

## **The Jubilee Riots in Toronto, 1875**

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During the period of the legislative union of Upper and Lower Canada from 1841 to 1867 the relations between the Protestant majority of Canada West and the Catholic minority were often marked by lack of harmony and even bitterness. The question of the establishment and support of a separate school system for the Catholics of Canada West had been the cause of fierce struggles between the different religious groups of the Province, and had aroused a great deal of hostility.<sup>1</sup> Another source of religious and political strife was the charge that because of the terms of the union Protestant Canada West was being dominated by the French Catholics of Canada East. Some progress towards easing the existing tension was made towards the middle of the 1860's. In 1863 a Separate Schools Act was passed in the Legislative Assembly of the United Province which, it was hoped by some at least, would settle that question. In 1867 the realization of Confederation brought an end to the Legislative union of Upper and Lower Canada and to some of the sectional disputes which had embittered the politics of the union.

The new Province of Ontario formed from Canada West was left free to handle its own local affairs, and in this province Catholics were left in a minority. The early post-Confederation years were comparatively free from religious strife in Ontario, though the peace was somewhat disturbed by echoes of the Red River Rebellion and the Separate School Controversy in New Brunswick. Then, in 1875, relations between the Protestants and Catholics of Ontario were jarred by an outbreak of violence in the chief city of the Province.

The year 1875 had been proclaimed by Pius IX a Jubilee year, and in a letter dated March 4, 1875, Archbishop John Joseph Lynch of Toronto explained the Jubilee to his people. He indicated to the faithful of the Roman Catholic Church in his diocese how they might obtain a special Jubilee indulgence which would gain for them "a full remission of all the temporal punishments due to your sins after you will have obtained forgiveness for them in the sacrament of penance." One of the conditions required was fifteen visits or pilgrimages on different days to the Cathedral or parish church to pray for certain intentions. For Torontonians the Archbishop enjoined that they should visit four churches including the Cathedral, their parish church and two other churches, each church to be visited fifteen times on different days. It was to pilgrims seeking to gain this Jubilee indulgence that trouble was to come late in September and early in

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Franklin A. Walker, *Catholic Education and Politics in Upper Canada*.

October.

The series of pilgrimages began in July and proceeded until September.<sup>2</sup> On September 22nd it was announced in the *Irish Canadian*, a Roman Catholic newspaper of Toronto, that the first Roman Catholic Provincial Council was to be held in Toronto, beginning on the following Sunday, September 26th. The advertisement in the *Irish Canadian* referred only to the programme to be followed in connection with the meeting of the Council, composed of the Bishops within the ecclesiastical province of Toronto. It dealt with the reception to be accorded the visiting Bishops upon their arrival in Toronto on Saturday night, and with the procession to mark the opening of the Council on Sunday morning. This procession was to be limited to the immediate environs of St. Michael's Palace.<sup>3</sup> On September 24th a requisition, signed by a number of citizens was presented to Francis H. Medcalf, the mayor of the city, calling his attention to the announcement of the public procession in the *Irish Canadian*. The signers of the requisition seemed to be somewhat disturbed by the references in the announcement to some of the accompaniments to the procession, mentioning in particular "Music," "Bands," "Singing," "Bishops," "Thurifers," "Acolytes," "Priests," "Deacons," "Copes," "Dalmatics," "and all the paraphernalia of 'Full Pontificals.'" They seemed particularly concerned with the invitation in the announcement to various Roman Catholic societies to line the streets. They professed to believe that "such a public and ostentatious display on the Lord's Day is an open violation likely to lead to serious breaches of the public peace of the city. . ." The requisition requested, the Mayor to use his influence, and, if necessary, his authority, to prevent "the said 'Procession,' 'Music,' 'singing,' and 'Banners' but not to interfere with the peaceful and orderly attendance of such as may feel disposed to attend the religious ordinances of their Church in a quiet, peaceful, and Christian manner."<sup>4</sup>

Mayor Medcalf forwarded the requisition to Archbishop Lynch, and asked him if it was his intention to have such a procession in the public streets of the city. He advised the Archbishop:

If such is your Lordship's intention, I would respectfully suggest for your consideration the advisability of well considering the consequences that are likely to arise from the same.

The answer to Mayor Medcalf's communication to the Archbishop was signed by J. J. Shea, Rector of the Cathedral. It said:

I am directed by his Grace the Archbishop to answer your communication of this morning accompanied by a petition from a few citizens, and to state that

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<sup>2</sup> *The Mail*, Oct. 5, 1875.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, Sept. 27, 1875.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

we intend to proceed to our cathedral and attend the religious ordinances of our Church on tomorrow in the manner expressed in the petition, viz: "Quiet, peaceful, and Christian."<sup>5</sup>

At 10 o'clock on Sunday morning the procession in connection with the Provincial Council took place without any molestation. Besides those who took part in it few were present for this procession which proceeded to the Cathedral from St. Vincent's chapel by way of Church and Shuter streets.<sup>6</sup> Also scheduled to be held on Sunday, September 26th, were the Jubilee pilgrimages of St. Paul's, St. Basil's and St. Mary's parishes. These were held in the afternoon and were confused by onlookers with the procession which had been advertised in the *Irish Canadian*. The pilgrimage, made up of over 1,000 members, many of them women, left St. Paul's on Power Street at about 2:30 p.m., and proceeded to the Cathedral where the processionists, remained for a short time. A small banner of the Immaculate Conception, as well as a crucifix, was carried at the head of the procession. From the Cathedral the procession went along Queen Street to Dummer Street, and along this street to St. Patrick's chapel where it stopped again.<sup>7</sup> Throngs of people accompanied the procession along the street, and some of the onlookers hurled insults at the pilgrims.<sup>8</sup> The pilgrimage had been scheduled to proceed via Queen Street to St. Mary's on Bathurst Street, but in view of the explosive situation the route was changed and the procession detoured to Spadina Avenue.

During the pilgrimage's progress towards St. Patrick's a slight altercation had broken out on Dummer Street, when an Irish woman looking out of a window referred to some young onlookers as being members of the Orange organization of Young Britons and suggested that they had no right being there. A few stones and missiles were thrown, and when peace was restored the young men headed for Spadina Avenue. A large crowd had gathered at the corner of Spadina Avenue and Queen Street when the procession emerged from Baldwin Street. A number of police took up a position at the bottom of Spadina, and waited for the pilgrims to arrive at Queen Street. As the head of the procession was passing near Phoebe Street stone-throwing commenced again, and the priest in charge of the procession, Father Conway, asked the police to intervene. Lining up across the avenue to keep the two parties apart the police became targets for stones thrown from both sides. They then forced the mob down to Queen Street, where they formed a line across the street keeping the rioters separated and allowing the women of the pilgrimage to escape along Queen to Bathurst Street. Before the crowd dispersed the police were subjected to a rain of missiles, and

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> The *Globe*, Sept. 27 1875.

many received slight injuries. The police proceeded to march along Brook to Adelaide Street, and up Adelaide to Bathurst Street where they stood guard outside St. Mary's.

At Brock and Adelaide Streets and Brock and King Streets threatening mobs had gathered, and reinforcements were sent for. Fifty men under the command of the Chief of Police, Major Frank C. Draper, arrived. When the pilgrims emerged from the chapel the police took up positions on either side of them. Another disturbance took place when the procession reached Brock and King Streets. A good deal of stone throwing followed; women fled towards Bathurst Street or looked for shelter in nearby houses or side lanes. Police wielding their batons charged the rioters to clear the way for the remainder of the pilgrimage. Renewals of the struggle took place at the corner of Peter Street and at the corner of John. Another fight occurred at Simcoe Street, and here, it was reported, shots were fired. Charging police dispersed the mob and captured several firearms. Altercations continued to occur from Simcoe Street to the corner of Church Street. Gradually the mob dispersed and the streets were restored to quiet.<sup>9</sup>

The press of Toronto strongly condemned the actions of the rioters, but at the same time questioned the prudence of the Roman Catholics in holding displays which might be a source of aggravation to other members of the community. The Conservative *Mail* expressed the fear that patriotic men might begin to despair of the future of Canada if scenes similar to the Sunday riot in Toronto were repeated or allowed, and called for a rigorous enforcement of the law against the disturbers of the peace. It mentioned that another pilgrimage was to be made in the city on the following Sunday, and warned that the civic power must make itself felt now or never. The *Mail* questioned the taste of Archbishop Lynch for making public a display which, it held, would have been better confined to the places set aside for Catholic religious exercises. "We cannot hold the Archbishop and his advisers blameless in throwing such a fire-brand into the community as his advertisement in the *Irish Canadian*." But, the *Mail* conceded, the Catholics could plead that they had done nothing against the law; and it admitted that the pilgrimage which was disturbed was a quiet one.<sup>10</sup>

The *Globe* held that the legality of a Sunday procession was incontestable, and that such a procession must be protected by the law. Although it professed that it had no favour for Sunday processions as a general thing, the *Globe* said of the procession attacked by the rioters that "a more inoffensive one could not be imagined." It feared that processionists would come prepared for a fight on the following Sunday, and warned the authorities that those who were acting according to law must be protected at all hazards.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> The *Mail*, Sept. 27 1875.

<sup>10</sup> The *Mail*, Sept. 28, 1875.

<sup>11</sup> The *Globe*, Sept. 28, 1875.

The Toronto *Leader* (a Conservative paper) granted that the procession was harmless, but suspected the motives of Archbishop Lynch in inviting members of Roman Catholic societies to line the streets through which the procession had to pass. To the *Leader* this looked as if a fight was contemplated. Revolvers, it claimed, were fired only by processionists, and the weapons taken were in the hands of those whom the Archbishop had invited to line the streets.

We trust that the priests had no sinister motive in making this unwonted demonstration in the streets of Toronto, but though they had, they could not have adopted a more effective mode of bringing on a row... It looks suspiciously as if a riot was what was desired.<sup>12</sup>

The district Orange Lodge in Toronto gave its views on the subject of the processions in a series of resolutions adopted at a meeting held on September 29th. The Orangemen denounced the parading through the streets of the pilgrimages on the Lord's Day, and charged that they endangered the public peace and disturbed the public mind. They put forth the opinion that such processions should be suppressed, and called for the appointment of a deputation which would request the Mayor to call a public meeting to devise a means of preventing a recurrence of violence.<sup>13</sup> On the following day the appointed deputation met with the Mayor and presented a request for a public meeting of the citizens at large "to take into consideration the best steps to be taken to prevent a repetition of the public procession and the acts of violence resulting therefrom on the last Sabbath day, and generally to calm the public mind, and to preserve the sanctity of the Lord's day, and the peace and tranquillity of the city."<sup>14</sup> In compliance with this requisition a proclamation was printed announcing a public meeting of the citizens to be held in the St. Lawrence Hall on Friday, October 1st.<sup>15</sup>

The *Globe* reported that the hall was filled to capacity on the night of the meeting, and that hundreds of people were not able to gain admission. The Mayor occupied the chair and announced to the meeting that a series of resolutions had been prepared. The first resolution was presented by Ogle R. Gowan, who claimed for the resolutions that they were prompted by a spirit of Christian charity, love and good will. He expressed the fear that if another procession were to turn out in the middle of the day and come into contact with an opposing party lives would be lost. The speaker claimed that Ultramontane ideas were prevalent throughout the whole world, and that Protestants believed that the ecclesiastical powers, headed by the Pope, desired to encroach upon

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<sup>12</sup> The *Leader*, Sept. 27, 1875.

<sup>13</sup> The *Globe*, Sept. 30, 1875.

<sup>14</sup> The *Mail*, Oct. 1, 1875.

<sup>15</sup> A copy of this proclamation is preserved in the Archives of the Archdiocese of Toronto.

civil liberty. The Protestant mind, he explained, was currently inflamed, and any Catholic attempt to hold a procession was in danger of provoking a breach of the peace from which bloodshed might result. If this occurred, Gowan claimed, the Catholics must be held responsible. He hoped that Protestants would use every power of conciliation in order that such a disaster might be prevented. If they were not successful the Mayor would be obliged to demand that the law be obeyed and to punish those who violated it. Gowan moved a resolution deploring the “riotous conduct” of the previous Sunday, and calling upon all good citizens to use “all legitimate and proper means to prevent its recurrence.” This resolution was carried.

A second resolution suggested, “with the view of discountenancing the appearance of triumph by either party,” that both parties give way “by abandoning all appearance of public processions and gatherings, and attend, as individuals, their respective churches on the Lord’s Day in the usual quiet and unobtrusive manner.” During the discussion of this resolution speakers came to the defence of the Orange Young Britons, denying that this group was responsible for the disturbance of the previous Sunday. One speaker predicted that if another procession were held on Sunday the streets of Toronto would be flooded with innocent blood. When the resolution was put to a vote by a show of hands the vote appeared to be about evenly divided. There was some vociferous opposition from the floor, but after the resolution was put to a vote again it was declared carried.<sup>16</sup> The Mayor spoke again and explained that the Roman Catholics had a right to walk since the law allowed them to do so, although he expressed his disapproval of the laws on this point, and suggested that the Legislature should be petitioned to have them changed. He explained that as Mayor he was forced to carry out the law, but remarked that if there was any law against the procession he would soon stop it.<sup>17</sup>

The Toronto *Globe* noted that the second resolution passed at the public meeting virtually requested those who were planning on participating in the procession to refrain from doing so.

Should the Roman Catholics see fit to accept this advice ... they must unquestionably be credited with the possession of a self-restraint and self-control to which those who have wantonly interfered with them are total strangers. At the same time it cannot be ignored that advice of this kind is gratuitous, if not impertinent, when rendered to those who have no intention of breaking the law, and whom the authorities are as much bound to protect

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<sup>16</sup> The *Globe*, Oct. 2, 1875. According to the *Mail’s* account of this meeting only three or four persons were in favour of this resolution when the vote was taken, while most of the audience cried, “No, no.” When the second vote on the resolution was taken about one hundred voted for it, according to the *Mail*, and the resolution was “apparently dropped.”

<sup>17</sup> The *Mail*, Oct. 2, 1875.

from injury as if they were assembled in their respective chapels. It is worthy of remark, also that a resolution of this comparatively mild character was carried last night only after a good deal of persuasion. The majority of those present were clearly in favour of something far stronger, and will refuse to consider themselves bound by anything like pacific resolutions.<sup>18</sup>

The Toronto *Leader* had published reports that Fenian agents from Toronto had visited Buffalo and Cleveland to solicit Fenians in those cities to come to Toronto to take part in the collision anticipated for Sunday.<sup>19</sup> This story the *Globe* labelled as “incredible and outrageous.” It suspected the *Leader* of intending to “stir up ill-blood and engender strife,” and feared that such provocative statements might serve to bring about a collision which might have been avoided. The *Globe* declared that the idea of the Catholics of the city seeking help from a distance was as foolish as it was wicked and hoped that both parties would treat the suggestion with contempt. Catholics were advised that their best policy would be to retain calmness and selfpossession, and to remain within the law. The *Globe* held that interference with the pilgrimage could not now be tolerated. Any attempt to stop it now would be an admission that mob law had been triumphant, the *Globe* reasoned, and that any lawless body of rioters who desired could overcome any peaceable group of citizens and put a stop to their proceedings.<sup>20</sup>

On the morning of Saturday, October 2nd, Archbishop Lynch sent the following communication to Mayor Medcalf:

If the civil authorities are prepared to protect the processionists on next Sunday, we will permit them to visit the various churches, all unarmed. Processions will commence at two o'clock.

On the same day the Archbishop sent a circular to the priests of the pilgrimage churches, in which they were directed to forbid the Jubilee pilgrims, in the Archbishop's name, to carry any arms or to use any force, such as stone-throwing, during the pilgrimage “under the penalty of losing by their disobedience and disorderly conduct every blessing and indulgence attached to the jubilee.” Lynch directed that the pilgrims must depend entirely on the authorities “to protect them in their civil rights as subjects of her Majesty.” After conferring with the Chief of Police the Archbishop agreed to change the route of the procession, dispensing with the call at St. Patrick's.<sup>21</sup> On Saturday afternoon a number of troops was sent for to be ready by one o'clock on Sunday afternoon. Accordingly, six companies of the Queen's Own, six companies of the

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<sup>18</sup> The *Globe*, Oct. 2, 1875.

<sup>19</sup> The *Leader*, Oct. 1, 1875.

<sup>20</sup> The *Globe*, Oct. 2, 1875.

<sup>21</sup> The *Mail*, Oct. 5, 1875.

10th Royals, and a detachment of cavalry were assembled in the city.<sup>22</sup>

The pilgrimage of Sunday, October 3rd, began at about two o'clock in the afternoon. The procession was composed of about 1,500 to 2,000 men, while many women and girls accompanied it along the sidewalks. No bands, banners or crosses accompanied the processionists. The pilgrimage started from St. Paul's church, Power St., while the troops were stationed along Church St., just south of King St. Mayor Medcalf, accompanied by John Hillyard Cameron as his legal adviser, remained behind the troops. The pilgrims' passage from Power St. to St. Michael's was not interfered with. A crowd estimated at about 6,000 to 8,000 people thronged the streets in the vicinity of the cathedral. Groans from the crowd greeted the procession when it arrived at the cathedral. At about the same time as the procession reached St. Michael's a strong detachment of police came up, and their arrival brought forth a chorus of hisses and groans from the mob gathered in the area. The majority of those taking part in the procession went inside the church. Archbishop Lynch arrived upon the scene and addressed the crowd, telling them that all the Roman Catholics were inside, and suggesting that the members of the crowd should return to their homes. This advice from the Archbishop went unheeded.

The pilgrims emerged from the church after about ten minutes and headed eastward to Church St., and then down Church St. The procession was led by about twelve policemen, while about the same number of police extended back along either side of the marchers. Before the procession reached Church St. a stone was thrown at it from McGill Square, and just after it entered that street a few more stones were thrown. This attack brought no reply from those in the procession. As the head of the procession was approaching Queen St. a volley of stones fell upon it, and a pistol shot from the attackers on Queen St. was heard. This assault prompted the processionists to retaliate, and a number of them drew revolvers and fired on the crowd. The battle was now on. The police charged on the attackers and drove them back across the ground in front of the Metropolitan Church and up Bond and Queen Sts. Returning to the head of the procession the police led it along Church St. to Adelaide, and then along Adelaide. Meanwhile, a large gang of anti-processionists streamed down Victoria St. to meet the pilgrimage at Victoria and Adelaide Sts., and subjected it to a barrage of stones. Several pistol shots were heard.

Another collision occurred at Yonge St. where the police again rushed the attackers, who repaired to a position on Bay St. to renew their assault on the head of the procession. The conflict was continued all the way along Adelaide St. to St. Mary's Church on Bathurst St. Anti-processionists poured along Richmond St. to turn down the side streets, using these as positions from which to shower the procession with stones. Their attacks were met with pistol shots from the procession and defensive actions from the police. After the procession

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, Oct. 4, 1875.

reached St. Mary's church some of the pilgrims rushed up Bathurst St. and exchanged volleys of stones with opponents on Little Richmond. About twenty policemen interjected themselves between the opposing parties, and charged at the anti-processionists with guns drawn, but without firing. In the face of this assault the anti-processionists retreated, and the police formed a cordon across Bathurst St. to keep the two parties separated. In this position the police found themselves under a rain of stones from all directions.

In the meantime pilgrims left the church and, unknown to their assailants, went down Bathurst to Front St., along which they proceeded eastward to the point from which they had started. The troops, which had marched along King St. to Portland St. while the procession was moving westward, now marched back along Wellington St. parallel to the procession in order to keep the opposing forces separated. From Church St. the infantry group proceeded back to the New Fort. The cavalry, accompanied by the Mayor, continued down to Power St. to ensure the safe passage of the pilgrims back to St. Paul's Church.

Meanwhile the crowd at Bathurst St. seemed to be unaware that the procession had passed beyond its reach. More people gathered at Queen and Portland, Queen and Brock, and along Queen St. in the expectation that the pilgrims would pass by that way. While the street crowd was kept at bay one zealous anti-processionist in a buggy with two other men drove continually up and down between Queen and Little Richmond with the crowd cheering him on. On one occasion he stopped midway between the two streets and stood up in the buggy to address the crowd. He asked them to recall the old days "when they walked eight deep," and invited all good Protestants to form in a body behind him and proposed that they burn the church. The crowd cheered at this suggestion, and the speaker began to drive his buggy at the police line inviting people to follow. Many responded to this invitation but the police drove them back while the buggy was allowed to pass. When it was discovered that the pilgrimage had been allowed to escape the mob, stoned the police but was again beaten back. It was reported that there were several badly hurt at this point.

Believing that the pilgrims were to make a call at St. Patrick's church the crowd hurried to William St. hoping to accost them there. A detachment of police lined up at Queen and William Sts. and blocked the way to St. Patrick's. There had been rumours that shots had been fired from the windows of Owen Cosgrove's tavern at the west corner. The windows of the tavern were accordingly riddled, and the building was subjected to intermittent stoning until dark. Cosgrove's friends did not fail to retaliate, and a group of them took up a position in a William St. alley-way from which they poured stones into the mob on Queen St. Police drove the rioters to Simcoe St. where severe fighting took place. The police suffered an attack from the rear by a second mob, which had emerged from streets running off Queen St. These rioters were driven off but eventually managed to join their colleagues at the corner of Simcoe St. At this point a messenger was dispatched to the military. Shortly after this the Mayor, accompanied by John Hillyard Cameron, appeared on Queen St., and in an

address to the crowd urged its members to disperse. The words of the Mayor were greeted with cheering, but when he left the fight resumed. The cavalry then entered Queen St. and patrolled it for some time. When the troops departed however a new attack was made on Cosgrove's tavern and Cosgrove's friends were again engaged in battle. The police kept up their attacks on the rioters, and succeeded in preventing the majority of them from coming farther west than Simcoe Sts. As darkness fell the crowds of people dispersed and quietness again reigned in the streets of Toronto. At one time during the day Queen St. between Brock and Simcoe was thronged with people; the number when the Mayor drove onto the street was estimated at 6,000 or 7,000. It was reported that the majority of these were spectators, some of whom found themselves caught up so that they could scarcely proceed, while others stayed willingly out of curiosity. While many persons were injured, no fatalities occurred. A number of rioters were arrested.<sup>23</sup>

The press throughout the province generally was gratified that the rights of Roman Catholics had been safeguarded by the authorities. The *Globe* felt that a lasting disgrace would have come to the city and its inhabitants if a group of citizens had been prevented from proceeding to their churches in the way and at the time they desired. The *Mail* could see no adequate excuse for the riots, and credited the police with having acted "most nobly." It considered Sunday to have been "the day of our lasting disgrace."

Ruffianism is now fighting for supremacy; let its power be shattered once for all, though the streets should run with blood... If they (the people responsible for the riot) are Orangemen, then we can but say to them that they are a disgrace to the Order. But it matters not who they are – the law is stronger than they, and will finally crush them, and that in short time and quick order too. The fair fame of the city must not long be tarnished by conduct so infamous, reckless, and unprovoked.<sup>24</sup>

The *Leader* was of the opinion that since Archbishop Lynch had declined to arrange for the pilgrimage to be held early in the morning, he must be held to some extent responsible for the riots that had occurred. It stated that otherwise, as far as it could learn, the conduct of the processionists had been beyond criticism. The *Leader* was pleased that the troops did not become involved in the fight, but conceded that the proximity of the troops probably "exercised a salutary effect upon potential rioters."

In Ottawa the *Citizen* strongly condemned the riot and referred to it as an "outburst of intolerant bigotry." It hoped that the leaders of the Orange Association would expel unworthy members who had disturbed the peace of the city on the Lord's Day, suggesting that only in such a way could they convince

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> The *Mail*, Oct. 4, 1875.

their opponents of the sincerity of their pronouncements against the Toronto rioters.

Protestantism gives no countenance to rowdyism. If its principles cannot prevail without the aid of hot-headed roughs, they ought not to live. If decent and orderly worship in Protestant churches cannot bear with the more imposing ceremonials of the Church of Rome, the intelligence of the age is capable of deciding between them. The interference of an ignorant and bigoted mob benefits neither side but always throws discredit on the cause which it proposes to serve.<sup>25</sup>

The Hamilton *Spectator* reminded its readers that if fanatical Protestants did take part in the disturbance, an Orange Mayor superintended the defence of the pilgrimage, “the batons which kept back the lawless crowd were in the hands of Protestant policemen, and Protestant sabres were ready to perform their deadly work, had that been necessary, for the vindication of law and the preservation of public order.”<sup>26</sup> The Hamilton *Times* too rejoiced that in a Protestant city Roman Catholics had been protected against the attacks of Protestant rioters, and expressed its pride that it was Protestant Ontario which had set “the first and most notable example of protecting the minority.”

So out of evil may come good, and not only mob rule receive the deathblow in Canada but Protestant and Roman Catholics prove each to the other that they esteem each other’s civil and religious rights as of equal value and equally to be upheld. Only so can we have permanent peace between our people; for with a Protestant majority in Ontario and a Roman Catholic majority in Quebec, unless the majority in each protects the rights of the minority, an endless series of retaliatory acts will mark the future of the two Provinces.<sup>27</sup>

The *Globe* opposed the motion that Sunday’s riot was prompted by “deep religious and Protestant feeling.” It said that it was beyond doubt that no enlightened Protestant was in the crowd to act in a way which was “contrary to the most cherished principles of Protestantism, and to the very essence of free thought and free speech.” The group which caused the disturbance on Sunday was composed chiefly, according to the *Globe*, of “rowdy lads bent on mischief,” criminals, and those who hoped to take advantage of the general confusion to “gratify some private grudges or have the opportunity for some private plunder.” The *Globe* called on Orangemen to consider if they should encourage the organization known as the Young Britons who, it said, “naturally seek to shelter their lawless doings under the pretence of zeal for Protestantism.” While

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<sup>25</sup> Ottawa *Citizen*, Oct. 4, 1875

<sup>26</sup> Quoted in the *Leader*, Oct. 6, 1875.

<sup>27</sup> Hamilton *Times*, Oct. 4, 1875.

evinced no love for processions the *Globe* did not agree that such displays should be put down on the grounds that they aggravate relations between sections of the population. "If everything or person were to be put down with which or whom any one found fault," it asked, "what would be left?"<sup>28</sup>

The London *Free Press* advanced a different opinion from that of the *Globe* in discussing what lay at the root of the riots. The London paper held that religious fanaticism, bigotry and intolerance had prompted the outbreaks, even though there had been attempts to show that the majority of the participants were not persons who were likely to be dominated by religious sentiment.<sup>29</sup> A correspondent to the *Globe*, who signed his letter "L.S.," also took issue with the *Globe's* view that the riot was caused by a group of boys bent on mischief. The correspondent claimed to have been a witness at the hottest part of the riot, and while he admitted that there were many boys involved he maintained that "the movers were men of mature age, and further... men took part in it whose heads were blossomed for the grave. You will please permit me to say, in conclusion that there were stones thrown by members of the Young Men's Christian Association; not boys... men... who would be more than surprised if you called them boys."<sup>30</sup>

The *Nation*, a Toronto weekly dedicated to the cultivation of a Canadian national spirit, feared that the prospect of seeing a good feeling replace the mutual distrust between Orangemen and Catholics was now more remote than ever. It reminded its readers that the ill effects of such occurrences as those of Sunday linger after the mob has dispersed. It reported having knowledge that workmen who were good friends prior to the riot "now scowl silently at each other from contiguous seats in the same workshop." At the root of the disorders the *Nation* saw the spirit of faction, which, it said, was instilled into boys before they were sufficiently well developed to grasp political issues, so that they learned hatred and revenge, and were inclined to answer arguments with "the thud of a volley of stones and the sharp crack of a pistol."<sup>31</sup>

The *Nation* declared that the riot came from the igniting of combustible materials already present in the country. It pointed to the two opposing sections of the Irish population in Canada who had imported from their homeland "furious antipathies brewed in the cauldron of Irish history." Orangemen were accused of acting in the spirit which marked their order in Ireland towards the end of the 18th century, and the *Nation* claimed that Young Britons were being trained in passions which were hostile to a free society. It also accused a part of the Roman Catholic Irish population of borrowing "from days when in Ireland the ministers of an alien church accompanied by bailiffs and dragoons collected

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<sup>28</sup> The *Globe*, Oct. 5, 1875.

<sup>29</sup> London *Free Press*, Oct. 8, 1875.

<sup>30</sup> The *Globe*, Oct. 9, 1875.

<sup>31</sup> The *Nation*, Oct. 8, 1875.

tithes from a starving peasantry, language of grievance and sedition which would now be inappropriate in the land where it was coined.” The *Nation* claimed that in Canada the Roman Catholic Church occupied “as favourable a position as any Church could desire in a free country,” and its members had the same standing before the law as anyone else.

Yet on stated occasions both factions celebrate events in Irish history which have no bearing on the present or future state of their adopted country, and which, if celebrated at all, should be recalled in a manner which could offend no one; and they form themselves into societies that no stretch of charity will permit a candid mind to regard as consistent with patriotism.

Such bodies as Orange lodges, Young Briton’s lodges, and Hibernian societies, the *Nation* held, placed “the most serious obstacles in the path of statemanship.”<sup>32</sup>

The strongest stand against Roman Catholic processions came from the Protestant religious press. The *British American Presbyterian*, a weekly, published in Toronto, declared that the riots were decidedly wrong; but it went on, “the procession that gave rise to the riot was wrong also.” The *Presbyterian* did not deny that the procession was legal, but it asserted unequivocally that it considered that “Roman Catholic *religious* processions are *wrong*, and should be rendered illegal.” The *Presbyterian*’s argument was based on the notion that Roman Catholic religious processions are acts of worship. The paper went on to say that “every garment and figure, every attitude and gesture in the Romish ritual and procession is symbolical of a doctrine,” and that a Roman Catholic procession involved a preaching of that faith. It was suggested that Protestants who had become apologists for Roman Catholic processions did not understand the point at issue, or did not wish to understand it because of political motives. But, the *Presbyterian* went on, the priests would gain a great advantage if they were allowed to preach to a city by symbols,

to captivate the eye of our thoughtless youth by the pomp and parade of their ceremonial, to draw away from our Sunday schools and sanctuaries worshippers who might be enticed from the simple worship within their own walls to the gorgeous display in the open street. That is the business they have on hand and nothing less. These processions are not the harmless things some people take them to be; but part and parcel of a deep laid plot for gradually familiarizing our youth with Romish worship, bringing them over to the Romish Church and subverting in Ontario the Protestantism which is the only barrier against the complete subjugation of this great Dominion to the yoke of Rome.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, Oct. 15, 1875.

<sup>33</sup> *British American Presbyterian*, Oct. 15, 1875.

The *Christian Guardian* also opposed processions and pilgrimages through the public streets, and branded the idea that such processions are so meritorious as to secure important spiritual blessings from God as “a silly and irrational delusion.”

The fact that any irrational and superstitious puerility of this kind may be endorsed by the highest authorities of that corrupt and heretical Church, does not create any obligation on our part to treat respectfully, or without contempt, such a senseless parade.

The *Guardian* argued that since these processions asked for the help and protection of law, it was of importance whether the majority of the people of the Province would consider them to be reasonable and appropriate, and conducive to the welfare of the country. The purpose of the public processions, the *Guardian* held, was “to familiarize and impress the public with Romish performances,” and they had the same object as Roman Catholic religious services in their churches; therefore, the Roman Catholics had no right to “occupy the public thoroughfares with such religious machinery for impressing their teaching upon Protestants.”

What, the *Guardian* wondered, would be the result if all the Churches claimed the right to hold such processions on Sunday? The Roman Catholics could only hold their pilgrimages in the public streets, it argued, if all other Churches relinquished the streets to them. But, it went on, any orderly crowd had as much right on the streets as the Roman Catholics.

In the eyes of the law they are merely citizens on the streets. But privileges that can only be conceded to one party, by denying similar privileges to all others, cannot be a right at all.

It is the most unbearable effrontery, that a Church, whose agents everywhere require unquestioning slavish submission to a narrow-minded Italian priest, which in many cases makes disloyalty a virtue, should expect the civil authorities, and Protestant population of Ontario, to act towards them and their pretensions as if their superstitious falsehoods were true; as if their insolent and baseless assumptions were just; and as if the pretended dictates of their perverted consciences created rules by which Protestants were bound to govern themselves!<sup>34</sup>

These words were extreme, and indicated that a considerable degree of hostility still existed towards Roman Catholicism among some sections of the population of Ontario. There had been no attempt to justify the course of the rioters, and the threat their actions posed to the good order of the community had been fully recognized. Those who took part in the attempt to disrupt the Catholic procession may have been in large part a youthful, rowdy element more bent on

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<sup>34</sup> The *Christian Guardian*, Sept. 20, 1875.

adventure and excitement than on the upholding of any particular, religious principles. Nevertheless the occurrence of the riot and the public reaction to it indicated the prevalence of a dangerous degree of ill feeling between different sections of the community, which threatened to explode into violence and so endangered the social stability of the city if not of the whole Province. In the presence of this danger there was practically universal condemnation of the rioters.

The *Globe*, whose past history had been marked by vituperative attacks on the Church, now stood out as the staunchest defender of the beleaguered processionists. Not only did it defend the lawfulness of the processions, but it rejected unequivocally any suggestions that such processions ought to be made unlawful in the future. The *Globe* seemed on the way to becoming the champion of the civil rights of the Catholic minority. The Toronto *Leader* of this period had been drifting into a more outspoken opposition to Roman Catholicism, and by its remarks on the riots, with the imputation of unworthy motives to those responsible for the procession it continued to show this drift.

Many in Ontario saw the riots as having been in part a reaction to the Guibord riot in Montreal. Joseph Guibord, a printer, had been a member of the *Institut Canadien*, a liberal organization which had fallen under the condemnation of the Bishop of Montreal, Ignace Bourget. According to Bourget's orders members who refused to forsake the *Institut* after its condemnation were to be deprived of the Sacraments of the Church and to be refused Christian burial. Guibord died in November, 1869, unreconciled with the Church, and the *curé* of Notre-Dame in Montreal refused his remains Christian burial. Some of Guibord's friends of the *Institut Canadien* took court action against the *curé* and churchwardens of Notre Dame in order to have Guibord buried in consecrated ground. The legal battle was carried to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, and did not end until 1874. In November of that year the Privy Council gave its decision, and by its terms the parish was obliged to bury Guibord in the Catholic portion of the cemetery.<sup>35</sup>

On the day scheduled for Guibord's funeral a crowd gathered at the Catholic cemetery in Montreal, and barred the entry of the funeral cortege accompanying the corpse of Guibord, causing it to fall back again to the Protestant cemetery.<sup>36</sup> This exhibition of mob violence had provoked considerable indignation in Ontario, and many of the Ontario papers looked on the Jubilee riots as a reaction to the events in Montreal.

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<sup>35</sup> Mason Wade, *The French Canadians*, p. 347.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 349.