deemed it necessary to make reference to the continent's "Christian roots" in the preamble to the European Union's future constitution, and those who preached for a Europe founded on a Universalist philosophy. The final draft of the constitution that these European leaders signed made reference to "Europe's cultural, religious and humanist inheritance," thus allowing member States to avoid definitively compromising Turkey's membership.

In fact, as Paul Veyne (a specialist on the Roman Empire) has explained, history has taught us that Europe has always protected some religious plurality (administrated more or less successfully) and it has also taught us that, in a more general way, Christianity certainly could not be considered an essential matrix for a prospective "European identity," given the manifold, contradictory and fluctuating historical factors that have contributed to producing today's Europe (Veyne, 2007). Hence, historians often find themselves at odds with the identity-based imaginaries of their times, which mobilize references around an origin and a continuity that their erudite practice has taught them to recognize as mythical and ideological — perhaps based on collective memory, but absolutely not part of their profession.

A few years after the aforementioned debates in Europe, an equivalent controversy took place in Quebec. In January of 2007, André Boisclair, then leader of the Parti Québécois, declared that he personally hoped that the crucifix hanging over the seat of the Speaker's chair in Quebec's National Assembly would be taken down. The same year, the Quebec government struck a Consultation Commission to study "Accommodation Practices Related to Cultural Differences," and many of the arguments that emerged at its hearings were based on the assertion of a Québécois Catholic identity. Identity-based objections notwithstanding, the Commissioner's report submitted the recommendation that the crucifix be removed (Bouchard and Taylor 2008). The same day, in a unanimous vote the National Assembly's members passed a motion that the National Assembly's attachment to its "religious and historical heritage, represented by the crucifix in the Blue Chamber and in the armories that grace our institutions" (*Journal des débats* 2008, our translation).

The expressed wish of some European parliamentarians to have a written reminder in their constitution of Christianity's supposed precedence over other religions therefore found something of an echo in the sudden loyalty manifested by Quebec's elected officials towards a symbol of the pre-eminence of Catholicism over other beliefs circulating in the public space. (On the first steps towards this ideology of history, see Hubert, 2006; on the forms of power-based logic founded on the first conquerors' stories of anteriority and legitimation, see Héritier, 2010, p. 79-99). Perhaps to the surprise of advocates for civic nationalism (Leroux, 2009), some localized frictions that had occurred following demands made by representatives of small religious minorities had been enough to generate a resurgence of Catholic French-Canadian markers of identity that had been eschewed as outmoded or at least socially disqualified (Mager and Meunier, 2008; Meunier and Wilkins-Laflamme, 2011). The subsequent discussion about

reasonable accommodation exposed the relative fragility of Quebec civic identity as it provided insight into the capacity (in an international context admittedly conducive to phobias) of a nationalist discourse to mobilize Catholic references and allowed us to realize that those references still held meaning for those affiliated with the imagined community of "French Canadian Québécois."

For the benefit of readers perhaps less familiar with current events in Quebec, it may be worthwhile to say a few words about the "crisis" that shook the province between 2006 and 2008 — the starting point from which the questions informing this chapter originated. A set of disparate events that occurred before the "crisis" (e.g., the case of a young man who wanted to wear a kirpan to school; that of some Hassidic people who wanted to hang an eruv; that between local secularists and a YMCA, which had tinted some windows so that its patrons would not be seen by neighbours (a local synagogue); that of a young girl who wanted to play soccer wearing her hijab) were connected by some media sources in order to stage supposed antagonisms between a "majority" (described as culturally Christian, implicitly justified in defining norms for living together based on the anteriority of its settlement) and a "minority (very vaguely conceptualized as an addition of religious or ethnic groups commonly associated with a populist discourse around immigration). In January 2007, the municipal council of Hérouxville, a rural Quebec town of fewer than 1,500 inhabitants, adopted a document that denounced the proliferation of "unreasonable accommodations" that threatened "the host culture." With this anecdote the media transformed the ripples that it had itself maintained in previous years into a veritable tsunami (Giasson, Brin and Sauvageau, 2010) to construct the representation of a social crisis. When the Quebec government struck its Commission to study the issue, it handed the reins over to historian Gérard Bouchard and philosopher Charles Taylor. The Commissioners

concluded in 2008 that the media was manipulating public opinion. They recommended that public authorities strengthen measures to fight acts of discrimination towards various minorities and towards recent immigrants to Quebec. The commissioners expressed their support for a system of secularism designed to "foster, not hinder" freedom of conscience and of religion (Bouchard and Taylor, 2008, p. 46). Both academics contrasted "open secularism" with the kind of "restrictive secularism" found in France, which tended to discourage the expression of diversity. In 2010, a broad-based group of Quebec intellectuals united under two banners with regard to the public expression of religious affiliation. Under the first banner, the signatories of the "Manifesto for a Pluralist Quebec" ("Manifeste pour un Québec pluraliste," *Le Devoir,* February 3, 2010) (myself included) expressed concern that the identity-based debate would veer into both conservative nationalism and intransigent secularism. Under the second banner, a group called Intellectuels pour la laïcité (intellectuals for secularism) proposed a strict policy prohibiting public servants (including educators) from "manifestations of their faith by [wearing] religious symbols during work hours" (« de manifester sa foi par des signes religieux durant les heures de travail » « Déclaration des intellectuels pour la laïcité. Pour un Québec laïque et pluraliste », *Le Devoir*, March 6, 2010. Our English translation).

These divided positions showed that no consensus existed regarding the integration of cultural diversity as an element in Quebec's collective imagination. The observation of this discord by Quebec researchers, in turn, conferred renewed relevance upon an entire field of academic activity in which they have long invested: analyzing the genealogies of "common culture" (See in particular and among others Dumont, 1993.). However, just as Paul Veyne's historical study of European identity exposed bogus consensuses and invariabilities, an analysis of Quebec culture is likely to reveal (contrary to the social imaginary of identity) the reality of its

own diversity and struggles (In the area of representations: Bouchard, 2001; in the area of political ideologies, see Lamonde, 2000.). Withal, diversity is part of the history of Quebec's Francophones, but not part of their imaginary, at least judging from what public debates seem to have revealed these past years. As historians, how should we be addressing this phenomenon? When it comes to religious history, at first glance Quebec Catholicism manifests itself as such a massive and enduring phenomenon that it could easily appear as a necessary mainstay of "national culture." Our purpose in evoking and examining the history of Francophone Protestantism (as it was able to express itself in the Saint Lawrence Valley during early colonial times until the end of the nineteenth century) in the text to follow is to impart a sense of the historical (which is to say, the unstable) character of "Catholic identity" among French Canadians and to illustrate how, for so long, the Quebec political imagination, dominated by social representations of Franco-Catholics, was able to keep notions of religious freedom, pluralism and the separation of Church and State at bay.

Under the French Regime: the Catholic monopoly and the forced conversion of notable Huguenots

That the kingdom of France was Catholic is, of course, the overriding factor in explaining Catholicism in the context of what was to become Quebec society. The papacy honoured the kings of France with the exclusive title of "Very Christian" and the kings promised to fight against heretics. The mounting power of the State was accordingly placed in the service of the land's religious unity, ergo serving Catholicism. Thus, it is understandable that, throughout the period of what was known as "New France," the Catholic church benefited from a monopoly in French America. The Edict of Nantes (1598) certainly offered some guarantees to Protestant

subjects, but monarchic France remained, and would remain, fundamentally Catholic. Therefore, from the 1660s onward (Quéniart, 1985, p. 101-113), Huguenots were subjected to a policy designed to force their conversion to Catholicism and, in 1685, the colonies were included in the final and formal abolition of all forms of religious freedom.

Despite this officially intolerant policy — and even though Quebec's national history (comprising mostly Catholic priests or fervent Catholic laypeople) was written based on almost exclusively Catholic archival or testimonial documents and has long neglected Protestant history — once the writing of Quebec history broke away from Catholic clericalism, several historians demonstrated that there was a bone fide Protestant presence in Canada under the French Regime. The work of Marcel Trudel (1955) is particularly noteworthy in this regard, as he strove to emphasize the presence of the Huguenots within the history of the French-Canadian people throughout his career. He and others showcased or alluded to a number of major figures in French colonization, such as Jean-François de La Rocque de Roberval, Pierre Chauvin, Pierre Dugua de Mons and, very probably, Samuel Champlain, reminding us that they were Huguenots or converts (Litalien, 2009). Far more revelatory for our purposes (as showcasing Protestant ancestry necessarily disrupts the very image of the "nation" in its relationship with Catholicism, given the symbolic importance of "origins" in the construction of national imaginaries [Burguière, 2003]), converging studies in social history now allow us to confirm that a significant fraction — difficult to precisely measure, but at least (and perhaps far more than) 10% — of the influx of French immigrants was of Huguenot ancestry (Bédard, 1978; Choquette, 2003). Robert Larin (1998, Chapter VI; 2009) set out a series of strong hypotheses in this regard. He observed that these migrants to Canada came from French provinces steeped in Protestantism and that pioneers were often former soldiers, since the armies abounded with members of the

Reformed church at the time. A correlation was also noted between the recruitment areas for the "Filles du roi" and the "Protestant" zones of the Kingdom (Dawson, 1986). The historicity of this French Protestant presence, a substantial facet of Franco-Québécois origins, is borne out by administrative provisions and diplomatic sources. In point of fact, the monarchic French State never prevented the settling of Huguenots in Canada. The revocation of the Edict of Nantes even bolstered this immigration since it made New France just about the only legal destination for those seeking to escape the persecution and pressure they underwent in metropolitan France.

Nevertheless, given that the French State itself, which welcomed and even favoured Huguenot immigration to New France, remained inflexibly and absolutely Catholic, the presence of colonial Protestant households should not lead us to imagine that it was a functionally pluralist society. The Catholic clergy, in effect the only administrator of the official religion of the kingdom, conducted in Canada the same militant anti-Huguenot campaign that it was pursuing in France, with support from all of the State's institutions. The Huguenots who settled in New France did not enjoy any freedom of conscience whatsoever. Of course, no archival trace has been found to date of the violent clashes and cruel bullying suffered by their brethren in France, but in reality a similar assimilationist terror was being enforced on both sides of the Atlantic. For their own safety, in their everyday lives the Huguenots in Canada had to hide their religious convictions at all times and behave as Catholics in public. Most ended up converting to Catholicism — 1,180 abjurations of faith were recorded in Canada in the period before 1760 (Larin, 2009, p. 66-67) — and blending into a Canadien population that was heterogeneous in its origins but forcibly homogenized under the effects of State policy.

The erasure of experience

  The story of this assimilation, which is relatively well known to specialists, also informs the memory of the small Francophone Protestant community living in Quebec to this day (Lougheed, 2001; Lalonde 2002). This fact barely registers in the collective historical awareness of Quebecers, who still automatically identify as the successors of a strictly Catholic filiation. If they did possess this knowledge, it could reinforce the collective idea that New France was a fundamentally pluralist society, which to a certain extent it was (if we add that, along with the difference introduced by Protestants, there were Jewish, Indigenous and African religious traditions), and thereby help cultivate an imaginary of the shared past that is compatible with promoting tolerance and diversity (Greer, 1998). While the erasure of Protestantism from the collective memory of Quebecers is partly attributable to Catholic intellectuals who resolved to suppress this part of the national experience, it is also the result of the uniformatizing French policies that characterized Ancien-Régime Catholic European kingdoms. So, although diversity did exist in New France, it was treated as a problem to be dealt with, as in the Huguenot example. Therefore, a dual (political, then memory-based) erasure of Quebec's diversity has taken place.

  State management of religious diversity is one of the most prominent issues in the political history of humanity, so it comes as no surprise that it permeates the history of Quebec. By attentively reading how the religious was administrated by the political in Quebec from colonial times to the present, we will see unfold a complex history with the potential to release us from exceptionalist, over-simplified paradigms of the "Catholic past" and the "Grande noirceur" (The Great Darkness). In many respects, the religious history of Quebec may be explained

through the evolutions of European imperial logics and through the emergence of liberal governmentality (Fecteau, 2004).

British liberties

The Conquest of Canada by the British, confirmed in 1763, seemed at first to completely upset the balances between Protestantism and Catholicism. In the final years of New France, local authorities produced intensive propaganda, presenting the Seven Years' War as a holy war waged by Catholics to save Canada from the clutches of a demon, whose instruments were the Protestants, the Barbarians and the heretics (Décary, 2009).

The imbrication between the religious and the political in European kingdoms meant that subjects professing a religion other than that of the Sovereign were necessarily held suspect. The problem of Protestantism in New France was presented above all in this light, which justified its repression (Larin, 2009, p. 66), and the same reasoning caused British governments to distrust Catholic subjects, old or new, Francophone or Anglophone, metropolitan or colonial (Conway, 2012). The notion that the Catholic communities that were incorporated into the British realm represented a permanent threat to its stability was, of course, nourished by over 200 years of religious and dynastic wars in Great Britain. This notion led London to devise a plan to place Catholics in Canada under the thumb of a landed Protestant elite, based on the Irish model. However, the rough climate in Quebec was not a very appealing destination to most potential candidates for emigration, and no dominant landed Protestant class was established in the end. Meanwhile, London and the Vatican began a process of normalizing diplomatic relations, which made Catholicism more compatible with British citizenship. Freedom of religion had been

recognized after the Conquest and full citizenship quickly afforded to Catholics in the Province

of Quebec, whose brethren elsewhere in the United Kingdom and in the rest of the Empire (with

the exception of Minorca and Grenada) endured discriminatory conditions. At every turn, the

Catholic church in Canada endeavoured to prove to the king that one could be both Catholic and

irreproachably loyal to the Anglican Sovereign, and in relatively short order, during the first

decades of the nineteenth century, it secured an exceptionally favourable position: its legal

foundation was guaranteed along with a degree of political independence far superior to what it

experienced under French domination (Lemieux, 1989, p. 13-50).

From one Empire to the next

Recognising that Catholicism and its clergy still held sway over society after the

Conquest should not prevent us from also recognizing that, on the most fundamental level of the

religious being organized by the political, changing Empires had swung the colony into a logic

that was altogether different from that of the era of New France.

In the same way that the case of Quebec's Franco-Protestant minority has served to help

understand the power and nature of the connection that united Catholicism and monarchy under

Ancien-Régime France (along with the essential intransigence that ensued), it will also help gage

how much the meaning of Catholic references changed within social spaces after the Conquest,

changes that the purported immutability of most Francophones' religious affiliation has blurred.

The change of empire thrust Canadiens into the institutional framework of a political

culture radically different from that of French absolutism. As regards religion (and we should

specify that such orientations had not yet fully triumphed in Great Britain at the time of the

Conquest and in the decades thereafter), this reversal did not mean that a Catholic prince had

replaced a Protestant prince, but that intolerance had been replaced by pluralism. Franco-Protestants in Canada could practise their faith for the first time in the colony's history, with no corresponding deprivation being visited on Franco-Catholics for practising this same freedom. It therefore seems highly inaccurate to talk about a "revenge of the Huguenots" after the Conquest, as Marcel Trudel did (Trudel, 1956, p. 189-192). In fact, Canada experienced a form of revolution by quickly shifting to a legal reality that no longer linked religious identity to citizenship. Thereafter, all citizens could choose their religion and Churches were de facto in competition with each other, mediated by a State that already had a head-start on the road to secularism (Baubérot and Milot, 2011, particularly p. 26-31).

Francophone pastors established themselves in the colony's main settlements and, after about a century of clandestine existence, Franco-Protestant life found its public expression at last. Unfortunately, owing to the dearth of studies in social history, we do not have an exact idea of what it meant to be Francophone and Protestant in Quebec during this period. Religious Catholic and Protestant sources on the subject were highly focused on valorizing stories of interfaith rivalry, which was heated, but offer us little to help in understanding whether Protestant religious affiliation constituted a decisive cultural and social marker among Francophones in Lower Canada — whether, for example, it oriented political sensibilities, level of wealth or education, strategies for settlement or reproduction, social relations or business networks and so on. We will therefore have to content ourselves with reading about this historical experience of religious pluralism within Quebec's Francophone society through the historical experience of the institutions who were at loggerheads with each other.

By understanding the period that leads us from the Conquest to the 1880s, when thriving Franco-Québécois Protestantism seems to run out of steam, we can delineate two main periods in relations between the Catholic church and Franco-Protestant churches.

Up until the 1830s, Franco-Protestant churches were not tremendously dynamic and so represented no real danger to the Catholic authorities. Francophone pastors provided services in the colony's main settlements, but the number of faithful remained negligible and converts, infinitesimally few. As for lay Catholics, they were quick to recognize the new and powerful tools that pluralism gave them in their relationship with clergy, as evidenced by Catholic parents who would brandish the threat of enrolling their children in a Protestant school when they wanted to influence Catholic school administrators about teaching objectives.

In sum, the diversification of religions on offer to Canadien Francophones was not encouraged by civil authorities, specifically because it represented a risk to the authority of the Catholic clergy. Moreover, the conversion of Canadiens to Anglicanism, though seriously considered by British authorities, would soon prove to be utopic (Hardy, 1999, p. 22) at a time when the Catholic church was the obvious, established default church, operating in the language of the majority and solidly entrenched throughout the colony. The Catholic church kept an ideal alive — that of including all of Francophone society under the authority of the same religious institution, preaching respect for order and, in particular, the authority of the State. Therefore, pluralism existed in a formal sense, but in real life it was considerably weakened by the language divide (which made Francophones the preserve of the Catholic clergy) and by the overwhelming advantages that the British authorities guaranteed the Catholic church regarding Francophones. In the circumstances, as the great nationalist Monseigneur Plessis had done a number of times,

the high clergy could comfortably glorify the religious diversity of the British space, since

diversity only concerned Canadiens on a strictly theoretical level (Hubert, 2013).

Evangelical forays

Circumstances changed in a flash for established churches (established officially or

officiously) and the State, when a radical wave swept over the world of Protestantism. Since the

late eighteenth century, the Anglican church in England had been steadily losing ground to a

powerfully popular evangelism with democratic, secularizing overtones (in that it promoted the

separation of Church and State) and anticlerical overtones (in that it questioned the relevance of

holy specialists, favouring instead a direct relationship between God and his autonomous

subjects). The awakening of dissident churches in the United Kingdom was the manifestation of

a trend that shook the Francophone world as well. First it hit Switzerland, then France, and lastly

Quebec (Encrevé, 1986, p. 113-130; Sacquin, 2001 and 1995; Delpal, 2003). Wide-ranging,

dynamic international missionary enterprises were orchestrated. It is striking that this wave of

missions reached the greater Montreal region and was highly successful (in the mid-1830s, when

the first door-to-door Evangelicals came from Switzerland) at the same time that political

republicanism was being concretely expressed within the patriot movement — striking, since in

both movements the same wave of protest for democratic, lay empowerment was spreading and

both movements regarded society as a group of equal individuals who were masters of their own

orientations. The violent reaction expressed by the Catholic church against these Protestant

initiatives was understandable (Ruddel, 1983, p. 1-13; Hudon, 1995): for the first time since the

beginning of French colonization in the seventeenth century, it was confronted with real

competition that threatened its domination over the consciences of Francophones and sapped the

roots of its social philosophy. Furthermore, the fact that the Catholic church never openly attacked Anglophone churches suffices to show that it was waging a war for market domination and not for the sake of its principles.

Bible salesmen versus parish priests: fighting for a living pluralism

Historians must exercise caution when it comes to interpreting archival sources from missionary activities due to the overrepresentation of the difficulties missionaries experienced. However, in the case of Protestant preachers in Quebec, it appears that public hostility really was extensive, with people most often refusing contact and sometimes even brutalizing door-to-door bible salesmen, who (it must be said) were very determined and, therefore, insistent. Conversions were won one family at a time, through the patient work of persuasive shepherding. To get through to a society initially resistant to their message, pastors used an assortment of strategies, including the particular promise of opening free schools at a time when there was an awakening interest in receiving an education among the popular classes. Their exhausting door-to-door method also yielded successful results: when a Catholic family seemed receptive, this symbolic crack in the wall of social conformism gave the missionaries access to a preliminary network of relations. It was in this way that within a few years, Protestant French-Canadian churches appeared and multiplied in number between 1860 and 1880, mainly in Quebec's south-west regions (Rousseau and Remiggi, 1998, p. 73).

Joseph Vessot, a bible salesman born in France who visited numerous rural areas north of Montreal in the mid nineteenth century (Lalonde and Grosjean, 2011), kept a journal that provides a better understanding of just how radically the Catholic World Order was being challenged by the proposals of Evangelical spirituality. The criticism from Evangelicals did not

focus so much on points of theology as it did on the organization of authority within the Church. They found in Quebec Catholicism the very essence of spiritual evil that was afflicting their contemporaries: clericalism. Clericalism was interfering with the authentic, direct, sentimental, individual and independent discovery of God and the Bible by the faithful. The Protestant mission, as it is presented in Vessot's narrative, was above all a fight to wrest the Canadiens away from the influence of priests, who, he contended, were hoodwinking them in all sorts of ways to maintain their privileged position in society.

The European missionary societies that trained and supervised Evangelists (Joseph Vessot attended the École normale de Mens [normal school in Mens], in south-west France, and was sent to Canada by the Société missionnaire de Genève) did not recommend entering into confrontation with parish priests (Sacquin, 2001, p. 131). Instead, the faithful were to be persuaded to leave the Catholic church by appealing to their sense of Reason, which is to say their freedom of thought. In December of 1840, it seems the parish priest in Mascouche, Quebec had conveyed to his parishioners that Protestant salesmen were the agents of the Devil, complete with cleft left feet. This anecdote provided Vessot with an opportunity to dust off some trenchant clichés about the naivety of superstitious Catholic people, encouraged in their ignorance by a manipulative clergy. He expounded theatrically: "After that I saw a great change in their faces. That fear and all of the prejudices had disappeared, then I had the joy of preaching the gospel to them. They listened to me very closely" (Vessot, 1983, p. 25). He also appealed to their sense of Reason to discredit the most typical elements of religion as taught in the Catholic tradition: Mary Mother of God, Purgatory, relics, and so on. The missionary then delivered his pitch, recommending that people read for themselves the unique and authentic source of the Divine Word, the Bible. Flouting the recommended techniques, Vessot unceasingly sought to engage

local priests in a public, face-to-face confrontation in the parishes he visited. By his account, he always emerged victorious from these heated stand-offs, which sometimes pushed the protagonists to the limits of physical violence. "When Messieurs The [parish] priests see that they cannot answer the questions that we are asking them from the Bible, well then! If they don't swear at us and lose their temper" (Vessot, 1983, p. 20). Defeated by the arguments that pitted Evangelical truth against the lies of Catholic tradition, the priest was humiliated, unmasked as an agent of a church primarily motivated by the prospect of extracting money from gullible-minded parishioners.

Vessot's conversion strategy (i.e., seeking out confrontations with members of the Catholic clergy), an ostensive anomaly that ran contrary to the Francophone Evangelical movement's recommendations to proceed with caution, was perhaps a product of this French salesman's particularly hard-nosed, overzealous personality (Lalonde and Grosjean, 2011, p. 91). It also reflected the intensity of the struggles taking place in the greater Montreal region between two waves of missionaries, Catholic and Evangelical, after the Rebellions. In effect, both Quebec Catholicism and Evangelism had diagnosed the moral state of French-Canadian society with similar ailments (as had all other conservatives): the Enlightenment, revolutions and republicanism had enfeebled religious sentiment, thereby constantly threatening social order. In particular, plebeian segments of the population, not considered sufficiently attached to religion, had to be won back. Therefore, during these same years and in the same areas as the Evangelists, the Catholic church undertook vast grass-roots campaigns, facilitated by enthusiastic preachers who also aimed to "convert" religious consciences among the same French-Canadian population.

The religious competition introduced in Quebec by British pluralism had a very intense and concrete impact as soon as Protestantism had the means to compete with Catholicism on the

market for Francophone souls (Paquin, 1998). Spurred on by the Evangelical movement, Quebec

Protestantism expanded remarkably. French-Canadian Protestant pastors quickly replaced

European missionaries, numbering around 135 in the period between 1861 and 1880 alone

(Vogt-Raguy, 1996, Appendix 14; Lalonde, 2002). Franco-Protestant French Canadian

communities organized throughout Lower Canada, forming a sizeable minority in some regions

of southwestern Quebec. The possibility of exercising freedom of conscience was a direct

challenge to the power of the Catholic clergy, which prompted the Catholic church to condemn

Protestants for threatening its concept of authority. Indeed, without this very tangible

competition, now largely blotted out of the collective memory of Quebecers, it is difficult to

understand the dominant position that the Catholic church occupied in key sectors of Quebec's

social and cultural life during the second half of the nineteenth century and in the first third of

the century to follow, as well as its ideological, activist and intransigent orientations. It was, in

effect, Protestant successes that spawned Quebec Catholicism's characteristically dynamic drive

until World War II (Hardy, 1999, Chapter 1).

New alliance with the State and the perpetuation of a de facto Catholic monopoly

How can we reconcile the image of a pluralist Quebec with that of Catholic domination

over Francophone culture? Although Evangelical Protestants and Ultramontane Catholics shared

the same sense of urgency about de-christianization among the popular classes and used

analogous missionary-conqueror techniques, their concepts of what constituted an ordered

society were not at all comparable.

The process of advanced secularization, characteristic of British political history, was

gathering speed in North America. In the United States, the separation between Church and State

was strict and religious freedom, absolute. In Canada, these libertarian winds from the south prompted constant criticisms from dissident and voluntarist Evangelical churches (in particular from Methodists and Baptists), which opposed any interference by the State in religious affairs. Already, the *Treaty of Paris* (1763) had introduced the concept of religious freedom. In 1851, the separation between Church and State was promulgated into law, thus completing the secularization of society. It defined a public space where clerical power was weakened by the power held by each citizen to change religious affiliation or to avoid religious institutions altogether (Christie and Gauvreau, 2010, p. 9-59).

In Quebec, the Catholic church would succeed in containing this type of secularization, preventing it from contaminating the Francophone public space, as shown by the sidelining of Franco-Protestant churches in Quebec. It continued to promote a fundamentally authoritarian, monolithic and hierarchal imaginary, with the layperson being positioned, in principal, under the domination of clerics. Whereas Evangelist movements avoided entanglements with the State in the course of their proselytizing, Catholic clerics were envisioning how to maintain (within the framework of an officially secular society) a model of alliance with the State to guarantee the hegemonic, quasi-monopoly over religion that their church had always enjoyed among French Canadians (Lougheed, 2011). One of the main arguments the Catholic church used to justify this privilege was nationalist in nature: the notion that Catholicism was an essential component of the "French Canadian race" had never ceased to gain ground, thanks to the complex and patient ideological work of the "religious construction of the nation" to use the expression set forth by Louis Rousseau (2005). Being Francophone and converting to Protestantism meant being part of a process of social marginalization because the Catholic church had succeeded in imposing the idea that the ethnic Canadien identity was consubstantial with Catholicism (Lemieux, 1990;

Perin, 2001) (contrary to historical reality, both distant and recent, since Quebec Francophone Protestantism was the product of a cultural transfer from continental Francophone Europe in exactly the same way Catholicism was and thus cannot be understood as an exogenic phenomenon). The Catholic church's concept of identity was even passed off as a given since it was approved by political elites seeking to unify the nation to better secure their newfound authority (Lamonde, 2000, chapter 10).

The new alliance between the Catholic church and the Quebec State, forged after Confederation, was particularly manifest in the many privileges granted to or maintained for the benefit of the Catholic church by the successive governments who led the Province. These advantages limited the influence of liberalism over the social lives of French Canadians who, far from being able to enjoy freedom of choice in religious matters, were prisoners within a Catholic culture so invasive that they had to show great force of character in order to dissent (Hudon, 1995 and 2000; Hinault, 2011). Consequently, the anticlerical, non-denominational and democratic positions of the Evangelical Protestants, who looked beyond tradition for ways of living together within a religious and political space that was authentically secular (giving authority to laypersons in the church and upholding the separation of Church and State) and secularised (embracing freedom of conscience) found very little resonance in Quebec during the second half of the nineteenth century.

In other words, the Catholic church found the legal and institutional means to avoid the hard laws of liberal competition by guaranteeing a monopoly over the religious consciences of Francophones, and in particular by exerting almost absolute control over the public, private subsidized and private unsubsidized education systems. It did so initially through its alliances with colonial governments, who appreciated the Catholic church's supreme respect for

established order and its ability to inculcate this respect, and subsequently, for the same reasons,

through alliances with the conservative French Canadians who administered the provincial State

after Confederation (Hardy, 1999, p. 222).

Conclusion

It is precisely this ongoing alliance between the Catholic church and the State in Quebec

(an alliance hailed in the name of preserving the distinctive attributes of the French Canadian

nation) and not just a vague reference to the historical importance of religion in Quebec, that was

monumentalized when Maurice Duplessis hung the crucifix over the Speaker's seat in Quebec's

National Assembly in 1936 (Rouillard, 2007). Faced with the embarrassing prospect of

embracing this aberrant relic of the past, in a professedly secular society at the beginning of this

twenty-first century, Quebec's political elites evidently concluded (yet again) that bucking

tradition to resolutely promote a pluralistic representation of the nation would not win them

many votes.

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