

INTRODUCTION

In 1911 more than 95 percent of the population in Canada had a church connection; and in Newfoundland in 1901 it was nearly 100 percent. The Christianity of British North America was not so varied or so nearly a cross section of world Christianity as was that of the United States. There was an absence of large new indigenous denominations. New religious groups, such as the Mormons and Christian Science, were U.S. imports. The pioneer stage was passed quickly and did not leave the same kind of impact on Christianity as in the U.S. Canada did not have a series of frontier revivals and camp meetings as in the U.S.; though they did have their repercussions in this nation. Protestant Christianity in British North America displayed a marked vigour, but it was more sober in expression and conservative. The majority of 19th century immigrants came from England and Scotland. The main motive of the British migration to Canada was economic and, accordingly, Canadian Protestantism was more conservative and less idealistic than that of the U.S. The Protestants seemed to have been more successful in holding their traditional constituency after immigration than in the U.S. In the course of migration from the Old World, very few had dropped their hereditary faith and some had it deepened.

Extensive aid to missions was given by societies and individuals connected with the Church of England. The Baptists and Methodists also received support from their homeland.

Schools for Indians were conducted by missionaries. The government made financial grants, which were often supplemented by white congregations. In 1914 the vast majority of whites, at least 3/4 of the Indians and some from among the small groups of Orientals thought themselves as Christians.

The Christian faith had a tremendous influence on education. Schools - from elementary to university - owed their existence directly to the church. As late as 1890 in most of the provinces of the Dominion the majority of the schools were under the control of the various denominations and had religious instruction as part of their curriculum. Latourette notes, "Even in Ontario, where the schools were undenominational, prayer and reading of the Bible were part of the procedure and the clergy were empowered to make arrangements for the teaching of religion. In 1890 the structure of denominational schools was abolished in Manitoba, partly through Protestant opposition to the influence of the Roman Catholic clergy." (Latourette, Kenneth Scott. *A History of the Expansion of Christianity. The Great Century*, vol.5. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1971. p. 41.)

B.N.A. Act

Few provisions deal explicitly with French-English relations. The major direct references serve to protect the rights of the English minority in Quebec. Section 93 of the Act provides constitutional protection for "any Right or Privilege with respect to Denominational Schools which any Class of Persons have by Law in the Province at the

Union." It guarantees the Protestant minority in Quebec the same rights to separate schools as the Roman Catholic minority received in Ontario. David Bell and Lorne Tepperman state that because this provision is termed in terms of religion rather than language, and because control of education was vested in the provincial government, Francophones outside Quebec had to fight for the right to education in the French language from the outset. The authors also mention that two other provisions of Section 93 allow for appeals to the federal cabinet in the event that educational rights are infringed. They permit the federal Parliament to legislate remedies "for the due Execution of the Provisions of this Section and of any Decision of the Governor General in Council [ie., the Cabinet] under this Section." (Bell, D., & Tepperman, L. (1979). *The roots of disunity. A look at Canadian political culture*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, pp. 121f.)

Denominational schools are thus specifically guaranteed in Quebec and Ontario, i.e., in Quebec public schools are Roman Catholic and the separate schools are all non-Roman Catholic, while in Ontario the public schools are all non-Roman Catholic and the separate schools are Roman Catholic. Furthermore, by the terms of the acts which made them provinces, says M. James Penton, denominational schools must exist in Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Newfoundland. And he notes that there is nothing to stop the provinces from funding denominational education if they desire to do so. Penton also points out that although all religions in Canadian society are theoretically equal, in fact they are not. Instead of there being "a wall of separation between church and state," in Canada there is what may be described a quasi-establishment. (Penton, M. James. *Religious Freedom and Canadian Law. An Historical Evaluation. The Canadian Society of Church History Papers*. 1980.)

The Evolution From Christian to Post-Christian

Conventional Christendom is no more. Our society calls itself post-Christian rather than pagan. And the latter is worse than outright pre-Christian paganism. In 1870 Cardinal John Henri Newman already said that our time has more difficulty with the proclamation of the Gospel than Apostolic times. Peter and Paul preached to a generation for whom the gospel was completely new. They were eager to listen and to respond. In our time the Gospel must be proclaimed to people who reject terms such as guilt and punishment, who think that they know about the Christian faith. People no longer speak about the unknown God but about the death of God. (DeKok, J.A. *Drie Eeuwen Westeuropose Kerkgeschiedenis. Een Inleiding. 1680 to heden*. Hilversum: Gooi en Sticht, 1979. pp. 212f.)

Canada's roots and ethos were Christian. But already in the 19th century the Christian faith began to lose its influence. Liberal higher criticism of Scripture made its impact felt in theological schools. The last three decades of the 19th century may well be termed the critical period that led to Protestantism's demise as the dominant influence in North America. (Askew, Thomas A., & Spellman, Peter W. *The Church and the American Experience*. p. 128.)

In the 1920's science went beyond research. It became Canada's new educational philosophy. W.L. Morton observed that science had become the basis, with mathematics, of popular education in Canada, and as religion and the humanities declined in popular influence, science succeeded them, not only as a material utility but also as a world view. (Careless, J.M.S., & Brown, R. Craig, eds. *Part One of The Canadians 1867-1967*. MacMillan Company of Canada Ltd., 1968. p. 223.) In the 1920's the public schools were already becoming less concerned with academic training and more and more involved as agents of social policy. Morton comments, "The school of learning had become the school of manners, and, all unwittingly, the new generation was being prepared for the demagogue and the advertiser." (*Part One of The Canadians*. pp. 224f.)

After World War I the churches experienced extreme difficulties with the transition from a Victorian World of rural conservatism to a scientific urban and industrial culture. They were shattered by the challenge of scientism. The mainline denominations veered to a gospel of good works: social reform and prohibition. There was still a spirit of unthinking rugged individualism, essentially optimistic in mood. By the end of the 1920's the churches had already lost the battle for the heart and soul of Canada. Morton notes, "The Canadian churches, as fragmented as the country they served, were bankrupted intellectually and spiritually, not in the decade as such (the 1920's), but more definitely during the decade than before or after." (*Part One of The Canadians*. p. 227.)

By the 1950's Canada had become a thoroughly secular nation. In his essay *The Process of Secularization*, Michel Despland defines secularization as the process of social change characterized by the appearance of an increasing number of ideas and attitudes developing without reference to, or control by, *traditional* religious creeds or institutions. It is a process of emancipation from established religious authority. Secularism has become a dogmatic ideology that denies the existence of God and the claims of transcendence upon the life of men. And Despland points out that the secularized Christian publicly uses secular language since he fully knows that Christian arguments have ceased to be self-evident to many of his contemporaries, and especially to those who are prepared to confront the problems of social justice. (LeBlanc, Philip, & Edinborough, Arnold, eds. *One Church, Two Nations?* Don Mills: Longmans Canada Ltd., 1968. pp. 121ff.)

In his essay *Canada's Churches: Living in a Cosmopolitan Culture*, Dr. Sinclair-Faulkner, a United Church layman and historian, declares that during the 1960's Canadian Christendom started to come apart. He writes, "Previously a 'Christian country,' Canada became, by act of Parliament, merely a country 'founded upon principles that acknowledge the supremacy of God.' Public schools whose charters called for the formation of 'Christian citizens' dropped religious instruction and replaced it with teaching 'about' religions, with 'values education' or with nothing at all. Departments of religious studies appeared on university campuses, and departments of theology dwindled." (Marty, Martin E. (editor) *Where The Spirit Leads: American Denominations Today*. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1980. p. 198.)