

## “Tel Père, Tel Fils!": The Franciscans on Racial Degeneration, Heredity, and Eugenics (1906–1954)

Vincent Auffrey

Les institutions scientifiques au Québec, 19<sup>e</sup>-20<sup>e</sup> siècle  
Scientific Institutions in Québec in the 19th-20th centuries  
Volume 46 , numéro 1 | Volume 46, Number 1

Published/Publié: 23 juillet / July 2025

DOI: 10.29173/scientia19

**Abstract:** *This paper sheds light on the institutionalisation of northern research in post-war French-speaking Quebec, focusing on the intellectual, disciplinary and political negotiations around the creation of Université Laval's Centre d'études nordiques (CEN) in 1961. The debates underlying CEN's institutional vision, as imagined by geographer Louis-Edmond Hamelin (1923–2020), reveal the tensions among politicians and academics whose interests diverged in terms of ends, but converged in terms of means. The research centre, seen as vehicle ensuring a French-Canadian presence in the Quebec's north, offers insight into the political and scientific premises of Quebec's Quiet Revolution.*

**Keywords:** Québec ; Eugenics ; Order of Friars Minor ; Temperance Movement ; Catholic Family Movement

**Résumé :** *Durant la première moitié du vingtième siècle, l'Ordre des Frères mineurs était à la tête de deux mouvements sociaux importants au Québec : le mouvement de tempérance et le mouvement familial. À partir des revues *La Tempérance* (1906–1937) et *La Famille* (1937–1954), les franciscains ont cherché à prévenir leurs lecteurs canadiens-français des effets de l'alcoolisme sur les générations à venir, citant notamment le rôle joué par l'alcool dans la prétendue dégénérescence de la race. Cet article scrute les écrits des franciscains sur l'hérédité, la dégénérescence et l'eugénisme – dont *Les tendances eugénistes au Canada* (1942) d'Hervé Blais – et démontre l'adhésion croissante des élites religieuses et scientifiques canadiennes-françaises à certaines formes d'eugénisme.*

**Mots clés :** Québec ; Eugénisme ; Ordre des frères mineurs ; Mouvement de tempérance ; Mouvement familial catholique

ISSN 1918-7750



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## “Tel Père, Tel Fils!": The Franciscans on Racial Degeneration, Heredity, and Eugenics (1906–1954)

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**Abstract:** *Between 1906 and 1954, the Franciscan order was at the helm of two important social movements in Québec: the temperance and Catholic family movements. In their journals *La Tempérance* (1906–1937) and *La Famille* (1937–1954), Franciscan writers invoked the hereditary consequences of alcoholism for future generations and the looming threat of racial degeneration. This paper examines how local religious and scientific elites contributed to the growing acceptance and dissemination of eugenics in early-twentieth century Québec. It focuses on the Franciscans’ writing about heredity, degeneration, and eugenics, and especially on Hervé Blais’s 1942 publication *Les tendances eugénistes au Canada*.*

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In 1905, the Montréal chapter of the Order of Friars Minor (OFM) or Franciscan order was called upon by Archbishop Paul Bruchési to lead a moral crusade against alcoholism in the province of Québec. For the next three decades, they ran a popular journal titled *La Tempérance* (1906–1937), whose mission was to educate French-Canadian families on the moral virtues of temperance and the dangers of alcoholism. The Franciscans associated alcoholism with racial decline, degeneration, and depopulation, often warning their readers about the hereditary effects of alcohol on future generations. During the Great Depression, *La Tempérance* was superseded by *La Famille* (1937–1954), another Franciscan-run journal concerned primarily with the promotion of traditional family values. In this specific context, the Franciscan scholar Hervé Blais (1908–1992) published a comprehensive study of eugenics titled *Les tendances eugénistes au Canada* (1942). Despite the widespread hostility of Catholics towards eugenics, Blais insisted that eugenics could be reconciled with the moralizing mission of the Catholic Church, noting that the most crucial element of any eugenics program was education or, as he put it, “la moralisation des âmes.”<sup>1</sup>

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Blais’s predilection for eugenic education was largely inspired by Sir Francis Galton’s (1822–1911) original work on eugenics. Galton, known as the “founding father” of eugenics, first coined the term in 1883 from the Greek *eugenes*, meaning “good in birth.” His foundational essays on the topic, written and published in the first decade of the twentieth century, defined eugenics as “the study of agencies under social control that may improve or impair the racial qualities of future generations either physically or mentally.”<sup>2</sup> Galton believed that racial improvement could be achieved by means of what he termed “positive” eugenics (i.e., encouraging the finest specimens of the race to procreate) and “negative” eugenics (i.e., preventing or discouraging reproduction among the “unfit”). Galton’s essays emphasized the role of education in promoting his eugenic gospel, first to local elites, and then to the masses. He envisioned that eugenics would one day be “introduced into the national conscience, like a new religion.”<sup>3</sup> In Galton’s view, eugenic values were meant to replace traditional Christian concepts of morality, charity, and marriage. How then could Catholic scholars such as Blais aim to reconcile eugenics with Catholicism? What aspects of eugenics did the Franciscans promote in their teachings and which ones did they reject? More importantly, what role did the Franciscans, their publications, and the institutions they created play in the reception of eugenics in Québec?

This paper examines how religious elites in French-speaking Québec came to embrace aspects of eugenic education and played a crucial role in its dissemination. Canadian historians have long assumed that French Canadians rejected eugenics due to their religious convictions as Catholics — especially after the 1930 publication of *Casti connubii*, a papal encyclical that condemned eugenic sterilization and birth control — and the comparatively late development of scientific institutions in the province.<sup>4</sup> However, rather than form scientific institutions devoted to the study and cause of eugenics (as in other national settings),<sup>5</sup> I argue that Catholic reformers in Québec appropriated and utilized eugenic ideas in the pursuit of their own distinct goals and agendas. By focusing on popular Catholic publications rather than scientific journals, this paper sheds light on popular conceptions of heredity in Québec. While concerns for the health and quality of future generations of French Canadians might not always have been framed in the language of eugenics, concerns about racial decline, degeneration, and depopulation were ubiquitous and made quite explicit in the Franciscans’ moral teachings.<sup>6</sup>

This paper is divided into three separate sections. The first two focus on *La Tempérance* and *La Famille*, respectively, and their discourse on heredity and degeneration. Together, these sections highlight how concerns for the quality of future generations became commonplace in the moral teachings of the Franciscans. While medical discourse on the degenerative effects of alcoholism on future generations was commonplace in both *La Tempérance* and *La Famille*, by the late 1930s, the Franciscans began relying more and more on genetics as part of their discourse on heredity. The Franciscan-led Catholic family movement — of which *La Famille* and its offices were a crucial part — openly criticized “Anglo-Saxon” eugenics and birth control. Yet, it was also explicitly preoccupied with ensuring the quantity and quality of future generations of French Canadians and mobilized scientific knowledge on human heredity and development in the pursuit of that aim. The third section of this paper examines Hervé Blais’s writings

on eugenics, including *Tendances* as well as a wider collection of papers he published in *La Famille*. It explores Blais's rehabilitation of eugenics as a scientific ideology that could serve the interests of the traditional French-Canadian family rather than precipitate its demise.

### **The Franciscan Crusade Against Alcohol**

On 20 December 1905, the Archbishop of Montréal, Paul Bruchési (1855–1939), initiated a “crusade against intemperance.”<sup>7</sup> The call to action, published in the form of a pastoral letter, exhorted French-Canadians to organize in temperance societies and to resist the sin of alcohol. This was not the first time the Catholic Church had led a moral crusade in the province of Québec; neither was this solely a French-Canadian phenomenon. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, temperance was a crucial component of moral and social reform movements throughout North America. It mobilized spiritual leaders, politicians, medical experts, and women's organizations (such as the Women's Christian Temperance Union, which was especially active in English Canada) intent on moral purity and bringing about the “Kingdom of God on Earth.”<sup>8</sup> While there were major doctrinal differences between Protestant and Catholic social teachings, such as the Catholic emphasis on spiritual rather than earthly salvation, the virtues of moral purity and temperance appealed to Protestant and Catholic reformers alike. In Québec, efforts to combat alcohol unfolded in the 1840s with the support of Archbishop Ignace Bourget; however, they had been whittled down by the turn of the twentieth century.<sup>9</sup> Bruchési's renewed call to action in 1905 called upon the Franciscans specifically — largely due to their experience as preachers and educators — to become the “apostles of this great work in our diocese.”<sup>10</sup> The order happily obliged.

The Order of Friars Minor was one of many Catholic orders who, having fled republican France, found a permanent home in Québec in the late nineteenth century. The Franciscans established their first chapter in Montréal in 1890 under the archbishopric of Édouard-Charles Fabre (1827–1896). They soon spread to the rest of the province, where they exerted a strong influence over education.<sup>11</sup> The Franciscan order stood out from other Catholic orders in part due to their conciliatory approach to science and religion. The Franciscans prided themselves in a rich intellectual tradition that dated to medieval Europe, and which included the likes of Francis of Assisi, Anthony of Padua, Roger Bacon, Duns Scotus, and William of Ockham. The teachings of their founder, Saint Francis of Assisi, preached the love of God's creation and the pursuit of knowledge about the natural world as a means of spiritual enlightenment. This played a part in the Franciscans' attitude towards heredity and human development.<sup>12</sup> As a mendicant order, the Franciscans were also bound by vows of poverty, the observance of a strict asceticism, and a dedication to preaching among the poor. The Franciscan way of life made them prime candidates as the leaders of Québec's temperance movement.

During the early twentieth century, the Franciscans — self-proclaimed Missionaries of Temperance — played a crucial role in the organization of Québec's temperance movement. In February 1906, a first mission organized by Franciscan Father Jean-Marie Bourcier in Saint-Isidore de Laprairie succeeded in recruiting 800 new members

to its Temperance Society. Within their first year of activity, the Franciscans had expanded their missionary work to 56 parishes and recruited 52,600 Temperance Society members. By 1908, they looked over 160 triduums and parish retreats in the diocese aimed primarily at spreading their anti-alcohol gospel. Some 80,000 people had taken the pledge in Montréal alone.<sup>13</sup> Through their missionary work and the monthly publication of a popular journal titled *La Tempérance*, the Franciscans quickly established their moral authority over the issue of alcoholism.

### **La Tempérance (1906–1937) and the Fear of Racial Degeneration**

The Franciscans had a lasting influence on Québec’s temperance movement through *La Tempérance*, a monthly journal preaching the values of temperance to French-Canadian parents. The journal was a charitable venture. Subscriptions cost 25 cents a year which, according to historian Nive Voisine, meant the journal survived through its large publication volume. It was meant to be easily accessible and affordable to its subscribers.<sup>14</sup> With the help of local priests, missionaries, and women of the temperance movement, *La Tempérance* became rather popular as a journal in early twentieth-century Québec. Within a year of its first publication in May 1906, the journal boasted 18,000 subscribers. Over the next decade, that number would increase to 30,000 and peak to 39,000 in 1918.<sup>15</sup>

By the 1920s, the failure of prohibition in Québec coupled with the implementation of regulations on alcohol caused the temperance movement to dwindle. Uncertainties about the future of *La Tempérance* led to several administrative changes and a new focus on combatting the perceived moral decay brought about by urban life. In June 1924, a new editor, Father Placide-Joseph, rebranded the journal *La Tempérance: Bulletin de Vie Saine* and drastically redefined its mission: the journal would no longer be concerned only with alcohol and alcoholism, but strive instead for moral improvement in all its forms. It promoted a vision of hygiene (both physical and moral) which embraced the values of moral purity, temperance, and abstinence. *La Tempérance*’s program for moral reform included the promotion of proper Christian marriage, the reaffirmation of parental authority over education, and the moral regulation of cinema and the press.<sup>16</sup> In the span of a few years, Father Placide-Joseph’s efforts to renew and adapt *La Tempérance* to the issues of the day managed to bring subscription numbers from 11,000 back to 25,000.<sup>17</sup>

While popular education against the dangers of alcoholism had always featured quite prominently in *La Tempérance*, the incorporation of moral hygiene in its discourse on moral improvement during the late 1920s was representative of the journal’s shift away from political reform and towards personal health education. The science of hygiene was, first and foremost, the science of disease prevention. By analogy, moral hygiene was to the soul what physical hygiene was to the body: it promoted purity in both thought and action. For the writers of *La Tempérance*, moral hygiene meant “the triumph of the will and reason over unhealthy emotional states and dishonest thoughts,”<sup>18</sup> the victory of “spirit over flesh.”<sup>19</sup> Embracing the values of Christian asceticism, the Franciscans encouraged their readers to exert self-control and discipline against sin, temptation, impure thoughts, sex, and drink. The journal’s motto became “moderation in things permitted and abstinence in all those forbidden.”<sup>20</sup> *La Tempérance*’s moral crusade was no

longer simply about alcohol. It preached adherence to a strict Catholic code of conduct and the ideals of family life.

I argue in this section that Franciscan writers used popular and scientific discourses on heredity and degeneration as a means of convincing French Canadians to adopt the moral virtues of temperance. Indeed, the moral crusade against alcoholism that began in 1905 was couched in alarmist discourse about racial degeneration and depopulation. This discourse appealed to Catholic reformers due to its moral implications and its relationship to what was considered sinful behaviour. Yet, equating hereditary disease with sin was not unique to French Catholics. As historian Riiko Bedford explains, popular discourses on the heredity of alcoholism were a crucial component of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union struggle against intemperance in Ontario. Such discourses, which emphasized the heredity of character and pathological predispositions, predated the rediscovery of Mendel's laws of heredity in 1900. According to Bedford, they set the stage for the emergence and widespread acceptance of eugenics in Ontario at the beginning of the twentieth century.<sup>21</sup>

To be clear, the term "race" was used in a much looser sense than it is today. Most often, it was synonymous with "nation" and referred to both cultural (i.e., shared language, religion, and historical origin) and biological attributes (i.e., shared physical characteristics and lineage). While there are instances where "French-Canadian race" was used to denote cultural difference, the concerns over racial degeneration voiced by Franciscan authors in *La Tempérance* were explicitly about the biological make-up of future generations. This is not to say that the Franciscans were only concerned with biological deterioration, however. Alcohol was also perceived as a source of cultural and moral decadence. It was described as a threat to the family, especially to women and children, and as a leading cause of poverty and criminality. The discourse on biological degeneration was just one aspect of the French-Canadian discourse on temperance. The fact that it was picked up by Québec's Catholic hierarchy points to the ubiquity of such concepts in French-speaking Canada.

While *La Tempérance* never officially broached the topic of eugenics, the Franciscans' close collaboration with French-Canadian public health experts led them to hold certain views on heredity. As in neighbouring Ontario — the province usually associated with the emergence of eugenics in English-speaking Canada — discourses based on the notion that "like begets like" were endorsed by the French-Canadian temperance movement. By following the Franciscans' evolving discourse on the hereditary nature of alcoholism, this section aims to shed light on the progressive acceptance of eugenics' discourse within Québec's Catholic clergy. Between 1906 and 1937, the Franciscans' moral teachings on alcohol were shaped by the active input of medical experts as well as by discoveries in the fields of cellular pathology and embryology. Yet, the moralizing ethos associated with degeneration never truly went away. The Franciscans might have revised their understanding of the mechanism of heredity as time went on, but their message remained the same: alcohol ought to be avoided for the sake of future generations.

Heredity, in its most basic and traditional sense, meant that "like begets like." Franciscan authors quoted folk wisdom, often in the form of biblical proverbs, to warn

their readers about the heredity of alcoholism. “Like father, like son” (in French: *tel père, tel fils*) and “like mother, like daughter” (*telle mère, telle fille*) were cited as hereditary principles to dissuade individuals from using alcohol. Likewise, biblical metaphors such as “the tree is known by its fruit”<sup>22</sup> were repurposed and imbued with hereditary significance: intemperate fathers produced degenerate children; they would be judged by the quality of their fruit. The Franciscan Brother Léon used this metaphorical language profusely in his writing. He explained — using another biblical reference — that “no one can give what he does not have.”<sup>23</sup> For him, this leading principle applied to both health and morality. Unhealthy parents could not pass on to their children what they were themselves lacking. Neither would they have the fortitude to provide their children with a proper moral education. Through either biological heredity or a faulty upbringing, such children were doomed to become “poor wretches, epileptics, idiots, thieves or bandits!”<sup>24</sup>

Despite the apparent simplicity of “like begets like,” the Franciscans’ discourse on the heredity nature of alcoholism was couched in degeneration discourse. The French-Canadian psychiatric tradition followed closely in the steps of French psychiatrist Bénédict-Augustin Morel and his theory of *dégénérescence*, which posited that mental illness originated from an inherited state of organic decay. Morel maintained that affected family lines progressively degenerated until they reached the fourth generation, at which time — stricken with idiocy and other hereditary defects — descendants inevitably perished before adulthood and failed to propagate their kind. Degeneration theory was brought to Québec around 1885 by a group of French-Canadian psychiatrists who had studied in Paris under Valentin Magnan — himself a disciple of Morel — and remained ubiquitous in French-speaking Canada well into the twentieth century. While Peter Keating and Guy Grenier argue that degeneration theory fell out of favour in Québec after the First World War, there is plenty of evidence to the contrary.<sup>25</sup> Despite growing challenges from genetics and psychiatry, the French school on degeneration remained influential in French-Canadian medical circles, especially in the context of alcoholism. As a case in point, French-Canadian physicians cited the authority of French temperance leader Paul-Maurice Legrain on alcoholism well into the 1930s and 1940s.<sup>26</sup> The Franciscans’ preaching against alcoholism and its degenerative effects on future generations drew extensively from French-Canadian medical practitioners who, in turn, deferred to the authority of European experts.<sup>27</sup>

### “La Vérité sur l’Alcool”: Father Placide-Joseph on the Heredity of Alcoholism

The Franciscans’ views on alcoholism and heredity were clearly and thoroughly laid out in a series of papers titled “La vérité sur l’alcool.” In 1926, *La Tempérance’s* editor Father Placide-Joseph began publishing a semi-regular section meant to expose the ugly truth about alcohol and alcoholism. “La vérité sur l’alcool” was inspired by a set of 20 canvases commissioned by the Clerics of Saint-Viator in Montréal in 1917. The “Tableaux d’Enseignement antialcoolique,” as they were called, were prepared by Brother Beausoleil, c.s.v., with the help of French-Canadian physician Joseph Gauvreau. At the time, they were celebrated by French-Canadian physicians and psychiatrists alike as representative of the medical community’s consensus on alcoholism and were widely used in Québec schools as a visual aid in public health education.<sup>28</sup>

**ENSEIGNEMENT ANTIALCOOLIQUE**  
 Les Clercs de St-Viateur  
 2061, St-Dominique  
 Montréal

L'ALCOOL ET L'HÉRÉDITÉ

**TABLEAU**  
**13**

L'alcoolique est puni de son vice dans la personne de ses enfants.  
Académie de Médecine de Paris.

1. L'alcool, à petites ou à grosses doses, ne ruine pas seulement la santé du buveur: il atteint sa descendance. A père alcoolique, fils dégénéré.



Enfants de tempérants.

2. Les enfants d'alcooliques sont débiles, chétifs, et souvent victimes de la tuberculose. Ils sont fréquemment atteints de faiblesse d'esprit, quand ils ne sont pas complètement idiots.



Enfants d'alcooliques.

3. DÉGÉNÉRESCENCE

a) Le Dr Legrain, ayant suivi trois générations de buveurs dans 215 familles, trouva parmi leurs 814 descendants:

Criminels - - - - - 14 sur 100	Enfants convulsivants - - 22 sur 100
Epileptiques - - - - - 17 " 100	Alcooliques - - - - - 50 " 100
Aliénés - - - - - 19 " 100	Dégénérés - - - - - 60 " 100

b) Le Dr Aubert, sur 476 descendants d'alcooliques, n'a trouvé que 79 enfants sains de corps et d'esprit.

c) Recherches du Dr Demme, de Berne.

10 FAMILLES TEMPÉRANTES, 61 ENFANTS:	10 FAMILLES INTÉPÉRANTES, 57 ENFANTS:
Sains - - - - - 50	Sains - - - - - 10
Difformes - - - - - 2	Difformes - - - - - 10
Faibles d'esprit - - - - - 2	Idiots - - - - - 7
Nerveux, (danse de St-Guy) - - - 2	Epileptiques - - - - - 5
Morts jeunes - - - - - 5	Morts jeunes - - - - - 25

4. L'alcoolisme est la grande cause de la mortalité infantile.

Le Dr Sullivan, de Liverpool, a fait les observations suivantes:

ENFANTS DE 28 MÈRES SOBRES:	ENFANTS DE 21 MÈRES INTÉPÉRANTES:
Nombre d'enfants: 138	Nombre d'enfants: 125
Morts jeunes: 38	Morts jeunes: 69
soit 27 sur 100	soit 55 sur 100

50 pour 100 des enfants d'alcooliques meurent avant l'âge de 3 ans.



Du berceau au tombeau.

D<sup>r</sup> LEGRAIN.

**Figure 1:** "Alcohol and Heredity." Source: Père Placide-Joseph, "La vérité sur l'alcool. XIII: L'alcool et l'hérédité (13e Tableau)," *La Tempérance* 26, no. 8 (January 1932): 265. (BANQ/reproduced with the permission of the Franciscans of Canada)

The “tableaux antialcooliques” consisted of short lessons on the dangers of alcoholism, laid out in clear, commandment-like statements. They contained facts, figures, and statistics describing the effects of alcohol on the human body and society. Individual tableaux dealt with a variety of topics including the nature of alcohol (I), its effects on the human brain (VII), heart disease (VIII), and tuberculosis (IX and X). The thirteenth tableau (Figure 1) focused on the hereditary effects of alcoholism; tableaux XIV and XV, on the impact of alcohol on family and the race. They linked alcoholism with criminality (XVI) and poverty (XVII) and urged French Canadians to choose a life of sobriety, join temperance societies, and pressure local government bodies in controlling the flow of liquor (XVIII). While the “tableaux antialcooliques” themselves were relatively succinct, Father Placide-Joseph’s commentaries often spanned multiple articles published over the course of many months. “La vérité sur l’alcool,” which ran until April 1937, became an integral part of *La Tempérance* and its philosophy.

For Franciscan writers, racial degeneration was analogous to biblical narratives of the fall from grace. If alcoholism was described as a “new original sin,”<sup>29</sup> it was implied that French Canadians were meant to repent for the sins of their fathers. This is because French-Canadians, according to the narrative presented by the Franciscans, had degenerated from a place of bliss, physical strength, and moral purity. In his analysis of Tableau XV (“La mort des races”), Father Placide-Joseph presented a narrative of the ethnic origins of French Canadians. According to this foundational myth, the French-Canadian “race”<sup>30</sup> descended from a group of original families which had immigrated from France prior to the wars of Conquest. These families were described as physically healthy, morally upright, and of “pure blood and noble hearts.”<sup>31</sup> Over time, European merchants introduced alcohol to the colony, which led to the demise of its Indigenous population and initiated the degeneration of French-Canadian lineages. The Catholic Church, of course, resisted the importation of alcohol in the colony. Father Placide-Joseph’s narrative cites a 1660 decree by François de Laval condemning the traffic of liquor. However, Catholic efforts were insufficient to save First Nations from the depredations of merchants. According to Father Placide-Joseph, the extinction or near extinction of Indigenous “races” in Africa and the Americas served as a cautionary tale. To reverse the effects of the poison on their own race, French Canadians now needed to avoid liquor and commit to a life of temperance. The moral of the story was thus: “To sober husbands, a strong race! To drinking husbands, a dead race!”<sup>32</sup>

The contents of the “tableaux antialcooliques” along with Father Placide-Joseph’s writing illuminate the complex relationship between alcoholism and heredity in the Franciscans’ degeneration discourse. Tableau XIII, titled “L’alcool et l’hérédité” was subject to three separate articles published between January and May 1932. While the topics of heredity and degeneration had routinely featured in *La Tempérance*, this was the first time that the Franciscans were explicit about the inner workings of heredity. The articles in question upheld the popular notion that “like begets like,” claiming that “Tel père! Tel fils!”<sup>33</sup> was the general rule of heredity. Sometimes, the hereditary effects of alcohol skipped a generation through atavism. The father might be spared from the sins of his ancestors, but the latent effects of degeneration could always resurface in his own children. To fully understand the scope of hereditary degeneration, Father

Placide-Joseph pointed out, it was often necessary to go back two or three generations.<sup>34</sup> However, “La vérité sur l’alcool” was also concerned with disproving popular myths and misconceptions about alcohol. Father-Placide Joseph clarified that the propensity for alcohol was not subject to morbid heredity: “Don’t go around believing that the inclination to drink alcohol can be spread, like an organic disease, through living microbes or germs.”<sup>35</sup> Children, he explained, “are not born into this world with the microbe for drunkenness or alcoholism.”<sup>36</sup> Alcoholic parents did not necessarily produce alcoholic offspring. Rather, children learned the bad behaviour from their parents. What was hereditary about alcoholism according to Placide-Joseph was not alcoholism itself, but its causal influence on mental degeneration, neuroticism, and feeble-mindedness.

Father Placide-Joseph explained the mechanism through which alcohol caused the degeneration of entire bloodlines. His interpretation relied not on some vague notion of organic degeneration or even genetics, but on cellular pathology and embryology. He considered that “blastotoxie” (“the deterioration of germinal cells ... at the time of procreation”<sup>37</sup>) and altered foetal development due to exposure to alcohol were important factors in the intergenerational transmission of degenerative traits. Father Placide-Joseph recognized that writing on the teratogenic effects of alcohol and “degenerate” embryos was the most delicate subject taken up by *La Tempérance* in the seven years he had served as its editor. It was, however, the best explanation for the hereditary effects of alcohol on children. Alcohol was a poison that “constantly circulates in the parents’ blood and stays there permanently, like some kind of original sin.”<sup>38</sup> From hence, it latched onto life, weakening the embryo and foetus and inhibiting them in their normal development. Father Placide-Joseph cited a vast collection of papers in experimental embryology which demonstrated the lethal and teratological effects of alcohol on chicken embryos, frogs, rabbits, and sea urchins.<sup>39</sup> Degeneration was not governed solely by the laws of heredity and atavism, but by development. The aphorism “Like father! Like son!” gave way to another: “Defective procreators! Degenerate embryos!”<sup>40</sup>

The acknowledgement that degeneration was linked to development rather than heredity alone implied that temperance could be an effective means of racial regeneration. Father Placide-Joseph was rather optimistic in that regard. There existed “convincing evidence that the germ cells of habitual and occasional drinkers can regenerate.”<sup>41</sup> Through moral fortitude and the strength of their metabolism, former alcoholics could hope to produce normal children. Hence, the future of the French-Canadian race rested on its parents and their commitment to a life of sobriety. Father Placide-Joseph exhorted his readers to take into account the long-term effects of alcoholism on future generations: “Christian and Canadian procreators,” he declared, “measure, if you can, the distant and disastrous repercussions of your excess on your descendants and your race, and you will not hesitate to correct yourselves.”<sup>42</sup> The moral responsibility for degeneration weighed heavily on alcoholic parents. It became morally imperative, for the sake of future generations, that the intergenerational cycle of degeneration be broken.

It might be tempting to explain Father Placide-Joseph’s enthusiasm for racial regeneration as an aberration from Catholic orthodoxy; however, we cannot dismiss the influence exerted by the Franciscans through their publications and tireless missionary work. Perhaps more importantly, their views on heredity, alcoholism, and degeneration

were backed by the authority of Québec’s Catholic hierarchy. In the year following *La Tempérance*’s disbandment in 1937, the French-Canadian Catholic hierarchy issued a pastoral letter effectively renewing the dioceses’ crusade against the evils of alcohol. The document — dated 4 October 1938 and signed by Cardinal Jean-Marie-Rodrigue Villeneuve along with all the bishops of the Province of Québec — explicitly mentioned the hereditary effects of alcoholism on future generations. In their enlightened opinion, the poison led to nothing less than the utter and complete ruin of the individual, the family, and the race: “Drunkards beget drunkards, alcoholics beget alcoholics. By this force of heredity, the taste for alcohol is passed from one generation to the next, onto the descendants of alcoholics, until the complete extinction of the family.”<sup>43</sup> The concern for racial degeneration and its implied conclusions — depopulation and the extinction of the race — elevated the struggle against alcoholism to a matter of national survival.

### “Donner à la nation de meilleurs enfants”: the “Mouvement Familial” and Eugenics

By the end of the Great Depression, Catholic reformers in Québec began mobilizing under the banner of the “mouvement familial.” Initially led by the Franciscans, this family movement was comprised of ecclesiastical and lay Catholic organizations whose chief concern was the promotion of Christian marriage and traditional family values by means of public education campaigns and family-oriented policy. Like in many other Catholic settings, the 1930s and 1940s was a time of deep social changes that left many Catholics apprehensive about the future. The Great Depression had caused poverty and unemployment on a scale never before seen. The resulting political unrest and changes in family structure caused Catholic authorities to worry about the dissolution of the family. In their view, the growing number of women in the workplace, Communism, divorce, and birth control threatened to destroy the institution of the family and, by extension, the very fabric of society. They responded by forming institutions devoted to the promotion of traditional, Christian family values and reiterating Catholic doctrine on marriage as defined by *Casti connubii*.<sup>44</sup> The late 1930s were also marked by the election of Maurice Duplessis and his Union Nationale to lead Québec’s provincial government. The politics of Duplessis-era Québec were marked by conservative nationalism and the upholding of Catholic authority and values. Like in Vichy France or Salazar-ruled Portugal, certain aspects of eugenics were rehabilitated by Catholic reformers in Québec to suit pronatalist and pro-family agendas. Those reformers, in fact, were paying close attention to the elaboration of family-oriented policy in European conservative regimes, which they perceived as a step forward in the rehabilitation of the Catholic Church and its values.<sup>45</sup>

### La Famille (1937–1954) and the Birth of Québec’s Catholic Family Movement

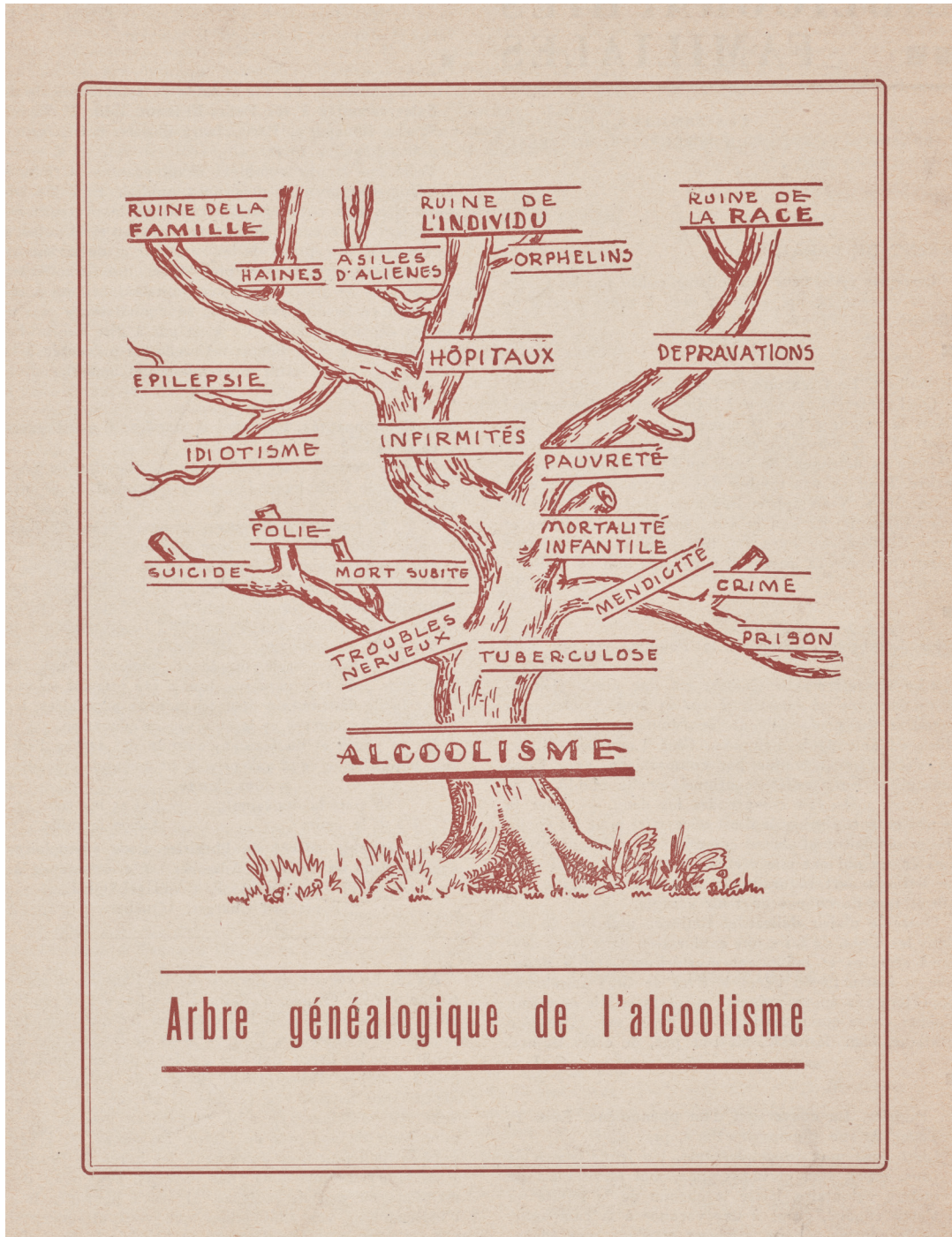
In September 1937, *La Tempérance* was replaced by another journal titled *La Famille*, which announced a clear shift in priorities. *La Famille* was born from the perceived need to “re-Christianize” Western society and to reaffirm the primacy of traditional, Christian family values in rapidly changing times.<sup>46</sup> As historian Nive Voisine explains, the Franciscans who were involved in the foundation of *La Famille* — Marie-Alcantara Dion, Bernardin Verville, Romain Légaré, Gonzalve Poulin, and Carmel Brouillard —

were not only friars, but university-trained philosophers and social scientists. While the Franciscans in no way abandoned their crusade against alcohol (alcoholism was still seen as an important family issue), *La Famille*, its scope and substance marked a clear break from the Franciscans' earlier writings.<sup>47</sup> *La Famille*, like *La Tempérance*, was a popular publication aimed at French-Canadian families. It defined its mission as the “restoration” of the institution of the family (Figure 2).<sup>48</sup>

This involved protecting parents from so-called outside influences, including eugenics, divorce, and birth control. Between 1937 and 1954, *La Famille* produced family-oriented literature and propaganda designed to keep Catholic families in line and advocated for social reform meant to promote the welfare and stability of families. Its pronatalist, pro-family agenda was partly a response to the growing influence of the Canadian birth control movement. During the 1930s, the Anglican Church (1930) and other Protestant denominations — namely the United Church of Canada (1936) — had declared their support for birth control within marriage provided it were done with good intentions. In 1937, Ontario-based eugenicists had scored an important legal victory in the Eastview Birth Control Trial, which greatly facilitated the distribution of birth-control literature in Canada.<sup>49</sup> Franciscans noted the “intrusion” of such literature in Catholic households. In their view, English-Canadian eugenicists were targeting French-Canadian families in an effort to “maintain the demographic balance within the country” and “reduce the vitality [of the French element.]”<sup>50</sup> They responded by sending their own pro-family, pronatalist propaganda. By 1947, *La Famille* had 45,000 subscribers.<sup>51</sup>

*La Famille* was the first of many institutions founded in Québec by the Franciscans to promote the interests of the French-Canadian family. In 1939, Franciscan sociologist Gonzalve Poulin founded Les Amis de la famille, an association that organized public lectures, family weeks, and advocated for family-oriented policy. Poulin was himself a vocal advocate of family allowances, which he believed would help support large families and dissuade Catholics from straying from the teachings of the Catholic Church. In his writings, Poulin criticized the Ontario-based Parents' Information Bureau and Toronto League for Race Betterment, which advocated for eugenics in the form of birth control. Poulin understood that poverty was responsible for the increased use of contraception but argued that neo-Malthusianism was a poor solution to the country's economic woes. Instead, he insisted that governments needed to harness the power of the economy to benefit and protect the institution of the family.<sup>52</sup> In April 1942, *La Famille* and Les Amis de la famille were united under the banner of the Institut familial with Poulin as its first director. The Montréal-based institute housed its own library and research centre. Its goal was to provide scientific solutions to the problems of the modern family and to proselytize *La Famille*'s pro-family, Catholic propaganda.<sup>53</sup>

*La Famille* and the Institut familial were at the vanguard of a wider movement of Catholic family associations whose chief preoccupation was the education of parents in matters of Catholic social doctrine and childrearing. Those organizations held the belief that the problems of modern society — poverty, alcoholism, criminality, child delinquency, immorality, and venereal disease — could be avoided if Catholics were better prepared for their duties as parents and emphasized the role of parents as the main purveyors of the child's moral education. One such association was the École des



**Figure 2:** "Alcoholism's Family Tree." Source: "Arbre généalogique de l'alcoolisme," *La Famille* 2, no. 9 (May 1939): 208. (BAnQ/reproduced with the permission of the Franciscans of Canada)

parents du Québec (founded in November 1940) whose self-proclaimed mission was supplying the nation with better children (“Donner à la nation de meilleurs enfants”).<sup>54</sup> The association brought together middle-class women and secular professionals — including psychiatrists, pediatricians, and geneticists — with a vested interest in parental education.<sup>55</sup>

### **Heredity or Environment: French-Canadian Psychiatrists on the Importance of Mental Hygiene**

Starting in December 1940, the École des parents du Québec organized a series of public lectures on childrearing. Most papers focused on child development and mental hygiene — an approach to psychiatry that emphasized prevention in the management of mental illness. On 3 February 1941, geneticist Jacques Rousseau and neurologist Jean Saucier spoke on the topics of eugenics and the heredity of moral character. Their paper, titled “Paul a-t-il hérité son villain caractère de grand-père? (hérédité et eugénisme),” assessed the role of heredity in the development of personality.<sup>56</sup> It covered the laws of Mendelian genetics and its application in humans. Rousseau and Saucier conceded that while moral character was passed on across generations, certain behaviours and hereditary conditions could be corrected in children through environmental factors (i.e., education). In a statement that summarized the family movement’s attitude with regards to eugenics, Rousseau concluded that “the improvement of man is a constant struggle between heredity and education.”<sup>57</sup> In his view, heredity was far from fatal; there was still hope as long as abnormalities were detected early on. Hence the need to educate parents on parenting.

Advocates within the family movement mobilized scientific and medical knowledge on heredity and child development as part of their efforts to improve the quality of Québec’s children; however, they tended to distance themselves from the eugenics movement, which they associated with sterilization and birth control. *La Famille*, for example, was published alongside two other journals titled *Nos Enfants* (1940–1942) and *L’Éducateur* (1942–1945).<sup>58</sup> *Nos Enfants* was the official organ of the École des parents du Québec and focused almost exclusively on childrearing. In its inaugural issue, pediatrician Albert Guibeault announced that *Nos Enfants* would be devoted to the popularization of the knowledge of “puériculture” among Québec parents. Guibeault’s understanding of “puériculture” included both “physical and mental hygiene”<sup>59</sup> and emphasized the role of prenatal care in producing strong, healthy children. He maintained that the health of procreators was a crucial factor in determining the health of offspring and that young people about to marry should inquire about the health of their prospective spouse before marriage. Guibeault likened this process to that of a farmer inquiring about the quality of the soil before purchasing a farm. “If the tree is bad,” he analogized “the fruits cannot be of prime quality.”<sup>60</sup> While he would not go as far as promoting “outrageous eugenics,”<sup>61</sup> Guibeault judged that such precautions were in the best interests of the nation. Healthy parents were required to produce healthy children. *Nos Enfants*, along with *L’Éducateur* (which was published by the Institut familial), espoused a comprehensive vision of parental education. Their aim was to guide parents and educators in the “physical, intellectual, and moral education”<sup>62</sup> of Québec’s children.

*La Famille, Nos Enfants*, and *L'Éducateur* benefited from the expertise of French-Canadian psychiatrists who carefully weighed the influence of heredity and environment on child development. They refuted negative eugenic arguments by appealing to the role of prenatal development, environment, and education. Psychiatrist J.-E.-Alexandre Marcotte — a regular contributor to *Nos Enfants*<sup>63</sup> — held the deep conviction that too much importance was given to heredity as an explanatory factor in the development of personality and bad behaviour in children. In Marcotte's view, hereditarianism was nothing but fantasy and incentivized parents to neglect their parental duties. Many parents, he explained, wrongly believed that the effects of heredity were irremediable and surrendered all responsibility in raising their children: “What use is it to properly raise children who are going to grow up under an uncontrollable influence [such as heredity]?”<sup>64</sup> In his view, the key to producing healthy children was to pay attention to both heredity and environment. Practically speaking, Marcotte recommended that young people choose healthy spouses and strive to cultivate a healthy family environment. When confronted with possible cases of morbid heredity in children, parents were reminded to address the issue with the appropriate level of care. On the one hand, the situation was not to be taken lightly. It called for careful monitoring and extra precautions on the part of parents. On the other, it was crucial that parents understood that there was still hope and that the obstacles they faced were far from insurmountable. The worst thing a parent could do was nothing at all.<sup>65</sup>

Marcotte reminded his readers that what was uncontrollable about heredity was, in fact, fairly limited. Conditions long believed to be hereditary were oftentimes the result of faulty foetal development and could be prevented by taking proper precautions during pregnancy. Alcohol, he explained, could not alter germ cells, but had a disastrous effect — like other poisons, chemicals, and heavy metals — on foetal development and should be avoided during pregnancy. Truly genetic diseases (like hemophilia) were comparatively few and did not necessarily affect every descendant. When it came to mental illness, Marcotte maintained that individual conditions were not by themselves hereditary. Rather, children inherited predispositions or mental weaknesses and learned patterns of behaviour from their parents. If placed in the right conditions, such children would not develop the same proclivities as their parents.<sup>66</sup> Despite his clear penchant for environmental factors, Marcotte conceded that it proved difficult to attribute faulty development to heredity or environment alone: “it is like trying to determine whether the seed or the soil is more important to the life and growth of a plant.”<sup>67</sup> For Marcotte, there was no clear answer. Nature and nurture were engaged in a complex balancing act and had to be addressed on a case-by-case basis. Just as good heredity could be soiled by a poor environment, a defective one could be corrected to some degree with proper care and precaution.

Similar views were voiced by psychiatrist Jean-Charles Miller, director at La Jemmerais school for abnormal children in Québec City. Miller argued that the laws of heredity were subject to so many exceptions that “they do not authorize the radical and destructive methods of eugenics.”<sup>68</sup> However, he pointed out, heredity was sufficiently consistent to allow physicians to dissuade individuals from marriage: “Subjects whose state of health is seriously compromised should be wisely dissuaded and warned of the

terrible dangers they would risk not only for themselves, but also for their spouse and their descendants.”<sup>69</sup> Miller favoured educating parents on the dangers of heredity, but was publicly opposed to compulsory premarital health examinations on the basis that restrictions on marriage were bound to have disastrous consequences for the nation’s population growth. In a public lecture titled “L’hygiène mentale, problème national,” which he presented in front of the Société Saint-Jean Baptiste on January 14, 1942, Miller described the need for increased mental hygiene but steered away from negative eugenic intervention. He invoked Scandinavian premarital health examination laws and explained that, in Norway, premarital health certificates only led to decreased marriage and birth rates.<sup>70</sup>

While the boundaries between those projects and eugenics are blurry and unclear, French-Canadian psychiatrists took great satisfaction in the fact that what they were promoting was not eugenics. Eugenics in the form of sterilization, birth control, or compulsory premarital health examinations was clearly off the table; but Miller and Marcotte saw no problem in advising patients against marriage or giving advice to pregnant women in the hope that they would raise “normal” children under the guise of “conscious generation” or “prenatal mental hygiene.”<sup>71</sup> Positive eugenic measures based on education and financial support (such as family allowances and maternal aid) were not explicitly described in *La Famille* as eugenics; yet they were embraced by Miller, Marcotte, Guibeault, Poulin and others within Québec’s family movement for their role in “protecting the future of our human capital.”<sup>72</sup> Despite widespread condemnation of “Anglo-Saxon” eugenics, policies meant to ensure the quality and quantity of future French-Canadian generations became normalized in *La Famille*’s pronatalist, pro-family discourse. Those measures were not described as eugenics because they were not seen as coercive or immoral. The Franciscans and their allies created strategic boundaries meant to legitimize the aspects of eugenics which suited their agendas and to criticize those aspects which did not. They certainly noticed that what they were preaching was similar enough to eugenics to warrant some degree of disambiguation.

### **Les Tendances Eugénistes au Canada (1942): Hervé Blais’s Writings on Eugenics**

In 1942, Franciscan theologian Hervé Blais published a comprehensive study of eugenics titled *Les tendances eugénistes au Canada*. The 200-page book, published by the newly founded Institut familial, criticized compulsory premarital health examination and sterilization laws that were passed in English Canada during the 1920s and 1930s. Blais claimed that the methods advanced by English-Canadian eugenicists to improve the human race were misguided. Not only did sterilization, birth control, and marriage restrictions contradict the moral teachings of *Casti connubii*, but they only dealt with one aspect of the problem at hand (and perhaps the most controversial of all): reproduction. Instead, Blais argued, eugenicists needed to focus on eradicating the causes of racial degeneration, i.e., alcoholism, syphilis, and drug use.<sup>73</sup> Preventing the degeneration of future generations required teaching prospective parents about the dangers of immoral behaviour both for themselves and their descendants. In Blais’s view, this made eugenics a fundamentally moral undertaking.

Blais’s work aligned with the agenda sketched out by Québec’s family movement and with the mission of the Institut familial. In fact, a significant portion of *Les tendances* was first published as separate articles in *La Famille* and *L’Éducateur* between April 1941 and October 1942. Those articles reiterated Church doctrine on marriage, reproduction, and pronatalism (“Crescite et Multiplicamini”), debated the morality of eugenics, condemned neo-Malthusian doctrine, and exposed Canadian legislation regarding compulsory premarital health examinations.<sup>74</sup> Considering that *La Famille* and its supplements catered to French-Canadian parents and schoolteachers, it is worth considering that Blais was not merely engaging in academic debate; he was actively proselytizing his own vision of eugenics to educators. His aim was to provide parents and teachers with moral and scientific arguments against negative eugenics and, especially, birth control. His writings also served to legitimize positive eugenic policies, which he deemed both beneficial for the future of the race and compatible with Catholic social doctrine. Blais was looking into eugenics for scientific solutions to the problems of the modern French-Canadian family.

Blais’s interest in eugenics was rooted in contemporary concerns about the implementation of eugenic policies in Canada. At the time of writing, he explained, eugenic sterilization laws had been adopted in two Canadian provinces (Alberta and British Columbia), premarital health examination legislation implemented in three (Alberta, Saskatchewan, and British Columbia), and other legislation meant to penalize officiants for knowingly marrying “idiots or insane persons” passed in most provinces of the Dominion. In neighbouring Ontario, eugenicists had mobilized under the banner of the Eugenics Society of Canada and were advocating for the implementation of eugenic policy at both provincial and federal levels.<sup>75</sup> Closer to home, Blais was especially preoccupied with debates happening in Québec regarding the implementation of premarital health legislation. He devoted a total of five separate articles in *La Famille* to the issue of eugenic marriage restrictions and medical examinations. This was no coincidence. Premarital screening for syphilis had come up in the debates that led to the adoption of Québec’s “Loi pour la prévention des maladies vénériennes” in March 1941. With French-Canadian public health officials openly advocating for increased medical supervision over marriage, Blais’s considerations on eugenics were especially timely.<sup>76</sup>

### Reconciling Eugenics and Catholicism

In many ways, *Les tendances eugénistes au Canada* was an attempt to reconcile eugenics with Catholic moral theology. Despite historians Angus McLaren’s and Sebastian Normandin’s depiction of the Franciscan friar as a critic of the eugenics movement, Blais was quite sympathetic to eugenics and its goals.<sup>77</sup> He described the prospect of eradicating inheritable disease and improving the race as “commendable, perfectly consonant with the demands of morality and in no way opposed to the doctrine of the Church.”<sup>78</sup> While he may have been harsh and unforgiving in his appraisal of negative eugenic policies, Blais was particularly fond of positive eugenics — namely of voluntary premarital health examinations and family allowances — for what such policies could accomplish for the health and stability of the family. Blais prophesized that historians would later regard the advent of the biological sciences as “a turning point in the history

of moral theology”<sup>79</sup>; that the knowledge of the laws of heredity ushered a new era in which Catholic moralists were forced to confront the moral implications of reproduction and to consider its effects on future generations. This new “biological conception of Catholic morality,”<sup>80</sup> as Blais put it, was having a profound cultural impact throughout the Christian world. It made procreators responsible “before God and posterity”<sup>81</sup> for the health and welfare of future generations.

Far from being an unquestioning critic, Blais championed a syncretic version of eugenics he called “Catholic eugenics” and whose central tenets were based on moralization and education rather than coercion. This formulation of Catholic eugenics was not unique to him. It was inspired by European debates happening in Catholic countries in the immediate aftermath of *Casti connubii*.<sup>82</sup> To be clear, *Les tendances* was not a condemnation of eugenics. It aimed, first and foremost, to shed light on the movement and to evaluate its validity using both theological and scientific criteria. As Blais pointed out, arguments based in religion alone were not sufficient to convince eugenicists of their wrongdoing. Quite the contrary, arguments based on Christian orthodoxy left Catholic critics of eugenics “unable to defend themselves against their adversaries.”<sup>83</sup> Even worse, the dogmatic Catholic reaction against eugenics only made the Roman Catholic Church’s attitude appear “outdated,” “detestable,” and “doctrinaire.”<sup>84</sup> According to Blais, both sides of the debate were at fault. On the one hand, he denounced eugenicists for their poor sense of morality; on the other, he criticized the Catholic position for “not taking into account reality.”<sup>85</sup> Still Blais believed the two positions could be reconciled. He maintained that it was in the best interest of the Church to contribute to the development of eugenics; that it ought to take its rightful place as moral arbiter in the elaboration of eugenic practices.

Blais’s exceptional erudition in both scientific and theological matters allowed him to navigate the issue of eugenics with incisiveness and authority. He was familiar with the works of European eugenicists and exploited disagreement and inconsistencies between them to bolster his own claims on the legitimacy of eugenics as science and policy. A careful reading of *Les tendances* reveals that Blais understood the different vocabularies and nuances that characterized national styles of eugenics. He cited French debates on premarital health examinations, the works of German “race hygienists” as well as those of American and British geneticists. His detailed analysis of the nature/nurture debates demonstrates high scientific literacy and an extensive knowledge of French, English, Latin, Italian, and German. On more than one occasion, Blais referred to Galton’s original work on eugenics and his predilection for education. Blais called for caution in the implementation of eugenic policy. “If we do not want to reduce society to an immoral, experimental stud farm,” he warned, “we must today refer to Galton’s [original] program, which called first and foremost for study [of the laws of heredity].”<sup>86</sup>

Even though he agreed that the concerns expressed by eugenicists — namely racial degeneration, the differential birth rate between the upper and lower classes, and rising tide of feeble-mindedness<sup>87</sup> — were legitimate, Blais argued that the available scientific data on heredity did not support the implementation of negative eugenic policies. By the 1940s, it had become clear to geneticists that sterilization was an ineffective method for preventing the spread of the “unfit” due to the persistence of recessive traits in

populations. Building on this argument, Blais added that the causes of feeble-mindedness were many and could not be attributed to heredity alone. Scientists and policy-makers, he explained, “have no right to invoke sterilization”<sup>88</sup> as long as the “exogenous” causes of degeneration, namely alcoholism and syphilis, were left unchecked. When it came to birth control, Blais gestured to the popularization of contraception in the upper classes and emphasized its detrimental effects on the quality of the race. His position was inspired by Italian eugenicists, who firmly believed that quality went hand-in-hand with quantity and that, statistically speaking, any negative eugenic measure would inevitably reduce the proportion of gifted or otherwise superior individuals being born.<sup>89</sup>

Blais’s conception of a positive, Catholic eugenics program emphasized the role of family legislation in the promotion of strong, healthy, and prolific families. It rested on three main points: better housing conditions for the working class, rural colonization, and economic advantages — namely tax breaks and family allowances — for heads of households.<sup>90</sup> “When the family,” which he described as “the vital cell of society, will have the opportunity to develop normally [...] we will likely have reached the highest form of eugenic achievement.”<sup>91</sup> However, Blais drew the line at marriage. As his writings made clear, any state-enforced restriction on marriage found itself at odds with the moral teachings of *Casti connubii*, the ideals of family life, and the imperatives of pronatalism. However, this did not preclude the possibility of “free” or “voluntary” premarital health examinations. Blais rationalized that such examinations — which would become “popular custom” by means of education — could only have positive effects on the institution of the family.<sup>92</sup>

### **Blais’s reading of “Casti Connubii” and the Position of the Catholic Church on Eugenics**

Blais’s writing drew from various debates happening in the Catholic world regarding the morality of eugenics. Significant sections of *Les tendances* were devoted to the analysis of theological debates which occurred in the United States, Spain, Italy, and Germany prior to the publication of *Casti connubii*.<sup>93</sup> In the book’s introduction, Blais credited Belgian Franciscan Provincial Celse Uyttenbroeck for “initiating [him] to the problems of eugenics,”<sup>94</sup> which suggests that religious orders acted as transnational networks in the dissemination of information regarding eugenics. Blais’s extensive knowledge of contemporary debates was largely possible due to the organizational structures of the Catholic Church and the far-reaching influence of Catholic lay organizations such as the Association du mariage chrétien, whose published materials had a strong presence in French-speaking Québec. Blais’s analysis drew extensively from the Association’s debates on eugenics (1930, 1937) as well as from the Congress of Catholic Physicians (1932, 1936), which openly debated the compatibility of eugenics with Catholic morality and medical deontology.<sup>95</sup> Yet, Blais did not stray too far from Catholic orthodoxy. Despite his foray into theological debates, he deferred to canon law and the authority of the Holy See, conceding that the interpretations of theologians (himself included) were “only worth the value of their arguments.”<sup>96</sup>

The historiography on Catholic resistance to eugenics in North America has often portrayed the 1930 publication of *Casti connubii* as a turning point in how Catholics interacted with eugenics. “During the decades before the Vatican took official

position on the controversy,” explains historian Christine Rosen, “a spectrum of Catholic opinion existed.”<sup>97</sup> Indeed, in the United States some elements of the Catholic clergy and hierarchy were willing to consider eugenics and debate the relative value of eugenic sterilization in the 1910s and 1920s. However, as Rosen and later Sharon M. Leon have demonstrated in their work, official papal pronouncements on the matter caused Catholic clergymen who were sympathetic to eugenics to break away from the movement during the 1930s. In Leon’s words, the American clergy “came into line with the letter’s teachings right away.”<sup>98</sup> Yet, Blais fits rather awkwardly in this narrative. Rather than passively acquiescing to the encyclical’s teachings, Blais deconstructed it and exploited its ambiguity to advance his own version of eugenics.

While *Casti connubii* provided doctrinal guidance against eugenic sterilization, birth control, and compulsory premarital health examinations, it did contain some caveats. The Holy See was opposed to state intervention in marriage and reproduction on the basis of natural law, which stressed a person’s unalienable right to marriage and bodily integrity; yet it also recognized that in some cases “individuals are to be dissuaded from entering into matrimony.”<sup>99</sup> The ambiguity of this statement caused Catholic moralists like Blais to wonder whether eugenic practices such as premarital health examinations could be justified were they not enforced by the state. After all, the encyclical did not preclude physicians from providing advice to young couples and to educate them in the proper selection of marriage partners.

The encyclical was clear on three principles: that marriage constituted a “natural and primeval right” of man, that “the family is more sacred than the State,” and “that men are begotten not for the earth and for time, but for Heaven and eternity.”<sup>100</sup> Those were serious philosophical objections to eugenics. If marriage was governed and protected by natural law and the rights of the family were superior to those of the state, arguments that sacrificed the rights of potential parents for the “common good” were difficult to uphold. Moreover, as the last point made clear, Catholic dogma prioritized spiritual growth over temporal, physical well-being. The theological argument levelled against eugenics in *Casti connubii* was that eugenics’ worldview was inherently materialist and that it prioritized the salvation of the race over man’s immortal soul.

Blais’s position was no different from the teachings of *Casti connubii*. Eugenists, he explained, erred in their overt materialism and statism. They believed “the physical improvement of the race [to be] an absolute requirement, superior to the spiritual and moral formation of man, [and] above all more urgent than the eternal salvation of the individual.”<sup>101</sup> He accused eugenists of only seeing the animal in man and of going to any means necessary to ensure its biological improvement. To make matters worse, he further explained, the eugenists’ belief in the primacy of the state over the individual implied the complete subjugation of personhood to its will. Sensing the growing number of so-called defectives “as a permanent and progressive threat to its own security,”<sup>102</sup> the all-powerful state will stop at no end to rid itself of individuals who “represent no positive utility to the State.”<sup>103</sup> If eugenists aimed at the eradication of disability (and of disabled persons themselves), it is because they could not see past their worldly aspirations. Blais reminded his readers that victims of heredity would not be excluded from the kingdom of God, that suffering was “the ordinary way chosen by God to sanctify and lead to

heaven.”<sup>104</sup> Human misery had its role in God’s plan: it helped cultivate the virtue of charity and developed a “heightened sense of humanity.”<sup>105</sup>

For eugenics to be redeemed required limited state intervention and the rejection of philosophical materialism. Blais’s vision of Catholic eugenics was not eugenics for the sake of the race or the state, but rather eugenics put to the service of man’s spiritual and eternal salvation. “This hierarchy of values,” he reasoned, “demands that the improvement of the body contribute to the perfecting of the soul and that both be conceived in conformity with the spiritual end.”<sup>106</sup> Where Blais differed from other, more conservative, Catholic thinkers in their interpretation of *Casti connubii* was that he thought eugenics could and ought to be employed for the fulfillment of man’s spiritual salvation. Eugenics, if implemented correctly, was entirely compatible with God’s eternal plan. Blais’s argument rested on the notion that moral responsibility to future generations represented an essential form of charity and that striving for the improvement and happiness of humanity was a deeply moral undertaking.

In some cases, Blais maintained, choosing to refrain from marriage was simply the moral thing to do. According to *Casti connubii*, parents could not be held morally or criminally responsible for marrying and bringing eugenically inferior children into the world. Yet, if individuals could not be coerced out of marriage, in some cases it remained morally irresponsible not to advise them against it.<sup>107</sup> Blais brought this argument one step further by contending that the responsibility for bringing “unfit” children into the world sometimes outweighed the moral imperatives of pronatalism, or that individuals with faulty heredity could be exempted from the duties of marriage and family. “It is formally said [in *Casti connubii*] that we can and must take into account a certain form of eugenics [..],” explained Blais, “Nowhere, in fact, does the Church oblige the abnormal to marry or those who, according to the conjunctures of science, will only create defective children.”<sup>108</sup> The Catholic belief in the redemptive power of suffering did not imply that all individuals ought to be put into this world. If *Casti connubii* defended the rights of Catholics to marry freely from state intervention, Blais further maintained, exercising free will in marriage implied following one’s conscience and abiding to the moral teachings of the Church. The crux of the matter was that the modern knowledge of the laws of heredity made it impossible for Catholics to ignore the moral implications of procreation. To do what was morally good, in Blais’s view, inevitably called for a certain form of eugenics.<sup>109</sup>

To convince his readers, Blais pointed out that the Catholic Church had already opened its doors to certain eugenic practices. The Church was not opposed to eugenics; it had knowingly and willingly “inserted various matrimonial clauses into its legislation” with the intention of “contributing to the good of the race.”<sup>110</sup> Most obvious was the ban on marriage between cousins.<sup>111</sup> Restrictions on the fourth degree of blood kinship were lifted in 1917 with the Code of Canon Law; however, spiritual authorities in Rome had become increasingly stringent on dispensation, explicitly stating the hereditary risk posed by consanguineous marriages. As Blais reminded his readers, the instructions of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament on cousin marriages dated 1 August 1931 urged spiritual leaders to prevent marriages between uncles and nieces and aunts and nephews on the basis that such unions would lead to hereditary defects in their

descendants. To Blais, Catholic marriage practices that had traditionally permitted dispensation in some cases were now being shaped and restricted by eugenic concerns for the quality of future generations in canon law.<sup>112</sup>

Blais also pointed out that the Roman Catholic Church's attitude on divorce, its legislation on the age of marriage, its requirement of parental consent, and that the bride and groom be of sound mind, all exerted a positive eugenic influence on humanity.<sup>113</sup> Catholic criteria for the validity of marriage emphasized the need for free will and consent. While mental illness did not represent a valid impediment to marriage — at least not for the reasons cited by eugenicists — the inability of the affected party to provide legal consent effectively rendered such marriages invalid in the eyes of the Church. As such, the principles of individual liberty upheld by *Casti connubii* only applied to those individuals who were deemed “capable” of marriage. Canon law regarding the legitimacy of marriage prevented “those whose mental illness seriously impairs their intellectual functions”<sup>114</sup> from entering holy matrimony.

### The Institut d'Études Familiales

Through his publication of *Les tendances*, which received scores of positive reviews in Catholic journals, Blais rose to a place of prominence within the ranks of Québec's family movement.<sup>115</sup> In the spring of 1945, he became the founding director of the Institut d'études familiales, a research institute created at the instigation of the Université de Montréal's Faculty of Philosophy.<sup>116</sup> The Franciscan-run institute aimed to train specialists and family pedagogists specialized in the problems of the modern family. The scope of this new institute and its programs were wide-ranging. Program descriptions alluded to the scientific study of the family under a variety of aspects, including its “philosophical, judicial, moral, sociological, economical, [and] psychological aspects, spirituality, demography, eugenics, health, delinquency, [and] education.”<sup>117</sup> The foundation of the Institut d'études familiales marked a turning point in the Franciscans' involvement in the family movement. They were no longer simply publishing a monthly journal promoting the ideals of family life to French-Canadian families; they were now teaching their pro-family doctrine in a university setting and training social scientists in what they termed “family studies.” This new institute replaced the former Institut familial. *La Famille* and its educational mission now fell under the purview of the Centre familial, which first opened its doors in May 1945.<sup>118</sup>

The Institut d'études familiales began offering courses in the fall of 1945. Its programs (both at the graduate and undergraduate level) were developed in collaboration with the Université de Montréal's Faculty of Philosophy and its Institut de psychologie. Both institutions were led by forward-thinking Dominicans — namely Marie-Ceslas Forest and Noël Mailloux — who were quite enthusiastic about Blais's work on eugenics.<sup>119</sup> Of the 450 lessons planned out for the first year of its bachelors' program, 150 were devoted to the study of psychology. A further 90 lessons were taught by Blais himself. They consisted of an introduction to the topic of the family, its “origin, history, structure, [and] function” as well as its “biological, economical, social, and personal aspects.”<sup>120</sup> Students were also expected to learn the basics of genetics, embryology, and endocrinology, with 10 lessons being assigned to each topic. The remainder of the program consisted of ethics, philosophy, law, statistics, and research methods.<sup>121</sup>

The Institut d'études familiales was rather short-lived. Blais left the institute in its first year and was replaced by a new director, Edmour Lemay, in September 1946. The institute's programs struggled to attract students, and it was dissolved by the Faculty of Philosophy in 1949.<sup>122</sup> Still, the institute's short existence offers tangible evidence of support for eugenics at the Université de Montréal. Eugenics, or rather Blais's interpretation of it, officially featured in its curriculum.<sup>123</sup> The fact that the family studies program included extensive training in psychology, genetics, embryology, endocrinology, and statistics points to the importance of biology in the program's conception. To find scientific solutions to the problems of the modern family required extensive knowledge of the laws of human heredity and development.

### Conclusion

The inclusion of eugenics in the Institut d'études familiales' curriculum should come as no surprise. Through their key role in Québec's temperance and Catholic family movements, the Franciscans exhibited clear concerns over the racial degeneration of French Canadians. Their frequent references to the hereditary effects of alcoholism on future generations became a key aspect of *La Tempérance's* moral teachings. While Franciscan writers might not have formulated these concerns in terms of eugenics, the observance of temperance was promoted as a means of preventing further degeneration and the eventual extinction of the race. Due to their specific conception of heredity, the biological future of the race was seen as contingent on the pursuit of Catholic moral ideals: alcoholics could redeem themselves and their descendants by forgoing alcohol and committing themselves to a life of sobriety. The idea of “racial improvement” was inextricably linked to moral improvement. As their priorities changed over time, the order redirected its efforts towards the protection and preservation of the traditional French-Canadian family. Like most Catholics, the Franciscans criticized eugenics for its association with sterilization and birth control. They were nonetheless dedicated to the education of parents and educators in the hope that they would raise “better” children from a physical, mental, moral, and intellectual standpoint. In the 1940s, the Franciscans created institutions devoted to the scientific study of the family, which included the topic of eugenics. Galton's projection that eugenics would find its way into the national conscience through the proselytizing of local elites had been fulfilled.

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## Endnotes

- 1 Hervé Blais, *Les tendances eugénistes au Canada* (L'Institut familial, 1942), 174.
- 2 Francis Galton, *Essays in Eugenics* (The Eugenics Education Society, 1909), 81. It is worth noting that Galton's role as the "founding father" of eugenics is relativized by recent historiography. While he coined the term "eugenics" in 1883, concerns about racial decline were quite widespread in the late nineteenth century and were not unique to Victorian England. Ideas on race improvement – however defined – emerged in a variety of national settings without necessarily being tied to Galton's formulation of eugenics. See, for example, Nikolai Kremontsov, *With and Without Galton: Vasilii Florinskii and the Fate of Eugenics in Russia* (Open Book Publishers, 2018).
- 3 Galton, *Essays*, 42. Blais was especially partial to Galton's conception of eugenics "as a factor in religion." See Blais, *Les tendances eugénistes*, 9.
- 4 See Angus McLaren, *Our Own Master Race: Eugenics in Canada, 1885–1945* (University of Toronto Press, 1990); Sebastian Normandin, "Eugenics, McGill, and the Catholic Church in Montreal and Quebec: 1890–1942," *Canadian Bulletin of Medical History* 15, no. 1 (1998): 59-86.
- 5 Scientific institutions have always played a central role in the history of eugenics. Galton himself prescribed the creation of "Local Associations for Promoting Eugenics" to help prepare public opinion to the eventual enactment of eugenic policy. The American, French, British, Italian, and Germans all had their own national eugenics societies, research institutes, and scientific journals devoted to the problems of heredity and human improvement. Ontario was home to the Eugenics Society of Canada. See Daniel J. Kevles, *In The Name of Eugenics: Genetics and the Uses of Human Heredity* (Harvard University Press, 1995); William H. Schneider, *Quality and Quantity: The Quest for Biological Regeneration in Twentieth-Century France* (Cambridge University Press, 1990); Mark B. Adams, ed., *The Wellborn Science: Eugenics in Germany, France, Brazil, and Russia* (Oxford University Press, 1990); Francesco Cassata, *Building the New Man: Eugenics, Racial Science and Genetics in Twentieth-Century Italy* (Central European University Press, 2011); McLaren, *Our Own Master Race*.
- 6 To be clear, the Franciscans were by no means the only Catholic order to broach the topic of eugenics in the twentieth century. Jesuits, Dominicans, and Oblates, too, debated the morality and applicability of eugenics as it gathered steam in North America and Nazi Germany in the 1930s and 1940s. Pie XI, *L'encyclique sur le mariage chrétien "Casti connubii" (31 décembre 1930): Traduction française avec divisions et commentaires* (Éditions de l'École sociale populaire, 1943); M.-C. Forest, "Que faut-il penser de l'eugénique?," *Revue Dominicaine* 36, no. 5 (May 1930): 272-83; M.-C. Forest, "Que faut-il penser de l'eugénique? (suite et fin)," *Revue Dominicaine* 36, no. 6 (June 1930): 355-67; Arthur Caron, "Le racisme," (L'École sociale populaire, 1940).
- 7 Émile Roy, "Lettre pastorale et mandement de Mgr Paul Bruchési, Archevêque de Montréal inaugurant une croisade contre l'intempérance," in *Mandements, lettres pastorales, circulaires et autres documents publiés dans le diocèse de Montréal depuis son érection* (Arbour & Dupont, 1905), 797-815.
- 8 On Anglo-Protestant moral reform in Canada, see Ramsay Cook, *The Regenerators: Social Criticism in Late Victorian English Canada* (University of Toronto Press, 1985); Mariana Valverde, *The Age of Light Soap & Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885–1925* (University of Toronto Press, 2008).
- 9 Nive Voisine, "De La Tempérance à La Famille, 1906–1954," in *Les Franciscains au Canada, 1890–1990*, ed. Jean Hamelin (Septentrion, 1990), 158.
- 10 Roy, "Lettre [...] Inaugurant une croisade contre l'intempérance," 814. "[L]es apôtres de cette grande œuvre dans notre diocèse."
- 11 On the history of the Franciscans, see Jean Hamelin, *Les Franciscains au Canada* (Septentrion, 1990).
- 12 See, for instance, Frère Félix-M., "Science et sainteté franciscaines: la science dans l'Ordre franciscain," *La Revue Franciscaine* 46, no. 5 (May 1930): 204-208; Frère Félix-M., "Science et sainteté franciscaines: la science dans l'Ordre franciscain (suite)," *La Revue Franciscaine* 46, no. 6 (June 1930): 246-250.
- 13 Voisine, "De La Tempérance à La Famille," 157-58.
- 14 Voisine, "De La Tempérance à La Famille," 162.
- 15 Père Hugolin, "Miettes d'histoire," *La Tempérance* 26, no. 1 (June 1931): 37.

- 16 Père Placide-Joseph, “L’amélioration des moeurs,” *La Tempérance* 26, no. 1 (June 1931). The journal also took an active stance against divorce, blasphemy, pornography, Communism, work on Sunday, and women’s fashion.
- 17 Père Hugolin, “Miettes d’histoire,” 37.
- 18 Pierre Bonami, “Hygiène morale,” *La Tempérance* 24, no. 4 (September 1929): 99. “[L]e triomphe de la volonté et de la raison sur les affections malsaines et les pensées déshonnêtes.”
- 19 Bonami, “Hygiène morale,” 99. “[L]a lutte incessante de l’esprit contre la chair!”
- 20 La Direction, “A nos lecteurs,” *La Tempérance* 31, no. 7 (December 1936): 197. “La modération dans les choses permises et l’abstention dans les illicites»
- 21 See Riiko Bedford, “Like Produces Like”: Popular Conceptions of Heredity in Canada, 1860–1900” (PhD Dissertation, University of Toronto, 2017).
- 22 See Frère Léon, “On juge de l’arbre, à ses fruits,” *La Tempérance* 17, no. 6 (November 1922): 197-210.
- 23 Frère Léon, “On juge de l’arbre, à ses fruits,” 201. “Personne ne peut donner ce qu’il ne possède pas.”
- 24 Frère Léon, “On juge de l’arbre, à ses fruits,” 201. “D’où il découle généralement que la génération d’ivrognes n’est qu’une production de pauvres misérables, d’épileptiques, d’idiots, de voleurs ou de bandits!”
- 25 Guy Grenier, “Doctrine de la dégénérescence et institution asilaire au Québec (1885–1930),” *Les Cahiers du Centre de recherches historiques*, no. 12 (1994): 7. See also Guy Grenier, *Les monstres, les fous, et les autres: la folie criminelle au Québec* (Éditions Trait d’union, 1999); Peter Keating, *La science du mal: L’institution de la psychiatrie au Québec, 1800–1914* (Boréal, 1993).
- 26 de Vaucleroy, “Pourquoi certains enfants sont épileptiques ou idiots?,” *La Tempérance* 9, no. 5 (October 1914): 142-144; Père Placide-Joseph, “La vérité sur l’alcool. XIII: L’alcool et l’hérédité (13e Tableau, suite),” *La Tempérance* 26, no. 11 (April 1932): 262-268; René Perrot, “Nos Grands Père étaient de bons vivants...! Et de gais buveurs,” *La Tempérance* 9, no. 12 (May 1915): 107-111; Père Placide-Joseph, “La vérité sur l’alcool. XIII: L’alcool et l’hérédité (13e Tableau),” *La Tempérance* 26, no. 8 (January 1932): 356-364; Père Placide-Joseph, “La vérité sur l’alcool. XIII: L’alcool et l’hérédité (13e Tableau, suite et fin),” *La Tempérance* 26, no. 12 (May 1932): 388-395; Adélar Tétreault, “L’alcoolisme et la tuberculose,” *La Famille* 3, no. 7 (March 1940): 200-201; Jean Paquin, “L’alcoolisme et la tuberculose,” *L’Éducateur* 1, no. 7 (October 1942): 104-106. Legrain, a disciple of Magnan, was the main instigator of France’s temperance movement. See Schneider, *Quality and Quantity*, 47-48.
- 27 A number of influential French-Canadian publications on alcoholism were published in the early-twentieth century as a result of Bruchési’s crusade against intemperance. See, for instance, Edmond Rousseau, *Alcool et Alcoolisme: Causeries sur l’intempérance* (Le Soleil, 1906); *Premier congrès de tempérance du diocèse de Québec* (Secrétariat des Oeuvres de l’Action sociale catholique, 1911).
- 28 Un Instituteur, “L’enseignement antialcoolique s’impose,” *L’Action française* 7, no. 6 (January 1922): 47-49.
- 29 Père Placide-Joseph, “La vérité sur l’alcool. XV: La mort des races (15e Tableau, fin),” *La Tempérance* 27, no. 10 (March 1933): 295. “L’Alcoolisme est un nouveau péché originel !!! Semblable à la faute de nos premiers parents, il passe de générations en générations.”
- 30 Father Placide-Joseph described race as an agglomeration of families having the same habits, traditions, and language. Strengthening the race involved improving the health and vigour of the individual families that comprised the race. Père Placide-Joseph, “La vérité sur l’alcool. XV: La mort des races (15e Tableau, suite),” *La Tempérance* 27, no. 8 (January 1933): 228. “Une race est une agglomération de familles, ayant les mêmes habitudes, vivant des mêmes traditions et parlant la même langue. Or, cette race sera d’autant plus forte que les familles qui la composent seront elles-mêmes plus vigoureuses et plus saines.”
- 31 Père Placide-Joseph, “La vérité sur l’alcool. XV: La mort des races (15e Tableau),” *La Tempérance* 27, no. 7 (December 1932): 199. “de sang pur et de cœur noble.”
- 32 Père Placide-Joseph, “La vérité sur l’alcool [...] (15e Tableau),” 196. “À époux sobres, race forte! À époux buveurs, race morte!”
- 33 Père Placide-Joseph, “La vérité sur l’alcool [...] (13e Tableau),” 263.
- 34 Père Placide-Joseph, “La vérité sur l’alcool [...] (13e Tableau),” 263.

- 35 Père Placide-Joseph, “La vérité sur l’alcool [...] (13e Tableau),” 264. “[L]’hérédité morbide n’existe pas. N’allez pas croire en effet que l’inclination à boire de l’alcool peut se propager, comme une maladie organique, à l’aide de microbes ou de germes vivants.”
- 36 Père Placide-Joseph, “La vérité sur l’alcool [...] (13e Tableau),” 264. “Cela veut dire que le fils d’un ivrogne ou d’un alcoolique [...] ne vient pourtant pas au monde avec le microbe de l’ivrognerie ou de l’alcoolisme.”
- 37 Père Placide-Joseph, “La vérité sur l’alcool [...] (13e Tableau, suite),” 356. “[C]’est-à-dire la détérioration des cellules germinales, résultant de l’état maladif ou toxique des parents, à l’époque de la procréation”
- 38 Père Placide-Joseph, “La vérité sur l’alcool [...] (13e Tableau, suite),” 358. “Le poison alcoolique, qui circule constamment dans le sang des parents et y séjourne en permanence, à l’instar d’une espèce de péché originel”
- 39 Père Placide-Joseph, “La vérité sur l’alcool [...] (13e Tableau, suite),” 359. “Féré a montré l’influence tératogène de l’alcool sur l’embryon du poulet; Nicloux a constaté la présence de l’alcool, dans divers liquides organiques; Ziégler et Fuhner ont expérimenté les effets pernicieux de l’alcool sur l’oeuf d’oursin...” The passage in question – much longer than the extract cited above – was copied almost word for word from René Charpentier, *L’Alcool, facteur de délinquance et de criminalité* (Imprimerie Laflamme, 1929), 6.
- 40 Père Placide-Joseph, “La vérité sur l’alcool [...] (13e Tableau, suite),” 357. “Procréateurs tarés! Embryons dégénérés!”
- 41 Père Placide-Joseph, “La vérité sur l’alcool [...] (13e Tableau, suite),” 364. “[L]a preuve convaincante que les cellules germinales des buveurs habituels ou d’occasion peuvent se régénérer.”
- 42 Père Placide-Joseph, “La vérité sur l’alcool [...] (13e Tableau, suite),” 364. “Procréateurs chrétiens et canadiens, mesurez, si vous le pouvez, les lointaines et désastreuses répercussions de vos excès sur votre descendance et votre race, et vous n’hésitez pas à vous corriger.”
- 43 Paul Bernier, “Lettre pastorale collective de Son Éminence le Cardinal Archevêque de Québec et de Leurs Excellences les Archevêques et Évêques de la province civile de Québec sur la tempérance,” in *Mandements, lettres pastorales, circulaires et autres documents publiés dans le diocèse de Montréal depuis son érection* (Arbour & Dupont, 1940), 616. “[L]es ivrognes engendrent des ivrognes, les alcooliques engendrent des alcooliques. Par cette force de l’hérédité, le goût de l’alcool passe d’une génération à l’autre, dans la descendance des alcooliques, jusqu’à l’extinction complète de la famille.”
- 44 See Marie-Paule Malouin, *Le mouvement familial au Québec : Les débuts : 1937-1965* (Boréal, 1998).
- 45 See, for instance, Gonzalve Poulin, “Une révolution familiale en France,” *La Famille* 5, no. 2 (October 1941): 45; Bernardin Verville, “Information Familiale,” *La Famille* 7, *L’Éducateur*, no. 6 (June-July 1943): 279-81. Schneider, *Quality and Quantity*; Richard Clemenson, *Catholicism, Race and Empire: Eugenics in Portugal, 1900–1950* (Central European University Press, 2014).
- 46 La Direction, “A nos lecteurs”; Romain Légaré, “Transition,” *La Famille* 1, no. 1 (September 1937): 3-4.
- 47 Voisine, “De La Tempérance à La Famille,” 167. As a case in point, Father Valère Massicotte wrote extensively on the heredity effects of alcohol in *La Famille*. He insisted on multiple occasions that healthy, sober parents were needed to produce healthy children. Valère Massicotte, “L’alcool... ennemi de la santé de l’enfant,” *La Famille* 8, no. 10 (December 1944): 483, 515; Valère Massicotte, “L’alcool... ennemi de la santé de l’enfant,” *La Famille* 8, no. 11 (January 1945): 557-558; Valère Massicotte, “L’alcool... ennemi de la santé de l’enfant!,” *La Famille* 8, no. 12 (February 1945): 581, 609; Valère Massicotte, “L’alcool... ennemi de la santé de l’enfant,” *La Famille* 9, no. 6 (October 1945): 207. *La Famille*’s commitment to combating alcoholism continued well into the 1950s. See Norbert-M. Bettez, “Alcool et famille,” *La Famille* 14, no. 7 (August-September 1950): 383-385.
- 48 Légaré, “Transition,” 3-4.
- 49 See Elizabeth Koester, *In the Public Good: Eugenics and Law in Ontario* (McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2021).
- 50 Hervé Blais, “Condamnation du néo-malthusianisme,” *L’Éducateur* 1, no. 4 (May 1942): 52. “Pour maintenir l’équilibre démographique à l’intérieur du pays, l’on a simplement décidé de réduire la vitalité française.”; See also Hervé Blais, “Le droit d’avoir des parents physiquement et mentalement sains,” *L’Éducateur* 1, no. 7 (October 1942): 99. Blais’s accusations were not far off the mark. A.R. Kaufman, founder of the Ontario-based Parents’ Information Bureau, was deeply motivated by anti-Catholic and anti-French-Canadian sentiment. See Koester, *In the Public Good*, 40; McLaren, *Our Own Master Race*, 150.

- 51 Malouin, *Le mouvement familial*, 29.
- 52 Gonzalve Poulin, *La famille canadienne aux prises avec les difficultés économiques* (Les Éditions de Culture, 1942), 26-27.
- 53 Gonzalve Poulin, “L’idée familiale en marche: le nouvel Institut familial,” *La Famille* 5, no. 7 (March 1942): 234-35.
- 54 “Programme de l’École des parents pour l’année 1941–42,” *Nos Enfants* 1, no. 10 (October 1941): 197.
- 55 “L’École des parents du Québec,” *Nos Enfants* 1, no. 10 (October 1941): 180.
- 56 “Vie de l’École des parents pendant l’année 1940–41,” *Nos Enfants* 1, no. 10 (October 1941): 183.
- 57 “L’atavisme ou les caractères de l’hérédité: Le mécanisme en est plus défini chez les plantes et les animaux,” *La Presse* (Montréal), 4 February 1941, 4. “De sorte que l’amélioration de l’homme est une lutte acharnée et constante entre l’hérédité et l’éducation.” See also A. Marc, “La puissance de l’hérédité sur les populations,” *La Patrie* (Montréal), 4 February 1941, 7.
- 58 *Nos Enfants* was published alongside *La Famille* starting in December 1940 but broke off its relationship with the Franciscan-run journal in January 1942. It kept publishing until April of that year but was forced to shut down due to financial difficulties. *L’Éducateur* was first published as a supplement to *La Famille* in February 1942 and remained separate from it until 1945. In March 1945, it was officially absorbed by *La Famille* and given its own section. Albert Guibeault, “Introduction,” *Nos Enfants* 1, no. 1 (December 1940): 3-6; Albert Guibeault, “Lettre du directeur,” *Nos Enfants* 3, no. 1 (January 1942): 2; La Direction, “Aux lecteurs,” *Nos Enfants* 3, no. 4 (April 1942): 146; Richard Thivierge, “Notre supplément: L’Éducateur,” *La Famille* 5, no. 6 (February 1942): 183.
- 59 Guibeault, “Introduction,” 6.
- 60 Guibeault, “Introduction,” 4. “[S]i l’arbre est mauvais, les fruits ne peuvent être de première qualité.”
- 61 Guibeault, “Introduction,” 4. “Je ne voudrais pas pousser cette théorie à un eugénisme outrancier; cependant, un peu de sage prévision serait de bon aloi.”
- 62 Guibeault, “Introduction,” 6.
- 63 Marcotte regularly contributed to *Nos Enfants* by means of a section titled “La petite clinique d’hygiène mentale,” which provided parents with advice on the intellectual and emotional development of their children. Its goal was to popularize notions of mental hygiene among French-Canadian parents. See J.-E.-A. Marcotte, “L’hygiène mentale, cette méconnue,” *Nos Enfants* 1, no. 1 (December 1940): 10-12.
- 64 J.-E. Alexandre Marcotte, “À qui la faute? Hérité ou environnement?,” *Nos Enfants* 1, no. 4 (March 1941): 89. “À quoi bon, par exemple, se donner tant de mal pour bien élever des enfants qui vont se développer sous une influence incontrôlable?”
- 65 J.-E. Alexandre Marcotte, “À qui la faute? Hérité ou environnement? II,” *Nos Enfants* 1, no. 5 (April 1941): 110.
- 66 Marcotte, “À qui la faute? Hérité ou environnement?,” 89-92.
- 67 Marcotte, “À qui la faute? Hérité ou environnement? II,” 109. “[C]’est comme si un agriculteur essayait de déterminer lequel, du grain de semence ou du terrain dans lequel il le dépose, est le plus nécessaire à la vie et à croissance d’une plante.”
- 68 Jean-Charles Miller, “Atavisme et hérédité,” *L’Éducateur* 1, no. 2 (March 1942): 21. “Les lois de l’hérédité souffrent de nombreuses et très notables exceptions, elles n’autorisent pas les méthodes radicales et destructives de l’eugénique.”
- 69 Miller, “Atavisme et hérédité,” 21. “Les sujets dont l’état de santé se trouve sérieusement compromis, devraient être sagement dissuadés et avertis des dangers terribles qu’ils y risqueraient non seulement pour eux-mêmes, mais aussi pour leur conjoint et leur descendance.”
- 70 “Le souci de l’hygiène mentale doit prédominer,” *L’Action catholique*, 15 January 1942: 3, 8; “La santé mentale de notre peuple,” *Le Soleil*, 15 janvier 1942: 6.
- 71 See, for instance, Jean-Charles Miller, “L’hygiène mentale pré-natale,” *L’Éducateur* 1, no. 3 (April 1942): 40-43.

- 72 Miller, “L’hygiène mentale pré-natale,” 43. “[P]our mieux protéger l’avenir de notre capital humain.”
- 73 Blais, *Les tendances eugénistes*, 154-55.
- 74 Hervé Blais, “Crescite et Multiplicamini,” *L’Éducateur* 1, no. 5 (June-July 1942): 67-68; Hervé Blais, “Moralité de l’eugénique,” *L’Éducateur* 1, no. 2 (March 1942): 26-27; Blais, “Condamnation du néo-malthusianisme;” Hervé Blais, “L’examen prénuptial au Canada,” *La Famille* 4, no. 8 (April 1941): 237-238; Hervé Blais, “Critique de l’examen prénuptial obligatoire,” *La Famille* 4, no. 9 (May 1941): 278-279; Hervé Blais, “L’examen prénuptial facultatif,” *La Famille* 4, no. 10 (June 1941): 312-313; Hervé Blais, “L’Église et l’empêchement d’infirmité,” *La Famille* 5, no. 1 (September 1941): 20-21; Hervé Blais, “L’Église et l’empêchement d’infirmité (suite),” *La Famille* 5, no. 2 (October 1941): 54-55.
- 75 Blais, *Les tendances eugénistes*, 45, 54-55, 85-99.
- 76 Blais, “L’examen prénuptial au Canada,” 237-238; Blais, “Critique de l’examen prénuptial obligatoire,” 278-279; Blais, “L’examen prénuptial facultatif,” 312-313; Blais, “L’Église et l’empêchement d’infirmité,” 20-21; Blais, “L’Église et l’empêchement d’infirmité (suite),” 54-55; Loi pour prévenir les maladies vénériennes, SQ, 1941, c. 55, 227-230. Blais was demonstrably aware of Québec’s anti-venereal legislation and refers to it in *Les tendances eugénistes*.
- 77 McLaren, *Our Own Master Race*, 153; Normandin, “Eugenics, McGill, and the Catholic Church,” 75-77.
- 78 Blais, *Les tendances eugénistes*, 148. “Au contraire, elle [la fin eugéniste] nous semble louable, parfaitement consonante aux exigences de la morale et nullement opposée à la doctrine de l’église.” See also Blais, “Moralité de l’eugénique,” 26-27.
- 79 Blais, *Les tendances eugénistes*, 83. “[U]n tournant dans l’histoire de la théologie morale.”
- 80 Blais, *Les tendances eugénistes*, 83. “[C]onception biologiste de la morale catholique.”
- 81 Blais, *Les tendances eugénistes*, 83. “[S]ous le point de vue de la responsabilité devant Dieu et la postérité.”
- 82 Blais, *Les tendances eugénistes*, 37. “[S]ouignons fortement la thèse centrale de l’eugénisme catholique – la moralisation des âmes.”
- 83 Blais, *Les tendances eugénistes*, 134. “[D]’une orthodoxie trop fervente pour laisser la pensée catholique en bonne posture devant ses adversaires.”
- 84 Blais, *Les tendances eugénistes*, 159. “La réaction de la pensée catholique contre les écarts de l’eugénique modern lui a valu le reproche de ne présenter qu’une detestable attitude doctrinaire.”
- 85 Blais, *Les tendances eugénistes*, 158. “Si la position catholique ne semble pas tenir compte de la réalité, ses opposants, eux, ne tiennent pas compte de la moralité.”
- 86 Blais, *Les tendances eugénistes*, 143. “Si l’on ne veut pas réduire la société en un haras d’expérimentation immorale, il faut encore aujourd’hui se reporter au programme de Galton lui-même, qui demandait avant tout l’étude.”
- 87 Blais, *Les tendances eugénistes*, 19-28.
- 88 Blais, *Les tendances eugénistes*, 155. “[L]a science n’aura aucun droit d’invoquer des moyens tels que la stérilisation.”
- 89 Blais, *Les tendances eugénistes*, 168. See Cassata’s chapter on “Quality through Quantity” in Cassata, *Building the New Man*, 135-221.
- 90 Blais, *Les tendances eugénistes*, 168-72.
- 91 Blais, *Les tendances eugénistes*, 174. “Quand la famille, cellule vitale de la société, aura la possibilité de se développer normalement, en recourant au besoin aux ressources de l’art pour défendre sa santé, nous aurons probablement atteint le plafond des réalisations vraiment eugénistes.”
- 92 Blais, *Les tendances eugénistes*, 51. Following Blais’s recommendation, Québec’s Catholic hierarchy expressed their unanimous support for voluntary premarital examinations in 1943. Paul Bernier, “Lettre pastorale collective et mandement de Son Éminence le Cardinal Archevêque de Québec et de Leurs Excellences Nosseigneurs les Archevêques et Évêques des provinces ecclésiastiques de Québec, Montréal et Ottawa, au sujet des investigations prénuptiales,” in *Mandements, lettres pastorales, circulaires et autres documents publiés dans le diocèse de Montréal depuis son érection* (Arbour & Dupont, 1952), 445-55.

- 93 Blais paid special attention to the *American Ecclesiastical Review*'s debate on sterilization (1909–1913) as well as to the writings of theologians Aloysius De Smet and Joseph Mayer on eugenics as “self-defence” (cas de légitime défense). See Sharon M. Leon, *An Image of God: The Catholic Struggle with Eugenics* (Chicago University Press, 2013); Donald J. Dietrich, “Catholic Eugenics in Germany, 1920-1945: Hermann Muckermann, S.J. and Joseph Mayer,” *Journal of Church and State* 34, no. 3 (1992): 575-600.
- 94 Blais, *Les tendances eugénistes*, vii. “[Q]ui nous a initié aux problèmes de l’eugénique.”
- 95 Blais, *Les tendances eugénistes*, 5, 144, 48, 63. See also Association du mariage chrétien, *L’Église et l’eugénisme: La famille à la croisée des chemins* (Éditions Mariage et Famille, 1930).
- 96 Blais, *Les tendances eugénistes*, 134. “Les déclarations officielles de l’Église possèdent, en effet, une autorité telle qu’elles s’imposent à tous les fidèles, tandis qu’un essai personnel d’interprétation vaut ce que valent ses arguments.”
- 97 Christine Rosen, *Preaching Eugenics: Religious Leaders and the American Eugenics Movement* (Oxford University Press, 2004), 139.
- 98 Leon, *An Image of God: The Catholic Struggle with Eugenics*, 61.
- 99 Pie XI, *L’encyclique sur le mariage chrétien*, 63-64. “Il n’est certes pas permis que des hommes d’ailleurs capables de se marier, dont, après un examen attentif, on conjecture qu’ils n’engendreront que des enfants défectueux, soient inculpés d’une faute grave s’ils contractent mariage, encore que, souvent, le mariage doive leur être déconseillé.” Translations are not mine, but from the original English translation of *Casti connubii*.
- 100 Blais addresses each point in detail in *Tendances* and in Blais, “L’Église et l’empêchement d’infirmité,” 20-21.
- 101 Blais, “Moralité de l’eugénique,” 27. “[L]’amélioration physique de la race comme un exigence absolue, supérieure à la formation spirituelle et morale de l’homme, surtout plus urgente que le salut éternel de l’individu. “
- 102 Blais, “Moralité de l’eugénique,” 27. “[U]ne menace permanente et progressive à sa propre sécurité.”
- 103 Blais, “Moralité de l’eugénique,” 27. “[N]e représentent aucune utilité positive pour l’État.”
- 104 Blais, “Moralité de l’eugénique,” 27. “La souffrance n’est-elle pas le moyen ordinaire que Dieu a choisi pour sanctifier et conduire au ciel?”
- 105 Blais, *Les tendances eugénistes*, 78. “La présence des misères humaines [...] provoque l’exercice de la charité, un sens plus développé d’humanité et d’assistance.”
- 106 Blais, *Les tendances eugénistes*, 149. “Cette hiérarchie des valeurs, antérieure à tous nos vœux, demande que l’amélioration du corps contribue au perfectionnement de l’esprit et que les deux soient conçus en conformité avec la fin surnaturelle.”
- 107 Blais, *Les tendances eugénistes*, 82.
- 108 Blais, *Les tendances eugénistes*, 146-47. “il est dit formellement que l’on peut et que l’on doit tenir compte d’une certaine forme d’eugénique [...] Nulle part, en effet, l’Église n’oblige au mariage les anormaux ou ceux qui, d’après les conjonctures de la science, n’engendreront que des enfants tarés.”
- 109 Blais, *Les tendances eugénistes*, 83.
- 110 Blais, *Les tendances eugénistes*, 161. “L’Église s’oppose d’autant moins à la cause eugéniste qu’elle a inséré dans sa législation diverse clauses matrimoniales avec la conscience de contribuer au bien de la race.”
- 111 The Roman Catholic Church’s historical ban on cousin marriages had little to do with hereditary disease. Concerns over heredity emerged in the nineteenth century as a result of medicalization. The relationship between eugenics and consanguinity is contested by historians Diane B. Paul and Hamish G. Spencer, who point out that the vast majority of cousin marriage laws in the United States were adopted decades prior to the emergence of eugenics in the English-speaking world. See Gabriel Andrade and Maria Susana Campo Redondo, “The Medicalization of Cousin Marriage in the 19th Century: Historical and Philosophical Approaches,” *Revista de Filosofia* 97, no. 1 (January-April 2021): 71-91; Diane B. Paul and Hamish G. Spencer, “Eugenics without Eugenists? Anglo-American Critiques of Cousin Marriage in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries,” in *Heredity Explored: Between Public Domain and Experimental Science, 1850–1930*, Staffan Müller-Wille and Christina Brandt, eds. (MIT Press, 2016), 49-79.

- 112 Blais, *Les tendances eugénistes*, 75-76.
- 113 Blais, *Les tendances eugénistes*, 161-62.
- 114 Blais, *Les tendances eugénistes*, 75. “Ceux dont une maladie mentale trouble sérieusement les fonctions intellectuelles.” On page 79, Blais states the following: “Puisque le texte fait mention des “hommes capables de se marier,” on exclut en principe tout individu affecté d’impuissance physique ou mentale.”
- 115 “Les tendances eugénistes au Canada,” *La Famille* 6, no. 3 (November 1942): 101-02; Richard Thivierge, “Éditorial: Les tendances eugénistes au Canada,” *La Famille* 6, no. 3 (November 1942): 76; Review of *Les tendances eugénistes au Canada*, by Hervé Blais, *Revue trimestrielle canadienne* 29, no. 116 (December 1943): 442-43; Philippe Perrier, review of *Les tendances eugénistes au Canada*, by Hervé Blais, *La Famille* 7, no. 1 (January 1943): 32; Léon Bouvier, review of *Les tendances eugénistes au Canada*, by Hervé Blais, *Relations*, no. 26 (February 1943): 53; Noël Mailloux, review of *Les tendances eugénistes au Canada*, by Hervé Blais, *Revue dominicaine* 49, no. 7 (July-August 1943): 64.
- 116 Letter from Conrad-M. Morin to the Université de Montréal’s General Secretariat, 29 October 1946. Fonds du Secrétariat général de l’Université de Montréal, Archives de l’Université de Montréal, D35/821. This letter from the institute’s secretary clarifies that the Institut d’études familiales was created by the Faculty of Philosophy and not simply a continuation of the Franciscan-run Institut familial.
- 117 Hervé Blais, “L’Institut d’études familiales,” *La Famille* 9, no. 4 (June-July 1945): 124. “Le sommaire des cours mentionne l’étude des aspects philosophiques, juridiques, moraux, sociologiques, économiques et psychologiques de la famille, la spiritualité, la démographie, l’eugénisme, la santé, la délinquance, l’éducation.”
- 118 Richard Thivierge, “Une étape nouvelle,” *La Famille* 10, no. 2 (February 1946): 44.
- 119 Father Marie-Ceslas Forest, dean of the Faculty of Philosophy, was an important promoter of French-Canadian science during the interwar period. He also had a scholarly interest in eugenics, writing on the topic on several occasions during the 1930s. Forest, “Que faut-il penser de l’eugénique?,” 272-83; Forest, “Que faut-il penser de l’eugénique? (suite et fin),” 355-67. Father Noël Mailloux, who founded the Institut de psychologie in 1942, was a pioneer in importing experimental psychology as well as Freudian psychoanalysis to the Université de Montréal. He positively reviewed Blais’s work in 1943. Noël Mailloux, review of *Les tendances eugénistes au Canada*, by Hervé Blais, 64. The two Dominicans were major figures in the institutionalization of the social sciences in Québec, which contributed to secularization and to the Quiet Revolution of the 1960s. See Noël Mailloux, “L’Institut de psychologie: un groupe de professeurs et d’étudiants qui cherchent à comprendre ce qui fait que l’homme est l’homme et peut le devenir toujours davantage,” in *Continuité et rupture: les sciences sociales au Québec*, ed. Georges-Henri Lévesque et al. (Les Presses de l’Université de Montréal, 1984), 27-44; Agnès Desmazières, *L’inconscient au paradis: comment les catholiques ont reçu la psychanalyse* (Payot, 2011), 81-83.
- 120 Jean-de-Brébeuf Laramée, “Études familiales,” *La Famille* 9, no. 5 (August-September 1945): 166. The course description reads: “La Famille, Introduction – 90 leçons – R.P. Hervé Blais, O.F.M. Origine, histoire, structure, fonction. Aspects biologique, économique, social, personnel. Processus d’intégration et de désintégration, restauration.”
- 121 Laramée, “Études familiales,” 166.
- 122 Letter from R.-M. Voyer to the Rector [Mgr Olivier Maurault], 17 September 1946. Fonds du Secrétariat général de l’Université de Montréal, Archives de l’Université de Montréal, D35/821. The Institut d’études familiales struggled greatly after Blais’s departure in 1946, as witnessed by the faculty’s internal correspondence. Only two master’s degrees were awarded by the institution (both in 1948). The institute’s existence is last mentioned in the Faculty of Philosophy’s budget for the 1948–1949 academic year. See “Faculté de Philosophie, Études Médiévales, Philosophie, Psychologie: Budget 1948–1949.” Fonds de la Faculté de Philosophie, Archives de l’Université de Montréal, E99/C1,1.
- 123 See “Institut d’études familiales: Raisons d’être,” Fonds de l’Action catholique canadienne, Archives de l’Université de Montréal, P16/14.