

For a century and a half the presence in Canada of a strong French element has directly influenced the political policy and development of the country. Since the decisive battle on the Plains of Abraham, England has squarely and with unwonted sagacity and firmness faced the problem of dealing with an alien and conquered race. Although, as Parkman has said, "a happier calamity never befell a people than the conquest of Canada by British arms," yet Great Britain totally failed either to annihilate or to assimilate the French settlers left in the country in 1763.

Guarantees in regard to religious privileges figured prominently in the treaties which handed over the French colony to Britain. The capitulations of Quebec and Montreal began by protecting the vanquished from all danger of that religious persecution of which they stood most in dread. The treaty of Paris in 1763 confirmed these preliminaries and formally recognized the right of French Roman Catholics to continue their religious practices within the limits of English law. Finally, the Quebec Act, passed in 1774 by the British parliament, established permanently the civil, political, and religious rights of the French in Canada. These privileges include the official recognition of the French language, the French civil law, and the established Roman Catholic Church. The status of the French Church in Canada may be regarded, therefore, as resting on a species of *Concordat*, and the Quebec Act is virtually a treaty as well as a law. England's strict observance of the provisions of the Act has rendered British rule entirely to the taste of the Roman Catholic Church; and a tacit understanding may be said to exist between the two powers, civil and ecclesiastical. The Church, on the one hand, keeps the French-Canadians, practically all of whom are of the Catholic faith, loyal and contented. The British authorities, in return, have left the Church so free to exercise her authority in the Roman Catholic province of the Dominion, that it remains as it were a special preserve for the Church.

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