

The Political Opinion of Upper Canadian Catholics

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Catholic leaders in Upper Canada estimated that Catholics formed almost one quarter of the population in this province. Most of the Catholics were from Ireland, but there was a considerable Catholic Scottish settlement in Glengarry, a number of French Canadian pioneers in the Detroit River region, and along the Ottawa valley, as well as a small Catholic German community in Waterloo County. Since Catholic immigrants were usually the poorest of the poor, and as a result badly educated, few attained prominence in political life. Their very numbers, on the other hand, gave importance to their vote and it is therefore of historical interest to determine the political attitudes of this group. I shall discuss the period from the early days of Upper Canada until Confederation in 1867.

Three factors were of major importance in forming Catholic political opinion here. These were: the struggle for responsible government, the establishment of Catholic schools as a part of the public school system and finally, the Catholic reaction in Europe to anti-clerical liberalism. Politics in Upper Canada is, of course, simply the transference of European views into a North American setting. No understanding can be reached of the situation here without reference to Europe, while at the same time important differences in political conditions must be kept in mind; often the same terminology could mean one thing in Europe, and something else in Canada.

Catholic immigrants poured into Upper Canada in the years following the restoration of Europe in 1815. Democracy other than in its suspect American or French forms was scarcely known outside of ancient Greek writings. The world had hardly adjusted itself to the experiment of the revolted American colonies, when France gave a sharp lesson in what the overturning of the social order might signify. Many now saw lofty terms of liberty, equality, civil rights, freedom of conscience and of the press, not as ideals, but as inflammatory appeals which would lead to suppression of religion and the institution of a military despotism on the Napoleonic model.

Aristocratic landholders, fearing a further loss of privileges, tended to abandon the public profession of religious skepticism. The wealthy middle class merchants and industrialists became more cautious in their criticisms of the antiquated order in Church and State when they sensed the danger of socialism more to the left. Socialist ideas in the new age of the industrial proletariat were now more than an academic game. Even progressive, liberal intellectuals felt the novel appeal of the nation-state, and shuddered at the possibility of any movement

which might produce another Napoleon. Where once the brightest minds of the western world had looked to “reason” in place of a “superstitious” and “persecuting” Church, now the leaders of the Romantic revival looked to the Christian Middle Ages as an ideal and professed an irrationalism in one form or another as an intellectual endeavour superior to the dry calculations of “reason.” In a generation Europe retreated from the Age of Progress and of Reason, to the Age of Reaction.

Catholic churchmen, although largely free from the unhealthy aspects of Romanticism, naturally greeted the sentimental swing to orthodoxy. If the conservative felt that the State and property could be preserved only when religion controlled the masses, so did the average churchman regard the despotic throne as essential to uphold the cause of religion. After all, they reasoned, liberal anti-clericalism had infected only a minority of influential, restless members of the middle class. The heart of the nation was represented by the peasantry in the countryside – a peasantry which was still religious. Let the monarch rule in the interests of all of the people, they argued, and not subject himself to the irreligious whims of dangerous thinkers among the lawyers and writers.

While this point of view influenced the course of events for a few decades in the nineteenth century, it failed to take into account the actual progress of human affairs. Not only did the liberal heritage of the French Revolution continue to attract, but the increasing pace of industrialism and of universal education so changed the complexion of society that any system based on a monarchy and a landed aristocracy became absurd; the oncedreaded democracy had become inevitable. The best of the Catholic thinkers themselves were to reconcile democratic and liberal ideas with ardent, orthodox, ultramontane Catholicism.

Catholic thought in Europe during this period is, on the whole, quite conservative, as any perusal of papal pronouncements will testify. This conservatism was reflected in the Upper Canadian Bishops, traditionally warm supporters of the papacy. It is right to assume that to a degree the political opinions of the hierarchy influenced the clergy and the laity here, as there was little anti-clericalism among the Catholic body in this province. There is no reason to assert that the frequent stress on loyalty to the British Empire and the consequent evils of rebellion did not have immediate effects in the turbulent politics of this time.

The political situation of Catholics in Upper Canada, however, was more complex than that of Catholics in many European states. “Throne and altar” thinking among Catholics cannot help but appear under a different light when both throne and altar happen to be Protestant. Conservative Bishops here, like their brothers in Europe, emphasized the divine nature of governmental authority, but in the British possessions they were very alive to the religious rights of those who did not fall within the pale of the government-supported Church. Right Rev. J. A. Macdonell, first Bishop in Upper Canada, was in many respects a “ferocious Tory,” but his criticisms of the Tory “family-compact” pro-Church of England rule were strikingly similar to those of the democratic Reformers.

With certain exceptions, the average Catholic voter was an Irish Catholic. His

opinions were voiced through the Irish Catholic press, the most important being Charles Donlevy's *The Mirror*, and J. G. Moylan's *The Canadian Freeman*, both published in Toronto. *The Mirror* was important in the 1830's, 1840's, and early 1850's, while *The Canadian Freeman* dominated the scene in the late 1850's and 1860's. *The Freeman* was devoted largely to religious interests, while *The Mirror* was almost exclusively a political paper, and gives a clear picture of leading Irish Catholic political opinion.

Donlevy, possessed to an unusual degree of the amazing gift of Irish rhetoric, was one of the most significant champions of democracy and responsible government in Canadian history. His advocacy of democracy came as natural to him as his ultramontane Catholicism. Both were a result of the political situation in Ireland. The fact that Catholics were considered as second-class citizens meant little in England where they were so few. But it was quite another thing in Ireland, where they formed the vast majority of the populace. Lacking full political rights, obliged to support a hated Church, and with the bitterest possible historical memories, the Irish Catholic was ready to learn his political ABC's from their leader Daniel O'Connell, who preached democracy, tolerance, and the separation of Church and State. O'Connell was as ready to denounce the state-church despotism in Spain as he was in Britain, but was at the same time a convinced and ardent Catholic. Few would question the orthodoxy of his views when his shafts were directed against the Protestant state-church.

The Irish Catholic arrived in Upper Canada a liberal democrat, anxious to remove any vestiges of a Protestant state-church here, highly suspicious of the English-appointed executive, and not at all enthusiastic about the British connection. Directed by the Catholic press, he allied himself with Protestant Dissenters and liberal members of the Church of England in Upper Canada's Reform party. This party, together with French Canadian and Protestant Reformers in Lower Canada, was successful in obtaining responsible government in 1848.

The Mirror contains valuable information concerning Irish Catholic opinion as far back as the 1830's, during the period of the rebellion. The paper had been friendly to the advanced Reformers led by William Lyon Mackenzie, and after Mackenzie's failure at Montgomery's Tavern, printed the rebel leader's proclamation which he had issued from Navy Island on December 13, 1837.¹ On the other hand, *The Mirror* was opposed to the use of force, as the following editorial shows:

The Clergy of our religion have always, to our certain knowledge, recommended submission to the higher powers, and a respectful obedience to the laws of the land, for which they have been sometimes censured-but it is plain now, that their object was in accordance with the rules laid down by the Apostles, and as dictated by a meek and merciful Saviour, whereas there is not one of them even suspected, and very few of their hearers who paid attention to their instructions,

¹ *The Mirror*, December 30, 1837.

concluded in the work of devastation, confusion, or blood.²

The paper, anxious to prevent its suppression from a Tory reaction, insisted that Irish Catholic political opinions did not lead to the rebellion, and that Catholics had no share in the Mackenzie disturbances. Although many regarded Catholics in Ireland as a dangerous element, there was no reason, *The Mirror* claimed, to suspect Catholics here of active hostility to the State:

In Canada the Catholics have no such grievances (as in Ireland) on account, of their religion, the nation does not hold them in degradation – they are qualified to fill any office of trust and honour, and sometimes (are) appointed.³

Donlevy's editorials at the time following the rebellion took on a moderately conservative tone, not only because he was anxious to co-operate with ecclesiastical censure of rebellion, but also because the Whig government in England was associated with O'Connell in Ireland.⁴ But it would be a mistake to assume that Donlevy had been converted to imperialism. Not only did he conduct an ardent campaign for leniency to the captured rebels, but he resumed his campaign for responsible government. In the summer of 1838, for example, he demanded that Upper Canada be free to conduct its own domestic affairs:

The separation advocated is merely a separation of all internal or local government of this Province, from the Colonial Office. We utterly repudiate any further interference. That allegiance which the Province owes to the Mother Country, and which is due to her, as from a child to a parent, must, and will be paid ... A democratic assembly based on suffrage almost universal, would at the present moment offer to the mother country – a surer, and more sincere and lasting tie and connexion than the Tories could offer, had they the services of the guillotine instead of the gallows.⁵

Donlevy's opinions frequently clashed with those of Bishop Macdonell. The Bishop was all his life a warm defender of the British Crown, and owed his salary to his efforts on behalf of British interests. He regarded Republicanism and democracy as natural developments of religious dissent, thought that the Catholic Church was in a sense a state-church in Canada, and that the government should give financial aid to Catholic priests and schoolmasters. He made no secret of his views at election time, and served on the Legislative Council.

Macdonell, however, was no slavish supporter of the old order. He was a practical man, with natural conservative leanings, yet he subordinated all other considerations to religious interests. He believed that the cause of religion could best be served by co-operation with a paternalistic regime, but he was quick

² *The Mirror*, December 16, 1837.

³ *The Mirror*, December 30, 1837.

⁴ *The Mirror*, January 6, 1838.

⁵ *The Mirror*, July 14, 1838.

enough to criticize the authorities when he thought they were acting unjustly, and his pressure on the administration to aid Catholic clergymen and Catholic schools was continuous over a thirty-year period.⁶

Although *The Mirror* supported the principle of public aid to Catholic education, it agreed with O'Connell that public support for priests turned clergymen into political supporters of the established government. Donlevy frequently attacked Bishop Macdonell for receiving a salary from the government, and for his public support of the "Tories."⁷

Another interesting dispute among Catholics at the time was that between *The Mirror* and the wealthy and prominent convert to the Catholic Church, the Honorable John Elmsley of Toronto. Elmsley's conversion and his very considerable support in resources and time to the Catholic episcopacy, did not prevent Donlevy attacking his political principles. *The Mirror* on one occasion rejoiced at Elmsley's defeat in a local election:

RISING POPULARITY. – The *Honourable* John Elmsley, formerly one of Her Majesty's Executive Council for the Province of Upper Canada, and one of the leaders of the notorious Family Compact party, recently opposed Mr. Sheriff Jarvis at the election in St. David's War, for the office of Alderman, and received *only six votes*. "Sic transit gloria mundi." Comment is needless.⁸

Earlier, Elmsley had aroused Donlevy's temper when Elmsley attacked the proposed legislative union between Upper and Lower Canada. Elmsley thought the union would give too much power to the French Canadians, who had demonstrated their lack of loyalty in the recent rebellion. It was necessary Elmsley told the Legislative Council, to ensure that any legislature contain a majority of persons favourable to the British connection. "Rebels," he declared, "have no claim to an equality of political rights with her Majesty's loyal and devoted subjects; and the establishment of that equality must have the inevitable effect of emboldening the former in their treason, and of disheartening the latter in their brave and patriotic efforts to suppress that reason."⁹ Elmsley recommended that:

Members of the Legislative Council and House of Assembly should possess proper & sufficient qualifications in respect of property & education; that electors in counties should hold their lands in free & common socage; that the English language should alone be spoken and used in the Halls of the Legislature, in the Courts of Law and Equity, and in all public documents and proceedings; that the British portion of the inhabitants of Lower Canada should by a new division of the Province into counties, be effectually represented; that the place of meeting of the Legislature of a British Colony should never be liable in the

⁶ See especially Macdonell to Sir John Macdonald, London, March 10, 1838, and Macdonell to Durham, June 14, 1838. Photostat copies in Ontario Archives.

⁷ *The Mirror*, November 25, 1837.

⁸ *The Mirror*, October 8, 1841.

⁹ *The Mirror*, December 27, 1839.

intrusion of a French mob, by being within the present limits of a Lower Canada.¹⁰

This occasioned The Mirror to retort:

Of all the acts a man could be guilty of, none astonishes us more than the effusions of the Hon. John Elmsley, against the Innocent Lower Canadians. Where was Mr. Elmsley, or any of the Compact, when the Canadians defended these Colonies, and defeated the Americans – shewing they preferred Monarchical government to Republican. The Lower Canadians are Catholics, and where is the rule, aye, the golden rule, “Love thy neighbour as Thyself.” Had Mr. Elmsley not been himself a Catholic, and seemingly a devout one, the admiration would be less. The number of Canadians that rebelled was small in comparison to those who are loyal subjects – even had every one of them rebelled, and again to be pardoned by their Sovereign, they have no right to be insulted. It is monstrous conduct in any would-be autocrat to try to enslave 650,000 of the Queen’s subjects.¹¹

Throughout the 1840’s, The Mirror continued to guide the Irish Catholic voter to support the Reform party. Occasionally the paper was disturbed by the anti-Catholic flavour of some of the Protestant Reform papers, but the Catholic-Protestant Reform alliance was not broken until in the 1850’s the Catholic separate school question became the most important element in Upper Canadian politics. As a result of the break-up of the Reform party on religious grounds, it becomes most difficult to ascertain Catholic opinion.

Until responsible government was realized in 1848, it is safe to classify most Catholic voters in Upper Canada as liberal, democratic Reformers. Bishop Macdonell was conservative, as were certain prominent Catholics such as Elmsley. But the “Catholic vote” was largely a Reform vote. Furthermore, the leaders of the Loyal Orange Lodge in Upper Canada normally supported the Tory or (later) the Liberal-conservative party. Even when the conservatives in Upper Canada allied themselves with pro-clerical conservatives in French Canada, Irish Catholics here were hardly tempted to vote for any party which they believed was associated with Orangeism.

Yet on the other hand there was a contradiction in the association of Irish Catholics with Protestant Dissenters. The non-Catholic wing of the Reform party contained a large element, to be known as “Clear Grit,” which was in principle strongly opposed to Catholicism. These persons regarded the Catholic Church as a diabolical instrument which was attempting to enslave mankind. Many regarded the Pope as “anti-Christ,” and others identified themselves with liberal anti-clerical movements on the European continent. Protestant Reformers were willing to co-operate with Catholics to overthrow Protestant state-churchism in Canada, but they did not want to see the Catholic Church replace the Church of England in the government’s favor.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

The issue came to a head with the growth of the free school system in the 1850's. Bishop Armand Marie Francis de Charbonnel of Toronto led the Catholic attempt to ensure that Catholic separate schools made parallel progress with the public common school system. The Irish Catholic Reform papers gave Charbonnel complete support. These papers viewed public aid for Catholic schools not as state churchism, but as a part of the liberal right for a parent to educate a child as he saw fit. Many Protestant Reformers, however, thought the support of Catholic schools was the same thing as public support for religion, and believed that the Catholic agitation was an attempt of the Catholic hierarchy to destroy the public school system, to keep the minds of Upper Canadian children in darkness.

George Brown, Free Church Presbyterian and editor of the successful *Toronto Globe*, led the agitation against public support for Catholic separate schools, freely acknowledge that Catholic principles were incompatible with Reform party ideals, and built up a strong party based largely on his brilliantly-written "no popery" articles. He became the most prominent leader of the "Clear Grits," gradually forcing the more moderate Reformers to ally with the Tories in the new Liberal-conservative party, which John A. Macdonald was eventually to lead.

The Irish Catholic Reformers were at a loss to know where to stand. How could they support the Liberal-conservatives when that party was supported by Orangemen and when in many places Orange leaders were its candidates? On the other hand, how could they support the Reform party, when its candidates generally were pledged to abolish separate schools? The separate school question dwarfed all other issues. Brown made it the keystone of determining a candidate's allegiance, and the Catholic bishops and newspapers instructed Catholics not to consider party names, but to vote for whatever candidate would improve the school law in favor of Catholic demands.

It was not easy to decide how a candidate stood on the matter of separate schools. Politicians wanted to receive the Catholic vote, but Protestants in almost all ridings were in a majority, and almost all were opposed to separate schools. Candidates often tried to be as vague as possible, so that they could capture both Catholic and Protestant votes. As a whole, Liberal-conservative candidates (even when Orangemen) favoured at least keeping the separate school provisions of the School Acts, and often thereby obtained reluctant Catholic support. It is not possible to determine how Catholics voted, but it is evident that while many Catholics shifted their allegiance to the Liberal-conservatives, and voted in many cases for Orangemen, they were never happy with the arrangement, and willingly followed Thomas D'Arcy McGee when he allied himself with Brown in 1858. The average Irish Catholic regarded himself as a liberal Reformer, and thought of any other arrangement as temporary and unnatural.

Clear Grits, *The Mirror* argued, were ruining the Reform party, by driving Irish Catholics from its ranks, and by making co-operation with French Canadians an impossibility.¹² The paper changed from a political journal to a religious paper,

¹² *The Mirror*, July 11, 1851.

defending Catholics against the charge that they were the tools of the priests,¹³ and at the same time upholding the religious authority of the episcopacy.¹⁴

When it was found that Liberal-conservative politicians in Upper Canada were able to ally themselves with French Canadians, and would co-operate in separate school legislation and in ecclesiastical corporation bills, *The Mirror* threatened the Reform party with the loss of Catholic support. Since the coming of responsible government, and the fanatical anti-Catholic spirit among the extreme Reformers, the political situation in Canada has undergone a transformation, the paper maintained, pointing out that “the terms ‘Tory’ and ‘Reformer,’ in the ordinary meaning attributed to them, cannot be said to apply with any show of cause to *any party* at present in Canada.”¹⁵ The Tories have acquiesced in responsible government, so that:

instead of Tories and Reformers, as heretofore, we must in future designate our political parties as “*Levellers*” and “*Preservers*.” The former are opposed to Separate Schools, opposed to Ecclesiastical Corporations, opposed to religion in every shape and form; and though they do not fully proclaim the fact, yet from their language and general demeanour one is justified in coming to the conclusion that they are seeking to establish an “age of reason” amongst us, with Tom Paine as the presiding deity. No man living can more thoroughly detest religious bigotry and hypocrisy than we do, but we will never countenance any infringement on the glorious principles of our common Christianity.¹⁶

The Mirror explained that it had not departed from its earlier liberal principles, but that extreme Reformers were making it impossible for Irish Catholics to continue to support that party. On the other hand, the former “Tories” were proving themselves better liberals and democrats in the matter of separate schools and ecclesiastical corporations, than the Reformers.¹⁷ Catholics, the journal added, will no longer support the anti-Catholic Reform party simply on the grounds that otherwise the Tories will obtain control:

Let the practical reforms which the country requires, be brought forward, and we shall lend our humble efforts to have them carried; but we are determined, with God’s assistance that our co-religionists shall no longer be made instruments in forwarding the selfish views of the most bigoted and anti-Catholic faction in the Province. The very strength and power which Catholics have obtained for them, they now seek to turn against themselves, and the most insulting epithets they can think of is the only return made for past services.¹⁸

¹³ *The Mirror*, January 9, 1852.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *The Mirror*, February 13, 1852.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *The Mirror*, March 12, 1852.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

Brown and his “Clear Grit” followers were right in assuming that the majority of voters in Upper Canada were opposed to separate schools. But his bitter anti-Catholic attitude allowed the Liberal-conservative minority in Upper Canada to ally itself with the French Canadian majority in Lower Canada to form a government. Yet the basis for the Liberal-conservative wing in Upper Canada was Protestant, and many were Orangemen, fearful of Rome’s encroachments. Most of the Orange political leaders had assented to keep the separate school provisions in the statutes, on the grounds that the school issue was not so much that of separate school as of the necessity to have Bible reading in the public schools. They were not prepared either in principle or politically to adhere to Catholic demands for an improved school law.

The government, rather haltingly, had acceded to Catholic pressure in 1853 and 1855, but refused to support a further school law amendment in 1856. As a consequence Bishop Charbonnel and the Catholic press denounced the Liberal-conservative ministry, instructing Catholics to vote against it. The Reformers, however, refused to offer to replace themselves as objects of Catholic affection. Catholics discussed the possibility of forming a Catholic political party, but *The Mirror* wisely observed that such a party would only encourage an anti-Catholic party of exceptional strength, and that the only solution for the Catholic difficulty at that time was to support neither party, but vote for a candidate in accordance with his attitude on separate schools.¹⁹

Upper Canadian politics took a surprising turn in 1858 when George Brown allied himself with Thomas D’Arcy McGee, eloquent Montreal Irish Catholic journalist, and A. A. Dorion, leader of the French Canadian *Rouge*. Brown at no time gave up his opposition to separate schools, but temporarily dropped his “no popery” campaign, and became vague about the school question, when both Dorion and McGee supported the Catholic position.

Many Catholics in Upper Canada, led by J. G. Moylan, editor of the new Toronto liberal Catholic weekly, *The Canadian Freeman*, followed McGee in supporting Brown and the Reform party. George E. Clerk, editor of *The True Witness*, Montreal right wing Catholic paper, and Michael Hayes, editor of *The Citizen*, Toronto Catholic conservative paper, attacked the McGee-Brown alliance as inimical to Catholic interests. It is impossible to judge accurately, but it is my opinion from reading Catholic and secular papers at the time, that the majority of Catholics in this province had no difficulty in stomaching Brown, and felt much more at home with the Reformers, than they did with the Orange-supported Liberal-conservatives.

Brown was not successful in forming a government, and Catholics gradually withdrew their support. Although *The Globe* had lessened its “no popery” campaign, it soon became evident nothing had changed, and that separate schools could receive no help from the Reformers. *The Canadian Freeman* announced its

¹⁹ *The Mirror*, July 18, 1856. See *The True Witness*, August 15, 1856.

break from Brown on November 8, 1860.²⁰ Moylan swung considerably to the right. Although he still professed to support the liberalism of the old-fashioned Reform party of the 1840's, he attacked democracy as harmful to religion, citing Luther, Oliver Cromwell, the French Revolution, Italian nationalism, and the northern American states as examples of that spirit.²¹

Politics lost some of its politico-religious bitterness in Upper Canada in the years immediately preceding Confederation in 1867, however, as Brown, McGee and Sir John A. MacDonald allied to support Confederation. The assurance of educational and religious rights of minorities in Upper and Lower Canada, and the control of domestic matters in provincial legislatures, satisfied most conservatives on the one hand, and a large number of Reformers on the other. *The Montreal True Witness*, always conservative, distrusted Representation by Population as a danger to Catholic interests, but the Bishops were non-committal, and indeed Bishop John Joseph Lynch of Toronto told Macdonald that he was "more favourable to Confederation."²²

Quite naturally, there was little that was profound in Upper Canadian Catholic political thought. O'Connell's Irish liberalism was simply transferred to Upper Canada and applied to the local scene. Upper Canada possessed no great Catholic theologians or scholars, and Catholic journalists voiced Reform opinions for practical political reasons. There is little trace here of the deep arguments between the "translation" and the "designation" theories which moved European Catholic thinkers.²³

Perhaps the most extensive definition of the Catholics attitude to the state was given in a lecture before the Catholic Institute of Toronto on the 12th of January, 1852, by the Very Rev. R. J. Tellier, S.J., on "The Economy of Catholic Education."²⁴ Tellier, a French Jesuit here temporarily in educational work, was representative of the European "throne and altar" tradition. Many of his remarks are so reactionary as to startle the contemporary Catholic reader, just as they must have startled the Catholic listener at that time, since the Catholic political tradition in Upper Canada was democratic and liberal.

Tellier hoped that justice in educational legislation would allow Catholics here to become "an exclusive body":

Let us supposed then that we have won the point with the enlightened, conscientious, firm, equitable jurisprudence of the Government. Then we Catholics enjoy Separate Boards of Education, Separate Schools, non-interference with the faith of our children, our fair share in the School Fund. By this very fact, we, although still materially blended with the rest of population

²⁰ See *The True Witness*, November 23, 1860; *Canadian Freeman*, February 21, 1861.

²¹ *Canadian Freeman*, February 6, 1852.

²² Lynch to Macdonald, December 13, 1864. *Macdonald Papers*, PAC, Vol. 228.

²³ See Gabriel Bowe, *The Origin of Political Authority*, Dublin, 1955.

²⁴ *The Mirror*, January 15, 1852.

in a mixed country... are, however, virtually an exclusive body ... On this, Gentlemen, depends the whole economy, which is benefitting to, and ought to be characteristic of education, of instruction in our schools, colleges, universities, and institutions: *a full spirit of Catholicism in its pure homogeneousness.*²⁵

Tellier wanted Catholic educational institutions on all levels from elementary schools to universities and special institutions and academies. He supported universal elementary education, but frowned on classical education save for those persons definitely going into the professions or who were from the aristocracy. It was a mistake, he said, to extend classical college training to youths who would have no means of using their education, since they would be unwilling to work, and would consequently become an unstable element in the population.

From such unstable elements were derived the advocates of “constitutions.” Constitutional and democratic movements, the priest declared, were the great enemies of the Catholic Church and of Catholic education in Europe. He attacked the French Revolution and the eighteenth century “enlightened despots,” and supported contemporary European reactionary monarchs. Tellier denounced countries which were “still infatuated with constitutional theories,” and expressed the opinion that such ‘political progress’ was “nothing but the secularization of Protestantism.”²⁶ He praised, furthermore, the control of Bishops over public schools in Spain, and asserted that the authority of the Bishops should extend not only over education, but also over “political religious education given by economists and publicists.”²⁷

It was an amazing address to give in this country, and it is a wonder that it was not picked up by the Protestant press. But there was little reaction to it, at least in any of the papers which are extant. Either Protestant editors found it too long to read or, since it merely confirmed what they had been saying about the Catholics all along, did not consider it worth bothering about. *The Mirror* withheld comment, remarking only:

We refer our readers to this truly able discourse, which we publish in our columns today *entire*, convinced as we are that to our subscribers no matter could be more welcome ... It would be a work of supererogation on our part to do more than direct the attention of the reader to this Address, as its perusal must convince every unbiased mind of the vast store of knowledge from which it emanated.²⁸

More in harmony with Catholic opinion here were the opinions of Orestes Brownson, American philosopher and convert, who warmly supported constitutional government, freedom of the press and conscience and religious

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

toleration. His views were from time to time reprinted in *The Canadian Freeman*,²⁹ just as *The Mirror* had reprinted similar opinions of O'Connell. *The Mirror* was much concerned with the numerous attacks against the Church as an enemy to civil liberty, and maintained that this was a false opinion based on inaccurate history. In fact, the paper asserted, the Church had been a consistent friend to civil liberties.³⁰ *The Canadian Freeman*, when a Reform party supporter, discussed the controversy current in France between Catholic authoritarians of the *Univers school*, and Count de Montalembert, the Catholic liberal. *The Freeman* backed Montalembert, and criticized certain Catholic intellectuals in Ireland for siding with the *Univers*. Resorting to the use of a bit of historical nonsense, *The Freeman* supported representative institutions as being naturally Catholic:

Parliamentary, or Representative Government, was the image and likeness of the early Christian civilization of all Europe, and prevailed not only in England, then, but in France, Spain, Germany, and Italy, as well. The Reformation, centralization, and counter-centralization, overthrew, one by one, the liberties of those several nations, until at last the sole remaining member of the European family of estates, as originally constituted, was to be found in insular England.³¹

It was as common for Catholic papers in Upper Canada to defend liberal democracy as it was for them to defend Catholic religious doctrine. After the coming of responsible government in 1848, there is no hint from any segment of native Catholic sentiment wanting a return to a more authoritarian rule. That there was an almost universal acceptance among Catholics here of parliamentary democracy is clear. It is more difficult to determine precisely how Catholics voted.

While the votes of many Catholics would shift from Reformers to Liberal-conservatives according to the demands of the separate school question, a great many, of course, always voted according to family tradition or indeterminate personal considerations. There is evidence that the attitude of the Bishops and of the Catholic press had considerable influence on particular elections, but there is no evidence to estimate the course of Catholic voting as a whole. But I do have the impression that generally speaking, most Catholics in Upper Canada felt more at ease in Reform ranks than with the Liberal-conservatives, and only extreme provocation drove them to support the Orange-backed "Tories."

It is obvious that although religious considerations were important in the Catholic vote, the Catholic people as a body regarded the institutions of self-government as natural as did the Protestant Canadians of English and Scottish origin. Political and religious animosities were incredibly bitter in Upper Canada, but above all was a general acceptance of liberal, democratic institutions.

²⁹ See Brownson lecture in New York, March 8, 1859, reprinted in *The Canadian Freeman*, April 1, 1859.

³⁰ *The Mirror*, October 10, 1856.

³¹ *The Canadian Freeman*, March 25, 1859.