

# *Irish Catholic Education in Victorian Toronto: An Ethnic Response to Urban Conformity*

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*This study analyzes the factors which contributed to the development of a separate, Irish Catholic system of education in Toronto between 1850 and 1900. Initiated in response to pressures towards urban conformity, the school system was broad in scope, encompassing religious, social, academic and corrective elements. Its success was dependent upon interaction with various Catholic social agencies and voluntary associations. Through promotion of a refurbished Irish Tridentine Catholicism, the separate school system sustained the ethnic and religious identity of the Irish child and created the cultural standard among English-speaking Catholics in Ontario.*

*Cette étude analyse les facteurs qui ont contribué au développement d'un système d'éducation séparé pour les Irlandais catholiques de Toronto entre 1850 et 1900. Voulant répondre aux pressions pour l'obtention d'une meilleure adaptation au milieu urbain, ce système d'éducation avait une portée multidimensionnelle comprenant des aspects religieux, sociaux, académiques et correctifs. Son succès dépendait de son insertion parmi les différents organismes et associations bénévoles catholiques. Par la promotion d'un catholicisme irlandais « Tridentin » renouvelé, le système d'éducation séparé aidait à préserver l'identité ethnique et religieuse des jeunes Irlandais et créait un standard culturel pour les catholiques anglophones de l'Ontario.*

## I

The Catholic system of education that developed in Toronto between 1850 and 1900 provided a means for a minority group to escape the pressures of assimilation into the charter English Protestant society. In opposition to the Protestant majority, Bishop Armand de Charbonnel of the Diocese of Toronto fought to acquire a separate system of education in order to retain the religious identity of his flock. His flock, however, was composed predominantly of an Irish, urban-dwelling peasantry, a portion of the New World Irish diaspora which strove to maintain its distinctive ethnic identity. As a result, the separate school system that evolved in the metropolitan centre and spread throughout all but the French-speaking areas of the province was an Irish Catholic institution, an ethno-religious response to urban conformity.

Education was but one aspect of a programme the Catholic Church adopted in its unified approach to assist the transition of Famine Irish immigrants into Toronto. It became a vital part of the ethno-religious thrust that incorporated an all-encompassing welfare system which might be labelled Irish Catholic social action. As such, it was not restricted to the elementary school system but permeated all the social agencies of the Church and the institutions of higher learning. Extensive in its range, it was directed towards various age groups and designed for specific purposes, all of which were intended to maintain a Catholic and Irish identity.

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The success of the Catholic system of education depended upon the unity of purpose between the Irish laity and its central, cultural focus, the Church. Although the Diocese of Toronto was formally established in 1842, it was not until 1850 that the Church began to emerge from a sect-like organization into a metropolitan institution. As the Church developed so did the Catholic educational system. The growth of Catholic institutions in the city and within the diocese was indicative of the bond that existed between the Church and its people, but such visible evidence of what was conceived as "alien strength" posed a threat to the majority charter population which, therefore, exerted additional pressure to procure cultural conformity. The application of external pressures only served to create a more cohesive society. In it the educational system served as a bulwark against urban pressure to assimilate and became a major vehicle for the retention of Irish Catholic identity. Ultimately it allowed for the development of Irish Tridentine Catholicism as a persistent, ethno-religious culture.<sup>1</sup>

## II

Prior to the Irish Famine of 1846-47 Toronto had a small Irish Catholic population, but by 1851 Famine immigrants had rapidly increased Irish Catholics to one-quarter of the city's population.<sup>2</sup> Their presence created an alien entity in a Protestant city, for the traits they carried exhibited a burden from Irish history, traits which were unacceptable to the Protestant majority. They faced urban rejection which was reflected through proselytizing tactics, differential treatment and abuse. The Catholic Church had to organize quickly to assist and retain this displaced peasantry, and gradually the Irish looked to the Church for redress from urban rejection. In the process, the Irish perceived that the church-sponsored social agencies and a separate Catholic education might help to blunt the disruptive pathology of the city and lead the way to a better future for their children.

These cultural effects were not unique to the experience of Toronto's Famine immigrants but were common throughout the New World Irish diaspora. For generations, Catholics living in Ireland under British rule had been oppressed. They had been denied the benefits of the legal system, education, the opportunity to enter some trades and, at times, the right to practise their religion. Although nominally Catholic, the Irish had become detached from their church and practised a syncretic religion that was as pagan as it was Catholic. Nonetheless, they were expected to support the Protestant Church of Ireland and were under constant pressure to convert through an open form of souperism.<sup>3</sup> The old, voluntary nature of Irish society had

1. Tridentine Catholicism pertained to the Council of Trent, conforming to its decrees or doctrines. However, peasant religious customs coloured the various national forms of that religion. Irish Tridentinism was the Irish peasants' ethno-religious response to conformity. Their religious practices and devotions exhibited an intense degree of ethnic consciousness. See John BOSSY, "The Counter-Reformation and the People of Catholic Europe", *Past and Present*, 47 (May 1970): 47-52.

2. Canada, *Census*, 1851, vol. I, pp. 30-31, 66-67. Archdiocese of Toronto Archives (hereafter ATA), records of St. Paul's Cemetery, of births and marriages, and the church census for 1855, show an Irish dominance of 90 percent of the total Catholic population. See as well Peter GOHEEN, *Victorian Toronto, 1850-1900* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), p. 78.

3. On the condition of the Irish peasantry, see Kenneth NEIL, *An Illustrated History of the Irish People* (New York: Mayflower Books, 1979); Brian DEBREFFNY, "From Reformation to the

weakened under British occupation; violent action emerged as an outlet for pent up frustration; drunkenness, a distraction from a harsh environment, became almost endemic; secret societies were set up to dispense extra-legal justice. The Famine disrupted families and practically obliterated Gaelic and the bulk of Irish peasant culture.<sup>4</sup>

Toronto's Famine Irish immigrants settled first in the Don Basin, the area in which the small pre-Famine group had concentrated, and created what was called "Paddy", "Cork", or "Slab" town. By 1851 they had spread into Cabbagetown and along the waterfront in search of cheap housing and employment opportunities. For the first decade following the Famine migration these areas were virtually Irish ghettos, but within a decade they were shared with other members of the British working class. As a result they became working-class ghettos where the Irish, initially segregated by ethnicity, were segregated by class.<sup>5</sup>

From Cabbagetown and the waterfront the Irish extended into the old Garrison Reserve in the early 1850s, creating what became known as Claretown. By 1860, the Irish Catholic population had increased to 27 percent and a large concentration had formed in a location designated as the junction in west Toronto. In addition to these four areas, there were at least a dozen, smaller pockets of Irish in the city by the turn of the century, but the Irish Catholic population decreased to approximately 13 percent when immigration from Ireland declined. The Irish were a minority in every ward of the city and in the "liberties" to which they moved to escape taxes. Yet within the broadly defined working-class ghettos, there were areas that were absolutely Irish. Because of tight-knit kinship patterns, friendships and regional loyalties, even the dispersed were attracted to those enclaves which encouraged the development of cohesive units. The Catholic Church followed these areas of Irish population, and secure within the organizational structure of a parish with its church and school, the Irish survived.<sup>6</sup>

Group survival in Toronto's urban milieu had been a difficult task for the Famine Irish and their children. Having arrived disease-ridden and in abject poverty, the immigrants sought what shelter they could afford. Some were taken in by relatives already established, but most at the mercy of landlords were crowded into slum tenements or into sub-standard housing constructed on the lots behind. The single dwellings contained multiple families, grandparents, related kin and boarders. They subsisted on the cabbages they grew, the chickens, pigs and other livestock that shared their living space, and on what they could earn, beg or steal. An integral

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Jacobite Defeat', in *The Irish World: The History and Achievements of the Irish People*, ed. Brian DEBREFFNY (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1977), pp. 99-126. For the pagan element within Irish Catholicism, see Walter Y. EVANS-WENTZ, *The Fairy-Faith in Celtic Countries* (New York: New York University Press, 1966). Souperism is described in Desmond BOWEN, *The Protestant Crusade in Ireland, 1800-70* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1978).

4. *Ibid.*; Gale BROEKER, *Rural Disorder and Police Reform in Ireland, 1812-36* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970).

5. GOHEEN, *Victorian Toronto*, *passim*.

6. *Ibid.* Canada, *Census*, 1861, vol. 1, pp. 48-49, 128-29; 1871, vol. 1, pp. 114-17, 266-67; 1881, vol. 1, pp. 174-75, 276-77; 1891, vol. 1, pp. 282-83, 349; 1901, vol. 1, pp. 218-19, 222-23, 344-45, 348-51; and ATA, records of St. Michael's cemetery and irregular church census. These records show an Irish dominance of 90 percent until after 1880 when the Irish proportion dropped to 85 percent of the Catholic population in Toronto.

part of slum existence was a number of outlets selling cheap liquor or supplying illicit Irish poteen and supporting a shebeen society, all of which increased social malaise. Abuses led to drunkenness which frequently terminated in violence, crime, death, disrupted marriages, and abandoned wives and children. The lack of privacy and the despair that accompanied slum-living seemed to contribute to a high rate of illegitimacy increasing the number of Irish infants left to the care of public institutions where Catholic identity was submerged.<sup>7</sup>

Within the first decades after the Famine migration, those Irish Catholic children who had the security of a home and parents were fortunate. Many young girls left to their own resources were taken into service, often under unpleasant circumstances, or turned to prostitution to survive. The orphanage was overcrowded with abandoned and illegitimate children who, under the care of the Sisters, faced a brighter future than those who bore them. Boys left to fend for themselves ran wild in the streets of Toronto. Under the auspices of church officials some were sent to rural areas where, in many instances, they were worked so hard that they ran away to rejoin the "Street Arabs" of the city. Some were enterprising enough to maintain themselves as newsboys and bootblacks. Some were hired to work on the Erie Canal but were treated shamefully as beasts of burden. Others were employed in mills where child labour was harsh, particularly so for Irish Catholic children.<sup>8</sup>

Generally uneducated and unskilled, Irish males were ill-prepared for employment. They became transients, taking jobs where they could find them, frequently in public construction and particularly on the railways. Such transiency contributed to the social and economic problems of the group. In many cases, transient labourers died as a result of dangerous work in which they were engaged, leaving orphans and widows. Some were so disillusioned with the limited job opportunities they departed for the United States, abandoning all family responsibility.<sup>9</sup>

By 1860 the Church had established institutions in the city to deal with some of these social ills. Although a number of problems continued, gradually some stability evolved in Irish family life. As the city's industry expanded, Irishmen formed part of the labouring population, going out to find work at age sixteen or seventeen, and marrying as early as age twenty-two but most often at age twenty-eight. Primarily, the socializing of Irish children was in the hands of the mother because the father's time for interaction with his children was limited. Irish girls married as early as sixteen, but the average was twenty-five years. Their fertility rate was high, but a late marriage age, a high mortality rate among men, abandonment by transient husbands, and a high infant mortality rate limited families to an average of three or four children raised to maturity.

Before marriage, many Irish women in Toronto had been employed as domestics and, depending upon circumstances, were sometimes forced to return to service after their children were raised. The task of running a home was difficult because

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7. ATA, records and minute books of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, records of St. Paul's and St. Michael's cemeteries, marriage and baptismal records; Archives of the House of Providence and Orphanage Sisters of St. Joseph, Toronto, Ontario (hereafter ASSJ).

8. Ibid.; ASSJ, St. Nicholas Home records.

9. Ibid.; see as well Irish newspapers for the period 1850-85, particularly *The Toronto Mirror*, *The Canadian Freeman* and *The Irish Canadian*, and the numerous personal letters in various bishops' papers, particularly those of Armand de Charbonnel and John Lynch, in the ATA.

couples were often expected to support elderly parents and to provide lodgings for their kin. To supplement a sparse income, Irish women took in boarders or laundry. In situations where the mother was compelled to work outside the home, the younger children in the family were reared by the eldest child or a grandparent.<sup>10</sup> Those children raised in the protective environment of an Irish Catholic home, no matter how humble, generally tended to repeat the life cycle of their parents.

A small group of Toronto's Irish Catholics succeeded in becoming entrepreneurs, builders, or undertakers and formed a "Lace Curtain" clique, unaccepted socially by the Protestant population and disliked by the Irish worker.<sup>11</sup> Generally, Irish labourers in Toronto were at the mercy of Protestant workers and Orange foremen. Physically assaulted and despicably labelled with ethnophaulisms such as "Taig", "Mick", "Dogan" or "Papist", Irishmen were protected by the vigilantes of the Irish Brotherhood who meted out justice to the abusers.<sup>12</sup> However, as former areas of Irish concentration became part of mixed working-class neighbourhoods, the Irish Brotherhood disappeared.

In opposition to the tactics employed by vigilante groups, the Church preached Christian forbearance as the correct response to persistent abuse. Gradually, the volatile Irish began to heed that plea. But open attacks upon their children or upon their right to practise their religion provoked the Irish and provided an opportunity for the release of pent up frustrations, as was demonstrated in the Jubilee Riots of 1875. The religion the Irish labourer carried to the workplace isolated him from other workers. He imbued his children with this religion along with the hatred he felt for the city and those who controlled it. As his feeling of helplessness and frustration gradually turned to pride in being Irish, he bequeathed to his children that pride and a strong desire for a Catholic education.<sup>13</sup>

Catholic education was available to some of the Irish immigrant children in the early 1850s. But those exposed to it, like the priests and teachers who instructed them, found the journey to school an intimidating experience. Stoning, beating and cursing were not uncommon occurrences.<sup>14</sup> Some entered the common school system where they discovered their religion and ethnicity made them targets for abuse. They were forced to read anti-Catholic literature and to participate in Protestant prayers and exercises. If they refused to comply, they were punished by the teacher or faced the consequences in the schoolyard at dismissal. It did not take those children long to learn they were considered members of a pariah population. In

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10. ATA, records of births and marriages and of the St. Vincent de Paul Society.

11. The "lace curtain" clique that arose among the Irish in Toronto were often rejected as leaders because they tended to become self-seeking. Editorials, petitions and songs bear this out. See the response of the Irish community to the efforts of John O'Donohoe and Frank Smith in *The Irish Canadian*, 10 July 1872; ATA, "Petition to His Grace the Archbishop", 9 November 1882. William BAKER, *Timothy Warren Anglin 1822-96: Irish Catholic Canadian* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), p. 243, portrays the Protestant rejection of the Irish middle class.

12. Considerable oral history concerning the relationship between Protestant and Catholic workers was collected for my dissertation, "The Catholic Church and the Irish in Victorian Toronto" (PhD dissertation, University of Guelph, 1981). However, see also "Toronto Catholic Employees", *The Catholic Register*, 28 December 1893; ATA, Lynch Papers, Archbishop J. Lynch to F. Smith, 1 February 1872; *PPA in Ontario: History and Principles of the Organization* (Toronto, 1893).

13. ATA, collected pastoral letters of Bishops Charbonnel and Lynch.

14. *Ibid.*

mixed neighbourhoods of working-class people, Protestant parents warned or paid their children not to play with the "Paddy".<sup>15</sup> Those Irish children who fell under the jurisdiction of public institutions learned that their treatment was in proportion to their willingness to reject their ethno-religious heritage.<sup>16</sup> To the Catholic Church and the Irish laity there was a choice — absorption into the general population or a separate system of education.

### III

Bishop A. Macdonell, the first Catholic Bishop in Ontario, failed to perceive Toronto as the future commercial metropolis of the province and chose Kingston as his See with the belief that the Rideau Canal would promote its position. As a result, York was a neglected mission and, generally, its few Irish Catholic inhabitants were apathetic to religious education. The few minor attempts to establish Catholic schools had failed because they were dependent upon voluntary support which the Irish could not afford. In 1842, however, Toronto became a separate Diocese under the jurisdiction of Bishop Michael Power. Although Power believed in the value of Catholic education for the growing numbers of Irish in his city, he was uncertain of his power base in an era of social and political change and did not want to be involved in any public disputes over Catholic education. In fact, he inadvertently gave episcopal sanction to the public system by accepting the appointment of Chairman of the Board of Education for Upper Canada in 1846. Had Power survived the typhus epidemic of 1847 it is doubtful the separate system of education would have developed beyond an appendage of the public system.<sup>17</sup>

Much like the resident Irish Catholic population, the Famine immigrants who arrived in the city in 1847 were detached from their religion. However, when Bishop Power, five priests and the layman, John Emsley, entered the fever sheds to render assistance while the city hid in fear of contagion,<sup>18</sup> a bond grew between the Irish people and the Church. Some Protestants were convinced that the famine and disease were God's way to sweep the Irish from the face of the earth because of their religious beliefs. Priests received virulent correspondence which they incorporated into sermon literature. Warnings like "In the name of common sense abandon such damnable, forbidden and unscriptural worship ...."<sup>19</sup> only served to strengthen the immigrants' resolve to retain their identity. In the face of such overt bias against the only institution which offered assistance when they needed it most, the Irish began to form a cohesive unit and to identify themselves with their Church.<sup>20</sup>

15. ATA, general educational papers, educational papers among both Charbonnel and Lynch papers, and priests' files and parish correspondence.

16. ASSJ, records of the St. Vincent de Paul Children's Aid Society; Irish Catholic newspapers, 1850-1885; and ATA, general correspondence of Bishop Lynch.

17. Edward KELLY, ed., *The Story of St. Paul's Parish* (Toronto: Archdiocese of Toronto, 1922), pp. 32-83.

18. *Ibid.*

19. ATA, Power Papers, A Christian to Rev. [Carl] Carroll, n.d. [c. 1847].

20. The vast number of interlocking, voluntary associations which supported Catholic institutions in Toronto show clearly the cohesive nature of the Irish. See NICOLSON, "Catholic Church and the Irish", *passim*.

The old, voluntary traits re-emerged among that displaced urban peasantry. In 1850 the Church, under Bishop Armand de Charbonnel, organized a programme of Irish Catholic social action.<sup>21</sup> As a priest, Charbonnel had become familiar with the problems of the Famine Irish in Montreal. He was determined to increase their ethno-religious identity in the hope of retaining them as Catholics. In his mind, schools were an immediate need to improve the position of the next generation. Although Charbonnel was criticized for his frequent demands for money, the selfless lifestyle he led and the generous use of his parents' estate on behalf of the Toronto Irish made his position tenable. When Charbonnel was asked by the mayor of Toronto to contribute to the city's patriotic fund in 1855, he declined. Instead, he replied that the "thousands of children, who in Toronto ... are intellectually starving" and "the thousands of immigrants ... in a condition worse than that of the victims of the Eastern War" had "a privilege right in all my savings".<sup>22</sup> In Charbonnel's view, Catholic education, religion and ethnicity formed a single urban phenomenon with which the city had to contend.

Charbonnel faced a strong opponent in Egerton Ryerson. Although they differed in their goals, their views on the influence of education and schooling were alike. Ryerson strove to attain a common, publicly-funded system of education, but one in which a Protestant religious philosophy would be perpetuated; Charbonnel demanded a separate system for Catholics to guard against assimilation. In the ensuing struggle there arose a number of Irish leaders, most of them journalists like Patrick Boyle, who supported Charbonnel and his priests in religious and educational matters. Because of their position, they influenced the Irish laity.

The Irish united behind their prelate and supported charity schools run by religious orders while the Church pressured the city and legislature for adequate funds. The Irish were made to feel ostracized by hatred spread by the press, the Protestant churches and the Orange Lodge. In examining the statements of influential figures, the editors of Irish newspapers perceived veiled threats of isolation and lockout and alerted the Irish Catholic community about its precarious position in the city.<sup>23</sup> Their fears were justified. The persistent demand for separate schools increased the pressure on the Irish Catholic community, and Catholic servants, Catholic labourers and Catholic merchants all felt the effect in their business relations.<sup>24</sup> But confidence arose from growing numbers and the Irish Catholics stubbornly resisted the constraints imposed upon them. The fact that civic officials, under Orange auspices, had refused to provide funds to cover the educational costs for Irish pauper children in 1848<sup>25</sup> left the immigrants with a bitter impression about the city's concern for their welfare. They were convinced that their children should receive the Catholic education which had been denied them under English law in Ireland. In addition, they knew too well that the supposedly secular, public institutions were proselytizing agents.<sup>26</sup> Ryerson's assurances that Irish children in public schools

21. See Murray W. NICOLSON, "The Irish Catholics and Social Action in Toronto, 1850-1900", *Studies in History and Politics*, 1, 1 (1980): 29-55.

22. ATA, Charbonnel Papers, Charbonnel to his Worship the Mayor, 2 March 1855.

23. *Ibid.*, insert for a newspaper or sermon, 1852.

24. *The Toronto Mirror*, 3 April 1857.

25. *The Christian Guardian*, 26 July 1848.

26. *The Canadian Freeman*, 14 May 1863, article on John Elmsley; *Report of the Trustees of the House of Industry for 1852* (Toronto, 1853).

would improve morally and educationally were but empty words to the Irish. Irish parents, having observed the Bishop, the religious and Catholic children stoned and insulted in the streets by Protestant youths, questioned the bigotry that evidently was being taught in the public schools of the city. Considering the hazards encountered on the journey to school, they wondered what prejudice and insult would be inflicted upon their children if they were students in the public system.<sup>27</sup>

#### IV

Charbonnel planned Catholic schools as institutional elements in a whole programme to implement social change and religious reform. Like the orphanage, the House of Providence to care for the indigents and infirm, and the Toronto Saving's Bank to encourage the Irish towards means of self-help, the schools were components of a vast interlocking system organized to protect Irish Catholics from proselytism and prejudicial treatment in the city, and ultimately they guaranteed the survival of the group.<sup>28</sup>

To accomplish those goals, Charbonnel needed new personnel, administrative models and funding. When Charbonnel arrived in 1850 as Bishop of Toronto, he faced a disorganized Diocese. Toronto had one Catholic church, its cemetery almost filled to overflowing with Famine immigrants, a palace and cathedral burdened with debt, few priests, two small schools staffed by the Sisters of Loretto from Ireland who entered Toronto at the time of Power's death, and a small group of dedicated Catholic laymen. Adopting the model of the St. Vincent de Paul Society developed in France to serve the poor, Charbonnel immediately organized the laymen to assist him. Utilizing the external communication network of the Church, Charbonnel invited from France the Sisters of St. Joseph whose order had abandoned a strictly cloistered life to allow its nuns closer contact with the people it served, the Christian Brothers who had developed an excellent system of Catholic education, and the Basilian Fathers who trained priests. These orders responded and were all active in Toronto by 1853.<sup>29</sup>

Each order was selected for a specific purpose, and through close interaction with the Irish poor as friends and not as social observers, they soon gained the confidence of those they were committed to serve.<sup>30</sup> Food, clothing, shelter and human contact fulfilled basic needs, but education was the means to improve the positive traits of Irish Catholic identity. The French and élitist personnel imbued the people with feelings of self-worth and gradually the institutions were staffed by the children of the Irish they aided and taught.<sup>31</sup>

27. ATA, collected pastoral letters of Bishop Charbonnel, 1850-1860.

28. NICOLSON, "Irish Catholics and Social Action", pp. 29-55.

29. ATA, Charbonnel Papers, in general his correspondence, including pastoral letters.

30. The confidence of the Irish in the organizations, institutions and religious orders which provided aid is reflected in nearly every issue of Irish newspapers, particularly in *The Irish Canadian*. In addition, ATA, records of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, and ASSJ, records of the House of Providence, portray an ever-increasing demand on their facilities.

31. ATA, St. Vincent de Paul Society, membership records; ASSJ, list of postulants; Sisters of the Good Shepherd Archives (hereafter SGSA); ATA, priests' records; Basilian Archives (Toronto), priests' records, Basilian order; and the Archives of the Christian Brothers.



From the outset, Charbonnel was embroiled in a conflict with Egerton Ryerson to obtain separate schools to regenerate a class of citizens who Charbonnel feared might otherwise become criminals or depraved individuals. Neither Ryerson nor the city was open to compromise in the belief that public schools were the tools to assimilate Irish peasants to charter group standards. To promote the separate school system, Charbonnel utilized every method available, including assistance from the bishops and politicians of Canada East and the use of coercive pastorals.<sup>32</sup> It took decades to receive an equitable proportion of the school grant, and the operation and expansion of separate schools was a major financial problem for both church and Irish laity. To compensate, the Irish found many ways to raise revenues for their growing school system. Picnics, bazaars and concerts were organized to support the schools which were lacking in resources and accoutrements. The bulk sum paid to religious orders for teaching services reduced administrative costs. The religious orders were allowed to apply profits gained from the operation of private schools to balance the budget of partially funded elementary institutions under their control. The introduction of sound cost-accounting practices performed by efficient unpaid laymen achieved tight fiscal control over meagre resources.<sup>33</sup>

At the end of Charbonnel's tenure in 1860, Toronto had five separate schools with 716 pupils under the direction of the Christian Brothers. The Loretto Sisters were teaching 25 boarders, 25 select pupils and 100 free pupils. The St. Joseph's Order taught 500 pupils in 8 institutions which included the girls' section of the 5 parochial schools shared with the Christian Brothers, the House of Providence which had incorporated the orphanage, and their convent school, as well as 40 students in night school. The total number of students receiving Catholic education in the city that year was 1,505.<sup>34</sup>

Bishop J. Lynch, Charbonnel's successor, struggled to retain the advantages gained by this indefatigable fighter. Through his efforts, separate schools were guaranteed for Ontario at Confederation.<sup>35</sup> After Confederation, Lynch utilized the power of the Catholic vote to obtain concessions from the provincial government. Provincial Acts were passed which facilitated the collection of separate school taxes.<sup>36</sup> By the end of his tenure in 1889, the religious orders operated 27 schools in the city which enrolled a student body of 4,602. Included were 9 separate schools for girls and 6 for boys, 1 convent school, the girls' section of De La Salle Institute

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32. ATA, Charbonnel Papers, various early pastorals of Bishop Charbonnel, particularly the Lenten Pastoral of 1857, and Pastoral Letter, 1855.

33. ATA, education papers; and advertisements in the Irish press in the period 1850-1900.

34. *Dunigan's American Catholic Almanac and List of Clergy* (New York: E. Dunigan and Brother, 1859), p. 251.

35. Bishop J. Lynch's belief in the guarantee of separate schools at Confederation stemmed from a letter from John A. Macdonald: "By the proposed arrangements all vested rights and institutions will be protected and the Catholics will have what they never had before, the security of an Imperial Act for the preservation of their religion and educational institutions." ATA, Lynch Papers, J.A. Macdonald to Bishop Lynch, 19 December 1864.

36. It is generally believed that Oliver Mowat did not make concessions to Archbishop Lynch. However there is ample evidence in the Lynch Papers that accommodations were made. In 1886, Lynch sent out a circular which the clergy were to read. The information was put as a question: "Can I vote and assist to put out the Mowat government which has acted fairly towards the Catholics of Ontario and help to place in power a government which by its organs threatens to curtail as much as possible rights and privileges accorded by the Mowat government? The answer: 'NO!'" ATA, Lynch Papers, circular no. 2, 22 December 1886.

and 2 orphanage schools all under the administration of the Sisters of St. Joseph; and 2 convent schools and 1 separate school for girls, operated by the Sisters of Loretto. St. Michael's College for seminarians and youths was under the direction of the Basilian Fathers. The Christian Brothers administered 4 separate schools for boys and the boys' section of De La Salle Institute which included a commercial programme.<sup>37</sup>

The impulse to Catholic institutional completeness in education and social agencies, initiated by Charbonnel and expanded by Lynch, was fulfilled during the administration of Archbishop John Walsh (1889-1898). Under the auspices of the Christian Brothers, St. John's Training School was opened, and the efforts of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd among troubled girls and women led to the development of St. Mary's Training School. The St. Vincent de Paul Children's Aid Society, which was to become the Catholic Children's Aid Society, was formed. Within that period also, St. Michael's Hospital was established. The achievements attained were the result of co-operation between Church and laity, a laity that had been educated in a Catholic system and gave Toronto's Irish Catholics pride in accomplishment.<sup>38</sup>

## V

The programme of studies incorporated in the Toronto separate school system during the latter half of the nineteenth century can be examined under four specific areas: religion, Irish identity, corrective socialization, and a similar but modified version of the academic programme offered in public schools.

The study of the major tenets of the Catholic faith was a *sine qua non*, for that was the primary reason separate schools were established. Increased knowledge of religion was the means to secure succeeding generations of Catholics in a rapidly secularizing society. Therefore religion was not only taught as a subject in its own right, but also permeated a number of different studies, particularly history and literature. Irish children learned the precepts of their religion by rote from the Penny or Baltimore Catechisms. They were taught who they were, why they were here and where they were going and, at an early age, established a personal, group-oriented *Weltanschauung*.<sup>39</sup>

Ideally, urban parishes included church, rectory, convent and school which gave the children a sense of security. Proximity to the church provided opportunity

37. It is difficult to ascertain the ratio between Irish Catholic children attending separate and common schools. Available statistics do not always differentiate between elementary and higher grades. It is doubtful whether statistics would show the proportion of Irish Catholics who favoured or rejected separate education. In core areas, attendance at separate schools was almost absolute, but in the extreme east, and the west and north ends of the city there were no separate schools in 1890. However, see *Hoffmann's Catholic Directory and Clergy List* (Milwaukee: Hoffman and Co., 1889), pp. 555-59; *Sadlier's Catholic Almanac and Ordo* (New York: B. and J. Sadlier and Co., 1889), pp. 20-21.

38. See in general ATA, Walsh Papers.

39. Documentation has been taken from a large number of manuscript sources. See particularly Christian Brothers Archives (Toronto), Annals of the Christian Brothers; ASSJ, Annals of the Sisters of St. Joseph, records of the House of Providence and orphanages; ATA, Educational Papers, and the sermon literature and letters of Bishops Charbonnel and Lynch.

for frequent attendance at mass, the central service of the Roman Catholic religion, under the watchful eye of the Sisters and Brothers who in many cases became surrogate parents. The habits or distinctive religious uniforms of the teachers created an impression upon the children, portraying to them a picture of Christian dignity, Christian self-sacrifice and Christian charity, characteristics which some might not have witnessed at home. It was essential that the walls of the Catholic classroom spoke of God in order to instil devotion and turn the minds of the young towards true principles. Symbolic religious art forms, such as crucifixes, paintings and statues, served as silent sources of promise, the reward for a good life.<sup>40</sup>

The Sisters and Brothers prepared the school children for important rites of passage such as first confession, first communion and confirmation. The ceremonies surrounding the events were celebrated in the church where the children were questioned by the priest or bishop. Many adults who had neglected the practice of their religion in the past returned to the church after witnessing their children in these ceremonies. Young boys rose early to serve at daily mass. Girls were given a stirring example by being allowed to watch the awesome spectacle of young women entering the cathedral dressed as brides and leaving in the habit of nuns. Because of that process of motivation and the comparative security the religious life offered, the orders had no difficulty in obtaining Irish postulants. The rapidly growing Irish novitiate in Toronto changed the ethnic nature of the religious orders from French to Irish and kept the secular priesthood Irish.<sup>41</sup>

Morality was emphasized in the school room and the school yard where children were expected to act in an obedient and respectful manner. To assure purity of thought, text books were censored closely by a Bishop's committee. The same moral philosophy was expounded at yearly mission retreats, planned as periods of religious intensity for all members of the parish. During the mission, young school children were taken into the church sometime during the day for group instruction. Older children were expected to attend evening sessions with their parents where they were taught their obligations to God and to society. Although the laity was segregated by sex, sex education was non-existent. Adultery was the word used to cover a wide area of sexual taboos such as indecent books and thoughts, the "solitary vice", or illicit relationships outside of marriage. In any event, group censure made attendance at mission an essential, cultural element; if one failed to "make the mission" one was scarcely considered Catholic or Irish.<sup>42</sup>

In the school, children were taught to participate in the new devotional systems of the Church, particularly those of Alphonsus de Liguori. The rosary, the stations of the cross and other forms of personal devotion became common practice and extended into the home. In addition, children belonged to confraternities and sodalities which gave their lives a religious orientation. Within the nearby church children were imbued with a sense of the Irish holy, for there children took part in the ceremonies of the mass, benediction and devotions, surrounded by the beautiful

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40. Ibid; ATA, Sundry Papers, obligations of parents, altar boys ceremonies; *The Mission Book of the Redemptorist Fathers* (New York: Benziger Bros., 1897); various editions of *The Key to Heaven* (Philadelphia, 1885); *Rules of the Society of St. Vincent of Paul* (Toronto: Lowell and Gibson, 1861); *The Irish Canadian, Toronto Mirror and Canadian Freeman*, 1850-1885.

41. Ibid.

42. Ibid.

externals of their religion — candles, tabernacles, statues, stations, altar — so different from the drabness of home. Like their parents, they could find solace and peace in the face of urban rejection, comfort in the loss of a loved one. There they felt that some external force from beyond the confines of the urban milieu was on their side. They responded with awe and reverence and were left contented for a time.<sup>43</sup>

The separate school classroom was an extension of the Church. Children were made aware that they existed in a Protestant city, truly the city of man, the enemy of their nationality and religion. However, they were taught that they must rise above it to live more perfectly in the city of God; and to the Irish Catholics of Toronto that was a city of the mind. The Church was their mother and in it they could find all the meaningful associations they required. Through a form of group-oriented religious privatism, the Church offered the Irish child an alternative which presented a different view of the world; a view from eternity. With that distinction, Irish Catholic children were moulded so that the assimilating and secularizing tendencies of the city were shut out.

The Catholic schools of Toronto perpetuated Irish national identity through a new urban, cultural vehicle — Irish Tridentine Catholicism, a mixture of traditional Roman Catholicism and Irish custom. Children were taught by their Irish teachers that to be Catholic was to be Irish. That fact was accepted readily because, with the exception of small French and German minority groups, the Irish, in absolute numbers, were the Catholics of Toronto. Furthermore, the children were told that to reject one aspect of their new ethno-religious background was to lose the other; if they ceased to be Irish they were well on the road to apostasy. To them, Irish Protestants were a foreign population who had been planted in their homeland and, under the name of Orangeism, brought to the new city to persecute them.

By instilling nationality, the school system prepared the children to withstand criticism of their ethno-religious group. Through reading and teaching, the pupils learned to uphold an Irish heritage presented by way of a nostalgic and subjective approach to Irish church history. Students responded with enthusiasm to that idealism. Essays, debates, oratorical presentations and term papers focused on Irish themes such as "The Irishman at Home and Abroad", "The Irish Boy", "Pius IX and The Irish Brigade", "The Irish Emigrant, His Adopted and Native Land". As well, the life of St. Patrick and the "Golden Age" of the Irish Church in Europe were popular choices for student projects. To support the interest in Irish Catholic history and literature which was fostered in the schools, a number of Irish bookstores opened in the city. Their resources were augmented by lending libraries set up and stocked by the various Irish societies. Children were encouraged to take books home and to discuss the contents with their parents.<sup>44</sup>

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43. The "Holy" is the non-rational factor in religious experience. The peculiar Irish feeling of the uncanny, awe, reverence, or contentment associated with their religion could be looked upon as the "Irish Holy". See Rudolph OTTO, *The Idea of the Holy. An Inquiry Into the Non Rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and its Relation to the Rational* (DAS Heilige 1917) (London: Oxford University Press, 1968).

44. St. Michael's College Archives (Toronto), Student Papers; ASSJ, *Annals of the Sisters of St. Joseph*; *Annals of the Sisters of Loretto* (Toronto); *Annals of the Christian Brothers* (Toronto); *The Irish Canadian*, *The Canadian Freeman*, *The Toronto Mirror*, 1850-85.

St. Patrick's Day, once a rowdy holiday celebrated with outbursts of violence, became a more religiously-oriented feast. The Church succeeded in emphasizing St. Patrick as an ethno-religious figure, rather than a purely national one. School children took part in the ceremonies honouring the saint and attended mass where, on occasion, the priest wore green vestments in defiance of the *ordo* or the bishop. Afterwards the day was marked with plays, music and speeches.

Public examinations of pupils at all levels in the separate schools of the city became annual Irish events. The examinations, occupying several consecutive evenings, were well publicized by the Irish press and attended by priests, bishop, kin and friends of the students. Irish pride swelled in the *gemeinschaft* display. An important part of the programme was the distribution of prizes and awards for proficiency donated by the more prominent "Lace Curtain" families or the bishop.<sup>45</sup> Entertainment was provided by the students and included a repertoire of Irish songs and recitations. Parents wanted pride of nationality fostered concomitantly with education and religion, and if the criteria was not demonstrated satisfactorily at those events, the Irish press expressed its criticism: "There was a little more nationality shown in the selection of songs than at Father Laurent's concert, but not enough; ... the committee of management ... should see that, in future, the Irish idea is fairly represented on the bill."<sup>46</sup>

Complementing the pride in ethno-religious solidarity was the concept of a New World Irish millenium. It was introduced to the Irish laity in the Charbonnel period by the French priests at St. Mary's Church in Claretown and adapted by Irish priests under Bishop Lynch. The children were taught to look back on an age of perfection when their ancestors aided in the conversion of Europe. In view of that, they had an historic task to perform — the conversion of North America. This was to occur by way of a revitalized Irish Catholicism. No doubt the Irish looked to Bishop John Lynch as their charismatic leader, for it was he who commissioned them to begin the work.<sup>47</sup>

Encouraged by the Church and by the school, children of the Irish immigrants slowly lost their feelings of inferiority. Education, by necessity, had to be directed towards the socializing of youngsters deprived of all the amenities of life. Denied privacy in the overcrowded tenements of the city, many of them were exposed to more of life than they should have been. Those who believed violence was the answer to injustice and maltreatment were taught to respond with Christian forbearance. They were instructed to avoid the Orange Parade on the 12th of July, for confrontations on that day brought retribution upon the whole Irish community. The Christian Brothers engaged the boys in school yard sports events. Not only were the boys given some form of recreation, but those events allowed for the release of frustrations and the opportunity to learn the meaning of fair play.

45. *Ibid.*

46. *The Irish Canadian*, 5 February 1873.

47. Millenarian activity is common among populations under stress. These groups tend to believe that, with new social rules and a charismatic leader, a solution to their problems will be found within a fixed period of time. See Kenelm BURRIDGE, *New Heaven, New Earth: A Study of Millenarian Activity* (Toronto: Copp Clark Publishing Company, 1969). The concept of the Irish New World Millenium can be found in H.C. McKEOWN, *The Life and Labors of the Most Rev. John Joseph Lynch, D.D. Cong. Miss. First Archbishop of Toronto* (Toronto: James A. Sadlier, 1886).

Trapped in the circumstances of poverty, many Irish children had no concept of personal hygiene. At school they learned that cleanliness was next to Godliness, that a clean body was supplementary to a clean mind. Moreover, the Sisters, the Brothers and members of the lay organizations visited the homes of the poor to teach them how to apply the most basic principles of good hygiene. To overcome the disruptive problems associated with drunkenness, Irish children were compelled to take a pledge of abstinence from alcohol until age twenty-one. Similarly, dancing was considered an evil to be avoided, an occasion to sin, and was denied on school property, even to adults who had planned dances as a means of financial support for the schools. Plays and dramatic representations were also considered evil, too worldly a form of entertainment. For fear of an undesirable effect upon students, those artistic forms of expression were banned in the schools and were substituted with what was thought to be correct and elegant readings, recitations, dialogues and speeches. In addition, an important part of the corrective educational process was a clear definition of roles and the division of labour within the family unit.<sup>48</sup>

Certainly, those aspects of the educational programme introduced as control measures by the Church contributed toward making Irish children more socially acceptable in the urban milieu. The pledge may have helped to reduce the abuse of alcohol, for many Irish family members became abstainers. However, Church censure failed to deter the Irish love of dancing, but the acceptance of chaperones by succeeding generations helped to moderate the unruly activity that had occurred at dances in the 1850s and 1860s.

Some of the Famine immigrant children spoke Gaelic or a brogue so full of Irish words that their language was unintelligible to the residents of the city. Although priests were found to hear confessions for the older generation of Gaelic speakers, the schools made no attempt to preserve the language. From the outset, English was recognized as the language of the élite, and Gaelic, a dying language in Ireland, disappeared in Toronto. Furthermore, education helped to eradicate some of the pagan trappings the Irish had attached to religion which made them appear alien and superstitious. The practices surrounding the wake, which had reflected an absolute fear of and reverence for the dead, became more Christian in emphasis. Children were taught to fetch the priest to minister to the dying, and bring blessed candles into the home for the administration of the last rites. They learned the source of their social rejection.<sup>49</sup> Through the socializing and corrective process offered in the separate system they were able to mould a new, more acceptable, yet still distinctive identity.

The academic programme in separate schools was similar to that in the public system. Text books were scrutinized by the Bishop's committee and rejected if the content was immoral, anti-Irish or anti-Catholic according to standards. James Sadlier, a New York publisher, set up offices in Toronto and began the revision of most common school texts for use in the separate system. The teaching methods employed were those that had been developed in France by the Brothers of the Christian Schools. In Toronto, the methodology was altered to suit the needs of

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48. *Mission Book of Redemptorist Fathers*; ATA, Sundry Papers, list of duties; Charbonnel and Lynch Papers, sermon literature, pastoral letters.

49. *Ibid.*

the Irish and modified slightly by the sisters in some schools. To provide consistency, detailed instructions and guidelines were provided for the administration and management of the schools, and the exercises and modes of instruction to be used.<sup>50</sup>

Normally the elementary school day began at 8:30 A.M. and ended at 3:30 P.M., with an half-hour lunch break. Ideally, boys and girls were taught in separate classrooms or, if financially feasible, separate buildings administered by either the Brothers or Sisters. Teachers and pupils alike were expected to conduct themselves in a rigidly formulated manner and discipline was strictly enforced. On a few different occasions, the Bishop criticized the Brothers for exercising poor judgement in the enforcement of discipline and for extremely harsh treatment of pupils. Because of such actions some parents removed their children to the public system or simply refused to have them attend school which, the Bishop believed, placed them in moral danger. To avoid those situations, the Bishop introduced control measures whereby no child could be dismissed from school without the permission of the Brother Director. In addition, the parish priest was to be consulted to act as an intermediary between parents and teacher.<sup>51</sup>

Within the system children were to be individually evaluated and advanced according to aptitude, but grouped together into sections or divisions consistent with progress. Teachers clarified and explained material, and by the use of questions motivated students towards reflection. Memory work was considered essential and used in teaching prayers and catechism particularly. Reading demanded syllable enunciation and the observation of punctuation with no affectation. Penmanship was introduced through the method of tracing and advanced towards complicated skills. Grammar, of prime importance, was taught through lessons, written exercise and homework, advancing to the written composition, usually on Irish topics, and written examinations. Arithmetic was set out in a methodical progression through grades, with pupils required to demonstrate understanding at the black-board, in work books and from memory. History, geography, linear and ornamental drawing and geometry were compulsory subjects.<sup>52</sup>

Catechism was the subject in which the Irish child was taught the practice of religion and good morals. But it had to be related to the urban milieu and in that sphere it was the socializing vehicle employed to teach cleanliness, politeness, obedience, respectful deportment, generosity and group sharing. By interacting with and providing care to the Irish poor in their homes, the first members of the Christian Brothers and St. Joseph's Order in Toronto had set an example of Christian charity and gained the respect and support of the Irish laity. Parents were supportive of the methods used to motivate, to promote emulation, to challenge and to reward the children. Punishment involved teacher, parent and child. The teachers were aware of their authority and responsibility and understood the importance of relationships with pupils, parents, and clergy.

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50. See particularly *Management of Christian Schools by the Brothers of the Christian Schools* (New York: de La Salle Institute, 1887); *Constitutions and Rules of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph in the Archdiocese of Toronto, Ontario* (Toronto, 1881), pp. 85-88; ATA, educational section of various bishops' papers, minute books of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, 1870-1900; Irish Catholic newspapers for the period 1850-1885.

51. Ibid.

52. Ibid.

When Charbonnel first arrived in the city, truancy was as much a problem in the separate schools as it was in the public. In many cases, children were absent from school because they lacked sufficient clothing or were needed at home; in others, it was because parents were too absorbed in their own misery to care what happened. The St. Vincent de Paul Society volunteered members to act as the first attendance and truant officers in the city and, with other Irish Catholic social agencies, supplied children with food, clothing and shoes, measures which helped to alleviate the problem to a degree. The Irish newspapers in Toronto provided coverage of all events that took place in the separate schools which by 1870 had become a source of Irish pride.<sup>53</sup>

## VI

Shielded by the protective mechanisms of its culture, the Irish Catholic laity expanded and staffed a number of urban-based social agencies which entailed some form of education. The St. Vincent de Paul Society, which was established in 1850, had become a working-class organization, and under its auspices lending libraries and night classes were set up for adults and youths. Courses were offered in corrective English reading and writing, and some business and technical training to improve employment opportunities. Towards the end of the century, the same methods served to ease the transition of small Catholic ethnic minorities in the city. Included in the social work of the Society and its related female counterparts were visits to the hospital and jail. Reading material and sundry items were supplied to patients and inmates. The society became actively involved in the rehabilitation of released prisoners by attempting to obtain employment or by referral to night classes where they could learn to prepare themselves to earn a living.<sup>54</sup>

The Sisters of St. Joseph administered the House of Providence established by Charbonnel in 1856 as an alternative protective agency to the House of Industry. The House of Providence provided care for the aged, the incurables, the blind, the deaf and dumb, and the indigents. Within a few years of its operation, the orphans whom the Sisters first came to tend in 1851 were moved into that institution as well. Education in it was diversified, dependent upon the ability and the age of the recipient. Eventually the demands of the whole institution were such that the Sisters had to open additional orphanages. Because of the close interaction between the Sisters and the St. Vincent de Paul Society in the protection of Catholic orphans, they were instrumental in the formation of the St. Vincent de Paul's Children's Aid Society in 1894.<sup>55</sup>

In order to prepare some of the street urchins for positions in urban trades or on farms, members of the St. Vincent de Paul Society with the co-operation of Lynch founded the St. John's Agricultural and Industrial School of the Gore in 1861. An urban outgrowth of that institution was the St. Nicholas Home for boys, established in 1868 and directed by the Sisters of St. Joseph. Its purpose was to

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53. Ibid.

54. ATA, minute books and reports of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, 1850-1900; ASSJ, ledgers of the orphanages.

55. Ibid.



serve as an hotel for working boys, primarily newsboys, bootblacks and apprentices. The Sisters were assisted in that venture by the St. Vincent de Paul Society whose members offered night courses in trades and academic or business subjects in the Home.<sup>56</sup> The Sisters also established an hostel for girls, Notre Dame des Anges, in 1871. Although it was intended as a home for working girls, it catered to teachers and seamstresses and offered more refined courses like music and art. Notre Dame des Anges was demolished to make way for St. Michael's Hospital, opened by the Sisters in 1892. Attached to the Hospital was a school of nursing which broadened advancement opportunities for Irish Catholic girls.<sup>57</sup>

In 1862 the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, an order renowned for its work among troubled women, arrived at St. Mary's parish in the city. They established St. Mary's Academy for 57 girls, an industrial school for 20 girls and women, and taught in a free school with an enrolment of 200 Irish girls from working-class background. The industrial school students were given a primary education and trained for domestic service or industrial work, chiefly dressmaking. The equipment and furnishings for that specific task were donated by the laity of St. Mary's Church. After some problem with the Bishop and a short tenure of four years, that order departed and it was not until 1875 that a similar type of work was re-established by the Sisters of the Good Shepherd.<sup>58</sup>

The primary purpose of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd was the rehabilitation of women. Suffering tremendous personal hardship, the Sisters opened a Refuge which they maintained through begging, the operation of a laundry and the manufacturing of men's shirts. Inmates were referred to the Refuge from the courts, the police and other Catholic social agencies to be taught domestic and industrial crafts. And it was from that beginning that St. Mary's Training or Industrial School for girls evolved.

Corrective education of a similar kind was offered to boys in St. John's Protectorate at Blantyre Park in Toronto. That institution was opened in 1897 under the direction of the Christian Brothers as an alternative to the Victoria Industrial School at Mimico, a secular institution in which the administrators admitted that Catholics were subjected to proselytism. Initially, at St. John's, thirty Catholic boys in trouble with the law, most from Toronto and of Irish background, were taught trades and academic courses. The methods used at St. John's differed from other punitive institutions; there were no walls, bars or uniforms to suggest restraint. The boys were trained in gymnastics by members of the Queen's Own Rifles. Boys from St. John's were in demand, at good wages, in the shops of Toronto because they had been taught practical trades with thoroughness.<sup>59</sup>

The Church was committed to its role as protector of the religious rights, including the education, of its laity. Where financially feasible and legally acceptable, it duplicated institutions in which Catholics were openly subjected to proselytism.

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56. Ibid.

57. ATA, ASSJ, record books of the House of Providence, orphanages, hostels; ATA, Sisters of Charity Papers; Sisters of the Good Shepherd Record Books and Files; Christian Brothers Records.

58. Ibid.

59. Ibid.

By 1900, Church officials had succeeded in penetrating with priests or teachers all public institutions in the province.<sup>60</sup>

## VII

During Charbonnel's episcopate there had been an impulse among the Irish to create a secondary and post-secondary educational system. But that impulse lost momentum during the career of John Lynch who, it seems, wanted to selectively control the leadership of the Irish laity.

The Christian Brothers arrived in Toronto in 1851 in response to Charbonnel's invitation. They began to teach in the existing Catholic elementary schools and also opened St. Michael's College in the Bishop's Palace as an educational facility for fifty senior boys. One year later, the Basilian Fathers arrived and established St. Mary's Minor Seminary to educate priests for the understaffed dioceses. Because of financial difficulties Charbonnel merged the seminary with the college, and a new St. Michael's College, under the direction of the Basilians, was built on a gift of land given to them by John Elmsley. In it, commercial and classical educational programmes were offered to prominent young men and prospective priests.

The Christian Brothers continued to teach in the elementary system. By 1871 they were able to open De La Salle Institute to provide secondary education for Catholic boys and girls from working-class backgrounds. The girls in the Institute were taught by the Sisters of St. Joseph. In addition, the St. Joseph's Order and the Sisters of Loretto had established convent schools for boarders and day pupils. The convent schools attracted a refined clientele from among the more successful Protestant and Catholic families and offered programmes from elementary to grammar school level.<sup>61</sup>

Bishop Lynch wanted a strong Irish Catholic society with roots in the past, not an overly educated and less pliable society which might reject its past, culture and religion. He conceded that secondary education was necessary to prepare young men for the professions to serve the Irish community. But, in his opinion, there were more than enough attorneys and doctors, and not enough priests. In his observation, too much education created a dissatisfied urban laity, for the men who achieved most success had no education. Furthermore, country boys were spoiled by a college education and were no longer content to return to the farm, or assume positions in country stores or with the railroad. Above all he wanted an obedient priesthood from which would arise the leaders to direct his Irish flock.<sup>62</sup> He opposed the Basilian philosophy of educating seminarians and laymen in the same institution and, as an alternative, he established a seminary at St. John's Grove wherein he controlled the education and training of diocesan priests. St. Michael's College retained its pre-eminent position among Catholic laymen as an institution for higher

60. ATA, Lynch Papers, record the Church's concern for the welfare of the Irish laity in public institutions.

61. For the development of secondary institutions of education, see the Annals of The Christian Brothers; Sisters of Loretto; ASSJ, Sisters of St. Joseph, and ATA, Basilian Papers.

62. Bishop Lynch's position on secondary education can be seen in ATA, educational papers.

learning; and those priests prepared for ordination through St. Michael's College entered the Basilian Order.

Lynch's short-sighted view about the value of secondary education for his Irish flock was regrettable. His apparent lack of interest in extending education halted the impetus which had begun during Charbonnel's tenure. If Lynch had had a more positive attitude, it is possible that provision for extension of separate education might have been obtained under the Secondary School Act of 1871.<sup>63</sup> As it was, Irish Catholic education at the secondary level remained a voluntary system controlled by the religious orders and available to those who could afford it or won it through proficiency. Towards the latter decades of the century, the Basilian Fathers, the St. Joseph's Order and the Sisters of Loretto added an university curriculum to their programme. St. Michael's College affiliated with the University of Toronto in 1887 and became a Federated College in 1910. Early in the 20th Century, Loretto and St. Joseph's Colleges federated with St. Michael's allowing for an all inclusive system of Irish Catholic education.<sup>64</sup>

## VIII

In attempting to improve the quality of life for its Irish laity, the Catholic Church in Victorian Toronto became an urban actor, an instrument for community improvement. It dealt with common urban problems like poverty, transiency, violence, and drunkenness. The Church hierarchy recognized the voluntary nature of the Irish and utilized it to build Catholic social institutions and schools to reduce seepage into Protestantism. The successful thrust for separate, government-supported elementary schools was an Ontario phenomenon, but the persistent demand for the realization of that goal put both the Church and the laity under pressure.

Perhaps most significant was the fact that in Victorian Toronto the Irish were the Catholics and the Church did not have the additional burden of inter-ethnic conflicts in parish schools and religious orders, as was common in a number of American cities.<sup>65</sup> Although Toronto-based Irish Catholicism had a devastating impact on urban Ontario, causing considerable strife between Irish and French Catholics in Ottawa, Kingston and Windsor, the small minority groups of German, French and Italian Catholics in Toronto in the 1890s were not sufficiently organized to cause problems for the Irish or the Church.<sup>66</sup>

63. The Lynch-Basilian controversy is well documented in ATA, Lynch Papers.

64. See the educational section of the Sisters of Loretto Papers.

65. The various elements in the Irish experience in America which differ from the Irish experience in Toronto can be found in Jay P. DOLAN, *The Immigrant Church* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1975); Dennis CLARK, *The Irish in Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1973); James W. SANDERS, *The Education of an Urban Minority* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977); and Daniel P. MOYNIHAN, Nathan GLAZER, eds., *Beyond the Melting Pot: The Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Jews, Italians and Irish of New York City* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963).

66. By 1900, the French in Toronto numbered 3,015, Italians about 1,000, and German Catholics less than 1,000. The numbers for the French and Italians do not reflect religious attachment. However, the total Catholic population in the city was 28,994. See Canada, *Census*, 1901, vol. 1, pp. 218-19, 222-23, 344-45, 348-51.

Between 1850 and 1900 the Irish Catholics of Toronto developed a system of education that preserved their Irish identity. The ethno-religious philosophy behind it sustained a new, refurbished Irish Tridentine Catholicism. By promoting it, the separate school system prevented the Irish from being submerged in an universal, Catholic sub-culture. The social patterns and educational standards that evolved in Toronto were transferred through the Church's metropolitan communication system to urban and rural areas of Ontario and became normative among English-speaking Catholics. When twentieth-century immigration changed the ethnic composition of the Catholic population in Toronto the Irishness in the school system decreased. However, within the Catholic educational system, the new ethnics had an established alternative to absorption into the Protestant, if not more accurately the "secular", city.