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Abstract

After decades of raising the "no popery" cry and fighting for the strict separation of church and state, Canada's Liberal Party leaders began in the 1870s to distance themselves from their previous reputation for anti-Catholicism and from their hardline approach to church-state policy. This article examines the Alexander Mackenzie administration's response to the Argenteuil Speech of 1875, in which Liberal cabinet minister Lucius Huntington called for all Protestants to unite with liberal Catholics to challenge the Roman Catholic Church's rising political influence in Canada. Although several prominent Protestants applauded the speech, and Prime Minister Mackenzie himself privately admitted his agreement, the administration publicly condemned the speech as anti-Catholic and effectively crushed Huntington's vision for the party. By forcing the party leaders to choose between their historic principles and their broader electoral appeal, Huntington's "deplorable speech" facilitated a turning point in the Liberal Party's approach to religious matters.

Résumé

Après s'être élevés avec virulence durant des décennies contre « le papisme » et avoir lutté pour la stricte séparation de l'Église et de l'État, les dirigeants du Parti libéral du Canada commencèrent, durant les années 1870, à se distancier de leur réputation anticatholique et de leurs conceptions arrêtées en ce qui concernait la politique Église-État. Cet article examine la réponse de l'administration d'Alexander Mackenzie au Discours d'Argenteuil de 1875, dans lequel le ministre du cabinet libéral Lucius Huntington appelait tous les protestants à s'unir aux catholiques libéraux pour contrer l'influence politique grandissante de l'Église catholique romaine au Canada. Bien que plusieurs protestants éminents eussent applaudi ce discours, et que le Premier ministre Mack-

enzie lui-même admît cet accord en privé, l'administration condamna publiquement ce discours pour être anticatholique et vint efficacement à bout de cette vision qu'avait Huntington pour le Parti. Mais, en contraignant les dirigeants du Parti à choisir entre leurs principes historiques et leur électorat le plus large, le « discours déplorable » d'Huntington fut l'occasion d'un tournant dans l'approche des questions religieuses par le Parti libéral.

Lucius Seth Huntington is perhaps best remembered, if at all, for his role in exposing the Pacific Scandal that brought down the John A. Macdonald government in 1873. But Huntington's boldness on the subject of church-state relations may be his most significant contribution to the long-term direction of the Liberal Party of Canada. On 30 December 1875 at a by-election debate in Argenteuil County, Huntington called for Protestants to unite with Liberal Catholics to fight against ultramontanism — the notion of papal supremacy over civil society that was then gaining prominence among Catholic leaders in Québec and in Rome.[1] The speech created a public relations crisis for the Liberal Party, reviving the impression among some Catholic clergy that the Liberals were a "Protestant party." While some Protestants applauded Huntington for his bravery, several condemned what they perceived to be divisive rhetoric. One St. John newspaper called it "a deplorable speech."[2] The Argenteuil Speech was notable not because it succeeded in its aims — the anti-ultramontane coalition Huntington envisioned never materialized — but because it exposed a latent division within the Liberal Party. Liberal Prime Minister Alexander Mackenzie, himself a devout Protestant, had participated enthusiastically in the "no popery" cry of mid-century Ontario; but now, as prime minister supported by an in-fighting caucus, he had tried rather desperately to distance his party from the religion-based political controversies of his past. Mackenzie believed, along with his close friend and mentor George Brown, that the old church-state controversies that had plagued the United Province of Canada had all been put to rest with the new federal arrangement of the British North America Act.[3] However, some Protestant Liberals like Lucius Huntington

believed that the battle for separation of church and state was far from over, and that the Liberal Party should be at the centre of that battle as it had always been. Through his Argenteuil Speech, Huntington inadvertently forced a moment of reckoning for the Liberal leadership on the question of Protestant-Catholic relations. Alexander Mackenzie had to decide whether he would join Huntington to publicly condemn ultramontanism or continue on his course of diplomatic neutrality. The response of the Liberal leadership to this "deplorable speech" — that of disavowal, back-peddling, and apology — cemented the trajectory of the Liberal Party away from its hardline stance on the separation of church and state, and ended its nearly five-decade position as the party of Protestant Dissent.

"No religious preferences whatever!": Liberals and the Separation of Church and State, 1840–1867

Although the Liberal Party, and its predecessors the Reformers and Rouges, always contained some variety of perspectives on church-state matters, the Ontario side of the reform party was closely affiliated with anti-state-church positions at the outset. The early reform movement in Upper Canada took shape in large part by rallying opposition to the clergy reserves, a massive land grant originally offered exclusively for the support of the Church of England.[4] For three decades from the rise of the reform party in the 1820s until the reserves' secularization in 1854, the clergy reserves provided a consistent rallying cry for reformers at the hustings, and as a result the reform party attracted a great number of Protestant Dissenters. The Dissenters, a loose collection of non-Anglican Protestant denominations, most of whom embraced evangelicalism, were outside of the traditional state-church arrangement and thus often were natural skeptics of the relationship. Some Dissenters of the evangelical persuasion came to see all state-church entanglement as corrupting of Christianity, partly because it might lead people to trust church institutions rather than seek a saving experience of conversion.[5] This evangelical doctrine provided a theological basis for voluntarism, the

political position that all religious activity should rely solely on voluntary contributions and never receive state support. Liberal politicians of mid-century often framed church-state policy with reference to these theological themes. At an anti-clergy-reserve meeting in Toronto in 1851, rising public figure George Brown reiterated the Dissenting belief that the early Christian church operated according to the "voluntary principle" until it was corrupted by the "priestcraft" of Rome.[6] When Brown first sought elected office in 1851, he ran on the unyielding cry of "No {clergy} reserves! No rectories! No sectarian schools! No sectarian money grants! No ecclesiastical corporations! No religious preferences whatever!"[7] Every plank of his platform was an unabashed appeal to voluntarism, and over the next decade Brown became a figurehead of Ontario's Protestant Liberals.

Alexander Mackenzie started his own political career in conjunction with Brown's, and shared many of Brown's positions on church-state policy. A fellow Scottish Protestant immigrant who arrived in Ontario in the early 1840s, Mackenzie worked as a stonemason before entering politics full-time. Following his spiritual conversion in Scotland, the Presbyterian-born Mackenzie became a Baptist and brought with him to Ontario a certain convert's zeal that naturally spilled over into political issues. On one occasion shortly after his arrival in Ontario, Mackenzie got into a heated argument with a co-worker by criticizing the clergy reserves, and the next day found his previous day's stone work defaced.[8] After campaigning for Brown in Mackenzie's home riding of Lambton/Kent in 1851,[9] Mackenzie went on to found the *Lambton Shield* as a pro-reform newspaper that desired "to establish and secure civil and religious equality, and the severance of the existing union between Church and State…."[10]

As the clergy reserves issue was resolved through secularization in 1854, it was only replaced by an escalation of other state-church controversies, such as the separate schools question. The first state-funded separate Catholic schools in Ontario emerged in the 1840s under the leadership of Bishop Michael Power,[11] and a decade later his successor Bishop Armand-Francois-Marie de Charbonnel began in 1852 to call for Ontario

Catholics to refuse to support or attend the common schools.[12] His activism led to the 1853 School Bill which established a separate Catholic school system intended to be on par with the minority "Protestant" (non-sectarian) school system in Québec. The bill incorporated separate school boards to handle their own funds, while exempting Catholics from taxes for common schools.[13] Notably, this bill (and the additions to it made in subsequent years) would have failed if left entirely to Ontarian votes, but passed with a majority from Québec combined with the few Ontario supporters in the united legislature.[14] It is in this context of perceived political domination that sectional tension and, more to the point, an "anti-Catholic" expression of voluntarism became a political force in Ontario.

"Without regard to their religious opinions": Liberal courtship of the Catholic Vote, 1867-1875

By Confederation, the future of the "anti-Catholic" planks of the Protestant Liberal platform was already endangered due to demographic and political realities. A rising proportion of Catholics in Ontario may have fueled nativist Protestant sentiments in the 1850s,[15] but it was only a matter of time before the growing Catholic voting bloc made the Liberal voluntarist position (that had traditionally been argued with an appeal to Protestant sentiments) unviable, most immediately because it alienated would-be coalition supporters among Members of Provincial Parlement (MPP) in Québec that were necessary to form government in the united legislature. For example, the 1863 election saw a Reform victory in Ontario with 40 seats versus the Macdonald Conservative-Liberals' 22 seats. Yet, Lower Canada's strong pro-Macdonald victory meant the formation of another Macdonald coalition government.[16] The Conservatives under John A. Macdonald recognized the political significance of the Catholic vote, and they were able to leverage their Liberal opponents' seemingly anti-Catholic positions against them. Indeed, private letters between Sir John and Catholic political leaders like Richard W. Scott discuss the Catholic vote like a valuable

chess piece that could be put in play where needed throughout the province. During the 1863 election, for example, Scott conveyed the impression that he could command the Catholic vote throughout Canada West. In one letter to Macdonald, Scott states,

> I have written a number of letters on behalf of Jones to M.S. R. of Leeds, which I think will secure for him the Catholic Vote … I generally send off a batch every day to different parts of Upper Canada. … Our chances throughout U.C. look well. Is Sidney Smith to run or Dunford? I have just written a friend to keep every Catholic Vote from Dunford.[17]

With the Conservatives both actively recruiting the growing Catholic voting bloc in Ontario and dominating all possibility of coalitions with the Catholic-majority MPPs in Québec, the Liberal "no popery" position was simply not politically effective under such conditions.

Recognizing the need for Catholic support during the deadlock of the 1860s,[18] Protestant Liberals like George Brown and his close colleague Alexander Mackenzie were eager to pursue a reset in Catholic-Protestant relations following Confederation. Despite failing to win a seat in the new federal parliament and subsequently resigning as party leader, Brown personally led the charge to reconcile Ontario's Catholic voters to the Liberal Party. In an 1871 letter to a committee of Roman Catholics in Ontario,[19] Brown announced that "All the vexed questions that caused the separation have been settled and swept away, and now all are free to act together for the advancement and prosperity of our country, and to treat all men alike, without regard to their religious opinions."[20] The statement was a diplomatic gesture, but it was not entirely accurate. With ultramontanism ascendant among the *programmists* in Québec and among Roman Catholic populations throughout the world, Protestant Liberals continued to be leery of "priestly" political influence in Canada. Sentiments of Catholic-Protestant mutual suspicion continued to thrive and threaten the reconciliation Brown envisioned.

Two years after Brown reached out to Catholic voters, his successor Alexander Mackenzie took over the Prime Minister's Office in the wake of the Pacific Scandal. Protestant Liberal commentators were at first enthusiastic about Alexander Mackenzie's administration, hailing Mackenzie as a devout and honest self-made man,[21] but upon observing Mackenzie's concessions on so many religiously-charged issues they quickly became disillusioned. By 1875, Mackenzie had already offered general amnesty to all of the Red River rebels (including Riel and Lepine provided they undergo a five-year banishment from Canada),[22] spoke in favour of maintaining separate Catholic schools in New Brunswick following their separate schools crisis,[23] and even allowed separate schools provisions to be included in the North-West Territory Bill.[24] Such was the disappointment that several public voices of the Protestant Liberal cause shifted their representations of Mackenzie from the glowing "self-made man" to shameless sell-out. Following the Liberal loss in a Toronto by-election in November 1875, the Huntingdon *Gleaner*'s editor Robert Sellars wrote that "The result should be a warning to Mackenzie that his truckling to Rome is alienating from his Ministry the support of all true Liberals. When out of office he spoke as became a true man of the atrocious murder of Thomas Scott. When he got into office he demonstrated that he had only been seeking to make political capital …." Sellars further suggested that Mackenzie's goal was "keeping in power by an alliance with the Hierarchy."[25] By the same token, the Toronto-based *Nation* newspaper lamented that both parties were "selling the country alternately to the Roman Catholic priesthood for political support" and predicted that one day they would both come into a "fatal collision with whatever there may be of patriotism among us."[26]

"Mr. Huntington prefers to strike back": Division in the Liberal Party over Religion, 1875-1878

It is in this context of Protestant Liberal disappointment with Mackenzie's "truckling to Rome" that Huntington delivered his notorious Argenteuil Speech. The occasion came with a

by-election for the riding of Argenteuil County in Québec. On 30 December 1875 the town of Grenville hosted a candidates' forum for both the reform candidate, Dr. Christie, and the conservative candidate, Mr. White, each of whom were supported by additional speakers from each party. According to press coverage of the event, the conservative Mr. White was actually the first to raise the issue of religion; he claimed he had been mistreated by Catholic voters for being a Protestant. It appears to have been in response to Mr. White's claims of victimhood that Lucius Huntington decided to lambast the conservative party's friendliness to ultramontanism. A correspondent for the *Globe* wrote that Huntington began his speech by rebuking Mr. White, saying that he "deprecate[ed] the raising of religious questions at elections." Huntington went on to accuse Mr. White of hypocrisy for crying Protestant victimhood while supporting a party allied with ultramontanists who, Huntington believed, wanted to curb the free practice of Protestantism in Québec.[27] In subsequent weeks, some conservative commentators would later depict the speech as a premeditated assault on Catholicism directly ordered by Alexander Mackenzie himself. In the words of Patrick Boyle in the *Irish Canadian,* for example, Huntington appeared at the meeting "fresh from the councils of his chief" to offer an "attack upon the French Canadians and the Catholic Church."[28] The earliest account, however, printed on 31 December 1875, seems to suggest that at least some of the content of the speech had been improvised as a direct response to the conservative candidate's claims of religion-based mistreatment.[29]

Despite the possibly impromptu nature of Huntington's remarks, his concerns about ultramontanism were common in Protestant Liberal circles — particularly the notion that ultramontanism posed a direct threat to civil liberties, such as freedom of speech and freedom of religion.[30] Indeed, Huntington warned that if a new alliance of Protestants with liberal Catholics failed to stand up for "British freedom," the Conservative-Ultramontane alliance would "make the State the mere machinery for registering the decrees of the Church" and ultimately "plunge Lower Canada back into the darkness of the middle ages."[31]

Huntington's comments represented a stark departure from the Mackenzie administration's actions over the previous two years, which had more often than not sought to appease the ultramontanists for the sake of Protestant-Catholic relations. By contrast, Huntington proposed that the party should not compromise with ultramontanists, but rather insist upon the supremacy of civil law and the separation of church and state. At the end of the speech came Huntington's bold, if inadvertent, dare to Prime Minister Mackenzie: he asserted that his anti-ultramontane position was shared by his entire party, and that he would be willing to resign if he felt they did not agree with him.[32]

In fact, the Liberal Party was not at all united as Huntington conveyed. Huntington's speech set off a storm of furious letter-writing behind the scenes. Alexander Mackenzie wrote to George Brown on 22 January 1876,

> That speech of Huntington's has given me such difficulty and has unfortunately lost us Lower Canada without any other gain being made. We cannot object to the sentiments but the time was ill chosen. We cannot govern without a large following from Quebec and any aggressive act is seen to lose it for us. … I have been in hot water since New Year about it and am still.[33]

Luther Holton, another Anglophone Liberal Member of Parlement (MP) from Québec, railed against Huntington in a series of letters to Mackenzie, saying he had been a Liberal politician in Québec for 20 years and had never been perceived as hostile to the Catholic Church, but that this one speech threatened to damage the whole party's reputation.[34] The Catholic leadership in Québec was also furious. Archbishop Alexandre-Antonin Taché wrote to Joseph Cauchon, Mackenzie's main clergy-friendly liaison in the cabinet, about his concerns that Huntington "looks towards executing a war of races and religions, of which the consequence would be disastrous."[35] Cauchon wrote back with several attempts at damage control, reassuring the archbishop that Huntington was only speaking as an individual Protestant and not speaking for the whole cabinet.[36] Taché was clearly not

convinced. He called the speech a "serious and unjustifiable attack on Catholicism."[37] Indeed, the notion that Huntington's attack on ultramontanism was an attack on all of Catholicism was repeated in Catholic newspapers around the country. The *Irish Canadian,* for example, argued that the speech was "an attack in express terms upon … the Hierarchy, clergy, and laity of the Catholic Church."[38]

While Liberal Party leaders cringed, many in the Protestant Liberal press applauded Huntington's move. The *Gleaner* defended Huntington's comments as being based on "notorious facts" about ultramontane interference in politics, and said that he "has no reason to be shamefaced or to become apologetical; let him stick to what he said at Argenteuil and beard Mr Holton and the Ultramontane hirelings to their face."[39] Alexander Galt, prominent Anglophone Québec businessman and politician who had previously served in Macdonald's cabinet, offered his support for Huntington's speech in two pamphlets published early in 1876. Although the speech was "politically distasteful," Galt said, it "embodied a most serious truth, in declaring that the attitude of the Roman Catholic Hierarchy is antagonistic to the principles of civil liberty."[40] Charles Lindsey, former newspaper editor and long-time Ontarian Reformer, wrote that Huntington was simply "reading the signs of the times" and that he was right to warn people that "a great battle between Ultramontanism and the defenders of the citadel of civil liberty was about to be fought in Canada."[41] Similarly, the *Nation* reminded its readers of their conviction that "the Church of Rome is about to force upon the Civil Power a deadly contest … In the midst of active enemies, it would be poor strategy to pretend not to see them; to receive their blows with submission and without any attempt at self-defence. Mr. Huntington prefers to strike back."[42]

Pressured from both sides, Mackenzie could not maintain his public neutrality forever. With Luther Holton calling for Huntington's resignation and publicly questioning whether Mackenzie himself was behind the speech, Mackenzie rose in parliament to offer an apology, denied that he and the cabinet had anything to do with Huntington's speech, and reiterated that religion must

be kept out of politics.[43] Huntington did not apologize. When he stood in parliament to respond to Holton's condemnation, he was reportedly "loudly cheered on taking the floor," and argued that his speech had simply been a "reply to the attacks being made upon him and his party by those he assailed."[44] Before the matter was put to rest in the legislature, Holton had the last word in offering himself as an example of a Protestant Quebecker who for 20 years managed not "to offend the Roman Catholics of Lower Canada" by mentioning religion, and expressed his hope that Québec would remain the "pleasantest society in the Dominion of Canada … composed of mixed elements."[45]

The two men's contrasting approaches to religion summarized well the division within the Liberal Party in the 1870s: should the party call out a perceived threat to church-state separation and fight against it as elements of the party had done since the 1820s, or avoid the subject in order to maintain amicable relations? Mackenzie and Brown had already decided that the religion-based controversies were behind them, and that they should focus on broadening the Liberal Party tent. Huntington's speech at Argenteuil reminded Mackenzie that a wing of the party still existed that saw church-state separation as imperative and under direct threat. Despite Mackenzie's private agreement with Huntington's concerns, his public disavowal effectively killed Huntington's vision for the party. As historian Robert Hill has noted, whatever appetite there may have been for an anti-ultramontane coalition in 1875, the Liberal Party leaders' unwillingness to form the basis of that coalition left otherwise willing participants without a rallying point. As Hill summarized, "the spineless Liberal party that Conservatives were being asked to support was hardly a vehicle through which the separation of church and state could be achieved."[46]

"The laws of morality … will be served by the cause of Free Trade": The Reorientation of Liberal Party Rhetoric after 1878

Seeking to reconcile both wings of the party, Alexander Mackenzie tried to redirect their energies toward the common enemy of

high-tariff protectionism. In the federal election of 1878, Mackenzie deliberately avoided religion and instead pursued the less divisive strategy of delivering three-hour lectures on economic policy.[47] When he did mention church-state issues, it was entirely in the past tense to boast of battles the Liberals had fought and won decades previous such as the clergy reserves secularization.[48] Featuring more prominently in his account of past political victories was his British counterparts' victory over the Corn Laws in the 1840s, which helped to overcome what Mackenzie described as "the demon of protection."[49] In the end, however, Mackenzie's free trade strategy did not work. The Liberals lost the 1878 election in large part because of voter frustration with the recession, and the belief that Macdonald's National Policy was preferable to Mackenzie's dedication to free trade which was perceived as inaction.[50] Besides this failure of messaging on economic policy, however, religious issues were not far from the foreground. For those Protestant Liberals for whom religious matters bubbled near the surface, the Liberal Party had ceased to speak to their values and concerns. To the contrary, it appeared to commentators that the Liberals were deliberately "truckling to Rome" for political advantage.[51] Although it is uncertain exactly what influence the issue had upon the election results, Mackenzie had clearly lost the enthusiasm of a core part of his party's historic base in Ontario.

The relationship between the Liberal Party and Protestant Dissent was effectively over by the end of Mackenzie's term as prime minister, and this change is reflected in a decisive shift in party rhetoric. In the 1850s, George Brown's political speeches had openly flirted with evangelical Protestant theology, declaring that true Christianity was "a religion of the heart" and lamenting that "The very preaching of an established church is cold and lifeless."[52] By contrast, Mackenzie's successor Edward Blake's references to religion were decidedly drained of specific creedal content. Consider this vague reference to Jesus in one of Blake's speeches in 1879:

> after nearly nineteen hundred years since the message came to earth of peace and good will to men … the

> cause of freedom of transactions between man and man … is one which we may vindicate on these higher grounds. I believe that the laws of morality, the real interest of the world in its highest sense, are and will be served by the cause of Free Trade.[53]

Ontario Liberals in the 1830s had often framed policy with direct reference to evangelical theology about salvation and the afterlife, one reformer arguing for instance that church establishment "is the wrong way to secure {people's} registry in heaven."[54] By the 1880s, Ontario Liberals were invoking an abstraction of Jesus' "laws of morality" to support free market economics.

The Liberal Party's changing approaches to religion in the Mackenzie administration may speak to a broader process of secularization in Canadian public life in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. David Marshall has argued that "In a modern liberal society such as Canada the key to understanding the process of secularization rests in the fact that religion and the churches are part of a pluralistic society and are thrust into a market-place of competing ideas, values, activities, and institutions."[55] Faced with such a pluralistic environment, mainline Protestant churches in the latter half of the nineteenth century increasingly tailored their message to appeal to wider audiences. Although Marshall's observation applies most directly to changes within the doctrines and practices of Protestant churches themselves, it is possible to see a similar process taking place simultaneously within the Liberal Party. Confronted with an increasingly pluralistic voting population, Ontario Liberals changed their message from one that made appeal to a specific set of beliefs and values in the 1820s to one increasingly removed of culturally-specific expression by the 1870s. The Liberal Party's trajectory follows the lead of the Confederation conferences, wherein the Founding Fathers set out what Janet Ajzenstat has called "a legal and institutional vision" for the new nation, a vision that was designed to be void of cultural and social content.[56] Within this framework, religion was not expunged from political discourse, but it was often reoriented to suit the sensibilities of the lowest common denominator.

The Fathers of Confederation quoted from the Bible, for example, but they "did not expect that an appeal to Christianity … would put an end to the debate, serving as a last and irrefutable declaration that would swamp all opposition."[57] Jeffrey McNairn has suggested that this phenomenon is observable even earlier, in the first half of the nineteenth century, arguing that Ontario's denominational plurality discouraged appeals to creed from taking precedence in public debate. Whereas appeals to God's will would more likely be used to shut down debate, McNairn suggests, the rise of a public sphere and deliberative democracy in nineteenth-century Canada necessitated "the waning of explicit and strictly denominational appeals in political debate in favour of secular or vaguely Judaeo-Christian sentiments and idioms."[58] In sum, Canada's religious plurality encouraged the gradual taming of religious rhetoric in the public sphere, the constitution, government institutions, and the major political parties themselves.[59]

While secularization offers one explanation for the changes to the Liberal Party in the 1870s, these changes in the party's strategy could also be understood in the context of the emergent "liberal order" in nineteenth-century Canada. Ian McKay suggests that the scholarly debates about secularization in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Canada could be reoriented as a matter of "liberalization."[60] His suggestion appeared as a footnote in his groundbreaking article on the liberal order framework. Although liberalization may help to explain the Liberal Party's compromises on church-state matters, and their subsequent shift of focus away from religious questions toward free market economic policy, the concept has not been explored further in this context. As McKay has shown, compromises on questions of church-state separation were crucial to incorporating Québec into the emergent liberal order. Because Québec society was organized around Catholic communitarianism, it was not fully absorbed into the liberal order that held philosophical assumptions that emphasized the individual above all else.[61] Whereas Protestants were more often viewed as ideal liberal individuals — and indeed, historians have noted that classical liberal ideals were

often framed with reference to Protestant terms and concepts[62] — Catholic Canadians were treated in many ways as "probationary liberals" at least until the 1890s.[63] Only after Catholic adherents and leaders had undergone a process of "liberalization," foregoing the church's earlier civic humanist challenge to capitalism and liberal individualism, could they become accepted as full participants in the liberal order.[64] In order to secure full participation in the liberal order, McKay explains, liberal politicians were willing to compromise on Catholic church-state communitarianism as long as it was limited to Québec itself.[65]

The church-state compromises McKay describes, however, were never limited to Québec. They accompanied the emergent liberal order as it extended westward. Beginning in the union period in the 1840s, Catholic leaders exercised their leverage in the united legislature to establish state-supported separate schools in Protestant-majority Ontario.[66] Even after Confederation ended the legislative union of Ontario and Québec, federal politicians necessarily accommodated Catholic opinion on church-state questions outside Québec such as the extension of Catholic separate schools into the North-West Territory. Alexander Mackenzie's administration had initially excluded any reference to education in the earliest version of the North-West Territory Bill of 1875, but Edward Blake recommended inserting a separate schools clause which he believed was "essential under the circumstances of the country." Despite opposition from then-Senator George Brown who argued that "there would be no end of confusion if each class had to have its own peculiar school system," Mackenzie allowed the inclusion of the separate schools clause and the bill passed.[67] The growth of Catholic church-state arrangements outside of Québec, and the inability or unwillingness of the historically anti-state-church Liberal Party to oppose it, reveals the effectiveness of the Catholic leadership and voting bloc in Canadian politics. Whereas McKay has emphasized the hegemonic position of liberals in the church-state "compromises,"[68] this study suggests there was a large extent to which liberals (whether part of the Liberal Party itself or not) had their hands tied. When politicians at the highest levels, including Prime Minister Alex-

ander Mackenzie and his cabinet, knew their opponents could smear them as anti-Catholic and potentially end their control of parliament, their range of responses to church-state issues was severely limited.

Canadian politicians' attempt to manage competing religious interests appears to have played a notable part in the advancement of the liberal order in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Politicians had immediate incentive to insist that voters engage with politics strictly as *individuals*, voting and otherwise engaging in public affairs without any regard for longstanding collective religious identities and interests. Outside of the halls of political influence, average Protestants exerted considerable popular resistance to this particular application of liberal ideology. For example, as Ian Radforth demonstrates, many Protestant leaders and laypeople in the 1860s and 1870s objected to the liberal interpretation of rights that allowed Catholic processions to march through predominantly Protestant neighbourhoods, responding in some cases with protests and violent clashes. Liberal politicians such as George Brown, however, insisted that such processions should be protected as a matter of religious tolerance.[69] Whereas concerned Protestants had an incentive to organize collectively against what they saw as "idolatry" parading through Protestant neighbourhoods, politicians had an imperative to downplay religious differences to build the coalitions necessary to get elected and to govern effectively once in office. Alexander Mackenzie noted this imperative in a speech during his 1878 election campaign: "We have a country vast in … its diversity of creed and race; and it is a task which any statesman may feel great difficulty in accomplishing, to harmonize all those interests …."[70] Canadian politicians therefore had a unique incentive to convince Protestant and Catholic voters to set aside any perceived collective religious interests, which had become barriers to party cohesion and political success, and to think of themselves first and foremost as individuals. The objections to Lucius Huntington's speech illustrates this "liberalization" process taking place among Protestant leaders in the Liberal Party.

Whether interpreted within the context of secularization or liberalization, the Mackenzie administration's cold response to Huntington's speech signaled the end of an era for the Liberal Party of Canada. Although the short-term consequences included no electoral benefit, this shift in rhetoric and policy was an essential component in the Liberal Party's long-term development into a nationally viable governing party. Historians rightfully offer much of the credit for this transition to the leadership of Wilfrid Laurier, beginning in 1886. Despite the Catholic Church's hostility toward liberalism in principle, Laurier successfully attracted Québec voters to the Liberal Party in the 1896 federal election and thereby inaugurated what would become a century of Liberal Party dominance in Canadian federal politics.[71] Laurier's success, however, depended upon the culmination of approximately three decades of Liberal Party leaders actively seeking to reverse their previous reputation for anti-Catholicism. Alexander Mackenzie's rejection of Huntington's vision for the party in 1875, and subsequent refusal to raise religious issues in the 1878 election campaign, laid the groundwork for this longer-term strategic transformation of the Liberal Party of Canada.

Conclusion

Despite the Liberal Party's new aversion to religious rhetoric in politics, their trajectory did not eliminate a demand among some of the electorate for sustained political pushback against Catholic church-state arrangements. The Liberals' unwillingness to meet that demand left a void that did not go unnoticed among some Protestant politicians. The Ontario Conservative Party leader D.W. Meredith, for example, took up the "no popery" mantle in the 1886 provincial election by opposing further extensions of the separate school system in Ontario.[72] Oliver Mowat's Ontario Liberal Party took this opportunity to turn the tables on their opponents by accusing them of bigotry toward Catholics. Mowat's education minister G.W. Ross, for example, celebrated his party's newfound support for separate schools in contrast with

his opponents' "prejudices" in an 1889 speech, saying, "We are the guardians of minorities just as well as of majorities … Why should the prejudices of centuries ago be appealed to determine the actions of to-day? Why should the bitterness and narrowness of the past be invoked as the standard for the present?"[73] The strength of the new liberal ethos is demonstrated in that Meredith's strategy to bridle Protestant sentiments ultimately proved a failure in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Rejected by the Catholic-friendly federal Conservatives under John A. Macdonald and by the majority of Ontario voters, Meredith presided over election defeats for the Ontario Conservative Party in 1886, 1890, and 1894.[74]

Whatever appetite remained among Protestant voters for opposition to Catholic church-state initiatives, the Liberal Party would not be the ones to take up the cause after 1878. Given the vocal disillusionment of some Protestant commentators toward the Mackenzie administration, perhaps there was truth to Robert Sellars' warning that if Alexander Mackenzie continued to convey the impression that he "sells his convictions for support … he will have forever forfeited the support of every true Liberal."[75] Huntington's "deplorable speech" dared Mackenzie to stand up for the old "convictions" as a matter of policy. Mackenzie's disavowal sent a clear signal that the Liberal Party would not re-engage old battles which, in Mackenzie's mind, had already been won. Reflecting in 1882, Mackenzie argued that after years of struggle, "there was no vestige of state-churchism in the land; all churches stood equal in the eye of the law."[76] This whiggish assessment contrasted markedly with the dire warning from fellow liberals such as Charles Lindsey who contended that ultramontanes were pushing to secure the Church of Rome as the established church in Canada and posed an immediate threat to civil liberties.[77] Although Lindsey had predicted otherwise, Mackenzie did not foresee that greater church-state controversies were yet to come, such as the Jesuit Estates Act and the Manitoba Schools Crisis. But the Liberal Party would not lead that fight as it had in the past. Despite his private convictions as a Protestant Dissenter, Mackenzie's mark upon the Liberal Party was to

solidify its transition from the mid-century party of "no popery" and the *Institut Canadien* to, as one critic put it, "The pardoners of Riel and Lepine, the opponents of the New Brunswick School Law, the apologists of Ultramontanism in every form."[78] What a change from the days when the Liberals were the standard-bearers against the clergy reserves, separate schools, and all other ecclesiastical grants. Under Alexander Mackenzie, the Liberal Party had moved on. In time it would become the party not of Lucius Huntington, Charles Lindsey, the *Gleaner,* and the *Nation,* but the more conciliatory party of Luther Holton, Edward Blake, and Wilfrid Laurier.

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Endnotes

1 Robert Hill, *Voice of the Vanishing Minority: Robert Sellar and the Huntingdon Gleaner, 1863–1919* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998), 77–80.

2 Originally in the *Freeman* (St. John, N.B.), quoted in *Nation* (14 Jan. 1876).

3 "The controversies respecting separate schools and ecclesiastical corporations had resulted in a serious secession of Roman Catholics from the ranks of the reform party. Now that these matters of difference were all removed by the new constitution, many of both sides were desirous of reaching an understanding." Alexander Mackenzie, *The Life and Speeches of Hon. George Brown* (Toronto: Globe, 1882), 122.

4 John Webster Grant, *A Profusion of Spires: Religion in Nineteenth-Century Ontario* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 89–90, 98–9.

5 One anonymous contributor to the Toronto-based *Christian Guardian* in 1840 summarized the difference as follows: "The perversity of man has sought out many inventions to accomplish this purpose [salvation], such as a connexion merely with some particular church, involving a round of outward forms …" But the only way to be truly saved, said the writer, was "A due exercise of faith on the vicarious sacrifice of the Redeemer, with a full surrender of the heart to him," and anyone who could not claim such an experience "is in the most imminent danger." See "The Scriptural Way of Salvation," *Christian Guardian* (16 December 1840).

6 George Brown, "Anti-Clergy Reserve Meeting [26 July 1851]," in *The Life and Speeches of Hon. George Brown,* ed. Alexander Mackenzie (Toronto: Globe, 1882), 242–243.

7 Quoted in J.M.S. Careless, *Brown of the Globe, vol. I: The Voice of Upper Canada, 1818-1859* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1959), 142.

8 William Buckingham and George W. Ross, *The Hon. Alexander Mackenzie: His Life and Times* (Toronto: Rose Publishing, 1892), 100.

9 Dale C. Thomson, *Alexander Mackenzie: Clear Grit* (Toronto: MacMillan, 1960), 29.

10 Qtd. in Thomson, *Mackenzie,* 32.

11 Mark McGowan, *Michael Power: The Struggle to Build the Catholic Church on the Canadian Frontier* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005), 268.

12 Bruce Curtis, *Building the Educational State* (London: Althouse Press, 1988), 150.

13 J.M.S. Careless, *The Union of the Canadas* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1967), 182–3.

14 Careless, *Union of the Canadas,* 182–3.

15 J.R. Miller, "Anti-Catholic Thought in Mid-Victorian Canada," *Canadian Historical Review* 66, No. 4 (1985): 474–494, 477.
16 J.M.S. Careless, *Brown of the Globe, vol. II: Statesman of Confederation, 1860-1880* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1963), 96.
17 Library and Archives Canada (hereafter LAC), R.W. Scott Papers, Letter from R.W. Scott to John A. Macdonald, 30 May 1863.
18 Careless, *Brown of the Globe, vol. II,* 95.
19 The background of this committee is unknown. Brown's letter is addressed "To John O'Donohue, Patrick Hughes, J.D. Merrick, and Thomas McCrosson, Esquires, a Committee acting on behalf of a Meeting of Prominent Catholics from all Sections of Ontario." Mackenzie, *George Brown,* 122. See also Careless, *Brown of the Globe, vol. II,* 281–283.
20 Quoted in Mackenzie, *George Brown*, 126.
21 "There is something instructive and encouraging for young men in the history and present position of the Hon. Alex. Mackenzie, now Premier of the Dominion of Canada. He started in life with no capital but his brains and his hands … By perseverance and untiring energy, united with integrity, he pushed himself up to the highest position in the country of his adoption." "Something for Young Men," *Gleaner* (12 February 1874).
22 Thomson, *Mackenzie,* 227.
23 Thomson, *Mackenzie,* 230–231.
24 Thomson, *Mackenzie,* 232.
25 *Gleaner* (11 November 1875).
26 *Nation* (4 June 1875).
27 "Speech of Mr. Huntington at Grenville," *Globe* (31 December 1875).
28 "A Startling Speech," *Irish Canadian* (12 January 1876).
29 "Speech of Mr. Huntington at Grenville," *Globe* (31 December 1875).
30 Hill, *Voice of the Vanishing Minority,* 77–78.
31 "Speech of Mr. Huntington at Grenville," *Globe* (31 December 1875).
32 "He had always preached those doctrines, and would be at once prepared to resign his position if he believed the party with whom he acted was not equal to their maintenance." "Speech of Mr. Huntington at Grenville," *Globe* (31 December 1875).
33 LAC, Alexander Mackenzie Papers, Letter from Alexander Mackenzie to George Brown, 22 January 1876.
34 LAC, Alexander Mackenzie Papers, Letter from Luther Holton to Alexander Mackenzie, 23 January 1876.
35 LAC, Alexander Mackenzie Papers, Letter from Alexandre-Antonin Taché, to Joseph Cauchon, 6 January 1876, translated from the original French.
36 LAC, Alexander Mackenzie Papers, Letter from Joseph Cauchon to Alexander-Antonin Taché, 8 January 1876, translated from the original French.

37 LAC, Alexander Mackenzie Papers, Letter from Alexandre-Antonin Taché, to Joseph Cauchon, 10 January 1876, translated from the original French.
38 For example, "Mr Huntington's Speech," *The Irish Canadian* (19 January 1876).
39 *Gleaner* (17 Feb. 1876).
40 Alexander Galt, *Civil Liberty in Lower Canada* (Montreal: D. Bentley, 1876), 15–16.
41 Charles Lindsey, *Rome in Canada: The Ultramontane Struggle for Supremacy over the Civil Authority* (Toronto: Lovell Brothers, 1877), 9.
42 "A New Departure," *Nation* (14 Jan. 1876), 19.
43 Thomson, *Mackenzie,* 259.
44 "Dominion Parliament," *Gleaner* (17 February 1876).
45 "Dominion Parliament," *Gleaner* (17 February 1876).
46 Hill, *Voice of the Vanishing Minority*, 92–93.
47 Alexander Mackenzie, *Workingmen's Demonstration at Toronto, Thursday, May 30th, 1878* (Cornwall, ON: Freeholder, 1878), 15.
48 Ibid., 14.
49 Ibid., 3.
50 For more about the role of economic policy in the 1878 election, see Peter B. Waite, *Arduous Destiny: Canada, 1874-1896* (Toronto: McLelland and Stewart, 1971), chapter 5.
51 *Gleaner* (11 November 1875).
52 George Brown, "Anti-Clergy Reserve Meeting [26 July 1851]," in *The Life and Speeches of Hon. George Brown,* ed. Alexander Mackenzie (Toronto: Globe, 1882), 242–244.
53 Quoted in Joseph Schull, *Edward Blake, vol. 1: The Man of the Other Way* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1975), 202.
54 John Rolph, *Speeches of Dr. John Rolph, and Christop'r A. Hagerman, Esq., His Majesty's Solicitor General, on the Bill for Appropriating the Proceeds of the Clergy Reserves to the Purposes of General Education* (Toronto: M. Reynolds, 1837), 9.
55 David B. Marshall, *Secularizing the Faith: Canadian Protestant Clergy and the Crisis of Belief, 1850-1940* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 24.
56 Janet Ajzenstat, *The Canadian Founding: John Locke and Parliament* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007), 81–82.
57 Ajzenstat, *The Canadian Founding,* 100–1.
58 Jeffrey L. McNairn, *The Capacity to Judge: Public Opinion and Deliberative Democracy in Upper Canada, 1791–1854* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 14.
59 The debate about secularization in Canadian history is complex and controversial. Whereas proponents of the secularization thesis have

argued that changes in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries produced both a gradual scrubbing of supernatural elements from Christianity and a waning of religious authority in public life, some historians have argued that Protestant churches retained their essential qualities throughout this time and that religion continued to play an active role in Canadian public life until the mid-twentieth century. This article acknowledges that religion certainly did not disappear from Canada's political landscape after 1878, but suggests that the Liberal Party's discouragement of religious rhetoric post-1867 is part of a broader reorientation of religion in Canadian public life whose long-term consequences may be identified as secularization. For further reading on the subject of secularization in Canadian history, see Marshall, *Secularizing the Faith;* Ramsay Cook, *The Regenerators: Social Criticism in Late Victorian English Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985). For challenges to the secularization thesis, see Marguerite Van Die, *An Evangelical Mind: Nathanael Burwash and the Methodist Tradition in Canada, 1839-1918* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989); Phyllis D. Airhart, *Serving the Present Age: Revivalism, Progressivism, and the Methodist Tradition in Canada* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992); Nancy Christie and Michael Gauvreau, *A Full-Orbed Christianity: The Protestant Churches and Social Welfare in Canada, 1900–1940* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996).

60 "It may be suggested that the somewhat strained and inconclusive debate over 'secularization' would be sharpened and clarified if, on the basis of this and other studies, it could be transformed into a debate over 'liberalization.'" See Ian McKay, "The Liberal Order Framework: A Prospectus for a Reconnaissance of Canadian History," *Canadian Historical Review,* 81, No. 4 (2000): 616-645, 625, fn16.

61 As Ian McKay explains, "A liberal order is defined as one that encourages and seeks to extend across time and space a belief in the epistemological and ontological primacy of the category 'individual.'" McKay, "Liberal Order Framework," 623.

62 Linda Colley, for example, has explained that the British concept of liberty was directly correlated to Protestantism and contrasted with the "tyranny" of their Catholic rival nations. Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707–1837* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 25–30.

63 McKay, "Liberal Order Framework," 625.

64 McKay refers to this process as the sixth "arresting moment" of the Canadian liberal revolution. McKay, "Liberal Order Framework," 633–4.

65 McKay, "Liberal Order Framework," 635-6.

66 McGowan, *Michael Power,* 268.

67 LAC, R.W. Scott Papers, "Constitution Granted to the North West Territories," n.d.
68 McKay, "Liberal Order Framework," 635-6.
69 Ian Radforth, "Collective Rights, Liberal Discourse, and Public Order: The Clash over Catholic Processions in Mid-Victorian Toronto," *Canadian Historical Review* 95, no. 4 (December 2014): 511–544, 536, 539–40.
70 Alexander Mackenzie, *Political Points and Pencillings, Being Selections from Various Addresses Delivered by Hon. Alex. Mackenzie* (Toronto: Gripp, 1878), 3.
71 Stephen Clarkson, *The Big Red Machine: How the Liberal Party Dominates Canadian Politics* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005), 7–8.
72 J.R. Miller, *Equal Rights: The Jesuit Estates Act Controversy* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1979), 33, 117–8.
73 Archives of Ontario, Mowat Family Papers, Separate Schools Scrapbook, G.W. Ross, "Report of a Speech delivered by the Minister of Education at the Reform Demonstration, Toronto, June 29th, 1889".
74 For more background on W.R. Meredith's time as leader of the Ontario Conservative Party, see Peter Edward Paul Dembski, "William Ralph Meredith: Leader of the Conservative Opposition in Ontario, 1878–1894" (PhD diss., University of Guelph, 1977).
75 *Gleaner* (16 December 1875).
76 Mackenzie, *Brown,* 151.
77 Lindsey, *Rome in Canada,* 6, 143.
78 Originally in St. Croix, NB *Courier,* quoted in *Nation* (14 January 1876).