

of Adélard Godbout granted suffrage to the women of Québec in 1940. The traditional concept of family was in danger, according to Church leaders such as Jean-Marie-Rodrigue Cardinal Villeneuve, archbishop of Québec City. Nearly 98 percent of French Canadians were still officially Catholic, but some new intellectuals began to criticize the Church and traditional society in the 1950's, especially those surrounding the journal *Cité Libre*, led by the future Canadian prime minister Pierre Trudeau, who was a liberal Roman Catholic educated by the Jesuits at Montreal's Collège Jean-de-Brébeuf. (For an insightful look at this period, see *The Catholic Origins of Québec's Quiet Revolution, 1931-1970* (2005), by Michael Gauvreau.)

In 1950 the Church was still in charge of Québec's education and healthcare systems. The two French universities were under a pontifical charter, and the secondary-school system was controlled by the religious communities and the secular clergy. It was an enrollment requirement at the universities to have passed through the classical college system, which was also controlled by the clergy. Maurice Duplessis, the conservative and nationalist premier of Québec from 1936 to 1939 and again in 1944-59, was a friend of the conservative Catholic hierarchy and a defender of traditional society. He fought socialist ideas and groups, and he was able to stop the Liberal Party in the 1950's. He was even able to ban Pierre Trudeau from teaching at the Université de Montréal, which was controlled by the Sulpicians.

After the death of Duplessis in 1959, the Liberals quickly won the elections of 1960 under the familiar slogan "*C'est le temps que ça change!*" ("It is time to change!"). This political and social modernization was in step with the Second Vatican Council (1962-65), which opened the gates to all sorts of liberal trends in the Church. Québec changed radically in just a few years (1960-76) in this "Quiet Revolution." The birthrate became one of the lowest in the Western world; French-Canadian priests left their ministry at record levels, and the Church aban-

doned her educational and healthcare institutions to the state. Some sociologists call it a late modernization process of a traditional and Catholic society, similar to what happened in Portugal after Salazar (1970), Spain after Franco (1976), Ireland (1980's), and Poland after communism (1990's).

Québec was transformed from a Church-shepherded society to a nanny state. Many priests became servants of the state, as bureaucrats, rectors, professors, and teachers. Education reform after 1964 was inspired by the American high school, with its utilitarian orientation and scientific emphasis. The old classical college, where Latin, Greek, philosophy, and French literature dominated, was abolished.

To get the support of the Church, the Liberals of the 1960's, who were still nominally Catholic for the most part, allowed Catholic children to receive one or two lessons per week in Catholicism. This was carried out in a generally neutral educational milieu, but it was still officially Catholic because of Article 92 of the Canadian Constitution of 1867. These religion courses, and the schools themselves, became less and less identifiably Catholic from 1964 to 1995. Then in 1997, the government of the Parti Québécois (PQ), a French-speaking, left-wing separatist party created in 1968, helped to pass a constitutional amendment that completely secularized the school system in Québec. The Church in Québec officially accepted this fundamental change in order to accommodate non-Christian immigrants, who began arriving in significant numbers in the 1980's, mostly from Muslim countries, on the Island of Montreal. In September 2008 the Liberal government of Québec, with the support of the PQ and the Québec Church, imposed a multicultural course that taught six different religions to all students, in grades one through twelve. With church attendance at less than five percent of the population, it seems the final nail has been hammered into the coffin of a once-Christian nation.

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Letter From Québec

by John Remington Graham

I Remember



For some years I have lived in Québec as a friendly alien from the United States, traveling from time to time back to my native Minnesota and other states to practice law in my fields of interest. I am married to a French-Canadian wife who is a member of the bar and *maitresse* of our country village. Together we have raised our bilingual children of dual citizenship. I was involved in helping to defuse by effective legal means the separatist crisis which posed a very real threat of civil war between Québec and Anglo-Canada. Québec now enjoys the security of the Confederation, yet has the option of independence. She has an adjudicated right of secession from the Union in certain circumstances. Her flag alone, without the federal banner, flies from her parliament building. And she has constitutional standing as a distinct society and a nation within Canada. Both the prime minister and the leader of the opposition in Ottawa are honest friends of Québec. The hostility between Québec and Anglo-Canada, which once came close to unleashing hatred and spilling blood, is now a thing of the past, mercifully dormant, thankfully forgotten. The Union waxes strong from sea to sea. Canada did right in 1995-2000 what the United States did wrong in 1860-65. Both Daniel Webster and John C. Calhoun would have been edified by what I watched unfold before my very eyes.

Québec has since sunk into an identity crisis, trying to determine what she is. Politicians imbued with political correctness, multiculturalism, and other contemporary inanities say that Québec is a pluralist society, yet nothing could be more obvious to a foreigner like myself than that Québec is a French, Catholic society, unspoiled by the corrupt values of the French Revolution. Of course, there are minorities that are generally well

treated, but this society is homogeneous. My friends here are amused by my “anglophone” accent, they correct my errors in French grammar, they try out their English on me at parties and receptions, and they make me translate French into English for them, but Québec is their country. Accordingly, I write strictly as an American observer living among them.

The motto of Québec is “*Je me souviens*” — “I remember” — for these people are supposed to remember their roots and thus recall who they are. But natives here are so close to the situation that many of them have forgotten. It is no secret that Québec is the modern legal embodiment of what was New France, which was cradled by the French crown, but above all else was a missionary project of the Catholic Church, as is everywhere apparent even in our age of secular humanism run riot. After the Battle on the Plains of Abraham, French magistrates and troops went back to Europe, leaving the Catholic Church as the indigenous basis of order and civilization. British soldiers and diplomats came to an understanding with the Catholic Church: The inhabitants of Québec could keep their language, their religion, and their culture if they would be good subjects of the king of Great Britain, who then sweetened the deal by teaching the arts of British parliamentary government. It was one of the most fabulously successful, mutually beneficial political bargains in the history of North America. And so Québec is a French and Catholic society, make no mistake about it, but she is also a society decorated with Scottish tartans, Irish shamrocks, and fine old English names of French-speaking families — a society raised to maturity by the British crown. Without the Catholic Church and the British crown, everybody in Québec would today be eating American hot dogs, drinking flat American beer, and watching American baseball.

During the tense days when the enemies of Québec engineered a reference to the Supreme Court of Canada in the expectation that the judges would deny any right of secession, the lawyer pleading the cause for Québec

gallantly rested his argument on the constitutional attributes of the British crown. The political turning point in the struggle came when the cardinal-archbishop of Montreal, prince of the Catholic Church, insisted in a dramatic public statement that the people of Québec, not the judges in Ottawa, would decide the question of independence from the rest of Canada. About the same time an eminent federalist statesman in Québec, who had led the opposition to separatism in the provincial legislature, stepped forward. Like many Québécois his given name was French, but his family name was Irish. Eloquent, he said that, while he always favored the reconciliation with Anglo-Canada, he never doubted that Québec had a constitutional prerogative to withdraw from the Union. And Québec prevailed against all odds by thus asserting herself, based on her true identity which reposes on the historic alliance between the British crown and the Catholic Church. The hard-nosed federalists in Ottawa have been in denial ever since.

Yet once the sovereign rights of Québec were memorably vindicated, the identity of the French nation of North America has been ruthlessly attacked, not by wicked politicians in Ottawa who are now icons of the past, but by all three political parties in the national assembly of Québec. For legislators have been duped by bureaucrats and pseudo-intellectuals doing the bidding of high finance and betraying their country. Québec now has a law that requires obligatory teaching of a new state religion in all public and private schools. It was once guaranteed as a constitutional principle in the Québec Charter that parents could stipulate the religious and moral instruction of their children in public schools. It was possible for parents to designate that their children should be taught the Catholic Faith, or the Protestant Faith, or enrolled in a course in general civic morality. About 86 percent of the children in Québec thus received Catholic instruction. But now the government has abolished this regime and imposed something else, which is a mandatory teaching of all religions in one gener-

al course of instruction — Catholicism, Protestantism, Orthodox Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Taoism, Confucianism, grand medicine of the Indian tribes, even NOW-style feminism and Al Gore-style environmentalism, indeed every religion or quasireligious teaching, including atheism and agnosticism. For, you see, although Québec was an harmonious society before, we must all “get along” according to those who have designed this course in “religious and cultural ethics.”

All religions now must be taught in Québec as true, equal, and one, and this synthesis is drummed into the minds of children, over the protest of their parents. The minister of education has fanatically taken a hard line that, while exemptions are allowable under the statute, no exemptions shall ever be granted. The difficulty is that this view is nothing but obligatory teaching of Freemasonry, contrary to the traditional teachings of the Catholic Church, which is a cornerstone for the unique identity of Québec. This teaching has been condemned by Leo XIII in the encyclical *Humanum genus* (1884), by Pius XI in the encyclicals *Mortalium animos* (1928) and *Divini illius magistri* (1929). This course in “religious harmony” has been condemned by the new cardinal-archbishop of Québec and Catholic primate of Canada, and by the prefecture of Catholic education at the Vatican. The prerogative of parents to supervise the religious and moral education of their children has been repeatedly confirmed, not only by the Catholic Church, but by the Supreme Court of Canada.

Lawyers and parents are now preparing to assault this outrage in the superior court of Québec. I know the lawyers; they are excellent men. And although they are right and the law is on their side, the outcome of the coming fight is as yet by no means clear. Government officials are not at all concerned about justice, they have public money and prostituted academics to support them, and they have lots of power.

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The Brazilian Cow

In the middle of the 19th century, Sydney Dobell wrote a poem that contained the following line: "Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah!" This excursion into the absurd *c.* 1850 is readily recognized by readers of American poems or novels *c.* 1950 as a cry of the soul in torment. The sources of the putative torment, qualitatively speaking, were as multifarious as they are irrelevant to the present discussion, ranging from Capitalism to Autocracy, from Woman to Machine, from Vivisection to Sapphism.

The relevant reading, which perforce places Dobell's decalogue of histrionic exclamation in an historical context, is the quantitative one. The literary epoch that had made him a writer was the habitat of the periodic sentence, as illustrated by a classic passage, *c.* 1800, from Ann Radcliffe's *Romance of the Forest*:

While he was declaring the ardour of his passion in such terms, as but too often make vehemence pass for sincerity, Adeline, to whom this declaration, if honourable, was distressing, and if dishonourable, was shocking, interrupted him and thanked him for the offer of a distinction, which, with a modest, but determined air, she said she must refuse.

Against this background of ratiocination, Dobell's bleating lapse into absurdity must be viewed as a rare event, roughly equivalent to an indecent misprint in a national newspaper or a midair collision in aviation.

Until very recently the absurd was a bedfellow of the irrational. As the air controller's unfaithful wife or the proofreader's repossessed motorcycle were responsible for the ensuing tragedy or the preposterous headline, so, too, were the inarticulate cry of the poet's broken heart and the playwright's

foul-mouthed diatribe against society at large the irrational products of profound emotional upheaval. Yet for the generation now living and reading, the absurd is the mouthpiece of reason.

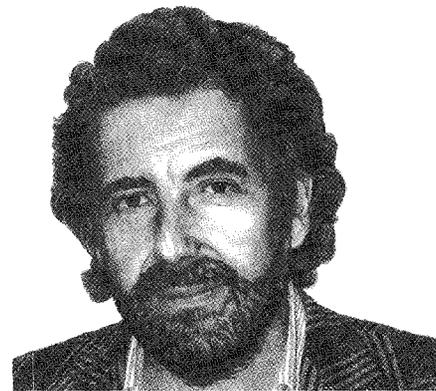
Evropa is a glossy arbiter of style for New Russians frequenting the spas and ski resorts of Old Europe. I hasten to assure skeptics that my translation of the following passage is scrupulously accurate:

"Never stay in one place and be creative," that is the credo of the young manufacturer of designer carpets KYMO whose collections bear the names of such music classics as Techno and House and whose products adorn the floors of HUGO BOSS and MONTBLANC boutiques. A new hit is the rug from the fur of the Brazilian cow.

You see? *Evropa* is a magazine for serious, worldly, rational people. Conservatively dressed thugs, impeccably realistic politicians, authors of plausible pyramid schemes, mobsters' abstemious spinster sisters, secret policemen's privately educated daughters, and swindlers' gold-digging wives are among its readers. These people keep their money in small unmarked bills under designer mattresses and rob widows and orphans as if human misery were going out of style and Bernie Madoff were Secretary of the Treasury.

They are tough, ruthless, and supremely rational. And yet the above passage, in a magazine fashioned expressly for them, like a bespoke pair of slippers, from the rarest cow fur that Brazil has to offer to the traders of Muscovy, would not be out of place in a futurist proclamation by Burlyuk *c.* 1920 or in an incomprehensible play by Beckett *c.* 1950. It reads like an homogenized parody of all rational utterance from Aristotle to Darwin.

When Molière parodied the ratio-



nality of a physician, his audience understood that he was satirizing a rogue, a pompous impostor, an insult to the medical profession, but above all a concrete exception. In Beckett, absurdity has been wed to mankind as a whole, with the result that for modern readers from the Adirondacks to the Urals, brought up on the dim echoes of what passes for high culture, any logic inherent in Radcliffe's exemplary sentence is just as puzzling and obscure as any outright nonsense from the pen of an *Evropa* hack.

"Cows haven't got fur?" exclaims the generic reader of *Any Magazine*, furious to be confronted with what is allegedly a fact of zoology. Then, fixing her makeup in a Chanel compact: "Well, maybe in Brazil they do! I mean, it's just a matter of how soft the hair is. Besides, this English lady, writing in that book of hers a hundred years before they had electricity, don't get me wrong, I love all those old things, my husband and I went to Morocco on our honeymoon, but anyway, this Adeline says that whatever her boyfriend was telling her, his declaration could be dishonorable.

"Now, what the hell does that mean? Because how can you say that some guy's declaration is dishonorable? I mean, he wasn't stealing from her, was he? And if this guy can say a thing that's dishonorable, why can't the other guy you're talking about, the guy from the magazine, why can't he be allowed to say that cows got fur? That's why I love America so much. It's a free country. Not like Russia."

Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah!
Ah! Ah!

