NOTICE

The quality of this microform is heavily dependent upon the quality of the original thesis submitted for microfilming. Every effort has been made to ensure the highest quality of reproduction possible.

If pages are missing, contact the university which granted the degree.

Some pages may have indistinct print especially if the original pages were typed with a poor typewriter ribbon or if the university sent us an inferior photocopy.

Previously copyrighted materials (journal articles, published tests, etc.) are not filmed.

Reproduction in full or in part of this microform is governed by the Canadian Copyright Act, R.S.C. 1970, c. C-30.

AVIS

La qualité de cette microforme dépend grandement de la qualité de la thèse soumise au microfilmage. Nous avons tout fait pour assurer une qualité supérieure de reproduction.

S'il manque des pages, veuillez communiquer avec l'université qui a conféré le grade.

La qualité d'impression de certaines pages peut laisser à désirer, surtout si les pages originales ont été dactylographiées à l'aide d'un ruban usé ou si l'université nous a fait parvenir une photocopie de qualité inférieure.

Les documents qui font déjà l'objet d'un droit d'auteur (articles de revue, tests publiés, etc.) ne sont pas microfilmés.

La reproduction, même partielle, de cette microforme est soumise à la Loi canadienne sur le droit d'auteur, SRC 1970, c. C-30.

Canada

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

THE PENSIONNAT ASSOMPTION: RELIGIOUS NATIONALISM IN A FRANCO-ALBERTAN BOARDING SCHOOL FOR GIRLS, 1926-1960.

BY

ANNE C. GAGNON

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF EDUCATION

IN

SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

SPRING 1988

ISBN 0-315-42794-9

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

RELEASE FORM

NAME OF AUTHOR: ANNE C. GAGNON

TITLE OF THESIS: THE PENSIONNAT ASSOMPTION: RELIGIOUS NATIONALISM IN A FRANCO-ALBERTAN BOARDING SCHOOL FOR GIRLS, 1926-1960

DEGREE FOR WHICH THESIS WAS PRESENTED: MASTER OF EDUCATION

YEAR THIS DEGREE WAS GRANTED: 1988

(signed) : A. C. Gagnon

PERMANENT ADDRESS:
BOX 3164
ATHABASCA, ALBERTA
T0G 0B0

Date: April 2, 1988

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled THE PENSIONNAT ASSOMPTION: RELIGIOUS NATIONALISM IN A FRANCO-ALBERTAN BOARDING SCHOOL FOR GIRLS, 1926-1960 submitted by ANNE C. GAGNON - in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF EDUCATION IN SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION.

.....
(Supervisor)

.....

.....

.....

Date: March 3, 1988

ABSTRACT

One of the constants in the education of women in the Western world until very recently was the necessity to mould them to fit socially ascriptive roles based on culturally defined, supposedly natural 'feminine' values. The different, usually inferior, education given women was justified by claims that they were being prepared to fulfill a designated role that was naturally theirs because, first of all, it was biologically determined and secondly it was embedded in the cultural heritage of a society. A case in point was the education of women in Quebec during the apogee of religious nationalism, a period spanning more than a century from 1840 to 1960.

By allowing for the provision and extension of post-primary education to women, the Catholic church hierarchy hoped to prepare an elite of mothers, wives, housekeepers and teachers to perpetuate traditional religious and national values in the home and in educational institutions. To ensure this, the specialized education, first of all, had to cultivate those virtues claimed to be more prominent in women: modesty, purity, patience, obedience, reverence to authority, gentleness, helpfulness, beneficence and above all selflessness. Secondly, it had to equip women with an unfailing devotion to the church and lastly, stimulate in them a patriotic attachment to the French Canadian nation.

As the clergy moved West to minister to the spiritual needs of the French-speaking voyageurs and settlers, it transplanted the clerico-nationalist ideology to the new communities. This thesis will examine the education offered in a private Catholic boarding school for girls in Edmonton, the *Pensionnat Assomption* and demonstrate that the clerico-

nationalist ideology flourished in Alberta between 1920 and 1960. It will also show that the image of women presented at the school conformed to the ideas of women and to the role prescribed for them by the Quebec ideologues.

I wish to express my gratitude to *Les Soeurs de l'Assomption de la Sainte Vierge* for their help with this research and for their devotion to the preservation of the French language and French-Canadian culture in Alberta.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Universal, compulsory schooling in the Western world has generally been equated with the good of society and has been acclaimed as an important milestone in civilization's long march to progress. And until recently, the extension of schooling opportunities to women, especially at the post-primary level, was indisputably held to have contributed to their emancipation. It was believed that their admission to the educational structure which had favoured men for centuries, served to redefine the image and the role of women and weakened the conventional barriers to career and economic opportunities.

Recent historical and sociological studies on women and education have pointed out, however, a more complex relationship between schooling and the status of women. While formal schooling has undoubtedly contributed to the independence of some women and expanded career opportunities for others, just as frequently, it has limited women's expectations by reinforcing traditional values and the status quo. A study of Oberlin College, North America's first co-educational post-secondary institution indicates that neither access to co-educational schools nor to higher education has necessarily provided equality of opportunity for women. The college accepted women as students for primarily two reasons: they were to have a soothing influence on male students and to provide a ready selection of suitable wives. Once

admitted, female students were discriminated against. Unlike men, they were barred from public speaking and were assigned housekeeping duties such as mending and doing the laundry. [1] The study illustrates that equality of opportunity did not and could not exist as long as women were believed to possess a different nature and their activities restricted to a separate sphere.

In fact, one of the constants in the education of women until recently was the necessity to mould women to fit socially ascriptive roles based on culturally defined, supposedly natural 'feminine' values. The different and usually inferior education given women was justified by claims that women were being prepared to fulfill a designated role that was naturally theirs because, first of all, it was biologically determined and secondly, it was embedded in the cultural heritage of a society. A case in point was the education of women in Quebec during the apogee of religious nationalism, a period spanning more than a century from 1840 to 1960.

From the beginning of the colony of New France, the institutions of the family, church and school had inculcated appropriate religious, moral and social values in young people. The frontier conditions, however, mitigated the influence of both church and school so that the family was largely responsible for the educational needs and the socialization of its members. Over the course of time, changing demographic patterns, political, economic, and social developments created conditions that

---

[1] Alison Prentice, "Towards a Feminist History of Women and Education," in David Jones, Nancy Sheehan et. al. (eds.), Approaches to Educational History Monographs in Education (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba, 1981) p. 47.

allowed, by the mid-nineteenth century, the ascendancy of the Catholic church over both the spiritual and temporal world. The church, reacting to the turbulent social consequences of industrialization and urbanization, proceeded to reinforce its control of education. It offered social stability based, in large measure, on an educational program that promoted an ideological reliance on the family, stressed the differences between the male and female nature and pressed for increasingly differentiated educational experiences for girls, especially at the secondary school level.

By allowing for the provision and extension of post-primary education to women, the church hierarchy intended to prepare an elite of mothers, wives, housekeepers and teachers to perpetuate traditional religious and national values in the home and in educational institutions. To ensure this, the specialized education, first of all, had to cultivate those virtues claimed to be more prominent in women: modesty, purity, patience, obedience, reverence to authority, gentleness, helpfulness, beneficence and above all selflessness. Secondly, it had to equip women with an unfailing devotion to the church and lastly, stimulate in them a patriotic attachment to the French Canadian nation. Thus prepared, women would be able to fulfill the glorious destiny of helpmates to husband, clergy and nationalist leaders, the mission for which they had been placed on this earth. The church hierarchy was convinced that keeping women in the home would strengthen the institution of the family and lead to the eventual re-establishment of an orderly society in the midst of what was perceived to be an increasingly chaotic and immoral world.

As the Catholic clergy moved West to minister first to the spiritual needs of French-speaking voyageurs, to proselytize the native population, and later to bring religion to the settlers, it transplanted the clerico-

nationalist ideology and its attendant images of women to the new communities. The western hierarchy, like its Quebec counterpart, unequivocally resented the interference of the state in educational matters and perceived the need to found private religious schools to prepare an elite to uphold, defend and transmit to succeeding generations religious, national and cultural values. By examining the education offered in a private Catholic boarding school for girls in Edmonton, the *Pensionnat Assomption* , this thesis will demonstrate that the religious nationalist ideologies of Quebec were transplanted to the western Francophone communities. It will also show that the image of women presented at the school conformed to the ideas of women and to the role prescribed for them by Quebec clerico-nationalists.

Essentially, this study will examine the factors which contributed to the transmission and acquisition of female gender roles within a Catholic French-speaking environment. Although social-psychologists disagree about the processes by which a child acquires the understanding of being either a male or a female, they generally concur with the notion that a child's gender identity is fixed by the age of six.[2] The home environment, as the initial centre of socialization, impresses upon the child "sets of expectations that define the ways in which the members of

---

[2] Freudian theory held that sex identity had its roots in experience; social learning theorists argue that society through conditioning, reinforcement and imitation shapes sex-defined behaviours while cognitive developmental theorists propose that "sex role learning is a part of the rational learning process of childhood."
James Vander Zanden, Social Psychology, Third edition (New York: Random House, 1977) p.460.

each sex should behave."[3] Schools sanction these gender roles and extend the division of labour to the community.

Given that schools attempt to reproduce the ideological constructs of a society, it is necessary to begin the examination of the education of girls at the *Pensionnat* by sketching the French-speaking community's understanding of the nature and role of women. The elite promoted an image of women based on the belief that the pious and fecund French Canadian wife and mother had assured and would continue to guarantee the survival of the race. This ideal, in turn, set the standards for the education of girls. The study examines the ways in which the role models were presented and how the girls were exhorted to emulate and pattern their lives on the ideals. It also attempts to discern the links between ideology and reality by seeking answers to the following questions. Did the girls accept the religious and nationalist values set forth by the nuns? What kinds of pressures existed to persuade them to conform? Were their academic and career expectations concordant with the images and values presented? And to what extent was their education circumscribed by the demands of religion and nationalism?

To fully answer these questions, it is necessary to place the study of the *Pensionnat Assomption* squarely within a social and historical context. For as Nadia Fahmy-Eid and Micheline Dumont pointed out in their study of women, the family and schooling in Quebec, the triangular relationship of women and the family, the state and the church was essentially one in which the secular and the clerical elite vied for control

---

[3] Ibid., p.445.

of the family by dominating women.[4] This study of the boarding school attempts to illuminate the ways in which the school, as an instrument of the church and French-speaking community, (the Alberta minority group's manifestation of the Quebecois nationalist state) prepared women to accept their 'proper place' in society and how it assured the allocation of traditional gender roles.

To gain an adequate understanding of the influences from Quebec, it is necessary to study the expansion of the school system in that province after 1840. For it was the system that remained firmly in place for well over a century, until *la Révolution tranquille* of the 1960's and it was the type of schooling that was held to be the ideal and when possible was emulated by French Canadian minorities outside Quebec. The second chapter of the thesis is thus devoted to the study of Quebec education following the ascendancy of the church and to the implementation, in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, of a similar system of Catholic education in the NorthWest. The third chapter examines the clerico-nationalist ideology that kindled the nationalist and religious spirit in Quebec classical colleges during the period in question.

In an effort to delineate the ideological structure of the religious nationalism of Quebec, the writings of *Abbé* Groulx are often cited. Groulx's unrelenting dedication to the nationalist cause and his unequaled talent for inspiring young and old alike with religious and patriotic fervour rank him as one of the most influential figures of the Québec

---

[4] Nadia Fahmy-Eid, Micheline Dumont (eds.) Maîtresses de maison, maîtresses d'école: femmes, famille et éducation dans l'histoire du Québec (Montréal: Boréal Express, 1983) p.16.

nationalist movement. More than any other ideologue, he was responsible for the fusion of religion, language and family, the fundamental triad of the clerico-nationalist construct. He was, as the historian Susan Mann Trofimenkoff points out, the link between the ultra-conservative religious nationalism of Jules-Paul Tardivel and Henri Bourassa and the secular nationalist movements of the 1960's.[5] His influence extended beyond the Quebec borders to the French-speaking minority groups scattered across the country. Far from ignoring these Francophones outside *la patrie*, he saw them as the vanguard of the French Canadian survival and exhorted them to be ever vigilant of the dangers of assimilation and taught them pride in their heritage. In Groulx's vision of a vibrant French Canadian nation, women played a distinct and essential role. The third chapter focuses on the place of women in this ideological construct and concludes by looking at the educational opportunities available to women at the time.

While chapters two and three set the stage for an understanding of the nature and purpose of the education provided in the private boarding school for girls, the *Pensionnat Assomption*, the fourth segment traces, first of all, the religious, political, social and cultural factors in Alberta that spurred the foundation of the school in 1926. It then describes the curriculum and outlines how it was geared to fulfill the mandate of the community. The study is concerned only with the period starting with the creation of the school and ending in 1960. This date corresponds to the

---

5 I have retained *Abbé* rather than using the equivalent English designation 'Father' whenever the French term was used, in the primary or secondary source, to refer to the person in question.
Susan Mann Trofimenkoff (ed.), Abbé Groulx Variations on a Nationalist Theme (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1973) p.9.

onset of the Quiet Revolution in Quebec, the decline of the influence of the church and the secularization of education both in Quebec and in western French-speaking communities.

1960 also marked a period of expansion and change for the *Pensionnat Assomption* . In that year, renovations to the building increased the enrollment capacity from approximately 130 students to more than four hundred. To ensure maximum attendance, the school began accepting an increasing number of girls from non French-speaking families.[6] Although the experiment was short-lived, it served to accelerate the integration of the private Francophone school into the predominantly English separate school system, a process that was complete by 1966. These developments greatly modified the nationalist and religious education that had characterized the school during its first thirty-four years.

The last two chapters of the thesis examine a number of activities and practices in those early decades that served to reinforce the national and religious instruction of the formal curriculum. Over the years, a series of clubs and organizations awakened and inspired the nationalist spirit by emphasizing the proper use of the French language, by stressing the importance of a solid historical knowledge of the deeds of the French in North America and by fostering an understanding of and an emotional attachment to the lives, exploits and customs of the ancestors. The nationalist education, in turn, initiated the girls to their future roles as Catholic women by providing them with the traditional female model to emulate, an ideal embodied in their foremothers, the women of New

---

6 These girls were of English-speaking parents of French origin.

France. The last chapter outlines the religious and 'feminine' education that completed the girls' preparation and assured their eventual dedication to husband, children, church and nation.

This study was born, in part, out of a need to understand my own nationalist and religious preparation. Educated in the late 1950's and 1960's, first as an external in a convent school in Quebec and later in a rural school in a Northern Alberta Francophone community, I was given an excellent academic training. The small number of students at the rural school allowed the well trained and able nuns to instill in my colleagues and me a solid foundation in all required disciplines. As a group, we excelled in French grammar and literature and were weak in English. This shortcoming mattered little, however, since we required a knowledge of English only in the higher grades to decipher the final compulsory provincial exams. Then, and as they had done throughout the years, the nuns translated the difficult sections for us and shielded us, once more, from the encroachment of the foreign, English world. The nuns were very successful in protecting our language and culture. Along with the grammar lessons, the dictations and poetry recitations, they taught us the history of New France, made us aware of the heroic deeds of our ancestors and instilled in us an intense pride in our cultural heritage. They taught us to be forever on guard to the dangers of assimilation.

This education, however, was Janus-faced. Although as French-Canadians we were always urged and expected to succeed academically, the attendant nationalist and religious values, especially those presented to female students, precluded the extension of academic success past the confines of the rural school. The distrust of the 'English' (anyone not speaking French) that had been so carefully nurtured, made us reserved

and cautious. We did not consider obtaining further education outside the Francophone environment. In Western Canada, this offered few opportunities. And for girls there were additional constraints. As women, our greatest contribution to our race and religion was as wife and mother. We were never encouraged to enter the professions; careers, even in nursing and teaching, were seldom mentioned. This study on the *Pensionnat Assomption*, another French Catholic school, will shed light on the contradictory character of the socialization process in the small rural school and extend our understanding of the education of girls in other Francophone schools across the province.

On a wider scope, this thesis seeks to contribute to the history and sociology of women and education by extending the accumulated knowledge on changing educational patterns and the role of schooling for women. Within the last two decades, the number of works on education has increased phenomenally. Many of these studies have proved to be insightful and innovative on a variety of topics related to schooling. Historical studies on childhood and adolescence such as Philippe Aries' Centuries of Childhood, specialized studies on primary schooling, Furet and Ozouf's Lire et écrire and socio-historical analyses of schooling and equality of opportunity, Bowles and Gintis' Schooling in Capitalist America and Christopher Hurn's The Limits and Possibilities of Schooling have a common characteristic.[7] They focus almost exclusively

---

7 Philippe Ariès, Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life (New York: Random House, 1962).
François Furet and Jacques Ozouf, Lire et écrire, (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1977).
S. Bowles and H. Gintis, Schooling in Capitalist America -- Educational Reforms and the Contradictions of Economic Life (New York: Basic Books, 1976).

on male subjects. If and when the absence of the female variable is noticed, a brief chapter on the education of girls is added to the study.[8]

The last twenty-five years, however, have seen an unprecedented interest in women and education. A number of writers, influenced by the women's movement of the 1960's and the revisionist approach to the writing of the history of education inspired by Bernard Bailyn, have attempted to redress the balance.[9] Although much of this literature is the work of English and American authors and looks at schooling and educational institutions in England and in the United States, these have influenced Canadian works on women and education.[10] Recent contributions such as Lucienne Plante's "La Fondation de l'enseignement classique féminin au Québec, 1908-1916," Ann Gray's historical study on co-educational schooling, Carolyn Gossage's work on independent schools, Mary Maxwell's analysis of class, religion and achievement in boarding schools and Alison Prentice's studies on schooling in Ontario have contributed greatly to our understanding of women's role in

---

Christopher Hurn, The Limits and Possibilities of Schooling: An Introduction to the Sociology of Education (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1985).

[8] Prentice, op.cit p.39-40 and Fahmy-Eid and Dumont op.cit., p. 28-29.

[9] Bernard Bailyn, Education in the Forming of American Society (New York: Vintage Books, 1960).

[10] Phyllis Stock, Better Than Rubies: A History of Women's Education (New York: Capricorn Books, 1978)
N. Frazier and M. Sadker, Sexism in School and Society (New York: Harper and Row, 1973)
Eileen Byrne, Women and Education (London: Tavistock, 1978).

education.[11] Substantial gaps remain as most studies originate in Ontario and Quebec and focus on the educational process in those two provinces.

In Quebec, a number of studies have analyzed the process of inculcating 'feminine' clerico-nationalist values in educational institutions. The writings of Susan Mann-Trofimenkoff and of Mona-Josée Gagnon on the image of women in French Canadian religious nationalism, Marta Danylewycz's study of convent life in the late nineteenth, early twentieth centuries, Lucienne Plante's, Antonine Gagnon's and Sherene Brookwell's studies of the education of women in Quebec and the collection of papers edited or written by members of *le Collectif Clio* are but a few of the works which attempt to determine how historical events and social developments have served to restrict or stimulate women's career and educational opportunities.[12] This thesis on

---

[11] Lucienne Plante, "La Fondation de l'enseignement classique féminin au Québec 1908-1916." thèse de D.E.S. Université de Laval, 1968.
Ann Gray, "Continuity in Change: The Effects on Girls of Coeducational Secondary Schooling in Ontario, 1860-1910," M.A. thesis, University of Toronto, 1979.
Carolyn Gossage, A Question of Privilege: Canada's Independent Schools (Toronto: Martin Associates, 1977).
Mary Percival Maxwell and James D. Maxwell, "Women, Religion and Achievement Aspirations: A Case Study of Private School Females," in Robert M. Pike and Elia Zureik, (eds.) Socialization and Values in Canadian Society, vol.II (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1975).
Maxwell and Maxwell, "Women and the Elite: Educational and Occupational Aspirations of Private School Females 1966-76," Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology 21, 4 (1984) pp. 371-394.

[12] Susan Mann Trofimenkoff, Action Francaise - French Canadian Nationalism in the Twenties (Toronto: University of Toronto Press. 1975), The Dream of Nation (Toronto: Macmillan, 1982) and "Les

the education of girls at the *Pensionnat Assomption* is an addition to this line of inquiry. It proposes to contribute as well to the body of research on Alberta women.

The lacunae of information on women and education in Alberta is pronounced. Historians of education have traditionally focused their investigations on religious education provided in mission schools by Roman Catholic orders. In these studies, women's contributions have been duly recognized.[13] Many of these works, however, have been written by members of religious orders and if not hagiographic are hardly critical of the education provided in the mission schools. Nancy Sheehan's dissertation on "Temperance, the W.C.T.U. and Education in

---

femmes dans l'oeuvre de Groulx" Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française, 32, 3 (décembre 1978) pp.395-398.
Mona-Josée Gagnon, Les femmes vues par le Québec des hommes 30 ans d'histoire des idéologies 1940-1970 (Montréal: Editions du Jour, 1974).
Marta Danylewycz, "Taking the Veil in Montreal, 1842-1920: An Alternative to Marriage, Motherhood and Spinsterhood," Ph.D. thesis, University of Toronto, 1981.
Lucienne Plante, op.cit.
Antonine Gagnon, "Le Collège classique Notre-Dame de l'Assomption de Nicolet 1937-1968," thèse de D.E.S., Université de Laval, 1972.
Sherene Brookwell, "The Instituts Familiaux of Quebec: Religious Nationalism and the Education of Girls for Domestic Life, 1900-1970," M.A. thesis, University of Ottawa, 1980.
Le Collectif Clio, L'Histoire des femmes au Québec depuis quatre siècles (Montréal: Les Quinze éditions, 1982).
Nadia Fahmy-Eid, Micheline Dumont, op.cit.

[13] Sr. Flore Houde, "Les débuts des Soeurs de l'Assomption au Lac d'Oignons," L'Etat de la recherche et de la vie française dans l'Ouest Canadien, Gilles Cadrin (ed.), (Edmonton: Institut de la Recherche de la Faculté Saint-Jean, 1983).

Alberta, 1905-1930," and Shelley Bosetti's "The Rural Women's University: Women's Institutes in Alberta from 1909 to 1940," have provided a fuller picture of the education of Alberta women.[14] Correspondingly, there have been a number of works within the sociology of education, yet, much research needs to be done.[15]

The character and design of this study on the *Pensionnat Assomption* have been dictated, in large measure, by the nature of the sources. Upon the closure of the boarding school in 1972, *les Soeurs de l'Assomption* donated much of their records to the Provincial Archives. These are contained in numerous volumes which include inventories, financial accounts, descriptions of important clerical visits, copies of addresses and decrees by bishops and priests, and the most informative labelled *Chroniques* , comprise periodic journal entries of noteworthy events. The nature, quality and quantity of details included varies with the degree of loquacity of the recording sister. While certain entries are highly descriptive of character and events, others are limited to cursory anecdotal statements. The [illegible] contain correspondence with the motherhouse in Nicolet, the church hierarchy and other religious orders.

---

[14] Nancy Sheehan, "Temperance, the W.C.T.U. and Education in Alberta, 1905-1930," Ph.D. thesis, University of Alberta, 1980.
Shelley Bosetti, "The Rural Women's University: Women's Institutes in Alberta from 1909 to 1940," M.Ed. thesis, University of Alberta, 1983.

[15] J. Morgan, "Perceived Communication Activities and Effectiveness of Male and Female Elementary School Principals," M.Ed. thesis, University of Alberta, 1977.
M. Nixon, "Women Administrators and Women Teachers: A Comparative Study," Ph.D. thesis, University of Alberta, 1975.
K. Toews, "Self-Hatred in College Women: Sex-role Stereotypes and Same-sex Affiliation," Ph.D. thesis, University of Alberta, 1973.

Much of the material dealing with the students themselves has been kept in the order's own archives at the provincial motherhouse in Edmonton. These records include yearbooks and school calendars listing admission requirements, regulations and dress codes, class activity scribblers, lists of required texts, student grades, photos, correspondence, essays written by both students and teachers commemorating special events, student newsletters, minutes of meetings, newspaper clippings, list of student awards and various historical pamphlets on the school. The analysis of this material was supplemented with relevant secondary sources on the order of *l'Assomption de la Sainte Vierge* , the history of French-speaking Albertans and the clerico-nationalist ideology of Quebec. And newspapers, especially La Survivance, were useful in sketching the cultural and historical context within which the school operated.

This study does not purport to be definitive nor does it claim to be anything but a beginning, a stepping stone leading to further research on the Francophone women of Alberta. In fact, this thesis can only claim to be rather limited in scope. It deals mostly with the ideology, the manner in which the nuns of the *Pensionnat Assomption* interpreted the clerico-nationalists' vision of the place of women in French Canadian society and how they imparted this understanding to their students. It is yet to be fully determined to what extent these teachings influenced the values and attitudes of the students of the *Pensionnat* . While the answers lie beyond the scope of this study, they may be contained, at a future date, in the research of some other prospective academic.

CHAPTER 2

The Catholic School System: The Quebec Model and the Implementation of a similar System in the NorthWest

> L'école, c'est le chateau-fort ou le tombeau des croyances ou des nationalités.[1]

These words by *Abbé* Lionel Groulx, a prominent twentieth century Quebec historian, teacher and nationalist, succinctly and accurately express the French Canadian Catholic church hierarchy's belief in the necessity of schools to propagate the faith and transmit nationalist ideals. During the period of New France, the church had relied primarily on the institution of the family to promote adherence to Catholic doctrine. A few religious schools prepared an elite destined to become lay and clerical leaders of the colony. The emphasis on schooling as a primary agent in maintaining the French-speaking nation did not flourish, however, until the mid-nineteenth century, when as a result of political, social and economic reorganizations, the church was able to gain ascendancy over all aspects of Quebec society.[2] Increasingly, schools came to be perceived as a principal agent in the maintenance of Catholic ideals and in the survival of the French-speaking nation within Canada.

---

[1] Lionel Groulx cited in Denis Monière, Le développment des idéologies au Québec - des origines à nos jours (Montréal: Editions Québec/Amérique, 1977) p. 247.

[2] For the sake of simplicity, Canada East and Lower Canada will be referred to as Quebec.

The belief in the invaluable function of the school in reinforcing the religious and cultural values of the church and family spurred the expansion of education in Quebec during the last half of the nineteenth century and accompanied the development of the school system to the prairie West. Even more than in Quebec where French Canadians constituted the majority of the population, the creation of schools that would allow the free expression of the group's religious and cultural values was crucial for the survival of the French-speaking minority in the West as religious and language rights could no longer be obtained and upheld through the political process once the influx of English-speaking and other immigrants changed the demographic composition of the North-West. In the twentieth century, French Catholic minorities had to rely increasingly on social organizations and on religious and educational institutions to assure *la survivance*. Schools played a primary role.

As in Quebec, separate schools were organized and directed by the church and staffed, in large measure, by the clergy or by members of religious orders. At the secondary level, private schools offered the possibility of obtaining an entirely French Catholic education similar to the type of schooling available in the classical colleges of Quebec. Although these institutions were primarily intended for boys, as the century progressed such schools were deemed essential for the education of girls. It is the purpose of this chapter to outline the development of the Catholic educational system in the North-West and to show the relationship between education and the survival of the French-speaking minorities on the prairies by first examining Quebec education and the factors that gave rise to this archetypal Catholic schooling.

The beginning of the ascendancy of the church in Quebec was marked by the Rebellions of 1837-38. Earlier in the century, French Canadians faced a series of upheavals. Crop failures, a shortage of arable land and high unemployment had precipitated, by the 1830's, an economic crisis. French Canadians were as well continually frustrated politically as a result of their inability to attain the self-government embodied in the constitution of 1791. Fueled also by the liberal and democratic European currents that accompanied the Industrial Revolution, the discontent erupted in rebellion. The uprisings revealed a profound dissatisfaction with the social and political order.[3]

Although the rebellion was promptly quelled, the repercussions of the defeat persisted and the failure of the uprisings was, for the history of French Canadians, as significant as the Conquest had been. For it reinforced the developments of 1760 and marked the end of the demands for radical change by truncating the influence of the liberal, *petite-bourgeoisie*, the social class likely to have encouraged the development of political, social and educational structures parallelling those liberal, secular arrangements that had developed in the western world following the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution. The defeat meant that few impediments were left in the way of the ascendancy of the church hierarchy.[4] The Quebec clergy, although always an integral part of

---

[3] Mason Wade, The French Canadians 1760-1967, Vol 1 (Toronto: Macmillan, 1968) p. 93.

[4] Quebec historians do not agree on the consequences of the Conquest and of the Rebellion. Those of the Montreal school contend, like Monière, that the modern development of Quebec was arrested by these events. Others, following the traditional historiographic school claim that the very nature of the French

French Canadian society had had to accept a limited role especially after 1760.[5] While some church property had been destroyed during the Conquest and some confiscated, the greatest loss had been felt as a result of the restrictions imposed on the clergy. Whereas few limitations had been placed on female congregations, recruitment of new members of the Jesuit, Recollet and Sulpician orders were disallowed. And many clerics, about one third of the clergy, made their way back to France following the Conquest.[6]

The reduced numbers of clerics certainly hampered the work of the church. Their duties and responsibilities, however, did not change. They were "to evangelize the American continent, to instruct the ignorant, help the poor, care for the sick, guide children on the right path of life, over the whole face of this immense continent."[7] This mission became more feasible after 1840 with the reorganization of judicial, social and educational institutions. As well, the nomination of Bourget as Bishop of

---

Canadian character, the reliance on the clergy, the feudal system of land tenure, etc., precluded modern developments from taking place.
Monière, op.cit., p.78-79.

5 Before the Conquest, the clergy's role was also limited. The *habitants* were irreligious, many did not respect Lent or Sunday rest and some refused to pay the tithe. The influence of the priest in their daily life was minimal. At the beginning of the 19th century, many parishes, if they had a church, often had to make due without a priest. In 1712, the clergy and members of religious orders represented only 1.6% of the population. Of 312 members, 196 were nuns. In 1730, only 20% of parishes could boast of having a resident cleric. Monière, op.cit., p.67.
Roger Magnuson, A Brief History of Quebec Education (Montreal: Harvest House, 1980.) p.12, gives slightly higher figures. In 1759, there were 196 members of the male clergy.

Montreal encouraged the ascension of the clergy to positions of power and influence.

Bourget, along with Mgr Laflèche, Bishop of Trois-Rivières, was the principal proponent of ultramontanism, a conservative ideology that permitted its adherents to make sense of the many changes occurring in a turbulent century and to justify their responses to these events. This ideological current had resurfaced in France, in the mid-nineteenth century, as a reaction to the liberal, socialist and anarchist movements that grew out of the industrial and Napoleonic revolutions. These ideologies challenged the notions of hierarchy and order based on noblesse oblige and working class deference and called into question the very fabric of the social order. Pressed by fear and uncertainty, Catholic leaders turned to Rome for guidance.[8] Inspired by the teachings of the encyclical Minari Vos, the ultramontane school objected to democratic ideals and freedom of opinion, rejected the separation of church and state and insisted on obedience to the church and to the governing body of the state.[9] Proponents envisaged the eventual restoration of a theocracy allowing the Pope jurisdiction over the Christian world as had been the case before the Reformation.

This ultramontane ideology was introduced in Quebec through the works of Louis Veillot.[10] As in France, the French Canadian version condemned all forms of modernism, naturalism and rationalism. One

---

8 For a discussion of ultramontanism, "looking beyond the mountains, over the Alps to Rome," see Susan Mann Trofimenkoff, The Dream of Nation (Toronto: Macmillan, 1982) p.116-117.

9 Monière, op.cit., p.179.

10 Monière, ibid., p.178.

adaptation, however, was required. In France, ultramontanism was necessarily anti-nationalist since nationalism, in Europe, was linked to republicanism and to the ultimate evil, revolution. In Quebec, for ultramontanism to combat liberalism and secure the support of the people, it had to be nationalist. This nationalism, however, was neither radical nor progressive. Based as it was upon the glorification of Quebec's agricultural past and colonial period and on its existent institutions and way of life, it served to justify the status quo. Ultramontanes promoted harmony and unity based on the sanctified institutions of the family and church.[11] On these foundations, the French Catholic nation had been built and these institutions, in turn, would ensure for French Canadians a destiny far more grand than that of English Canadians. The link between language, religion and nationality was largely constructed through this ultramontane perspective.[12]

And it was this divinely ordered, conservative, Catholic ideology that promoted and tied Quebec to a form of education different from the type developing in English Canada.[13] Attempts to introduce British and American ideas in the Quebec educational system ended with a series of school acts passed during the 1840's and 1850's. This legislation enabled municipalities to create school boards and to raise taxes locally for the construction and maintenance of schools. In 1875, the Ministry of Education was abolished and replaced by the Council of Public Instruction

---

11 Monière, op.cit., p.181.

12 Monière, ibid., p.182, Silver, op.cit., p.226 and Trofimenkoff, op.cit., p.204.

13 Silver, op.cit., p.241.

which allowed both Protestant and Catholic committees separate and complete jurisdiction over their respective school systems. Bishops could and did become board members thereby assuring clerical domination of the Catholic section.[14]

A multiplication in the numbers of schools was made possible following the reorganization of the education system. The increase was necessary to provide schooling for a population that contained, by the end of the century, a high proportion of school-age children. In effect, although the birth rate declined slightly after the 1860's, Quebec could still boast a rate of forty births per thousand, one of the highest in the western world.[15] Between 1853 and 1867, school enrollment doubled, from 108,284 to 208,030 and continued a steady, if unspectacular, increase in the following decades.[16] The expanded network of schools required staffing preferably by members of the clergy or religious orders. Bourget used his influence to have the previously imposed bans on the recruitment of clergy revoked. He encouraged French orders to migrate to Quebec and supported the founding of indigenous religious communities. In this manner, the church armed itself with an imposing number of workers willing and able to devote their lives to a variety of

---

14 Magnuson, op.cit., p.26
It is interesting to note that the denominational system was created in response to a petition by Protestants in Montreal requesting educational guarantees for minorities. Danylewycz, op.cit., p.38.

15 Marie-Paule Maloin, "Les rapports entre l'école privée et l'école publique: l'Académie Marie-Rose au 19 siècle" in Fahmy-Eid and Dumont, Maîtresses de maison, op.cit., p.78.

16 Magnuson, op.cit., p.39, 55.

causes associated with health and social services, leisure activities and more importantly, education.[17]

The renewed religious fervour and vigour that these new members infused into the ecclesiastical body allowed the church to extend its influence outside Quebec. It now became possible to carry the mission of evangelization to the western frontier.[18] The first member of the Catholic clergy to arrive in the North-West was a secular priest named Jean-Baptiste Thibault. After a brief visit in 1842, he returned to Saint Boniface. He was back the following year to establish the mission of Lac Sainte Anne on the shores of Devil's Lake, 50 miles west of Fort Edmonton. In 1844, he was joined by Father Joseph Bourassa. Together, they served the mission and the surrounding area until 1852 when they were replaced by Father Albert Lacombe.[19] The clergy's mandate was to

---

[17] Danylewycz, op.cit., p.49.
Marjorie Keith, "A Brief History of Teaching Orders Of Women in Quebec," M.Ed. thesis, University of Manitoba, 1948.

[18] Raymond J.A. Huel in "Gestae Dei Per Francos: The French Canadian Experience in Western Canada" contends that this missionary zeal was a legacy of monarchical, Catholic France, 'the deeds of God through the actions of the French' or 'Gestae Dei Per Francos'. Arrested by the anti-clericalism of the French Revolution, the dreams of fulfillment were transposed to New France and extended to the West. in Benjamin G. Smillie (ed.), Visions of the New Jerusalem: Religious Settlement on the Prairies (Edmonton: NeWest Press, 1983) p.39-40.

[19] E.J. Hart, "The History of the French-speaking Community of Edmonton,1795-1935," M.A. thesis, University of Alberta, 1971, p.12-15.
E.O. Drouin, Lac Ste-Anne Sakahigan (Edmonton: Editions de l'Hermitage,1973), p.10.
Joseph-Etienne Champagne, Les Missions Catholiques dans l'Ouest

evangelize the Indians, to revive the Christian faith and French Canadian culture of the Métis, and in the following decades, to bring the sacraments to the French-speaking settlers. The latter began to move to the Edmonton, Saint Albert and Fort Saskatchewan area in 1875 so that by 1885, the majority (60%) of the non-Indian population of the region was French-speaking.[20]

The French Canadian presence in the area was recognized in the North-West Territories Act of 1875. This legislation contained provisions for the establishment of separate schools in keeping with section 94 of the British North America Act.[21] An amendment in 1877 made French and English official languages of the courts and territorial council. Religious and language rights were further strengthened by the school ordinance of 1884. Resembling the Manitoba School Act, this ordinance granted the North-West a dual school system on the Quebec model. The board of education consisted of twelve members divided between a Catholic and a Protestant Section, each responsible for the management and inspection of its own schools, for licensing its teachers and for the selection of textbooks. The language issue was not mentioned

---

Canadien 1818-1875. (Ottawa: Editions des Etudes Oblates and Editions de l'Université, 1949) p.86.

20 Donald B. Smith, "A History of French-Speaking Albertans" in Howard and Tamara Palmer (eds.) Peoples of Alberta: Portraits of Cultural Diversity (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1985) p.88.
Out of a total population of 2,599, there were 582 whites and 940 Métis. Also in Hart, op.cit. p.23.

21 Manoly R. Lupul, The Roman Catholic Church and the North-West School Question 1875-1905 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974) p.3.

in the ordinance, the assumption probably being that French would be used as a language of instruction in schools serving a predominantly French-speaking population.

By 1891, however, it became apparent that the bilingual promise of the North-West Territories Act could not be fulfilled as an influx of immigrants of various linguistic and cultural heritages to the area changed the status of the French-speaking population to that of a minority.[22] The precarious linguistic and religious situation of the community was well understood by the church hierarchy. Bishop Grandin of Saint Albert sent impassioned pleas to the Quebec church asking the clergy to encourage emigration to the West to fortify the ranks so that "none would think of enacting extraordinary laws" potentially dangerous to French Catholics.[23] The Quebec hierarchy, although sympathetic to the plight of western French Canadians, failed to respond appropriately to the requests. The church in Quebec discouraged emigration altogether, for any decline in the population threatened the survival of the French Canadian homeland itself.[24] Minorities outside were encouraged and expected to take action

---

22 Population estimates vary. Lupul's figures indicate that by 1901 there were 7000 settlers of French origin out of a total population of 30,070. Lupul, ibid., p.7. Huel, on the other hand writes that in 1891, there were only 1,543 French Catholics out of a population of 66,799. Huel, op.cit., p.44.

23 Lupul., op.cit., p.57.

24 The hierarchy could not, however, prevent the movement of people out of the province. There simply was not enough agricultural land to satisfy the demands of a rapidly expanding population. Rather than seeing French Canadians flock to the factory towns of New England in search of employment, the clergy advised those determined to emigrate to go West. There, at least, French Canadians could practise their true vocation of tilling the

on their own behalf - resourcefulness and a high birth rate were the proferred solutions.[25]

An increase in the birth rate could not equal or stem the tide of non French-speaking immigrants to the North-West. Nor could it prevent the backlash of English Protestant resentment and fear at what seemed to be a renewed French Canadian nationalism. Following the Riel Rebellion and the Jesuit's Estate Act of 1888, the alliance between the ultramontane church hierarchy and John A. Macdonald's Conservative government that had thus far guarded French Catholic interests, proved unable to prevent the move by both Manitoba and the North-West to restrict the use of French.[26] In 1892, the territorial assembly abolished the use of French as a language of the legislative chamber and as a language of instruction in both the public and separate school systems. Subsequently, French was allowed to be taught only as a 'primary course' for the first two or three years of schooling to children whose mother tongue was French.[27]

Between 1892 and 1905, a series of ordinances also placed numerous restrictions on separate schools. In 1892, education was centralized with the creation of a Council of Public Instruction replacing the denominational Board of Education. Teacher examination,

---

land while at the same time carry out their evangelical mission. Dean R. Lauder and Eric Waddell (eds.) Du Continent Perdu à l'archipel retrouvé - Le Québec et l'Amérique française (Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1983) p.83

25 Lupul, op.cit., p.57.
Silver, op.cit., p.104.

26 Silver., ibid, p.180.
Wade, op.cit., p.424.

27 Smith, op.cit., p.90.

certification and school inspection became the responsibility of the Board as did curriculum planning and textbook selection. This legislation and the 1901 creation of the Department of Education were reaffirmed by the Autonomy Act of 1905 when the federal government granted Alberta and Saskatchewan provincial status.[28] The influences of the clergy in educational matters were thus effectively curtailed. As Father Leduc claimed in Hostility Unmasked, a tract composed as a rebuke to the 1892 Ordinance, no essential difference remained between the public and separate schools. According to him, Catholic schools existed in name only.[29] A.E. Forget, one of the two Catholic representatives on the Council of Public Instruction in 1892 and an opponent of the measures expressed his objections to the new administrative requirements in a memorandum to the federal government. It was, he wrote, "a strange spectacle [to have] Catholic schools managed and inspected by protestants, and in which the programme of studies is fixed and the textbooks are carefully selected, according to the advice of a protestant superintendent of education."[30]

The Catholic hierarchy was little consoled by the fact that separate schools had not been abolished nor had Catholic taxpayers been overburdened with double taxation. It was indignant at having its 'natural' rights over education restrained and vigorously campaigned against the imposed limitations. The hierarchy's objections stemmed

---

28 Lupul, op.cit., p.79.

29 H. Leduc, Hostility Unmasked (Montreal: Beauchemin and Son, 1896) p.2.

30 Lupul, op.cit., p.101.

directly from the church's ultramontane ideology and its attendant theory of schooling as defined in a series of encyclicals and apostolic letters beginning in 1864. These outlined the role of the family, church and state in education.

According to papal directives, the church had a divine mission to educate. Not only must "God's ministers...travel the length and breadth of the earth...to preach the word of truth...[to] administer the sacraments...[and] edify by their word and example," the directives also stipulated that "instruction [belonged] entirely to the church."[31] The church was to act as the intellectual and moral guardian of Catholic children. This precept was based on the belief of the primacy of the family as the fundamental unit of society. The social organization of the family preceded and superseded all forms of civic or state authority. The child, born of a family, was essentially dependent on paternal authority and became a member of society only through the intercession of the parents. Although education was, according to church law, primarily a function of the family, parents had a responsibility to delegate the education of their children to the church which acted as the extension of the family in society. Therein lay the foundation for the church's claims of having 'natural' rights over the education of children.[32]

Schooling as the extension of the family and of the church contributed to the formation of the perfect Christian, the ultimate goal of

---

31 Pius IX in Allocution to the German Literary Society (1873) in Annette Ramrattan "The Theory of Catholic Schooling in the Archdiocese of Edmonton,1884-1960." M.Ed. Thesis, [illegible] of Alberta, 1982. p.31.

32 La [illegible] 1 Jan., 1929.

human existence. For the development of the child to be complete, the whole environment had to "be permeated with Christian piety."[33] It was, therefore, crucial that the church maintain complete supervision over all aspects of education. This was also necessary because, the hierarchy believed, the weakness of children made them at the same time extremely maleable and easily corruptible. "La faiblesse même de l'enfant nous dit avec quelle délicatesse, quel doigté il faut manier, pétrir cette cire molle et capable de recevoir toutes les formes."[34] While curriculum and textbooks had to offer the right combination of moral, religious and academic instruction, the church had to be absolutely sure that teachers, who acted as guides and role models to the children, were imbued with a genuine Catholic spirit. For the church to attain complete control, the state necessarily had no place in the school. Its only role lay in protecting the interests of the church.

The 1892 and 1905 ordinances on language and religious education ran counter to many of the church's educational precepts and the hierarchy was forced to deal with the immediate repercussions of these ordinances. One of the most pressing and recurring aggravations concerned teacher certification. After 1893, a teacher could only be granted certification by the Board after the successful completion of an academic examination in Regina and upon the presentation of a normal school diploma or the inspector's confirmation of three successful years

---

[33] Leo X111 in Militantes Ecclesiae (1897) quoted in Ramrattan, op.cit., p.40.

[34] La Survivance, op.cit.

of teaching experience in the North-West.[35] The separate schools had difficulty finding teachers who could fulfill these requirements. Part of the difficulty lay in the hierarchy's insistence on obtaining members of religious orders to teach. These women, the clergy believed, had talents and aptitudes that made them invaluable in the schools. As Leduc wrote in Hostility Unmasked, "they devote themselves...entirely, without a desire to change" and ensure "order and the most perfect morality."[36]

There was, however, a decided lack of French-speaking teaching sisters. They had to come from Quebec, a province that had, by 1888, only one normal school for women and the number of diplomas issued by this institution was small. Only 907 had been issued by 1939. Attendance at normal school was not required to obtain teacher certification in Quebec. After nine years of elementary schooling, a few added courses in pedagogy and completion of the examination set by the Board of Inspectors, a successful candidate was granted 'un brevet d'enseignement' which allowed her to teach in either the public or private Catholic systems.[37] This certificate, however, was not accepted by the school administration of the North-West.

The situation was further aggravated by the fact that the sisters in the North-West consistently refused to attend the normal school sessions of the Council of Public Instruction - later the Department of Education - since this would require them to mingle with members of the opposite

---

35 Lupul, op.cit., p.88.

36 Leduc, op.cit., p.33.

37 Le Collectif Clio, op.cit., p.314.

sex.[38] Archbishop Langevin attempted to improve the situation in 1901 and asked the order of the Faithful Companions of Jesus to set up a normal school in the Territories. For unknown reasons, the sisters refused. This so angered Langevin that he felt it necessary to refer to them as 'les Infidèles Compagnes de Jésus.'[39] Eventually, a compromise served to partially resolve the problem of certification. The teaching sisters, numbers permitting, were allowed to hold normal sessions in their own convents.[40] The shortage of qualified French-speaking Catholic teachers as well as the reliance on Quebec teaching orders, however, continued well into the twentieth century.[41]

The church hierarchy was convinced that the imposition of restrictive language and religious legislation in the North-West and the difficulties resulting from these measures were part of the anti-French, anti-Catholic machinations of Ontario Freemasons and Orangemen.[42]

---

38 Leduc, op.cit., p.8.

39 Lupul, op.cit., p.160.

40 Ibid., p.89.

41 The limited number of qualified teachers for the Francophone schools of the West was problematic in 1926 as well as in 1954. A letter from A. W. Gorman, "inspecteur en chef au Ministère de l'Instruction Publique du Québec," to S.A.S.V.; dated 10 aout,1926, reiterated the difficulties. "Depuis longtemps et encore maintenant le ministère a beaucoup de difficultés à trouver pour les écoles établies dans les groupes français, des institutrices possédant à la fois les deux langues et toutes les qualifications pédagogiques exigées de tout le personnel enseignant dans les écoles de l'Alberta." Provincial Archives of Alberta (PAA), Collection des Soeurs de l'Assomption de la Sainte Vierge (SASV)/50/1, box 13, 73.80, Shannon file containing correspondence from Jan. 1949-1970.
A similar concern is expressed in a letter written on the 24

The accusations implied that more than religion was at stake. The new school legislation, by limiting the use of French and submitting all schools to a uniform, secular system of education based on the Ontario public school model, threatened the survival of the French Canadian fact in the West. Ultimately this would mean the demise of the alternative vision of Canada the hierarchy believed was embodied in the Confederation agreement of 1867.

The Quebec political and clerical elite had originally perceived Confederation as a guarantee of provincial autonomy, the separation assuring French Canadian survival. The province of Quebec, it was believed, represented the only "geographical and political expression of the French Canadian nationality."[43] This nolationism had been accompanied by an absence of concern for the French minorities in the rest of the country. This position of indifference, however, was short-lived. The Riel Rebellion (1885), the Manitoba and North-West school questions (1890-1892), the 1912 Ontario school legislation and the Conscription crisis (1917), served to animate the anti-Catholic, anti-French sentiments of the English Protestant elements. In turn, the conflicts contributed to the development of a French Canadian

---

February, 1954, by the Mother Superior of the S.A.S.V. in Nicolet to *Abbé* René Jacob of the parish of Sainte-Anne, Edmonton. "... les vides [two teaching nuns recently passed away] qu'elles laissent doivent être comblés et les recrues de l'Alberta...rares. C'est vous dire que les sujets pour l'enseignement font défaut." PAA, SASV /50/2, box 14, 73.80, Shannon file containing correspondence from Oct. 1926 - May 1935.

42 Lupul, op.cit., p.81.

43 Gerald Friesen, The Canadian Prairies (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984). p.261.

nationalism based on the need and the insistence to maintain the dual partnership of the constitution.[44]

French Canadians asserted that the constitutional agreement of 1867 had guaranteed them the right to their language, religion and schools throughout the Dominion. That the bicultural and bilingual equality guarantees had been overlooked and language and Catholic rights trampled upon, was evidence enough to convince French Canadians that they were not equal partners in Confederation. They were, rather, only grudgingly tolerated and as a result, felt betrayed, besieged and isolated. For the clergy and laity alike, the betrayal translated into a distrust of anything English and Protestant and to a rejection of modernism, materialism and liberalism. For all these were associated with the American, English and Protestant world and as such endangered the way of life and the very character of French Canadians. These feelings of oppression also led to a greater degree of mutual support between Quebec, the homeland and defender of French-Catholic minorities, and the French Canadian communities outside the province.

For the French Canadian minority, in Alberta as elsewhere in the country, the support that Quebec could offer was largely symbolic. Survival for these communities was dependent not so much on the political process as on the establishment and maintenance of organizations and institutions that promoted Catholicism, the French language and French Canadian culture. The clergy encouraged the organization of associations that would foster unity and awaken nationalist sentiments in French Canadians. Among the earliest associations established was an

---

[44] Silver, op.cit., p.111.

Edmonton branch of *la Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste* . Created in 1894, *la Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste d'Edmonton* was modeled after the parent organization in Montreal and professed the same goals: the protection of "Nos institutions, notre langue et nos droits."[45] During the following decades, a plethora of groups with similar aims made their appearance in the city. Among these were: *l'Alliance Nationale* and *les Artisans Canadiens-français* , *l'Association Catholique de la Jeunesse Canadienne-française* , *le Cercle 'Jeanne d'Arc'*, *le Club National* and *l'Union Française de l'Alberta*.[46] In 1925, *l'Association Canadienne-Française de l'Alberta* was created to represent the interests of the entire French-speaking population of the province.[47] These groups were further supported by a number of French-Catholic newspapers, the most important of which was La Survivance.[48]

Although these organizations were necessary to reinforce the sense of national solidarity, they were not nearly as vital to the survival of language and religion as were schools. Until 1964, when legislation allowed the use of French as a language of instruction from grades one to nine, French in schools had been restricted to one hour of instruction per day.[49] In separate schools, however, French language instruction continued surreptitiously or at least without government intervention.[50]

---

45 Hart, op.cit., p. 40. "Nos institutions, notre langue et nos droits" was the motto of the society.

46 E.J. Hart, "The Emergence and Role of the Elite in the Franco-Albertan Community to 1914," in Lewis H. Thomas (ed.) Essays on Western History (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1976) p.168-169.

47 Huel, op.cit., p.45.

This flexibility came to an end shortly after 1910 with the appointment of McNally as Bishop of Calgary.[51] This marked the beginning of the decline of the position of the French-speaking Catholic hierarchy in the West.[52] For the English-speaking clergy, French was a subject to be taught in schools, not a language of instruction. Thereafter, a complete education in French became more difficult to obtain. For Francophone parents determined to pass on their heritage to their children, private schools became the only viable alternative.

Established before World War I, these schools trained a new Franco-Albertan elite. In 1910, the Oblate order founded *le Juniorat Saint-Jean* and in 1913, the Jesuits opened *le Collège d'Edmonton*. Both institutions offered a classical education modeled on the Quebec system.[53] For girls, a decided lack of secondary schools existed until 1926 when, at the invitation of the French Canadian community, the sisters of the order of *l'Assomption de la Sainte Vierge* of Nicolet, Quebec, established a boarding school in the city.[54] This institution, the *Pensionnat Assomption*, offered girls the education and training that would enable them to take on the very important duties of wife, mother and educator. As "the

---

[51] The appointment of Bishop McNally was officially announced April 14, 1913. M.B. Venini Byrne, From the Buffalo to the Cross (Calgary: Archives and Historical Publishers, 1973) p. 108.

[52] Huel, op.cit., p.48.
The change in the composition of the clergy in the West, particularly in the Edmonton archdiocese, is studied more extensively in Chapter 3.

[53] Hart, op.cit., p.117.

[54] Soeurs de l'Assomption de la Sainte Vierge (SASV), Private Collection (PC), doc.1, untitled, not dated.

bearers of culture and the preservers of tradition," their contributions to *la survivance* were of primary importance to the French Canadian community.[55]

In summary, the French Canadians of the diaspora did not sever their ties to their homeland. To the new settlements they brought a number of cultural and social organizations that would enable them to retain their national character. Foremost among these was the Catholic religion and the institutions of the church. It was the clergy that encouraged, accompanied and often preceded the coming of the settlers, ministered to the spiritual needs of the community, protected language and religion and educated the young. In the North-West, the church hierarchy set up schools that resembled the Catholic schools of Quebec. But an influx of non-French immigrants to the area that later became known as Alberta corresponded with and gave rise to an English nationalist, anti-French movement that eventually served to circumscribe French language and Catholic religious rights. The French-speaking community came to rely increasingly on private French language schools administered by the clergy or by religious orders for the education of its children and for the maintenance of the French Canadian character in western Canada.

---

55 Danylewycz, op.cit., p.7.

CHAPTER 3

The Clerico-nationalist Ideology and the Image of Women

To understand the nature of the education offered in the privately-sponsored religious schools of the French minority groups in Alberta and in other French Canadian communities across the West, it is not only necessary to know about the multiplicity of factors that gave rise to the ascendancy of the church in Quebec and to be familiar with the structure of the educational system that evolved under the authority of the church, it is also crucial to have a good understanding of the dominant clerical and secular ideology of the period. For the ultramontane church in Quebec proposed distinctly religious measures that would diffuse the threats of assimilation and simultaneously assure the survival of the French Canadian nation.

The hierarchy's proferred solutions rested in large measure on inculcating in children appropriate religious and national values. The field of action was the classroom. There, children were prepared for their future roles as preservers of language and culture and as defenders of the faith. For women a distinct role was envisaged and a different education given. After a brief study of the ideology of clerico-nationalists, this chapter will examine, at length, the image of women presented by religious nationalist ideologues during the period of the church's eminence, from 1840 to 1960, and attempt to determine whether this ideology restricted the educational opportunities of women in

Quebec. This will set the stage for the study, in a subsequent chapter, of the Alberta manifestation of this religious and nationalist education of women.

As noted in the previous chapter, the convergence of a series of circumstances and events in mid-nineteenth century Quebec allowed the Catholic church to gain ascendancy over many sectors of society. The political reorganization consequent to the 1841 Act of Union, the political and economic weakness of the French Canadian bourgeoisie, the creation of the denominational system of education as well as reliance on Rome and acceptance of papal pronouncements against liberalism set the stage for the clerical offensive. Other factors such as the depressed economic situation in rural areas, the strength of the church and the efficiency with which it promoted its involvement in community affairs and the close liaison it was able to establish with the state contributed to the church's accession to power.

Life in the rural areas became increasingly arduous as the century progressed. Soil exhaustion, the shortage of arable land and unemployment meant that for many people there were few alternatives for overcoming the limited economic situation. While the migration to cities held the promise of a better life for some, others chose a more secure course of action and joined religious communities. The rise in the number of both male and female vocations during the period of the church's eminence was phenomenal. Although nuns outnumbered male members of religious orders and of the clergy three to one, statistics on the rise of female vocations give an indication of the magnitude of the increase. The numbers of nuns went from 260 in 1841 to 13,570 in 1920

and rose to a total of 35,000 in 1961.[1]

This strong church, continually envigorated by new members, energetically promoted control of education and social welfare. In schools, churches and through the press, the clergy persistently argued that as guardian of the faith, the direction of these services was a natural extension of the church's duties and responsibilities. The Catholic hierarchy also contended that the church, by distancing itself from party politics, achieved political impartiality which rendered its management of educational and social services free of patronage and nepotism.[2]

The extensive control the church was able to achieve, however, resulted, in large measure, from the partnership it cultivated with the state. Politicians were fully aware of the financial benefits to be reaped from conceding the responsibilities of education and social welfare to the church. Such an arrangement freed a larger proportion of public money to invest in more renumerative enterprises such as railway construction. As well, the government, anxious to avoid a reoccurrence of the turmoil of 1837-38, highly valued the maintenance of political and social order that the hegemony of the church provided. [3] The most prized contribution of the church, however, was contained in its nationalist message. As a vanguard against the assimilation of the French Canadian identity, the church established itself as an indispensable component of Quebec society.

Since the early days of New France, the church had advocated a central role for religion in the lives of the people. In the nineteenth

---

[1] Danylewycz, op.cit., p.21-22.

[2] Danylewycz, op.cit., p.44.

[3] Ibid., p.41.

century it extended this association and claimed that the very existence of the race depended on the survival of the Catholic faith. The church "appropriated the nationalism of the 'Patriotes', purged it of its liberal and democratic components and grafted it to the clergy's view of French Canadian Catholicism."[4] Working from this secular nationalist perspective, the church set up an elaborate program to counteract English Canadian and American influences and to guarantee *la survivance*..

The clerico-nationalist ideology and strategies for the survival of the French Canadian nation underwent few modifications for the period spanning more than a century - from 1840 to 1960. Both the clerical and lay elite expounded an ideology based on the glorification of the past, a time when French Canadians were masters in their land. And valued were those cultural particularities considered to have thus far prevented assimilation. The clerico-nationalists advocated the return to a rural life based on agriculture, the preservation of the large family, the maintenance and purification of the French language and the re-adoption of religious values and morals that the clergy attributed to the pioneers and heroes of New France.

Consequently, nationalists viewed with alarm the urban shift.[5] They continually compared the intrinsic values of life in the rural areas to the glaring materialism promoted in cities.. As agriculturalists, the colonists had held the qualities of independence, resourcefulness and courage as well as being imbued with superior moral character. These ancestors had never neglected their religious and patriotic duties and so had assured the

---

[4] Danylewicz, op. cit., p.48.

[5] Mona-Josée Gagnon, op.cit., p.14.

continuation of the race by producing large, religious, independent, healthy, diligent, mild-mannered, happy and patriotic families. A move away from the land invariably would mean social degeneration since the three bastions of society, the family, the parish and the school, would be weakened. "Tout départ de la campagne implique presque invariablement une déchéance sociale...Nos lignes de force...nos 'trois bastions', la famille, la paroisse, l'école en sont ébranlées."[6]

Cities, according to clerico-nationalists, did not provide the proper environment for the establishment of exemplary families. The urban areas offered many distractions such as movies and dance halls that threatened to erode the solidarity of the family. Children, no longer under the watchful eye and authority of parents busy working outside the home, were prey to delinquency. Parents, on the other hand, engaged in the individualistic pursuit of material goods, neglected their familial obligations - proof rested in the smaller size of urban families - and their relationships often disintegrated into divorce. Clerico-nationalists like Groulx feared that French Canadians were becoming Americanized and that in the process would lose those "religious and social patterns that had characterized and protected French Canada."[7] The standardization and homogeneity of cities would lead ultimately to assimilation.

A return to an agricultural way of life and the maintenance of social and cultural characteristics such as the family, the French language and the Catholic faith formed the nucleus of the clerico-nationalist program for the survival of the French Canadian race. Women figured

---

6 Lionel Groulx, Paroles à des étudiants (Montréal: Editions de l'Action Nationale, 1941) p.28.

7 Trofimenkoff, op.cit., p.225.

prominently in this ideological construct. This naturally followed from the assumption that the family, especially the rural family, constituted the base upon which the nation was built and upon which rested the survival of French Canada. The central role of women as wives and mothers and as the preservers of religious values and cultural traditions had been greatly praised by ultramontane thinkers. These qualities, combined with women's fertility that assured the physical continuance of the race, were held in such esteem as to confer upon maternity and motherhood quasi-mystical characteristics. As indicated by Mona-Josée Gagnon in her work on the image of women, the veneration of women reached new heights in Quebec society. The extent of this phenomenon has seldom been seen even in Catholic countries where the role of women is defined in terms of motherhood and the family. "Si les sociétés catholiques ont en général énormément valorisé la maternité et la mère, la mythologisation de la mère québécoise est sans doute un phénomène unique au monde."[8]

The role of women in nationalism was first outlined in 1866 by *Abbé* Laflèche in his publication on the family, church and state, Quelques considérations sur les rapports de la société civile avec la religion et la famille.[9] Laflèche's conception of women's role was derived from the ultramontane doctrine on the family. The family, church and nation were divinely ordered patriarchies following natural principles of authority. Just as the Pope had authority over the king and the king over man, so did

---

[8] Mona-Josée Gagnon, op.cit., p.18.

[9] Abbé Laflèche, Quelques considérations sur les rapports de la société civile avec la religion et la famille (Montréal: Eusèbe Sénécal, 1866).

man have authority over woman.[10] Man's duties and responsibilities as head of the family, however, could not be fulfilled without the support of the spouse. She was thus called upon to maintain the hierarchical construct by acting as her husband's partner.[11] As the educator of their children, she also supported the hierarchy by guaranteeing the reproduction of religious and moral values from generation to generation.

To these traditional ultramontane precepts, Laflèche added the particularly *québécois* element of linking religion and nationality.[12] Women's role in the survival of the nation was central as a result of the pivotal nature of her role in the family and those same female characteristics of devotion, selflessness and renunciation that served to maintain the natural social order allowed women to be particularly successful in the propagation of the race and in the preservation of language and culture.

For the next century nationalists repeated Laflèche's conception of the role of women in French Canada. Neither religious nor secular elite could envisage a society without the family at its centre. And the contribution of women was to hold the family together. As Bourassa eloquently stated:

---

10 Laflèche op.cit., p.86.
Sherene Brookwell in "Les Instituts Familiaux," p.8 to 10, also charts the evolution of Laflèche's ideas on women's nationalist role.

11 Ibid., p.99.

12 Ibid., p.47.

> L'homme sans doute, et c'est l'ordre voulu par Dieu, est le chef de la famille, mais la femme en est l'âme, le coeur, le noeud vital. Sans la femme, et la femme toute femme, la femme épouse et mère, et seulement femme, la famille n'a plus de vie ou elle n'a plus qu'une vie incomplète, incohérente. [13]

As late as 1961, the ideology did not entertain any role for women outside the home. A text published in that year and approved by the Catholic Committee for the Council of Public Instruction and written with the purpose of preparing young girls for their familial and social role, described the family as "la vocation fondamentale de la femme."[14] The total universe of a woman was contained within the home. This restriction, however, did not prevent ideologues from bestowing upon her the title of "reine du foyer." [15]

The label gives an indication of the dualistic nature of the role of women in the family as defined by clerico-nationalists. Although they placed women clearly within a separate sphere, they as a whole never perceived women as passive.[16] Women's duties and obligations were

---

[13] Henri Bourassa, "La famille canadienne-française - ses périls, son salut", La Famille - Semaine Sociale du Canada 1Ve Session (Montréal: Secrétariat des Semaines Sociales du Canada, 1923) p.283.

[14] Marthe Saint-Pierre, Education familiale de la jeune fille (Québec: Editions du Pélican, 1961) p.7.

[15] Mona-Josée Gagnon, op.cit., p23.

[16] An exception was Bourassa's ideas of women. His were more in line with the 19th century bourgeois conception of women. He saw women as being delicate, gentle, romantic, charming, forever ready to use their feminine guile to influence others.

S. Mann Trofimenkoff, "Henri Bourassa and 'the Woman Question'" in The Neglected Majority Vol 1, (eds.) S. Mann

numerous and their assigned task immense. If they were to fulfill these, they could not be weak and helpless. Groulx's vision of the feminine ideal represented this idea of women. His conception corresponded to the rural, pre-industrial feminine reality of an agriculturalist, peasant society.[17] Groulx studied the history of New France and speculated about the character of the women in the colony. The heroism and strength of women facing isolation and innumerable difficulties, their tenacity, resourcefulness, authoritarianism and even a "male resolution" he transposed to his time and advocated for contemporary women.[18]

In effect, all of these traits and more were needed to accomplish that which was deemed to be woman's work. A woman's duties included those of wife, mother and housekeeper. Nationalists particularly valued the reproductive functions of motherhood. As members of a minority, they were greatly worried about the proportion of French Canadians in Canada. By 1920, there were fewer French Canadians compared to English or other ethnic Canadians, yet the birth rate was higher in Quebec than in any other province.[19] It was still believed, however, that the most

---

S. Mann Trofimenkoff, "Henri Bourassa and 'the Woman Question'" in The Neglected Majority Vol. 1, (eds.) S. Mann Trofimenkoff and Alison Prentice (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977) p.108.

17 Trofimenkoff, "Les femmes dans l'oeuvre de Groulx," Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française 32 (3) déc. 1978, p.394.

18 Trofimenkoff, ibid., p.387-89.

19 Trofimenkoff, Dream of Nation, op.cit., p.222.

important safeguard for the race was increasing numbers.[20] Groulx stated the need in these terms:

> Il n'y a d'avenir, pour un peuple, une nation, que s'ils se recréent sans cesse, se refont sans cesse des enfants, des femmes et des hommes...Pour vivre, pour garder nos positions...nous ne pouvons compter que sur nos berceaux et sur le courage de la Canadienne française. [21]

A woman's patriotic duty was to bear children to enlarge the population. Maternity was her natural function, and, like her ancestors who had by their contribution assured the continuance of the race, she should not turn her back on her responsibilities. A woman producing a dozen or more children was praised for her heroism. While "empêcher la famille" became akin to treason. [22]

To procreate plentifully was perhaps the most visible evidence of a woman's patriotism. It was, however, but her first contribution to the survival of the nation. The Catholic church had always stressed the

---

20 Mona-Josée Gagnon contends that French Canadians believed in 'la revanche des berceaux' because they had not yet conceived of political solutions to guarantee minority rights. The clerico-nationalist elite, however, had consistently pursued political means to achieve survival even though members of the clergy disdained party politics.
Mona-Josée Gagnon, op.cit., p.18.

21 Lionel Groulx, La Canadienne Française (Nicolet: Soeurs de l'Assomption de la Sainte Vierge, 1950) p.17.

22 M.-J. Gagnon, op.cit., p.19.
The need for larger families was a partial explanation for the nationalists' opposition to woman's work outside the home and to the process of urbanization. Women living and working in the unsanitary and dangerous conditions of the city could not but give birth to sickly offsprings, that is, if they bothered having children at all. M.-J. Gagnon, ibid.

parental responsibilities of educating children with the proper religious and moral values. As the father's absence from the home for much of the day limited his role as educator, those functions were assigned to the mother. She was to shape the soul of her children by discovering and encouraging the development of qualities placed there by the Creator, to form their character and activate their conscience by teaching them discipline, charity, love, honor, a sense of duty and self-control, as well as infuse in them an appreciation of knowledge and aesthetics.[23] Mothers imbued their children with the religious values that not only differentiated them from Protestant children but that, along with language and traditions, made them full members of a superior race. French Canada, clerico-nationalists believed, was a nation with "un climat moral presque exceptionnel."[24]

A minority nation under the threat of assimilation cannot simply "count heads and expect to win the democratic game."[25] To resist, an endangered people must have pride and the collective will to survive. And what better way to assure this than by glorifying those characteristics that identify the group and by encouraging the transmission of these across generations? Women were assigned the task of teaching the French language and the cultural traditions of French Canada to their children and of instilling in them a fierce loyalty to the race and an ardent love of

---

[23] L. Desbiens, "Le rôle de la mère canadienne au foyer" in La Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste de Montréal, La Saint-Jean-Baptiste, Fête Nationale des Canadiens Français: Le jeudi 24 juin 1943, La Mère Canadienne (Montréal: Secrétariat Général, 1943) p.76.

[24] Groulx, La Canadienne, op.cit., p.5.

[25] S. Mann Trofimenkoff (ed.) Abbé Groulx Variations on a Nationalist Theme (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1973) p.16.

everything bequeathed them by their ancestors.

Clerico-nationalists urged mothers to speak French to their children and stressed the importance of the language as an instrument of nationhood. Language carried ideas, feelings, customs and the teachings of the Catholic church. It was the "expression of the soul."[26] Mothers were to impress upon their children the beauty, the uniqueness, the superior qualities and the universality of the language. As Groulx forcefully advised: "Apprenez-lui surtout que sa langue est une langue de grands civilisés, et qu'il n'y a que les imbéciles, les orangistes, les fontionnaires fédéraux et quelques tribus sauvages à ne pas la savoir."[27] Of course children who lost the ability to use the language, "denationalized children," also lost their national character and became no better than the uncivilized - the imbeciles, Orangists, federal bureaucrats and others who had never learned French. According to Groulx, these children were actually inferior to others of any race. They and their parents, especially the mother, had failed, as a result of laziness and apathy, to uphold the cultural legacy the ancestors had worked so hard to maintain and transmit to succeeding generations.[28]

Groulx and other nationalists consistently reminded French Canadians of their responsibilities to their ancestors:

> We are the representatives of former generations and our task is to weld the past to the future. The inheritance we now

---

26 Trofimenkoff, ibid., p.74.

27 Groulx, La Canadienne, Op.cit., p.23.

28 Trofimenkoff, Groulx, op.cit., p.73.

> have was accumulated over three centuries: we do not have the right to toss it to the winds.[29]

The link with the past was an affirmation of the ability of the race to survive. And history also provided constants and directions for the future. A knowledge of one's past was first acquired in the home under the tutelage of the mother. She made sure that the traditions passed on from the preceding generations were honored in the home and she encouraged the re-adoption of customs that might have been forgotten or neglected over the years. She also explained the historical significance of such ceremonies and celebrations to her children. Through her, they learned to love the heroes of the past and to take pride in their deeds, to cherish their culture and become ardent patriots, forever on guard against threats to the nation.

By invoking the ideals of the past, women were to socialize all children to be devout, strong, courageous, self-sacrificing and patriotic. They were to mould "des enfants, des hommes de haute qualité."[30] But as these words of Groulx indicate, what nationalists wanted most of all were great men, an elite eager to take on the leadership of the French Catholic nation and keep the patriotic fires burning. In a speech addressed to a group of male and female students, Groulx exhorted them to excell in all subject areas. French Canada, he continued, needed experts in all disciplines: great politicians, great doctors, lawyers, poets, philosophers and great saints. He added for the benefit of his female audience; "de grandes institutrices, de grandes religieuses, de grandes mères de famille,

---

29 Trofimenkoff, ibid., p.75.

30 Groulx, La Canadienne, op.cit., p.22.

de grandes femmes."[31] Women, he was implying, were not to become leaders themselves but were to foster the development of the male *chefs* and support their ventures whenever called upon to do so. Indicative of this is the fact that women were not granted the vote provincially until 1940.[32]

Women's duties, according to clerico-nationalists, were at the same time glorious and secondary, their activities crucial yet limited.[33] While their representation of women hardly corresponded to reality, no one doubted that women could live up to the ideal. After all, God and nature had endowed women with a collection of attributes that made their mission at least feasible if not easy. Much of women's work, in fact, allowed them to satisfy their natural tendencies. For example, a simple domestic task such as dusting served to gratify a woman's innate desire for order and cleanliness. Dust, dirt and clutter made women suffer; cleaning up, on the other hand, brought liberation from unpleasant feelings. That housework could provide such salutary benefits for women was ample evidence to ascertain that this type of work naturally belonged to women. Clerico-nationalists reinforced this 'natural' distribution of labour by describing trivial as well as not-so-trivial household functions in lyrical terms. "Tenue par des doigts féminins, une aiguille devient une sorte de baguette magique."[34] Assiduously done ironing and mending became 'chef-d'oeuvres' and domestic work was held up to be 'un sport

---

31 Groulx, Paroles, op.cit., p.60.

32 Le Collectif Clio, op.cit., p.349.

33 Trofimenkoff, Les femmes, op.cit., p.393.

34 Albert Tessier in M.-J. Gagnon, op.cit., p.15.

passionnant'.[35]

The ideologues did not economize either in their effusive praise of woman's role as wife, mother and educator. Representatives at the 1943 congress of the Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste eulogized women and stressed their superiority: "La mère canadienne-française n'est inférieure à aucune autre en héroisme et...elle est même supérieure au plus grand nombre."[36] Of course women could not but be accomplished, admirable mothers and wives. After all, it was their natural vocation. And only through motherhood, in both the physical as well as the spiritual sense of the word, could women obtain satisfaction.[37] Fortunately, they had been granted generosity, tenderness, the ability to listen and to forgive, the spirit of renunciation and self-sacrifice, attributes particularly useful in the fulfillment of their mission. And as the preservers of the faith, they had been appropriately blessed with spirituality and a refined sense of morality.

A woman's alleged superior ability to discern the truth, to choose between right and wrong, placed on her shoulders the responsibilities of not only her children's moral well-being but her husband's as well. Traditional religious nationalism clearly defined the husband as irresponsible when it came to moral issues. He, like his children, depended on the woman's value judgement and advice.[38] Without her loving and enlightened guidance, he would likely never find salvation. He

---

35 Ibid., p.21.

36 Ibid., p.19.

37 Ibid., p.24.

38 Ibid.

was, as Susan Mann Trofimenkoff points out, absolved from accepting responsibility for his own foibles: "As long as women were the redemptors then men could engage in all manner of scurrilous activities - their nastiness would always be tempered by the opposite qualities in women and social equilibrium would result"[39]

This image of women as "the agents of redemption of man and society," was prevalent throughout the period in question.[40] During the 1940's and 1950's, the representation of women was adapted to fit the reality of an increased participation of women in the public sphere. The ideologies still sanctioned motherhood and woman's place in the home, yet clerico-nationalists had to take into account reduced family size - three or four children - and the mass-marketing of labour-saving household appliances. Women were to volunteer any spare time and energy to social action work. Like the feminists at the turn of the century, they were expected to extend their moral influence beyond the home and clean up society. Social problems, according to clerico-nationalists, were above all religious and moral problems and women, as moral guardians, were appointed to find solutions. They were to guide and purify the political process, mostly by influencing men to vote properly, support the rights and improve the working conditions of women, teach them their duties, protect young girls and adolescents and provide care for orphaned children.[41]

---

39 Trofimenkoff, "Bourassa", op.cit., p.114.

40 Ibid.

41 Trofimenkoff, Les femmes, op.cit., p.392.

"Women were not simply mothers of individual families, they were also mothers of the nation." [42] As the welfare and moral status of the family rested in the mother's hands, so was the condition of society dependent on women's standards of morality. Women could not be a constructive force without being a potentially destructive one as well, and the religious nationalists feared that "if female behaviour changed, so would society."[43] Women represented the affective realm, that which was eternal and immutable. They were the conservative and stable element that by its daily routines, similar over time, anchored a people to a nation.[44] Their place in the home was crucial and the clergy felt compelled to appeal to women to maintain the traditional role and also to warn them of the temptations that might entice them away from their familial responsibilities. Certain nationalists insinuated that the problems of Quebec society had women, their vanity, wordliness and lack of thriftiness as the cause.[45] Nationalists saw the frequent need to remind women of their patriotic duties and railed against those who failed to follow the prescribed norms, for failure to do so could mean the disintegration of the whole religious nationalist construct.

The importance of women in the traditional ideology cannot be over-emphasized. As Trofimenkoff succinctly stated:

> French Canada needed the inexhaustible strength and energy, the courage, the religious conviction, the sense of duty and mission, the will to survive, the very assurance of continuity

---

42 Trofimenkoff, Action Francaise, op.cit., p.82.

43 Trofimenkoff, Dream, op.cit., p.230.

44 Danylewycz, op.cit., p.7.

45 Trofimenkoff, Les femmes, op.cit., p.390-91.

across time that only women could provide.[46]

Women had a distinct, momentous, national [redacted] to play and particular characteristics such as piety, sacrifice, devotion and heroism were required in the fulfillment of their patriotic duties. These were considered much too important for the development of an appropriate feminine personality to be left to the vagaries of nature or in the untrained hands of parents. As the twentieth century progressed, religious and secular nationalists alike increasingly promoted the need to prepare girls for their future domestic, social and nationalist role, in educational institutions.[47]

Before 1900, education for the majority of girls ended prior to the completion of the seven years of primary schooling offered by the public school system.[48] For a few, the daughters of the elite, or of parents

---

[46] Trofimenkoff, Dream, op.cit., p.230.

[47] Lucienne Plante, op.cit., 1968.

[48] Several sources on the education of girls in Quebec indicate that few records, if any, exist listing only the rate of school enrollment of girls for the period in question. Le Collectif Clio, op.cit., p.314 and Nadia Fahmy-Eid and Micheline Dumont "Les rapports femmes/famille/education au Québec: bilan de la recherche," in Nadia Fahmy-Eid and Micheline Dumont (eds.) Maîtresses, op.cit., p.29. Although there are no separately listed statistics for girls, it is possible to deduce a certain pattern from the rate of enrollment of both boys and girls. Magnuson, in A Brief History, op.cit., p.55, claims that school enrollment in Quebec, at the turn of the century, compared to the enrollment in other Canadian provinces. Although about 80% of children were listed as attending school, these figures reflected school registration rather than attendance. Magnuson further states that the great majority of children at the time did not attend school past the age of twelve and that there was, as well, a progressive decline in the standards of education and in the rates of attendance as the twentieth century progressed.

willing and able to make due without the daughter's labour and able to raise the boarding and tuition fees, a secondary education could be obtained at private convent schools.[49] These were finishing schools with the objective of preparing girls for marriage, for convent life or for earning a modest living should both other avenues fail. At the completion of eleven years of schooling, the graduates could boast of having a moderate knowledge of the arts and sciences: religion, grammar, literature, ancient and modern history were emphasized. The girls were also exposed to zoology, botany, mineralogy, geology, astronomy and hygiene. To the program were added instruction in the domestic skills of cooking, sewing, needlework and the rudiments of art: drawing, painting and music. During the last half of the nineteenth century, there was a progressive adaptation of the curriculum to the needs of women who might be entering the workforce with bookeeping, typing and stenography being offered. [50]

There were few alternatives open to women at the end of this training. A normal school for girls was opened in 1856 yet few women

---

Brookwell, op.cit., p.32, 61, states that by the time schooling was made compulsory in 1943, "most Quebecers still did not acquire more than the very minimum amount of education." She goes on to say that 77% of children did not continue past grade seven and that even as late as 1961, 85% of Quebecers did not attend school beyond grade nine. As well, the post-primary schooling women obtained was often from domestic education schools.

49 Le Collectif Clio, op.cit., p.181. Attendance at convent schools was not restricted to the bourgeoisie. Many parents exchanged agricultural products or cords of wood for the convent's fees.

attended since normal school training was not necessary to teach in the public schools. As well, the gradual clericalization of the teaching profession limited the demand for lay instructors.[51] While at the turn of the century twenty teaching orders of nuns accounted for half of all female teachers, fifty years earlier, teaching sisters had comprised only one-tenth of female instructors. During the twentieth century, taking the veil became the most common form of entry into the profession. Yet teaching still remained the principal form of employment for educated lay women, since prior to 1908 they were barred from the classical colleges, the prerequisite to university entrance and the liberal professions.[52]

By the turn of the century, the need for a classical college for girls was articulated by such prominent women as Marie Gérin-Lajoie who in consultation with sister Sainte-Anne-Marie of the Sisters of the Congregation, lobbied and obtained permission from the church hierarchy, for the sisters to set up an accredited program in Montreal.[53] The Collège Marguerite Bourgeoys opened its doors in 1908.[54] Affiliated with Laval University at Montreal, it offered the second cycle of a classical education. Shortly after, in 1910, the religious communities already offering a secondary education in their convent schools were granted permission to adapt these to allow their students to complete the

---

51 ibid., p.216.

52 ibid., p.211.

53 Marie Gérin-Lajoie was a prominent Quebec feminist and co-founder of *la Fédération nationale Saint-Jean-Baptiste*. See footnote 63.

54 Claude Galarneau, Les Collèges classiques au Canada français (Montréal: Fides, 1978) p.38.

first cycle of the classical program. These four-year courses of study were given the prestigious designation of *cours universitaires* but were the equivalent of the immatriculation of English high schools.[55]

The classical education offered girls, like the program for boys, was based on the 'ratio studiorum', a program essentially grounded on the study of classical languages and literature. From these, students progressed to the grammatical analysis of ancient as well as of modern languages, rhetoric, philosophy, history, geography, mathematics, music and drama.[56] The sciences (chemistry and physics, botany, biology and minerology) were added to the curriculum only in the 1930's.[57] During the first few years following the creation of the girls' program, the syllabus replaced Greek with the study of a modern language such as German or Spanish. This was required by the clerical administrators of the parent institution, Laval University to differentiate the program from the one offered boys. When Greek was added in 1922, the courses of studies of the classical colleges were identical for both young men and women.[58]

There were, as one might expect, many objections to the establishment of classical colleges for girls. The idea, even when not adamantly opposed, was often treated with derision as illustrated by this statement: "Quand madame séra mariée, elle présentera à son mari de la

---

55 These courses were known as *lettres-sciences* in Montreal and *primaire supérieur* in Quebec. Le Collectif Clio, op.cit., p.315.

56 Galarneau, op.cit., p.166-68.

57 ibid., p.180.

58 Plante, op.cit., p.103.

soupe aux alphabets latins ou grecs!"[59] The opposition, however, was usually more emphatic. Some critics simply did not see the utility of a classical education for girls. After all, the ultimate goal of such an education was to form priests, lawyers and doctors, all careers closed to women.[60] Others felt that women, by trying to imitate men, lost their femininity.[61] Mostly, it was feared that women removed from the home would be seduced by the intellectual life and refuse to accept marriage, motherhood and the responsibilities of the family.[62]

The resistance did not, however, silence the demands of women for higher education. Middle-class women such as Marie Gérin-Lajoie, Joséphine Marchand-Dandurand and Caroline Beique, members of the *Fédération nationale Saint-Jean-Baptiste*, an organization founded in 1907 uniting a variety of women's groups, wanted their daughters educated.[63] The lack of women's colleges in French Canada forced them

---

59 Diane Bélanger, Lucie Rozon, Les religieuses au Québec (Montréal: Editions Libre Expression, 1982) p.181.

60 Plante, op.cit. p.27.

61 Ibid.

62 Antonine Gagnon, op.cit., p.130.

63 Le Collectif Clio, op.cit., p.329. Originally, members of *la Fédération* had been ideologically aligned with feminists of the English Canadian and American movements. They aimed to reorganize society through their work in philanthropic associations. The clericalization of these organizations in Quebec and the fierce anti-feminism of the clergy served to relegate French Canadian feminists to a purely supportive role in benevolent organizations. As well, the ideological constraints of Catholicism and nationalism imposed limits on the feminists and *la Fédération* failed to propose radical modifications to the role and status of women. The majority of feminists

to send their daughters to English secular institutions like McGill, or to the United States and Europe to study. On April 25, 1908, the newspaper La Patrie announced the opening in Montreal of a secular "lycée de jeunes filles."[64] This private, religiously neutral institution proposed to respond to the needs of these feminists. The church hierarchy reacted quickly to this attempt at undermining the absolute control of the church over education and acquiesced to the formation of a classical college for girls under the auspices of a religious order.

The clerical hierarchy's acceptance of higher education for women was not simply a concession to the spirit of the century.[65] Members of the clergy quickly discerned the expediency of these developments. A classical education was, as the historian Galarneau contends in his study of classical colleges, by its very nature, an expression of the French-Catholic essence and the keeper of the French culture.[66] Classical colleges were in themselves a cultural legacy - the first having been founded in Quebec city in 1636.[67] Based as it was on the study of the Latin and French character, the whole permeated with the moral teachings of the Catholic religion, this type of education was a perfect vehicle for clerico-nationalist teachings. The role of classical colleges was to prepare an intellectual aristocracy that upon graduation would propagate the faith, protect the

---

supported the clerico-nationalists' definition of feminism: "...l'émancipation de plus en plus effective de la personne morale féminine." Plante, op.cit., p.39.

64 Le Collectif Clio, ibid., p. 321.

65 Antonine Gagnon, op.cit., p.172.

66 Galarneau, op.cit., p.234.

67 Plante, op.cit., p.11.

rights and liberties of French Canadians and maintain the social order.

Higher education for girls also had nationalistic ends. But these goals were very much in line with the clerico-nationalists' image and role of women. The canon of Laval University outlined the role of the educated woman in his address at the opening ceremonies of the Collège Marguerite Bourgeoys. She was to protect her faith and to contribute to the formation of an intellectual elite, "protéger le flambeau de sa foi et ... participer à la formation d'une élite intellectuelle canadienne-française."[68] His words indicate that the motivations for the religious nationalists' support for higher education was not to produce intellectual women, nor was it primarily intended to prepare them for university entrance. Antonine Gagnon in her study of the classical college of Notre-Dame de l'Assomption de Nicolet, gives as evidence the fact that in her interviews with former students, they often mentionned the lack of career orientation and information offered in the school.[69] She adds that the purposes of a feminine classical education were to fully prepare young girls, religiously, morally and intellectually for their roles of wife, mother and teacher. Furthermore, a classical education gave a woman the opportunity to prove her feminity by seriously embracing and preparing for her mission as educator:

> "Elle doit prouver qu'elle ne renonce pas à demeurer femme, qu'elle ne trahit pas son être profond, mais au contraire qu'elle envisage sa mission d'éducatrice avec

---

68 Plante, op.cit., p.78.

69 A. Gagnon, op.cit., p.106.

> gravité et qu'elle désire y apporter une préparation adéquate."[70]

As long as education did not render women pedantic, vain and selfish and they continued to willingly accept their familial responsibilities, higher education would meet with approbation and was commended for contributing to the formation of a superior race. This was evident in such statements: "L'université deviendra le foyer d'une race plus forte parce qu'elle serait plus instruite," and "...des femmes supérieures feront une civilisation supérieure."[71]

It can be said, in conclusion, that until the 1960's, education for women continued to be guided and limited by the clerico-nationalists' notions of women's place in society. Women's increased participation in the workforce during the Depression years of the 1930's and during the Second World War intensified the fears of the elites. They linked what they perceived as the disruption of the social order to the disintegration of family life and reacted by vehemently demanding a return of women to the home. They offered a retreat to traditional moral values as an antidote to the dangers of socialism, communism, rampant American materialism and to all manners of 'modernisms'. All these irreligious and sinful influences could be nullified by women's moral influence in the home and in society.[72]

---

70 Ibid, p.111.

71 Plante, op.cit., p.77-78 and p.128.

72 Nicole Thivierge, "L'enseignement ménager, 1880-1970," in Nadia Fahmy-Eid and Micheline Dumont, Maîtresses, op.cit., p.126.

CHAPTER 4

Factors Leading to the Foundation of the Pensionnat Assomption and the Program of Study

The education the Catholic church brought to the West was similar in structure and content to the education that had evolved in Quebec under the leadership of the ultramontane clerico-nationalist elite. As this chapter will indicate, it was not possible to duplicate the ideology in the separate schools of Edmonton, for as the century progressed, the separate school board was dominated by English-speaking members not always sympathetic to the educational needs of the French-speaking community. In an effort to protect and maintain its religious and national legacy, the church and the Francophone community founded private schools that aimed to prepare young people to defend the faith and preserve their culture by inculcating in them the traditional moral values based on the primacy of the family, church and nation. This chapter will examine the conditions that led to the founding of one such school, the *Pensionnat Assomption*, outline the school's program of study and define the teachers' conception of female education.

For Franco-Albertans, World War I and the inter-war years, 1919-1939, were particularly difficult ones. The period marked for the Edmonton community the beginning of the gradual decline of the group's strong sense of identity and influence. During this twenty-five year period, the ability of the French-speaking community to survive was

tested repeatedly. Demographic and socio-economic changes, reorganizations within the provincial school system and within the Catholic church itself provided numerous obstacles to *la survivance*. Whatever cordial relationship French Edmontonians had previously established with their English-speaking neighbours became strained during the Conscription Crisis of 1917. The reluctance of the *Québécois* to enlist in the fighting forces for service in what was perceived to be an imperialist war was met by accusations of treason from English Canadians. Although French-speaking Albertans contributed to the war effort with as much enthusiasm as their English counterparts, they did not escape the anti-French attacks because of their association with Quebec.[1]

Within the next two decades, the composition of the French-speaking community and the transformation of urban life brought about by such inventions as the motor car and moving picture shows further threatened the sense of cohesiveness of the community. The decline of French-speaking immigration to the West during the war, combined with the clergy's campaign to prevent rural exodus during the Depression years, meant that a greater proportion of the French ethnic population had been born and raised in the community.[2] This generation growing up in a culturally mixed environment did not have the national consciousness of

---

[1] E.J. Hart, "The History of the French-speaking Community of Edmonton, 1795-1935", M.A. thesis, University of Alberta, 1971, p.128. Hart claims that no figures exist on the enlistment of French Canadians by provinces, but that on the eve of conscription in 1917, half the number of French Canadians in the forces came from provinces other than Quebec.

[2] Ibid., p.187. In 1931, in an attempt to prevent the disintegration of rural parishes and unemployment in the cities, the clergy began an appeal to "le retour à la terre."

the previous generations. Their commitment to their cultural legacy was further threatened by the liberated attitudes that accompanied the advent of the car, moving pictures and dance halls. These new forms of entertainment drew young people away from the traditional family gatherings and parish *soirées* that had served to bind the community together. The economic hardships of the Depression further weakened those bonds as the need for physical survival superseded cultural and ethnic concerns.[3]

The 1920's also witnessed a decrease in the numbers of French-speaking clergy. This proved to be a significant alteration in the composition of the community's elite. From the earliest days of the fur-trading settlement the church hierarchy had staunchly supported the interests of the community and carefully nurtured and protected its identity. The high proportion of French-speaking clergy serving the various Catholic parishes made this work possible. In 1920, the Catholic archdiocese of Edmonton, comprising 28,372 souls of which 18,094 were French-speaking, was served by 98 priests, 72 of French origin.[4] Following the death of Bishop Legal and the appointment of Henry O'Leary as head of the diocese, the numbers of French-speaking clergy quickly declined. By 1931, there were only sixteen left to serve a French population of 25,933.[5]

---

[3] Ibid., p.164.
Lauder and Waddell, op.cit., p.82.

[4] La S[illegible]vance, 5 sept., 1934.

[5] Ibid. In 1931, the total number of priests was 80 and the English-speaking population of the archdiocese was listed as 34,144.

The move by O'Leary to recruit fewer French priests was a corollary of the hierarchy's decision to replace the missionary priests, mostly of the French Oblate order, with secular clergy in urban parishes.[6] The changing role of the church, however, was not the sole impetus for this reorganization. It was, as well, a stratagem by which the English-speaking clergy, in the continuing struggle for control of the church in the West, aimed to wrest power from the French Canadian hierarchy.[7] The ensuing tension and the declining number of French-speaking clergy left French Canadians feeling assailed by forces within the church itself. Difficulties also arose between English and French-speaking Catholics on the Separate School Board. From 1926 on, only two French-speaking trustees represented the interests of one-third of the Catholic population. These representatives were unable to obtain from the Board approval for hiring what was considered to be, by the Francophone community, a sufficient number of French-speaking teachers.[8] The proposals for the consolidation of schools, first placed before the legislature in 1929, also worried the community. The already weak voice of the French-speaking trustees would be lost in larger boards.[9] Also lost would be the autonomy that had permitted school boards in isolated communities to allow the surreptitious use of French as a language of instruction.[10]

---

6 Ibid., p146.

7 Huel, op.cit. p.48-49.

8 Hart, op.cit., p.191.

9 La Survivance, 31 Janv.,1939 and Hart, op.cit., p.195-196.

10 Hart, op.cit., p.195.

In the wake of the difficulties experienced by the community following the First World War, French-speaking Albertans came to rely increasingly on schools to ensure the maintenance of a separate identity. The emphasis was placed on improving the standards of French taught in the schools, providing a secondary and post-secondary education in colleges, and increasing the number of certified bilingual teachers. The need for bilingual teachers was most pressing. On September 1, 1925, the government of Alberta put into effect an educational bill that authorized the teaching of French in schools one hour per day. This supplemented the 1905 Autonomy Act that had allowed French to be used as a language of instruction in the first two years of primary school.[11] The community welcomed this new legislation and quickly set up appropriate programs in the schools. In the predominantly French parishes of *Saint Joachim* and *l'Immaculée Conception* , keeping the schools staffed with qualified bilingual teachers proved to be consistently difficult. The elite turned to the religious order of *les Soeurs de l'Assomption de la Sainte Vierge* of Nicolet, Quebec, to obtain qualified teachers.

This teaching order was well known in Alberta. In 1894, three sisters had journeyed to the mission of *Notre-Dame des Sept Douleurs* in Hobbema and there established a boarding and day school for Indian children.[12] During the same period, the order had founded a number of mission schools across the prairie provinces: in Alberta at *Saint-Paul des Métis* (1899) and Wetaskiwin (1912), in Saskatchewan at Onion Lake

---

11 Hart, ibid.

12 PAA, SASV/15/, 73.80, "Decrets/Visites," box 8, item16, 13 août,. 1894.

(1891), Battleford (1893) and Delmas (1901).[13] The order had its origin in Quebec in 1853. It had been founded by *Abbé* Jean Harper and four young postulants to expressly answer the educational needs of a small rural parish in the diocese of Nicolet.[14] By the turn of the century, the order had 750 teachers in 83 schools across the province.[15]

Les Soeurs de L'Assomption 's avowed dedication to western Catholic minority groups, Indians, Metis and Francophones in predominantly Protestant milieux, influenced the French-speaking community's request for their services. The nuns made French a priority in their many educational endeavors, and were well prepared to fulfill the mandate set by the community.[16] In 1924, the order accepted the invitation of *Abbé* Lepage, *un prêtre colonisateur* and *Abbé* Bernier, the *curé* of the parish of *l'Immaculée Conception* to set up a congregation in the city.[17] The sisters were to alleviate, first of all, the shortage of

---

[13] PAA, SASV, "Chroniques," box 4, item1, paper giving the history of the mission titled "Mission de Delmas," 28 jan., 1960 and SASV/13/51, 73.489, Chroniques 1899-1921.

[14] Germain Lesage, Les Origines des Soeurs de l'Assomption de la Sainte Vierge (Nicolet: Editions des Soeurs de l'Assomption de la Sainte Vierge, 1957) p.239.

[15] Marjorie Keith, A Brief History of Teaching Orders of Women in Quebec. M.Ed. thesis, University of Manitoba,1948, p.102.

[16] PAA, SASV, box 14, item 50/2, Shannon file, letter from Provincial Superior to Mary Laframboise, 23 mai, 1962. The letter to Mary Laframboise stated that "knowledge of both French and English [was] one of the necessary conditions for a young girl to be admitted to [the] Order." In reality, however, only the knowledge of French was a prerequisite.

[17] *Prêtres colonisateurs* or colonizing priests were placed in Quebec and in the Eastern United States to promote emigration to

French-speaking teachers in the separate schools - the first three to arrive taught at *Sacré Coeur* school for one year but their explicit instructions were to establish and operate a private boarding school for girls.[18]

The community had attempted since 1913 to found a convent school for girls in the city. There were already two institutions providing higher education for boys. *Le Juniorat Saint-Jean* under the direction of the Oblate order, had opened in 1910 and *le Collège des Jésuites d'Edmonton* in 1913.[19] All attempts to establish a girls' school, however, had failed. In 1920, the community had invited the Sisters of Sainte Croix from Saint-Laurent, Quebec, to establish and direct a school. After obtaining pledges from lay supporters to finance the venture, the community had been frustrated by the church hierarchy's failure to grant approval for the project. When permission was finally granted, the sisters declined to direct the school.[20] Finally, in 1926, Bishop O'Leary gave his consent, *les Soeurs de l'Assomption* had agreed to commit their services and the

---

the Canadian West.
Hart, op.cit., p.33.

[18] Soeurs de l'Assomption de la Sainte Vierge (SASV), Private Collection (PC), Doc.1, untitled, not dated.
It is also recorded in the "Chroniques" that nuns from the order began to teach at *Sacré-Coeur* school in 1925.
PAA, SASV/5/1/; box 6, 20 oct., 1925

[19] Hart, op.cit., p.117.

[20] In previous years, two other orders, the Sisters of Saint-Anne and *les Fidèles Compagnes de Jésus* , had also tried but failed to establish a boarding school.
SASV, PC, Doc.1, op.cit. and also in the Private Collection a booklet written by Eloi DeGrace, "La Paroisse de l'Immaculée Conception 1906-1981" (Edmonton: La Paroisse Immaculée Conception, 1981) p.70.

Pensionnat Assomption was able to open its doors September 26, 1926.[21]

In that first year of operation, sixty students registered and attended the *Couvent de l'Assomption d'Edmonton* , as the boarding school was formally called. Approximately half of these students came from outlying French-speaking communities and were boarders at the school. The others resided in the city and attended as day students. Four teaching sisters looked after the educational needs of these scholars of grades one to ten. During the next decade, the higher grades 10, 11 and 12 were taught intermittently according to the demands dictated by student enrollment. After 1935, all grades were consistently offered.[22] By 1960, the final year of the study, the school had a student population of 164 and employed eight teachers.[23] Members of the teaching staff were nuns belonging to the order. The school employed few lay teachers. One was hired in 1926 and others came on staff in 1939-40 and 1955-56.[24] As a rule, a lay

---

21 The order, with financial help from the community, purchased the Hagman Hotel on the corner of 98 St. and 108 Ave.. Situated in the parish of *l'Immaculée Conception* , in proximity of the church, the Hagman Block was ideally located.

22 A lack of space forced the nuns to restrict enrollment to grades 4 to 12 during a five-year period prior to the expansion of 1960-61.
SASV, PC, "Liste du Personnel Enseignant Depuis 1926", unclassified.

23 SASV, PC, "Pensionnat d'Edmonton, nombres d'élèves par grades depuis 1948." unclassified.

24 Ibid.

teacher was employed only when the order could not find a qualified nun to fill the position and was released as soon as one was found.[25]

It is important to note, at this point, the relatively small number of girls attending the *pensionnat* and the selective, limited character of the institution. The 1936 Census of the Prairie Provinces, the most appropriate population data for the early years of the study, indicates that in 1936, there were 32,192 French-speaking Albertans, 5,077 of whom were school-age girls between the ages of five and nineteen years.[26] Given that the number of students at the school was less than 80 in 1936, it is possible to estimate the rate of enrollment as approximately 1.6% of the total number of Franco-Albertan school-age girls.[27] The figures for 1960, the closing year of the study, show a similar proportion; students of the *pensionnat* accounted for only 1.2% of the eligible female population.[28] The expense of tuition and boarding fees certainly deterred

---

25 The order's practice of not hiring lay teachers, quite apart from the ideological conflict these might have posed, was financially motivated. The school, although exempted from taxation, did not receive either government or school board subsidies. The only source of revenues came from the students' room, board and tuition fees and from private music lessons given at the school. With this money, the nuns paid their custodial staff but they, themselves, did not receive salaries. Lay teachers, on the other hand, had to be paid; the added costs discouraged the nuns from hiring them even when they were short-staffed.
SASV, PC, "Historique de l'Académie", 1963, p.2, unclassified.

26 Census of the Prairie Provinces, 1936, Vol I, "Population and Agriculture," Table 57.

27 "1946-47, Report of Inspectors of Schools," unclassified. The report gives the number of students as 84.

28 The 1961 Census of Canada does not provide data on the number of school-age Franco-Albertan females. But given that

many parents from sending their daughters to the school. In 1926, externals were charged four dollars a month for tuition; boarders paid twenty dollars boarding and tuition fees. A better indication of the costs borne by parents are the 1961 rates. Externals and boarders paid a yearly admission fee of fifteen dollars and tuition fees of $150.. Boarding fees were an additional $350. per month.[29] While the costs of attending the school were relatively inexpensive for externals they were prohibitive for boarders. Francophone parents in Edmonton would not have been discouraged by the expense of sending a daughter to the *pensionnat* , but only daughters of the wealthier families living outside the capital city could have afforded to attend.

All girls at the *pensionnat* , whether urban or rural, rich or poor, had to adapt to life at a convent school and accept the rigours of the program of studies, a program which remained relatively unchanged during the period 1926-1960. The boarding school had been created as a response to the needs of the community - these varied slightly over the years - and had been given a clear mandate. The school was to equip young girls with the necessary intellectual and language skills in preparation for their future vocation as teachers in French-speaking communities. A circular requesting financial support from parishioners

---

there were 83,319 French-speaking Albertans and assuming that half were women and one-third of these females were children between the ages of 5 and 19, the number of girls attending the *pensionnat* totalled approximately 1.2% of school age women in Alberta.

[29] For younger students, tuition fees were $100. yearly and boarding fees $300. monthly. Interview with Sr. Anne-Marie Mireault former student, teacher and principal of the *pensionnat*, August 22, 1987.

stated these explicit goals of the school. "De cette institution devront sortir les jeunes personnes formées et préparées à aller elles-mêmes enseigner dans nos paroisses de langue française et dans les groupes canadiens éloignés ou isolés."[30] To accomplish this objective, the girls, first of all, had to gain entrance and graduate from one of Alberta's normal schools. The *pensionnat* , therefore, had to offer a curriculum which fulfilled the exigencies of the province's Department of Education while providing at the same time the pedagogical directions and cultural environment that would promote the use and enhance the knowledge of the French language.

Drawing from years of educational experience in Quebec and from the already well established links between the order and Laval University, the directors of the *pensionnat* sought to affiliate the school's program of studies with the Quebec university.[31] Permission was obtained during the first year of the school's operation and the university was thus allowed to "cover with its authority the programs of studies, improve these programs [and] coordinate plans and methods."[32] As in Quebec convent schools, the course of study offered was the *cours universitaire primaire-supérieur* leading to the completion of the first cycle of the classical education program. The affiliation would not only assure "a good pedagogical orientation and a sound intellectual and moral formation,"

---

30 PAA, SASV/50/1, 73.80, box 13, Shannon file, "Fondation du Couvent Canadien-Français d'Edmonton, Alberta", not dated.

31 The post-primary education provided by the order in Quebec had been under the aegis of Laval University since 1914. SASV, PC, "Affiliation à l'Université Laval", unclassified, not dated.

32 Ibid., my translation.

the certificate granted would allow the student entrance to Quebec normal schools and universities.[33]

The Alberta Department of Education only reluctantly gave approval to the school's program of study. Government officials had repeatedly voiced their objections to the granting of equivalent credits for studies done in Quebec during the numerous attempts by the French-speaking community to obtain accreditation for teachers trained in that province.[34] Representatives of the Alberta Department of Education claimed that in Quebec, mathematics, the sciences, the 'arts' and English were neglected.[35] They insisted that the *pensionnat's* curriculum conform to the guidelines for private schools set by the Minister of Education. It had to substantially follow the program of study proposed by the Department, devote a required amount of instruction time to approved subjects and apply the same teaching standards as those expected in the public and separate schools. Teachers had to have valid Alberta

---

[33] Ibid. After 1944, the *cours universitaire primaire-supérieur* underwent a number of modifications, among these was a name change. They became known as cours *lettres-sciences*.

[34] In 1914, the Minister of Education J.J. Boyle had granted the recognition, under certain circumstances, of normal school certification from Quebec. The teachers could teach if they had sufficient English skills and followed a five-week course at one of Alberta's normal schools. Hart, op.cit., p.119.
In a 1926 letter, however, there is mention of a move by the *Association Canadienne Française de l'Alberta* to push for the adoption of teaching certificates from Quebec convent schools. PAA, SASV/50/1, 73.80, box 13, Shannon file, letter from Sr. Marie-du-Crucifix, to Sr. Marie-Ange, Directrice, Ecole Normale de Nicolet, 9 oct., 1926.

[35] Ibid. Sr. Marie-du-Crucifix does not specify which 'arts' were thought to have been neglected.

teaching certificates or acceptable equivalent certification and the school was subject to regular inspection by the Department.[36]

Satisfying the pedagogical and curriculum requirements of both the Alberta Department of Education and the Quebec university required a number of innovative practices from the students and staff of the *pensionnat* [redacted]ugh only one hour of French per day was allowed according to [redacted]cational provisions of 1925, the school offered all instructi[redacted]nch. As reported by a sister superior in 1966, "à l'exception de l'anglais, toutes les matières s'enseignaient en français."[37] This fact, of course, was concealed from government officials. Inspectors' reports only made reference to two half-hour periods of French per day, from nine to ten o'clock each morning.[38] Even the version presented in the French-language press did not reveal the full

---

36 SASV, PC, Doc. 23, "Private Schools Regulations", 1946. These stipulations were part of the amendment to the Department of Education Act of 1945 that regulated the establishment, operation and supervision of private schools. Alberta Education Planning Services, "A Study of Private Schools in Alberta," Edmonton, 1984, p.12. Although there was no such stringent legislation prior to 1945, the inspectors' reports of private schools for the years preceding the implementation of the amendment stressed "the fact that the standard of education offered was generally in accord with that outlined by the Department ... as was the generally acceptable qualifications of the teachers." Leroy Sloan, "A Policy Analysis of Legislation Permitting Public Private School Agreements for the Provision of Educational Services." Ph.D. thesis, University of Alberta, 1980, p.48.

37 SASV, PC, Doc.10, "1926-1966, Quarante ans au service de la population franco-albertaine", 1966. The fact that French was the language of instruction was frequently repeated and is contained in many writings about the school.

38 Ibid., "1946-47, Report of Inspectors of Schools", unclassified.

dissociate themselves from the world outside the school. Although French was to be the only language used in the school, day students had to return to an English world at the end of the day. And even those students who came from homes where French was still spoken, would generally have encountered more difficulties maintaining fluency in the language than students boarding at the school. Yet, one can assume that even the boarders, who were immersed in the language twenty-four hours a day, would not have been totally shielded from the influence of the English language as it infiltrated the inner sanctum of the *pensionnat* through the day students.

The *avant-gardistes*, however, tended to reject the validity of these explanations and attributed the shortcoming to apathy and to a lack of patriotism. "Pour être sincère, concluons que c'est à cause du manque de volonté et de patriotisme."[18] Nevertheless, they extolled the advantages of having two languages as well as reminding students of their duties to parents, nation and church when soliciting their co-operation during the campaigns. The *avant-gardistes* asserted that learning the French language contributed to the aesthetic and intellectual development of students. It was claimed that those who learned that most elegant and harmonious of languages were more likely to appreciate the beautiful and the refined and that by obtaining a thorough knowledge of one's own language, learning a second language became easier. Another incentive given in favour of learning the language was more pragmatic. Since French was recognized as an international language as well as being the language of one of the country's two founding nations, bilingualism, it

18. SASV, PC, Binder, op.cit., Noel, 1947.

was claimed, would improve a student's prospective career opportunities and future station in life.[19] There was no mention of the fact that during this period, bilingual French Canadians belonged, on average, to a lower socio-economic status group than did unilingual English Canadians and that the ability to speak two languages tended to be an insignificant if not a negative factor in the acquisition of wealth and social status.[20]

Career opportunities, however, did not rank as the most important reason for learning the language. The girls were never allowed to forget that language linked the past to the future and that the continuity of the French fact in the West rested upon their ability to acquire and transmit the language to their descendants. One student expressed the sobering responsibilities of the task in these words:

> La survivance de notre langue si chère, la langue de nos aïeux, la langue de nos pères, la langue canadienne-française, oui la langue qui est bien près de s'effacer de nos foyers si nous, les jeunes, nous l'espoir de demain ne savions réagir, combattre et se dépenser pour cette digne cause.[21]

The members of the *Avant-Garde* did not shun their duties and eagerly promoted a number of activities to achieve this end. One in particular seemed to have been a favorite of students and teachers alike. The nuns had received instructions about the use of this particular method from the motherhouse in Quebec.[22] It had been used effectively in

---

19 SASV, PC, Binder, op.cit., "La Jeune Canadienne," juin 1937.

20 Marcel Rioux, Quebec in Question, translated by James Boake (Toronto: James Lewis & Samuel, 1971) p.96-97.

21 SASV, PC, "minutes," op.cit., 18 nov., 1935.

22 PAA, SASV, Shannon file, letter from Sr. Marie-Ange, a.s.v., Nicolet to Edmonton order, 22 juin, 1933.

Quebec convent schools for a number of years. At the meetings, each student received a number of tokens, their language currency for the week. For every improper use of the language, a token had to be sacrificed. The student who had saved the most tokens at the end of the week received a small prize at the *Avant-Garde* meeting. In this way, the game provided a constant incentive to speak well.

Many of the other activities demanded commitment and involvement well beyond the weekly meeting hour. The *avant-gardistes* were regularly called upon to discuss or present summaries of works by prominent Catholic and nationalist authors. Their weekly tasks also included reading "La Survivance des Jeunes", a supplement to the newspaper La Survivance, aimed at the young Francophone population and the official organ of the provincial *Avant-Garde*.[23] A *cercle* of older girls wrote and published a newsletter, *La Jeune Canadienne* during the school year 1936-37. Other journalistic endeavours followed with *Le Jaseur* in 1945-46, *Assumpta* in 1947-48 and *La Voix de l'Assomption de la Sainte Vierge* from 1945 to 1958.[24]

Not all activities of the *Cercles de l'Avant-Garde* were dedicated to the pursuit of literary and linguistic excellence. While limited in number, some activities were politically motivated. By taking action, the students and the nuns, as instigators of these projects, hoped to influence the world outside the confines of the school. They studied the school and language rights of the French minority group to be ready when called upon to defend or extend those rights. An opportunity to act came in

---

[23] "La Survivance des Jeunes", vol.1, no.1, mai, 1934.

[24] SASV, PC, see Binder for the individual issues.

1934. Each *cercle* wrote to Prime Minister R.B. Bennett reaffirming the rights of French Canadians and demanding support for French language radio programming in the West.[25] The report of a 1936 statement reminding students of the potentially damaging repercussions for French Catholics of a proposed education bill concerning the consolidation of school boards, suggested a course of action more indicative of the students' and nuns' approach to political questions.[26] Special prayers were requested to bring matters to an acceptable close.

Prayers, letters to politicians, literary activities and language games, were all directed to stimulate the patriotic feelings of the students. Judging by the effusive and emotional tone of much of the students' prose, the activities of the *Avant-Garde* seemed to have been successful in stirring their national spirit. Often, the *avant-gardistes* exuberantly expressed their zeal to maintain the heritage their ancestors had so valiantly fought to preserve.

> Qui de nous n'est prête à conserver notre langue? Qu'elle est celle qui serait assez lâche de mentir à la face de Dollard en méprisant sa langue, en ne la parlant pas ou la parlant mal...?[27]

The strength of their commitment was proportionate to the sense of outrage expressed at those who dared to shun their responsibilities. Students who refused to uphold their linguistic traditions were traitors to their race. They lied unashamedly to their ancestors, in this case to the hero of Long Seault, by refusing to carry the battle sword in defense of

---

25 SASV, PC, "minutes," op.cit., 27 avril, 1934.

26 Ibid., 14 fev., 1936.

27 Ibid., 6 déc., 1935.

the nation. The students expressed their inability to pardon people who, while destined to live in a certain world, failed to prepare themselves adequately to fulfill their mission in that world.[28]

Saving the national heritage of language and culture for future generations was a noble mission, a mission that Dollard des Ormeaux and countless other heroes of New France had valiantly performed by keeping intruders and enemies of the French Canadian people at bay. Always, the battles had been costly and at times the heroes had had to lay down their lives for their country. They had fought till the end, *jusqu'au bout*. And like their heroes, the *avant-gardistes* battled for the survival of the nation. They called themselves "soldats de la cause française" and liked to believe that they too would dedicate their lives to the cause.[29] "Oui, nous défendrons notre langue quelque soit le prix qu'il faudra déposer."[30]

The nature as well as the structure of the activities of the weekly *Avant-Garde* meetings supported the image of student-nationalist as soldier-hero. Part of the ritual at each meeting was singing the patriotic song *Jusqu'au bout*, and saluting the flag Carillon Sacré-Coeur.[31] The

---

[28] Ibid., 23 oct., 1936.

[29] Ibid., 29 nov, 1935.

The minutes of 30 sept., 1938 also compared the students to soldiers. The report reads: "Notre nouvelle présidente adresse la parole à ses soldats."

[30] Ibid., 8 nov., 1935.

[31] Ibid., 23 oct,1936, 5 fév., 1936. The oath to the flag: "Salue à toi, noble drapeau Carillon Sacré-Coeur. Redis-nous la foi et la vaillance de nos ancêtres. Et sur ce sol de la patrie fais le ralliement de la race canadienne française." According to Mason Wade, ' *le drapeau Carillon Sacré-Coeur* 'was a "mythical

battle of Carillon, or Ticonderonga where the French under Lévis and Montcalm had defeated the English armies of Abercromby in 1758, was duplicated by the students during a debate on the history of Canada under the French.[32] The proportion of soldiers in the French and English camps was maintained. One student represented the 3000 French soldiers while the others portrayed the 15,000 men of the English forces. By declaring the French camp victorious, the students also faithfully reproduced the outcome of that historic battle.[33]

At another *Avant-Garde* meeting, students again became soldiers, this time in a game on the proper use of French grammar and vocabulary. Two camps were formed each with a captain and a complement of soldiers. The object of the game was to remove the enemy soldier from the battleground. After ten errors, a soldier was taken prisoner, fifteen errors wounded her and she was declared dead after twenty.[34] The correspondence between the image of the soldier defending New France and the student fighting for the survival of her language was further strengthened by the use of analogies. For example, the collection of folk

---

standard" purported to have been flown at Ticonderoga in 1758, but was actually the early twentieth century creation of a religious-nationalist *abbé* at the Seminary of Quebec. Wade, op.cit., p.516.

32 Francis Parkman, Montcalm and Wolfe (Markham, Ontario: Viking Press, 1984), pp. 352-370.

33 SASV, PC, "minutes," op.cit., 27 avril, 1934.

34 Ibid., 6 avril, 1936.

songs known as *La Bonne Chanson* was likened to the bayonnette: "La Bonne Chanson comme la bayonnette est une arme française."[35]

Just as the nationalist program of the *Avant-Garde* was responding to the call of the Quebec clerico-nationalists for the purification of and emotional attachment to the language, it fostered, as did the education of the Quebec classical colleges, "le culte des ancêtres" through the glorification of the past. A knowledge of history was, according to idéologues such as Groulx, the key to patriotism. Knowledge of a common ancestry first bound people together. Solidarity soon turned to pride as they became aware of the virtues, exploits and quiet determination of the ancestors to withstand the yoke of conquest.[36] The course of action chosen by the ancestors also set the guidelines for future action. Descendants were to ensure "the dignity of a French destiny" through the preservation of schools, laws, customs and language.[37]

For Franco-Albertans who had to live " dans [une] atmosphère saxonisée et saxonisante," this mission would always be arduous.[38] It was doubly important to arm young people, who had little or no intimate

---

35 Ibid., "minutes du Cercle Jeanne-L'Archevêque-Duguay," 4 nov., 1945, unclassified.

36 Lionel Groulx in Susan Mann Trofimenkoff, Abbé Groulx Variations on a Nationalist Theme (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1973) p.190.

37 Ibid., p.151.

38 SASV, P.C., Binder, op.cit., "Echos", 24 nov., 1948. The phrase was Groulx's and was the maxim of La Survivance. The text read: "En Amérique, dans cette atmosphère saxonisée et saxonisante, nous le savons maintenant: nous sommes restés catholiques parce que nous sommes restés Français. Après Dieu, voila d'où nous est venu le salut."

knowledge of the land of their ancestors, with the lessons of history. Throughout the period, the *Avant-Garde* and other nationalist clubs organized meetings and daily, weekly and even monthly activities that centred around the study of historical themes, cultural traditions and notable ancestors. On the more formal occasions, the students of the pensionnat joined the scholars of the *Juniorat Saint-Jean* and of the *Collège des Jésuites* to observe *la Semaine de Fierté Nationale* and *la Fête de Dollard* .[39] Along with other members of the French-speaking community, they celebrated their nationality and renewed their patriotism.

But these were special festivities that only served to reinforce the daily and weekly history lessons that had always been an integral part of the education of girls at the *pensionnat* . Before the creation of the *Avant-Garde* , the nuns had incorporated elements of nationalist education in the curriculum. Directives emanating from the motherhouse in Nicolet encouraged the nuns to inculcate in their students "le culte des ancêtres."[40] In one instance, a convent-wide literary contest for classical education students required them to draw upon their knowledge of Groulx's, Chez nos ancêtres, to write an essay, "Seigneuresse... pour dix minutes." It asked the students to imagine and describe life as a chatelaine in a manor-house of New France.[41]

---

[39] La Survivance, 12 déc., 1951 and SASV, PC, Binder, op.cit., "Echos," 1950-51.

[40] PAA, SASV/50/1, 73.80, box 13, Shannon file, letter from motherhouse in Nicolet to Sr. Marie-du-Crucifix, Edmonton, 10 dec., 1927.

[41] PAA, SASV, ibid., "Concours Littéraire", mai, 1935.

The organization of the *Avant-Garde* allowed for a more sustained and systematic nationalist education. This often seemed to have been necessary. Several student surveys convinced the members that there were glaring deficiencies in the sum and substance of the knowledge of their historical past. The results of a 1938 survey indicated that half of the thirty-five girls who had returned the questionnaire knew who Jacques Cartier, Champlain, Maisonneuve, Dollard des Ormeaux, Louis Hébert and La Vérendrye were but could not name the difficulties and successes of their exploits. The other half recognized only Cartier as the discoverer of Canada. Very few of the total number of respondants had heard of the Seven-Year War, could name the causes, describe the principal battles or understand the repercussions for New France of the signing of the Treaty of Paris in 1763. [42]

As on many other occasions, the students resolved to study more closely the period of French domination in North America, to examine the lives and accomplishments of prominent ancestors, and to research the traditions of New France. The activities of a week in 1936 sponsored by the *Avant-Garde* , *Notre Semaine Canadienne* illustrate the students' approach to the study of history.[43] Each day was devoted to a particular period in the life of New France. The students summarized works on the subject. They learned about the discoveries of Cartier, the foundation of Quebec and Montreal, the work of the Jesuits, Recollets and Ursulines, the Iroquois threat, the voyages of Marquette, Joliette and LaVérendrye, the deportation of the Acadians and the battle of the Plains of Abraham. The

---

[42] SASV, PC, "minutes de l'Avant-Garde," op.cit., 9 oct., 1938.

[43] SASV, PC, "La Survivance des Jeunes", vol II, no.16, avril 1936.

historical events were, however, but a backdrop, a stage upon which the ancestors played out their heroic deeds.

And heroism was defined in very narrow terms. It meant devotion to the Catholic church and to the French nation in North America. Jacques Cartier was admired as much for preparing the natives to receive the word of God as for claiming in the name of France the lands along the St. Lawrence, "s'il a découvert un pays, il a aussi préparé les âmes des sauvages à recevoir la divine semence."[44] The martyrs, René Goupil, Gabriel Lalemant and Jean de Brébeuf were admired for their missionary zeal and for their willingness to die for their faith.[45] But the most revered hero was Dollard des Ormeaux. Intensely religious, he dedicated his life to his country. Through prayer and the sacraments, he found the courage to withstand and diffuse a formidable Iroquois attack at the cost of his own life.[46] By combining piety and patriotism, the indispensable qualities of the ideal French Canadian, he personnified for nationalists, young and old alike, the will of the French nation to survive on North American soil.

Dollard's courage to resist till the end, his determination never to retreat nor to beg for mercy, his piety, all these qualities were held up as inspiration for young French Canadians. And they were encouraged to emulate his exemplary behaviour. An *avant-gardiste* in 1938 noted the influence of the hero. "Dollard personifie pour nous, le brave qui a puisé sa force dans le Christ.... [Il] a sacrifié sa vie pour sa patrie. Il a pris sa

---

44 Ibid.

45 Ibid.

46 Robert Hollier, Dollard: Héros ou Aventurier? (Montréal: Les Editions de l'Horizon, 1963).
Lionel Groulx, Dollard est-il un mythe? (Montreal: Fides, 1960).

force dans l'eucharistie. Nous devons à son exemple sacrifier quelques plaisir pour notre mouvement."[47] Like him, students should be willing to make sacrifices to develop those character traits that sustained patriotism, " la débrouillardise, le courage, la pureté; ces trois qualités de Dollard doivent être aussi les nôtres, puisque nous sommes ses descendants."[48]

Of course, there were numerous other heroes to emulate. Some like Louis Hébert and his wife Marie Rollet exemplified the French Canadian agricultural ideal. These courageous, hard-working, steadfast, pious and thrifty colonists possessed all the virtues young people needed to cultivate and they were frequently held up as models. A work on Louis Hébert was recommended to *avant-gardistes* with the explanation, "Cet ouvrage, rapportant la vie et la mentalité de ce brave colon, indique et touche de près le vrai esprit des Canadiens français.... Ce livre est recommandé à l'usage des maisons d'éducation, pour que, à l'exemple des Hébert, notre jeunesse soit courageuse, persévérante et amie de la terre."[49]

All ancestors were revered in "le culte des ancêtres". Even the most obscure progenitors had performed heroic deeds. After all, they had assured the survival of the race. If French Canada was still Catholic and French, it was due to their perseverance, piety, strength, bravery, generosity, resourcefulness and will to survive, or, in other words, to their heroism. The nation would endure only if young people in turn

---

47 SASV, PC, "minutes de l'Avant-Garde," op.cit., "La Fête de Dollard des Ormeaux", not dated.

48 SASV, PC, Binder, op.cit., "La Fête de Dollard", 24 mai, 1951.

49 SASV, PC, "minutes de l'Avant-Garde," op.cit., 26 jan., 1934.

accepted their duties and lived by the moral codes set by the ancestors. They were to pattern their lives after "l'héroïsme qui leur fut légué."[50] An address by the provincial superior urged the girls to live by this creed. "Soyez fidèles!... Fidèles à vos ancêtres! Durant toute cette année, vous avez contemplé par l'étude de 'Nos Héros' l'héroïsme des fondateurs et des sauveurs de la patrie canadienne. Souvenez-vous que vous appartenez à cette lignée de braves et que jamais l'on ne compte de 'traitres' parmi vous."[51] She intimated that to deviate from the established pattern amounted to the denial of one's ancestry and meant the refusal to carry on the heroic fight, a treasonous course of action, no less.

On the other hand, acceptance of one's obligations granted full access to one of the greatest civilizations of the modern world. To sweeten the burden of the task envisaged, the girls assured themselves of the merit of the undertaking by claiming that the French culture was actually superior to all others. "La culture française est aussi grande que la greque et la latine; elle leur est même supérieure parce qu'elle est profondément chrétienne."[52] They, as French Canadian women, had been blessed by God with the responsibility of keeping the flame of this Canadian manifestation of "la plus belle civilisation qui fût jamais", burning in the home.[53] And since *noblesse oblige* , they would not turn away from their duties.[54]

---

50 SASV, PC, "Annuaire Souvenir," op.cit., p.13.

51 Ibid., p.5.

52 SASV, PC, Binder, op.cit., "Echos", 19 jan., 1949.

53 SASV, PC, Doc. 21, "Amicale de l'Assomption, 1926-36."

54 Ibid.

Like their foremothers, the students were to preserve the French Catholic traditions in the home so that their children, in turn, could pass them on to their descendants. "Nous sommes l'espoir de l'avenir; comme nos mères ont tenu à conserver les traditions canadiennes françaises si chrétiennes dans leurs foyers, nous tiendrons à notre tour... et nous passerons le flambeau à la génération qui montera après nous."[55] Much of the work of the *Avant-Garde* was taken up with the study of national customs and traditions. The girls were assigned to find songs, poems, stories, plays and illustrations of traditions. During the meetings, they presented their findings by dramatizing the customs or by giving a summary of their research to the group. The girls were then exhorted to uphold or revive the observance of these in the home. "Ensuite nous avons gardé un silence pendant deux minutes ceci pour bien se rappeler quelle tradition nous ferions revivre dans nos foyers pendant les fêtes."[56]

There were numerous traditions studied by the *avant-gardistes*. Although a few such as *l'Epluchette*, *la Guignolée* and *les Sucres* depicted cultural scenes from the past, most were linked to the observance of religious rites.[57] Even some apparently secular customs such as *la Tire*

---

55 SASV, PC, Binder, op.cit., "Echos", 29 nov., 1950.

56 SASV, PC, "Minutes de l'Avant-Garde," 22 dec., 1936.

57 *L'Epluchette* was a corn-shucking social gathering, *la Guignolée*, a house-to-house collection for the poor at Christmas time, and *Les Sucres* represented the work of collecting the sap from the maple trees in early Spring, processing this sap to sugar and celebrating the end of a successful harvest with an evening of dance and entertainment.

and *le Gâteau des Rois* were celebrated on religious feast days.[58] Some like *la Criée* had direct religious significance. An auction of baked goods held for the purpose of raising money to buy prayers for the souls in purgatory, *la Criée* , showed, according to the students, the importance of the supernatural in the daily lives of their forbears.[59] Others such as *l'Angelus, la Croix du Chemin , le Signe de la Croix , la Prière en famille, le Saint Viatique à la maison* and *la Bénédiction du Jour de l'An* were purely religious observances.[60] The re-introduction of these in the home not only strengthened the link between twentieth century Franco-Albertans and their ancestral past, it served also to re-establish or to reinforce the intimate place the church held in the lives of French Canadians.

The emphasis on the study of history, traditions and "le culte des ancêtres" aimed to inculcate in the students a strong allegiance to the Catholic religion and to the French Canadian race. The girls' account of their efforts and their statements of conviction indicated that the nationalist education succeeded in making them more aware of their

---

58 On the 25 November, the feast day of Saint Catherine, the patron saint of students, children made toffee. *Le Gateau des Rois* was made to celebrate Epiphany, the feast day to commemorate the day the Three Kings presented their gifts to the infant Jesus. A pea was hidden in the cake batter and the child to find it was declared king or queen for a day.

59 SASV, PC, Binder, "Voix de l'ASV", Noël 1948.

60 *L'Angelus* was a prayer uttered morning, noon and night and *le Saint Viatique* , the granting of the last rites at home. *La Bénédiction du Jour de l'An* was the traditional benediction given by the patriarch of the household on New Year's Day. In the name of God, the Father, he gave his blessings to his flock.

collective past and more inclined to preserve their cultural, linguistic and religious heritage. Their writings, however, revealed a certain ambivalence about their role as French Canadians in an English Canada. Theirs was not the radical nationalism of the Quebec religious nationalists nor was it of the same intensity as the nationalism of some of the most militant western Francophones. Unlike the Franco-Manitoban Jesuit educator who claimed that "pour un petit Français, l'anglais n'est jamais l'essentiel," the students recognized the necessity of learning English, even to the point of neglecting French.[61] On several occasions, they proclaimed their allegiance to the Canadian nation in these terms: "Le patriotisme pour une jeune Canadienne française signifie l'amour du Canada; il signifie de plus l'amour de conserver son coeur et son esprit français... Nous aimerons à cause de cela, mieux le Canada que ceux qui n'ont ni notre sang ni notre langue."[62] Nationalism, on one hand, was a positive force that would enable them to become better Canadians.

In some ways, the nuns recognized the impossibility of denying the English character of the world outside the *pensionnat* and at times advocated a more liberal nationalism. By having the students participate in the Kiwanis music festival, for instance, they showed a certain degree of willingness to expose their students to the English environment.[63] And at least in one instance, they were willing to use the means provided by an English Protestant association to further the educational prospects of their

---

61 SASV, PC, "La Survivance des Jeunes", avril, 1936.

62 SASV, PC, Binder, "Echos", 4 oct., 1950.

63 SASV, PC, Doc.4, Flore Houde, "Les Soeurs de l'Assomption de la Sainte Vierge à Edmonton," op.cit.

students. In 1942, three of their students applied for the Marshall scholarships, prizes offered by the Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire to help defray the costs of attending an Alberta normal school.[64] The convent students did not win; three of the four prizes were awarded to girls with distinctly British surnames. Nevertheless, the very act of applying showed a certain degree of openness as well as willingness to profit from the circumstances.

In the final analysis, however, one can detect throughout the students' writings, the foreboding consequences of neglecting *la patrie*. The girls carried with them the potentiality of becoming Groulx's 'denationalized children'. Having lost their language and heritage, they would certainly become failures in both English and French worlds. Success for French Canadians could only be attained by remaining true to their French heritage. They had been born French Canadian women and only by developing the "highest qualities of French culture," by being true to their nationality, would they find happiness.[65] The theme of the 1949 *Semaine de Fierté Nationale* illustrated this belief. "Tu réussiras dans la vie dans la mesure où tu seras Canadienne française."[66] By promoting the work of the nationalist clubs, the nuns maintained the religious and cultural identity of their students, a prescription for success that also embraced the need for the girls to conform to their feminine nature and to the role ascribed by husband and church.

---

64 SASV, PC, Doc. 24, Bursary application to I.O.D.E., June 1942.

65 Trofimenkoff, Groulx, op.cit., p.73.

66 SASV, PC, Binder, op.cit., 23 mars, 1949.

CHAPTER 6

The Religious and 'Feminine' Education of Girls

The preparation given the students at the *pensionnat* not only served to fashion the girls' sense of responsibility for the survival of their culture, language and history, but also was intended to prepare them for their role as auxiliary to husband and church. The nuns envisaged for women a purely supportive role. As wives and mothers, they made a comfortable home for the family and guaranteed the spiritual, the physical well-being and therefore the happiness of those around them. In society, they supported the cause of religion and of the nation. Education for women was geared to enhance the virtues inherent in the 'feminine' nature, qualities that in turn they would need for their supportive and subservient role.

Les Soeurs de l'Assomption clearly articulated their conception of the role of women in society. They perceived women as primarily wives and mothers. Ninety percent of their students, they estimated, would marry.[1] As the girls' mentors, the nuns had a responsibility to assure that their charges were well prepared for their future functions as homemakers. "Quoi de plus essentiel pour la jeune fille," they wrote, "que de l'initier aux travaux de cuisine, de couture, à la bonne tenue d'une

[1] SASV, PC, "Annuaire-Souvenir," op.cit., p. 13.

maison."[2] This training conformed to the parents' expectations for they also perceived housekeeping skills as a necessary and essential component of the complete female education. One parent expressed his gratitude to the nuns for his daughters' education: "Dans cette institution vous avez préparé nos filles pour une vie complète plutôt que de préparer ces élèves à gagner leur vie comme il se rencontre dans presque toutes les écoles publiques en Alberta."[3] A good education did not necessarily prepare a girl to enter the labour force. For her, life held a different promise.

And no instruction, the nuns affirmed, was more important to their charges' future well-being than a solid training in the domestic sciences. Initiation in the skills of cooking, sewing, the proper care of the house and the careful nurturing of the attendant qualities of cleanliness, thrift, resourcefulness and self-sacrifice they advocated as the key to happiness for the prospective "gardienne du foyer."[4]

> "Propreté, économie, débrouillardise, don généreux de soi: autant de vertus exigées par les humbles besognes matérielles du foyer, mais qui relève déja de l'esprit et du coeur. Nos pensionnats se font un devoir de les donner à leurs élèves pour le bonheur futur de ses jeunes filles - car la femme qui les possède à déjà gagné ... la confiance et l'admiration de son mari."[5]

The girls echoed their teachers' understanding of a woman's happiness as being directly related to the husband's approval of her

---

2 Ibid.

3 SASV, PC, Binder, op.cit., "Voix A.S.V.", mai, 1957

4 SASV, PC, "Annuaire," op.cit., p.13.

5 Ibid.

housekeeping functions. In a short article in the school's newsletter *Assumpta*, a grade nine student inadvertently explained the need for domestic education.[6] She declared that domestic science, a class period in which students learned to embroider, knit, prepare interesting meals and the general upkeep of a house, was an appropriate subject for all young girls. In a few years, she added, the husband of an ex-student might come and thank the home economics teacher for the meticulous attention she gave to "comment faire une tarte." The link between the acquisition of housekeeping skills, pleasing the husband and a woman's happiness had been clearly understood.

Nevertheless, it was still necessary to glorify "les humbles besognes matérielles du foyer," to make these menial tasks attractive to the girls.[7] To accomplish this, the nuns invoked images from the past. During the weekly *Avant-Garde* meetings, the students learned about the female heroes of New France. Although most of the noteworthy women of the period were remembered for their purity and devotion to religious life, some, like Marie Rollet, were said to have been excellent cooks. Following their presentation on the life of this courageous pioneer, the students prepared dishes that Marie Rollet herself might have cooked.[8] By reproducing the work of their foremothers, the girls thus reassured themselves that their housekeeping duties could have heroic dimensions.

The traditional domestic tools of the housewife were romanticized to fit this grandiose image of housework. A report of a demonstration

---

6 SASV, PC, Binder, op.cit., "Assumpta", Pâques, 1948.

7 SASV, PC, "Annuaire," op.cit. p.13.

8 SASV, PC, "Minutes de l'Avant-Garde," op.cit., 27 avril, 1934.

using an old iron heated on top of the stove described this appliance as "le vieux fer, vieillot et lourd, ... passe comme une caresse ... sur le voile des communiantes."[9] And in a song of the *cercle Jeanne L'Archevêque-Duguay*, a literary club comprising the oldest students of the school, the girls expressed the desire to become skilled in the domestic arts of their ancestors. Again there was a romantic attachment to housework and to the ancient skills of the housewives of New France.

La main agile
Sachons conduire le métier
Et le rouet qui chante et file
La blanche lainé à plein panier[10]

In this song, a prayer dedicated to Mary, Mother of God, the students also implored her to help them carry out their domestic burdens with a smile:

O douce image
Rayon béni sous notre toit
La tâche obscure du ménage
Devient facile auprès de toi

Sachons sourire
Au plus modestes des travaux
Tenons gaiement la poêle à frire
Balais, plumeaux, crochets, ciseaux![11]

As the verses indicate, there was a recognition of the modest nature of housework and of the often unsung or ignored contributions of the housewife. But acceptance of their duties and fidelity to the past, the song

---

9 Ibid., 27 mars, 1936.

10 SASV, PC, "Minutes du cercle Jeanne L'Archevêque-Duguay," op.cit., "Chant du cercle," 1949.

11 Ibid.

continued, would confer glory upon women and bring honor to the nation.

> Pour notre gloire,
> Et pour l'honneur de ce pays
> Suivons l'exemple méritoire
> Des saintes mères de jadis [12]

Girls who later chose to marry could best fulfill their responsibilities to their church and nation and demonstrate their allegiance to the past through motherhood. The students were presented with the ideal of the large family.[13] There was no happier destiny for women than to have a house full of children, "la maison ... embellie par de joyeux essaims d'enfants."[14] The call for a high birth rate reflected the Catholic church's doctrine on the sanctity of the family and its condemnation of any form of birth control. There was, however, an unquestionably nationalist element to the insistence on large families of the Franco-Albertan community. Several articles in La Survivance expressed the views of the elite. One author deplored "le suicide d'une race" as a result of divorce and the use of birth-control methods.[15] Another praised large families and rejected the contention that geniuses, saints - and by the same token, leaders - were more likely to issue from smaller families that could provide better conditions for the growth and development of children. The author affirmed that the qualities of a hero

---

12 Ibid.

13 SASV, PC, Binder, op.cit., "Voix A.S.V.", juin 1954.

14 S.A.S.V, PC, "Minutes du cercle L'Archevêque-Duguay," op.cit.,1949. 'Essaim' is translated as 'swarm'.

15 La Survivance, 7 fév, 1945 and 23 avril, 1947.

could not develop in an environment suffused by the selfishness that drove parents to limit family size. "Peut-on affirmer qu'il sorte du fruit de l'égoisme un génie intellectuel ou une volonté capable d'héroïsme."[16]

This statement reflected the preoccupation of clerico-nationalists and of the French-speaking collectivity for the creation of *des chefs* , an elite that would, in moments of crisis, save the nation and allow it to reach full cultural greatness and immortality.[17] Women could not become *des chefs* ; their different nature denied them leadership roles. In an article written to commemorate the *pensionnat* 's twenty-fifth anniversary, the nuns quoted Thomas Aquinas to explain why women's nature prescribed for them a different mission. God, he had said, did not create Eve from the head of Adam for the very reason that he did not want her to become a leader; "il ne voulait pas qu'elle soit chef."[18] Her role, rather, was to be helpmate to the husband and to the leaders of *la patrie* .

This ideal was embodied in the heroic women of New France. They had been the strength, the inspiration, the discrete influence behind the valiant men who had founded and courageously defended this great nation.[19] A student recording a debate on the superiority of French Canadian women in history eloquently described the admirable and supportive role played by women.

---

16 Ibid., 24 jan., 1940

17 Groulx, La Canadienne, op.cit., p.24.

18 SASV, PC, "Annuaire," op.cit., p.12.

19 PAA, SASV/50/1, 73.80, box 13, Shannon file, letter from Sr. Saint-Casimir, Nicolet to Sr. Marie du Crucifix, Edmonton, 10 déc., 1927.

> Combien de fois n'a-t-on pas dit: dans toute oeuvre de bien la prière et le sacrifice sont de première necessité. Je crois fermement que sans les prières et les sacrifices de nos Jeanne LeBer, de nos Catherine de Saint-Augustin, de nos Jeanne Mance, de toutes nos religieuses, de toutes nos mamans, les hauts exploits de nos hommes n'auraient été qu'un feu de paille. On nous répète souvent aussi sur tous les tons - la part la plus importante dans une oeuvre, c'est celle qui se joue dans l'ombre, dans les coulisses - l'oeuvre cachée donc! ... Vraiment qui a soutenu le courage de nos colons, de nos explorateurs, nos militaires si ce n'est nos femmes avec leurs delicates attentions, leurs bons mots, leurs sublimes conseils![20]

The strength of women lay in their greater religious fervour, in their ability to pray for others, to care for them and to counsel them. Their foremothers were not remembered for their accomplishments but for the unheralded support they freely granted others. In turn, the glorification of women's supportive historical role encouraged young girls to subordinate their talents to sustain the achievement of others, to support, in particular, male endeavours.

Strength and willfulness were male characteristics and the necessary attributes of a leader. Love and compassion, 'the qualities of the heart', on the other hand, enabled women to fulfill their supportive roles. The students understood the distinction and their special mission of supplying the nation with "des hommes de caractère, des femmes de coeur."[21] In an issue of the school's newsletter, a grade eleven student

---

20 SASV, PC, Binder, op.cit., "Le Jaseur", Pâques 1946.

21 SASV, PC, "Annuaire," op.cit., p.13. The passage reads: "Au travers de toute cette atmosphère anglicisante, il faut rendre nos jeunes filles fières de leur origine et de leur caractère national, les rendre aptes à garder à notre peuple l'héroïsme qui leur fut légué, les saines et saintes traditions du terroir, prêtes à lui donner des hommes de caractère, des femmes de coeur."

exhorted her colleagues to accept their responsibilities as women and to prepare themselves for future action. "Savoir que nous sommes fortes ne suffit pas. Il faut agir. Refuserons-nous à notre pays des hommes, des citoyens forts, courageux, chrétiens? L'avenir dépend de nous, jeunes filles ... Nous sommes les gardiennes de l'âme du Canada!"[22]

It is not possible within the scope of this study to determine how well these particular students actually fulfilled their obligations. How many of them married? Did they bear children at an earlier age than other women? Did they produce large families? General statistics on the ethnic minority groups of the Prairie provinces provide partial answers to some of these queries. A population study taken from the 1961 Census reveals interesting data on the fertility of western French Canadian women. Based on a 20% population sample, the table charts the number of children born per thousand married women by age and ethnic group.[23] According to the data, French Canadian women had more children than women of either English or Irish ethnic extraction. For example, at the time of the census, French-speaking women in the 20-24 year age group, the contemporaries of the last girls to graduate from the *pensionnat* for the period of concern in this study, had 1,588 children per 1000 women as compared to the 1,354 children of the English and the 1,444 children of the women of Irish ethnic extraction. The difference in fertility is more pronounced as the age of the women surveyed increases. French Canadian women in the 35 to 39 year age group, the cohort of the graduates of 1941 to 1946 had 3,962 children compared to 2,904 children

---

22 SASV, PC, Binder, op.cit., "Voix de A.S.V.", Pâques, 1950.

23 Census of Canada, 1961, Vol IV, Part I, Population Sample, Income, Migration and Fertility

for the English and 3,067 for the Irish Canadian women. Women in the oldest age group, the 50 to 54 year-olds and the contemporaries of the first graduates of the *pensionnat* , had 4,657 children as compared to 2,600 for women of British extraction and 2,646 for the women of Irish background. For every age-group, differences are more pronounced in rural areas than in urban centres. The data not only indicate that the French Canadian women of the Prairies had more children than western English-speaking women but that they also had more offspring than another predominantly Catholic group, the Irish. Can the differences be partially accounted for by the nationalist ideology that imbued the training and the psyche of French Canadian women?

Child-bearing, while certainly the most natural and important female function, constituted but one facet of a woman's mission. Once a mother, she had the responsibility to educate her children and education, like maternity, was held to be within the natural scope of a woman's activities. A student repeated the words of Albert Tessier to express this notion of women's intuitive skills with children. "Une excellence propre à la femme, c'est la diffusion de la lumière! L'Education apparaît comme son domaine naturel; elle s'y meut à l'aise et trouve d'instinct les formules de clarté et de persuasion.[24] And the training given the girls, the nuns asserted, would sharpen these natural predispositions. The feminine education appropriate for the mother and educator that stressed comprehending the essence of people and things rather than a detailed

---

24 Ibid., juin, 1955. Albert Tessier was a prominent Quebec clerico-nationalist. He founded and directed the domestic education schools, *les Instituts Familiaux* which he euphemistically called *Ecoles du Bonheur* , see Sherene Brookwell, "The Instituts Familiaux of Quebec", op.cit. p.75.

understanding of the subject matter, befitted all women.[25] It mattered little what vocation a woman chose, for in fact, all women had to become *des femmes de coeur*.

The nuns proposed to cultivate these 'virtues of the heart' by teaching the girls the value of affection, tenderness, the ability to console and to understand, the patience to listen and to wait and the courage to endure hardships. Young girls, they continued, must be given responsibilities that required devotion, self-sacrifice and demanded an heroic self-abnegation.[26] They assured the girls that they would find happiness only by consecrating their lives for the welfare of others. "Vivez en vous dépensant pour le prochain, c'est à ce prix que vous récolterez le bonheur." [27]

To help them live up to this ideal, the girls were presented with another model to emulate, that of the Virgin Mary. The *pensionnat* had been dedicated to *la Vierge de l'Assomption*, and the school celebrated all the religious feast days associated with Mary.[28] These festivities were numerous. In September, a typical month, the religious *fêtes* included *la*

---

25 SASV, PC, "Annuaire," op.cit., p.13. "Ce qu'elle a besoin de savoir pour sa mission de mère et d'éducatrice ... c'est moins le détail des choses que la moelle des choses."

26 Ibid., The passage reads: "Dans sa formation, il faudra surtout cultiver les vertus du coeur, c'est-à-dire, 'l'affection et la tendresse, le don de consoler et de deviner, la patience d'écouter, la charité de supporter et le courage d'attendre'. Il faudra surtout lui confier des responsabilites où s'exercera le dévouement poussé jusqu'au renoncement héroïque et constant."

27 SASV, PC, Binder, op.cit., newspaper clipping from La Survivance, 1954.

28 SASV, PC, Binder, ibid, "Voix de A.S.V.", juin 1954.

Nativité de Marie , *Notre-Dame des Sept-Douleurs* , *Notre-Dame de la Salette* , and *Notre-Dame de la Merci* .[29] Throughout the year, these celebrations were punctuated with *semaines mariales* , *le Mois de Marie* and even particular years such as 1957 were consecrated to Mary.[30] Through various activities such as the preparation of albums, posters, songs, the decoration of statues of Mary, processions, prayers and meditation, the girls professed their dedication to the Virgin Mother.

Beginning in 1926, all girls at the *pensionnat* were officially consecrated as members of *les Enfants de Marie* .[31] This organization was similar in structure and purpose to other women's Marian societies that had been born as a result of the Quebec devotional revolution of the mid-nineteenth century.[32] A catalyst of this revolution had been the promulgation in 1854 of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. The proclamation of the miracle of the virgin conception strengthened the faith of Catholics in miracles and in the power of devotional exercises, so that the resolution of personal and social problems was frequently attributed to saintly intercession as a result of prayers or devotions to holy objects. The devotional revolution was subsequently invigorated with the arrival of the Oblate order from France. Part of the fathers' mandate had been to extend and intensify the devotion to Mary and they proceeded to

---

29 Ibid., Noël 1950.

30 Ibid, "Année Mariale au Pensionnat", mai 1957.

31 SASV, PC, "Annuaire," op.cit. "Miettes d'Histoire", p.26-27. The records show that the society was still extant in 1954.

32 For a discussion of the devotional revolution and the significance of the Marian societies see Marta Danylewycz, "Taking the Veil " op.cit. p.53 to 64.

do this by founding Marian societies. A number of affiliated groups, *les Enfants de Marie* , soon made their appearance in convent schools. The Children of Mary were urged to scorn modern forms of entertainment such as dancing and the 'French theatre', were encouraged to read only approved literature and were expected to be pure, humble, serious and hard-working. In summary, they were to pattern themselves after their model, Mary the Immaculate Conception.[33]

What was the image of women represented by the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception? Marta Danylewycz in her study on Quebec religious orders provides a description of this ideal.[34] She claims that by the middle of the last century, in an effort to re-establish the influence of the church over a modernistic, secular world, the Catholic hierarchy was inclined to discount the fullness of Mary's humanity. The force, strength, love, warmth and compassion, characteristics that in the past had been attributed to her were ignored and instead, the clergy focussed on her absence of sin, her passivity and her obedience. Danylewycz added that the image of Mary represented, supported and fortified nineteenth century ideas on women. The dogma of the Immaculate Conception, she continued, "cast women in the role of helpmate and sought to protect society from ideological currents and political movements challenging existing social divisions." Furthermore, it "elevated the role of social

---

33 Ibid., p.65.

34 Ibid., p.61-64

guardians and purifiers to unprecedented heights, while denying women the right to self-autonomy and equality." [35]

At a special mass, *les Enfants de Marie* of the *pensionnat* consecrated their services to Mary, their patron. For the ceremony, they wore white as a sign of their purity. Once members, they had to observe the marial code that required them to declare their faith in the dogmas of the Immaculate Conception, the Divine Maternity and the Glorious Assumption.[36] Their membership also required them to fulfill certain other obligations such as reciting special prayers and wearing a miraculous medal of the Holy Mother and a scapular.[37] During the weeks dedicated to Mary, the religious activities were multiplied and it was not uncommon for them to spend evenings in prayer and to recite "ave nombreux en montant aux salles de classes."[38]

The girls were to pattern their lives on the virtues attributed to Mary. A student recording her thoughts following a consecration ceremony expressed the desire to attain the perfection of the woman incarnate, "que nos vies soient marquées de l'effigie d'une pureté

---

35 Ibid., p.64.
A Globe and Mail article dated Saturday June 27,1987, "Theologian loses licence to teach," tells of the revoking of the teaching license of the first woman Catholic theology professor for contesting the virgin birth of Jesus Christ. The Roman Catholic church withdrew the licence of the West German professor for stating that the dogma of the Immaculate Conception was "an offence to all normal mothers" and an example of the clergy's "anti-sexual and neurotic traits."

36 SASV, PC, "Annuaire," op.cit., "Enfants de Marie", p.19.

37 SASV, PC, Binder, op.cit., "Voix A.S.V." sept.-déc., 1954.

38 Ibid., Binder, "Echos", 8 mars, 1950.

angélique, d'une humilité profonde, et d'une charité incomparable."[39] On several occasions, visiting clergy reminded the girls of the importance of the cult of Mary and of women's role. In *La Voix de l'A.S.V.*, a student wrote of how the chaplain of the school, an Oblate priest, stressed the importance of the devotion to Mary and encouraged the girls to copy her virtues, especially her purity.[40] Another Oblate, at a graduating ceremony spoke of the greatest contribution of women, prayer. "Finissantes," he said, "rappelez-vous que la femme n'est grande qu'à genoux...."[41] He was insinuating that the natural posture of women was one of submission as well as one of adoration. A student unintentionally made the connection when describing the scene she imagined took place when the angel from heaven came to announce to Mary her divine mission as Mother of God. "C'est à genoux qu'elle reçut l'appel de sa sublime vocation; attitude de soumission adorante; mais c'est debout qu'elle en accomplit la grande immolation: attitude de vaillance, d'indicible courage, jusqu'au bout!"[42] There rested the ideal woman. She was one who dutifully accepted her fate and yet had the strength to sacrifice herself in the name of her mission.

By teaching the girls to deny themselves for the good of others, self-sacrifice being the fundamental virtue upon which a woman's mission depended, the nuns reinforced the traditional secondary and supportive role of women. They effectively were assuring that in spite of their solid

---

39 Ibid., Binder, "Voix A.S.V.", mai 1956.

40 Ibid., sept-déc., 1955.

41 Ibid., mai 1956.

42 SASV, PC, "Annuaire," op.cit., p.5.

education, the girls never lost their 'feminity'. A woman's place was definitely in the home and the nuns constantly reaffirmed the primacy of the family in the lives of their students. To press upon them their future responsibilities as not only "la gardienne du foyer," but of its heart and soul, they exposed their students to conferences and lectures on the psychology of women and children and on child-rearing practices.[43] In addition, the nuns felt it necessary to permeate the *pensionnat* with a familial atmosphere. They referred to the complement of student and staff as *une famille étudiante* .[44] Similarly, the periodic evenings of entertainment at the school, consisting of skits, songs and games, were known as *soirées familiales* .[45]

In fact, very little of the instruction a girl received was intended for her own specific ends. Even her physical and intellectual training was geared to mould her to fulfill the needs of husband, children, nation and church. A well-educated woman, the nuns asserted, would be a better spouse and mother. By being able to follow "the intellectual pathways of her husband's mind," a wife became a more interesting and attractive companion.[46] Her intelligence and knowledge she used to help direct her children's studies, to create a soothing environment and a comfortable home for the family. She held in her hands the emotional and physical well-being of husband and children so that she herself had to be in perfect health to look after their needs. To keep a healthy mind in a healthy body,

---

43 Ibid., p.14.

44 SASV, PC, Binder, op.cit., 15 juin, 1949.

45 Ibid., "Assumpta", Noël 1945.

46 Ibid., p.13.

the girls were given physical education training. According to the nuns, these exercises taught a young woman good posture and gave her an effortless grace that along with modesty enchanted those dear to her. And through their happiness, she would find her own joy and satisfaction.[47]

Even singing, an activity the girls might have participated in for the sheer joy of it, was given a somewhat utilitarian purpose by the nuns. Singing, they said, was to firm-up the mouth, improve pronunciation and sharpen appreciation for the beautiful and the refined. Songs also enobled the soul and fostered the development of a young and pure personality, for after all, they reasoned, to sing well, was it not necessary to be pure, to have a clear conscience, a good head, and a generous heart? In turn, singing enlivened one's labour, granted steadfastness and courage in the face of difficulties, gave faith in the future and strengthened one's patriotism.[48]

It is evident that the convent girls were not being prepared primarily to enter the professions, nor to find a place in the labour force. Actually, few career opportunities were available to the students upon graduation despite the nuns' frequent assertion that the bilingual and doubly-accredited program of studies would open doors closed to their English counterparts. There is no evidence to indicate that a substantial number of students later attended the university. On the contrary, few seemed to have enrolled. In 1950, a student from Laval University and an alumna of the *pensionnat* visited her alma mater and urged the girls to register at the University in greater numbers. At the time, she claimed to

---

47 Ibid.

48 SASV, PC, "Annuaire," op.cit., p.25.

have been the only French-speaking, female student from the West attending.[49] Since the program of the *pensionnat* was affiliated to Laval University it is possible but not probable that girls would have chosen to attend other Quebec institutions.[50] More would have enrolled at the University of Alberta yet even there, few would have attended since a university training was not necessary for the vocations that 'attracted' young women: teaching, nursing, taking the veil and secretarial work.[51]

The restricted choice was sadly even if amusingly illustrated by the following anecdote reported in an article that appeared in La Survivance. Several guests were invited to the school to speak at a forum on career education. These included a teacher, a nurse, a lab-technician, a librarian, a secretary, a housewife and a woman who was to speak about a career in psychiatry. The final comment of this woman representing her husband's profession, the recorder noted as: "Mais si vous voulez une vie remplie

---

49 Ibid., Binder,"Voix de A.S.V.," 20 sept., 1950.

50 Further evidence to support this contention is the fact that according to Antonine Gagnon, no student from Alberta enrolled in the classical education program provided by *les Soeurs de l'Assomption* at their college *Notre-Dame de l'Assomption* in Nicolet. Of the 325 students who attended between the years 1937-1968, only eight came from outside Quebec, none were from Alberta. Antonine Gagnon, op.cit., p.97.

51 Ibid., "Echos," 1950-51.
See Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada (Ottawa: Information Canada, 1970) p.59 for occupational segregation by sex.

d'intérêt, vous n'avez qu'à épouser un psychiatre!"[52] As late as 1960, the girls were led to envisage participating only indirectly in that profession.

Their options were limited to work that, in fact, only served to extend the motherhood and educative role to the community. Even women who were not biological mothers were expected to perform the role of spiritual mothers of the community. This especially was required of nuns and teachers, but was, nonetheless, part of the mission of all women. The choice of a career simply meant that women could devote their lives to others through various causes. While the nurse primarily looked after the physical needs of her patients, she could bring them spiritual solace as well. And the secretary could do her part by setting an example. Her piety and the faultless fulfillment of her national duties would inspire others to follow in her footsteps.[53] That the career itself was not the vocation and devotion to others was, is illustrated by the comment that celibacy was an admirable vocation of dedication to social work. "Le célibat est une vocation aux oeuvres sociales, et les vieilles filles sont dignes de notre admiration."[54]

All women were also expected to be committed to the work of the church, whether as lay apostles or as members of religious communities. The clergy frequently sent impassioned pleas to the students to comply with the needs of the church. During a 1951 visit to the *pensionnat* , MacDonald, Archbishop of Edmonton warned students that their duties

---

52 SASV, PC, folder titled "Festivals-Musique (résultats), Programmes chants et musique, 1960-65." The year of the clipping is identified as 1960 but the exact date is not specified.

53 SASV, PC, Binder, op.cit., "Voix A.S.V.," juin 1954.

54 Ibid., "Echos," 24 nov., 1948.

embraced studying the most pressing problems of the church, one of which he identified as the need for religious vocations. He subsequently appealed to them to contribute to the solutions.[55] And as the mother superior explained during an educational week devoted to religious vocations, answering the call of the church also took care of the multitude of needy souls who relied on the services of the nun, "les malades, les vieillards et les orphelins, les pauvres, les enfants, tous désirent le dévouement de la religieuse."[56] By their work, especially with children in the schools, nuns lay the foundation of Christian life in the home, and therefore over all society.[57] They thus strengthened the ties between religion and education and through their other services made themselves indispensable adjuncts of every family.[58]

But whether or not the young students chose to take the veil, they had to be taught to live their faith fervently. For the church felt threatened by the secularization of the period before, during and after World War II, and insisted on the need for a greater commitment and participation by its lay members. This period also saw the beginning of a dramatic decrease in the number of new religious vocations in Alberta.[59]

---

55 Ibid., 11 avril, 1951.

56 Ibid., 25 avril, 1951.

57 SASV, PC, Binder, "Echos", op.cit., 11 avril, 1951.

58 Trofimenkoff, Dream of Nation, op.cit., p.123.

59 PAA, SASV/13, 73.80, box 11, item 3, "Matricule.". This record book contains a list of girls who entered the order's noviciate in Saint-Paul between 1955-1962. Of a total of 40 novices, half chose to leave and return to a secular life. The crisis in religious vocations peaked between 1960 and 1970 with a 95% decrease.

To fill the void, the church appealed to lay apostles. "Nous avons besoin d'institutrices catholiques, surtout des institutrices bilingues, d'apôtres de la presse catholique, d'apôtres de nos écoles catholiques, d'apôtres qui aideront nos prêtres, surtout dans les petites missions, dans l'oeuvre divine de la préparation des enfants pour la digne réception des sacrements."[60]

In 1935, *la Jeunesse Etudiante Catholique* was established at the *pensionnat* to answer the appeal for "des chrétiennes convaincues, vivant intégralement leur catholicisme."[61] Through various activities, the students were to assume their responsibilities as Catholic women and learn to participate fully in the redemption of the world.[62] The *J.E.C.*, like its parent *l'Action Catholique*, was part of the church's extensive program of Catholic action which aimed to defend the place of religion in a modern, industrial, and secular world and offered religious and moral solutions to resolve all social problems. As educated women, the girls would be expected to participate in benevolent religious organizations and act as intermediaries between their less educated counterparts and the clerical and secular elite. "L'on distingue toujours, dans nos paroisses, la femme instruite; c'est celle qui est la plus influente, on la veut présidente des associations et des comités. Souvent aussi, elle doit se faire l'interprète des autres auprès des authorités religieuses et scolaires. Elle

---

Micheline D'Allaire, Vingt ans de crise chez les religieuses du Québec 1960-1980 (Montréal: Editions Bergeron, 1983) p.509.

60 SASV, PC, "Annuaire," op.cit., p.3.

61 Ibid., p.16, 26-27.

62 Ibid., p.16.

devient ainsi, en quelque sorte le pivot de la société."[63] As the go-between, women played a pivotal role in the community for not only did they reduce conflict by interceding on behalf of the less fortunate segments of society, they also acted as the conscience of the more powerful by reminding them of their responsibilities.

In summary, the education that the students received at the pensionnat was a carefully crafted instrument that would mould the girls to fit the design of church and nation. The education they were given had little to do with their own personal needs and plans. They were trained, first of all, to become competent housewives, personable companions to their husbands and educators of their children. Secondly, they were expected to foster the interests of the church and simultaneously, the interests of the French-speaking community. To ensure that women could fulfill all of the demands placed upon them, they had to become sensitive to the needs of others while at the same time learn to deny their own. The girls, therefore, were presented with the ideal woman, a woman who essentially lived only through the accomplishments, the happiness, the lives of others. In turn, the validity of the ideal was supported by the traditional role women had played in the history of French Canada and the supposed nature of women.

63 SASV, P.C., Binder, juin 1953.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

As this thesis has demonstrated, the French Canadian migration to the western prairies at the turn of the century was accompanied by, or in fact, was often preceded and encouraged by the Catholic clergy. The hierarchy in the West offered French-speaking Catholic immigrants the chance to further the church's mission of evangelization of the North American continent as well as the possibility of returning to what it claimed to be the natural occupation of French Canadians, tilling the land. To the new land the descendants of the *habitants* brought with them the institutions that had made Quebec a distinct culture within North America. The organizations that supported and strengthened the church, the cultural traditions of Quebec and a system of education patterned on the Catholic schooling of that province were transplanted in the new communities.

The movement of French-speaking people to the West corresponded to the period of the church's pre-eminence in Quebec. The hierarchy was thus able to send missionaries and religious personnel to the newly created parishes and schools of the Territories and safeguarded, for a number of years, the language and religious rights of the French Catholic population. During the early part of this century, however, the area also received an influx of immigrants, new settlers who, by becoming assimilated in the

Anglo-Saxon culture - as English nationalists hoped - would ensure the extension of English Canada and of the British Empire to the prairies. By 1905, the year Alberta was granted provincial status, Franco-Albertans had become a minority, French was no longer a language of the Legislative Assembly nor a language of instruction in the schools beyond the first two primary grades. At the same time, the state gained increased control over Catholic education as part of the gradual process of the secularization of education. Teacher certification, the standardization of textbooks and student evaluation were regulated by the state. The imposed uniformity was considered to be, by the French Catholic laity and clergy alike, equivalent to the abrogation of their religious rights.

The restrictions and the lack of political power to redress the perceived injustices left French Canadians feeling betrayed and under attack. In its isolation, the group turned onto itself as a protective measure against assimilation. At the community level, organizations that reinforced French Canadian traditions and culture and furthered solidarity between individuals and groups were promoted. The most important institution for the survival of the heritage were schools. At the primary level, the school acted as an extension of the home by maintaining the language, traditions and moral values first instilled by the parents. At the secondary and post-secondary level, schools prepared the future elite of the community. The prevailing influence of the church in community life and the predominance of the clergy and nuns in educational institutions, positions the hierarchy reinforced by linking the survival of language and culture to the preservation of the Catholic faith, meant that these schools had a decidedly religious character. Patterned on the classical colleges of Quebec, two private secondary schools for young

men were founded in Edmonton in 1910 and 1913. For girls, the *Pensionnat Assomption* opened its doors in 1926.

Like the classical colleges of Quebec, the *pensionnat* offered a rigorous academic training. The program of study aimed to satisfy the curriculum requirements set by the Alberta Minister of Education as well as fulfill the exigencies of the classical courses directed by Laval University. A solid academic training was required to enable the graduates to attend Alberta normal schools and to consequently answer the persistent needs for bilingual teachers of the Francophone communities across the province. Parents, clergy and community alike, however, valued more than the intellectual discipline and the diplomas. The school was an invaluable training ground that served to inculcate in the girls national and religious values appropriate to the female sex.

In many ways, *la survivance* as defined by clerico-nationalists, was only possible as long as women maintained their traditional place in the home. For religious nationalists relied on the influence of women as wives, mothers and educators to impress upon children the nature and significance of their future responsibilities as French Canadians and to remind men of their duties to the church and nation. The education of Franco-Albertan girls at the *Pensionnat Assomption* conformed to the expectations of the clerico-nationalist elite. The classical education program of study complemented by the activities of nationalist clubs allowed the students to improve their language skills and to develop an appreciation of French history and literature. Furthermore, the study of the national heritage was meant to instill pride in the students and incite them to a militancy that would ensure the transmission of cherished values to the generation they would later nurture. And the history of the

deeds of the French Canadian people, the traditions handed down from generation to generation and the cult of the ancestors also defined the means of *la survivance*.

Historical events and the lives of the ancestors pointed primarily to the fact that French Canadians had been intensely religious people. Catholicism, it was believed, was a distinguishing feature of the race. Religion set them apart from other Canadians and, in large measure, it was held to have been responsible for the survival of the nation. If the Catholic faith was allowed to die, the French language and French Canadian culture would suffer a similar fate. A woman's first duty, therefore, was to safeguard her own faith. As in the past, one of the greatest contributions of women to their race was their ability, through prayer, to bring divine intercession to their fellow men. The girls were also exhorted to preserve religious and moral values in the home. In large measure, this was to be accomplished by encouraging the observance of primarily religious cultural traditions during vacations at home and in future years, to transmit these to their own children.

The study of history also gave credence to the heroic reproductive contributions of women and lent support to their traditional role in the home. The foremothers had unselfishly produced large families and guaranteed the physical continuance of the race. Having a large progeny also increased the chances of producing *des chefs*, men whose leadership qualities gave added vitality to the race and ensured its survival. At the *pensionnat*, the girls were taught to appreciate the national significance of women's reproductive functions as they were encouraged to accept the home as a woman's domain. Housekeeping, the care of children and the provision of support and companionship to the husband were held up to be

the natural and most rewarding occupations for women. Their work in the public sphere, as nurses, teachers and philanthropists was simply an extension of the caretaking role of the housewife and mother.

These fundamental duties, it was believed, should subsume all other occupations and interests. Correspondingly, the girls were taught to subordinate their own needs to the needs of others to further the interests of church and nation. They were, therefore, encouraged to develop the qualities that would enable them to give of themselves willingly. Affection, tenderness, empathy, patience, courage, devotion, self-sacrifice and self-abnegation were presented as the ideals and offered as the key to happiness. By inculcating these values in the girls, the nuns, as the representatives of the church and of the French Canadian community, were creating women ready to accept their supportive roles in society. The secular and clerical elite would thus be guaranteed compliant women willing to maintain the institution of the family, bear new generations of French Catholics and transmit the church's teachings and the national heritage to their descendants.

It is possible to understand and to empathize with the need of the French-speaking community for the implementation of draconian measures to prevent assimilation. As stated in the 1977 manifesto of *La Fédération des Francophones Hors Québec*, Les Heritiers de Lord Durham, many of the language and educational policies of provincial governments outside the province of Quebec furthered the process of assimilation.[1] And it must be added that nationalism has never been a purely French Canadian characteristic. In fact, English Canadian

---

[1] La Fédération des Francophones hors Québec, Les Héritiers de Lord Durham, vol. I, avril 1977, p.48-54.

nationalism, in its most conservative and parochial version has shaped much of the history of this country.[2] French Canadians continually had to be wary not only of assimilative policies but of the dangers to ethnic survival posed by urbanization and exogamy. According to Les Héritiers de Lord Durham, these factors among a multiplicity of others resulted in an assimilation rate in the province as high as 51.2% in 1971.[3] It was the precarious status of Franco-Albertans as members of a minority within a minority which made them susceptible to adopt measures that proposed to keep the dangers of assimilation at bay.

The evidence gathered in this research indicates that the nuns were quite successful in instilling in their students the desire to maintain their French Canadian character. Their contribution to the preservation of language and culture must be acknowledged. For without Francophone schools like the *Pensionnat Assomption* and the dedication of teachers such as *les Soeurs de l'Assomption de la Sainte Vierge* , the process of Anglo-assimilation would, undoubtedly, have proceeded at a much faster pace. The extent of the students' commitment to la *survivance* , however, is difficult to assess by looking only at the findings of this thesis. Further research is required in the nature of a longitudinal study to evaluate the students' French language competence and the extent of French-Canadian culture in their adult years. Such a study, which was to have included

---

[2] Alison Prentice, The School Promoters (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977). In her work, Prentice documents the nationalist influence on the rise of the public school system in Ontario.

[3] Les Héritiers, op.cit. p.27. According to the report, one French Canadian in three marries a person from a different linguistic group. Of the exogamous Alberta marriages, 96.2% choose English as the language of communication in the home.

interviews with former students, had originally been contemplated as part of this project but was considered too extensive to accompany this inquiry of the clerico-nationalist ideology.

Interviews with former students would also provide valuable information on the effects of the 'feminine' education of girls at the *pensionnat*. A study of this nature could answer questions on the extent of the students' acceptance of the ideology presented to them and outline the consequences of these teachings on their later lives. Were they more likely to reject a career in favour of marriage and motherhood than girls in other French-Catholic institutions across the province? Was the ideology presented at the selective, private *pensionnat* similar to the ideology offered in other Francophone schools? Were the career expectations and aspirations of the students of the boarding school different than those of students in English-speaking secular schools? Before the feminist movements of the 1960's, the lives of all Canadian women, irrespective of ethnicity, were circumscribed by their roles as bearers of children and helpmates to fathers and husbands. In neither Francophone nor Anglophone schools were girls encouraged to become intellectuals and professionals. This thesis does not address the similarities inherent in the subsidiary role of women.

The study begs, as well, the question of the nature of the relationship between the reproduction and the evolution of ideology and social change. While on one hand the French Canadian hierarchy called for an academic preparation for girls similar to the education available for boys, it insisted on restricting women to a separate sphere. The inherent tension in the contradictions between ideology and practice was bound to affect women's understanding of their place in society. Their academic success

coupled with the growing recognition of their inequality of opportunity eventually impelled some to demand entrance to the professions and an improvement to the status of women. While it is crucial to understand how and why educational institutions have maintained women's inequality, it is as important to analyze the patterns which have, if only unwittingly, allowed some women to further their aspirations. For it is only by understanding the intricacies of the educational system, by being aware of both its potential for women's equality and its oppressive limitations, can we hope to influence social conditions to create a better world for women.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Archival Materials

Provincial Archives of Alberta, Collection des Soeurs de l'Assomption de la Sainte Vierge.

Private Collection, Archives des Soeurs de l'Assomption de la Sainte Vierge, Edmonton.

Government Publications

Alberta Education Planning Services. "A Study of Private Schools in Alberta." Edmonton, 1984.

Census of Canada, 1961.

Census of the Prairie Provinces, 1936.

Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada. Ottawa: Information canada, 1970.

Newspapers

Globe and Mail

La Survivance

Articles, Books and Theses

Ariès, Philippe. Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life. New York: Random House, 1962.

Bailyn, Bernard. Education in the Forming of American Society. New York: Vintage Books, 1960.

Bélanger, Diane and Rozon, Lucie. Les Religieuses au Québec. Montréal: Editions Libre Expressions, 1982.

Bossetti, Shelley. "The Rural Women's University: Women's Institutes in Alberta from 1909 to 1940." M.Ed. thesis, University of Alberta, 1983.

Bourassa, Henri. "La Famille canadienne, ses périls, son salut," in La Famille Semaines Sociales du Canada IVe Session. Montréal: Secrétariat des Semaines Sociales du canada, 1923.

Bowles, S. and Gintis, H. Schooling in Capitalist America: Educational Reforms and the Contradictions of Economic Life. New York: Basic Books, 1976.

Brookwell, Sherene H. "The Instituts Familiaux of Quebec: Religious Nationalism and the Education of Girls for Domestic Life, 1900-1970." M.A. thesis, University of Ottawa, 1980.

Byrne, Eileen. Women and Education. London: Tavistock, 1978.

Cashman, Tony. Edmonton's Catholic Schools: A Success Story. Edmonton: Jasper Printing, 1977.

Champagne, Joseph-Etienne. Les Missions Catholiques dans l'Ouest Canadien 1818-1875. Ottawa: Editions des Etudes Oblates et Editions de l'Université, 1949.

Choquette, Robert. "Problèmes de moeurs et de discipline ecclésiastique: Les Catholiques des Prairies canadiennes de 1900 à 1930, " in Histoire Sociale/ Social History. Vol. VIII, No.15 (May 1975) pp.108-113.

Clark, Linda L. Schooling the Daughters of Marianne. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984.

Collectif Clio, Le. L'Histoire des femmes au Québec depuis quatre siècles. Montréal: Les Quinze Editions, 1982.

Cook, Ramsay, ed. French Canadian Nationalism An Anthology. Toronto: Macmillan, 1969.

D'Allaire, Micheline. Vingt ans de crise chez les religieuses du Québec 1960-1980. Montréal: Editions Bergeron, 1983.

Danylewycz, Marta. "Changing Relationships: Nuns and Feminists in Montreal, 1890-1925," in Alison Prentice and Susan Mann Trofimenkoff, eds. The Neglected Majority, vol II. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1985.

Danylewycz, Marta. "Taking the Veil in Montreal, 1842-1920: An Alternative to Marriage, Motherhood and Spinsterhood." Ph.D. thesis. University of Toronto, 1981.

Drouin, E.O. Lac Ste-Anne Sakahigan. Edmonton: Editions de l'Héritage, 1973.

Fadette. "L'Education familiale," in La Famille Semaines Sociales du Canada IVe Session. Montréal: Secrétariat des Semaines Sociales du Canada, 1923.

Fahmy Eid, Nadia and Dumont, Micheline, eds. Maîtresses de maison, maîtresses d'école: femmes, famille et éducation dans l'histoire du Québec. Montréal: Boréal Express, 1983.

Fédération des Francophones Hors Québec, La. Les Héritiers de Lord Durham. Vol. I, avril 1977.

Frazier, N. and Sadker, M. Sexism in School and Society. New York: Harper and Row, 1973.

Friesen, Gerald. The Canadian Prairies. Toronto: University of Toronto Press,
1984.

Furet, Francois and Ozouf, Jacques. Lire et écrire. Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1977.

Gagnon, Antonine. "Le Collège classique Notre-Dame de l'Assomption de Nicolet 1937-1968." thèse de D.E.S. Université de Laval, 1972.

Gagnon, Mona-Josée. Les Femmes vues par le Québec des hommes : 30 ans d'histoire des idéologies 1918-1970. Montréal: Editions du Jour, 1974.

Galarneau, Claude. Les Collèges classiques au Canada français. Montréal: Fides, 1978.

Gendreau, Benoit and Lemieux, André. Milieu scolaire québécois. Montréal: Les Editions France/Québec, 1977.

Gossage, Carolyn. A Question of Privilege: Canada's Independent Schools. Toronto: Martin Associates Ltd., 1977.

Granatstein, J.L. and Stevens, Paul, eds. A Reader's Guide to Canadian History 2: Confederation to the Present. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982.

Gray, Ann. "Continuity in Change: The Effects on Girls of Coeducational Secondary Schooling in Ontario, 1860-1910." M.A. thesis, University of Toronto, 1979.

Groulx, Lionel. Dollard est-il un mythe? Montréal: Fides, 1960.

Groulx, Lionel. La Canadienne Française. Nicolet: Soeurs de l'Assomption de la Sainte Vierge, 1950.

Groulx, Lionel. "La Famille canadienne-française, ses traditions, son rôle," in La Famille. Semaines Sociales du Canada IVe Session. Montréal: Secrétariat des Semaines Sociales du Canada, 1923.

Groulx, Lionel. L'Appel de la race. Montréal: Fides, 1956.

Groulx, Lionel. Paroles à des étudiants. Montréal: Editions de l'Action Nationale, 1941.

Hart, Edward J. "The Emergence and Role of the Elite in the Franco-Albertan Community to 1914," in Lewis H. Thomas, ed. Essays on Western History. Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1976.

Hart, Edward J. "The History of the French-speaking Community of Edmonton, 1795-1935." M.A. thesis, University of Alberta, 1971.

Hollier, Robert. Dollard: héros ou aventurier? Montréal: Les Editions de l'Horizon, 1963.

Houde, Sr. Flore. "Les débuts des Soeurs de l'Assomption au Lac d'Oignons." Etat de la Recherche et de la vie française dans l'Ouest

canadien, ed. Gilles Cadrin. Edmonton: Institut de la Recherche de la Faculté Saint-Jean, 1983.

Huel, Raymond, J.A. "Gestae Dei Per Francos: The French Canadian Experience in Western Canada," in Benjamin G. Smillie, ed. Visions of the New Jerusalem: Religious Settlement on the Prairies. Edmonton: NeWest Press, 1983.

Hurn, Christopher. The Limits and Possibilities of Schooling: An Introduction to the Sociology of Education. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1985.

Jaenen, Cornelius J. The Role of the Church in New France. Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1976.

Jean, Marguerite. Évolution des communautés religieuses de femmes au Canada de 1639 à nos jours. Montréal: Fides, 1977.

Keith, Marjorie. "A Brief History of Teaching Orders of Women in Quebec." M.Ed. thesis, University of Manitoba, 1948.

Kertland, May G. I.O.D.E. The Third Twenty-five Years 1950-75. Don Mills, Ontario: T.H. Best Printing, 1975.

Laflèche, Abbé. Quelques considérations sur les rapports de la société civile avec la religion et la famille. Montréal: Eusèbe Sénécal, 1866.

Lalonde, A.N. "L'Intelligentsia du Québec et la migration des Canadiens français vers l'Ouest canadien 1870-1930," in Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française, vol 33, no.2 (sept. 1979) pp.163-185.

Lauder, Dean R. and Waddell, Eric, eds. Du Continent perdu à l'archipel retrouvé - Le Québec et l'Amérique française. Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1983.

Leduc, H. Hostility Unmasked. Montréal: Beauchemin and Son, 1896.

Lesage, Germain. Le Transfer à Nicolet des Soeurs de l'Assomption de la Sainte Vierge. Nicolet: Editions des Soeurs de l'Assomption de la Sainte Vierge, 1965.

Lesage, Germain. Les Origines des Soeurs de l'Assomption de la Sainte Vierge. Nicolet: Editions des Soeurs de l'Assomption de la Sainte Vierge, 1957.

Light, Beth and Strong-Boag, Veronica. True Daughters of the North Canadian Women's History: An Annotated Bibliography. Toronto: OISE Press, 1980.

Lupul, Manoly R. The Roman Catholic Church and the North-West School Question 1875-1905. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974.

Magnuson, Roger. A Brief History of Quebec Education. Montreal: Harvest House, 1980.

Malloy, Margaret. "The History of St. Mary's Academy and College and its Times." M.Ed. thesis, University of Manitoba, 1952.

Maxwell, Mary Percival and Maxwell, James D. "Women and the Elite: Educational and Occupational Aspirations of Private School Females 1966-76." Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology 21, 4 (1984) pp. 371-394.

Maxwell, Mary Percival and Maxwell, James D. "Women, Religion and Achievement Aspirations: A Study of Private School Females," in Robert M. Pike and Elia Zureik, eds. Socialization and Values in Canadian society. vol. II. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1975.

Migneault, Alice. Vingt ans d'expansion chez les Soeurs de l'Assomption de la Sainte Vierge 1874-1894. Nicolet: Editions des Soeurs de l'Assomption de la Sainte Vierge, 1985.

Monière, Denis. Le Dévelopment des idéologies au Québec des origines à nos jours. Montréal: Editions Québec/Amérique, 1977.

Morgan, J. "Perceived Communication Activities and Effectiveness of Male and Female Elementary School Principals." M.Ed. thesis, University of Alberta, 1977.

Nixon, M. "Women Administrators and Women Teachers: A Comparative Study. Ph. D. thesis, University of Alberta, 1975.

Ouellet, Fernand. Economic and Social History of Quebec, 1760-1850. Ottawa: Gage, 1980.

Painchaud, Robert. "French-Canadian Historiography and Franco-Catholic Settlement in Western Canada, 1870-1915," in Canadian Historical Review, LIX, 4 (1978) pp. 447-466.

Painchaud, Robert. "The Franco-Canadian Communities of Western Canada since 1945," in David Jay Bercuson and Philip A. Buchner, eds. Eastern and Western Perspectives. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981.

Parkman, Francis. Montcalm and Wolfe. Markham, Ontatio: Viking Press, 1984.

Peterson, Susan C. "A Widening Horizon Catholic Sisterhoods on the Northern Plains, 1874-1910," Great Plains Quarterly (Spring 1985) pp.125-32.

Plante, Lucienne. "La Fondation de l'enseignement classique féminin au Québec 1908-1916." thèse de D.E.S, Université de Laval, 1968.

Prentice, Alison. The School Promoters. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977.

Prentice, Alison. "Towards a Feminist History of Women and Education," in D.C. Jones, N.M. Sheehan, et al., eds. Approaches to Educational History. Monographs in Education, University of Manitoba, 1981.

Prévost, Augustine. L'Education hier et aujourd'hui 1850-1985. Montréal: Editions du Merindien, 1986.

Ramrattan, Annette. "The Theory of Catholic Schooling in the Archdiocese of Edmonton, 1844-1960." M.Ed. thesis, University of Alberta, 1982.

Riley, Glenda. "Women on the Great Plains Recent Developments Research,"
Great Plains Quarterly (Spring 1985) pp. 81-92.

Rioux, M. Albert. "Chez nos anciennes familles," in Mission et droits de la famille Semaines Sociales du Canada XXXVIe Session. Montréal: Secrétariat des Semaines Sociales du Canada, 1959.

Rioux, Marcel. Quebec in Question. Translated by James Boake. Toronto: James Lewis and Samuel, 1971.

Rusak, Stephen T. "Relations in Education Between Bishop Legal and the Alberta Liberal Government, 1905-1920." M.Ed. thesis, University of Alberta, 1966.

Saint-Pierre, Marthe. Education familiale de la jeune fille. Québec: Editions du Pélican, 1961.

Sheehan, Nancy. "Temperance, the W.C.T.U. and Education in Alberta, 1905-1930." Ph.D. thesis, University of Alberta, 1980.

Sloan, Leroy. "A Policy Analysis of Legislation Permitting Public Private School Agreements for the Provisions of Educational Services." Ph.D. thesis, University of Alberta, 1980.

Silver, A.I. The French-Canadian Idea of Confederation 1864-1900. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983.

Smith, Donald B. "A History of French-Speaking Albertans." Howard and Tamara Palmer, eds. Peoples of Alberta: Portraits of Cultural Diversity. Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1985.

Société Saint-Jean Baptiste de Montréal, La. La Saint-Jean Baptiste, Fête Nationale des Canadiens Français: Le jeudi 24 juin 1943. La mère Canadienne. Montréal: Secrétariat Général, 1943.

Stanley, George G. "French and English in Western Canada," in Mason Wade, ed. Canadian dualism/ La dualité canadienne. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1960.

Stanton-Jean, Michèle. "Le Travail de la mère hors du foyer," in Mission et Droits de la famille Semaines Sociales du Canada XXXVIe Session. Montréal: Secrétariat des Semaines Sociales du Canada, 1959.

Stocco, Denise. "French-Canadian Colonization in Alberta." Provincial Museum and Archives of Alberta, Aug. 1973.

Stock, Phyllis. Better Than Rubies: A History of Women's Education. New York: Capricorn Books, 1978.

Tardivel, Jules-Paul. Pour la patrie Roman du XXe siècle. Montréal: Hurtubise, 1975.

Tkach, Nick. Alberta Catholic Schools ... A Social History. Edmonton: Faculty of Education, University of Alberta, 1983.

Trofimenkoff, Susan Mann, ed. Abbé Groulx Variations on a Nationalist Theme. Toronto: Copp Clark, 1973.

Trofimenkoff, Susan Mann. Action Française French Canadian Nationalism in the Twenties. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975.

Trofimenkoff, Susan Mann. "Henri Bourassa and 'the Woman Question'," in Alison Prentice and Susan Mann Trofimenkoff, eds. The Negected Majority, Vol I. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977.

Trofimenkoff, Susan Mann. "Les femmes dans l'oeuvre de Groulx." Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française 32,3 (dec.1978) pp. 395-398.

Trofimenkoff, Susan Mann. The Dream of Nation. Toronto: Macmillan, 1982.

Underwood, June O. "Western Women and True Womanhood Culture and Symbol in History and Literature," Great Plains Quarterly (Spring 1985) pp. 93-106.

Valois, Jocelyne. "La Presse féminine et le rôle social de la femme," in Recherches Sociographiques 7, 3 (sept.-déc. 1967) pp. 351-375.

Vander Zanden, James. Social Pshychology. Third Edition. New York: Random House, 1977.

Vaughn-Robertson, Courtney Ann. "Having a Purpose in Life Western Women Teachers in the Twentieth Century," in Great Plains Quarterly (Spring 1985) pp. 197-24.

Venini Byrne, M.B. From the Buffalo to the Cross. Calgary: Archives and Historical publishers, 1978.

Wade, Mason. The French Canadians 1760-1967, vol I and II. Toronto: Macmillan, 1968.

Westhues, Kenneth. "Catholic Separate Schools: An Ambiguous Legacy." Grail, vol.1 (March 1985) pp.51-64.

Westhues, Kenneth. "The Adaptation of the Roman Catholic Church in Canadian Society," in Stewart Crysdale and Les Wheatcroft, eds. Religion in Canadian Society. Toronto: Macmillan, 1976.