Introduction

> *The Church in the colonies is a white man's Church, a foreigners' Church. It does not call the colonized to the ways of God, but to the ways of the white man, to the ways of the master, the ways of the oppressor. And as we know, in this story many are called but few are chosen.*
>
> Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*[1]

As French officials prepared to negotiate the terms of Algerian independence with the Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic (GPRA) in 1961–1962, among the issues up for discussion were the rights of the European settler population of Algeria and the religious freedom of Christians and Jews in what would soon be a country governed primarily by Muslims. Despite the French government's diplomatic interest in the future of his flock, Monseigneur Léon-Etienne Duval, the archbishop of Algiers, informed the French that the Catholic Church in Algeria would hold its own negotiations with the GPRA on the future of Christianity in Algeria, as the church did not want its interests to be confused with those of the French government.[2] After more than one hundred thirty years of occupation and six years of armed struggle, in which the defense of "Christian civilization" in Algeria had been one of the chief ideological justifications for the notoriously violent French tactics against the Algerian population, the future of Christianity in postcolonial Algeria was in jeopardy.

In France and the wider world, the events unfolding in Algeria during the 1950s and early 1960s became catalysts for a reevaluation of the role of

[1] F. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. R. Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2004), 7.
[2] R. Malek, *L'Algérie à Évian: Histoire des négociations secrètes, 1954–1962* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1995), 163. See also A. Nozière, *Algérie: Les chrétiens dans la guerre* (Paris: Éditions Cana, 1979), 241.

Christianity and Christian institutions in the modern world. For Christians across the world, the Algerian conflict was just one ripple, albeit one of the most tragic, in the global wave of political uprisings and negotiations that signaled the end of the European empires. Yet the Algerian War of Independence (1954–1962) forced Christians in both France and Algeria to face the realities of what had been until then abstract discussions about the problems of colonialism or colonized peoples' right to self-determination. Institutions such as the Vatican and the Protestant World Council of Churches (WCC) were concerned, above all, with the future of Christian missions in a post-colonial world. They closely watched the Algerian War, realizing that it was a particularly important test of the possibilities for positive postcolonial relations between Christians and formerly colonized peoples.

The vast majority of the Christian population, however, would not stay in Algeria long enough to witness Algerian independence. Instead, most Christians living in Algeria chose the option of "repatriation" to France. Although the origins of the phrase "the suitcase or the coffin" remain contested, it was the vibrant metaphor that captured the imagination of the European settler population by late 1960, especially those who clung desperately to French Algeria and envisaged a fate sometimes dramatically worse than death if they remained.[3] In the late spring and summer of 1962, newsreels and the pages of French periodicals such as *Paris Match* depicted dramatic scenes of the European settler population of Algeria gathering at the ports of Algiers, Oran, and other coastal cities, with suitcases and children in tow, fleeing the ravaged and newly independent Algeria.[4] By the end of the summer, more than three-quarters of the approximately one million European settlers who lived in Algeria before the War of Independence had left Algeria for France.[5]

Despite – and perhaps because of – their departure in the early 1960s, the European settler population has long dominated the narrative of the European experience of Algeria, both before and after its independence. For the period between 1962 and the early 2000s, public and official memory of

[3] Stories about Algerian nationalists' brutality toward *colons*, including beheadings and mutilation of corpses, were commonplace among the *pied-noir* community throughout the twentieth century, and especially in OAS propaganda about the consequences of Algerian independence. On the phrase, "the suitcase or the coffin," see J.-J. Jordi, *De l'exode à l'exil: Rapatriés et pieds-noirs en France* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1993), and P. Daum, *Ni valise ni cercueil: Les pieds-noirs restés en Algérie après l'indépendance* (Arles: Actes Sud, 2012), 33–37.

[4] See, for example, the June 2, 1962, issue of *Paris Match*.

[5] D. Lefeuvre, "Les pieds-noirs," in *La Guerre d'Algérie*, ed. M. Harbi and B. Stora (Paris: Robert Laffont, 2004), 396–409.

France's colonial rule in Algeria has often been described as "amnesiac."[6] The official French narrative at the time of the cease-fire negotiations between the French government and the provisional Algerian authorities declared that the French were beneficently jumping on board the "Tide of History" in according the Algerians independence.[7] The reality, however, was that in the minds of the vast majority of the French and European settler population up until 1959, Algeria was irrevocably a part of France – not a colony – and therefore, could not be decolonized. In contrast to the general amnesia of the French population, former European settlers, often called *pieds-noirs*, have engaged in an active project of memorializing their experience in Algeria. This is primarily because the history of French colonialism, the Algerian War, and the dramatic exodus from Algeria's shores are foundations of their identity.[8] Indeed, the narrative of the *pied-noir* experience in Algeria has been given the label *nostalgérie*, referring to its tendency toward sentimental nostalgia and representations of French Algeria as a Paradise Lost.[9]

[6] M. Harbi and B. Stora, eds., *La guerre d'Algérie, 1954–2004, la fin de l'amnésie* (Paris: Laffont, 2004).

[7] On this narrative and its creation, see T. Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization: The Algerian War and the Remaking of France* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), ch. 3.

[8] The terminology for the population of colonial Algeria is extremely complex and fraught with identity politics. Until the interwar period, the European population comprised French, Spanish, Italian, and Maltese settlers (mostly Catholic but with a notable Protestant and Jewish presence), who all had some variation of French citizenship and called themselves "Algerians," and then the "*Français d'Algérie*" (French of Algeria). The indigenous Arabs and Berbers were called "*indigènes*" or "*français musulmans*" (Muslim French). During the Algerian War, the indigenous Algerian Arabs and Berbers reclaimed "Algerian" to refer to the non-European populations of Algeria. In this book, I use the term "Algerian" to refer to the non-European Arab and Berber population, and the term "Muslim" solely in its religious or historical context. I refer to the European settler population alternately as "European settlers" or "*pieds-noirs*," and use "the French" to designate metropolitans or recent arrivals from France. The term "*pied-noir*" is of obscure and contested origin, but it is currently used to refer to settlers in Algeria of European descent who arrived after French colonization in 1830, possessed French citizenship, and were "repatriated" to France after the Algerian War. The term was used pejoratively during the colonial period, but "repatriated" settlers in France have since reclaimed it. On the complexities of these labels, see Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization*, ch. 1. Other important recent interventions on the *pieds-noirs* include M. Baussant, *Pieds-noirs: Mémoires d'exil* (Paris: Stock, 2002); V. Esclangon-Morin, *Les rapatriés d'Afrique du Nord de 1956 à nos jours* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2007); É. Savarese, *Algérie, la guerre des mémoires* (Paris: Éditions Non Lieu, 2007).

[9] On the phenomenon of *nostalgérie* and *pied-noir* memory, see A. L. Smith, *Colonial Memory and Postcolonial Europe: Maltese Settlers in Algeria and France* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), and C. Eldridge, "Blurring the Boundaries between Perpetrators

An extreme version of this narrative appeared in 1968, six years after Algeria gained its independence from France, with the publication of the French researcher Jean Boisson-Pradier's book *L'Église et l'Algérie* (The church and Algeria). In this wrathful indictment of anticolonial Christians in Algeria, Boisson-Pradier documented what Jean Loiseau, who wrote the preface, called, "the erasure of the Church in Algeria."[10] According to Boisson-Pradier, during the Algerian "war," a group of French Catholics had "colluded" with Algerian nationalists and "contributed in large part to the granting of Algerian independence," in that "each act, each text that demonstrated sympathy and understanding for Algerian nationalism was taken by the FLN and exploited against France."[11] In doing so they had betrayed both France and Christianity, and consequently, "the granting of independence to Algeria meant that the million or so French living there were obliged to precipitately leave the territory." Thus "the Church brutally disappeared from Algeria, driven by the vacuum that enveloped it."[12] Boisson-Pradier recounted the alleged transgressions of these Christians, including biased journalism, and the speeches and actions of Mgr Duval, whom he accused of betraying Catholics by supporting the Algerian nationalists of the Front de libération nationale (FLN) instead of his own parishioners. Some of the most egregious acts, though, entailed the provision of material support to nationalist militants. One example was that of a social worker named Denise Walbert, who was put on trial in Algiers in July 1957 for using her apartment to print FLN propaganda and shelter wanted Algerian militants. To question the validity of her motives, Boisson-Pradier cited this statement from Walbert, allegedly from the time of her arrest: "It was my Christian convictions that made me decide, freely, to take part in all of these activities."[13]

On the surface, Walbert's statement is unremarkable. In the context of the history of Christianity in Algeria, however, the position that she espoused was nothing short of revolutionary. In the spring of 1957, in the midst of the events that are commonly known as the battle of Algiers, the

and Victims: Pied-noir Memories and the Harki Community," *Memory Studies* 3 (2010): 123–36.

[10] J. Boisson-Pradier, *L'Église et l'Algérie* (Paris: Études et recherches historiques, 1968), 7. *Note*: All translations from the French, unless otherwise indicated, are my own.

[11] Ibid., 289, 290.

[12] Ibid., 297.

[13] Ibid., 28. Boisson-Pradier incorrectly dates Walbert's arrest from "the first days of 1956." She was actually arrested in February of 1957. See Walbert's personal testimony: "Une Française en Afrique du Nord de 1929 à 1957," Centre des archives du monde du travail (hereafter, CAMT), Fonds de la Mission de France (MDF), 1999013 0154, Roubaix, France.

French military arrested Walbert and eleven other Christians and charged them in the military tribunal of Algiers with "undermining the security of the French state." The actions and motivations of these Christians, among them a Catholic priest, several Catholic social workers, and an assistant to the mayor of Algiers, were feverishly debated on both sides of the Mediterranean. In some cases these Christians were labeled as "liberals," but several of the more conservative newspapers, including *Le Figaro* and *L'Echo d'Alger*, emphasized their "progressivist" activities, a term that clearly referred to their supposed ties to communism. For conservatives, right-wing Catholics, and the French military, the most vocal critics of the Christians on trial, "progressivism" was a crime in and of itself. Indeed, Walbert's statement and the argument that support for the Algerian cause was the "Christian" position had the force of an incendiary to those who saw her actions and those of her colleagues as a political and moral betrayal.

Despite the polemics and hostility toward their moral positions and actions, the "progressivist" Christians were, for the most part, neither communists nor revolutionaries. Rather they were men and women – both Protestant and Catholic – who worked on the ground in Algeria, initiating a dialogue with Algerian Muslims and working with them to solve some of the grave social problems that were at the root of Algerian discontent. With the outbreak of the Algerian War of Independence in 1954, these so-called progressivist Christians realized that whatever moral authority they had left among the Muslims of Algeria depended on their distancing themselves from the colonial power and demonstrating solidarity with the Algerians. In groups such as the Association de la jeunesse algérienne pour l'action sociale (Association of Algerian Youth for Social Action, or AJAAS), which organized service projects for Christian, Jewish, and Muslim Scout movements, these Christians began to fully understand the Algerian arguments for independence. The Centres sociaux (Social Centers), where Algerian and French social workers and teachers provided basic literacy, social services, and medical care for the residents of Algerian shantytowns, also became sites for direct Christian-Muslim collaboration. Within these organizations, Christians gained firsthand exposure to the massive poverty, illiteracy, and frustration that were the most visible legacy of French colonialism for the majority of the Algerian population.

Through these interactions, the "progressivist" Christians came to believe that radical social action was the means through which they could prove to the Algerians that their engagement in the political project of

independence was serious. For some this even meant supporting the end of *Algérie française*, a position that was tantamount to treason in the eyes of many in both France and Algeria. Yet it was through this engagement in social projects at the grass roots that they also came to realize that the institutions and practices of Christianity in Algeria would also have to be decolonized.

Decolonizing Christianity

This book examines the central role that Christianity played in Algerian decolonization and the evolution of the relationship of religion and politics throughout the war of independence and its aftermath on multiple levels. First and foremost, this book tells the story of individuals who, like Denise Walbert, understood their political and social engagements in Algeria to be a vital extension of their Christian beliefs. I trace the origins of their beliefs and the motivations for their political and social actions by examining their religious, social, and political networks, and the ways in which they constructed their political and theological worldview. I reconstruct the individual histories and connections that developed between the Christians in France and Algeria who came to realize that Christianity would need to adapt to the realities of a postcolonial world. Their shifting beliefs about Christianity's role in the French empire grew out of a long-term theological and moral examination of the relationship between religion and politics, which emerged in France in the 1930s and 1940s. It was first tested during World War II as leftist Catholics and Protestants in France used Christian theology as a basis for their resistance to Nazism. In the aftermath of World War II, Catholics like the worker-priests of the Mission de France and Protestants such as the aid workers of Cimade transferred this engagement to the colonial context through their political solidarities with North African laborers and their social projects in Algeria.[14] Protestants and Catholics in Algeria then adapted theological ideas from the metropole to the Algerian

[14] The Mission de France was a French Catholic missionary movement that began in Lisieux in 1941 as part of the Catholic Church's project to attract more young men to the priesthood and combat the growing dechristianization of the working classes. Several of the priests who joined the Mission de France became known as worker-priests because they went into factories as laborers (rather than as chaplains or priests) to be among the working classes. Cimade was a French Protestant aid organization formed in the early days of World War II as a means to support wartime refugees. Both organizations are analyzed in great depth throughout this book.

context thereby forcing Christians globally to rethink concepts and practices such as the Christian missionary project, and the relationship between religion and politics.

I use the term "Christianity" in this book to describe the totality of Catholic and Protestant institutions and beliefs in both France and Algeria, with the clear understanding that Catholics vastly outnumbered Protestants in both places. Although I often analyze Catholics and Protestants separately, as individuals or movements, their networks overlapped in significant ways, particularly by the end of the Algerian War. The greater representation of Catholics and Catholicism within France and its empire (particularly in overseas missions) has dominated scholarship on Christianity in France, and to a certain extent dominates this book. However, Protestants were a vocal minority who played a significant role in both Christian resistance to Nazism during World War II and the decolonization of Algeria, and thus deserve significant representation in this story.

This project reframes the history of twentieth-century French Christianity in several ways. Analyzing both Catholics and Protestants allows us to see more distinctly both their similarities and their differences in regards to theology, religious practice, and engagement in the political sphere, while highlighting their interpersonal connections, which were considerable in Algeria. In addition, this book ties the period of World War II to that of the Algerian War and its aftermath. In contrast to the majority of histories of French Christianity that isolate one event from the other, I demonstrate that the theological innovations and political and social activism that emerged in French Catholicism and Protestantism during the 1930s and 1940s were among the most important inspirations for the engagement of French Christians in the Algerian War.[15] This book also illustrates how the local context of Algerian decolonization influenced the global currents of both Protestant and Catholic movements that were concerned about the future of Christianity in the decolonizing world.

[15] This is most typical of much of the French-language historiography of Christianity that tends toward long-term synthetic works organized around major political events such as the two world wars, the Algerian War, the May '68 uprisings; religious events such as Vatican II; or more focused studies of religious movements. Some examples include F. Bédarida and E. Fouilloux, eds., "La guerre d'Algérie et les chrétiens," special issue, *Cahiers de l'IHTP* 9 (1988): 1–188; G. Cholvy and Y.-M. Hilaire, *Religion et société en France, 1914–1945* (Toulouse: Éditions Privat, 2002); E. Fouilloux, *Les chrétiens français entre crise et libération, 1937–1947* (Paris: Seuil, 1997); E. Fouilloux, *Les chrétiens français entre guerre d'Algérie et mai 1968* (Paris: Parole et silence/Desclée de Brouwer, 2008).

In exploring the decolonization of Christianity in France and Algeria, I follow the lead of scholars such as Frederick Cooper, Ann Stoler, and Gary Wilder who treat the metropole and the colony within the same analytical frame.[16] Wilder, in particular, invites us to consider France as an "imperial nation-state" and ultimately to decenter France in the spatial, intellectual, and methodological norms of the history of the modern French empire.[17] By analyzing networks and exchanges of people and ideas that moved back and forth across the Mediterranean, I demonstrate that it was not simply French theology or grassroots activism in Algeria that reshaped global Christianity in the era of decolonization but the combination of the two. However, this does not imply that Christians in Algeria simply put into practice modern theological innovations from Europe. Such a claim highly devalues and underplays the transformative role that Christians in Algeria and the context of Algerian decolonization played in the development of postcolonial Christianity in the 1960s.

Following Dipesh Chakrabarty, who works to "decenter" or "provincialize" Europe in global history, this book seeks to "provincialize" the history of Christianity.[18] In decentering the focus of postwar Christianity from metropolitan Europe, I am not suggesting that we reject or ignore the influence of French Christianity on Algeria. On the contrary, "provincializing" the history of Christianity allows us to see how Christians in the French empire understood metropolitan theologies, adapted them to their local context, and reshaped debates and practices that have long been analyzed as uniquely "French" or "European." It adds new depth and context to debates about the relationship between religion and politics, and the role of religion in the development of the French empire, as well as the relationship between Christianity and Islam, that have long been centered solely on the metropole. Provincializing Christianity also allows us to analyze how and why Christians in Algeria undertook the project of "decolonizing" Christianity – or transforming the institutions and practices of Christianity there – as they faced a situation in Algeria quite unique to French

[16] F. Cooper and A. L. Stoler, "Between Metropole and Colony," in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, ed. F. Cooper and A. L. Stoler (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 1–37; G. Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State: Negritude and Colonial Humanism between the Two World Wars* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

[17] G. Wilder, *Freedom Time: Negritude, Decolonization, and the Future of the World* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015).

[18] D. Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 3–6.

Christianity. Indeed, as we look closer into the shifting power dynamics that the process of decolonization produced, we see that the decolonization of Christianity was a means through which Christianity was provincialized in its power structures and practices. This occurred most visibly in the theological innovations and personnel changes of these churches in the 1960s, as the emerging voices of the Third World within both Protestantism and Catholicism began to gain a foothold in their historically Eurocentric hierarchies.

Algeria is a particularly instructive case study within the crumbling European empires for examining how Christianity encountered the question of decolonization. Algeria was quite distinctive in a number of respects from the rest of the French empire. Because of Algeria's legal incorporation into metropolitan France and its status as France's major settler colony, Christianity in Algeria was organized around the European settlers. In contrast to French imperial territories such as French West Africa, Madagascar, or Indochina, Algeria had few Catholic or Protestant missionaries seeking to convert indigenous souls to Christianity or to uplift them to the standards of French civilization. In most European colonies, the objective of both Catholic and Protestant missionaries (and their leadership institutions) was the establishment of an indigenous church. As both Elizabeth Foster and Charles Keith have demonstrated, in France's nonsettler colonies like Senegal and Indochina, a "decolonization of the church" meant a transition to indigenous leadership at independence. This process did not occur without contestation, as it was the Vatican that had, from the end of World War I, been pushing to build up indigenous clergy and leadership throughout the European empires. It did so, in many instances, in the face of strong opposition from French missionaries, who claimed that their protégés were not yet prepared to hold positions of leadership.[19] Although the existence of indigenous churches in most European colonies secured some future for Christianity after decolonization, tensions between European missionaries and indigenous clergy lingered after independence, putting to question the validity of traditional missionary practices and the ideologies of Western Christianity.

[19] E. Foster, "A Mission in Transition: Race, Politics, and the Decolonization of the Catholic Church in Senegal," in *In God's Empire: French Missionaries and the Modern World*, ed. J. P. Daughton and O. White (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); C. Keith, *Catholic Vietnam: A Church from Empire to Nation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), ch. 3.

Algeria, with its violent war of decolonization that placed Christian rhetoric and practices center stage, brought these questions to the attention of Christians globally. The second objective of this book is to examine the ways in which "Christianity" was mobilized as an ideology – rather than as theology or a body of religious practices – to defend a variety of actions during the French colonial period and during the Algerian War. The goal here is to analyze the power that Christianity as an ideology held in relation to French colonialism, to show who wielded this power, how it was mobilized, and what its consequences were. By the late 1950s, the Algerian War of Independence had become a test case for how Christianity would respond to the potential crises of decolonization that were developing throughout Africa and Asia. As Christians attempted to renegotiate their place in the emerging Third World, they were forced to confront the consequences of centuries of racism and violence that Christian rhetoric and institutions had reinforced in European colonies. By the end of the Algerian War in 1962, many Christians globally had realized that unless they demonstrated solidarity with colonized peoples in their desire for independence, they would lose whatever moral authority they had left and would cease to be welcome in the new independent nation-states that emerged from the process of decolonization. Furthermore, they understood that it was necessary to decouple – or decolonize – Christian institutions and practices from both the real and perceived authority of the colonial state. Otherwise, in the eyes of formerly colonized peoples, Christianity would forever be associated with colonial power.

The final objective of this book is to analyze the consequences of Christian activism in Algeria, of Christian rhetoric around the Algerian War, and of the decolonization of Christianity both in Algeria and on the global stage. The moral and religious questions that shaped the Algerian War inspired theological discussions at the highest levels of Christian institutions such as the Vatican and the World Council of Churches. They also fostered historic innovations in global religious thought, including the ecumenical movement, Vatican II, and Liberation theology. Thus, in contrast to Jean Boisson-Pradier's assertion that Christian "collusion" with Algerian nationalists destroyed the church in Algeria, I demonstrate that it enabled the church's continued presence in Algeria after independence. Using Protestant and Catholic engagement in the decolonization of Algeria as a case study of the role of Christianity in the modern world after World War II, this book traces the transformation of Christianity from its position as the moral foundation of European imperialism to its role as a radical voice of political and social change in the era of decolonization.