

horns of this dilemma, the Catholic spokesmen continued to point to the good sense of their bishops and Quebec's history of religious tolerance.

What are we to make of these bygone debates on monarchy and religion? Are they mere museum pieces to flatter the wisdom of our more enlightened times, reminding us of what marvelous progress we have made in our democratic and secular ways? I do not think so. I believe participants in today's constitutional debates can learn from these old debates as well as about them.

Federalists might ask themselves if the diminished role of the monarchy, once a source of such intense pride for Canadians, has contributed to the chronic Canadian puzzlement over their national identity. Does it help to explain why a serious but whimsical author hit upon "The Unbearable Lightness of Being Canadian" as a perceptive subtitle for his thoughtful book?<sup>23</sup> Can this "unbearable lightness" be traced to a failure to find a suitably democratic commitment to fill the void created by the virtually total irrelevance of the monarchy today? More importantly, does it offer separatists an easy target for appeals to Quebecers looking for a deeper sense of national identity?

Have Quebec separatists made a bad bargain in exchanging yesterday's religion for today's culture as the travelling companion of language and law along the road to separation? Religion, in the sociological sense of the term, is always part of culture, but a culture that loses its religion may lose its soul as well. It is, of course, too late in the day for Quebec separatists or anyone else in the western world to rekindle the religious passions of the last century. Yesterday's vibrant, militant religious fervor has split off in many directions. Today it can be found at the heights of fashionable ecumenical dialogue, in the depths of cranky fundamentalism or in free fall toward the religious indifference of the poet's "decent, godless people." Quebec separatists might be well advised to find a place in their ranks for that most attractive aspect of contemporary Christianity, namely its tendency to soften the hard edges of ethnic politics.<sup>24</sup>