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Jacques Monet, S.J.

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FRENCH-CANADIAN NATIONALISM AND THE CHALLENGE OF ULTRAMONTANISM

JACQUES MONET, S.J.
Loyola College

A funny thing happened to French-Canadian nationalism on its way to responsible government. It became ultramontane.

At the end of the 1830s French Canada was in ferment. Under British domination for some 75 years, the French had succeeded in surviving, but not in developing by themselves a full, normal, national life. They had kept the essentials: their ancestral land, their French language, their Catholic Faith, their time-honoured and peculiar jurisprudence, and their long family traditions. But they needed a new life. The seigneurial system could no longer hold the growing population, the economy lagged, the problems of education had reached such an impasse that the schools were closed, and the old civil code no longer applied to modern circumstances. Above all, the upward thrust of the growing professional middle class created a serious social situation of which the rebellions of 1837-38 were only one expression. Clearly, if the struggle for national survival were to hold any meaning for the future, French-Canadian nationalists needed new solutions.

They were divided, however. Inspired by the ideology of Louis-Joseph Papineau some considered *la survivance* could be assured only by political isolation in a territory over which French-Canadians would be undisputed masters. Militant idealists, they were led by John Neilson and Denis-Benjamin Viger until Papineau returned to politics in 1847. Others, broader minded and more practical, held to a doctrine of which the Quebec editor Etienne Parent was the clearest exponent, and which Louis-Hippolyte LaFontaine translated into politics. They reasoned that it was the flexibility of the British constitutional system that could best assure not only their acquired rights, but also (by means of self-government) the certain hope of a broadening future for their language, their institutions, and their nationality.

Before achieving responsible government, however, LaFontaine needed to accomplish two things. He had to forge the unity of his people in favour of British parliamentary democracy and, along with this, form a united political party with the Upper Canadians. Neither was easy. In the years immediately following the rebellion French Canada's strongest sympathies belonged to the leaders of the Viger-Neilson group, believers neither in responsible government nor in Union with Upper Canada. After the election of 1841, for instance, out of some 29 members elected by French-Canadian ridings, LaFontaine could

count on only six or seven to be sympathetic to his views. By 1844, he had succeeded in persuading many more — at least he could then count on some two dozen. But not before the end of the decade could he be certain of victory, for until then Papineau, his followers, and especially his legend remained one of the strongest forces in the country. Still, after a decade of fistfights on electoral platforms, scandals, riots, and racial fury; after a brilliant, dynamic, and flexible partnership with Robert Baldwin, LaFontaine became in 1848 the first Canadian Prime Minister in the modern sense and, by means of the British Constitution, the first French-Canadian to actually express and direct the aspirations of his people.

He had also gradually, and all unwittingly perhaps, presided over the marriage of ultramontanism with the practical politics and the nationalist ideology of his party. At the beginning of the decade, the hierarchy and priests of the Roman Catholic Church in French Canada hardly conceived that practical party politics could be their concern, nor did they think of adding significantly to the nationalist theme. They worked behind the scenes; and, in 1838, for instance, after deciding to oppose the Union, they composed and signed an unpublicized petition which they sent directly to London to be presented to the Queen. But in 1848, during the crisis which consecrated the practice of responsible government, they openly took sides with LaFontaine's party, and allowed their newspapers to give approval to his administration. Likewise, at the time of the rebellions, most of the priests, and especially those among the hierarchy, had officially disassociated themselves from what seemed to be the main preoccupations of the leading French-Canadian nationalists. "Des mauvais sujets... prétendus libéraux, attachés à détruire dans nos peuples l'amour de la religion",[1] Bishop Jacques Lartigue of Montreal called the *Patriotes*, while Archbishop Signay of Quebec tried to explain to his flock that Colborne's devastating march against the rebels had been undertaken "pas à dessein de molester ou maltraiter personne, mais pour protéger les bons et fidèles sujets, pour éclairer ceux des autres qui sont dans l'erreur et qui se sont laissés égarer".[2] Within a decade later, however, they openly wrote and talked of the doctrine that the Catholic Faith and French Canada's nationality depended one upon the other. "Tous les rapports qui nous arrivent des divers points du diocèse", the *Mélanges Religieux* reported on July 7 1843, about the Saint-Jean-Baptiste day celebrations, "prouvent combien sont vifs et universels les sentiments de religion et de nationalité de nos concitoyens. Partout ces deux sentiments se sont montrés inséparables dans les cœurs: la pompe et les cérémonies religieuses ont

[1] Archives de l'Archevêché de Montréal, Mgr Lartigue à G. A. Belcourt, 24 avril 1838.

[2] Archives de l'Archevêché de Québec, Mgr. Signay à A. Leclerc, 25 novembre 1837.

accompagné les démonstrations civiles et patriotiques . . . C'est parce que nous sommes catholiques que nous sommes une nation dans ce coin de l'Amérique, que nous attirons les regards de toutes les autres contrées, l'intérêt et la sympathie de tous les peuples . . . Qu'on nous dise ce que serait le Canada s'il était peuplé exclusivement d'Anglais et de Protestants?" Of course, much happened between 1838 and 1848 to change the thinking of both nationalists and Catholic clerics.

One very important thing was the advent of Ignace Bourget. A short time after succeeding to the See of Montreal in 1840, this earnest and authoritarian Bishop made it clear how much he intended to renew the face of Catholicism in French Canada. During his first year — incidentally, after successfully reasserting in an interesting conflict with Poulett Thomson the doctrine of Papal supremacy and of episcopal independence of civil authority — he had organized a great mission throughout his diocese, preached by Bishop Forbin-Janson, one of France's foremost orators. Between September 1840 and December 1841, the French Bishop travelled across Lower Canada, visiting some sixty villages and preaching rousing sermons — two of which Lord Sydenham attended in state at Notre-Dame — before crowds sometimes estimated at ten thousand. Bishop Bourget thus initiated close and large-scale religious contacts with France.

Indeed, while Forbin-Janson was still in Canada, the new Bishop of Montreal left on the first of some five voyages to France and Rome, a trip from which he would return carrying with him the reawakened energies of the Catholic revival. While in Europe, he held discussions with a cluster of interesting and influential Catholic ultramontane leaders. At this time, European ultramontanes — whose intellectual roots reached as far back as the quarrels between Philippe LeBel and Boniface VIII, the pope "beyond the mountains" — had outgrown the traditional belief that the Pope held doctrinal and jurisdictional supremacy over the whole Church. Brought up on DeMaistre's *Du Pape,* a book that urged Papal dominion over temporal rulers in all Church matters, and feverish with romanticism's revival of all things medieval, they urged the subservience of civil government to the papacy, of State to Church. They had not understood that there was a difference between the surrender of all men to God's will, and the obedience of civil society to the Pope. They were mistaken — but they were, perhaps because of this, all the more dogmatic, energetic, aflame with zeal: they directed newspapers, notably Louis Veuillot's *L'Univers,* entertained crucial political polemics over education, censorship, and "secret organizations"; by the 1840s, they had founded hundreds of pious societies for desirable ends, collected a multiplication of relics from the Roman catacombs, covered Europe with imitation Gothic, and filled their churches and parlours with Roman papier-maché statuary.

Bishop Bourget fell under their spell as soon as he arrived. In Paris he had long conversations with the Abbé Desgenettes, curé of the ultramontane cenacle at Notre-Dame-des-Victoires, and the founder of the Archconfraternity of the Most Holy and Immaculate Heart of Mary; he met Théodore de Ratisbonne, a convert from Judaism and the founder of the Daughters of Sion, Jean-Marie de Lamennais, the founder of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, and the most noted of them all, Louis Veuillot, who attended a sermon of Mgr Bourget's at Notre-Dame-des-Victoires and gave it a rave review in *L'Univers*. At Chartres, he was entertained by the compelling personality of the Abbé, later Cardinal, Louis-Edouard Pie, the future exponent of Papal infallibility at the Vatican Council. In Marseille, he was impressed by Bishop de Mazenod, another staunch defender of the Vatican; and in Rome, he was greeted by Fr. John Roothaan, the General of the Jesuits, with whom he spent eight days in retreat and meditation. Finally, several audiences with the kindly Gregory XVI crowned the series of discussions that made him the most ultramontane churchman of his generation in Canada.[3]

In Chartres, the Bishop of Montreal also had a long conversation with Bishop Clausel de Montals. The latter was a strong Gallican, but nonetheless the acknowledged champion in the fight for Catholic institutions against the State University. He doubtless recited for his Canadien colleague a long list of the dangers and evils of the *école laïque*. For from that day onwards Mgr Bourget would battle tirelessly to keep the Church in control of education in Lower Canada. And all Canadian ultramontanes would follow him in this.

Back in Montreal, Mgr Bourget began injecting into the Canadien mood the full fever of his Roman creed. With a crusader's singleness of purpose, he arranged for the immigration from France of the Oblate and Jesuit Orders, of the Dames du Sacré-Coeur and the Sisters of the Good Shepherd; he founded two Canadian religious congregations of his own, established the Saint Vincent de Paul Society; carried out an extensive canonical visitation of his diocese, and pressed Rome to establish an ecclesiastical Province that extended within a few years to new dioceses in Toronto, Ottawa, British Columbia, and Oregon, "une vaste chaîne de sièges épiscopaux qui doit s'étendre un jour de la mer jusqu'à la mer: a mari usque ad mare".[4] He also organized a whole series of Parish revivals and religious ceremonies superbly managed to stir the emotion of all classes. At Varennes on July 26, 1842, for example, before a huge crowd of several thousand, surrounded

[3] I want to thank Fr. Léon Pouliot, author of *Mgr Bourget et son Temps* (2 vols., Montréal, 1955-56) and of *La Réaction Catholique de Montréal* (Montréal, 1942) for pointing out to me the importance of this trip in the formation of Mgr Bourget's thinking.

[4] *Mélanges Religieux* [henceforth *MR*], 13 mai 1842.

by some sixty priests and in the full pontifical splendour of his office, he presided over the crowning of a holy picture of Saint Anne, according to "le cérémonial usité à Rome pour de semblables solennités". (The end of the day was, perhaps, more Canadien: "Tous ces feux", reported the *Mélanges*, "des salves d'artillerie ou de mousquetterie au milieu du silence d'une nuit profonde, après toutes les cérémonies de la journée, faisaient naître des émotions nouvelles inconnues."[5]) Another time, in November 1843, he presided over a huge demonstration in honour of the transferral to the chapel of the Sisters of Providence of the bones of Saint Januaria, ancient Roman relics which he had negotiated away from the custodian of one of the catacombs. At this service, the golden reliquary was carried by four canons of the cathedral surrounded by eight seminarians bearing incense, and "la foule eut peine à se retirer, tant était grande son émotion".[6] Throughout the 1840s, he ordered many more such occasions. For the blessing of the bells for the new towers of Notre-Dame Church, "on exécuta parfaitement le jeu du *God Save the Queen — Dieu sauve notre reine* auquel la bande du régiment fit écho de toute la force de ses instruments".[7] (Yes, the ultramontanes were also strong royalists. The *Mélanges* often published articles on royalty, one of which began by praising "les principes d'honneur, de devoir, d'ordre, de générosité, de dévouement, qui dérivent de l'idée monarchique".[8]) A not untypical reaction to this type of demonstration was that of the politician Joseph Cauchon who wrote to a colleague about the funeral of Archbishop Signay in October 1850: "Le deuil de l'Eglise était grandiose et solennel à l'extrême. L'installation du nouvel archevêque s'est faite avec une égale solennité. Il y a quelque chose de grand, de sublime dans ce développement des cérémonies soit lugubres soit joyeuses du Catholicisme."[9]

The new Orders naturally aided Mgr Bourget with his ultramontanism — especially the Jesuits who began in 1843 to lay the foundation of Collège Sainte-Marie, an institution that would train so many energetic young nationalist Catholics. The *Mélanges Religieux* also helped. In this bi-weekly newspaper, the priests from the bishopric published over and over again long articles of praise for the papal states, and copious excerpts from the works of leading ultramontanists: speeches by the Spanish conservative Donoso Cortès, Montalembert's famous oration on the Roman question, Mgr de Bonald's pastoral letter "contre les erreurs de son temps", and long book reviews such as the one condemning Eugène Sue's salacious *Les Mystères de Paris* for trying to "répandre

[5] *MR*, 28 juillet 1842.
[6] *MR*, 14 novembre 1843.
[7] *MR*, 4 juillet 1843.
[8] *MR*, 27 janvier 1843.
[9] *Archives de la Province de Québec* [henceforth *APQ*], Papiers Taché A50. Joseph Cauchon à E.-P. Taché, 9 octobre 1850.

sur la religion et ses pratiques tout l'odieux possible".[10] They also issued vibrant appeals to Canadian youth to join their movement: "Vous voulez être de votre siècle jeunes amis, vous voulez marcher avec lui? ... Avez-vous trouvé mieux où reposer votre âme que dans les œuvres immortelles des DeBonald, de Maistre, de Chateaubriand, de Montalembert, du Lamartine *catholique*, de Turquety?"[11] They also gave news of Catholicism throughout the world, concentrating especially on the independence of the Papal States and the University Question in France. "Pour parvenir à remplir leur mission", the *Mélanges* noted on March 31, 1846, "les Éditeurs n'ont rien épargné; ils ont fait venir à grands frais les meilleurs journaux d'Europe, *L'Univers, L'Ami de la Religion, Le Journal des Villes et des Campagnes de France,* le *Tablet* de Londres, le *Freeman's Journal* de New York, le *Cross* d'Halifax, le *Catholic Magazine* de Baltimore, le *Catholic Herald* de Philadelphie, le *Propagateur Catholique* de la Nouvelle-Orléans." In a word, the *Mélanges* opened a window on the Catholic world. And through it there blew in the high winds of ultramontanism, which, for the Canadiens, felt so much like their own aggressive and assertive nationalism.

Through it there also came for the clergy a novel regard for the layman. Since the Restoration in Europe, the Catholic Bishops and priests had achieved some success there in reintegrating the Church into educational life and social services. Very often they had done this with the assistance of influential laymen. Through the *Mélanges* publication of articles and speeches by these European ultramontane politicians, the Canadien priests gradually developed a fresh respect for their own lay politicians. They began to think of new ideas on how they could work with them. In fact, with the coming of responsible government the old ways which the priests had grown accustomed to were passing into history forever. The Union had marked the end of the courteous and courtly style which the Bishops and the British governors had so carefully devised over the years to fuse the good of the throne with the good of the altar. Now, effective political power was passing from the hands of Governors-General to those of the Canadien electors. And if the Church was to exercise the influence which the priests felt in conscience it must, then the clergy must begin to deal directly with the politicians and the people.

Besides, they were finding nationalist politicians whom they liked. Indeed, by the middle of the decade, it was becoming obvious how much LaFontaine's followers and the priests seemed made to understand each other. The debate on the Union, during which they had been on opposite sides, was settled. And since then, they had forged new

[10] *MR*, 20 novembre 1849.
[11] *MR*, 26 novembre 1842.

personal friendships. In Quebec, politicians such as René-Édouard Caron, Étienne-Pascal Taché, and especially Joseph-Édouard Cauchon, the editor of the influential *Journal de Québec,* enjoyed frequent hospitality at the Séminaire. Taché and Cauchon were also close correspondents of the Archbishop's secretary, the talented and ubiquitous abbé Charles-Félix Cazeau. In Montreal, LaFontaine's close friend, Augustin-Norbert Morin, also received a cordial welcome at the bishopric, especially from Mgr Bourget's *Grand-Vicaire,* Mgr Hyacinthe Hudon. So did other partisans like Lewis Thomas Drummond and Joseph Coursol. Indeed, as these priests and politicians grew to admire each other, a new esteem was also developing between their leaders, between the new Bishop of Montreal and the man who in 1842 had become French Canada's Attorney-General. Despite initial suspicion on both their parts, Bourget and LaFontaine were by temperament made to understand each other. Both were heroes to duty, strong-willed leaders, unyielding in their principles, and expert at manœuvreing within the letter of the law. Especially they had this in common that each one thought in absolute terms that he was in total possession of the truth. Neither could accept from an adversary anything but complete conversion.

Thus it was that slowly within the womb of LaFontaine's party, despite appearances, the pulse of the clerico-nationalist spirit began, faintly, to beat.

* * *

None of these things — Bishop Bourget's trip to Europe and its effects in Montreal, the historical turn in Canadian politics caused by responsible government, the new intimacy between ultramontanes and nationalists — none could weigh enough to bring the priests officially into LaFontaine's party. But they did prepare the way. Then, in 1846, the public discussion over a new Education Bill and over the funds from the Jesuit Estates revealed to the clergy which politicians were its natural allies and which were not. The Education Bill of 1845, proposed by Denis-Benjamin Papineau, the great tribune's brother, who was Commissioner of Crown Lands in the Viger-Draper administration, did not satisfy the clergy. Although it provided for the Curés being *ex officio* "visitors" to the schools, it did not give them the control they wished. They therefore began a campaign to have the project amended in their favour.

The *Mélanges* took the lead, repeatedly emphasizing the close connection between education and religion. "Nous ne comprenons pas d'éducation sans religion, et conséquemment sans morale", it had written back in November 8, 1842, in words which could easily have been inspired by Bishop Bourget's conversation with Clausel de Montals, "et nous ne voyons pas ce qui pourrait suppléer à son enseignement dans les écoles. Que sera donc l'instruction et l'éducation des enfants sans

prières, sans catéchisme, sans instruction religieuse et morale quelconque?" Even as the Bill was being debated, the *Mélanges* kept up the pressure, receiving great assistance from A.-N. Morin, "ce monsieur dont le cœur est droit", as one curé wrote.[12] From his seat on the Opposition benches, with the aid of his colleagues Taché, Drummond, and Cauchon, Morin proposed amendment after amendment to bring about a system which would happily unite clerical authority on the local level with centralized control by the Superintendent at the Education Department. "M. Papineau, auquel j'ai eu le plaisir d'administrer quelque dure médecine pour lui faire digérer son Bill d'Éducation, ne veut pas que l'éducation soit religieuse", Cauchon reported to the abbé Cazeau. "J'ai dit, moi votre ouaille, qu'une éducation dépouillée de l'instruction religieuse mènerait à de funestes résultats."[13] Finally, in mid-1846, Denis-Benjamin Papineau bowed to the pressure, and accepted the Morin amendments.

If the Bishops accordingly felt happy about the Act in its final form, they owed it in great part to the support of politicians like Morin and his friends. At the same time, they were receiving support from LaFontaine's friends on another critical issue: the Jesuit Estates.

The problem of these lands which had been granted by a succession of French Kings and nobles to serve as an endowment for education, had definitely passed to the British Crown in 1800 at the death of the last Jesuit. Their revenues were used by the Colonial Office for any number of Government sinecures until 1832 when as a gesture of conciliation it agreed that they be administered by the Lower Canadian Assembly. Then there began another struggle with the Catholic Bishops who claimed that they and not the Assembly were the true heirs of the Jesuits. By 1846 the controversy had reached the floor of the House, and the Provincial Government, led by Denis-Benjamin Viger, refused the Bishops' claim. As in the debate over Papineau's Education Bill, LaFontaine and his party supported the priests. LaFontaine, Morin (who had been acting as confidential advisor to the clergy on the question), Drummond, and Taché each delivered an impassioned speech against the "spoliation" of French Canada's heritage; Morin himself proposing that the funds be transferred entirely to the Church. Viger defended the Government's action on the grounds of precedent and Parliamentary supremacy. He won the vote. But in appealing to Parliamentary supremacy, he began a disagreable discussion which continued in the press for over three months. At the end, it was clear how wide a division had taken place among French-Canadian nationalists:

[12] *APQ*, Fonds de l'Instruction Publique. Lettres reçues. P. Davignon à J.-B. Meilleur, 23 novembre 1843.

[13] Archives de l'Archevêché de Québec, DM H-245. Joseph Cauchon à C.-F. Cazeau, 24 février 1845.

a division as explicit as the opposing doctrines of liberalism and ultramontanism.

While traditionally nationalist papers such as *Le Canadien,* and *L'Aurore des Canadas,* defending Viger, assailed the Church's position, *La Minerve, Le Journal de Québec,* and *La Revue Canadienne,* all LaFontaine papers, became like the *Mélanges* defenders of the Faith. In a series of articles probably written by Viger,[14] *L'Aurore* insisted that the Bishops had at most a very tenuous claim to the Jesuit funds which had never, in fact, belonged to them, and which, if the intentions of the donors were to be respected, should be applied to the whole territory of what had been New France. Since they were being spent exclusively in Lower Canada, as the Bishops themselves agreed was correct, then the revenues derived their title from the Imperial decision of 1832 which put them at the disposal of the "volontés réunies des pouvoirs exécutif, législatif, administratif" of the Lower Canadian Assembly, and hence of the Union government which was its heir. When the LaFontaine press generally replied that the taking of the property from the Church in the first place had been a sacrilege, the argument rose to a higher level.[15] Running through precedents that went back to Justinian, La Régale, and the *coutumes* of pre-Revolutionary France, *L'Aurore* retorted that since the Church's possession of property derived from the State's civil law, any change by the government could hardly be a sacrilege. To which, in best scholastic manner, the *Mélanges* retorted that since the Church possessed property by divine and natural right, civil recognition added nothing. And to this *L'Aurore,* in best liberal tradition, asserted that since nature knew only individuals, no corporate body such as the Church could claim existence by natural law.[16]

And so the controversy proceeded. It was one which could not easily be resolved. For while the *Mélanges* was reasserting the doctrine so dear to the nineteenth-century ultramontane that the Church, by natural and divine right, was autonomous with respect to the State, Viger, brimming with the liberal's faith in the individual, denied any natural right to a corporate body. It was an argument that could not be settled for generations; indeed not until both the liberals and the ultramontanes, in the face of other problems, would come to modify their intransigence.

This was not the first difference of opinion that had brought Viger's party and the *Mélanges* into conflict. Back in 1842 they had measured paragraphs against each other over the interpretation of Bishop Lartigue's famous *Mandement* against rebellion in 1837; and at that time also they had been quarrelling from the viewpoint of opposing ultramontane

14 *L'Aurore des Canadas,* 3, 6, 13, 16 juin 1846.
15 *L'Aurore des Canadas,* 13 juin 1845.
16 *MR,* 26 juin 1846, *L'Aurore des Canadas,* 30 juin 1846.

and liberal doctrines.[17] Yet somehow that discussion had not caused any overt split. The 1846 one did — and soon with the reemergence of Louis-Joseph Papineau into political life, all bridges were broken between his party and the clergy. By 1849, the priests had become one of the great forces on the side of responsible government in Canada.

Having returned from his exile in liberal, anticlerical France, the great rebel found little to encourage him in Canada. He was disgusted by LaFontaine's politics, repelled by the growing power of the priests. Especially he suffered at being forced to witness his people's growing commitment to the British Connection. In the late fall of 1847 he issued what Lord Elgin called "a pretty frank declaration of republicanism",[18] reviving his dreams of the 1830s for a national republic of French Canada. Around himself he rallied Viger's followers and a group of enthusiastic young separatists who edited the radical newspaper *L'Avenir*. They shared the rebel leader's philosophy: if it only depended on them they would win through the sharpness of their minds what he had not by sharpness of sword.

What struck the ultramontanes about Papineau and *L'Avenir* was of course not so much the attacks against LaFontaine and responsible government. It was their anticlericalism. As things turned out the republicans would hurt their own cause more than they would the Church: on the subject of responsible government, Papineau might conceivably weaken LaFontaine, especially if he concentrated on nationality and the defects of the Union. But by challenging the Church, the *rouges* merely helped to cement the alliance between LaFontaine and the priests.

On March 14, 1849, *L'Avenir* created quite a stir by publishing large extracts from the European liberal press on the Roman revolution which had forced Pius IX into exile and proclaimed Mazzini's republic. The articles were bitter: and the Lower Canadian republicans left little doubt where their own sympathies lay. The *Mélanges* took up the challenge. Through several series of learned front pages, it tried to show "les Messieurs de l'Avenir" how serious were "l'injustice et la faute qu'ils ont commises".[19] But the young editors did not understand. They continued to insult the Pope; and at their Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste banquet that year, they replaced their traditional toast to the Sovereign by a defiant speech on "Rome Régénérée". "Les journaux socialistes et anti-religieux sont sans cesse à vanter les hauts faits de MM. les rouges à Rome", the *Mélanges* complained,[20] adding sadly that "la manie d'aboyer contre la soutane semble être à la mode".[21]

17 Cf. F. Ouellet, "Le Mandement de Mgr Lartigue de 1837 et la Réaction libérale", *Bulletin des Recherches historiques*, 1952 (58), pp. 97-104.
18 Elgin-Grey Papers I, 102. Elgin to Grey, December 24, 1847.
19 *MR*, 30 mars 1849.
20 *MR*, 6 juillet 1849.
21 *MR*, 21 septembre 1849.

Indeed it was. On July 21, 1849, *L'Avenir* led another attack which would lock the journalists in another discussion for two months: this time on tithing. "La dîme", it pronounced, "est un abus encore bien plus grand que la tenure seigneuriale." Then later, when it began to campaign for the abolition of seigneurial tenure, the radical paper again attacked the Church for its ownership of seigneurial lands. In fact, it averred, one of the very reasons against the system was the amount of revenue which accrued from it to the Séminaire de Québec and other religious institutions.

On September 14, 1849, the *Mélanges* warned the republican youngsters at *L'Avenir*: "Nos adversaires ne doivent pas se dissimuler que par leur conduite et leurs écrits ils se font plus de tort qu'ils nous en font à nous-mêmes." True enough. For as the priests were being attacked by their own political enemies, LaFontaine's publicists naturally came to the clergy's rescue. Thus, all during 1849, the *Journal de Québec, Le Canadien,* and *La Minerve,* defended the Church as if they themselves had been directly concerned.

While the dispute raged about the Pope's temporal sovereignty, for instance, Cauchon's *Journal* featured a serial on the subject by the French Bishop Dupanloup of Orleans, and another series covering several instalments by "Un Canadien Catholique" assailed *L'Avenir* for "la prétention qu'il entretient de catéchiser le clergé sur ses devoirs". So also on the issue of tithing: Cauchon spread an article defending the Church over the front page of three issues in October 1849, and underlined the connection between anticlericalism and the republicans: "Ce sont les aimables procédés du passé, la haine entre le peuple et ses chefs religieux pour assurer le triomphe des doctrines pernicieuses et anti-nationales." [22] When the *rouges* criticized the clergy's role in the schools, Cauchon answered by giving the clergy credit for *la survivance*:

> D'où vient cette haute portée d'intelligence, ce caractère si beau, si noble, si grand de franchise, d'honneur, de grandeur d'âme et de religieuse honnêteté qui distingue nos premiers citoyens et qui contraste si étonnamment avec cette populace de banqueroutiers qui soudoient les incendiaires, les parjures, les voleurs et la lie des villes pour commettre en leur nom, pour eux, et à leur profit des crimes dignes de Vandales ? Du clergé national, sorti des rangs du peuple, identifié avec tous ses intérêts, dévoué jusqu'à la mort, initié à tous les progrès des sciences modernes, des arts et du génie, aux tendances des sociétés actuelles. [23]

Finally, when the *rouges* hurled insults, the editor of the *Journal* answered flamboyantly:

> Détrôner le Dieu de nos pères et lui substituer l'infâme idole du sensualisme, voilà leur but; vilipender le prêtre, calomnier son enseigne-

[22] *Journal de Québec,* 2 octobre 1849.
[23] *Journal de Québec,* 2 mars 1850.

> ment, couvrir d'un noir venin ses actions les plus louables, voilà leur moyen... Quel but, quelle fin vous proposez-vous en livrant à l'ignominie le prêtre du Canada, votre concitoyen, votre ami d'enfance, l'ami dévoué de notre commune patrie ! Aurez-vous relevé bien haut la gloire de notre pays lorsque vous aurez avili aux yeux de l'étranger ses institutions les plus précieuses, couvert de boue ses hommes les plus éminents dans l'ordre religieux et civil, enseveli sous un noir manteau de calomnies le corps le plus respectable de la société comme un cadavre sous un drap mortuaire ? [24]

Le Canadien wrote less lyrically, but like the *Journal,* it too came to the defence of the priests, and struck back at *L'Avenir.* It found that the republicans' articles "représentent trop de passion et par conséquent une notable injustice envers les hommes en qui le pays a confiance". [25] And at the height of the temporal power dispute, it noted how the same republicans who praised Mazzini had also supported those who burned down the Canadian Parliament buildings, and signed the manifesto demanding Annexation to the United States.

In return, of course, the priests supported LaFontaine. At the time of Papineau's Manifesto at the end of 1847, during the general election that swept LaFontaine to the final achievement of responsible government, reports from different parts of Lower Canada came in to Montreal that "certains prêtres, même à Montréal, ont prononcé en chaire des discours presqu'exclusivement politiques". [26] But more important still than such electoral advice was the increasing involvement in party politics of the *Mélanges Religieux* and its junior associate in Quebec, the weekly *Ami de la Religion et de la Patrie.* Edited by Jacques Crémazie, *L'Ami* first appeared in early 1848 under the interesting motto: "Le trône chancelle quand l'honneur, la religion, la bonne foi ne l'environnent pas." It endorsed LaFontaine's ideas so unequivocally that Cauchon was glad to recommend it to his party leader for patronage:

> Il ne faudra pas oublier quand vous donnez des annonces d'en donner aussi à l'*Ami de la Religion*... qui montre de bonnes dispositions et fait tout le bien qu'il peut. [27]

As for the *Mélanges,* since mid-1847 it had practically become a La-Fontaine political sheet. In July 1847, the clergy had handed over the editorship to a twenty-one-year-old law student who was articling in the offices of A.-N. Morin: Hector Langevin, whose religious orthodoxy they felt well guaranteed by his two brothers (and frequent correspondents) in Quebec: Jean, a priest professor at the Séminaire, and Edmond who in September 1847 became secretary to the Archbishop's *Grand-Vicaire* Cazeau.

[24] *Journal de Québec,* 6 décembre 1849.
[25] *Le Canadien,* 31 mai 1848.
[26] *MR,* 14 décembre 1847.
[27] Public Archives of Canada, MG 24, B-14. LaFontaine Papers. Joseph Cauchon à LaFontaine, 24 octobre 1849.

With mentors like Morin, the youthful editor soon threw his paper into the thick of the political fight. In fact he became so involved that at last the priests at the Bishopric felt they had to warn him (they did so several times) to tone down his enthusiasm for LaFontaine. He did not, however. His greatest service was perhaps the publicizing of the clergy's support for LaFontaine at the time of the trouble over Rebellion Losses. At the height of the crisis, on May 5, 1849, he issued the rallying call:

> En présence de cette activité des gens turbulents et ennemis de la Constitution, on se demande ce qu'ont à faire les libéraux [i.e. LaFontaine's supporters] . . . Regardons nos Évêques, regardons nos prêtres, regardons notre clergé; il vient de nous montrer l'exemple en présentant lui-même des adresses à Son Excellence Lord Elgin, et en en envoyant d'autres à notre gracieuse souveraine. Après cela hésiterons-nous à agir avec vigueur, promptitude et énergie ? Hésiterons-nous à suivre la route que nous trace notre épiscopat, que nous trace notre clergé tout entier ? [28]

Half a year later he spelled out his full sentiments in a letter to his brother Edmond:

> Si les rouges avaient l'autorité en mains, prêtres, églises, religion, etc., devraient disparaître de la face du Canada. Le moment est critique. Il faut que le ministère continue à être libéral tel qu'à présent, ou bien on est Américain, et puis alors adieu à notre langue et à notre nationalité. [29]

* * *

Perhaps it was inevitable that during the closing years of the decade the French-Canadian clergy would come to play an increasingly political role. For with responsible government the Canadiens had, for the first time in their long national life, taken over the direction of their own destiny. And as the Catholic Church had long played an important part in fashioning their thought, it was natural for most of those on the political stage to welcome the support of the priests. Yet, would it have happened as effortlessly if Bishop Bourget had not fallen in with the *Veuillotistes*? If LaFontaine and Morin had not supported clerical schools in 1846? If Hector Langevin had not articled in Morin's office? If *L'Avenir* had not attacked the Papal States? Would it have happened at all if Denis-Benjamin Viger had won the election of 1844? If the Papineau legend had persisted? Be that as it may, the *bleu* alliance of priest and politician (since we can now give it its name) radically transformed LaFontaine's party and French-Canadian nationalism.

Except when the rights of the Church were in question, ultramontanes tended to consider politics as secondary. They concentrated rather on Church-State problems, thus gradually moving away from areas of co-operation with Upper Canada — especially at a time when the "voluntary

[28] *MR*, 5 mai 1849.
[29] *APQ*, Collection Chapais, 253. Hector à Edmond Langevin, 25 janvier 1850.

principle" was converting Baldwin's party as ultramontanism was LaFontaine's. Gradually they came to appeal almost exclusively to ideas and feelings which were proper only to French Canada. When he began in the late 1830s LaFontaine aimed at political and economic reforms in which both Canadas would share. In his famous *Adresse aux Électeurs de Terrebonne,* he described the problems of French Canada in political and economic terms alone. As the decade moved on, however, under pressure from his opponents and his followers, he found himself becoming more and more involved with ultramontanism and a narrower nationalism. Reluctantly, it seems. Late in 1851, several weeks after his resignation, he recalled to Cauchon, who had bragged about rallying the priests, how he had cautioned him about the faith-and-nationality theme. "Je me rappelle ce que vous m'avez dit", Cauchon admitted, "par rapport à la question nationale. Mais je vous répondais que c'était la seule corde qu'il était possible de faire vibrer avec succès." [30] Later, to another admonition from the former premier, the editor of the *Journal de Québec* admitted that "la question de nationalité était délicate", but protested again that "c'était la corde qui vibrait le mieux. J'espère que vous avez en cela parfaitement compris ma pensée et que vous êtes convaincu que je n'ai pas voulu employer un moyen malhonnête pour atteindre mon but." [31] LaFontaine had wanted to break with Papineau's particularist and republican nationalism. He appealed to a more general, open point of view, founding his hopes on cooperation with Upper Canada and in the British political system. Yet, in the end, he found himself the head of a party which tended to be as particularist as Papineau's (although for different reasons).

His party also turned out to be one which did not understand Parliamentary institutions. The ultramontanes were not rigid republicans like Papineau, but they were rigid Catholics, used to "refuting the errors of our time", with a doctrine which they proudly wanted as "toujours une, toujours sublime, toujours la même".[32] They were accustomed to think in an atmosphere rarified by unchanging principles. Instinctively they reacted in dogmatic terms, pushing ideas to their limits — and students of the absolute make poor parliamentarians. The ultramontanes could not really understand parliamentary practice as LaFontaine and Parent had. They lacked political flair and skill in manœuvring. They could not adapt to the gropings and costs of conciliation. To them, "rights" were an objective reality which could not be negotiated, only acknowledged. "Toleration" could not mean respect for an opposing opinion; at best it was a necessary evil. Applied to theology, their attitude might have had some validity (although not for ecumenism!) but transferred to politics and nationalism — as inevitably

30 LaFontaine Papers. Joseph Cauchon à LaFontaine, 11 novembre 1851.
31 *Ibid.*, décembre 1851.
32 *MR*, 15 décembre 1843.

it was — it could not but extinguish LaFontaine's hopes for a broadening democracy of the British type.

For years the *bleus* and their Upper Canadian colleagues supported the same men, but as the French party gradually concentrated so dogmatically on Faith and Nationality, there could be no true meeting of minds. Outwardly, LaFontaine's and Parent's wider nationalism seemed to have prevailed: responsible government and British Parliamentary institutions were secured. Also, a political party uniting Upper and Lower Canadians continued to govern the country for over a generation. But this was external appearance only: in reality, the party from which LaFontaine resigned in 1851 was assiduously becoming less concerned with the larger perspective than with the particular Church-State problems of French Canada; it was becoming decreasingly parliamentarian, increasingly authoritarian.

A funny thing indeed had happened to French-Canadian nationalism on its way to responsible government.