
H-France Review Vol. 12 (February 2012), No. 21

Jacqueline Lalouette, Xavier Boniface, Jean-François Chanet, Imelda Elliott, eds., *Les religions à l'école: Europe et Amérique du Nord XIX^e-XXI^e siècles*. Paris: Letouzet et Ané, 2011. 346 pp. Tables, notes, bibliography, and index. 36,90 € (pb). ISBN 978 2- 7063-1277-0.

Review by Caroline Ford, University of California, Los Angeles.

This edited volume is the result of an ambitious conference entitled “Dieu à l'école: Education et religion en Europe du Nord Ouest et en Amérique du Nord de 1800 à nos jours,” which was held at the Université du Littoral-Côte d'Opale in December 2007. Its purpose was to bring together historians, jurists, education scholars, and sociologists to reconsider the question of the place of religion and the teaching of religion in schools from the early nineteenth century to the present. The conference's sponsors included its host university, Université de Lille 3, the city of Boulogne-sur-Mer, the Conseil général du Pas-de-Calais and the Conseil régional du Nord-Pas-de-Calais. While the volume is intended to be transnational, interdenominational, and interdisciplinary in its scope, it is nonetheless heavily focused on the northeast of Europe (Belgium, France and Great Britain), on Christianity, and more particularly, on Catholicism. Indeed, the volume's cover illustration is a 1850 painting entitled *Ecole des petites filles* by François Bonvin, depicting a Catholic nun in a girls' classroom, and it is the eighth volume in a series entitled *Mémoire chrétienne au présent*.

The volume is comprised of twenty-two short articles, which are divided into three sections. Section one, “From Catholic Predominance to Religious Pluralism,” focuses on the gradual move away from a period in which a dominant religion of Catholicism shaped debates about religion in schools in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to a world of greater religious and cultural diversity in the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries. As the overarching theme of this section might indicate, the contributions are largely historical in their emphasis and they necessarily focus primarily on Ireland, France, and Belgium, where faiths other than Catholicism were minority religions. The contributions are rather eclectic, ranging from a study of ecclesiastical *recteurs* in France between 1809 and 1865 to Catholics and Protestants in school councils in western Scotland from 1872 to 1918.

Section two, “From Religious Teaching to the Teaching of the *fait religieux*,” focuses on religious instruction in historical context (including the teaching of Italian in France, which was closely linked to religious instruction); Catholic instruction and the teaching of a *morale laïque* in Belgian schools; and the place of artistic *patrimoine* in teaching about religion. Section four examines ideological controversies surrounding religion, such as the teaching of creationism in the U.S. and philosophical controversies centering on religion in universities. The last and fourth section on the “Process of *Laïcisation* and Secularization” represents a mix of articles that do not really hold together under this general heading. They treat a disparate set of subjects, including religion and American higher education and types of religious instruction in primary schools in France in the nineteenth century. Nonetheless, Jean-Paul Willaume's concluding essay, “Is there a Europeanization of Teaching relative to Religion?,” does much to bring together some of the themes that the title of this section suggests, as well as those that emerge in the volume as a whole.

Willaume, who is Directeur d'études at the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes, Section des Sciences Religieuses in Paris, argues that the ideas that have guided the ways in which religion has been approached in schools were strongly shaped by the distinctive political and religious history associated with the national contexts in which they were born and implemented. He nonetheless suggests that these histories have come together in certain respects in the late twentieth century. He surveys the particular features of this convergence in a variety of different national contexts—even those that were not discussed in any of the volume's contributions, including Norway, Denmark and Greece. The drive toward secularism and pluralism has in part been encouraged by the Council of Europe and European courts. Willaume also suggests that a consensus has not been reached and that the place of religion in schools continues to be a source of conflict.

At the heart of his argument is the view that much of the attention devoted to the question of religion has been sparked because Europe is increasingly characterized by cultural diversity. In particular, the specter of Islam looms above many of the debates about the place of religion in schools, about the right to difference, the nature of national identity and the putative survival of a European identity. While the editors' introduction recognizes this fact, with the exception of the last essay, there is little attempt to address these issues head-on in a comparative light. Indeed, astonishingly, with the volume's heavy emphasis on Christianity, and particularly Catholicism, there is little discussion of Islam in Europe or North America, the so-called Scarf Affair in France, or the 2004 French law regarding the wearing of religious symbols in schools. This is a puzzling lacuna. Moreover, some the contributions, while illuminating in many respects, are narrow in their focus, lack a cohesiveness and do not often engage in some of the broad transnational questions that the editors wish to raise.

However, in addition to Jean-Paul Willaume, three of the other contributors do take up larger issues posed by religious and cultural diversity and by the religion of Islam: Mireille Estivales, a professor of Education and Theology at the University of Montreal; Marouissa Raveaud, a maitre de conférences at the Université du Maine and research associate at the University of Bristol; and Brigitte Caulier, professor of history at Université de Laval in Quebec. Estivales explores how debates about teaching religion in schools have been shaped by the challenge of cultural pluralism in both France and Quebec. While France's tradition of *laïcité* is deeply entrenched and its educational system has been secularized since the early Third Republic, Estivales shows how late Quebec was in coming to a secularism in schools, even as it shared a common cultural heritage with France. She traces the debate over secularism, *laïcité* and religion in schools as that debate came into being in the late 1990s, when Quebec's Minister of Education, Pauline Marois, set up a working group to study the problem of religion in schools. A 1999 report, *Laïcité et religions: Perspective nouvelle pour l'école québécoise*, recommended complete secularization and the abolition of any confessional religious instruction, which launched a lively public debate that resulted in "de-confessionalization" in public schools.

As Brigitte Caulier examines later in the volume, this was followed by the creation of a commission charged with studying how to accommodate cultural difference in December 2007, headed by Gérard Bouchard, a sociologist and historian, and Charles Taylor, the philosopher, following a variety of complaints regarding interdictions against wearing Sikh turbans in schools and the absence of prayer sites for Muslims in a university institute. Added to these complaints from specific religious groups were expressions of uneasiness regarding these new communities and immigration more generally. Quebec's initiatives can be compared to France's 2003 Stasi commission, which examined the question of wearing religious signs in the public space of the school (in the context of France's long tradition of *laïcité*), although the outcomes of the two commissions were quite different. Caulier shows how this debate led to the "de-

confessionalization” of a public school system that had been in place since the nineteenth century, and she stresses the challenges that this posed in terms of integrating Jews, Muslims, and Sikhs.

It is Marouissa Raveaud who puts forward two models for the political and social organization of the public and private spheres in terms of religion by comparing France and Britain in a brief, but perceptive piece on the response of parents to religious diversity in Paris and London schools. She finds the abstract *modèle républicain*, as represented by France, and the *modèle multiculturel*, as represented by Britain, to be very much in evidence among those she interviewed, but she indicates that the landscape in Great Britain has changed with regard to valorizing communitarian difference in the public space of the school following the London bomb attacks of 2005. Her article raises a number of questions associated with Willaume’s final question, whether there is a growing convergence in Europe when it comes to the place of religion in schools and in private and public life. (Given the ostensible scope of the volume and the many comparisons made between France and Quebec, one wonders, however, if both questions might be reframed slightly to include North America, or at least Quebec.) As many contributions to this volume suggest, the jury is still out. While the volume itself could have been more cohesive in its presentation and more inclusive in terms of the religious cultures that it considered, it will nonetheless interest historians of France and contemporary Europe, as well as sociologists and historians of education, as it highlights differing conceptions of secularism or *laïcité* and the conflicts engendered by religion in Europe and North America since the beginning of the nineteenth century.

LIST OF ESSAYS

Jacqueline Lalouette, Xavier Boniface, Jean-François Chanet, and Imelda Elliott, "Avant-propos"

Part 1: De la prééminence catholique au pluralisme religieux

Jean-François Condette, "'Mi-dieu, mi-grand-maître', les recteurs ecclésiastiques en France (1809-1865)"

Imelda Elliott, "L'évolution du rôle de l'Église catholique dans l'enseignement en Irlande"

Mélanie Lanouette, "Chrétiens et conquérants. La formation religieuse de la jeunesse catholique en Belgique francophone durant l'entre-deux-guerres"

Géraldine Vaughan, "Les 'Volontaires' de Dieu? Catholiques et protestants au sein des conseils d'écoles dans l'Ouest écossais (1872-1918)"

Patricia Fournier-Noël, "Immigration et remise en question de la place de Dieu à l'école: études de cas d'écoles primaires en Irlande"

Mireille Estivalezes, "L'enseignement sur les religions à l'école à l'épreuve du pluralisme culturel en France et au Québec"

Maroussia Raveaud, "Parents d'élèves et diversité religieuse à l'école (Paris et Londres)"

Part 2: De l'enseignement de la religion à celui du fait religieux

Gabrielle Cadier-Rey, "L'école du jeudi et la Société pour l'encouragement de l'instruction primaire (France, XIXe siècle)"

Jérémie Dubois, "Religion et enseignement de l'italien en France de la fin du XIXe siècle au début des années 1930"

Jean-Paul Martin, "Religion catholique et morale laïque dans l'enseignement secondaire belge : entre cloisonnement et convergence (1920-2000)"

Brigitte Caulier, "Langues et religions à l'école publique québécoise"

Laurent Gutierrez, "'L'éducation catholique confrontée à la pédagogie nouvelle!' Lorsque le message pontifical brouille les pistes: l'exemple de l'encyclique *Divini illius Magistri* (31 décembre 1929)"

Isabelle Saint-Martin, "Le patrimoine artistique dans l'enseignement des faits religieux"

Part 3: L'idéologie en cause

Guillaume Cuchet, "Catholicisme et philosophie universitaire : l'affaire Vacherot (1851)"

Luc Courtois, Françoise Hiraux and Paul Servais, "Le Groupe de synthèse de Louvain"

Mokhtar Ben Barka, "La controverse relative à l'enseignement du créationisme aux États-Unis"

Preston Shires, "The necessity of faith and disbelief in the history classroom"

Part 4: Processus de laïcisation et de sécularisation

Jacqueline Lalouette, "Religion et religions à l'école primaire en France (1808-1882)"

Annie Bruter and Philippe Marchand, "Grandeur et décadence d'une matière d'enseignement : l'Histoire sainte"

Carole Masseys-Bertoneche, "Religion et enseignement supérieur américain: une laïcisation inachevée"

Arnaud Decroix, "Le système éducatif canadien face aux revendications de nature religieuse: quelques considérations de nature juridique"

Jean-Paul Willaime, "Y a-t-il une européenisation de l'enseignement relatif à la religion?"

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ISSN 1553-9172