VALLIERES ACCOUNT OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH IN QUEBEC

PIERRE VALLIERES' ACCOUNT OF THE PLACE OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH IN THE HISTORY OF QUEBEC

By

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

1. Scope of the Study

The purpose of this thesis is to provide an in-depth study of those opinions of Pierre Vallières which deal with the place which the Roman Catholic Church has in the history of Quebec. In the course of this study, some examination will be made into the opinions of some other thinkers who have written about Quebec. These people's views are important to the extent that they serve to help further the point of the thesis which is to explicate the position of Pierre Vallières.

The secondary material will help to establish in the reader's mind the over-all scope and nature of the topic under study. In a sense, it provides background information to Vallières' own thoughts. This material will indicate the complexity of the topic, and will give a clearer picture of that material of Vallières which is examined. In addition, these views will, in many ways, provide a contrast to those of Pierre Vallières, thereby giving to the reader a basis of comparison between the ideas of others and the ideas of Vallières.

I will pay greatest attention to the writings of Pierre Vallières, specifically his first book, Nègres blancs d'Amérique. This particular book deals more with the Roman Catholic Church in Quebec than any of his other writings, including his second and only other book, L'urgence de choisir. Because of this fact, only minor

attention will be given to Vallières' writings other than Nègres blancs d'Amérique. From those writings which are available, Nègres blancs d'Amérique stands out as the prime source with regards to Pierre Vallières' position on the Roman Catholic Church in Quebec.

2. Purpose of the Study

Why is it important at this time to do a study of this type which deals with the opinions of someone like Pierre Vallières particularly as they pertain to the Roman Catholic Church in Quebec? There are two basic reasons which provide the answer to this question: (1) The Roman Catholic Church has always been a most important force in the development of French Canada. This is reflected in the strong influence it has had on the social conditions in Quebec. This religious institution more than any other significant organization has determined the type of culture -- including language, religion -- which the Québécois have always thought of as their own. In addition, it has been a most powerful force in determining the political developments in Quebec. Thus, the Roman Catholic Church should be examined because it has been central to the development of various aspects of French Canadian life. (2) The views of Pierre Vallières are particularly important because of the significant role he has played in the movements of protest -- in both the religious and political spheres -- which are fermenting in present day Quebec. Pierre Vallières -- the man's ideas, and, as

well, his lived-world involvement -- represents a model of the forces of change that have affected Quebec. For one thing, he represents a new generation of French Canadians whose ideas, beliefs and customs are very different from those held by past generations. Many members of the new generation look to Pierre Vallières as the one who most clearly expresses the ideas which they hold to be true -- this was especially true during the fifties and sixties which were the decades of most turbulent ferment and change.

In Nègres blancs d'Amérique, Vallières integrates a condemnation of the traditional societal patterns in Quebec with a condemnation of the Roman Catholic Church in Quebec. By doing so, he states what many Québécois believe to be true about their own society. Those Québécois who have turned away from the Roman Catholic Church and have opted for ways which are basically secular and, at times, anti-clerical, often identify with the opinions expressed by Pierre Vallières. Indeed, it also seems to be true that many Québécois who continue to believe in the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church have come to identify with much which Pierre Vallières states concerning Quebec. In some ways, Nègres blancs d'Amérique can be viewed as a handbook for these various types of dissidents, for the changing attitudes regarding traditional ideas, beliefs and customs are reflected in the pages of this book.

Thus, the views of Pierre Vallières, which are concerned with a number of topics pertinent to Quebec and her history, but, above all, with the religious and political spheres of activity, are important because they are in a broad way representative of the beliefs of many contemporary Québécois.

To examine the thoughts of Pierre Vallières is a relevant and important task, since these thoughts are pertinent in a central way to the over-all pattern of behaviour which the Québécois of today are coming to adopt as their own. Vallières and others like him are rebelling against a strong force of traditionalism which has had a great influence on the character of Quebec for so many years. This traditionalism has, in large measure, placed the Roman Catholic Church at its centre to the extent that the Church has become the guiding force of the tradition. The importance which the Roman Catholic Church has had in Quebec is reason enough for a study of that role. To do so through the eyes of someone like Pierre Vallières is all the more valuable since in many ways it involves a bringing together of the old and the new. The old, in this case, is the Roman Catholic Church in Quebec, while the new concerns those citizens of modern-day Quebec who express their reaction to the Roman Catholic Church in secular political terms.

CHAPTER I

SOCIAL CHANGE AND THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH IN QUEBEC

(1) The Historical Distinction

The society of Quebec, like so many societies in the twentieth century, has experienced a number of significant and dynamic changes in its character. Much of the Quebec social spectrum is very different from what was there at the turn of the century. These changes have been brought on by the advent of modernity. Many of the beliefs and customs which the Québécois had held as being true up until the twentieth century have, in the recent decades, been called into question. The modernization of Quebec has been responsible for this fact.[1]

Two of the most noteworthy features of modernization have been large-scale industrialization and the correspondent movements of large numbers of people from the rural parts of Quebec to the urban areas of the province.[2]

These features might be considered common to any social structure in the world which has experienced modernization. Quebec is therefore hardly an exception. However, distinctive features have accompanied the onslaught of modernization in Quebec; these

features are of central importance to this thesis.

To elucidate this point it will be necessary to examine the nature of what I have called the "traditional" society to provide a basis of contrast with the society which is emerging as the product of the modernization process. Briefly, and in anticipation of the discussion to follow, the tension between the old and the new as it concerns this work can be formulated in this way: the old society was largely rural, agricultural and dominated in large measure by the clergy; this has been transformed, so that increasingly it has come to be an urban, industrial and secular based society. Indeed, upon examination one can see that Quebec has moved from being a society with a pre-industrial based economy to one which is largely industrial in nature. In referring to these two very different societal types, some scholars employ the terms "homogeneous" and "heterogeneous".

The term "homogeneous" is used, in a general way, to describe the former more traditional society, while "heterogeneous" is used, also in a general way, to denote today's conditions in modernization. Two thinkers who use these terms are Marcel Rioux and Jean C. Falardeau.[3] The latter writes:

> . . . La société canadienne-française est devenue, sous plusieurs rapports, semblable aux sociétés occidentales évoluées-industrielle, hétérogène, pluraliste.[4]

These terms are significant terms because they say much about what those who use them believe French Canadian society, past and present, is like. To refer to past French Canadian society as "homogeneous" is to view it basically as a society which is insular and lacking in influence from pressures outside of itself. There is no, or at best very little, degree of social, cultural and political change. Such would be the French Canadian society of the pre-industrial age. Conversely, contemporary Quebec society has an industrial base which is thought of as open to outside pressures. It is constantly changing and has many social, cultural and political diversifications.

Thus, in the above passage, Falardeau infers that in the old society -- rural, agricultural and clerically run -- people remained on the farms. There was very little exodus of people to urban centres. Today, however, the Québécois have more social mobility -- they are more free to move around to seek a variety of employment, to experience a diversification of cultural pursuits, and to opt for an ever-widening choice of political objectives. No longer is the society of French Canada to be viewed as a parish-oriented society, but rather it must be seen as a society caught up in the traumas of modernity. It will be shown that Vallières presents to the reader a picture of French Canadian society which follows this model in that he views the old as a society with

resistance to change and the new as a society filled with much flux.

Thus, in summary, following what Rioux and Falardeau write, it is clear that great changes have taken place in Quebec in the twentieth century. These changes have caused Quebec to be transformed from a society centred in the rural parishes to a society centred in the larger cities of the province. There is today much greater social mobility. Pierre Vallières views the situation in this light. As a modern he views Quebec society, past and present, in a manner which is representative of a number of Québécois. He sees a clear contrast between the old and the new. History and his own personal experience provide him with a clear understanding of how the contemporary situations arose, and an understanding of what must be done to meet the demands of the modern reality.

(2) The Rapidity of Change

One significant feature of the changes which have occurred in Quebec should be taken note of -- the rapidity with which change has occurred. The transformation of Quebec from a pre-industrial society to that of an industrial society has taken place in less than seventy years. Because of the speed at which these changes have occurred, the adjustment required by the Québécois has been an

enormous one indeed. Some Québécois have experienced both the old and the new, while others have only experienced the latter. This time factor has caused the Québécois all the more difficulty in adjusting to the actual changes which have come about due to modernization. Marcel Rioux writes of this period of time:

> Au moment où Laurier quitte le gouvernement, en 1911, après quinze ans de pouvoir, le Quebec a profondement changé. Rural dans une proportion de 80% en 1871, il est a moitié urbain, quarante ans plus tard. A cause de son développement industriel et commercial, Montréal a attiré beaucoup de ruraux qui y sont venus grossir le contingent des manoeuvres et des salariés . . . Pendant les premieres années de l'après-guerre le Québec continue de s'industrialiser à un rythme accéléré. . . . La population urbaine du Québec dépasse, pour la première fois de son histoire, la population rurale, soit 51.8% . . . . . Si l'on prend pour plus de commodité la décennie 1939-1950, on s'aperçoit, qu'au Quebec la main-d'oeuvre a doublé de 1939 a 1950: "Cet accroissement, affirment ces économistes, est égal à la croissance du siècle qui se termine en 1939." "Durant cette même periode, ajoutent les auteurs, le taux d'industrialisation dans le Québec dépassé celui du Canada." Depuis 1939, les produits manufacturés ont augmenté, en volume, de 92% pour le Québec et de 88% pour le Canada; les nouveaux capitaux dans les industries manufacturières du Québec ont augmenté de 181% dans le Québec et de 154% au Canada." (A. Faucher et M. Lamontagne, French Canadian Society, vol. 1, éd. par M. Rioux et Y. Martin, Toronto, 1964, p. 267.). . . . Il apparaît donc que le Québec a subi massivement, pendant la décennie 1939-1949, des transformations plus importantes que dans quelque autre décennie de son histoire, mises à part celles de la Conquête et de l'Insurrection. L'ideologie de conservation qui avait surmonté toutes les autres vagues d'industrialisation et d'urbanisation n'a pu résister victorieusement à la dernière.[5]

In a similar vein, Stanley Ryerson writes:

> . . . Between 1891 and 1931 the rural population only increased from 988,820 to 1,060,649; though the percentage of the total population which that represented fell from 66.4 to 36.9.
> In 46 out of 66 counties in an area between the Saguenay River and the Ontario border, the rural and village population totalled 705,578 in 1871; 705,204 in 1931.
> During the decade 1921-1931 the net rural-urban movement equalled 19.2 per cent of the rural population: an amount just about equivalent to the whole natural increase.
> In other words, industry continued to absorb the landless farm population surplus.[6]

These passages confirm that changes have indeed taken place in Quebec and they indicate the speed at which these changes have occurred.

(3) The Consequence of Change

In addition, the social changes which have taken place in Quebec have done so without widespread rebellion or revolution. In much of the world the transfer from a pre-industrial to an industrial based society is such that social upheaval has often resulted.[7] Even though this has not been the case in Quebec, there has been of late a greater activity among some Québécois to become involved in the forces of social control which govern them. More and more, throughout the twentieth century, the Québécois have come to question the societal norms which surround them. What began as a quiet murmur became a chorus in the decade of the sixties.

It is in this context that one must understand Pierre Vallières, for he, in many ways, is a product of the modern age. The forces which have most influenced his ideas have been those of industrialization and urbanization. The questioning which he believes the Québécois should develop if they are to obtain a better situation in life is a type of inquiry brought on and sustained by the hard realities of modernization. Modernization has meant that the Québécois are so situated as to be able to question more and more the standards which are present in a pluralist industrial-based society.

In some ways, this questioning as one sees it in Quebec is an unique phenomena which the Québécois share with no one else. The reason for this is the nature of the French Canadian traditions which allow a Québécois to view himself differently from anyone else in North America, and the broad sweep of perspective from within which the viewing is done. The historical past, kept alive by the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church, is very dear to the average French Canadian. Thus, for such a one any questioning of the modern predicament must be examined in light of the traditions he has been brought up in. This is the tension of the old and the new wherein one's understanding of the new is fashioned by one's understanding of and relationship to the old. Consequently, one of the institutions which has come under closest scrutiny by many French Canadians is the Roman Catholic Church for the Church has come to be regarded by many, such as Vallières, as the foundation of the old order.

(4) The Roman Catholic Church and Modern Quebec

The Roman Catholic Church itself has gone through a period in which changes have occurred. Many of these changes can be attributed to the impact of modernization. That is, prior to the advent of the heterogeneous society, the Roman Catholic Church's role in Quebec society was very integral: it was such that society and church could be viewed as being one and the same. On this point, Jean-C. Falardeau writes:

> Il n'est pas possible de comprendre, encore moins d'évaluer, l'importance contemporaine de l'Eglise catholique au Canada français, sans évoquer le passé. La société canadienne-française a été depuis les débuts memes de son établissement, à tel point circonscrite, contenue et dominée tout entière par le clergé et les chefs ecclésiastiques, que son histoire se confond en tout point avec celle de l'Eglise canadienne. . . . L'histoire du Canada français, c'est l'histoire de l'Eglise au Canada, et réciproquement.[8]

The unity of religion and society which is clearly indicated in this passage has been lessened by the advances of modernization into Quebec. The power and influence which the Roman Catholic Church exerted in the past is no longer available to it. A number of Québécois who, at one time, may have been influenced by the Church have become its greatest critics.

These people vary in the tone and style which they employ in the questioning of the traditional role which the Roman Catholic Church has had in Quebec. It can be said that the modern day critics of religion in Quebec fall into two basic categories: those who are

critical but somewhat reformative, and those who are revolutionary to the point of not seeing a positive role for institutional religion per se. The former group would include thinkers such as Pierre E. Trudeau and Gerard Pelletier, while the latter group would include Léandre Bergeron and Pierre Vallières.[9] All of these people, at one time or another, have been influenced by the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church; yet, all show through their various writings a marked disagreement on the nature of the historical role which this powerful body has played in French Canada. They also differ in their understanding of the future role of the church in Quebec.

Vallières claims that never before has there been the large-scale questioning of the Roman Catholic Church's power as there is today. He writes:

> Nous n'avons pas trouvé la certitude, l'être, dont nous avons besoin -- ou plutôt nous n'avons pas encore reconnu le sens de notre être. La première démarche authentique de notre liberte devra être une interrogation loyale sur le sens de notre présence sur cette terre. Car rien, a premiere vue, ne nous justifie; et nous sommes réellement les seuls à pouvoir répondre aux questions que nous pose la réalité. Seule la reflexion philosophique peut nous fournir une solution concrète en nous remettant à nous-mêmes. Nous avons trop longtemps vécu d'aliénation. Trop longtemps nous avons été pensés par d'autres. Trop longtemps nous nous sommes pensés nous-mêmes avec des idées préfabriquées en Europe. Il est grand temps que nous nous mettions en face de ce que nous sommes réellement, de ce que nous portons caché en nous-mêmes.[10]

It is only in the twentieth-century that large-scale questioning of the position of the Church has taken place. The Roman Catholic Church has, or, rather, is, being openly condemned as perhaps never before. In addition, the position which the Church has in the society has been altered in the modern day.[11] These points are related, since it is often the case that the ones who condemn the position of the Roman Catholic Church often condemn a position which the Church has held in the past. But one would think that as the position of the Church changes, any criticism of the Church, if it is to be relevant, must be tempered by the reality of those changes. As will be shown in greater detail below, Vallières is sensitive to this point, for in Nègres blancs d'Amérique the church receives less critical consideration in his analysis of the contemporary situation than in his historical critique.

Some of those who criticize the Roman Catholic Church, Bergeron and Vallières included, do so from a secular point of view. Indeed, one gets the impression that their stand concerning the Roman Catholic Church is increasingly Marxist in substance. As mentioned earlier, this position contrasts in varying degrees to the position of thinkers like Trudeau and Pelletier who, although critical of the Church, are far more conciliatory towards it. To Vallières and Bergeron, there is simply no room in society for any religious body. In this context, such Marxism can be thought of

as being a secular movement with secular principles which are basically anti-clerical.

The development of French Canadian nationalism exemplifies the new militancy of some Québécois and underscores the altered status of the Church in the new society. Prior to the impact of modernization, those in Quebec who were concerned with political issues would turn to the clergy for their guidance. Thus, someone like Abbé Groulx would be thought of by the Québécois as a leader whose opinions on the question of nationalism should be followed. Today, it appears that the Roman Church has no positive impact on the thinking of those Québécois who are most concerned about the question of self-autonomy for the Québécois. This is true in the case of Bergeron who relies on principles which are anything but clerical in nature. And while it is true that the Pierre Vallières of Nègres blancs d'Amérique seems to be a Marxist with radically anti-clerical sentiments there appears to be a basis for arguing that even within that work, as well as in his later works, his position is neither as simplistic nor as radical as it might seem.

CHAPTER II

THE FOUNDATIONS OF VALLIERES' VIEWS

This chapter is designed to do two things: (1) to give a very brief biographical account of Pierre Vallières' life which will provide a background to his present intellectual position, and (2) to examine the thoughts of Vallières regarding the Roman Catholic Church as expressed in his Nègres blancs d'Amérique to clarify the basis of those ideas in his early life.

(1) Biographical Sketch

There are a number of accounts of Pierre Vallières' life.[1] For the purposes of this chapter prime attention will be given to Vallières' own book, Négres blancs d'Amèrique which in many ways is autobiographical.

Pierre Vallières was born in Montreal in 1938. His father worked in the rail yards of the C.P.R. His mother stayed at home to raise the family. Vallières' situation appears to have been one of intense poverty and hardship. Inadequate housing, poor social services, and long hours of work were a constant feature of the Vallières' household. Pierre did not see his father for any great part of any day as the father was often forced to work long shifts well into the night.

Vallières' intellectual development seems to have been rather

capricious. He attended an assortment of schools, all of which were run by the clergy. At one time Vallières was so influenced by the clergy that he became a novice for the priesthood. Throughout his later years at school, Vallières spent some time in the working world. For example, he spent much of one year away from school being employed as a bank teller. This is an important point for it indicates a tension early in his own life which he later formulated as the necessity of balancing one's intellectual principles with the practical application of those principles in the lived world. It is also significant that for many he came to symbolize the crest of a wave of young and militant French-Canadian intellectuals in spite of the fact that he was not the product of the "intellectual mill". He never received an university degree. Although his development was in many ways erratic the one factor which loomed as a constant principle was the influence -- positive or negative -- of the Roman Catholic Church.

Vallières read extensively and questioned many of the beliefs and customs which his home and the schools had taught him. The Church was central to both his own home and to the schools he attended. Consequently, the Roman Catholic Church was an institution whose role Vallières questioned a great deal. His questioning moved from the home to the school and on to the general social realities of life in Quebec where he concentrated on the plight of the working class.

Again, the Church is the thread which ties these areas of interest together for in Vallières' understanding the Church is the primary influence in each area. He reinforced the notion that intellectual credibility is measured in terms of social accountability. Often, after reading Dostoevski, Sartre, Camus and Kierkegaard, he questioned the notion of belief in a God. He never accepted existential thought, for he believed anyone who accepted its ideas negated his social responsibility. Thus this would result in a negative reaction to the situation which the working class saw themselves in during the forties, the fifties, and during the early sixties.[2]

Nevertheless, it was not until the late fifties that Vallières came to view things in a political light, for it was during that time that he came in contact with the political activists of his own generation, many of whom were Marxists. At that time Vallières held a degree of respect for people like René Lévesque, Pierre Trudeau, who were condemning Duplessis and his political establishment. But this would not last.

In the early sixties, Vallières joined the staff of Cité libre, a magazine operated by Trudeau and Gerald Pelletier (179). However, differences

arose between them which caused Vallières to resign his position on the staff of the publication. The differences largely surrounded the issue of separatism -- a position endorsed by Vallières but not by Trudeau and Pelletier.

In 1962 Vallières travelled to France where he came in touch with the world outside of Quebec for the first time. In March of 1963 he returned to Quebec and began working again as a journalist. Vallières was happy to leave France, for he had seen little good about the country. He viewed the leftists as petty criminals who were betraying the people they were representing. In addition, he appears to have made few friends on his travels except for a small group of fellow French Canadians whom he befriended in Paris.

His beliefs in the doctrines of Marxism appear to have been strengthened throughout this period. Vallières became more and more radical in his outlook on life in general. He had another falling out with the Cité libre people, for whom he worked again. This time, Vallières left to help establish Revolution québécoise, a leftist journal. It was at this point that Vallières came in contact with the radical militant separatist movement, the F.L.Q. [3]

It is during this period of time -- the mid-sixties -- that the F.L.Q. initiated a number of bombings and various other terrorist acts. One bombing killed an innocent bystander; Vallières was implicated in the crime and charged with manslaughter. In 1966 he was

arrested in front of the United Nations building in New York where he was demonstrating against injustices in Quebec. During his detention in New York he wrote Nègres blancs d'Amérique. Vallières was deported to Canada and placed on trial in Montreal. He was found guilty, as charged, and spent four years in jail before the decision was reversed.

Following the F.L.Q. crisis of October, 1970, Vallières published an article in Le Devoir in which he denounced as wrong the strong-arm tactics of the F.L.Q. These arguments were developed to form the basis for his second book, L'urgence de choisir.

As a corollary to the ideas presented in this book, Pierre Vallières has become an enthusiastic supporter of René Lévesque and Le Parti Québécois. At present Vallières is a part-time journalist for Le Devoir and, as well, he has recently done some social work in Mont-Laurier, a community north of Montreal.

(2) Vallières' Critique of the Role of the Roman Catholic Church

(a) Introduction

Vallières' criticism of the Roman Catholic Church within the perspective of the history of Quebec is clearest in his first book, Nègres blancs d'Amérique. The opinions expressed there are often very different from the opinions of the other Québécois which were briefly examined in the previous chapter. Indeed, Vallières' opinions

concerning the Roman Catholic Church are very different in Nègres blancs de'Amérique from what they are in his second book, L'urgence de choisir.

This section will concentrate largely on the views which Vallières presents in Nègres blancs d'Amérique, and provide a summation of those views in an attempt to clarify Vallières' position. [4]

(b) Nègres blancs d'Amérique: Vallières' Historical Analysis of the Role of the Church in Quebec Society

At an early point in the text Vallières notes thatQuebec has leapt from the Middle Ages into the modern period and has done so in a very short period of time. He states:

> . . . Expression, de plus, particulière et restreinte à un nombre limité d'expériences et d'actes, formulée par un esprit some toute borné . . . et conditionné par un milieu, le Québec, qui vient de "sauter" du Moyen Age ø au xx^{e} siècle . . . [p.13].

Vallières believes the Roman Catholic Church to be a remnant of the Middle Ages which the Québécois must rid themselves of if they are to improve their lot in the modern world. He writes:

> . . . Encore aujourd'hui, après trois siècles, le pouvoir ecclésiastique est l'un des plus grands obstacles au développement du Québec. La preuve en a été faite, une fois de plus, avec l'action enterpreise par les évêques pour torpiller le Bill 60 sur la réforme de l'Education. [p.29]

In these passages and throughout the book Vallières identifies himself as being a product of modernity. He believes that traditional answers do not adequately deal with contemporary problems. Thus, Vallières opposes the upbringing he had with its emphasis on traditional beliefs and customs. It is from within this perspective that Vallières views the opposition shown by the clergy towards Bill 60 as reactionary and something which is bad for the Québécois.[5]

Although this piece of legislation involves a particular social situation in contemporary Quebec, Vallières understands it to exemplify a long-standing tendency in Quebec's history. In verification of this point, the first part of his book provides a brief historical account of the development of French Canada from the time when the settlers arrived in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. He outlines the important role which the Roman Catholic Church has played from this early time period onwards. [pp.23-35]

Vallières infers that Bishop Laval, one of French Canada's first bishops, made a strong effort to establish a theocracy in French Canada. According to Vallières, Laval viewed the first settlers, who were encouraged by the home government to come to North America, as the means by which this could come about.[26] Vallières also speaks of the favourable rapport which the clergy had with the British officials following the Conquest. He writes:

> Les marchands anglais prirent la relève des marchands français qui, avant de livrer la colonie aux Anglais, avaient eu le temps d'effectuer quelques fructueuses ventes d'armes. Les conquérants se gagnèrent sans peine la collaboration du clergé et des seigneurs sans fortune qui étaient demeurés dans la colonie malgré la défaite. Ensemble, ils se partagèrent le pouvoir: les Anglais monopolisèrent les affaires économiques et le pouvoir exécutif, le clergé put continuer à contrôler l'éducation et à percevoir la dîme, les seigneurs conservèrent la propriété de leurs terres et obtinrent le droit d'exercer certaines charges administratives. Rien ne changea dans la vie frugale et monotone des Habitants. Ils étaient toujours des bêtes de somme, méprisées dans un pays hostile. Mais, Dieu soit loué, le clergé reçut l'ordre du Ciel de faire de cette collectivité résignée et muette une nation dévouée a l'Eglise. Enfin, cette vie d'esclavage prendrait un sens en devenant rédemption. Ce peuple, planté en Amérique par un hasard de l'histoire, se voyait soudain investi d'une vocation «surnaturelle». Sa tâche, dans le monde païen des sauvages et des Anglais, serait de sauver des âmes en supportant patiemment la pauvreté, les travaux pénibles et l'isolement . . . Le clergé organisa la nation embryonnaire en paroisses, créa des écoles et des collèges, s'arrogea le droit de régler la vie des individus et des groupes et définit l'idéologie qui devait servir à façonner une vision du monde conforme aux intérêts de l'Eglise. Le haut clergé devint la véritable classe dirigeante, la noblesse se décomposant, chaque jour davantage, dans la fatuité. [p.30]

Thus, Vallières argues that the clergy not only allied itself with the powers of government, but also gained, through this alliance, a solid hold over French Canadian society.

Vallières indicates how, under the British, the newly-educated French Canadian laity turned against the clergy and its traditional position in French Canadian society. He maintains that this led to the rebellion of the eighteen thirties which saw this educated group -- referred to by Vallières as petite bourgeoisie -- leading

[pp.30-31]
the Habitants against British rule./ Of the effect on the Roman Catholic Church, he writes:

> La chrétienté canadienne-française se transforma soudain en une vaste insurrection, qui fit trembler l'Eglise tout autant que les vainqueurs de 1760. [p.31]

And of the clergy's reaction, he adds that,

> . . . Pire, les Anglais avaient toujours l'appui du clergé qui, partout, se mettait à prêcher l'obéissance à l'Autorité établie et la soumission au "juste châtiment" qu'avaient attiré sur le peuple le rationalisme, l'athéisme et l'esprit de révolte des Patriotes! [p.32]

In addition, the clergy handed down a number of excommunication sentences to various Habitants who had participated in the uprising.[p.32] Vallières argues that the clergy, especially the high clergy, objected strenuously to the French Canadians who had seen fit to rebel against the British. By so doing the clergy placed the Church on the side of les étrangers and the forces of imperialism which they represented. Vallières goes on to indicate how the petite bourgeoisie, which had been the leaders in the rebellion, joined with the clergy to impose
[pp.33-34]
a "retour à la terre" policy./ This alliance worked to contain les Habitants within the borders of French Canada. Vallières is of the opinion that this was done to further the economic interests of both the clergy and the petite bourgeoise. He writes:

> Le clergé commençait à s'inquiéter de l'exode des Canadiens français vers les Etats-Unis. La petite bourgeoisie, qui contrôlait souvent le commerce dans les campagnes, s'énervait, elle aussi. Si les campagnes continuaient à se dépeupler, à se vider de leurs éléments les plus jeunes et les plus dynamiques, le clergé et la petite bourgeoisie ne perdraient-ils pas la base de leur pouvoir et de leurs profits? Montréal était alors une ville plus anglaise que française et le milieu rural représentait, aux yeux de l'élite canadienne-française, la vraie nation, le vrai peuple. Mais si le

peuple refusait de vivre dans ce milieu rural, «la nation» (c'est-à-dire la petite bourgeoisie et le clergé) ne disparaîtrait-elle pas, à plus ou moins brève échéance? Que deviendraient l'Eglise et la petite industrie familiale?

C'est alors que l'instinct de conservation inspira au clergé et à la petite bourgeoisie l'idéologie du «retour à la terre» et de la «colonisation» des vastes régions inexploitées du Québec. Cette trouvaille inattendue fut accueillie favorablement par les Anglo-Canadiens et la bourgeoisie canadienne-française des villes qui y virent le moyen le plus pratique et le plus économique de régler le probleme du chômage urbain provoqué par l'exode rural. Les milieux d'affaires et le gouvernement s'empressèrent de financer les projets de colonisation et toute une littérature commença a circuler, invitant les Canadiens français à se souvenir de leur passé «glorieux», falsifiant délibérément l'histoire afin d'idéaliser la vie des Habitants sous le régime français, faisant des synonymes des mots «rural», «catholique» et «français», et prêchant la croisade du «retour a la terre» comme l'unique solution aux graves problèmes sociaux de la nation canadienne-française.

Des milliers de chômeurs furent expédiés avec leurs familles au Saguenay-Lac St-Jean, dans les Laurentides, dans la Haute-Mauricie, dans certains coins reculés des Cantons de l'Est, dans la région de Portneuf, vers l'interieur de la péninsule gaspésienne. Plus tard, la colonisation devait gagner l'Abitibi et le nord de l'Ontario. On donna aux colons des lots a defricher sans se préoccuper de savoir si ces lots etaient reellement cultivables. Certains colons eurent la chance de se voir accorder des terres d'excellente qualité. Mais la majorité de ces «pionniers» furent les victimes innocentes de l'entreprise la plus stupide, la plus antisociale et la plus inhumaine qui se puisse concevoir. Seuls un clergé et une petite bourgeoisie aussi arriérés que les nôtres pouvaient imaginer et appliquer pareille «réforme». Pendant des dizaines et des dizaines d'années, des centaines de milliers de Québécois, laissés à eux-mêmes, allaient s'user comme des forçats pour tenter de transformer en fermes productives et rentables des terres de roches. Le miracle ne s'opéra jamais. Et de la colonisation résulta une misère plus grande encore que toutes celles que les travailleurs canadiens-français avaient connues jusque-là. Mais, à entendre les curés prêcher, l'on pourvait se consoler à la divine pensée que tant de souffrances ne pouvaient faire autrement que de nous mériter le Ciel. N'étions-nous pas sur la terre pour expier nos péchés et «gagner» une place au paradis? Cette philosophie absurde fut, à nouveau, présentée au peuple comme étant l'essence du plus parfait bonheur. L'histoire des peuples offre-t-elle d'autres exemples de masochisme collectif aussi tenace que la religion catholique-québécoise? [pp. 33-34]

Vallières presents a picture of how the defeated Habitants, having been led astray by the petite bourgeoisie, were then faced with the harsh fact that this element had sided with the Roman Catholic clergy whose members, in many cases, opposed the rebellion outright. As this alliance developed between supposed enemies, the Habitants were exploited all the more in that they were encouraged to relocate on unproductive land in the rural areas of Quebec./ [p.34] Vallières hints that the development of industrialization was hindered by this movement of Québécois to the rural parts of the territory when he says:

> La population continua d'augmentée à un rythme très élevé, les terres déjà insuffisantes et appauvries, deveraient moins productives et surpeuplées. Les jeunes quittaient la compagne pour tenter leur chance en ville, aù le nombre des chômeurs ne cessait d'augmenter. [p.30]

Vallières holds that this unemployed mass formed the basis of support for the rebellion. It was then encouraged to remove itself to the depopulated and economically destitute areas of Quebec.

Although he does not say so, one is left with the impression that Vallières believes that the proper move would have been in the establishment of more industry in the urban areas. This would have given employment to the mass of Habitants who were unemployed in the middle of the nineteenth century. To do this, however, would have meant the destruction of the economic means of both the petite bourgeoisie and of the clergy. Accordingly, Vallières states:

> . . . Mais si le peuple refusait de vivre dans ce milieu rural «la nation» (c'est-a-dire la petite bourgeoisie et le clergé) ne disparaîtrait-elle pas à plus ou moins brève échéance? Que deviendraient l'Eglise et la petite industrie familiale? [p.33]

Vallières holds that the decisions which the Roman Catholic clergy made in this setting were often made for economic gain. The Roman Catholic Church is portrayed by Vallières as an institution which is primarily interested in furthering its economic station in Quebec society.

Further, the economic policies of both the clergy and of the petite bourgeoisie have cost French Canada a number of its citizens. Vallières indicates that in the century between 1820 and 1920, a large number of French Canadians left Quebec for economic reasons. [p.37] He believes that this, in part, reflects the inability of the clergy and of the petite bourgeoisie to understand the needs of French Canadians, especially the working class. He writes:

> . . . depuis Honoré Mercier, les nationalistes petits-bourgeois de l'Etat du Québec n'ont pas encore trouvé de solutions aux angoissants problèmes de la classe ouvrière canadienne-française . . . [p.37][5]

Vallières holds that Mercier permitted the colonization of rural parts of Quebec to become a policy whereby traditional beliefs and customs could be maintained.[6] The clergy gave full support to this policy.[p.38] Vallières also maintains that the misery which resulted had the sanction of the clergy. He writes that ". . .la misère fut arrosée d'eau

bénite". [p.38].

In an attempt to fortify his position, Vallières turns the thrust of his argument directly against the real estate policies of the Roman Catholic Church. The laity, many of whom were very poor, bore the brunt of financing the construction of ecclesiastical buildings throughout Quebec. Vallières writes:

> . . . Même les curés aimaient bien percevoir la dîme . . . en espèces sonnantes! Car il en fallait beaucoup pour construire cathédrales et presbytères, ces pauvres maisons de Dieu, en marble d'Italie! Il fallait donc se procurer toujours plus d'argent, en travaillant, si possible. Qu encore en volant les autres. Qu finalement en se livrant, de désespoir, aux avares, de chaque village, de chaque comté, qui ne demandaient pas mieux que de «vous sortir du trou» pour mieux vous égorger. [p.38]

Thus, Vallières sees a clear connection between the needs of the Roman Catholic Church and the means by which these needs are met. The means often entailed the French Canadians going more and more into debt in order to finance the Church.

Eventually urbanization and industrialization came to Quebec. They did so, according to Vallières, on the shoulders of American capitalists. [p.40]. He states:

> La prolétarisation des Canadiens français «ruraux, catholiques et français» et l'urbanisation du Québec médiéval deviarent irréversibles. «Le retour à la ville» n'eut pas besoin de propagandistes, il s'accomplit de lui-même, comme tout phénomène naturel. [pp.39-40]

Suddenly, of their own accord, people returned to the very cities which the petite bourgeoisie and the clergy had been encouraging

them to leave. According to Vallières, the petite bourgeoisie and the clergy have been taking advantage of the new economic changes. He writes:

> Tout en s'obstinant à prêcher «le retour à la terre», «l'achat chez nous» et «l'appel de la race», le clergé et la petite bourgeoisie profitaient de l'industrialisation du Québec, particulièrement dans la région de Montréal où viarent s'installer bon nombre d'industries, a proximité des institutions financières et commerciales, des voies de communication et des quartiers, généraux des maîtres (en majorité étrangers) de l'économie. [p.40]

Les étrangers became allies with the higher clergy of Quebec and did so with the greatest of speed. [40] / Of this event, Vallières says,

> . . . Les communautés religieuses furent invitées à se joindre à eux pour invester dans les banques le commerce et l'industrie. [p.40]

Vallières is making the case that the clergy were invited by foreign investors to set up economic enterprises. [p.40]

However, the clergy was not able to forget that it was also in league with the petite bourgeoisie of Quebec. Vallières implies that this is one reason why the petite bourgeoisie did not collapse as an effective force under the overwhelming investment from abroad during the period around the turn of this century. [p.40]. He states:

> La petite bourgeoisie canadienne-française doit à son idéologie de clocher de l'avoir pas été complètement balayée par l'offensive économique des Américains, au xx^{e} siècle, soutenue par l'un des clergés les plus puissants au monde cette classe de professionnels, de petits industriels, de petits commerçants et de petits financiers réussit à préserver et même à renforcer son rôle d'intermédiaire entre le peuple, d'une part, et les détenteurs étrangers du pouvoir économique, et la bourgeoisie canadianne-anglaise qui contrôle la politique fédérale, d'autre port. [p.42]

The Roman Catholic Church is pictured as being of assistance to both foreign investor and native intermediary.[7] From both perspectives, according to Vallières, the clergy was able to receive benefits largely of an economic nature.

Further, the clergy was able to become involved in the trade union movement in Quebec. Vallières mentions that trade union activity increased during the major depression of the nineteen thirties. He indicates that the clergy often involved itself as an ally of the establishment in its attempt to coerce the members of the trade union movement. He says:

> D'une part, les leaders ouvriers étaient, pour la plupart dominés, Sinon terrorisés, par le clergé qui bloquait systématiquement tout effort d'organisation révolutionnaire de la classe ouvrière. D'autre part les chefs, «anti-conscriptionnistes» des années 40 étaient des petits bourgeois sans influence réelle sur les travailleurs. C'étaient des disciples de Bourassa et du Chanoine Groulx . . . [p.44]

Thus, in allying itself with the petite bourgeoisie, the clergy has been able to counter the interests of the working class by influencing the organizations which the workers have looked to as being their own. This influence on the labour movements is elaborated on by Vallières:

> Le mouvement coopératif et le syndicalisme contrôlés par l'Eglise (à peu d'exceptions près) et par la petite bourgeoisie traditionnelle, furent mis au service de «l'achat chez nous», de «l'épargne canadienne-française» monopolisée par les Caisses populaires Desjardins et de la préservation de «la foi, la langue et la religion». Certains chefs syndicaux prêchèrent même «le retour a la terre» et la suppression de toute politique d'immigration, car les immigrants, a leurs yeux, n'étaient que «des voleurs d'emplois et de terres». Les Aumôniers régnaient en despotes dans les syndicats et les coopératives, comme les

> curés dans les paroisses et les évêques dans les diocèses. Car l'Eglise, tout en luttant contre l'exode rural depuis le début du siècle, avait eu la sagesse de ne pas laisser sans prêtres ces milliers de travailleurs qui, dans les villes, seraient «exposés aux vices, aux idées pernicieuses et au communisme». Les laïcs qui osaient dire aux prêtres de s'occuper davantage de Dieu, et un peu moins de politique et de syndicalisme, étaient automatiquement qualifiés de «révoltés» et de «communistes», calomniés et persécutés. Le Moyen Age ne serait pas le Moyen Age sans une Inquisition bien organisée. Et Dieu, malgré les efforts des capitalistes américains, ne voulait pas que le Québec perde son caractère médiéval. C'est tout juste si la Sainte Vierge n'apparut pas à quelque enfant, comme au Portugal, pour nous supplier d'obéir aux continuateurs du schizophrène Mgr de Laval, qui au xvii^{e} siècle, avait jeté les fondements de cet univers d'asile d'aliénés. [p.45].

Here Vallières indicates most clearly the connection which he believes the Roman Catholic Church has had with the labour movement in Quebec. The clergy did not want to see trade unions established beyond the sphere of ecclesiastical influence. The Church thought that secular trade unions would only lead to Communism getting a foothold in Quebec. The Roman Catholic Church according to Vallières wanted to keep the society in a medieval setting -- a setting which clearly served the financial interests of the Church.

Vallières believes that the Asbestos Strike of 1949 and similar labour strife at that time helped the trade unions to get rid of the influence of the clergy, or at least, to lessen the clergy's influence. [p.46]. For him, the late fifties is the beginning of the "revolution tranquille".

He sees this as a significant time in the history of Quebec because traditional institutions were called into question. [p.46]. Above all, the institution of the Church and its historical role in Quebec was questioned as never before. Indeed, this questioning of the Church's role can be seen in the attempt by the Quebec government to modernize the teaching in the school system of Quebec. [p.47]. Vallières believes that in this situation the clergy reacted so strongly that they did more harm than good for their own cause. He writes:

> La simple annonce par les Libéraux de leur intention de moderniser, c'est-à-dire de «mettre à date», l'enseignement dispensé à la jeunesse québécoise sema la panique chez la majorité des vénérables et incontestés «patrons» de l'Education traditionnelle, en particulier les Evêques qui réussirent, finalement, à saboter «en douce» la réforme de l'enseignement . . . avec la complicité de Ti-Jean-la-Taxe-Lesage qui n'avait défendu cette réforme (à laquelle tenait beaucoup son ministre de l'Education), que pour se faire réélire en 1962. Mais le sabotage des Evêques fut un demi-échec pour l'Eglise, qui n'a jamais été aussi discréditée qu'aujourd'hui aux yeux du peuple. Certes, les eglises se remplissent encore de fidèles, le dimanche, et la plupart des gens croient en Dieu. Mais les Québécois sont écoeurés de leurs prêtres en pantoufles qui mènent une existence de millionnaires dans leurs presbytères cossus et qui boivent du scotch avec l'argent des pauvres. Quant aux jeunes, non seulement, ils sont anticléricaux, mais la majorité d'entre eux refusent d'aller contempler, le dimanche, des «simagrées» d'un autre âge, auxquelles ils ne comprennent rien, et de payer pour ce spectacle, ne fût-ce que vingt-cinq cents. Croient-ils en Dieu, en Jésus-Christ, en Mahomet ou en Bouddha? Je l'ignore. Mais j'ai l'impression qu'ils croient d'abord en eux-mêmes et en l'humanité, et qu'ils ne song pas prêts, comme leurs parents, à sacrifier leur vie terrestre pour un hypothétique bonheur céleste. [p.47].

Again, Vallières reiterates that the Roman Catholic Church is a part of a bygone age, and, as such, it has no relevant role in modern-day Quebec.

Thus far in this chapter I have presented the position which Vallières argues in the first part of his book. There, Vallières gives his understanding of the history of French Canada from the time of the first explorers to the twentieth century. He makes constant reference to the role which the Roman Catholic Church has played in this history. The remainder of his text is basically an auto-biographical account of Vallières' upbringing and adult life. In that section Vallières is writing on those aspects of his own life on which the Church has had a great influence. Consequently, in an implicit way much of what he says of himself reflects his views on the Church.

(c) Nègres blanc d'Amérique: The early years and the formulation of Vallières' views

(i) The home and the Church

Vallières begins the section with an account of his home life. He declares that his father worked in the rail yards and did so with men who ". . . votaient obligatoirement pour Duplessis, comme ils allaient a la messe, le dimanche . . . ." [p.85]. Vallières further indicates that habitual ritual did not change matters, insofar as his own parents were concerned. The status of their marriage did little to aid their miserable living conditions. Even though it received Church sanction, the sanction had no real effect on their actual lives. He saw little relationship between sacrement and social reality. Vallières writes:

> La misère engendrée par le système poussa mes parents à se marier après de brèves frequentations. Cette misère ne disparut pas par la vertu du Sacrement. [p.86]

In the same context, Vallières mentions his mother's position in the marriage:

> . . . A la maison, au contraire, ma mère était seule avec les enfants et toujours la même corvée se présentait à elle; la tradition ne lui permittoit pas de chercher à "fuir ses tâches" de mère-de-famille-chrétienne-soumise-à-la volunté-du-bon-Dieu. [p.86]

Vallières believes that the clergy has no understanding of the suffering which takes place in the households whose members are exploited by the capitalistic system. He says:

> . . . Seuls les prêtres s'imaginent que l'amour peut s'accommoder de la misère, de l'abrutissement quotidien, de l'ignorance "crasse" des lois et des beutés de la sexualité, du jansénisme et de la dictature du capitalisme. Seuls les prêtres peuvent voir une espèce de paradis dans l'enfer prolétarien; et comme alors, sans le savoir, ils sont utiles au capitalisme! Quand une femme fait l'amour par devoir d'état et subit la passion de son mari comme un prisonnier supporte la torture de la police militaire comment lajoie peut-elle l'habiter?. . . [pp.86-87].

Thus, Vallières conveys the impression that the Roman Catholic Church is an institution which has been insensitive to the reality of the unhappiness caused by poverty. He appears to employ the example of his own parents' conditions and the conditions in which he, himself, was placed as his model of his understanding of the working class of Quebec in general. The misery which he describes is caused largely by the capitalistic economic structure of Quebec society. Vallières believes that the clergy taught obedience to this system. Consequently,

they are responsible, in part, for the conditions within which the working class live.

Unlike his father, the young Vallières rebelled against the status quo. He states:

> . . . Si je fus un enfant triste, mais intégré au «milieu», mon adolescence, au contraire, fut une révolte continuelle, à la fais contre ma classe, contra la bourgeoisie et contre la société tout entière et sa mythologie: Dieu, la religion, le Mal, le Bien, etc. . . . [p.90]

Vallières appears to regard the clergy as being close in kind to the members of the bourgeois capitalistic class -- a class which is in direct opposition to the working class which Vallières more and more came to identify with. The Roman Catholic Church cannot, in Vallières' mind, be thought of as an institution whose interests concern the well-being of the working class in Quebec. Indeed, in referring to his mother's educational up-bringing, he indicates that the particular order of nuns who ran her school taught her to despise her social class and all that it stood for. He says of his mother:

> . . . Quand ma mère deviat «secrétaire» dans un bureau quelconque, elle venoit de terminer sa neuvième année chez les Soeurs de Notre-Dame. Ces aristocrates de la catholicité québécoise lui avaient enseigné, entre autres, le mépris de «la populace») et [illegible] donne le gout des «bonnes manières» bourgeoises . . . . [p.97]

He indicates that this had a substantial effect on his mother:

> . . . La maladie de mon grand-père mit brusquement fin aux ambitions de ma mère, qui s'efforca alors de transformer sa déception en obéissance chretienne à la volunte du bon Dieu. Comme la plupart des Québécois

> de cette époque, elle se mit à ramasser des mérites' pour le Ciel, sans pour cela se croire obligée, comme d'autres chrétiennes, de se rendre a l'église chaque matin. Son amertume lui servait d'oraison et ses travaux quotidiens de liturgie. Elle exécrait les dévotes (ces machines à prier) tout autant que les commères. Elle priait haïssoit, se tormentait, souffrait dans son coeur, pour elle-même . . . . [p.97].

To Vallières, mothers like his own are common enough in situations where capitalism and religion have had a chance to influence them. [p.99] Religious practices for his parents, as indeed for parents of the working class generally, were largely ritualistic in a shallow way, and nothing more. Vallières writes:

> J'ai déjà dit que mes parents n'étaient pas particulièrement dévots. Ils assistaient, comme tous les inquiets et les angoissés, à la messe du dimanche et allaient «à confesse», de temps en temps. Ce n'étaient ni des collectionneurs d'images saintes ni des amateurs de pèlerinages. Ils pratiquaient leur religion à la fois par tradition et par crainte de l'enfer. Ils obéissaient à la Loi. Leur amour de Dieu n'allait pas au-delà de l'observance minimum des commandements. Ils ne recherchaient ni la compagnie des prêtres, ni celle des religieux. Ils détestaient les «bonnes soeurs» parce qu'elles n'étaient, à leurs yeux, rien de plus que des femmes d'affaires avaricieuses et hostiles aux pauvres, particulièrement dans les hôpitaux. Mon père, plus encore que ma mère, était un catholique malgré lui, un catholique -- comme bien d'autres dans ce pays -- qui n'osait pas affirmer publiquement son indifférence religieuse. [p.99]

Vallières believes that for his parents, religion had become a routine which was something one did merely out of habit: it had ceased to have any significant meaning. Of special importance to Vallières' overall perspective is the importance he places on the fact that these so-called devout Roman Catholics never once saw the necessity of

questioning in a public way the Roman Catholic Church or its practices. Indeed, they did not even dare to publicly declare their indifference to religion. Vallières infers that this situation was not just peculiar to his own parents, but was a common enough thing in all the households whose parents were of the working class.

This lack of respect for the Church is further enlarged upon when Vallières describes the attempts by the local diocese to bring in a cure to a new community which the Vallières' family had moved into. [pp.103-104] Many of the people objected to the cure's coming since it would mean more expenses caused by greater taxation which the clergy required in order to have the necessary public administration to help it get established. The people did not deem it necessary or even useful. It would cause much discomfort in their living habits; besides, many of them were those whom the Church referred to as living in a "state of sin". Vallières writes:

> Chaque dimanche, un prêtre de Longueuil venait dire la messe dans la petite chapelle de bois construite au coin des chemins Chambly et Coteau-Rouge. L'évêque avait promis à la «petite bourgeoisie» locale (les deux vieilles filles qui dirigeaient le bureau de poste et les propriétaires de l'épicerie) de nommer bientôt un curé et d'accorder à Longueuil-Annexe le statut de paroisse. Dès que la nouvelle se mit à circuler, les gens se dirent qu'ils auraient bientôt à payer pour la construction d'un presbytère luxueux (un curé, ça ne loge pas n'importe où), alors qu'ils devaient eux-mêmes s'endetter pour payer le carton dont ils recouvraient leurs cabanes. Personne ne cacha son mécontentement, mais personne non plus n'osa contredire la décision de l'évêque de Saint-Jean, le «boss» du diocèse. Les gens se dirent que l'arrivée d'un curé annonçait celle des percepteurs de taxes. Car le curé, sûrement, créerait une Caisse populaire et voudrait

> se faire seconder par un maire dans l'administration de sette nouvelle paroisse qui manquait de tous les services. Cette administration aurait besoin de revenus pour payer un chef de police, quelques pompiers, une secrétaire, etc. Ce qui voulait dire qu'il faudrait bientôt payer des taxes de plus en plus élevées. La plupart des gens ne soupçonnaient pas l'ampleur de l'invasion qui s'annonçait. Ils se croyaient isolés, à l'abri des autres, tranquilles. Ils ne savaient pas que les propriétaires des champs abandonnés vendaient des dizaines de lots, chaque mois, à des travailleurs qui attendaient seulement d'avoir économisé quelques centaines de dollars pour déménager leurs meubles, leurs enfants et leur femme de l'autre côté du fleuve.
>
> L'arrivée prochaine d'un curé les derangeait, car la majorité des adultes, vivant en concubinage, ne pratiquaient aucune religion; très souvent, leurs enfants n'étaient pas baptisés. De plus, certains d'entre eux travaillaient pour «la petite pègre» et n'étaient pas intéressés à voir un curé se mêler de leurs affaires. Quelques familles ressemblaient à la nôtre; bonne famille, père «travaillant», mère possessive, enfants bien lavés bien que vêtus pauvrement. Mon père fut fort surpris d'apprendre que la plupart de ces «bons voisins» étaient, eux aussi, des employés du C.P.R. [pp.103-104]

Vallières does not directly come out and declare that people who live in a "state of sin" are really sinful -- he does not lay his emphasis on the moral question. He does, however, make the comparison that his parents never sinned as the Church would know it; yet, they lived in abject poverty which to Vallières is a sin. [p.104]. For Vallières, social realities must be the guiding principles.

(ii) The School and the Church

Vallières spends a good deal of time describing his years in school. In the Quebec of his childhood days, education was run by the religious orders. He writes:

En septembre 1945, ma mère m'envoya à la petite école locale, dirigée par trois religieuses de Longueuil. Le personnel enseignant, laïc, était entièrement composé de vieilles filles habitant Longueuil ou Montréal. Elles se comportaient envers nous comme des missionnaires. Nous étions les sauvages du Pérou que les Blancs de la grande ville venaient instruire. Nous avions tout à recevoir, rien à donner. Nous devions dire: «merci, mademoiselle», «merci, ma soeur», «merci, monsieur l'inspecteur», «merci, monsieur l'abbé», merci, merci, MERCI!

Si j'avais su l'anglais, je leur aurais crié, certains jours: "Mercy! Sacrez-nous la paix, nom de Dieu!"

Leur condescendance nous sous-développait, nous humiliait, nous portait à «retenir» constamment notre spontanéité . . . car nous avions peur d'avoir l'air trop sauvages. Ah! maudite école qui nous constipait et nous paralysait! Prison qui, jour après jour, nous assommait de leur écoeurante et maternelle bêtise! Ecole du désespoir enfantin qui, peu à peu, se transforme en monstruosité vécue! Châtiment incompréhensible . . .

Nous étions heureux dans les champs, car là, au moins, nous ne ressentions pas l'humiliation insoutenable d'être vus et enseignés en tant que pauvres et non en tant qu'êtres humains «normaux».

Les bonnes soeurs et monsieur l'abbé -- qui se réservaient souvent les cours de catéchisme -- connaissaient parfaitement toutes les tactiques de la dictature et de l'abrutissement des cerveaux par l'humiliation.

Tout le temps, «le bon monde» était opposé au «mauvais monde», les saintes femmes aux grands pécheurs, les Salazar aux Staline, les hommes respectés par «l'opinion publique» (Duplessis, etc.) aux leaders syndicaux, les commerçants industrieux aux «paresseux» en chômage . . . Et tout cela voulait dire: la bourgeoisie, qui est «bonne» chrétienne, vient au secours de vous autres, mes «pauvres» petits, afin que vous appreniez à travailler et à aimer Dieu . . . comme Duplessis, comme Salazar, comme les commerçants qui réussissent et comme les bonnes soeurs qui vont dans les missions . . .

Longueuil-Annexe, «pays de mission» . . .

Nous étions si heureux quand nous vivions en païens! Pourquoi allions-nous à l'école? Pour apprendre le malheur d'être éloignés de Dieu, de la richesse et du succès? Pour apprendre à avoir honte de notre paganisme de pauvres et à nous haïr les uns les autres, afin de mettre en practique les enseignements évangéliques des bonnes soeurs et des abbés de la bourgeoisie longueuilloise?

Je ne me souviens pas d'avoir appris, à l'école, autre chose que la honte de ma, de notre condition . . .

Plusieurs parents comprenaient d'instinct ce que l'enseignement clérical et officiel avait de pernicieux. Ils refusaient d'envoyer leurs enfants à l'école et les bonnes soeurs affirmaient que ces parents-là étaient des dégénérés, qui brûleraient en enfer éternellement. Ma mère pensait comme les bonnes soeurs. Elle méprisait ces gens qu'elle disait «sans éducation». Moi, je n'étais pas du tout d'accord. J'avais plusieurs amis qui n'allaient pas a l'école (les chanceux!). C'étaient mes meilleurs amis. Leurs parents étaient pauvres et amers, mais ils étaient indépendants. Ils n'acceptaient pas facilement les Leçons et les commandements du catéchisme bourgeois. Ils connaissaient trop bien l'exploitation quotidienne qui se pratiquait au nom de l'AMOUR, de l'OBEISSANCE, et de la VERTU. Ils ne voulaient pas être des vertueux: être des moutons avec les loups, être des humiliés avec les riches, être des pécheurs avec les purs . . . et des «maudits pauvres» à assister. Ils n'avaient besoin ni d'aide ni de conseils. Ils voulaient qu'on les laisse en paix dans leurs cabanes à eux.

J'étais d'accord avec cette révolte-là. Mais j'étais encore trop petit, à cette époque, pour me défendre contre la volonté de ma mère. J'allais donc à l'école comme on se rend à un salon funéraire, à pas lents et en silence.

Durant les récréations, comme il n'y avait aucun sport masculin d'organisé (comment voulez-vous que de vieilles filles organisent des équipes de baseball ou de hockey?), nous nous adossions au mur sombre de l'école, tandis que les filles, séparées volontairement de nous, causaient ou chantaient des cantiques en compagnie des institutrices.

Un vrai paradis, quoi!

Nous apprenions l'ennui en écoutant le chant des anges!

Puis nous retournions en classe comme des prisonniers regagnent leurs cellules. Pour passer le temps, je dessinais des figures sur mon pupitre ou je m'amusais à faire rigoler les autres en «lâchant» au beau milieu d'un cours de religion ou de grammaire, un «pète» qui faisait autant de bruit qu'un pétard à mèche. Je jouais' la comédie de la «confusion», pendant que les autres se tordaient de rire et que l'institutrice ou la bonne soeur agitait sa baguette de sorcière au-dessus de nos têtes. ... Et vous, Vallières, si vous êtes malade, allez voir un médecin.

-- Il n'y a pas de docteur par icitte . . .
-- Alors, retenez-vous! Compris?
-- Quoi?
-- Vous avez compris? (elle était rouge comme une tomate).

> -- Moi pas compris . . . (j'imitais le langage des Iroquois). Toute la classe éclatait de rire à nouveau.
> -- Vallières, sortez dans le corridor!
> -- MERCI!
>
> Je me sentais alors soulagé d'une partie de ma révolte, moins malheureux qu'assis au centre de la classe, immobile, les oreilles agacées par les leçons des autres. Au moins, dans le corridor, je me tenais debout et mes pensées n'étaient pas dérangées par les propos dédaigneux que l'institutrice ou la bonne soeur tenait sur le malheur des gens sans éducation et sans religion. J'étais fier de moi et cette petite fierté de quatre sous me rendait plus heureux que d'apprendre en classe, le corps raide et la bouche close, que Dieu m'aimait in-fi-ni-ment . . . . [pp.106-108]

Vallières ably conveys an image of the authoritative nature of the school system -- a system run by the Roman Catholic clergy whom Vallières refers to most often as being dictatorial and all-powerful in the society.

Vallières wants greater freedom: he envies those of his friends whose parents are not so limited by Church doctrine, and who do not go to school simply because of their parents' beliefs. In his writing Vallières speaks of his desire for more personal freedom to do what he feels and believes to be proper given his position in life. In addition, he indicates that he became more aware of the class bias which he feels the clergy has against those members of society who are of the working class. He writes:

> Je ne me Souviens pas d'avoir appris, à l'école, autre chose que la honte de ma, de notre condition . . . [p.107]

He stated this before when he made reference to the nature of his mother's education at the hands of the nuns. Vallières holds that

the clergy teaches humiliation so as to be able to dictate to those they educate. [p.106] Because he was so young he was unable to do anything in the nature of open rebellion. Indeed, his mother interpreted rebellion as a religious sacrilege. He writes:

> Mais pour ma mère, comme pour les institutrices, les bonnes soeurs et l'abbé, nous faisons de la peine au Bon Dieu, nous commettions des péchés, nous étions constamment coupables de désobéissance. J'enviais ceux de mes amis dont les parents étaient plus wrongnes et moins chrétiens que les miens: au moins eux ils étaient libres; ils n'étaient pas constamment empêches d'être eux-mêmes par la nécessité de faire le Bien . . . [p.109]

His response to this predicament was to lay awake at night reflecting in a critical way on the indoctrination which he was subjected to at school. He indicates that he also considered many general questions which arose out of his daily existence when he says:

> Certains soirs, je ne me mettais pas au lit pour dormir mais pour penser. Je n'avais pas dix ans, mais je pensais beaucoup. J'interrogeais tout ce que je voyais: les choses et les hommes. (Les philosophes appellent cela: mettre en question.) Parfois, je me sentais triste et seul. D'autres fois, surtout les jours où l'école m'avait été plus pénible que d'habitude, je durcissais mes poings d'enfant et rêvais tout haut d'insulter mes maîtres en public, de les humilier à mon tour, de les barbouiller de boue et de leur crier:
>
> -- Eh! filles de Dieu et messieurs les abbés, allez donc travailler un peu à construire des maisons moins froides et moins étroites pour «vos» pauvres au lieu de leur apprendre à regretter des péchés . . . D'ailleurs si «vos» pauvres ne péchaient pas, de quoi donc vivriez-vous? Qu'avez-vous donc à nous donner en échange de tout ce que vous voulez nous enlever? Laissez-nous donc notre liberté, nos péchés, notre crasse et notre paix! Rapportez à Longueuil votre catéchisme, vos bonnes manières et votre eau bénite! L'important, n'est-ce pas d'être heureux? Et nous sommes heureux (à part quelques «convertis») d'être ces sauvages que vous voulez civiliser.

> Evidemment, je ne me disais pas ces choses-là dans ce style. Ce n'était pas aussi bien tourné. Mais je n'en ressentais pas moins comme une blessure jusque dans les moindres replis de ma conscience angoissée . . .
> Leur aptitude au mépris me brûlait; leur habitude d'humilier les «mal vêtus», les «mal peignés», les «mal mouchés» . . . les enfants crottés de la populace!
> Oh! maudits maitres de la sainte propreté! Imbéciles aux mains pures, aux oreilles décollées, au nez pointu, à la bouche dédaigneuse, aux yeux de vitre et au visage de papier sablé! Têtes creuses . . . Au fond de moi-même, de tout mon coeur, de toute mon intelligence, de toute ma dureté d'enfant dégénéré, je vous disais, avec orgueil, d'aller au diable! Si l'enfer existait, il était votre demeure toute désignée. Vous aviez tout ce qu'il fallait pour faire de «satanés» beaux damnés, imbéciles! Qu'attendiez-vous de cette vie? Pourquoi existiez-vous? Pourquoi étiez-vous nos maîtres? [p.109]

Vallières was drawn to consider the clergy as members of the privilege class in society who thrived in opposition to the underprivileged class such as himself and his contemporaries from the working class. Vallières wondered why the clergy did not do something concrete to help the poor rather than teaching the nobility of poverty. He came to feel that the doctrine of humility is not an adequate answer to the issue; he saw the need for a practical response to a concrete problem.

At the age of thirteen Vallières went to a school run by the Franciscan order. Most of his fellow students, like himself, came from working-class families and most were also aided financially by the Roman Catholic Church. The school was designed to be a preparatory stage in the development of priests. To Vallières, the purpose for which he attended the school was to obtain:

> . . . une meilleure connoissance de moi-même, des autres et du monde. Je voulais donner un sens à ma vie de Canadien français, frustré mais passionné [p.135]

Of the courses which he studied, Vallières writes:

> Les cours qui nous étaient donnés par deux Franciscains ne valaient absolument rien. Nous mémorisions les conjugaisons latines, les règles, de grammaire, les définitions du catéchisme, quelques dates historiques; puis, periodiquement, nous récitions ce que nous avions mémorisé. Nos deux professeurs étaient de parfaits, ignorants, que leur Ordre avait envoyés la «en attendait» de trouver un personnel plus compétent. [p.133]

The freedom he experienced was one thing of immense value at this (p. 133)
school. He was able to read a great deal, especially at home, for (p. 133)
he did not have many distractions. Through such freedom he became able to "...cracher intérieurement sur ce que notre famille avait toujours connu." [p.133]

Also in a positive note Vallières speaks highly of two clerics (pp. 133-134)
who were associated with the college. He considers Father Vary and Father Charles to have been broad-minded and open to new ideas -- quite the exception to his general impression of the clergy which he

presents throughout Nègres blancs d'Amérique. Thus although Vallières views the Church in what comes to be a negative light, he is intellectually honest enough to realize that there were exceptions to the rules which provided the inspiration from within the Church which would lead him intellectually to outgrow the narrowness of the general views of the Church.

Often, the questioning which Vallières undertook led to violent arguments with his mother who believed her son should be studying English and mathematics. She wanted him to prepare for a practical job within what she considered to be a very practical world.(p. 131) In these disputes Vallières would often defend himself by pointing out that his parents failed to respond openly -- that is, practically -- to the harsh conditions of life which they experienced. (p. 138; pp. 144-145) Analysis was not enough for Vallières -- he saw early that action was the necessary complement to understanding.

He left school for a brief period of time. On his return he found that the school had become a true classical college in the traditional sense, in spite of the moderating influence of Father Vary. On his return to school and the conditions he encountered there, Vallières makes the following observation:

> Les autorités de l'externat me permirent de prendre «ma» place en Belles-Lettres, comme si je m'étais inscrit en septembre et que, depuis ce temps, je m'étais absenté «pour raison de santé». Quelques semaines plus tard, mourut le Pere Vary. Le collège commença à se transformer vraiment en collège classique. Tout y devint formaliste et discipliné, à la mode ancienne. L'enseignement ne valait rien, surtout l'enseignement de l'histoire universelle et celle du Québec. Duplessis et Salazar, de chaque côté d'un Pie XII froid comme un bloc de glace, inspraient de leur orthodoxie l'enseignement des imbéciles qui avaient la prétention de nous faire cadeau de la Vérité, comme des missionnaires apportent le Baptême aux sauvages (qui, heureusement, ne sont pas dupes, et se font baptiser dans l'espoir d'obtenir un morceau de cette richesse capitaliste que l'Eglise transporte partout avec elle). Nous supportions la Vérité dans l'espoir de bénéficier un jour des privilèges matériels qui y sont attachés! Nous vivions tous dans la contrainte de l'hypocrisie. Car être franc et honnête, cela signifiait immédiatement «la porte», c'est-à-dire la fin des études . . . et la pauvreté a perpétuité.
>
> Nous étions tous catholiques, forcément. Mais très peu croyaient vraiment en Dieu. Nous assistions à la messe, chaque vendredi, pour bénéficier de l'assistance de la Belle Oeuvre des Vocations! Nous ne craignions pas, pour cela, de faire, de temps à autre, quelques communions «sacrileges». Je me souviens que, durant la messe, je lisais Baudelaire, pendant que les moines s'édifiaient de ma piété!
>
> J'ai joué la comédie jusqu'en décembre 1955. J'étais alors en Rhétorique. Premier de classe au tempérament instable mais élève intelligent, qui, disait-on «promettait beaucoup». (Je me demande ce que mon Alma Mater pense de moi, aujourd'hui!) Je n'avais pas le choix de ne pas jouer le jeu de la «vocation», car autrement je retournais à la banque et perdais mes rares amis. Entre nous, mes amis et moi, nous discutions souvent de cette hypocrisie qui nous avilissait. [p.147]

Here Vallières appears to offer a rationalization for the fact that he stayed in school at the expense of the Church. He writes:

> Nous nous disions: «Ce n'est tout de même pas de notre faute, si, dans notre milieu, il faut profiter de la Propagation de la Foi et de l'Oeuvre des Vocations pour

> se payer un minimum de connaissances et un droit d'entrée a l'université -- c'est-à-dire un B.A. La Foi se fout bien de la Justice! Pourquoi nous, nous craindrions de nous foutre de la Foi et d'en profiter! La Charité se fout bien des bas salaires et du chômage! Pourquoi serions-nous gênés d'exploiter la Charité? Ce n'est tout de même pas notre faute si l'Eglise et la Haute Finance nous emprisonnent dans un empire (leur empire) où les hommes ne peuvent que s'aliéner, se prostituer . . . pour ne pas crever comme des rats . . .» [p.147]

Vallières believes the poverty he and others like him have gone through is sufficient cause to justify accepting the charity given by the clergy.

Vallières observes that the Roman Catholic Church is by no means a poverty-stricken institution. He writes:

> L'Eglise, la religion, après tout, était-ce plus que des rites et des collectes? Des rites qui justifiaient des collectes. Des collectes qui finançaient l'enseignement du catéchisme. L'enseignement du catéchisme qui justifiait la pauvreté et l'exploitation qui «sanctifiait» l'esclavage . . . [pp.147-148]

To Vallières, then, the Roman Catholic Church is a religious institution which is full of hypocrisy -- an institution which is very much a part of the exploiting class of capitalistic society. In its social involvement the Church is guided primarily by financial considerations. The teachings of the Church not only justify but tend to reinforce the poverty which is ever-present in Quebec. Vallières could tolerate "this farce" no more -- he began to condemn it openly. [p.148]

Vallières does not feel that it is possible to speak out against the Church from within. He verifies this point when he

points out what happens to those within the Church who become critical of the Institution. In this context he provides the example of l'abbé Pierre who, because he had provoked Cardinal C. P. E. Leger, had to leave the country. [p.148] Vallières carries the argument further by declaring that the clergy, in general, refused to say anything about what had happened to l'abbé Pierre. He was deserted! Vallières writes:

> Je demandai aux meilleurs des prêtres qui nous enseignaient s'ils prenaient parti pour l'abbé Pierre ou pour le Cardinal. Tous se réfugièrent dans la neutralité, comme le reste du clergé; ce qui faisait bien l'affaire de Paul-Emile.
>
> Un jour, je dis à l'un d'eux qu'ils étaient tous une bande de putains et les pires ennemis du peuple québécois. Il me répliqua que «moralement» il appuyait l'abbé Pierre, les prêtres-ouvriers, etc. Mais qu'il ne voulait pas faire de politique ni tomber dans «l'extrémisme».
>
> Je lui demandai:
>
> -- Que voulez-vous que le peuple fasse de votre appui moral?
>
> -- . . .
>
> -- Vous êtes tous complices de l'exploitation, de l'obscurantisme et de l'injustice tant que vous ne posez pas des ACTES. Des ACTES, pas des sermons!
>
> -- Tu es dur . . .
>
> -- Je ne le suis pas assez. Tenez, je vais vous dire une chose qu'un jour j'affirmerai publiquement . . . Tous les prêtres seront pour moi des profiteurs et des lâches tant que je ne les verrai pas aider les ouvriers, les cultivateurs et les étudiants du Québec à brûler leurs églises, leurs séminaires, leurs presbytères, leurs Cadillac et le reste! C'est bien beau, mon petit père d'être honnête et vertueux dans son coeur, mais ça ne donne pas grand-chose à ceux que le régime opprime chaque jour. Comme tous les hommes, vous avez aussi des bras, servez-vous-en!
>
> Le bon moine, atterré, me dit seulement, d'une voix éteinte:
>
> -- Et moi qui croyais que tu . . . étais . . . le mo-dè-le de ta classe! que t'est-il donc arrivé?

> --Rien du tout. Ou plutôt si. Il m'est arrivé . . . d'en avoir assez de jouer la comédie avec vous autres, bandes d'idiots!
>
> A partir de ce jour, ma haine de leur Autorité et de leur Vérité m'empêcha d'étudier. Avec mes amis, je me mis à fréquenter les tavernes de Longueil (1). Nous y lissions ensemble une saison en enfer, de Rimbaud, qui était rapidement devenu notre évangile. Nous multipliâmes les excentricités et les scandales à un point tel que les autorités du collège songèrent, un certain moment, à nous expulser "en bloc". Nous devenions un «danger public»

---

1. Les tavernes étaient «interdites» à Ville Jacques-Cartier, chef-lieu de la pègre! Sans doute, les curés avaient-ils obtenu cela de la pègre en échange d'autre chose . . .

pour les nouvelles générations d'étudiants à qui nous fournissions les livres à l'index qui étaient les «bêtes noires» des professeurs.

En juin, je passai les examens avec une indifférence totale dont seule la bière, consommée à la taverne, était capable de me tirer. Je résolus alors de ne plus remettre les pieds à l'externat et de me consacrer totalement aux oeuvres romanesques dont j'avais commencé à tracer les grandes lignes. [pp.148-149]

Hence, it was as a young man in his school years that Vallières developed his feelings of intense dislike for the Roman Catholic Church. It was as a student that he developed the core of his criticism of the Church. It seems that for Vallières the Church-supported school system exemplifies the most negative aspects of the Church's role in the public life of the province. Vallières' private experiences in the college led him eventually to question both his own social role and that of the Church in the public sphere. At school, Vallières learned to rebel. Indeed, the

crowning touch for Vallières insofar as his educational experiences were concerned, involved his re-visiting the school which he had attended for a number of years. Of the visit he says:

> Parfais, je retournais au collège pour voir comment les choses et les hommes y évoluaient. L'externat avait maintenant un visage «respectable». Les frais d'admission et de scolarité y étaient très élèves. L'Oeuvre des Vocations, je crois, avait été abolie. Il y avait plus de petits-bourgeois que de fils d'ouvriers l'aspect général était plus «présentable» et l'on parlait de rivaliser un jour, avec les Jésuites du collège Sainte-Marie. L'esprit y était très libéral, mais, malheureusement, pour jouir du privilège de participer à ce libéralisme . . . il fallait maintenant pas mal d'argent! Les gars des alentours, les gars de Ville Jacques-Cartier, n'avaient pas cet argent. Ils devenaient manoeuvres comme leur père, passant, matin et soir, devant l'Externat classique des riches, leur boîte à lunch sous le bras. Les rues de Ville Jacques-Cartier étaient maintenant asphaltées, mais la pauvreté y demeurait toujours aussi grande.
> [pp.153-154]

Vallières maintains that the clergy and the petite bourgeoisie function against the interests of the working-class, the poor, and those who are not able to rise socially above their lot in life. Even where schooling is a concern, the clergy will ally with the moneyed interests of the society in the name of exploitation and oppression. [p.107] Vallières appears to understand education in modern bourgeois society as something which has nothing to give to those who are not part of the moneyed classes. [p.107] The Church-run schools reinforce the status quo rather than serving the real interests of the general population. [p.107] As Vallières points out in several places, it is through the schools

that the Church preaches charity and teaches that it is wrong for the oppressed to demand change. [p.109] Vallières states his case against the system when he says:

> Je n'en veux pas à ceux qui croient en Dieu. Mais j'en veux à ceux qui se croient «dispenses» de prendre parti contre l'injustice et d'agir pratiquement contre elle, qui se croient «justifiés» de demeurer neutres, en vertu d'imaginaires commandements, révélations ou enseignements divins. Ceux-là, à mon avis, ne méritent ni respect ni «compréhension». Les affamés et les humiliés n'ont que faire de leurs scruples moraux de bourgeois bien nourris et honorés par leur classe au pauvoir. [p.164]

Here Vallières is speaking to both clergy and laity who portend to be devout religious believers. He is saying that unless they are ~~be devout religious believers. He is saying that unless they are~~ willing to take a stand against injustice and unfairness in the system as a whole their pious claims are of no worth. One's inner convictions must be verified in public life. Vallières views the poverty of the masses as a greater evil than any activity which the Church would call evil.

CHAPTER III

THE CONSOLIDATION OF VALLIERES' VIEWS

After leaving school, Vallières spent some time studying existentialism and then he wrote an unpublished novel. After some time he came to realize that these pursuits did not reflect his political interests. He says:

> Je me sentais coupable de haute trahison envers ma classe, envers les miens, qui, eux, n'étaient pas existentialistes mais catholiques pratiquants; qui n'étaient pas écrivains et «géniaux», mais «cheap workers» sans voix et sans instruction; qui n'attendaient pas la révélation de l'Etre, du Sens . . . mais uniquement, même au plus profond de leur résignation, ou plutôt de leur total écrasement, l'organisation pratique de leur potentialité illimitée, de leur immense force inemployee, jugulée, aliénée. Et c'est peut-être pourquoi, un jour de printemps (en avril 1958, je crois), je pris soudainement parti pour les aliénés et donnai aux boueurs, qui couraient dans ma rue derrière un incinérateur mobile, ce gros manuscrit, presque terminé, qui avait pour titre Les porteurs d'eau. [p.174]

Vallières believes the members of the working class, although experiencing hardships from a system supported by the Roman Catholic Church, are "catholiques pratiquants". Vallières never clarifies this ambiguity in his support for the working class: the fact that he supports a betterment of their conditions yet opposes the Roman Catholic Church while so many of the working class are believers in the Church's teachings. In Vallières' thinking, these people have remained loyal to the Roman Catholic Church even though the

Church has done so much to prevent the working class from obtaining a better standard of living. He chooses to direct the brunt of his criticism at the Church rather than at the working class -- perhaps this reflects his early endorsement of what are essentially Marxist principles. Perhaps he feels that the corruptive influence of the Church is so thorough-going that the working class cannot be criticized on this point.

Throughout the text Vallières denounces the role which the Roman Catholic Church has played in the development of the society of Quebec. He ties this in with his own development. Vallières writes of a change in his life; a change which saw him become more and more involved with the thoughts of existentialist and religious thinkers. Because of this exposure, he makes a definite attempt to distinguish between the Roman Catholic Church as an institution and religious principles such as the idea of God. Vallières feels it is well-nigh impossible to believe in a God preached about "par des imbeciles". [p.181] During this period he spent a year as a novice with the Franciscan order. This experience appears to have turned him against the Church even more. He failed to acquire a deeper understanding of his own inner being, much less an understanding of the divine. [pp. 181-189] Vallières writes a great deal about the experiences which he endured during this period of soul-searching. His writing concerns the Roman Catholic Church, its

various religious leaders, and what he contends is the general lack of good the Church breeds in Quebec. Often, the Church's failure is understood to be due to its inability to cope in a realistic manner with real life problems of the world. It is in this vein that he writes about the Franciscans, the order with which he was most familiar, as being generally insensitive to the genuine problems of the people in the world around them. [p.181]

Vallières infers that, like himself, those who are brought up in a strictly religious setting are liable to be beset by problems of guilt. He says:

> . . . inconsciemment j'avais voulu me réconcilier avec ma famille, mon milieu et les valeurs traditionnelles de ce milieu, parce qu'alors ma révolte n'avait pas atteint un niveau de conscience suffisant pour échapper au profond sentiment de culpabilité entretenu par «l'univers morbide de la Faute» dans lequel le Québec s'est développé sous l'influence des ultramontains des trois premiers siècles de son histoire, qui ont organisé la véritable armature de la société québécoise (jusqu'a ces toutes dernières années); l'Eglise catholique, qui a su allier à sa hiérarchisation des classes et des fonctions, l'égalité de tous . . . devant Dieu . . . et dans le <u>péché originel</u>! Egalité bien arbitraire, mais qui, enfoncee dans notre esprit dès l'enfance, a réussi ce tour de force assez fantastique de nous rendre, pendant des siècles, <u>égaux</u> dans la culpabilité, la honte, l'impression continuelle de défaite et le sentiment, encore très profond au Québec, que la vie au fond ne vaut pas la peine d'être <u>vécue</u>. L'Eglise a fait de nous -- en s'appuyant sur nos conditions d'existence d'exploités, de colonisés et de «non-instruits» -- un peuple de citoyens honteux d'eux-mêmes, coupables avant même d'avoir eu l'occasion de poser des gestes libres, dégoûtés de la vie, cherchant refuge dans la promesse d'un bonheur céleste éternel. La «révolution tranquille» a commencé à faire sauter cette «routine» aliénante, déshumanisante, mais un long chemin reste encore à parcourir

> pour que tous les révoltés du Quebec échappent réellement à la culpabilité et soient en mesure de s'autodéterminer sans se référer à l'enseignement qu'ils ont reçu, à la religion des esclaves et des opprimés. [pp.181-182]

Here, he is saying that the Roman Catholic Church is responsible in large measure for the inability of large numbers of the Québécois to question and to develop alternatives to their daily life patterns. Feelings of guilt and shame which have been taught them by the clergy have stifled their full public involvement. It is only recently that they have begun to experience the freedom which is necessary to critical inquiry. [p.82]

Vallières goes on to examine the ideas of Kierkegaard, especially as these relate to the concept of freedom and the Bible. To Vallières, the Bible is full of contradictions and errors.

For Vallières, the opinions he generated concerning freedom and the Bible result from his reading of Kierkegaard's Thoughts and Observations. He writes:

> Kierkegaard, comme tous les curés, disait de faire «le saut» dans la Foi, dans le néant, dans la croyance en l'Incroyable, en l'Inintelligible, au Dieu d'Abraham, d'Isaac et de Jacob.
>
> J'avais fait «le saut» . . . et je me retrouvais comme avant. Toutes les questions demeuraient ouvertes. Mais alors qu'avant le saut dans la Foi, tout m'était permis, maintenant tout m'était défendu. Et c'est dans le mépris de moi-même et du monde que l'on m'apprenait à trouver l'Amour, la Voie, la Vérité, la Vie, l'Etre. Je ne trouvai rien du tout, si ce n'est une certaine discipline corporelle qui améliora grandement ma santé et me rendit moins nerveux. Comme de longues vacances à la campagne reposent l'organisme. [p.183]

Vallières views the study of profound questions which deal with the meaning of inner spirituality as something which plays into the hands of the capitalists -- the exploiters who dominate the system which he holds so deeply in contempt. What Vallières appears to derive from his study of Kierkegaard and the Bible is an understanding which allows him to accuse those who are religious of not taking into full account the realities of the world about them. Indeed, to study religion, to quest for religious truth, is wrong because it teaches man to be contemptuous of himself and to be oblivious of the conditions which are around him. [p.183] Kierkegaard teaches him of the necessity of the public aspect of one's convictions -- "public" and "private" truths are inseparable.

Vallières infers that the one-sided view which has emphasized the seeking of spiritual truths serves to further blind obedience among the laity. Vallières equates obedience with acceptance; both stifle the type of questioning which is necessary in order to bring about social change. [p.183] In the religious life one exists, but never questions much less complains of one's existence. [p.183] Vallières writes:

> Au fond de moi-même, je méprisais cette vie, car là la pleine égalité des volontés personnelles des individus existait dans la mesure même où ces volontés ne voulaient rien, selon l'expression très juste d'Engels, mais obéissaient comme les moutons broutent leur herbe sans se poser de questions, parce que Dieu l'a voulu ainsi. Voilà

> la liberté pratique de ceux qu'a touchés la «grâce» de Dieu; la liberté de brouter de l'herbe sans grogner. Heureusement, Dieu épargne de sa «grâce» un nombre croissant de Québécois. C'est pourquoi le Québec a cessé d'être une colonie tranquille de Washington et du Vatican. Dieu et son Ciel se meurent dans les esprits québécois qui se sont, enfin, réveillés des pieux rêves de leur enfance. L'obeissance stupide, la servitude sanctifée ont cessé d'être des «vertus». Elles deviennent ce qu'elles ont tourjours été; des nonsens, des chaînes qu'il faut briser. Le décolonisation politique et économique du Québec s'accompagne de la désaliénation des Québécois. L'Eglise fera moins d'argent, mais le peuple sera libre.
>
> Plusieurs au Québec ont enfin compris que la solidarité entre exploités, entre humiliés, entre opprimés, n'est rien qu'un esclavage «sublimé» en commun. La solidarité ne peut exister qu'entre hommes libres. C'est pourquoi, au grand desespoir des évêques, de l'aristocratie cléricale, le nombre des «vocations religieuses» et des prêtres ne cesse de diminuer tandis que celui des révoltés et des révolutionnaires augmente. [p.183]

He feels that the people of Quebec are beginning to question their lot in life and, above all, are questioning the role which the Roman Catholic Church has played in the development of their social condition. Various teachings of the clergy are, more and more, coming under heavy scrutiny from parishoners who at one time were very quiet and submissive.

Vallières reveals what he went through during the intense period of his personal questioning. He writes:

> En 1958, 1959, 1960 . . . j'ai passé des mois et des mois à chercher les raisons, le pourquoi de mon existence. J'ai fait de la métaphysique. J'ai essayé, par la mystique, d'attraper Dieu «par le collet» et de le faire parler. J'ai perdu mon temps et pas mal de mes énergies au sport de la «sanctification», de la purification de l'âme, de l'oraison, etc.
>
> Car même si la grande noirceur duplessiste s'était transformée, grâce à Dieu, en «la nuit obscure» des mystiques

> décrite par Saint Jean de la Croix, la Foi elle-même demeurait une chose «insensée», intangible et hors de la réalité. Il n'y avait que deux attitudes logiques; croire sans comprendre, ou laisser Dieu où il est. J'essayai de croire et de comprendre. Mais plus je faisais d'effents pour croire, moins je comprenais, et moins je comprenais, moins cela me plaisait de croire; plus je me mettais à penser que, tout compte fait, la seule chose à faire était d'oublier Dieu et de chercher à comprendre la vie humaine à même ses conditions de développement, à même son histoire, son évolution. Car si Dieu avait une réponse à donner à l'homme, un sens à donner à l'existence humaine, n'était-ce pas à lui de «s'expliquer» puisque, d'une part, nous ne pourions l'atteindre que par une foi aveugle, muette, sans réponse, et que, d'autre part s'il existait et si vraiment il était Amour, comme disait saint Jean, il connaissait nos questions, nos angoisses; pourquoi alors ne prenait-il pas les moyens, lui qu'on disait tout-puissant, de notre rejoindre? . . . Pour «purifier» davantage notre foi, me disait-on. C'est comme si un amoureux disait à celle qu'il aime; «Tu souffres, chérie? Tu me demandes de répondre à tes longues lettres? Tu ne sais pas ce qui arrive? Tu n'es plus sûre de rien? Mais, ma vieille, c'est justement ainsi que je t'aime. Quand tu souffres. Et plus tu souffres, plus je t'aime. Souffre, souffre, souffre! Je t'aime ainsi."
>
> -- Fuck this love! dirait un Américain ou une Américaine. En effet, "fuck this love!" Et vive la pauvre petite liberté humaine!
>
> «Masturbez-vous, Seigneur, et soyez à nouveau crucifié si cela vous passionne tant! Mais, de grâce, foutez le camp au plus tôt!» C'était le thème de mes oraisons, moins de deux ans après le «saut» kierkegaardien dans la Foi, avec un F majuscule pour bien marquer le caractère «métaphysique» de ce saut absurde. [pp.183-184]

Thus Vallières indicates his dislike for the institution of the Roman Catholic Church. To Vallières, politics and economics are the only true realms of study, if one wants a true picture of the forces which shape one's destiny. To examine theology and philosophy is a waste of time: it may clarify the background of

Again, Vallières makes repeated references to the institution of the Roman Catholic Church which he views as being an institution of exploitation. Indeed, he views it as an institution which allies itself with the businessmen to the extent that they, the clergy, can be thought of as capitalists and businessmen while the Roman Catholic Church itself can be thought of as a corporation which obeys all the laws of capitalistic practices. [p.185] Thus Vallières is saying that the Roman Catholic Church is an institution of deepest capitalistic entrepreneurship -- a betrayal of its own lofty claims regarding spiritual truth. He suggests, using the Franciscans' practices as examples, that in the lack of correspondence between its theory and practice the clergy represents the profoundest dishonesty and hypocrisy possible. In this regard he says:

> J'ai été le témoin chez les Franciscains, qui sont censés être les plus pauvres d'entre les pauvres, de discussions «très mystiques» concernant la vente de leur maison de la rue Marie-Guyard a l'Université de Montréal. Je ne sais à quelle entente sont parvenus les Franciscains et l'administration de l'Université. Mais je sais -- pour l'avoir entendu de la bouche même du «manager» du temps, le «frère procureur» -- que l'intérêt des Franciscains était alors de faire le plus de profits possibles (de l'ordre d'un million, si je ne me trompe) par la vente de cette maison qu'ils avaient achetée à bas prix, autrefois, d'une riche personne «charitable», que les pieds nus des Franciscains rendait très sentimentale et pieuse. Et pourtant les Franciscains sont censés, d'après leur Constitution, ne jamais faire de «spéculations financières»! Que se passe-t-il alors dans ces autres communautés que leur Constitution, au contraire, encourage aux investissements? [p.185]

At this point it is clear that Vallières feels that the people of Quebec owe nothing to the Roman Catholic Church. [p.186] Certainly history shows this to be true in his mind for the general population, but to underscore this point as it pertains to the contemporary situation he refers to l'abbé Villeneuve:

> Le curé-politicien du Lac Saint-Jean, l'abbé Villeneuve, a déclaré en 1966, à un journaliste du Magazine Maclean, que les Québécois ne devaient rien a l'Eglise. C'est l'exacte vérité. Les Québécois ne doivent rien à l'Eglise, si ce n'est trois siècles d'obscurantisme. Mais l'Eglise doit à notre ignorance et à notre passivité d'être devenue la plus grosse institution financière canadienne-française, la seule que les Américains «respectent». [p.186]

Vallières is saying that the Roman Catholic Church is such a strong and powerful financial operation that it demands and receives a great deal of attention from American business interests.[1] This is merely a new expression of an old reality: the principles of the old alliance -- that of the Roman Church with the petite bourgeoisie -- which had established the interests of the Church in firm opposition to the interests of the people were being both broadened and deepened by the new alliance between the Church and the modern world's most glaring expression of capitalistic exploitation - Wall Street.

In the present, as in the past, the primary interests of the Church do not concern the everyday needs of the people, but, rather, function against the best interests of the people. Again, it is the common people, most in need of genuine help, who suffer through the alliance of the Church with business to the point that

exploitation becomes ridicule. Of this Vallières writes:

> A Québec, j'ai été le témoin oculaire et révolté de deux faits, parmi des centaines d'autres, dont la signification est facile à comprendre. Premièrement, à la veille des élections de 1960, on nous distribua la propagande électorale de l'Union nationale. (Il faut préciser que le seul journal que nous pouvions lire était 1'Action de Québec. Il fallait aller voler Le Devoir et la Presse dans la section réservée aux Pères, pour avoir une vue un peu moins «politisée» de ce qui se passait au Québec!) Deuxièmement, alors que la communauté se gavait d'une abondante nouriture et buvait assez souvent du Grand-Supérieur, les pauvres qui frappaient à la porte du monastère ne recevaient qu'un ou deux sandwiches de «paris-pâté». Je fus portier un jour, un seul, et le «portier en chef» me reprocha de mettre un peu trop de «paris-pâté» dans les sandwiches. "Après tout, me dit-il, nous ne sommes pas riches!" Je ne retournai plus jamais travailler à la porterie, car je crois que j'aurais donné des revolvers aux pauvres plutôt que ces sandwiches «dégueulasses». [p.186]

Vallières' thinking on this subject had led him to the conclusion that the basis of the problem lies in the discrepancy between what the Church preaches and what it practises. In his historical analysis of the Church's role in the history of Quebec he argues this repeatedly, and in the contemporary social situation he feels that there is nothing to indicate that things have changed or will change. Consequently, he is led to wonder why the great theologians who have called the Church to question have not broken with the Church. He writes:

> J'ai lu tous ces grands théologiens que l'Eglise a «excommuniés»., ces vingt dernières années: Rahner, de Lubac, Congar, Daniélou. Mais je n'ai jamais pu comprendre qu'après avoir critiqué si justement l'institution, ils n'aient pas rompu carrément avec l'Eglise. C'est bien beau de faire appel au «corps mystique» de l'Eglise pour

> justifier sa foi en elle. Mais du même coup, ne justifie-t-on pas aussi, indirectement, l'institution tout entière, son économie, sa politique, sa pensée sociale réactionnaire, son conservatisme fondamental? Ce n'est pas de «conciles» et de «réformes liturgiques» que les exploités et les affamés du monde ont besoin, mais d'une révolution. Tout le reste n'est que savant verbiage entre «la gauche» et la «droite» d'une même classe d'exploiteurs, conscients ou inconscients. La foi au «corps mystique», comme «la sincérité» et «l'honnêteté» de certains moralistes, n'ont jamais rien changé et ne changeront jamais rien aux conditions d'existence insoutenables de la majorité des hommes de la planète. Les «conciles» me font penser aux débats parlementaires des pseudo-représentants du peuple: ils finissent toujours par ratifier de petites «combines» savamment élaborées dans le but de faire croire au progrès, mais ne proposent jamais de changements radicaux. Qu'est-ce que le peuple gagnera à prier en français plutôt qu'en latin? Cela fera-t-il diminuer la dîme? Cela augmentera-t-il le nombre des emplois et fera-t-il diminuer le coût de la vie? Cela changera-t-il quelque chose à l'oppression de tous les jours?
>
> Refaire le visage de l'Eglise, comme refaire celui du système capitaliste, ne modifie que bien superficiellement sa nature! Une sorcière qui subit une chirurgie plastique pour faire disparaître ses verrues et son nez crochu n'en demeure pas moins une sorcière.
>
> L'Eglise est la sorcière de Dieu et je souhaite que les Québécois de l'avenir apprennent à s'en passer comme les enfants d'aujourd'hui ont cesse de croire au «Bonhomme Sept-heures» pour s'intéresser aux aventures réelles des astronautes. [pp.186-187]

There is something curious about this statement. Certainly Vallières continues to discuss the Church and capitalism, but in doing so he refers to continental theologians -- it is curious to the extent that whereas his analysis of the Roman Catholic Church as well as the conclusions of that analysis had been within the perspective of the role of the Church in the history of Quebec he now refers to the Church in a broader, almost universal sense.

This need not necessarily be understood as an inconsistency on his part; it is, perhaps, a reflection of Vallières' deep-seated Marxism. Perhaps he is using the example of that particular aspect of the Roman Church as it is found in Quebec to demonstrate social truths which he holds to have universal validity. But, if that is the case, then one is led to wonder about the rigour of his argument regarding the role of the Church in the tide of change which he sees to be inevitable in Quebec. This point is discussed briefly in the following chapter.

Earlier it was noted that Vallières fell out with the others of Cité libre on the question of separatism. Those with whom he disagreed had also been critical of the Church's involvement in Quebec's social history, but while they believed that the situation could be reformed, Vallières held that revolution was the only answer to the situation. Vallières' position was based on the notion that what was needed was economic reform, but because the alliance between the Church and the predominant economic forces had been historically inseparable and remained so, one could not have economic reform while the Church was still a viable force in the life of the province. The difference in the two attitudes to the future role of the Church might be called the difference between a "soft" reformative criticism and a "hard" revolutionary line.[2]

It was pointed out that Vallières, being one who believes in

removing the Church completely from society, finds it most difficult to comprehend those who are more conciliatory towards the Roman Catholic Church, even though they are willing to offer criticism of the Church. Vallières holds that the people need a complete break with the Church. They are in need of a revolution in order to liberate themselves from the chains which bind them -- chains which are basically economic, but which have sanctification from the Roman Catholic Church. [p.186] Compromise changes, such as the "soft" reformative thinkers want, achieve nothing. What is needed is a drastic alteration in the situation, so that the people will no longer have to put up with obstructive religious teachings, with manipulative religious institutions. [pp. 186-197]

When Vallières finally arrived at a clear formulation of the situation he found that because his ideas were in such radical opposition to the intellectual position and social reality of the Church he could no longer tolerate living within its sphere of influence. [pp. 188-189] For Vallières, the future did not involve becoming like one of his teachers about whom he says,

> Mon professeur de philosophie, avec qui «je me défoulais», certains jours, en lui disant ce que j'avais sur le coeur, éclatait d'un grand rire rabelaisien chaque fois que je me mettais en colère. Il y avait longtemps qu'il avait pris son parti de la bêtise humaine dont l'Eglise est remplie. Pour échapper au désespoir (et peut-être aussi à l'effort de se révolter carrément contre ce qu'il appelait «les commissaires»), il s'était réfugié dans la philosophie et une espèce de relativisme, d'agnosticisme, qui n'osait dire son nom ni surtout «passer à l'acte».

> Durant ces cours, il nous initiait bien davantage à la théorie de la relativité d'Einstein et à la doctrine «interdite» de T. de Chardin sur l'évolution de l'homme qu'à la piteuse philosophie tomiste diluée par la sottise du docteur Grenier, de l'Université Laval. Mais son agnosticisme pratique demeurait un individualisme malheureux, honteux, tourmenté et, finalement, hypocrite, puisqu'il «jouait le jeu» en faisant croire qu'il le faisait par obéissance et charité. En réalité, il «jouait le jeu» par paresse, sinon par lâcheté. Et cela m'écoeurait d'autant plus que, parmi la bande d'idiots qui peuplaient ce saint monastère, il était à peu pres le seul être intelligent. Mais comme bien d'autres, il avait abdiqué avant même d'avoir vraiment livré bataille. [p.188]

And of his own leaving of the school he says,

> Il me fallut un certain temps avant de décider définitivement de reprendre mes culottes et de retourner à mon ancienne liberté. D'une part, je passais beaucoup de temps à chercher dans l'oeuvre de Congar et de Lubac des raisons de croire, car «retourner» a mon athéisme me faisait peur. D'autre part, j'étudiais, a cette époque, certaines oeuvres de Husserl et de Merleau-Ponty; cette étude m'absorbait tellement que j'en oubliais facilement la bêtise qui m'entourait. Enfin, je mangeais bien, je n'avais aucun problème financier, et il y avait là des libres en abondance.
>
> Mais tout cela commencait à sentir un peu trop fortement «le sacrilège», c'est-à-dire en langage courant: la malhonnêteté avec soi-même. «Les commissaires» se mirent à discuter mon cas, car je commencais à semer la pagaille dans le scolasticat; je rotais à table, je «pétais» durant les offices religieux, je dormais aux heures d'oraison, je chantais «de mauvaises» chansons en prenant ma douche et j'allais même jusqu'à danser le rock'n roll dans la salle de lecture! Scandaliser ces imbéciles me rendait moins lourde l'atmosphère de caserne du scolasticat et me rafraîchissait. Je pouvais, après cela, lire un passage de Husserl avec plus de lucidité. Mais je n'étais pas très fier de moi et, finalement, je résolus d'aller étudier Husserl «à l'air libre». Je n'avais pas terminé ma scolarité en philosophie et je ne passerais pas les examens prescrits en vue de l'obtention du B.A. Mais qu'avais-je à faire d'un B.A.?
>
> J'avais résolu de reprendre ma recherche philosophique, là où je l'avais arrêtée avant mon entrée au noviciat, mais, cette fois en utilisant la méthode d'analyse

> phénoménologique. Mon projet était d'appliquer cette méthode à l'analyse de la liberté humaine dans son comportement humain, ses motivations, sa finalité illusoire, consciente ou inconsciente, afin de découvrir sa signification réelle, matérialle, sans doute «relative» . . . son «essence» comme dit Husserl, en donnant à ce mot un contenu bien différent de celui de la «catégorie» thomiste du même nom.
>
> Les commissaires de Dieu me virent partir sans aucun regret. Mais moi, je me donnais des coups de poing sur la tête un me répétant: «Idiot, qu'est-ce que t'as bien pu aller faire dans cette galère? décidément la liberté, du moins la tienne, n'est pas exempte de folie . . ."
>
> [pp.188-189]

Thus, Vallières broke from the routine within which he had placed himself. He emerged from the routine to experience more fully the world of freedom [p.189] Furthermore, Vallières saw the move as a move into the real world -- a world which he would become increasingly involved in. He became more accustomed to the world of political discourse as he worked for various leftist journals, the most notable being Cité libre.

Through his writings Vallières not only called on the common people to act, but he also provided the model for such action through the example of his own life-style. He both instigated and exemplified change. He called the status quo into question, and, in so doing, he called the Church into question.

Much of the remainder of Nègres blancs d'Amérique is devoid of comments directly related to the matter of the Roman Catholic Church, its clergy, and the effect these have had on the development

of Quebec. It concerns the development of Vallières' opinions as they pertain to the formulation of a course of action to provide the Québécois with more freedom and a better standard of living. This portion of the book clearly reflects Vallières' Marxist viewpoints. Here he is concerned with more than a descriptive analysis of the conditions in Quebec. As a complement to his analysis he presents a clear format for the implementation of radical social changes. Although interesting in themselves, Vallières' more practical political considerations are beyond the immediate scope of this study. For Vallières, the Church has little to do with the practicalities of revolution. Consequently, he mentions the Church en passant in this portion of the work. The conservatism of the Church provides the foil for the radicalization of his Marxism. In one such reference he identifies the Church with the element of fascism which he holds to be evident in modern-day Quebec. He says:

> . . . si les petits bourgeois lucides, si les étudiants et les jeunes ne transforment pas davantage leurs idées progressistes et leurs convictions politiques en des actions pratiques, il est fort possible, hélas! que le Québec devienne non pas un nouveau Vietnam mais un second Portugal.
>
> Déjà, certains faits ne manquent pas de susciter des questions angoissantes: la popularité fulgurante de Caouette, de Grégoire, de Marcoux en 1962; la renaissance du parti d'Adrien Arcand; la «vogue» d'Aujourd'hui-Québec dans les milieux cléricaux et les institutions contrôlées par le clergé: écoles, collèges, couvents; la fusion des séparatistes du Regroupement national avec les créditistes nationalistes d'extrême-droite; la présence de fascistes

> notoires au sein même du R.I.N.; la mutation récente de l'Ordre de Jacques-Cartier en deux autres sociétés secrètes de tendance nettement fasciste; la victoire de l'Union nationale et la «renaissance duplessiste»; enfin, le plaidoyer du maire de Montréal, Jean Drapeau, en faveur du parti unique, un peu avant les dernières élections municipales. Jean Drapeau et Daniel Johnson sont, à mon avis, les plus rusés (avec Pierre Laporte) des leaders de la droite. Jean Drapeau est peut-être celui qui, actuellement, jouit du plus large soutien financier. Deviendra-t-il, un jour, notre Führer?
>
> La situation actuelle n'est pas sans rappeler celle qui permit à Houde et à Duplessis de devenir les rois-nègres du Québec, au lendemain de la seconde guerre mondiale.
>
> Mais cette fois, les travailleurs et les «gauchistes» sont mieux organisés et plus forts qu'en 1945. Ils représentent une menace certaine pour le système. C'est pourquoi il est fort possible que l'extrême-droite, au Québec, comme aux Etats-Unis, soit en train de s'armer. On parle de l'organisation par Arcand d'un camp d'entraînement paramilitaire dans la région de Louiseville et d'un intense effort de propagande dans le comté de Berthier et dans les quartiers ouvriers de l'est de Montréal. L'un de mes amis a été «approché» par un officier supérieur de l'agence privée, bien connue, Phillips, qui faisait du recrutement pour une organisation fasciste paramilitaire. Cet ami a refusé «l'invitation» mais ne l'a pas oubliée; cela se passait il y a deux ou trois ans.
>
> On pourrait aussi parler des discours de l'abbé Gravel, de Québec, de ce petit frère des écoles chrétiennes qui faisait à Montréal de l'éducation à l'hitlérienne, des propos du juge Laganière à l'occasion de l'autodafé du Quartier Latin par des étudiants, des déclarations anti-syndicales de Lucien Tremblay, de l'A.P.I., des Chambres de commerce, etc.
>
> Une chose est certaine: l'agitation de la droite a augmenté en intensité depuis deux ans. Et cette agitation manifeste clairement que l'Ordre établi a maintenant peur. Ce n'est pas encore la panique, mais celle-ci n'est pas loin. [pp. 256-257]

He talks again of the alliance between the clergy, the petite bourgeoisie and other forces which he identifies with the political right. He considers this alliance reactionary, and, consequently

a threat to the progressive left of the working class. He also warns that the petite bourgeoisie notion of independence is essentially deception for it masks reactionary interests. He accuses the alliance between the clergy and the petite bourgeoisie of preaching a sham doctrine of independence. He argues that the superficialities of political independence such as a flag are no guarantee of genuine economic independence. For Vallières, political independence is economic independence. And what Quebec needs is economic independence -- not the cultural political pseudo-independence advocated by the reactionary alliance! [pp.267-280]

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION: THE MODIFICATION OF VALLIERES' VIEWS

Pierre Vallières has changed his position on a number of matters pertinent to Quebec since the writing of Nègres blancs d'Amérique. This is particularly true with regard to political issues.[1] It is also true of the opinions -- or lack of them -- which he now holds regarding the Roman Catholic Church in Quebec. I say "lack of them" as the Pierre Vallières of the seventies, the Vallières of L'urgence de choisir, rarely makes reference to the Church. This is a clear departure from the concerns which are central to Nègres blancs d'Amérique.

It is not clear just why Vallières, the die-hard revolutionary in the sixties, becomes more moderate on matters which pertain to the Church. This is an important question, but because Vallières has said little which is available publically on this matter, consideration of the issues involved must necessarily remain speculative and conjectural.

In the first place, Vallières considers the cultural spectrum of Quebec as a whole in L'urgence de choisir, just as he did in Nègres blancs d'Amérique. Yet, on comparing the books where the issues are the same one notices that he is less militant in the tone and argument of the second work. There is a marked

difference in emphasis in the two works. The conciliatory tone which Vallières adopts in L'urgence de choisir is indicated in his consideration of the Church just as it is apparent in his views on the purely political problems which Quebec faces. It is essential to remember that insofar as Vallières is concerned the Church is very much a political force. However, this is more clearly the case in Nègres blancs d'Amérique than in L'urgence de choisir where the Church is seldom mentioned. However, the issue remains generally the same -- he is still concerned about the social/political realities of Quebec -- but the framework within which he considers the issues in the two books differs.

Why the modification in Vallières' views and in his approach? I have chosen two approaches to this question: the first is more directly concerned with Vallières' personal experiences and the effect of those experiences on his convictions, while the second concerns the more public aspect of the political and cultural life of Quebec:

(1) It is clear in Nègres blancs d'Amérique that although Vallières' criticism of the Church is harsh, there are elements within the Church which he continues to respect highly. The worker nuns are one group for whom he has great regard. [pp. 193-193] Vallières says,

> Je devins chômeur . . . et libre, pendant un mois. C'était l'hiver 1961-1962. Je profitai de mes loisirs pour mieux connaitre la société étudiante et pour étudier Husserl.

> La préparation du numéro special de Cité libre sur le séparatisme m'éloigna, cependant, des intellectuels «engagés». Je ne voyais Miron et Maurice qu'occasionnellement. Je me fis de nouveaux amis à l'université parmi les pionniers des Chantiers de Montréal, qui s'occupaient des familles défavorisées de Saint-Henri. Plusieurs d'entre eux avaient séjourné en Amérique latine pendant quelques mois. Ils avaient «mordu» dans la charité pratique prêchée par l'abbé Pierre et s'efforçaient d'amener les étudiants à assumer «individuellement» certaines responsabilités sociales, tout en refusant l'engagement politique. Ils voulaient être une «présence» et un «appui». Faire de la politique leur paraissait . . . anti-démocratique, car, dans leur esprit, toute politique était mauvaise en soi, injuste, immorale. Leur but était moins de changer les conditions de vie des travailleurs que de se donner bonne conscience en «sympathisant» avec la misère des exploités.
>
> Cette mystique «appliquée», au début, m'attira, car je ne m'étais pas encore débarrassé de la culpabilité morbide qui m'avait poussé à faire «le saut dans la Foi». Déçu par l'attitude intransigeante de Pelletier et de Trudeau vis-à-vis le séparatisme, désabusé, chômeur, je décidai de devenir simple ouvrier, journalier comme mon père, et d'abandonner ma recherche philosophique.
>
> Au moment même où Pelletier m'offrait un emploi à La Presse, je devins manoeuvre sur un chantier de construction vers la fin du mois de mars 1962. Par les Chantiers, je connus les petites soeurs ouvrières qui travaillaient dans les usines sans faire de prosélytisme: des carmélites aux mains sales, sans privilèges, gagnant elles-mêmes leur vie, partageant exactement les conditions d'existence des travailleurs, vivant à deux ou à trois dans un taudis loué, comme tout le monde. Elles m'offrirent un visage nouveau de l'Eglise. Je connus une soeur, en particulier, qui était déchirée entre la spiritualité "contemplative" de sa communauté et son besoin de faire une action concrète et nécessairement politique pour transformer les conditions de vie des travailleurs. [p.193]

It seems that the reason for which Vallières continues to respect these people is the fact that in addition to being committed to the abstract doctrines of the Church they actively participate in

the everyday world in the real application of the things they claim to be true. That is, they are a part of the "working-class", as Vallières would call it. This sets them apart from their fellow clerics and Church officials who, according to Vallières, are identified with the bourgeois establishment. Indeed, Vallières speaks most highly of one particular nun who maintained that the common men do not need religious experiences so much as they need revolutionaries who are willing to alter the social system. [pp. 193-195] She believes that in this manner Christ will get what He calls for: true witnesses. [p.193] She told Vallières that he should not lose heart and become discouraged, for there is much to be done in Quebec. Vallières reports her saying:

> . . . L'Eglise se place toujours du point de vie de Dieu pour aller tendre la main aux travailleurs. Les travailleurs n'ont pas besoin de «notre» charité de «notre» compassion. Ils nous estiment . . . par superstition au par habitude. Ça ne veut rien dire. Si de main, ils nous tirent dessus, ils n'auront pas tort. Car j'ai fortement l'impression que nous les trompons . . . . [p.194]

She says that "la misère nous avengle au lieu de nous ouvrir les yeux . . ." [p.194] Such talk made Vallières respectful of such a one who was as an individual much closer to the Church than he would ever be. On the other hand, she was willing to commit herself to the aiding and abetting of the conditions under which the working class of Quebec had to exist. She combined theory and practice. The occasion of Vallières meeting with this woman appears

to have been quite an eye-opening experience for him.

Subsequently Vallières went to France hoping to find more agreeable circumstances in which to exist. There he found confirmation of the experiences he had had with the worker nuns. That is, the only ones who appeared to be doing anything positive for the workers were the members of the priesthood who were worker-priests. [p.197] He writes:

> Les seuls qui faisaient oraiment quelque chose étaient des prêtres-ouvriers, quelques militants de l'Action catholique, une poignée de disciples du Père de Foucould qui se contentaient de «témoigner». Les gens les aimaient bien, mais ne croyaient pas en eux. Les travailleurs ne voulaient pas racheter des péchés imaginaires en offrant à Dieu leur travail d'esclaves mais se battre pour balayer l'esclavage lui-même. [p.197]

To Vallières' understanding what these committed people were doing was often what the organized left in France was not doing. [pp. 197-200] Still critical of the Church as an institution, but with a deepened appreciation for some of the socially dedicated individuals in the Church, Vallières eventually left France to return to Quebec. [pp.209-210].

Thus Vallières believes the Roman Catholic Church to have been inadequate in its treatment of the social problems in Quebec. At the same time there are individuals within the Church for whom Vallières holds great respect because of their sincere efforts in the social sphere.

(2) The latter part of Nègres blancs d'Amérique and all of L'urgence

de choisir reflect Vallières' concern about the present day situation in Quebec. When he speaks about contemporary predicaments brought about by industrialization and urbanization Vallières does not focus his argument on the Church. In these sections he is concerned most with those means by which the Québécois can achieve true independence. Significantly, the question of means does not necessitate his consideration of the contemporary role of the Roman Church.

Vallières understands the Church to have had a central role in the shaping of Quebec's social history, but he sees no role for the Church in the present situation which he understands in very practical political terms. Vallières' silence on the Church in his discussion of the present political situation attests to this.

One can speculate that Vallières believes that the Roman Catholic Church is no longer the important determining force it once was in the social and political life of the province. Perhaps the Church's role has been diminished by the tides of urbanization and industrialization which have provided secular alternatives to the Church.

But there is an alternative to this view. Perhaps Vallières senses that the Roman Catholic Church is of immense importance to any degree of successful self-autonomy which the Québécois may win.

Indeed, Vallières may see the Church's role to be changing rather than lessening. Instead of supporting the status quo, as Vallières understands it to have done throughout the history of Quebec, the Church has now come to support the forces which are presently opposing the status quo, namely, the forces of separatism which aim at self-autonomy for the Québécois.[2] This interpretation is strengthened by the fact that in Nègres blancs d'Amérique Vallières indicates his support for individuals like Father Vary, Father Charles, and the working nun. Is it not possible that he respects a very much larger number of clerics by the time that he comes to write L'urgence de choisir? This would account for his silence in that book on matters pertaining to the Church.

If this view is a correct interpretation of Vallières' position, then one can see that as a natural corollary to that view Vallières may now recognize that the culture which he so strongly advocates preserving is present in Quebec today precisely because of the historical role of the Roman Catholic Church. Vallières may well be a modern, per se, but he is not so unthoughtful as to forget the central role of the Church in the preservation and conservation of French-Canadian values.[3] This would account for the moderation of Vallières' Marxist radicalism, for it places his Marxism clearly within the historical perspective and the cultural heritage which is unique to French Canada.

Regardless of the real reason for Vallières' change in attitude, the Vallières of the early seventies is a man who has largely chosen the more moderate path to political/social reform. The "hard" critique of the Church which Vallières presented in the sixties has been toned down so as to become rather akin to the "soft" critique of those who have held out for the possibility of reform of the Church's social role. He has become less severe in his criticism of the political processes which make the province function, and he has become less severe in his criticism of the position which the Church has played, and still is playing in the lives of the Québécois.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER I

1

"Modernization" as used here refers to a socio-economic reality, but, as well, it refers to the question of values -- the calling into question in a self-conscious and deliberate way of the ability of traditional institutions and values to provide adequate answers to the contemporary situation.

2

Because the modest objective of this study concerns the explication of Vallières' views on the question of the Church it is not within the scope of the study to enter into a detailed analysis of either the history or the sociology of Quebec. The writings of J. C. Falardeau, M. Rioux and F. Dumont provide a sociological point of view.

3

Marcel Rioux, "Notes sur le developpement socio-culturel du Canada français", Contributions à l'étude des sciences de l'homme, IV (1959), 144-159.

J.-C. Falardeau, "Les recherches religieuses au Canada français", Situation de la recherche sur le Canada français, Québec (1962), pp. 209-228.

4

Falardeau, loc. cit., 220.

5

Marcel Rioux, La Question du Québec, Paris: Editions Seglers, 1969, pp. 85-92.

6

Stanley B. Ryerson, French Canada: A Study in Canadian Democracy, Toronto: Progress Publishing Co., 1943, pp. 128-129.

7

For example, while there has undeniably been a limited amount of social dissidence in Quebec, it has never been of the thorough-going sort found in Cromwell's England or Robespierre's France.

8

J. C. Falardeau, "Rôle et importance de l'Eglise au Canada français", Esprit, (août-septembre, 1952), pp. 214-229.

9

In addition to Pierre Vallières' own writings, the works of others provide examples of attacks on the Roman Catholic Church in Quebec: see, La grève de l'amiante, ed. by P. E. Trudeau, Montréal. Ed du Jour, 1970, XVII (first ed. in 1956); Gerald Pelletier, "La société canadienne", Maclean, September, 1961, p. 11, pp. 27-40; P. E. Trudeau, "Some Obstacles to Democracy in Quebec", Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science, Vol. XXIV, no. 3 (August, 1958), pp. 297-311; Pierre Vallières, "Premières Démarches De Notre Liberté", Cité libre, XIII^{e} annee, No. 45, (Mars 1962).

10

Pierre Vallières, "Premières Démarches De Notre Liberté", Cité libre, XIII^{e} annee, No. 45 (Mars 1962), 4.

11

An example of the changes which have taken place in the Roman Catholic Church's position in Quebec can be seen in the involvement it has in certain groups within that society. The traditional functions of the Church in society have now been taken over by members of the laity. Barnes elaborates on this point: Sam H. Barnes, "Quebec Catholicism and Social Change", Review of Politics, (Jan., 1961), pp. 52-76.

In this article, Barnes indicates how much the Roman Catholic Church has traditionally participated in the community through social groups. A number of these groups are referred to as "Catholic Action" groups. They are "extra parish groups" which means that they have a high involvement of laity within their ranks. Barnes lists some of these on page 55 of the article. They are: Jeuness Qu vrière Catholique, Jeunesse Etudiante Cultivateurs Catholiques, Association Professionnelle des Industriels. Also included are various co-operatives, credit unions, and the Canadian and Catholic Confederation of Labour (CCCL).

There appears to be no explicit account of the history of the trade union movement in Quebec. However, a number of sources do touch on the subject. These include: Gad Horowitz, Canadian Labour in Politics, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968; C. Lipton, The Trade Union Movement of Canada 1827-1959, Montréal: Canadian Social Publications, 1966; L. Bergeron, Petit manuel d'histoire du Québec, [Montréal?]: Editions Québécoises, 1971; Jean C. Falardeau, "Rôle et importance de l'Eglise au Canada françois", Esprit, (août-septembre, 1952), pp. 214-229; Sam H. Barnes, "Quebec Catholicism and Social Change", Review of Politics (jan., 1961), pp. 52-76; Lorne Brown, "Breaking Down Myths of Peace and Harmony", Canadian Dimension (May 1973), pp. 11-35.

CHAPTER II

1

There are a number of sources which can be consulted in order that a description of Pierre Vallieres' life can be had. They are: Pierre Vallières, Nègres blancs d'Amérique, Nick Auf der Mour, "Vallières: the road to Mont Laurier", Last Post (Vol. 2, No. 5, May, 1972), 16-20.; Ann Charney, "The Transformation of a White Nigger", Maclean's (May, 1973), 36-58.

2

Pierre Vallières, Nègres blancs d'Amérique, Paris: François Maspero, 1969, p. 161. From now on, all references to Nègres blancs d'Amérique will be given in brackets following the section referred to.

3

The F.L.Q., which stands for Front de Libération du Québec, was a militant separatist organization which leaned somewhat towards an ideology of Marxism, separatism and terrorism. In the sixties, it was responsible for a number of terrorist acts which culminated in the fall of 1970 with the kidnappings of Ms. Laporte and Cross and the killing of the former. It has since been removed from the Quebec scene in such a manner as to be heard from only slightly. During the sixties, however, it was very big in the activities of separatists in Quebec. Pierre Vallières was generally thought of, at that time, as the movement's chief theoretician.

4

This chapter will be divided into two basic parts: a re-stating of Vallières' opinions, a summation of such which will give a clearer understanding of Vallières' opinions; also, much use will be made of the material found in Nègres blancs d'Amérique. This will include a number of passages from the text, some of which are of considerable length since they are crucial to the development of the chapter.

5

Bill 60 is a bill which the Quebec government put through and which dealt with the liberalization of the educational system in Quebec. It was opposed by the Roman Catholic Church, especially when it wanted to take education out of the church's control.

6

Honor Mercier (1840-1894) was prime minister of Quebec for the period 1887-1891. He was a French Canadian nationalist of the nineteenth century and a supporter of the position which the Roman Catholic Church held at that time.

7

Further, Vallières sees a clear link between the petite bourgeoisie and the clergy. He writes:

> Les financiers anglo-américains, la petite bourgeoisie canadienne-française et le clergé -- solidaires dans leurs intérêts malgré leurs «chicanes» continuelles -- s'interrogeaient: «Que va devenir notre peuple si paisible, si industrieux, si profondement religieux (life: résigné), si docile?» Le Moyen Age catholique et l'oppression capitaliste ne voulaient pas mourir. [p.79]

CHAPTER III

1

Pierre Vallières maintains that the Americans respect the Franciscans, indeed the Roman Catholic Church, in Quebec because of their economic situation.

It can be argued that such an interpretation is rather simplified, since it may be more true to say that the respect which the Americans show for this institution is shown because of the overall situation of power and respect this institution has in Quebec society: power and respect based on more than simply economic principles.

2

The soft line can be seen in the thoughts of liberal optimists, including people like P. E. Trudeau, Gerald Pelletier and even to some extent Québécois like M. Rioux, C. Falardeau and F. Dumont. The hard line holds to a total rejection of the Church -- unlike the soft line who feels the church has a place but should reform its ways -- and holds to Marxist beliefs in many cases. Pierre Vallières, Léandre Bergeron are two examples of this group. At least, Vallières of the sixties is, for the changes which result in his different attitudes in the seventies can be said to place him more in the line of "soft" critics. This, however, will be discussed at a later point in the thesis.

CHAPTER IV

1

Over the short span of a few years Vallières has changed his position as concerns the best possible means for the Québécois to obtain self-autonomy. In the sixties, he was a strong supporter of the F.L.Q. and its tactics, while in the seventies he has come to support Le Parti Québécois. He has come to believe that self-autonomy can be won through democratic means: he no longer sees revolution as the only effective means for political change.

2

Robert McKenzie, "A New Kind of Priest Turns to Quebec Nationalism", The Toronto Star, (Dec. 1, 1973), p. B7.

3

The historical role of the Church in the educational system of Quebec attests to this fact.

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