

Report of the Annual Meeting

Rapports annuels de la Société historique du Canada

Report of the Annual Meeting

Two Ways of Life: The Primary Antithesis of Canadian History

Presidential Address

A. R. M. Lower

Volume 22, Number 1, 1943

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/300240ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/300240ar>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

The Canadian Historical Association/La Société historique du Canada

ISSN

0317-0594 (print)

1712-9095 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this document

Lower, A. R. M. (1943). Two Ways of Life: The Primary Antithesis of Canadian History: Presidential Address. *Report of the Annual Meeting / Rapports annuels de la Société historique du Canada*, 22(1), 5–18. <https://doi.org/10.7202/300240ar>

All rights reserved © The Canadian Historical Association/La Société historique du Canada, 1943

This document is protected by copyright law. Use of the services of Érudit (including reproduction) is subject to its terms and conditions, which can be viewed online.

<https://apropos.erudit.org/en/users/policy-on-use/>

érudit

This article is disseminated and preserved by Érudit.

Érudit is a non-profit inter-university consortium of the Université de Montréal, Université Laval, and the Université du Québec à Montréal. Its mission is to promote and disseminate research.

<https://www.erudit.org/en/>

TWO WAYS OF LIFE: THE PRIMARY ANTITHESIS OF CANADIAN HISTORY

Presidential Address by A. R. M. LOWER
United College, University of Manitoba

THE school-boy, with unerring judgment, picks out as the dullest subject of his acquaintance, Canadian History. Given the way it is usually presented to him, the school-boy is right. But need he be? Does his judgment arise from the intrinsic nature of the material? I do not think so. On the contrary, the historian of Canada has at his command exciting and diversified resources, if he have but the skill to make them diversified and exciting.

Foremost among them, surely, are the glaring contrasts upon which this country rests, its sharp antagonisms, the diversity of the groups within it, its unbelievable geography, the ringing clashes everywhere upon all the great fundamentals. The human scene in Canada, both in time and space, is as full of bold colours as a typical Canadian landscape. The painter has used these effects: if the historian cannot, but puts everything into dull grey, it is his fault if people pass him by.

Of all our clashes, who will deny that the deep division between French and English is the greatest, the most arresting, the most difficult? Here is the most resounding note in our history, the juxtaposition of two civilizations, two philosophies, two contradictory views of the fundamental nature of man. For the historian, to neglect it is to leave the battle line. I propose therefore to devote this paper, with what skill I can command, to a short exploration of this primary antithesis of Canadian history. Since it is nothing less than two historic ways of life that I am going to look at, it is especially necessary to keep in mind the warning against "the dilettante who believes in the unity of the group mind and the possibility of reducing it to a single formula."¹ Whatever I have to say will, I hope, be taken by members of both races in the same spirit in which it is uttered, with a wish to understand but no desire to wound. While I shall be as objective as I can, I am well aware that to one of the divergent groups I myself belong.

* * *

A paper of this sort, attempting to look at a few of the fundamentals upon which this country is built, with a view to securing some of that release of tension so necessary to our national well-being, should logically begin with medieval Catholicism and St. Thomas Aquinas, for no one who wishes to understand Canada will get very far until he has studied the medieval structure which a section of this country preserves with singular integrity. Failing the possibility of so comprehensive an approach, the movement which stands at the threshold of our present era, the Reformation, may serve as a point of departure. To that revolt against ecclesiastical metropolitanism, the medieval church, which had been rapidly disintegrating in the liberal world of the Renaissance, owed the renewal of vitality that expressed itself in the Counter or Catholic Reformation. In France, the first of our mother countries, the historical process was delayed for three-quarters of a century by civil strife. This gave to the religious problem a solution not in terms of compromise, as in England,

¹Max Weber, quoted in Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* (Pelican edition), 256, note 7.

but in those of the new Catholicism. The French Reformation, when in the first quarter of the seventeenth century it at last began to formulate itself, soon showed that it was not merely an imitation of that of Spain or Italy. It was French and northern. It was not particularly intellectual or artistic—no earnest religious movement can be—it had little either of the subtlety or the cruelty of the true Latins beyond the mountains. It was enthusiastic, serious, moral, evangelical. There was about it none of the fireside comfort of Anglicanism, little of the cold selfishness of Calvinism. It was a warm, human faith, full of visions and harmless miracles, strict in the standards of conduct it enjoined on its adherents. For those whose roots lie in nineteenth-century Protestantism, it diffused a religious atmosphere which, save for its ritualistic and sacramental basis, is not difficult to understand: it was a kind of nineteenth-century Methodism in a seventeenth-century Catholic setting. It was above all things missionary, and the missionaries it was to give the New World, the Brébeufs and Lalemants, were to become in the manner of their deaths, strong pillars of France in America. Their shadows have loomed the larger as they have receded and today the proud memory of the martyrs gives to French-speaking Canadians a centre of loyalties and a support which their English-speaking fellow countrymen have nothing to match.

It was in the man who was to be the first bishop of Quebec and in the nature of the church he established that the French Catholic Reformation was most deeply to affect Canada. François de Laval was strong-willed, haughty, eager for power, a puritan in morals, ultramontane—as was perhaps natural in a man whose younger days were passed among the confusions of the Fronde, with its tarnishing of royal power—jealous of the privileges of the church as opposed to the state, jealous of his rights as bishop, jealous of his personal dignity in the presence of the Governor. Such traits have many times been repeated among his successors.

The ecclesiastical system whose foundations he laid was never to falter in proper loyalty to the King but within the orbit of that loyalty was to become as strong as the state itself. Education was in its hands from the first—as was inevitable in a period where education was universally a department of religion. The priesthood under him was formed into a disciplined body of men who were not allowed to become incumbents of "livings," but remained missionaries—fighting troops to be moved about from station to station at the discretion of their commander. The system still holds. The instrument Laval fashioned has proved its strength and its worth.

After Laval's time, Canadian-born became more and more common among the priesthood. This had its advantages and disadvantages. The Canadian priests were at one with their people: they were the natural shepherds of their flocks. On the other hand, they were provincials, with little experience except in their own small world. Their culture contrasted unfavourably with that of highly trained Jesuits and Sulpicians from France, but this lag in culture in the period following the original immigration is a familiar story in all new countries, a stage that must be worked through as a new society forms itself. It was as nothing compared with the asset of the curé's closeness to his people. When the evil days came, he had been fitted to become their natural leader, their salvation in tribulation. He retains his place to this day. A moment's glance at history should be

sufficient to take all meaning out of that charge so often levelled by bigoted people that the French Canadians are "priest ridden."²

Laval built on natural foundations, for Catholicism of this popular, even democratic, northern type reflected the genius of the French people who came to Canada, the peasantry of Normandy and its neighbourhood, just as its close relation, Anglicanism, has suited the neighbouring peasantry of southern England, and as paternalistic and sacramental religions suit any peasantry. The life of the peasant is a series of ritual occasions—planting and harvesting, being born, coming of age, begetting, dying. The land has always been there and it always will be. Man's occupancy is transient and the individual is only one in a long chain from forefathers to descendants. All are one family, inter-related if not in this generation, in the last or the next. All give unquestioned obedience to the great mother goddess, the earth-mother, who can easily be made to wear a Christian dress. The restless strivings, the desire for change, "improvement," "progress," "opportunity," which we today take as the normal condition of life, are absent. Man is subject to nature and to nature's moods: he learns to acquiesce in the drought and the flood, the good years and the bad. As his animals and plants grow and come to harvest, so he grows and comes to harvest. His religion is among the simplest and oldest of all creeds, Catholic almost by accident.

The business of the peasant—or *habitant*, as he became in Canadian parlance—was not to make progress but to "make land": to "make land" many hands were necessary. Nature responded, as she always does. Practically all pioneer peoples are prolific, the transplanted French were especially so. There was lack neither of food nor function for every new child. A socially minded people saw no evil in being surrounded with their own and in the swift, steady widening of the family connection. Quite the reverse. They found happiness in life, not in things. A new and finer house meant less to them than sons and daughters growing up in the neighbourhood. If some died, others came: they would all meet hereafter. If some were lame or halt or blind, that was God's will. It was life that He and nature commanded, not the saving of life. This other-worldliness, still so marked in the countryside of Quebec, and not at all divorced from practical wisdom, was re-enforced by the immemorial teaching of the church: man's real life begins hereafter. A genuine belief in immortality works profound effects on the manner in which a people lives. Catholicism and the countryside, simple French peasant traditions, as old as agriculture, and the French joy in human companionship, came together into a strong complex which to this day shows little sign of giving way.

Yet for decades the countryside of New France was a neglected plant, overshadowed by the adventurous foliage of fur trader and missionary. Old France had men for high tasks but not peasants for export. Nor did the home-loving peasantry of a non-emigrating race wish to leave their native soil. The English separate themselves from home and family with ease—and often with relief: they dislike the cramping atmosphere of small communities. The French cling to the ties of mutual support: they dislike going away from the near and the familiar. They accept and enjoy the life

²It is well known that after the conquest, the habitants were very glad to escape from the obligation of the tithe, but that indicates no general dislike of the clergy, simply a healthy independence, which has been demonstrated on more than one subsequent occasion, as, for example, in the elections of 1896.

of small communities. It is not surprising that only a few of them came to the new province, less than ten thousand, it is said, but all of them firm in their Catholicism and carefully guarded from taint or touch of heresy! From these all persons of French-Canadian race are descended. The combination of a faith kept free from all possibility of contamination, of a close environment, the banks of the St. Lawrence, and this extraordinary degree of inbreeding, produced a stock whose homogeneity surely can have few parallels. For the rest of us, with our multitudinous descents, this close-knit world is almost impossible of entry. All its members have clouds of common ancestors, all have had identical historical experiences and all hold the same creed. Even today, amid the complexities of the modern world, the degree of differentiation seems relatively slight. All French Canadians are, as it were, the same French Canadian.

The process of forming a new people began as soon as the first children were born. By the Conquest, it was for practical purposes, complete. The seventy thousand Canadians of 1760, in a century of wrestling with the wilderness, had created a new society: one resembling the old peasant societies of France but with its own orientation, especially with its own family clans and its own passionate love of the land it had made its own and the soil it had won from the wilderness and the natives; a society entirely cut off from the rest of the world, turned inward upon itself to a degree few people of English speech can grasp; a society unbelievably parochial but in every sense a strong blood brotherhood. This was the little world that was to crash under the triumph of English arms. The heart of the French nation had never been in empire and it saw the vision of Champlain fade without regret. But what of the children of France, the Canadians, those who had taken such firm root in the soil that was to pass under the alien flag? What of them, isolated now in the hostile, Protestant, English continent of the conqueror?

It is hard for people of English speech to enter imaginatively into the feelings of those who must pass under the yoke of conquest, for, except in the Southern States, there is scarcely a memory of it in all their tradition.³ Conquest is a type of slavery and of that too we have no memory—except as masters. Conquest, like slavery, probably must be experienced to be understood. But one can intellectually perceive what it means. The whole life structure of the conquered is laid open to their masters. They become second-rate people. Wherever they turn, something meets their eyes to symbolize their subjection: it need not be the foreign military in force, it need not be the sight of the foreign flag, it may be some small matter—a common utensil of unaccustomed size and shape, let us say, taking the place of one familiar. And then there is the alien speech, perhaps not heard very often, but sometimes heard, and sometimes heard arrogantly, from the lips of persons who leave no doubt that the conquered are in their estimation inferior beings. Even the kindness of the superior hurts.

Nor does conquest sit easiest on the humble. The educated may make their peace, learn the foreign language, and find many areas in common, but the humble cannot cross the gulf—they feel pushed aside in their own homes. Hence it is that nationalism will always live longest, even if not

³Yet as late as the nineteenth century an historian like Freeman could draw a line between the Saxon people, with whom he identified himself, and their conquerors, the Normans. In his writings the Saxons were always "we," and the Normans "they." The memory of conquest dies hard!

blazing up into fierce flame, in the hearts of the people, who will seek to maintain their own ways by the passiveness of their behaviour, and little by little, as opportunity offers, will edge forward into any chance space left vacant by their masters.

Conquest in the forces it sets in motion may be tantamount to a revolution. The conquered are so bludgeoned by fate that they come to find new spiritual springs of life. Something like this did happen in French Canada. French Canadians are strong as a group today not least because they passed through the valley of the shadow a century and three-quarters ago.

No one can suggest that the English conquest was cruel, as conquests go, or the English government harsh. If the French in Canada had had a choice of conquerors they could not have selected more happily. But conquerors are conquerors: they may make themselves hated or they may make themselves tolerated. They cannot, unless they abandon their own way of life and quickly assimilate themselves, in which case they cease to be conquerors, make themselves loved. As long as the French are French and the English English, the memory of the Conquest and its effects, will remain. Not until the great day comes when each, abandoning their respective colonialisms, shall have lost themselves in a common Canadianism, will it be obliterated.

Within the old régime the French-Canadian type was formed: all its history since has been merely a superstructure on the foundation then laid. Anyone understanding the conquered people and gifted with a sufficiently prophetic eye could in 1760 have foretold the attitude of the French Canadians toward conscription in 1941, or for that matter in 2041. In external affairs, including war, it is, was and will be, simply that of most of the other small Latin and Catholic peoples of the hemisphere who have been cut off from their parent stock and find themselves in a world that has moved far away from the pole about which they swing, they whose metropolitan centre is not London, or Moscow, or New York, but Rome. If we can understand the reactions of Ecuador or Paraguay to this northern world of Anglo-Saxons, Slavs, and Germans in which we live, we shall understand that of Quebec readily enough.

In the 180 years since the Conquest, new phases of the basic situation have naturally presented themselves. As numbers and wealth increased and as English parliamentary institutions were introduced, a new class grew up—the intellectuals who spilled over from the too abundant material for the priesthood into the secular professions, especially the law. In French Canada, where everyone likes to talk and to hear good talk, the lawyer, *l'avocat*, has had a field day. His opponent invariably being another lawyer, every election has turned itself into an oratorical contest and since a superbly convenient whipping boy has always stood ready to hand, it has been inevitable that every contest should involve him—*les sacrés Anglais*, the damned English. Is it therefore too much to suggest that every political fight from 1791 to the present day has had as its fundamental, if unexpressed issue, the English conquest? If the situation were reversed, the same would be true of us—as it is to some degree true in the Southern States. But why does the point need labouring? Does not the municipal government of the capital of our largest and wealthiest province turn on an even more ancient issue than the Plains of Abraham—on that obscure Irish skirmish, the Battle of the Boyne?

The French-Canadian intellectual, whether lawyer, journalist, or priest, has run true to type. He has lived in a world of ideas—or notions—but he has been better at talking, perhaps, than doing. He has had a difficult road, because for him there cannot be that free play of the intellect so naturally assumed by his opposite numbers in the English camp. His education has formed his mind before the world has opened to him and he has had to do his thinking within a system whose boundaries are rigid. The results have been the weak development of the objective studies, the slam-banging personal tone of French-Canadian journalism (which is also agreeable to the spirit of the French race), its sometimes rather tenuous connection with facts, but above all the shoving-over of discussion and emotion to another concept, that of the race. The intellectual, priest or layman, has been the protagonist of the race. It is a natural, if somewhat unhealthy role. Any virile group cut off from free expansion will necessarily turn inward and console itself with its own virtues. It will at all costs seek survival and an opportunity to break its bonds. This is the motive power behind Nazi-ism, Fascism, and "Japanese-ism": Germans, Italians, Japanese, all suffer from a species of claustrophobia. So do many French Canadians, marooned in an English continent. Like causes produce like results. The utterances of extreme racialists everywhere, whether in Germany or in Canada, come back to about the same thing. But it has been our good luck, here in Canada so far, that the extremists of neither race have captured control of the state.

Nevertheless as the outside world has pressed more and more on the French island in America,⁴ racialism has become more and more self-conscious and has absorbed into its concepts more and more of life, so that today it is impossible to tell whether the race is the bulwark for the faith or the faith for the race. Possibly the latter. It would appear to the outsider as if the French church today could to some extent stand apart from its own spiritual significance as a manifestation of Christianity and find its function in binding together people of common blood and speech.

We English Canadians have not until recently been very much plagued by intellectuals. Most of them who have not been drained off into practical tasks, we have managed to ship to the United States. The French have not had that easy solution. Their society was completed long ago and there has not been a great deal for the intellectual to do except watch the English men of business tear it to pieces. The French intellectuals cannot enter into that world, any more than can our own. They can merely stand at the threshold, their sensitive souls lashed with the thought that they may be regarded by the bustling representatives of the conquering race as second-class citizens. Hence their discontent. Hence much of the explanation for the Papineaus, the Bourassas, the Chaloult, with the rather pathetic cry, repeated from generation to generation, for more "posts," more safe government jobs, free from the rude blasts of English initiative.⁵

But French Canada, even if its people so desired, has not remained frozen in Maria Chapedelaine-ish postures. Things do move. The most

⁴And how heavily it does press! Note how American persuasiveness has at last drawn the "Quints" out of their backwoods French environment and put them on a public platform singing English songs! The reference is to their appearance at Superior, Wisconsin, during May, 1943, to sponsor certain ship launchings.

⁵It is in the 92 Resolutions of 1834 and in one of Mr. Chaloult's speeches of May, 1943.

conspicuous change is the coming of industrialism and the swing from rural to urban.⁶ In 1871, 80 per cent of the French people of Quebec were rural, today only 42 per cent are. One of the most interesting questions that confronts the social scientist is what urbanism and industrialism will do to the Canadians of French speech. Will this unique peasant structure, this strong fortress of the Catholic Reformation be able to adapt itself to the new kind of life? French Canada today is in the grips of the first revolution its people have ever known, the Conquest excepted, the industrial revolution. What will be the outcome of the clash of medievalism and modernism, of the régime of the natural law and the acquisitive ethic? Will Catholicism adapt itself? Can the countryside continue to send out its sons and daughters in such a strong tide that peasant values, the faith and the church, will continue to dominate the cities? Will the race as binding concept more and more displace the faith under the dissolving forces of urbanism? Will urban values work back into the countryside and give to rural Quebec, as they have already given to rural Ontario, a kind of suburban atmosphere? Will the forces of continentalism triumph over this strong fortress of localism? Will the international unions displace the Catholic? Whatever the future holds, the appointed guardians of race and faith will put up a good struggle.⁷ The rural clergy will not be tempted overly much by the English shibboleth of a "high standard of living": they see the trap that lurks in that. They will not be too much in favour of high wages and only mildly of progressive and social measures, for their people have not yet reached the stage where they feel it necessary to be parsimonious of life. Heaven may not be quite as close as it once was and temporal values may be getting more emphasis than they used to do, but the group is still more than the individual, life still more than the means of livelihood, and the simple standards of the countryside will for a long time carry themselves into the cities.

II

From this exploration of French Canadianism one figure is absent, the man of business. With very good reason. Except in minor roles, he is an inconspicuous figure. If one takes his *Manual of Canadian Securities* and looks at the serried ranks of Directors listed therein he will find only a corporal's guard of French names. The explanation is simple. Here is a society founded under a philosophy that admitted only a subordinate place to the man of business and his pursuits, that, even in his luxuriant fur-trading days, managed to keep him more or less in his place and that by

⁶RURAL AND URBAN FRENCH POPULATION OF QUEBEC, 1871-1941

Year	Rural	Urban	Total	Per cent rural
1871	745,125	184,692	929,817	80.3
1881	806,960	266,860	1,073,820	
1891	No returns
1901	848,229	473,866	1,322,115	
1911	904,357	702,138	1,606,495	
1921	920,553	968,716	1,889,269	
1931	945,035	1,325,024	2,270,059	41.2
1941	1,107,380	1,587,652	2,695,032	41.7

Table from 1931 census, 1,755, table 35, and 1941, bulletin A-4. The total rural increase in Canada 1931-41 was 310,000 of which the French in Quebec contributed 162,000.

⁷In the last decade the French added to their population almost 70 per cent more people than those of British origin did to theirs, 553,000 as compared with 331,000.

historical accident was rather thoroughly purged of him. It is possible to find Catholic societies in which a degree of capitalism has prevailed, though it is to be suspected that in them Catholicism has been subject to very severe strains. Sometimes, as in nineteenth-century France, it has been shouldered aside. But in such a preserve of the church as French Canada, it would be vain to expect any striking development of native capitalism—except the special form of capitalism represented by ecclesiastical corporative organization. Both historically and today the weight of French-Canadian society is against capitalism. The values it seeks to conserve are quite other. The business man does not walk among the French as a god. Honours are paid not to the captains of industry but to the political, and especially to the ecclesiastical figures. I can see no end to English-Canadian domination of the machinery of production in Quebec except the abandonment by the French of their attitude to life and their acceptance of ours—either that, which they will not deliberately make—or the invocation of the power of the state to take over English enterprise and thus a slipping back into a more or less efficient paternalistic socialism, in which the intellectuals at last have all the *postes* they want as public factory managers.

No; for this characteristic phenomenon of yesterday, the business man, we shall have to turn to the other side of the house, where he may be examined in riotous abundance. Our first contact with him is shortly after the Conquest when he comes rushing in on the heels of the military. He is in a hurry. He wants to get things done. He has ends to gain, an object in life. That object is one comprehended only remotely by the peasant. From the first the New World has released in men the passion of greed. Greed in itself as a human quality the peasant can understand well enough but not greed erected into a way of life and fortified not only with the majesty of the law but with the sanction of a religion. Yet no other group has so systematically set up acquisition as an object in itself and made it the centre of a cult as have the men of business of the English-speaking world.

In 1760, the new creed had not gone as far as it has since, and there continued to resist it the older elements in English life, feudalism in its eighteenth-century form of aristocracy and certain sections of the Church of England. It was in the fighting and governmental services that these elements found their strongest expression. It was therefore these that were to have the best relations with the conquered Catholics. The weight of the English thrust into the conquered territories was not, however, to consist in officials and the military, but in men representing the new way of life, which had already appropriated for itself a theology by which it could rationalize its conduct. This way of life became dominant in Canada and remains so.

The connection between Protestantism, especially Calvinism, and material achievement has been the subject of much investigation. Wherever Calvinism has prevailed, societies largely committed to the acquisitive way of life have arisen. The coincidence seems logical, for while the spirit of acquisition is as old as man, Calvinism subtly reinforces it. The burning question it presented to its adherents—and in altered terms still presents—was whether God had elected them unto salvation.⁸ There was no infallible

⁸Today this question is put in much terser and secular form: "Can I make good?" C. A. Beard, *The Rise of American Civilization*, makes the point that since about mid-nineteenth century, the ethic of success has dominated the older ethics: not "Is it

means of finding out but God might give a sign. And what more visible sign could the individual receive than that he should be prospered? But the sign would not come if one merely sat and waited for it. So the faithful set about each to his own individual duty, doing, as he believed, God's work. As someone has said, there is no more awesome sight than a churchful of Scotch Presbyterians upon their knees praying God to give them strength to do His will unto their fellow men, and then arising to go forth and do it! Calvinism created strong men, strong in their convictions, strong in their demands for elbow room to carry out their allotted tasks. But not men who were much concerned with their fellows. That was God's business. While the Jesuits were threading the wilderness to bring Christianity to the Indians, the New England Puritans were burning them alive in their own villages.⁹

In countless ways the Calvinistic type of Protestantism accentuated the motives of accomplishment and success. Everywhere it found its most congenial soil in urban areas, among the middle classes. In industry, it became the support of self-made men, men who "did not need the government to help them in *their* business," and in politics, it came to stand for *laissez-faire* and the policeman state. Its spirit reigned supreme in Victorian England, the spirit of drive, of providence and thrift, of smug success. How far it all was from the scriptural injunction to take no thought for the morrow!

Nowhere was the acquisitive ethic more at home than in the New World. There the field was open and nature invited exploitation. Hence the strong link between it, the Scotch or New Englanders, the staple trade, and the characteristic expression of the staple trade, the metropolitan-hinterland relationship. Traditions that might have held it in check were weak. Nearly everything sooner or later was bent in the one direction—the contempt of the older ideals and the intolerance that the new and the moving invariably manifests for the old and the static. The goal of material success passed over easily into success in terms of accomplishment or of power and in these forms afforded the driving energy that has mainly made America.

No one would assert that there have been no other aspects of life represented among the English-speaking population of Canada. Among our farmers many of the traits of peasant societies survive, and the antithesis between the country way of life and the urban has been almost as sharp at tempt of the older ideals and the intolerance that the new and the moving settlement come close to the French countryside itself in their conformity to older social patterns.¹¹ In the region of religious or cultural tradition there is the Anglican emphasis on service to the state and on the ideal of the gentleman; or the Scottish ideal of the learned man, the philosopher. Very prominent is humanitarianism, that powerful body of emotions, sentiments, beliefs, and actions, which has penetrated every nook and cranny

just, is it right?" becomes the question, but "Can I succeed?" To fail in the presence of the group emerges as the unpardonable sin.

⁹A century later the *bourgeois* of the North West Company were zealously supporting the first Presbyterian Church in Montreal but that church showed a conspicuous absence of interest in the activities at the other end of the fur trade.

¹⁰It had a large share in the Upper Canadian Rebellion of 1837, the Clear Grit party, and of course in the more recent agrarian movements, especially Alberta "Social Credit."

¹¹See Dr. Enid Charles's article on Prince Edward Island and its population characteristics in *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*, May, 1942.

of our Canadian life. It would be interesting to analyse the complex way in which these all twine around each other. But space does not permit. English-speaking Canada has fallen under these various traditions in about the same way as the United States, though at a retarded rate, for here there have been influences restraining their free play. For example, our continuing connection with Great Britain has provided some shelter for a class structure and a quasi-official church, the Church of England. For the first seventy-five years after the Conquest, this older English tradition—the “squire and parson” concept of society—made a strong fight of it with commercialism—as in its modern form it is doing again today, under the special circumstances of the war, with its strengthening of the forces of history. But it too became more or less assimilated to the dominant tone, as witness the business relationships of the Family Compact men, and left the field pretty clear for the exploitive and acquisitive attitudes, which had an almost unchecked run until a decade or two ago. There must be few English Canadians of middle life who were not brought up on the conviction that their business in life was to succeed, “to make good,” “to get on,” “to get to the top,” “to amount to something.”

Methodism, whose social gospel also opposed a certain counterweight to acquisition, split under its pressure. The industry and thrift inculcated by the creed brought worldly success to many of its followers, who trailed off into the acquisitive camp, taking with them the phraseology of simpler days and the shell of the old attitudes of brotherhood and often leaving awkward gaps between profession and performance. But the genius of Methodism continued to assert itself in characteristic social movements, temperance, social service, and so on. Eventually it found logical expression in a more or less formal political socialism: much of the drive in Canadian socialism comes out of Canadian Methodism and as it does battle with Canadian individualism, it carries forward the Christian ethic of support for the weak and the lowly against the strong and the established.

These are the two most significant traditions at work in our English-speaking community today: they represent its sharpest antithesis, and the future will witness a battle over which shall organize it. Neither one is now very firmly attached to its original religious base. The Methodist-humanitarian tradition satisfies itself with a social gospel and a social task: it resorts easily to perfectionism—to Utopianism, pacifism, a vague internationalism, and a “planned society.” The Calvinist-individualist-success conception of life, stripped of its fine phrases about election unto salvation, initiative, individualism, being nothing more than mere selfishness, was the first to run beyond Christian bounds. Those who live in this area find themselves today confronting life either on the basis of a rather mechanical benevolence and simple good fellowship or face to face with a frank hedonism and a stark paganism.^{11a}

The dynamics of acquisition have transformed the world but the societies dominated by them—of which our own is one—despite their brilliance, are hollow at the centre. For deep in the heart of this way of life there seems to be a denial of life. It sets up for itself a goal of goods, of plenty, of a “high standard of living,” and here finding common ground with humanitarianism, surrounds itself with devices designed to smooth out life’s ills, to make life easier, to prolong and save life. It secures food and

^{11a}The American divorce tradition, which is paganism, is a descendant of the individualism of American Puritanism.

shelter of an excellence never before attained. It increases the span of life, makes individuals healthier, stronger, taller, more alert. It decreases illness, physical disabilities, infant mortality, maternal mortality. And yet solicitous as it is for the individual's well-being, the societies it has created are slowly withering. Speaking of the disappearance of the English from the Eastern Townships, the authors of a recent book on Quebec say: "A peaceful victory, a grand victory, for today there are 300,000 French there as against less than 50,000 English. Note that the relations between them are excellent because our people have not returned the blows which their ancestors received. . . . 'The French are right to act in this way: it is better (instead of retaliation) to give the English splendid funerals' The majority of the English have become a population of old people . . . who having sold their property to the French, live in retirement in the villages. These villages present as it were 'the foretaste of a cemetery'."¹²

Many people become indignant because they would say the French are pushing the English out. I cannot see that the French are to blame. They are a virile people who can see no virtue in childlessness. If we have no instinct for group survival and choose the easy way out of comfort and race suicide, we have ourselves to blame.

Our two Canadian ways of life exemplify the antithesis that in general terms might be put somewhat as follows: The nearer what might be called the peasant-spiritual, or rural-natural, the primitive outlook on life, the stronger the hold on life, the greater the survival value of the group, the less considered the individual, the greater the complaisance in taking what life brings, good fortune or bad, good health or bad, sound limbs or crooked. In contrast, the more in the other current, acquisition, materialism, commercialism, urbanism, individualism, Calvinism—call it what you like—the greater the parsimony with life, the more concern for the individual, the more strenuous the efforts to keep him from blemish, to make perfect specimens, to patch up the defective, to prolong life, the less ability to create it. *The "high standard of living" seems to destroy life.* The one complex, in its extreme, leads to mere animalism, the other to extinction. Where is the happy medium and what philosophy will support it?

In Canada, the two outlooks have had marked geographical correlations. The urban-acquisitive complex has deepened in proportion to the longitude west. Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia have been less affected by it than Ontario, Ontario than Manitoba, and Manitoba than British Columbia. Under the weight of the depression this tendency is not now so marked. The English in Manitoba and Saskatchewan alike are decreasing, and in Ontario and British Columbia they are being kept afloat by immigration from other provinces. In Saskatchewan the pattern stands out with especial clearness: in the last ten years, those races close to the soil have held their own despite misfortune—Ukrainians, Germans, Hungarians, etc. But the commercial races—those who do not see life as existence but as opportunity—have gone sharply down in numbers, the English, the Syrians, the Jews, and the Chinese.

There is also a decided religious correlation. Believe it or not, you will have a considerably larger family if you are a Pentecostal than if you are a Presbyterian. The further one moves away from the simple, rural,

¹²*Notre Milieu* (Montreal, 1942), 98.

pietistic groups, such as the Mennonites, among whom there were in 1931, 159 children under the age of five for every 1,000 persons, into the more sophisticated, urban, middle-class, acquisitive areas, which make large demands on life, the less is the likelihood that his group will replace itself in the next generation. At the extreme stand the Christian Scientists, just where one would expect them, with 45 children under five per 1,000, the perfect embodiment of prosperous middle-class dessication. When its characteristics are analysed every denomination falls exactly into the anticipated place.¹³

Correlations of group survival value may in fact be made by the bushel. There are positive correlations such as the rural life, pietistic or authoritarian religion, religious dogma, pioneer areas, old static areas, poverty, short life-expectancy, religious communism, communal segregation, lower class, labour in new industries, possibly aristocracy: and negative correlations such as urbanism, size of urban unit, individualism, altitude in the middle class, commercial attitudes, professional occupations, income, divorce, "feminism," the size and newness of automobile, exploitive economies, such as the mining and logging economy of British Columbia, suburbanized rural areas, humanitarianism, possibly agnosticism, intellectualism. In general it is the humble who have survival value. It is the meek who shall inherit the earth.

It is an ironic commentary upon history that that group which began with a return to life, with a triumphant affirmation of life, with a "*Welt-Bejahung*," the Protestant, should now, with minor exceptions, have fallen into a denial of life, a fear of animal "robustiousness," while the other group, which persistently belittled this life and lived in the shadow of immortality, should be exhibiting in our day every evidence of that affirmation which Protestantism once made. Protestantism as a traditional way of life has got too far away from nature. Sophistication has been too much for it. Given our present attitude to life, we are probably fighting our last victorious war. If the test comes again in the future, we shall have too few young men to fend off the races such as the Japanese that ask less return from life but are more able to live. Our people are willing to make every effort to ensure by military means the immediate survival of their group but they seem not to have the slightest interest in what may happen to it a few years into the future. It may therefore be that their fate, too, is to

¹³CHILDREN 0-4 YEARS OF AGE PER 1,000 OF TOTAL

<i>Denomination</i>	<i>Children 0-4 per 1,000 of total</i>
Mennonites	159.3
Roman Catholics	125.5
Mormons	123.3
Greek Orthodox.....	121.7
Pentecostals	103.7
Lutherans	97.8
Baptists	90.5
United Church.....	87.5
Anglicans	85.5
Presbyterians	80.5
Salvation Army.....	75.5
Jews	75.0
Christian Science	45.3

Table compiled from 1931 census, vol. III, p. 310.

pass under the harrow and from intimate contemplation of the arrogant superior, find for themselves the secret that the humble already know. *Deposuit magnifices de sedibus. . .*

Does this mean that we shall have to choose between the way of life we have built up and our survival as a group? Shall we have to return to what most of us would feel to be a much poorer kind of civilization? I trust not, though if our civilization is to survive I am certain that some kind of compromise will have to be effected and many aspects of our present way of life greatly modified. Amid much that is good many of them are just idiotic. Everyone can amuse himself by compiling his own list of lunacies, but conspicuous among the major changes that will have to come is a modification of the ethic of acquisition, the *appetitus divitiarum infinitus*, the unbridled indulgence of the acquisitive appetite, as Tawney puts it and the degenerate indulgence that surely accompanies it.

If our urban civilization were to fall through dry rot, through failure of man-power, hardly less ironical a fate would be in store for the non-acquisitive group, which is, in Canada, the French. Without the initiative of the English Protestant man of business, the present-day mechanical civilization could not have come into existence. Without it, the French would have remained a quiet rural people, probably not more than a quarter as numerous as they are now. If old William Price, or some other, had not opened up the Saguenay a century and a quarter ago, and if his successors had not built on to his achievements, instead of the lumber, the pulpwood, the water-power and the aluminum that now come out of that valley, there would have been a few farms on the shores of Lake St. John, a few small local saw-mills, and that would have been all. There would have been that many fewer opportunities for life. The industrial structure of Quebec rests on this initiative, which has provided work for the hundreds of thousands from the countryside who otherwise would have had to stay on the farm as bachelors and spinsters, or divide and subdivide the land in Malthusian misery. The question forces itself, "who has created the French race in America?" I make bold to say that the English industrialist has created about three-quarters of it.¹⁴

So the fate of the two peoples seems indissolubly linked. At present they complement each other, unhappily and acrimoniously. But may the day not come when understanding will be greater? May the English not learn a little tolerance, the French gain a little breadth? May the English, through suffering, perhaps, lose a little of their arrogance, the French a little of their touchy vanity? May the extreme commercialism of the English not be modified, the more obvious blatancies of their civilization overcome, their acquisitive ethic toned down? May the French not come forward and take their place in running a modern state, finding constructive ideas to contribute, getting a little further away from medievalism, from a philosophy that sacrifices nearly everything to survival value? May the deep fear which afflicts both sides—the fear of the French of losing their identity and the fear of the English of being outnumbered—not be dissipated in a common loyalty to a common country?

That day may come and it may not. Pressure from the outside world may bring it, though of that I am doubtful. The lessening numbers of the English may induce in them more of a live-and-let-live attitude. The

¹⁴Reckoning in the industrial French population of the United States.

penetrative qualities of North American civilization may bring French society closer to the continental norm. Most likely of all, it seems to me, the tensions and troubles of our times, which are not going to end with the peace, will some day burn out the grosser aspects of our English materialism, giving us a truer and deeper insight into life than what we have now, reforming our society in some such way as society was reshaped at the end of the middle ages and thereby establishing a new set of values in which both races can share. The two communities will never be one, there can be no question of a blood brotherhood, but sooner or later they will take up their respective weights, some kind of equilibrium will be reached, of that I am sure. We have not lived together for nearly two centuries merely to see the Canadian experiment fail. It will not fail. This country of high colours and violent contrasts will not fail. One of these days the two races, forgetting lesser allegiances, will unite in mutual loyalty to it, and build it into a structure of which our successors will be proud.