

# Irish Politics on Parade: The Clergy, National Societies, and St. Patrick's Day Processions in Nineteenth-century Montreal and Toronto

ROSALYN TRIGGER\*

*Comparative methods allow us to explore how the experiences of nineteenth-century Irish communities varied across Canada. Examination of St. Patrick's Day processions in Montreal and Toronto reveals that those organizing the processions in Montreal were generally more successful at achieving the appearance of community consensus than their counterparts in Toronto. In both cities the parades acted as a catalyst for discussions concerning the balance between lay initiative and clerical authority, the question of loyalty to Canada versus loyalty to Ireland, and the relationship between Protestants and Catholics. Only by exploring the complex interactions of local, national, and international politics in each of the two communities, however, can we understand these different outcomes.*

*Les méthodes comparatives nous permettent de considérer comment les expériences des communautés irlandaises du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle ont varié à travers le Canada. Une analyse des défilés de la Saint-Patrick à Montréal et à Toronto indique que ceux qui organisaient les défilés à Montréal ont généralement mieux réussi à créer l'apparence d'un consensus communautaire que leurs homologues à Toronto. Dans les deux villes, les défilés ont servi à déclencher de multiples débats au sujet de l'équilibre entre l'initiative laïque et l'autorité du clergé, du conflit entre la fidélité envers le Canada et l'attachement à l'Irlande et des rapports entre protestants et catholiques. Seule l'étude des interactions complexes de la politique locale, nationale et internationale dans chacune des deux communautés nous permet de comprendre ces différents résultats.*

\* Rosalyn Trigger is a doctoral student in the Department of Geography at McGill University. This research was carried out with support from the Fonds québécois pour la formation de chercheurs et l'aide à la recherche and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. I am grateful to Mary McGovern (St. Patrick's Basilica Archives) and Monique Montbriand (Archives de la Chancellerie de l'Archevêché de Montréal) for providing access to archival materials and to Gordon Winder for drawing my attention to background material on Australia and New Zealand. I also thank Sherry Olson, John Zucchi, and three anonymous reviewers for their comments on the original version of the paper. Many years ago, Professor Peter Goheen awakened my interest in the geography of processions, and I am grateful to him for doing so.

THE 1851 ST. PATRICK'S Day celebration in Montreal was hailed in the newspapers as "the triumphant festival of a nation's joy, and the ever vivid manifestation of the faith of Ireland's children — scattered abroad as they are over the face of the earth, yet annihilating space by their unanimous celebration in every land of the feast of their beloved apostle".<sup>1</sup> This statement draws attention to the dual national and religious components of St. Patrick's Day observances. At the same time, it emphasizes the universal nature of these celebrations throughout the nineteenth-century Irish diaspora. In Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United States of America, Irish immigrants and their descendants were enthusiastic participants in annual processions and other forms of public demonstration on, or in close proximity to, March 17. It is therefore hardly surprising that the expansion of the broader literature on parades in recent years has included numerous accounts of St. Patrick's Day processions in various cities and towns, including Toronto, New York, Philadelphia, and Worcester and Lowell, Massachusetts.<sup>2</sup> These studies demonstrate that St. Patrick's Day processions around the globe shared a range of similar goals, including affirmation of national or ethnic group solidarity, demonstration of the worthiness of the Irish as citizens, nationalist protest against British governance of their homeland, and expression of religious faith, as well as pure entertainment. They also suggest, however, that local social and political contexts had a significant influence on the diverse ways in which these goals were expressed.

Given the growing interest in understanding how and why the Irish diaspora experience varied from place to place,<sup>3</sup> it seems logical to consider

1 *True Witness and Catholic Chronicle*, March 21, 1851.

2 Dennis Clark, *The Irish Relations: Trials of an Immigrant Tradition* (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1982), pp. 193–204; Michael Cottrell, "St. Patrick's Day Parades in Nineteenth-Century Toronto: A Study of Immigrant Adjustment and Elite Control", *Histoire sociale/ Social History*, vol. 25, no. 49 (May 1992), pp. 57–73; Oliver MacDonagh, "Irish Culture and Nationalism Translated: St. Patrick's Day, 1888, in Australia", in O. MacDonagh, W. F. Mandle, and P. Travers, eds., *Irish Culture and Nationalism, 1750–1950* (London: MacMillan Press, 1983), pp. 69–82; Sallie Marston, "Public Rituals and Community Power: St. Patrick's Day Parades in Lowell, Massachusetts, 1841–1874", *Political Geography Quarterly*, vol. 8, no. 3 (1989), pp. 255–269; Timothy J. Meagher, "'Why Should We Care For a Little Trouble or a Walk Through the Mud': St. Patrick's and Columbus Day Parades in Worcester, Massachusetts, 1845–1915", *New England Quarterly*, vol. 58, no. 1 (1985), pp. 5–26; Kenneth Moss, "St. Patrick's Day Celebrations and the Formation of Irish-American Identity, 1845–1875", *Journal of Social History*, vol. 29, no. 1 (1995), pp. 125–148; Patrick O'Farrell, "St. Patrick's Day in Australia (The John Alexander Ferguson Lecture 1994)", *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, vol. 81, no. 1 (1995), pp. 1–16; Nancy Schmitz, *Irish for a Day: St. Patrick's Day Celebrations in Quebec City, 1765–1990* (Ste-Foy: Carraig Books, 1991); Rosalyn Trigger, "The Role of the Parish in Fostering Irish-Catholic Identity in Nineteenth-Century Montreal" (MA dissertation, McGill University, 1997), pp. 112–125.

3 See, for example, Malcolm Campbell, "The Other Immigrants: Comparing the Irish in Australia and the United States", *Journal of American Ethnic History*, vol. 14 (Spring 1995), pp. 3–22; David N. Doyle, "The Irish in Australia and the United States: Some Comparisons, 1800–1939", *Irish Economic and Social History*, vol. 16 (1989), pp. 73–94, and "The Irish as Urban Pioneers in the United States,

that the addition of a comparative element to such studies might contribute to our understanding of this issue.<sup>4</sup> The adoption of such an approach sheds further light on the complex relationship between Irish voluntary associations and the Roman Catholic clergy, on tensions between Irish Catholics and Irish Protestants, and on the ambiguities created by the desire of many Irish Catholics to be accepted as loyal Canadians while continuing to support the nationalist cause of their homeland. While the primary focus here is on St. Patrick's Day processions in Montreal, those in Toronto are also examined as a means of drawing attention to the contrasts that could emerge in cities that, despite being located within the same British Dominion, had very different cultural environments. Events that took place in one city frequently resonated in the "sister" city, an effect that at times had an impact on the internal politics of their respective Irish communities. Toronto was also chosen because of the quality of the literature that exists documenting the history of its Irish-Catholic community,<sup>5</sup> including a pre-existing study of its nineteenth-century St. Patrick's Day parades.<sup>6</sup> As a result, the Toronto component of this study draws heavily on secondary literature, while that for Montreal is based on church and diocesan records, local newspapers, and the minute books of the Convention of Irish Societies, the organization that coordinated planning for the annual procession in Montreal during the latter part of the nineteenth century.

Studies with a comparative element provide an important means of understanding the ways in which local circumstances moulded Irish-Catholic experience in various parts of Canada. Within Canadian historiography, there is already a strong tradition of recognizing the significance of local and regional differences, although less effort has been devoted to explicit comparisons between nineteenth-century immigrant experiences in various parts of the country. In recent years, Canadian social historians have challenged traditional accounts that drew on stereotypes borrowed from American studies depicting Irish Catholics as a proletarianized and mainly urban under-

---

1850–1870", *Journal of American Ethnic History*, vol. 10, nos. 1–2 (Fall 1990–Winter 1991), pp. 36–59; Cecil J. Houston and William J. Smyth, *Irish Emigration and Canadian Settlement: Patterns, Links, and Letters* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990); William Jenkins, "Social and Geographical Mobility Among the Irish in Toronto, Ontario, and Buffalo, New York, 1880–1910" (PhD dissertation, University of Toronto, 2001).

4 Since the original version of this paper was first submitted, Mike Cronin and Daryl Adair have published an international history of the celebration of St. Patrick's Day entitled *The Wearing of the Green: A History of St. Patrick's Day* (London: Routledge, 2002). While they do not adopt an explicitly comparative framework, their work effectively captures the diversity of the Irish diaspora experience.

5 I am thinking in particular of Brian Clarke's *Piety and Nationalism: Lay Voluntary Associations and the Creation of an Irish-Catholic Community in Toronto, 1850–1895* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993); and Mark G. McGowan's *The Waning of the Green: Catholics, the Irish, and Identity in Toronto, 1887–1922* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999).

6 Cottrell, "St. Patrick's Day Parades in Nineteenth-Century Toronto", pp. 57–73.

class.<sup>7</sup> Most studies have focused on the socio-economic position of the Irish, particularly Irish Catholics, in various places — both urban and rural — in Canada.<sup>8</sup> These studies provide an empirical foundation for debates between those arguing for the upward mobility of Irish Catholics in nineteenth-century Canada (with some also emphasizing the small differences between Irish Catholics and Irish Protestants), and those pointing to the persistent inability of Irish Catholics to achieve economic parity with other groups. Perhaps the most useful outcome of these debates has been greater recognition that “locational variations between Irish-Catholic circumstances ... need not be reduced to a singular account”.<sup>9</sup> Instead, Gordon Darroch argues, “[T]he plural experiences may be better grasped if ethnicity is understood as an ‘emergent’ and highly contingent historical construction, in which identities and communities are fabricated from the threads of a shared heritage, but in widely varying conditions that mould their local institutional forms and meanings.”<sup>10</sup>

While St. Patrick’s Day processions provide an opportunity to explore the variation of Irish-Catholic experience in more detail, it is nevertheless necessary to be attentive to the peculiarities of parades as collective expressions. There has been a tendency in some accounts of St. Patrick’s Day processions — particularly those that see parades primarily as “sites” where national group memory is reflected, ritualized, and reaffirmed — to emphasize conformity and consensus within the Irish-Catholic community. Kenneth Moss, for example, argues that St. Patrick’s Day celebrations in New York experienced a “sea-change” between the late 1840s and the 1870s which “paralleled, reflected, and played a role in the reworking of identity that transformed a community characterized by multiple loyalties ... into a community that imagined itself as a unified national organism with a common, Irish past”.<sup>11</sup> Such

7 Donald H. Akenson, *Being Had: Historians, Evidence, and the Irish in North America* (Don Mills: P. D. Meany Publishers, 1985), pp. 77–142; Gordon Darroch, “Half Empty or Half Full? Images and Interpretations in the Historical Analysis of the Catholic Irish in Nineteenth-Century Canada”, *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, vol. 25, no. 1 (1993), pp. 1–8; Houston and Smyth, *Irish Emigration and Canadian Settlement*, p. 7. H. Clare Pentland’s work on the Irish in Canada has been the focus of much of this criticism.

8 Donald H. Akenson, *The Irish in Ontario: A Study in Rural History* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1984); Peter Baskerville, “Did Religion Matter? Religion and Wealth in Urban Canada at the Turn of the Twentieth Century: An Exploratory Study”, *Histoire sociale/ Social History*, vol. 34, no. 67 (May 2001), pp. 61–95; Gordon Darroch and Michael D. Ornstein, “Ethnicity and Occupational Structure in Canada in 1871: The Vertical Mosaic in Historical Perspective”, *Canadian Historical Review*, vol. 61, no. 3 (1980), pp. 305–333; Darroch, “Half Empty or Half Full?”, pp. 1–8; Sherry Olson and Patricia Thornton, “The Challenge of the Irish Catholic Community in Nineteenth-Century Montreal”, *Histoire sociale/ Social History*, vol. 35, no. 70 (November 2002), pp. 331–362; P. M. Toner, “Occupation and Ethnicity: The Irish in New Brunswick”, *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, vol. 20, no. 3 (1988), pp. 155–165.

9 Darroch, “Half Empty or Half Full?”, p. 6.

10 *Ibid.*

11 Moss, “St. Patrick’s Day Celebrations”, p. 144.

approaches tend to downplay the fact that public processions are exercises of power, which can achieve the appearance of consensus through the influence of dominant groups or individuals within a community or through external pressures exerted by the host society.<sup>12</sup> Only by exploring the complex politics within Irish communities, however, can we explain why those organizing processions in Montreal were generally (although not always) more successful in achieving the appearance of consensus than their counterparts in Toronto.

Montreal is a city with a long tradition of well-attended and relatively peaceful St. Patrick's Day processions.<sup>13</sup> The event in Montreal was notable for the extent to which it assumed, and then maintained, the character of a national-religious procession. This did not mean that there was no room for the expression of Irish nationalist feelings — quite the contrary — but the voicing of more militant and extreme nationalist sentiments rarely found a place in the Montreal processions. In contrast, St. Patrick's Day processions in Toronto were disrupted or cancelled more often than those in Montreal, and the Roman Catholic clergy struggled to gain the same degree of control over the proceedings as was possessed by their Montreal counterparts. This draws attention to the significance of the relationship between lay nationalist societies and the Roman Catholic clergy in the organization of St. Patrick's Day processions,<sup>14</sup> as well as to the potentially disruptive role that local tensions between Irish Catholics and other groups could have on lay-clerical cooperation and on the way in which sectarian and nationalist sentiments were expressed in any given community. A comparison of processions in the two cities for three short periods during the 1850s, 1860s, and 1870s illustrates the impact of this relationship and how it changed over time. While the comparative approach adopted here serves principally to provide a better understanding of the Montreal processions, it also raises questions about some of the conclusions that have been drawn from earlier studies of Toronto's St. Patrick's Day parade.

A distinction is made here between “national” sentiments or associations, which drew their strength from a common immigrant experience and whose principal aim was to reinforce feelings of connection with Ireland and fellow

12 In contrast, see Marston, “Public Rituals and Community Power”, pp. 255–269. Her account of St. Patrick's Day parades in Lowell, Massachusetts, emphasizes the contested nature of public processions.

13 One of Montreal's largest annual parades continues to be held on St. Patrick's Day. The term “procession” is used to describe the event that took place on St. Patrick's Day in nineteenth-century Montreal because that term was most often used at the time. Father Patrick Dowd, the pastor of St. Patrick's Church, objected to the use of “parade” rather than “procession” because the latter had religious connotations, whereas the former did not (*The Post*, March 15, 1880). In a letter to the editor of one of the Montreal newspapers, William Conroy wrote that he had “heard the word parade condemned as connected with St. Patrick's Day by parties who claimed the procession to be a religious one” (*The Post*, March 15, 1881), once again indicating the significance of the distinction between the two terms.

14 See Clarke, *Piety and Nationalism*. This book has been influential in drawing attention to and encouraging a reassessment of the relationship between lay voluntary associations and the Roman Catholic Church in nineteenth-century Canada.

Irishmen (often providing the basis for local charitable endeavours), and “nationalist” individuals and groups who embraced the more explicit political goal of furthering Home Rule or independence for Ireland using either constitutional methods or physical force.<sup>15</sup> While my usage of the term “nationalist” is relatively straightforward, the distinction between “national” and “nationalist” requires further explanation. In certain contexts within the literature on nationalism, the two terms are used more or less interchangeably, for example when referring to a “national” or “nationalist” movement. At the same time, the term “ethnic” is frequently used as a substitute for “national”, as when referring to an “ethnic” or “national” group or organization.<sup>16</sup> To distinguish between lay organizations that were actively promoting the political or revolutionary struggle for Irish independence and those whose attachment to Ireland was more sentimental or focused primarily on issues related to the well-being of Irish communities in Canada, I refer to the former as “nationalist” associations, while the latter are designated as “national” societies. Since both “national” and “nationalist” organizations frequently, but not always, had a strong ethno-religious component, I have avoided applying the label “ethnic” to either type of association. The adoption of this terminology is more in keeping with contemporary nineteenth-century usage. It also avoids an implicit assumption that all nineteenth-century Irish “national” societies in Canada saw themselves as “ethnic” associations.

Some of the confusion over terminology can be alleviated by reflecting on our understanding of what is meant by a “nation”. Eric Hobsbawm defines nationalism as a political programme that “holds that groups defined as ‘nations’ have the right to, and therefore ought to, form territorial states of the kind that have become standard since the French revolution”.<sup>17</sup> He argues, however, that only since the late nineteenth century have nations come increasingly to be defined in ethno-linguistic terms. While earlier “revolutionary-democratic” and “liberal” expressions of nationalism understood the nation to be “the body of citizens whose collective sovereignty constituted them a state which was their political expression”, the late nineteenth century saw growing acceptance of the idea that a nation should be constituted by a group of people sharing a common language and religion and with a perceived common ethnic ancestry.<sup>18</sup> Thus theorists and historians have

15 Unless otherwise specified, all references to “national” societies refer to Irish (rather than English, Scottish, or French-Canadian) national societies.

16 In the North American context, the term “ethnic” is generally reserved to describe groups other than white Anglo-Saxon Protestants and Native North Americans.

17 Eric J. Hobsbawm, “Ethnicity and Nationalism in Europe Today”, in Gopal Balakrishnan, ed., *Mapping the Nation* (London: Verso, 1996), p. 256.

18 Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 18–19. Also see the discussion in chapter 4 of the same publication, as well as Katherine Verdery, “Whither ‘Nation’ and ‘Nationalism’?”, in Balakrishnan, ed., *Mapping the Nation*, p. 227.

emphasized the importance of understanding nationalism in its appropriate historical context and of recognizing that the concepts of “nationalism” and “ethnicity” need to be differentiated even if they are often closely associated with one another.<sup>19</sup> This distinction is important in the Irish context, where certain nationalist movements such as the Young Irelanders included Irish Protestants within their ranks and drew upon an inclusive concept of the Irish nation that embraced all who lived in Ireland rather than emphasizing religion or common ancestry.<sup>20</sup> The Young Irelanders’ embrace of a Romantic nationalism that envisaged “literature, history and language” as the foundation for a “distinct Irish nation” nevertheless represented a problematic basis for a unified Ireland.<sup>21</sup>

Irish nationalism also became increasingly intertwined with Catholicism over the course of the nineteenth century, encouraged by events such as Daniel O’Connell’s successful campaign for full Catholic emancipation in the 1820s, which the Roman Catholic clergy helped to transform into a mass movement.<sup>22</sup> John Breuilly makes the interesting observation that churches are one of only a very few pre-modern institutions with the capacity to serve as vehicles for the construction, preservation, and transmission of national identities. He points out that they are most likely to do so in situations that place them in conflict with other, more powerful, religious institutions (as was the case for the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland in the wake of the Protestant Reformation).<sup>23</sup> While they may overlap, the agendas of religious institutions and those of nationalists rarely correspond precisely, creating a somewhat ambivalent relationship between the forces of religion and nationalism.

### **The Local Context: Irish Catholics in the Two Cities**

Although Irish Catholics constituted approximately one-quarter of the populations of both Montreal and Toronto in 1861,<sup>24</sup> those living in Montreal inhabited a cultural environment very different from that of their co-religionists in Toronto. Not only was Montreal a city in which both English and French were spoken, but it was also a city in which being Roman Catholic did not entail belonging to a minority group. Anglo-Protestants made up only

19 Hobsbawm, “Ethnicity and Nationalism in Europe Today”, pp. 256–258; Thomas H. Eriksen, “Ethnicity, Race, Class and Nation”, in John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith, eds., *Ethnicity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 28–31.

20 T. W. Moody and F. X. Martin, *The Course of Irish History* (Boulder: Roberts Rinehart Publishers, 1995), pp. 261, 277.

21 Richard English, “Defining the Nation: Recent Historiography and Irish Nationalism”, *European Review of History/Revue européenne d’histoire*, vol. 2, no. 2 (1995), p. 195.

22 Moody and Martin, *The Course of Irish History*, p. 250; Clarke, *Piety and Nationalism*, p. 155.

23 John Breuilly, “Approaches to Nationalism”, in Balakrishnan, ed., *Mapping the Nation*, p. 154.

24 Clarke, *Piety and Nationalism*, p. 15; Sherry Olson, “Le peuplement de Montréal”, in Serge Courville, ed., *Atlas historique du Québec : population et territoire* (Sainte-Foy: Presses de l’Université Laval, 1996), p. 85.

about a quarter of Montreal's population, while approximately half was French-Canadian Catholic. The *Quebec Act* of 1774 had guaranteed Catholics the right to exercise their religion freely and to hold government and political office without having to swear an oath that offended Catholic principles, placing them in a more favoured position legally than their counterparts in Britain and Ireland.<sup>25</sup> The powerful and privileged position of the Catholic Church in Quebec provided Irish Catholics with strong religious leadership and encouraged development of Irish-Catholic institutions, although strenuous efforts had to be made by the Irish community to secure separate churches and parishes for the English-speaking Catholic population.<sup>26</sup> The dominant Catholic presence in Montreal also placed the community in a good position to defend itself against Orangeism and other expressions of anti-Catholic and anti-Papist sentiment. In contrast, Irish Catholics in Toronto found themselves an embattled minority among a Protestant population that included a large Irish-Protestant contingent with a strong commitment to the Orange Order.<sup>27</sup> Irish Catholics in both cities, however, had to contend with the fact that they were living in a British Dominion in which expressions of Irish nationalist or anti-British sentiments could exacerbate existing class and sectarian tensions between them and their Anglo-Protestant neighbours.

The timing of Irish migration to the two cities seems to have been broadly similar: in both Montreal and Toronto the number of Irish-born inhabitants reached a peak in 1861 (the peak in Montreal of 14,179 being somewhat higher than that in Toronto of 12,441), after which lower figures were registered in the 1871 and 1881 censuses as the United States became the preferred destination for Irish immigrants.<sup>28</sup> The religious composition of the Irish population in the two cities was nevertheless very different. Cecil Houston and William Smyth have estimated for 1871 that the urban Irish of Quebec were approximately 84 per cent Catholic, while only 49 per cent of

25 Mason Wade, *The French Canadians* (Toronto: MacMillan of Canada, 1956), pp. 63–64.

26 Rosalyn Trigger, "The Geopolitics of the Irish-Catholic Parish in Nineteenth-Century Montreal", *Journal of Historical Geography*, vol. 27, no. 4 (2001), pp. 553–572. Similar efforts were made by Quebec City's Irish-Catholic population. See Marianna O'Gallagher, *St. Patrick's, Quebec: The Building of a Church and of a Parish, 1827–1833* (Sainte-Foy: Carraig Books, 1981).

27 See William Jenkins, "Between the Lodge and the Meeting-House: Mapping Irish Protestant Identities and Social Worlds in Late Victorian Toronto", *Social & Cultural Geography*, vol. 4, no. 1 (2003), pp. 75–98, and "Patrolmen and Peelers: Immigration, Urban Culture, and 'the Irish Police' in Canada and the United States", *Canadian Journal of Irish Studies*, vol. 28, no. 2–vol. 29, no. 1 (2002–2003), pp. 10–29; Gregory S. Kealey, *Toronto Workers Respond to Industrial Capitalism, 1867–1892* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), pp. 98–123, and "Orangemen and the Corporation: The Politics of Class During the Union of the Canadas", in Victor L. Russell, ed., *Forging a Consensus: Historical Essays on Toronto* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), pp. 41–86; Mark McGowan, "'We Endure What We Cannot Cure': John Joseph Lynch and Roman Catholic-Protestant Relations in Toronto, 1864–1875: Frustrated Attempts at Peaceful Coexistence", *Canadian Society of Church History Papers* (1984), pp. 89–111.

28 Clarke, *Piety and Nationalism*, p. 16; Census of Canada, 1861, 1871, 1881.

urban Irish in Ontario were Catholic.<sup>29</sup> It has been suggested that a cultural filtering process worked against the Protestant Irish staying in Quebec, while providing encouragement for Irish Catholics to remain.<sup>30</sup> The possibility must also be considered that the contrast resulted from differences in the timing of the arrival of Protestant and Catholic immigrants. The fact that the proportion of Irish Catholics to Irish Protestants in Upper Canada stayed virtually constant between 1842 and 1871, however, implies that even after the famine the bulk of emigrants to the upper province continued to be Protestant.<sup>31</sup> Donald Akenson has also argued that the Irish-Catholic minority in Ontario prior to the famine migration of the late 1840s was larger than has generally been supposed.<sup>32</sup> This strengthens the argument in favour of the importance of a cultural filter and indicates that both cities already had well-established Irish-Catholic communities prior to the famine migration.<sup>33</sup> The similarities between the Irish communities in Montreal and Toronto in terms of such factors as timing of arrival, combined with differences such as the religious composition of the two communities, provide a fruitful setting for comparing St. Patrick's Day processions in the two cities.

### **Evolution of St. Patrick's Day Processions in Montreal**

In the early nineteenth century, Irishmen around the globe regarded St. Patrick's Day primarily as an opportunity for a convivial celebration of their common attachment to Ireland, regardless of whether they were Protestant or Catholic.<sup>34</sup> The celebrations in Montreal were similar to those taking place in Irish diaspora communities elsewhere in the world. Commemorative banquets, attended by the Irish social elite and accompanied by numerous toasts and speeches, were the order of the day. St. Patrick's Day processions also took place, and in Montreal are reputed to have been held as early as 1824.<sup>35</sup> In the late 1830s the parade was composed of the St. Patrick's Society (which at that time included both Protestants and Catholics), the committee of charity, the committee of management, and "Irishmen now in town, not members of the society".<sup>36</sup> Sister societies such as the St. George's and St. Andrew's societies participated in the annual dinners and may also have

29 Houston and Smyth, *Irish Emigration and Canadian Settlement*, p. 227.

30 *Ibid.*, p. 228. Also see Robert J. Grace, *The Irish in Quebec: An Introduction to the Historiography* (Quebec: Institut québécois de recherche sur la culture, 1993), pp. 53–54.

31 Akenson, *The Irish in Ontario*, pp. 27–28.

32 *Ibid.*, p. 26.

33 Olson's data indicate that the Irish community in Montreal already had a substantial Irish-Catholic component by 1842. See Sherry Olson, "Ethnic Partition of the Work Force in 1840s Montréal", *Labour/ Le Travail*, vol. 53 (Spring 2004), pp. 157–200.

34 See discussion in Cronin and Adair, *The Wearing of the Green*, chap. 1.

35 Archives de la Chancellerie de l'Archevêché de Montréal [hereafter ACAM], Album St. Patrick, A-1, 1824–1974: 150th Anniversary Celebrations of St. Patrick's Day in Montreal, March 17, 1974; *Montreal Gazette*, March 16, 1935.

36 *Montreal Transcript*, March 17, 1838.

joined the processions and accompanying religious services during this period.<sup>37</sup> In Toronto, as in Montreal, early St. Patrick's Day celebrations were quiet and respectable affairs that brought together the Irish elite and reflected the cordiality that existed between Protestants and Catholics.<sup>38</sup> The processions that occurred in Toronto in the 1830s usually included the "sons of St. Patrick" along with the St. George's and St. Andrew's societies, and involved a route that took them to the Episcopal Church to attend a special service (the procession to the Catholic church in 1839 being an exception).<sup>39</sup> Patrick O'Farrell's statement that the national connotations of St. Patrick's Day celebrations in Australia during the early nineteenth century were "mild, ecumenical, and subordinate to the wider concept of the United Kingdom", with no sign of the separatist or religious connotations associated with celebrations later in the century, could equally well be applied to the celebrations in both Montreal and Toronto.<sup>40</sup>

Events taking place on both the global and domestic stages were to have an impact on the way in which St. Patrick's Day was celebrated as the century progressed. In broad terms, changes on the other side of the world bore a strong resemblance to what was happening in both Montreal and Toronto. By the 1840s, St. Patrick's Day in Australia "had become a divisive occasion among the Irish themselves, shedding the Protestants and splitting the proletarians from the prosperous and respectable".<sup>41</sup> At the same time, the Catholic Church attempted to gain more control over the celebrations, an intrusion that was resented by many Irishmen.<sup>42</sup> Multiple factors worked together to produce these changes. Cooperation between Irish Catholics and Irish Protestants was challenged by the famine migration of the 1840s, as Irish communities around the globe struggled to absorb an influx of new, and often poor, immigrants. Meanwhile, the revitalization of the Catholic Church, which occurred in connection with the international movement known as ultramontanism, resulted in efforts being made to establish greater episcopal authority, to create a professional clergy, to invigorate and expand the services provided by church-operated social institutions, and to "devotionalize" the laity.<sup>43</sup> At least partly in response to this movement, membership in the Orange Order expanded in the colonies, while for many Irish Catholics in

37 Kevin James, "Dynamics of Ethnic Associational Culture in a Nineteenth-Century City: Saint Patrick's Society of Montreal, 1834–56", *Canadian Journal of Irish Studies*, vol. 26, no. 1 (2000), p. 54.

38 Cottrell, "St. Patrick's Day Parades", p. 60.

39 Peter G. Goheen, "Parading: A Lively Tradition in Early Victorian Toronto", in Alan R. H. Baker and Gideon Biger, eds., *Ideology and Landscape in Historical Perspective: Essays on the Meanings of Places in the Past* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 340–341.

40 O'Farrell, "St. Patrick's Day in Australia", p. 7.

41 *Ibid.*, p. 9.

42 *Ibid.*

43 Clarke, *Piety and Nationalism*, p. 31.

both Ireland and abroad religion came to be seen as an integral part of Irish identity.<sup>44</sup>

These factors played themselves out in a different way in each Irish diaspora community. Accounts of St. Patrick's Day processions in North America during the second half of the nineteenth century reveal a spectrum, with strongly nationalist demonstrations at one end and processions with a more national-religious dimension at the other. While nationalist parades such as the one in New York were at one extreme, the procession in Montreal could be placed closer to the other end of the spectrum. In Montreal processions, the level of involvement of parish societies and congregations was high, routes evolved in response to the changing parish structure of the English-speaking Catholic community, the church service and procession were highly integrated, and the Roman Catholic clergy maintained a strong influence over decision-making.

By the early 1840s, the procession in Montreal had already taken on a more pronounced religious and Roman Catholic dimension. In March 1840 the following announcement was made at the Recollet Chapel (a chapel of ease that had been set aside for use by English-speaking Catholics):

The Christian Doctrine Society accompanied by all the children who usually attend catechism here and in Bonsecours Church are required to meet here on that day at 8 o'clock in order to be regularly arranged to process with ... the St. Patrick's Society and others, from this to the Parish church. The men who belong to the Temperate association, as well as others, who can attend are required to meet here at the same hour to accompany us for the honor of our Holy Patron St. Patrick.<sup>45</sup>

The "Temperate association" refers to the Irish Catholic Temperance Society established in 1840 by Father Patrick Phelan at the Recollet Chapel and reputed to be the first of its kind in North America.<sup>46</sup> The temperance movement in Montreal was a direct import from Ireland, where a crusade led by Father Theobald Mathew during this period led thousands to take the pledge. Temperance processions on a grand scale also became an important part of St. Patrick's Day celebrations in Ireland in the decade leading up to the famine, and, according to Mike Cronin and Daryl Adair, received the support of the authorities because of their perceived ability to promote a respectable

44 Terrence Murphy, "The English-Speaking Colonies to 1854", in Terrence Murphy and Roberto Perin, eds., *A Concise History of Christianity in Canada* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 177–178; Lawrence J. McCaffrey, *The Irish Question: Two Centuries of Conflict* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1995), pp. 66–67.

45 Archives of St. Patrick's Basilica [hereafter ASPB], Recollet Book of Weekly Activities and Marriages, 1839–1844, March 15, 1840.

46 *Souvenir of the Golden Jubilee of St. Patrick's TA&B Society, 1840–1890* (Montreal, 1890).

and “morally upright vision of St. Patrick’s Day observance”.<sup>47</sup> The Temperance Society once again formed an important element of the procession in Montreal in 1842, with newspapers claiming that 3,000 of its members participated.<sup>48</sup> The procession was described as being “the most splendid affair” of its kind ever seen in Montreal, while the more respectable appearance over former years of participants who were not members of the St. Patrick’s Society was also seen as evidence “that the sad stain attaching to the Irish national character was fast passing away”.<sup>49</sup> Temperance and total abstinence societies continued to form an important element in St. Patrick’s Day processions in Montreal throughout the rest of the century, and their early appearance is indicative of the success of efforts made by the Irish-Catholic clergy in Montreal to devotionalize the laity. It also reflected a strong desire on the part of Irish Catholics to confer an image of respectability on their community.

In 1847 the procession revolved around the inauguration of St. Patrick’s Roman Catholic Church, which was to become the focus of future St. Patrick’s Day processions (Figure 1). After proceeding from the Recollet Chapel, the procession walked past Notre-Dame Church in Place d’Armes (where participants were joined by the Sulpician clergy and Roman Catholic Bishop of Montreal), before proceeding up the hill to the new St. Patrick’s. “God Save the Queen” was played as the clergy and bishop entered the door of the new church.<sup>50</sup> On this occasion, the St. Patrick’s Society (still at least nominally non-sectarian) was accompanied by the Hibernian Benevolent Society, the Temperance Society, banners, bands, and “the whole body of Irish Catholics of the city”.<sup>51</sup> Evidence indicates, therefore, that St. Patrick’s Day processions in Montreal rapidly assumed a strong religious character and that the clergy and societies connected with the Catholic Church came to play an increasingly important role.

Throughout the 1850s, a route was adopted that took the procession from Place d’Armes to St. Patrick’s Church and back again. Both the St. Patrick’s Society and the Young Men’s St. Patrick’s Association appeared in the parades during this period, as did the Temperance Society and the men of St. Patrick’s congregation “who may not be members of any of the Irish Societies”.<sup>52</sup> The dissolution of the old St. Patrick’s Society and the creation of a new and exclusively Catholic St. Patrick’s Society in 1856 completed the

47 Cronin and Adair, *The Wearing of the Green*, p. 48.

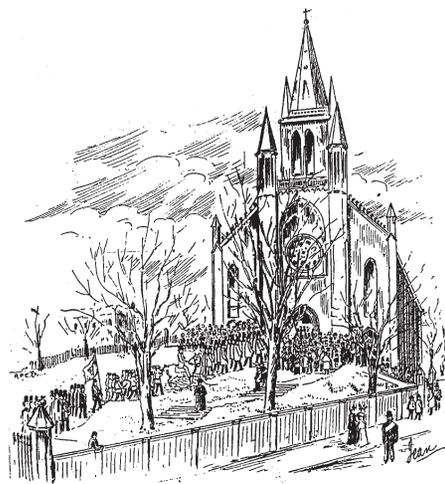
48 *Montreal Transcript*, March 19, 1842.

49 *Ibid.*

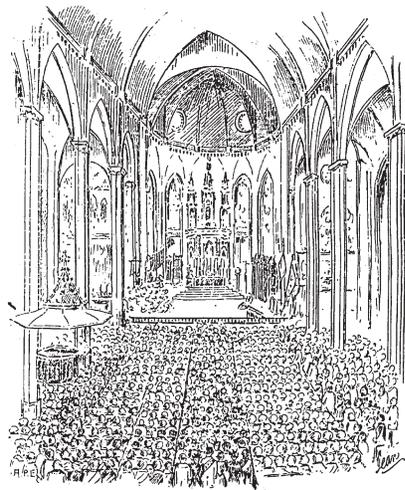
50 *Montreal Transcript*, March 16, 1847.

51 John J. Curran, ed., *Golden Jubilee of the Reverend Fathers Dowd and Toupin, With Historical Sketch of the Irish Community of Montreal* (Montreal: John Lovell and Son, 1887), pp. 11–12. Note that the Hibernian Benevolent Society referred to here is not the same organization as the Hibernian Society discussed later.

52 See, for example, the *True Witness and Catholic Chronicle*, March 12, 1852.



PROCESSION ENTERING ST. PATRICK'S CHURCH



INTERIOR VIEW OF ST. PATRICK'S CHURCH AT HIGH MASS



PROCESSION FORMING ON RADEGONDE STREET

**Figure 1** St. Patrick's Day Procession, Montreal. *True Witness and Catholic Chronicle*, March 21, 1894.

transformation of the procession into a Catholic national-religious demonstration and consolidated the power of the clergy over the way in which it was organized. In the 1860s the procession began to move towards a system that alternated annually between “western” and “eastern” routes through the city. Doing so represented a logical adaptation to the growing territory covered by the city and to the dispersion of Irish-Catholic residences. The western route passed through Griffintown, a working-class and largely Irish neighbourhood, and passed St. Ann’s Roman Catholic Church, while the eastern route, which usually went down St. Lawrence Main Street, was an attempt to reach out to the substantial Irish community in the city’s east end.

The minutes of the Convention of Irish Societies, available as of 1879, provide detailed information concerning the organization of processions and the negotiation of routes.<sup>53</sup> During this period, Montreal’s Irish Societies met each year to arrange for the celebration of St. Patrick’s Day. It is interesting to note that an organization with a similar name and function organized the parades in New York City from the 1850s onwards.<sup>54</sup> Participants in Montreal’s Convention of Irish Societies included lay-run national societies approved by the Church such as the St. Patrick’s Society, as well as parish-based societies such as the St. Patrick’s, St. Ann’s, and St. Bridget’s Total Abstinence and Benefit Societies. St. Patrick’s Benevolent Society, the Catholic Young Men’s Society, the Irish Catholic Benefit Society, and the Young Irishmen’s Literary and Benefit Association were also represented. Over the years, a number of societies joined the Convention, including St. Gabriel’s

53 ASPB, Convention of Irish Societies, Minute Book, 1879–1900, March 2, 1879. The Convention existed prior to 1879 since in that year the secretary refers to having mislaid the previous minute book.

54 Cronin and Adair, *The Wearing of the Green*, pp. 36–37, 71–72. Despite the presence of the Convention of Irish Societies in New York, the Ancient Order of Hibernians (AOH) was the dominant force in New York’s more militantly nationalist St. Patrick’s Day processions as early as the late 1850s (Moss, “St. Patrick’s Day Celebrations”, p. 136). Because of its questionable antecedents in the United States, the AOH’s first appearance in Montreal in the late 1870s caused concern among the clergy. Father Patrick Dowd corresponded with several bishops and archbishops in the United States in an attempt to ascertain whether the AOH was a secret society and to determine whether he should denounce it as such and forbid its members the sacraments. He received a mixed response to his inquiries, although there was a general consensus that the AOH was a secret society at this time (ASPB, Box 1, J. Loughlin, Bishop of Brooklyn, to Fr. Dowd, July 7, 1879; W. Quenn [?], New York, to Fr. Dowd, July 7, 1879; Archbishop of Boston to Fr. Dowd, July 10, 1879). At the time of its official foundation in Montreal in 1892, the AOH was considered to be a “respectable” society, as testified by its participation in the St. Patrick’s Day processions alongside the parish societies (*True Witness and Catholic Chronicle*, March 14, 1894). By the time it had gained a widespread presence in Canada, the AOH was “more of an ethno-cultural insurance society than a vociferous exponent of Irish nationalism” (McGowan, *The Waning of the Green*, p. 153) and “the form of ethnic nationalism it expressed, unlike that of its sister branches in the United States, was far from militant” (Clarke, *Piety and Nationalism*, p. 239). St. Patrick’s Day parades in Montreal were organized by the AOH between 1920 and 1929, before being transferred to the United Irish Societies of Montreal, a new umbrella organization (Cronin and Adair, *The Wearing of the Green*, pp. 139–140).

Total Abstinence and Benefit Society, St. Ann's Young Men's Society, St. Mary's Young Men's Society, and the nationalist Ancient Order of Hibernians in 1894. Although never officially represented, groups such as the Hackmen's Union and the Shamrock Lacrosse Club were invited to participate in the procession. Exclusions are also significant. When a delegate from the Society of the Holy Family wished to participate in the deliberations of the Convention in 1885, a discussion arose as to the expediency of allowing "religious societies" to be admitted to the meeting. It was unanimously decided that "in future all exclusively religious societies shall not be represented by a delegate or delegates at any future meeting of this Convention".<sup>55</sup> Devotional societies such as the Society of the Sacred Heart did, however, participate in the procession itself from time to time.<sup>56</sup> Women's societies, many of which were devotional in nature, never participated in either the Convention or the parade, and the Catholic Mutual Benevolent Association and the Catholic Order of Foresters were excluded on account of their "cosmopolitan membership".<sup>57</sup> In reference to the exclusion of these two organizations, it was stated that "only societies similar to those already represented and which are not composed of men of mixed nationalities can be invited to send delegates here".<sup>58</sup> In other words, there was a consensus that the Convention wished to retain its distinctly Irish-Catholic male identity.

The high visibility of parish-based societies did not preclude the expression of nationalist or political feelings.<sup>59</sup> Between about 1875 and 1895, the movement for Home Rule in Ireland had a significant influence on St. Patrick's Day celebrations in Montreal. Speeches expressed the hope that Ireland would soon benefit from the same form of government that Irish Canadians presently enjoyed, and Home Rule banners were displayed in the public thoroughfares.<sup>60</sup> Arches spanned the streets, decked with the flags of Ireland, the Dominion of Canada, and the United States, bearing inscriptions such as "God Save Ireland", "Union is Strength", "The Land for the People", and "Away With Feud and Faction — Home Rule Then Assured".<sup>61</sup> Constant efforts were made to maintain a balance between drawing on the national and nationalist appeal of the celebration and ensuring that parishioners continued to recognize the religious significance of the saint's day. These efforts helped

55 ASPB, Convention of Irish Societies, Minute Book, 1879–1900, March 3, 1885.

56 The Society of the Sacred Heart is listed as marching as early as 1879 (*True Witness and Catholic Chronicle*, March 19, 1879).

57 ASPB, Convention of Irish Societies, Minute Book, 1879–1900, February 28, 1893.

58 ASPB, Convention of Irish Societies, Minute Book, 1879–1900, March 8, 1894.

59 Rosalyn Trigger, "La vie des paroisses catholiques irlandaises : une fusion des identités nationale et religieuse", in Serge Courville and Normand Séguin, eds., *Atlas historique du Québec : la paroisse* (Sainte-Foy: Presses de l'Université Laval, 2001), pp. 229–231.

60 *Evening Star*, March 17, 1875; *Montreal Herald*, March 18, 1885; *Montreal Daily Star*, March 18, 1895.

61 *Toronto Globe*, March 18, 1891.

to maintain the continuity of the procession from year to year and ensured its appeal to Irish Catholics with a wide range of political affiliations.

In the late 1870s and 1880s, with an increasing number of Irish Catholics living in suburban areas, it was recognized that route changes were needed if the procession was to continue to represent Irish Catholics as a body and serve as a means of uniting the Irish-Catholic community. In 1884 the minutes of the Convention confirm that there was “a general understanding that the route should be an eastern and a western one alternately, although no definite rule has yet been made to that end”.<sup>62</sup> The western route included St. Ann’s Church and the Griffintown area, and after 1887 often crossed the Lachine Canal into St. Gabriel’s Parish, while the eastern route now took the procession to St. Mary’s Church. Because the recently created St. Anthony’s Parish seemed less enthusiastic about sending delegates to the Convention, in 1893 it was suggested that “it would be a graceful act on the part of the delegation present to direct the route ... towards St. Anthony’s parish”.<sup>63</sup> This procession route was over six kilometres in length (Figure 2). By 1895 the general feeling was that “the route of procession should be divided alternatively [*sic*] in the direction of the different parishes”,<sup>64</sup> although calls for a shorter and more central procession soon came to the fore.<sup>65</sup> As the number of English-speaking Catholic parishes increased in the early twentieth century, the procession continued to reinforce community solidarity by bringing together parish and national societies from all parts of the city.

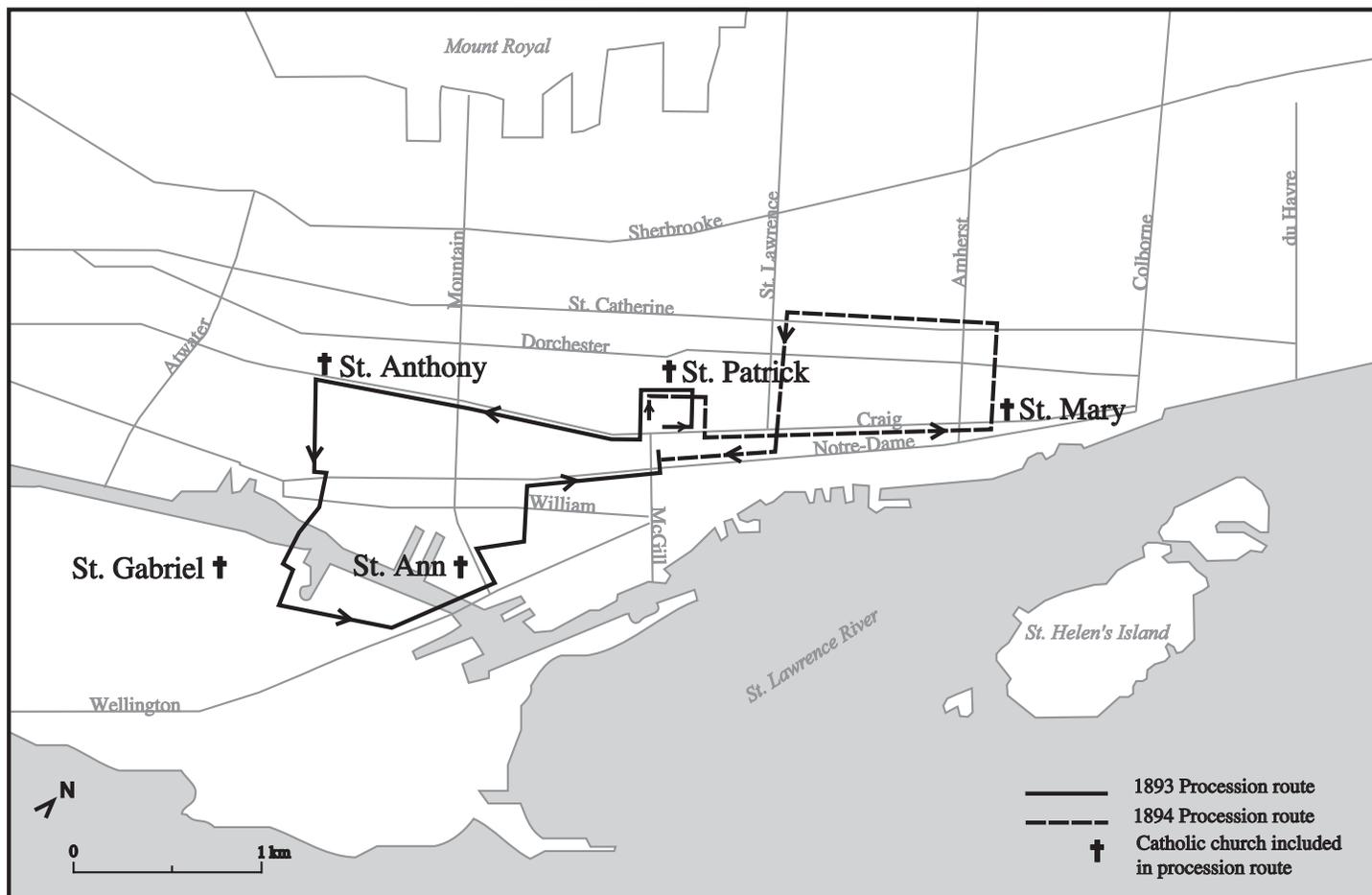
On its own, this account of the evolution of St. Patrick’s Day processions in Montreal might leave the impression that very little controversy existed and that only minor debates took place over which route to take or which societies should be allowed to march. The overall continuity and smooth-running of the procession from year to year can, in part, be attributed to the fact that the right of Irish Catholics to celebrate their national-religious festival publicly was never seriously contested by other groups in the city. It also had much to do with the success of the clergy in gaining influence over the lay-run national societies organizing the procession at an early stage and of maintaining and consolidating this influence over time. This apparent harmony did not mean, however, that debates were not taking place within Montreal’s Irish community between national societies and the Catholic Church, between Irish Protestants and Irish Catholics, and between those wishing to demonstrate their loyalty to Canada and those who felt a stronger allegiance to the Irish nationalist cause. An examination of the parades on their own, without attention to the context in which they took place, obscures the constant efforts made by the clergy to diminish the powers of national

62 ASPB, Convention of Irish Societies, Minute Book, 1879–1900, March 3, 1884.

63 ASPB, Convention of Irish Societies, Minute Book, 1879–1900, February 28, 1893.

64 ASPB, Convention of Irish Societies, Minute Book, 1879–1900, March 4, 1895.

65 ASPB, Convention of Irish Societies, Minute Book, 1879–1900, March 1, 1897; March 5, 1900.



**Figure 2** Montreal St. Patrick's Day Processions of the early 1890s, showing western and eastern routes. Archives of St. Patrick's Basilica, Convention of Irish Societies, Minute Book, 1879–1900, February 18, 1893 and March 8, 1894; *True Witness and Catholic Chronicle*, March 1, 1893 and March 14, 1894.

and nationalist societies and to ensure conformity with the wishes of the Church.

**Introducing a Religious Dimension:  
Lay Associational Life in Transition**

Various factors worked together during the 1840s and 1850s to redefine the relationship between Irish national societies and the Catholic Church. While the clergy continued its efforts to devotionalize the Irish-Catholic laity, increasing sectarian tensions simultaneously hindered the ability of Irish Protestants and Irish Catholics to work together in Irish national societies. Sectarian tensions were fuelled during this period by a range of factors. On the international stage, the “papal aggression” crisis in Britain and the “Know-Nothing” movement in the United States were influential.<sup>66</sup> The emergence among Canadian Anglo-Protestants of a “self-conscious, colonial nationalism that fused evangelical Protestantism with British loyalism” also coincided at this time with the rise of “a French-Canadian nationalism suffused with the ideals of ultramontanism”.<sup>67</sup> Local incidents likewise contributed to rising tensions. The *Rebellion Losses Act* of 1849 was anathema to many British loyalists and led to the burning down of the parliament buildings in Montreal by an enraged mob, an event for which Orangemen received much of the blame.<sup>68</sup> Likewise, the visit of apostate priest Alessandro Gavazzi to Montreal in 1853 provoked a riot that resulted in numerous deaths and the vandalism of Protestant churches in the largely Irish-Catholic working-class district of Griffintown. This event inaugurated what one account described as “an era of bitter feeling between extreme Roman Catholics on one side and extreme Protestants on the other”.<sup>69</sup> More minor incidents also occurred, including disruption of the 1851 St. Patrick’s Day celebrations in Montreal when a group of firemen unsuccessfully attempted to steer their engine through the ranks of the procession. As in Toronto, the fire brigade in Montreal appears to have attracted working-class Orange elements, and the event led the *True Witness and Catholic Chronicle* to conclude that “the old rabid animosity of the Orange Faction” was still alive and well “even in this city”.<sup>70</sup> This type of rit-

66 Brian Clarke, “English-Speaking Canada From 1854”, in Terrence Murphy and Roberto Perin, eds., *A Concise History of Christianity in Canada* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 297–298.

67 Clarke, *Piety and Nationalism*, p. 43.

68 Kealey, “Orangemen and the Corporation”, pp. 56–57; Hereward Senior, *Orangeism: The Canadian Phase* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1972), pp. 44–45.

69 McGill University Rare Books Department, Lande Collection 2003 Folio, *Montreal – Old and New: Illustrated With Over One Thousand Engravings of the City’s Chief Institutions, Churches, Statues, Homes and Citizens, Both of the Past and of To-day* (Montreal: International Press Syndicate, 1915), p. 33. For more on the Gavazzi Riot, see Robert Sylvain, “Le 9 juin 1853 à Montréal – encore l’affaire Gavazzi”, *Revue d’histoire de l’Amérique française*, vol. 14, no. 2 (1960), pp. 173–216; also Senior, *Orangeism*, pp. 47–48.

70 *True Witness and Catholic Chronicle*, March 21, 1851. For more on the association between fire brigades and Orangeism, see Kealey, “Orangemen and the Corporation”, p. 69; and Dorothy Cross, “The Irish in Montreal, 1867–1896” (MA dissertation, McGill University, 1969), pp. 72–74.

ualized street disturbance was an integral part of working-class urban life in Canada during this period and provided a very visible manifestation of divisions that also played themselves out in municipal politics, particularly in Toronto with its Orange-Tory dominated city corporation.<sup>71</sup>

Heightened tension between Protestants and Catholics during the 1840s and 1850s assisted the Roman Catholic clergy in their efforts to assert greater authority over the national societies that organized and participated in the St. Patrick's Day processions. It also encouraged some Irish Catholics to shift their support towards lay-run societies that promoted Irish nationalism at the same time as they defended local Irish Catholic interests against Orange aggression. Secular and clerical aims were compatible only up to a point, as is clear from a comparison of the roles played by national societies in transforming St. Patrick's Day processions in Montreal and Toronto during the late 1850s.

Throughout the 1830s and 1840s, members of the St. Patrick's Society formed a major component of St. Patrick's Day processions in Montreal. The St. Patrick's Society, as established in 1834, was a national society open to all Irishmen, irrespective of religion, although members generally represented the wealthier elements within the Irish community.<sup>72</sup> Many of those marching in the early years would have been Irish Protestants. During this period, the St. Patrick's Society was mainly under Protestant leadership, with Protestants retaining the presidency until at least the late 1840s.<sup>73</sup> As early as 1843–1844, however, the chaplains were listed as the Reverend Messrs. Phelan and O'Connell, both of whom were Roman Catholic priests.<sup>74</sup> Protestants still participated in processions in the early 1850s, since the papers reported that the Roman Catholic clergy, “[k]nowing that there are always many Protestants present on St. Patrick's Day”, took advantage of the religious celebration in St. Patrick's Roman Catholic Church to give “a short explanation of the Catholic doctrine of the Invocation of Saints” and administer “a strong reproof to those who affect to ridicule that salutary practice”.<sup>75</sup> This can have done little to encourage Protestant participation. In 1858 one commentator noted, “[U]p to a late period the St. Patrick's Society was open to Protestants, yet Protestants never joined it; a few only who sought for popularity did.”<sup>76</sup>

71 Kealey, *Toronto Workers*, pp. 115–117, and “Orangemen and the Corporation”, pp. 41–86; Gordon M. Winder, “Trouble in the North End: The Geography of Social Violence in Saint John, 1840–1860”, *Acadiensis*, vol. 29, no. 2 (2000), pp. 27–57.

72 James, “Dynamics of Ethnic Associational Culture”, p. 50.

73 Edgar A. Collard, *The Irish Way: The History of the Irish Protestant Benevolent Society* (Montreal: Irish Protestant Benevolent Society, 1992), p. 11. The prominent Irish-Catholic merchant Thomas Ryan was president of the society from 1852 to 1854.

74 *Ibid.*

75 *True Witness and Catholic Chronicle*, March 21, 1851.

76 ACAM, 901.137 Fonds Notre-Dame et St. Sulpice, 858–16, C. Walsh to M<sup>sr</sup> Bourget, September 1, 1858.

A new national society, the Young Men's St. Patrick's Association (YMSPA), joined the processions in the early 1850s. The crest of the association indicates that it was founded in 1848, the same year as liberal and nationalist revolutions took place across Europe and Young Irelanders carried out their unsuccessful insurrection in Ireland.<sup>77</sup> The Young Ireland movement had included both Protestants and Catholics and espoused a concept of Irish nationality that embraced all who lived in Ireland, regardless of creed or origin.<sup>78</sup> The toast to the Exiles of 1848 at the YMSPA's dinner in 1851 reflected a similar vision, emphasizing that there were prospects of "a speedy and complete union of Irishmen of every creed, of every county" and stating, "There will soon be neither North nor South, but Ireland."<sup>79</sup> By the mid-1850s, the YMSPA had embraced a more explicitly Catholic agenda. In a widely publicized address to the YMSPA in 1854, the society's president, lawyer Bernard Devlin, referred to "the Catholic Church, to which we all belong" and argued that greater unity was necessary among Irish Catholics in Canada if they were to gain influence in keeping with their numbers.<sup>80</sup> The same year, the secretary of the YMSPA wrote to Bishop Ignace Bourget, expressing the desire of members of the association "to conduct themselves in accordance with the spirit of Catholic teaching".<sup>81</sup> The YMSPA also chose in 1853 to place the toast to Pope Pius IX before the toast to the Queen, unlike the St. Patrick's Society, which toasted the Queen ahead of the Pope. The young men stated that no mark of disrespect was intended, but also pointed out that it was not without a "deep significance" that the celebration of the Pope should be placed, at a banquet of "Irishmen", immedi-

77 *True Witness and Catholic Chronicle*, June 1, 1855.

78 Moody and Martin, *The Course of Irish History*, p. 261.

79 *True Witness and Catholic Chronicle*, March 21, 1851. At the same dinner, the YMSPA also toasted the Irish Tenant League, an association set up in 1850 by Charles Gavin Duffy (one of the few leaders of Young Ireland remaining in Ireland after the failure of the 1848 insurrection). The purpose of the League was to reanimate national spirit by uniting Catholic and Protestant tenant farmers in a common cause, and its aims were to be achieved through the creation of an independent Irish party in the British parliament (McCaffrey, *The Irish Question*, pp. 62–64; Moody and Martin, *The Course of Irish History*, pp. 276–278). Some success was achieved in the elections of 1852, and both Duffy and the Independent Irish opposition were toasted by the YMSPA at their 1854 dinner (*True Witness and Catholic Chronicle*, March 24, 1854). The Catholic Archbishop of Dublin did not share this favourable impression of Duffy and his followers, considering "Young Ireland a local version of Young Italy, and the independent Irish party a vehicle for secular and revolutionary ideas" (McCaffrey, *The Irish Question*, p. 64), and his opposition contributed to the swift demise of Duffy's movement.

80 ACAM, 786.029 Fonds St. Patrick's Society of Montreal, 854–1, *Address of the Young Men's St. Patrick's Association of Montreal Delivered by B. Devlin, Esq. (President) At Their Annual Meeting, held on 5 September, 1854* (Montreal: John Lovell, 1854). A biography of Bernard Devlin appears in the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 10 (1871–1880) (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972), pp. 229–230.

81 ACAM, 786.029 Fonds St. Patrick's Society of Montreal, F. Dalton, Secretary of the YMSPA, to M<sup>gr</sup> Bourget, October 23, 1854.

ately after the toast of the Day.<sup>82</sup> There was also likely a domestic political dimension to the YMSPA, since Montreal's Irish community was strongly divided along political lines during this period. Throughout the 1840s, the St. Patrick's Society was rife with political factionalism, as Reformers led by Francis Hincks attempted to exert influence in the traditionally Tory society.<sup>83</sup> The Young Men's St. Patrick's Association of Toronto was a Catholic pro-Reform organization,<sup>84</sup> and the Montreal Association may have shared its political orientation.

In 1856 both the St. Patrick's Society and the Young Men's St. Patrick's Association dissolved and together formed a new, exclusively Catholic, St. Patrick's Society. Although the loss of Protestant members had been ongoing for some time, this was nevertheless a defining moment and was to have a significant influence on future processions. Sources indicate that the clergy played a decisive role in the creation of the new society and that the immediate aim of the dissolution of the old societies was not so much to exclude Protestants as to put an end to the bad feeling and competition between the St. Patrick's Society and the Young Men's St. Patrick's Association. Although the priests of St. Patrick's Church had "gladdened the procession by their presence" in 1853, an occasion on which civilities were exchanged between the two societies during the evening festivities, in 1855 "the people were chilled and disheartened by the absence of their clergy, who refused to join the procession, because of the bad feeling existing between the two societies".<sup>85</sup> In February 1856, at the request of Father Patrick Dowd, the two societies agreed to vote themselves into extinction and to enter a new "Grand National Society" that would be "creditable to the Irish citizens of Montreal"<sup>86</sup> and "which would embrace elements now divided".<sup>87</sup>

Not all members of the YMSPA were happy with the proposed changes, but the majority of those opposed to the dissolution gave their consent following a meeting with Father Dowd.<sup>88</sup> Dowd approved of the alacrity with which the two societies assented to his request and wrote that he regarded

82 *True Witness and Catholic Chronicle*, March 25, 1853. Kevin James describes the consternation that these toasts caused within the St. Andrew's Society of Montreal, which usually sent representatives to the St. Patrick's Society dinner. The president emphasized that at the St. Patrick's Society's dinner "the health of the Pope was proposed after 'the Queen' — and, that it was some young men of some other society on St. Patrick's Day", almost certainly referring to the YMSPA, "who drank to the health of the Pope before that of the Queen". Quoted in Kevin James, "The Saint Patrick's Society of Montreal: Ethno-Religious Realignment in a Nineteenth-Century National Society" (MA dissertation, McGill University, 1997), p. 66.

83 James, "The Saint Patrick's Society of Montreal", p. 39.

84 Clarke, *Piety and Nationalism*, p. 159.

85 *True Witness and Catholic Chronicle*, March 25, 1853; April 4, 1856.

86 *True Witness and Catholic Chronicle*, February 22, 1856.

87 ASPB, Box 1, Resolutions adopted at the special general meeting of the St. Patrick's Society held at St. Patrick's Hall, February 12, 1856.

88 James, "Dynamics of Ethnic Associational Culture", p. 60; *Montreal Transcript*, February 16, 1856.

their behaviour “not only as an example worthy of imitation by any Catholic society but also as a guarantee of that peace and cordial unanimity sought to be established amongst our people in order that united in one great national society all may labor together heart and soul for the good of religion and for the honour of our dear old Erin”.<sup>89</sup> The *Montreal Witness*, a liberal newspaper committed to the cause of evangelical Protestantism, suggested that the new society was simply an attempt by the priests to control the young men who had shown signs of beginning to think and act for themselves, the idea being to swamp them with older and better drilled laymen.<sup>90</sup> It went on to contrast the Irish young men with their French-Canadian counterparts who had formed the *Institut canadien*, concluding that the Irish “appear to have less love of liberty or less resolution than the French”.<sup>91</sup> While many Irish Catholics must have been incensed by such suggestions, the resurrected and Catholic St. Patrick’s Society had nevertheless acquired approximately 400 members by April 1856.<sup>92</sup>

While remaining a lay-run association, the new St. Patrick’s Society was fundamentally different from its predecessor. Although Father Dowd informed members of the new society that “the interests of religion and the honour of Old Ireland are in your hands”, the constitution was to be submitted first to the clergy of St. Patrick’s for their examination and approbation, then to the Bishop of Montreal to obtain his sanction, before finally being promulgated at a public meeting of the congregation of St. Patrick’s Church.<sup>93</sup> In July 1856 Bishop Bourget was presented with a copy of the St. Patrick’s Society’s constitution,<sup>94</sup> which he duly approved, noting that he felt “un véritable bonheur en voyant que votre société de Saint Patrice a un but aussi religieux que national : ce qui toutefois ne me surprend nullement; car je ne puis ignorer que ce qui fait le caractère propre de votre nation c’est la foi catholique”.<sup>95</sup> The religious orientation of the new society was emphasized by the fact that St. Patrick’s Day celebrations in 1856 were postponed until early April, since March 17 fell during Holy Week.<sup>96</sup>

The small numbers of Irish Protestants who had previously belonged to the St. Patrick’s Society presumably ceased to participate in the procession as of 1856. An Irish Protestant Benevolent Society was formed to assist

89 ASPB, Box 1, Fr. Dowd to W. P. Bartley Esq., President of the late St. Patrick’s Society, February 18, 1856.

90 *Montreal Witness*, February 27, 1856. Also see James, “The Saint Patrick’s Society of Montreal”, p. 74.

91 *Ibid.*

92 *True Witness and Catholic Chronicle*, April 4, 1856.

93 ASPB, Box 1, Fr. Dowd to the chairman of the preparatory meeting organized to appoint a committee to frame a constitution for the new St. Patrick’s Society, February 21, 1856.

94 ACAM, 786.029 Fonds St. Patrick’s Society of Montreal, H. Howard, President of the St. Patrick’s Society, to M<sup>gr</sup> Bourget, July 29, 1856.

95 ACAM, 786.029 Fonds St. Patrick’s Society of Montreal, M<sup>gr</sup> Bourget’s response to H. Howard’s letter, August 15, 1856.

96 *True Witness and Catholic Chronicle*, March 28, 1856; April 4, 1856.

immigrants and care for needy Irish Protestants, but did not participate in the annual procession. Support for the division of the community along religious lines was by no means universal among either Protestants or Catholics. The *True Witness and Catholic Chronicle* reported that two or three disappointed Orangemen (as well as some “bad Catholics”) had made use of another local newspaper as a channel for pouring forth their complaints against the new St. Patrick’s Society.<sup>97</sup> Two years later, in 1858, a group of individuals holding “respectable positions in society” made an attempt to form an Irish National and Literary Association with goals very similar to those of the St. Patrick’s Society, but which would admit both Protestants and Catholics.<sup>98</sup> In giving his opinion of the association, Joseph La Rocque, coadjutor of the Diocese of Montreal, pointed out to Bishop Bourget that very little of interest could be discussed by an Irish national association that was determined to avoid all sectarian discussions, arguing that Catholicism was central to the history and identity of the Irish nation:

[O]n a pourtant pour but avoué la littérature d’Irlande : quelle est donc la littérature ou l’histoire irlandaise qui puisse intéresser sans le catholicisme? L’Association ne devra donc jamais dire mot de l’histoire d’Irlande durant les trois derniers siècles, si elle veut être fidèle au principe d’éviter toute *sectarian discussion*. Maigre sera donc l’intérêt historique pour tout cœur catholique : plus maigre encore sera l’intérêt religieux : il n’existe même pas [...] Que reste-t-il donc à l’Association à célébrer dans sa fête nationale? La chair et le sang irlandais : – Mais la chair et le sang ne font pas une nation [...] il faut plus à une race que le souvenir qu’une même fluide rouge coule dans ses veines.<sup>99</sup>

Bourget also feared that the Irish National and Literary Association, as a potential rival to the St. Patrick’s Society, would again divide Irish Catholics into two factions.<sup>100</sup> Despite the society’s willingness to make adjustments to the wording of its constitution in an effort to gain clerical acceptance, its insistence on the right to admit Protestants resulted in Bourget’s continued disapproval, notwithstanding warnings that his actions might lead to the creation of an Irish Canadian Institute “where hatred of the priests will be a cardinal dogma”.<sup>101</sup> The ability of the clergy to hinder the creation of associations that

97 *True Witness and Catholic Chronicle*, March 28, 1856; James, “The Saint Patrick’s Society of Montreal”, p. 77.

98 ACAM, 901.137 Fonds Notre-Dame et St. Sulpice, 858–5, Joseph La Rocque, M<sup>ef</sup> de Cydonia, Opinion on the Irish National and Literary Association, April 16, 1858; 858–16, C. Walsh to M<sup>ef</sup> Bourget, September 1, 1858; 858–17, Constitution and By-Laws of the Irish National and Literary Association, n.d.

99 ACAM, 901.137 Fonds Notre-Dame et St. Sulpice, 858–5, Joseph La Rocque, M<sup>ef</sup> de Cydonia, Opinion on the Irish National and Literary Association, April 16, 1858.

100 ASPB, Box 1, Bishop Bourget to J. Curran, April 17, 1858; ACAM 901.137 Fonds Notre-Dame et St. Sulpice, 858–6, J. Curran to M<sup>ef</sup> Bourget, April 21, 1858.

101 ACAM, 901.137 Fonds Notre-Dame et St. Sulpice, 858–16, C. Walsh to M<sup>ef</sup> Bourget, September 1, 1858.

embraced both Protestants and Catholics ensured the long-term success of the transformation of the St. Patrick's Day procession into an exclusively Catholic national-religious demonstration and helped to establish greater clerical influence over the way in which the procession was organized.

Despite the higher percentage of Protestants in Toronto's Irish population, clerical influence, as well as growing divisions between Protestants and Catholics, contributed to a similar identification of St. Patrick's Day processions with Roman Catholicism in Toronto. The St. Patrick's Society in that city (which, like its Montreal counterpart, had been founded in the early 1830s, admitted both Protestants and Catholics, and was chiefly a political organization<sup>102</sup>) survived into the 1850s, but — as was the case in Montreal — “the inclusive definition of Irish ethnicity which sustained it was undermined by the Famine immigration of the late 1840s”.<sup>103</sup> According to Michael Cottrell, this prompted Protestant Irishmen to distance themselves from their Catholic counterparts and move towards the Protestant, loyalist values of the Orange Order.<sup>104</sup> At the same time, the Catholic clergy sought to establish greater clerical influence over the people, so that by the early 1850s St. Patrick's Day celebrations increasingly revolved around the Catholic Church.<sup>105</sup> As in Montreal, church-sponsored societies and members of the Catholic clergy came to play a more prominent role, and processions to the Cathedral were a central part of the celebrations.<sup>106</sup> The continued desire for independent lay initiative, however, resulted in the establishment in 1855 of the Young Men's St. Patrick's Association, a society that was middle class and pro-Reform in character, as well as being “the first exclusively Catholic organization free from the church's control”.<sup>107</sup>

Similarities between the Young Men's St. Patrick's Associations in Toronto and Montreal indicate that they shared a common heritage in the Young Ireland tradition. In 1856, the same year that Father Dowd successfully brought his influence to bear on the St. Patrick's Societies in Montreal, the leaders of Toronto's Young Men's St. Patrick's Association “seized control of the St. Patrick's Day festivities from the clergy and transformed them into a nationalist demonstration”.<sup>108</sup> Unlike the Irish in Montreal, who deferred their celebrations because of Holy Week, organizers in Toronto held the festivities on March 17. Although the YMSPA attended the Mass for Holy Monday as a collective body, “the Mass was an ordinary one, there was no sermon, nor was there any other ceremonial recognition of the national *fête*”.<sup>109</sup> Newspapers

102 Clarke, *Piety and Nationalism*, p. 161.

103 Cottrell, “St. Patrick's Day Parades”, p. 60.

104 *Ibid.*, pp. 60–61.

105 *Ibid.*, p. 62.

106 Clarke, *Piety and Nationalism*, pp. 155–156; Cottrell, “St. Patrick's Day Parades”, p. 62. See, for example, the celebrations described in the *Toronto Mirror*, March 23, 1855.

107 Clarke, *Piety and Nationalism*, pp. 161–162; Cottrell, “St. Patrick's Day Parades”, p. 63.

108 Clarke, *Piety and Nationalism*, p. 162.

109 *Toronto Mirror*, March 21, 1856.

that had initially stated that the YMSPA had obtained a dispensation from Bishop Armand de Charbonnel allowing its members to march had later to acknowledge that there had been some misunderstanding: while the Bishop had not actively opposed the celebrations, he had certainly not given them his approval and had refused to allow any special religious ceremonies to take place.<sup>110</sup> The transformation of the parade in Toronto paralleled similar shifts in cities such as New York during the 1850s, where more militantly nationalist societies turned the procession into “a full-fledged nationalist display”.<sup>111</sup> The demonstrations organized by the YMSPA of Toronto were not long-lived, however, as the sectarian violence that marred the 1858 St. Patrick’s Day parade caused leaders of the Irish-Catholic community to forego processions until further notice.<sup>112</sup>

The transformation of the St. Patrick’s Society of Montreal into an exclusively Catholic association in 1856 thus discouraged cooperation between Irish Protestants and Irish Catholics, reinforced the Church’s attempt to cultivate religious particularism, and set a precedent for the future subservience of Irish national societies to the Catholic Church in Montreal. The success of the clergy in bringing Irish national societies in Montreal more firmly under the supervision of the Catholic Church was reflected in the composition and routing of St. Patrick’s Day processions. It is possible that the influence and financial resources wielded by the Catholic Church in Quebec, and the acceptance of religious processions as an integral part of Roman Catholic life in Montreal, made Irish Catholics in that city more disposed than their Toronto counterparts to accept the exertion of clerical authority over their national associations and more willing to frame their annual processions in national-religious, rather than overtly nationalist, terms. While Irish communities elsewhere also experienced a growing rift between their Protestant and Catholic components at this time, the shift towards a more religiously oriented St. Patrick’s Day procession was by no means the only possible adaptation. Events in Toronto led to an outcome that the Montreal clergy worked hard to avoid, in which independent secular societies challenged the authority of the clergy and effectively hijacked the symbolic value of the day for nationalist purposes.

### **The Fenian Threat: Events of 1866**

Overshadowed by the threat of an invasion of Canada by the Fenian Brotherhood from the United States, the St. Patrick’s Day processions that took place in 1866 provide further evidence of the very different ways in which the events of the day expressed themselves in the streets of Montreal and Toronto. Whereas the procession in Montreal was transformed into a well-orchestrated display of Irish loyalty to their adopted home, the Toronto procession once again took on overtly nationalist overtones and lost the endorsement of the Catholic clergy as well as the majority of the Irish-Catholic populace.

110 *Toronto Mirror*, March 14, 1856; March 28, 1856.

111 Moss, “St. Patrick’s Day Celebrations”, p. 136.

112 Cottrell, “St. Patrick’s Day Parades”, p. 64; Clarke, *Piety and Nationalism*, pp. 159–160, 164.

The St. Patrick's Day procession held in Montreal in 1866 was carefully planned by community leaders to demonstrate the loyalty of the Irish-Catholic population in the face of the presumed Fenian threat to Canada. In the extent to which this goal took over as the guiding principle of the celebrations, the procession of 1866 was atypical. After taking the conventional route to St. Patrick's Church from Place d'Armes and participating in the usual religious services, Montreal's various Irish-Catholic societies and congregations, as well as "Irishmen of the Volunteer Force", headed east to St. Denis and completed a circuit of the eastern portion of the city. In the course of this circuit, the procession stopped at the St. Lawrence Hall to pay its respects to the Governor General, Lord Monck (who was himself Irish and Protestant), who thanked them for their show of loyalty on behalf of the Queen and gave a short speech that was reported as having been received with extensive cheering.<sup>113</sup> "I accept this demonstration", he said, "as an evidence on your part of loyalty to your sovereign — [enthusiastic cheers] — of attachment to the institutions of our land, and as a protest on your part against the principles of wicked men who would disgrace the name of Irishmen [cheers] and desecrate the birthday of her patron saint by a wanton attack on a peaceful, prosperous and happy country [loud cheers]."<sup>114</sup> More speeches were given once the procession reached Victoria Square, including one by Thomas D'Arcy McGee, MP. McGee began by congratulating the participants for the way in which they had chosen to celebrate St. Patrick's Day that year, before describing the significance of the procession route:

We went first, as was most proper and laudable, to return our thanks to Him to whom we owe that we are here today, and where we received, from the lips of His Minister, an instruction on our duties as Christians and citizens which I trust we will all long remember [cheers]. You next, on your tour of the city, went to pay your loyal homage to the representative of our sovereign, the Governor General; and you are now here to receive from the Mayor of the city the gratifying acknowledgment, that Montreal looks upon you, not as step-children or as foreigners, but as children of her own household, whom she does not distinguish unfavourably from any of her other children [loud cheers].<sup>115</sup>

113 *Montreal Daily Witness*, March 17, 1866.

114 *New York Times*, March 18, 1866. The speech was also reported in the *Montreal Daily Witness*, March 17, 1866.

115 Thomas D'Arcy McGee, *The Irish Position in British and in Republican North America: A Letter to the Editors of the Irish Press — Irrespective of Party* (Montreal: M. Longmoore and Co., 1866), Appendix C: "St. Patrick's Day, 1866, Montreal. From the *Montreal Transcript*, Monday, March 19". McGee's speech was also reported in the *Montreal Daily Witness*, March 18, 1866. According to David Wilson, it was not unknown for McGee to insert comments such as "applause" and "laughter" into his written speeches, so we should perhaps be suspicious of the "cheers" and "loud cheers" in this text. See David A. Wilson, "Thomas D'Arcy McGee's Wexford Speech of 1865: Reflections on Revolutionary Republicanism and the Irish in North America", *Canadian Journal of Irish Studies*, vol. 26, no. 2 – vol. 27, no. 1 (2000–2001), p. 13.

McGee then contradicted those who said that the Irish would not be found true to the city if the day of trial came, pointing to the \$3.5 million worth of property held by the Irish citizens of Montreal and to all the rights, privileges, and advantages that they possessed.<sup>116</sup> He also recognized the influence of the Catholic Church in maintaining the loyalty and good behaviour of Irish Catholics in Montreal. “[J]ust as jealously and zealously as Father Phelan ... guarded the character and conduct of his flock, in the last great crisis of this country,” he said, referring to the Rebellion of 1837–1838, “Father Dowd and his *confrères* watch over their much larger flock at this moment.”<sup>117</sup> These speeches were intended both to reassure fellow citizens that the Irish Catholics did not pose a threat and to reinforce Irish loyalty (to Montreal, at the very least) by reminding Irish Catholics of their acceptance as Montrealers, their duties to the Church, and the material prosperity that would be jeopardized should they offer their support to the Fenians.

The situation in Montreal presented a stark contrast with that in Toronto, where the 1866 St. Patrick’s Day procession consisted of about 600 members of the Hibernian Benevolent Society, a nationalist society that had been infiltrated by the Fenian Brotherhood.<sup>118</sup> The procession, which had been banned by Bishop John Joseph Lynch, was much smaller than those held in 1863 and 1864, the Hibernians having lost the support of the bulk of Irish-Catholic citizens.<sup>119</sup> Events of the preceding years provide clues to understanding why such different processions emerged in Montreal and Toronto. After the 1858 St. Patrick’s Day procession in Toronto was marred by violent confrontations, lay and clerical leaders had decided to adopt a lower public profile and forego parades.<sup>120</sup> The Young Men’s St. Patrick’s Association had also founded at this time.<sup>121</sup> While its nationalist ambitions would later become more evident, the Hibernian Benevolent Society was a self-consciously Catholic organization whose initial *raison d’être* was to patrol the streets in Catholic neighbourhoods.<sup>122</sup> In 1862 the Hibernians decided to revive the St. Patrick’s Day procession, and — despite opposition from middle- and upper-class Irish Catholics and the protests of McGee — Bishop Lynch approved the plan, even allowing the Hibernians to attend High Mass as a group with their

116 McGee, *The Irish Position*, Appendix C. The figure of \$3.5 million worth of property was calculated from the municipal assessment rolls. McGee mentions that a gentleman familiar with the tax roll, at his request, calculated the value of property belonging to known Irish proprietors, both Catholic and Protestant (as far as could be identified). Irish-Catholic property in the city was valued at \$1,993,330, while that of Irish Protestants was valued at \$1,587,647 (*Montreal Daily Witness*, March 18, 1866). Given the preponderance of Irish Catholics in Montreal, clearly Irish Protestants were enjoying greater material prosperity (on average) than their Irish-Catholic counterparts.

117 McGee, *The Irish Position*, Appendix C.

118 *Toronto Daily Globe*, March 19, 1866; Clarke, *Piety and Nationalism*, p. 170.

119 Cottrell, “St. Patrick’s Day Parades”, pp. 67, 68.

120 *Ibid.*, p. 64.

121 Clarke, *Piety and Nationalism*, p. 162.

122 *Ibid.*, pp. 162–163.

flags and regalia for the first time.<sup>123</sup> Lynch appears to have been unaware that contact had been established between the Hibernians and the Fenian Brotherhood in 1859, when the Hibernian Society's president, Michael Murphy, was recruited by a Fenian agent.<sup>124</sup> The processions of 1863 and 1864 attracted large numbers of participants, many from the lower classes, and more aggressive routes were chosen which took the marchers and their Fenian banners past many of Toronto's Orange Lodges.<sup>125</sup> By 1863 the Hibernian Benevolent Society had publicly declared its support for the use of physical force in Ireland, but the organization nevertheless retained Bishop Lynch's approval until 1865, when Michael Murphy's defiance of his colleague, Bishop John Farrell of Hamilton, compelled Lynch to declare that the Hibernian Benevolent Society had fallen away from Catholic principles and that it was the religious duty of Catholics to leave the organization.<sup>126</sup> Having agreed not to march the previous year, by 1866 the Hibernians were no longer amenable to clerical influence and decided to ignore Bishop Lynch's injunction not to march on St. Patrick's Day.<sup>127</sup> By adopting an increasingly radical position, in defiance of their clergy, the predominantly working-class Hibernians could no longer claim the sympathies of the vast majority of Toronto's more moderate Irish Catholics.<sup>128</sup>

Attempts were also made to establish an Hibernian Society in Montreal, but they were less successful due to prompt and effective intervention by the Roman Catholic clergy. The clergy's task was also made easier in Montreal by the numerical superiority of Catholics, which meant that the pretext of needing protection against the Orange Order carried little weight. Thomas D'Arcy McGee claimed that, despite these circumstances, a few young men — along with two or three of their elders — determined in 1863 to form an Hibernian Society along the lines of the Toronto society.<sup>129</sup> In September 1863 Bishop Bourget, who was concerned with the growing Fenian sentiment in Montreal, issued a pastoral address in which he condemned all secret societies, and this was commented on with great force and energy by Father Dowd from the pulpit of St. Patrick's Church.<sup>130</sup> Father Dowd warned his congregation that the Hibernian Society contravened Bourget's pastoral and refused to remove his censure when appealed to by a deputation of Hibernians.<sup>131</sup> The Montreal Hibernian Society existed for only a year or

123 *Ibid.*, pp. 164–165; Cottrell, “St. Patrick's Day Parades”, p. 65.

124 Clarke, *Piety and Nationalism*, p. 169; Cottrell, “St. Patrick's Day Parades”, p. 66.

125 Cottrell, “St. Patrick's Day Parades”, p. 67.

126 Clarke, *Piety and Nationalism*, pp. 170, 191–192.

127 McGowan, “ ‘We Endure What We Cannot Cure’ ”, p. 94.

128 Cottrell, “St. Patrick's Day Parades”, p. 68. For a discussion of the social composition of Toronto's Hibernian Benevolent Association, see Clarke, *Piety and Nationalism*, pp. 180–183.

129 Thomas D'Arcy McGee, “An Account of the Attempts to Establish Fenianism in Montreal”, *Montreal Gazette*, August 17, 1867.

130 *Ibid.*

131 *Ibid.*

two, and McGee claimed that “it was then abandoned, for it was found a more effective method of doing the same thing under another name, to try to get hold of the St. Patrick’s Society”.<sup>132</sup>

One must be cautious when interpreting McGee’s testimony since he was using it to implicate his Liberal political opponent, Bernard Devlin (who had beaten McGee in the 1865 contest for presidency of the St. Patrick’s Society<sup>133</sup>), in the Fenian conspiracy.<sup>134</sup> David Wilson’s recent account of the progress of the Fenian movement in Montreal during this period nevertheless suggests that much of McGee’s information was accurate.<sup>135</sup> There were estimated to have been about 300 to 400 dedicated members of the Fenian Brotherhood in Montreal, and — despite the best efforts of Dowd and McGee — by the winter of 1865–1866, Wilson argues, they had made “significant inroads into the St. Patrick’s Society, gathered an increasing body of support, and mounted a strong challenge to their conservative and clerical enemies”.<sup>136</sup> As the Fenian element within the St. Patrick’s Society continued to expand in 1867, Wilson notes, its social composition came increasingly to be dominated by artisans, tradesmen, and shopkeepers, representing a major change for a society that had traditionally drawn its membership from the Irish middle classes.<sup>137</sup> Thus, while the infiltration of the St. Patrick’s Society did not prevent its members from participating as a body in the display of Irish-Catholic loyalty on St. Patrick’s Day in 1866, it seems reasonable to question the extent to which these events actually reflected the desire of “respectable” and “moderate” Irish Catholics to express their disapproval of physical-force nationalism. Given the Fenians’ willingness to feign loyalty under certain circumstances as a means of furthering their militant republican aims, the possibility remains open that the loyal procession of 1866 might also have represented yet another element in the Fenians’ strategy of subterfuge.<sup>138</sup>

As a potential threat to clerical hegemony, lay-run associations were carefully monitored in Montreal and those that did not meet with clerical approval were swiftly condemned. Nationalist societies such as the Montreal Hibernian Society, which covertly supported the Fenian Brotherhood, were treated with even greater caution by the clergy because they posed the additional threat of breaking the fragile bond that made Irish national sentiment compat-

132 *Ibid.*

133 Dorothy Cross, “The Irish in Montreal, 1867–1896” (MA dissertation, McGill University, 1969), p. 159.

134 *Montreal Gazette*, August 17, 20, and 22, 1867; Alan Hustak, *Saint Patrick’s of Montreal: The Biography of a Basilica* (Montreal: Véhicule Press, 1998), pp. 53–54.

135 David A. Wilson, “The Fenians in Montreal, 1862–68: Invasion, Intrigue, and Assassination”, *Éire – Ireland*, vol. 38, no. 3–4 (Fall/Winter 2003), p. 123.

136 *Ibid.*, p. 119.

137 *Ibid.*, p. 122.

138 *Ibid.*, pp. 114–115, 120, 132–133.

ible with Canadian loyalty. In Toronto, Bishop Lynch was much slower to condemn the Hibernian Benevolent Society, which had a more legitimate role in the city in terms of protecting Irish Catholics from Orangemen. "Orangeism has been made the pretext of Fenianism," wrote McGee of Toronto, "and Fenianism is doing its best to justify and magnify Orangeism."<sup>139</sup> These circumstances contributed to the contrasting St. Patrick's Day processions, loyal Canadian and Irish nationalist respectively, that took place in Montreal and Toronto in 1866. It is important to emphasize that this should not be interpreted as a measure of the support that existed for physical-force republican nationalism in the two cities, since tensions clearly existed in both communities between loyalty to one's country of adoption and commitment to the cause of Ireland. Instead, the contrast illustrates the extent to which St. Patrick's Day processions, occurring under very similar circumstances, could be moulded by local Irish politics, influential community members, and the Roman Catholic clergy to express dramatically different messages.

### The Response to Orangeism

Heightened tensions between Catholics and Protestants emerged once again during the 1870s. At the local level, processions provided one means of expressing these differences. The causes of these tensions were varied and complex. The reassertion of papal authority and traditional Catholic values during the Vatican Council of 1870 alarmed Protestants and liberals alike.<sup>140</sup> Meanwhile, the growth of a large immigrant Catholic population in the United States led to fears of a Catholic bloc vote in that country, while in Canada anxious questions were being raised over the religious and cultural balance in the Canadian West.<sup>141</sup> The activities of Louis Riel and his colleagues led to heightened tensions between the Métis and Orangemen in western Canada and had repercussions in eastern Canada, where in Quebec Riel was hailed as a hero and defender of the Roman Catholic faith while being denounced as a "murderer" in Ontario.<sup>142</sup> Catholics were also angered by the ruling that denominational schools in New Brunswick did not fall under the protection of the *British North America Act*, a decision that in 1875 led to a series of riots over the control of a local school.<sup>143</sup> Closer to home, many Protestants in Quebec were uncomfortable with their minority position in the new post-Confederation province and were not reassured by constitutional guarantees that Protestant education and political representation would be safeguarded. Their sympathy for the cause of Joseph Guibord, a member of the *Institut canadien* who had been refused burial in Montreal's

139 McGee, *The Irish Position in British and in Republican North America*.

140 Senior, *Orangeism*, p. 71.

141 *Ibid.*

142 *Ibid.*, pp. 73–75; George F. G. Stanley, "Louis Riel", in *The Canadian Encyclopedia* (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1985), pp. 1584–1585.

143 Clarke, "English-Speaking Canada From 1854", pp. 294–295.

Catholic cemetery by Church authorities in 1869, contributed to misunderstanding between Protestants and Catholics, as did events at Oka in the mid-to-late 1870s involving the razing of both a Methodist chapel and later a Catholic church.<sup>144</sup> It seems safe to assume that the economic depression of the 1870s only helped to stoke these tensions.

Under these circumstances, the troubles that arose in connection with processions of the late 1870s were hardly unexpected.<sup>145</sup> St. Patrick's Day processions during this period cannot be understood without taking into account the activities of the Orange Order and the Catholic response.<sup>146</sup> In Montreal, disturbances arose when Orangemen threatened to reassert their right to march on July 12 in 1876, 1877, and 1878 to celebrate the Battle of the Boyne. Events taking place in Ireland shed light on why Orangemen in Montreal may have chosen this particular time to resume marching. Until 1872 a *Party Processions Act* had been in force in Ireland that discouraged elite Orangemen from participating in July 12 parades, although it failed to deter the working classes.<sup>147</sup> With the repeal of the *Party Processions Act* in 1872, parading was legal once again, and this endowed Orange marches with a new aura of "respectability".<sup>148</sup> Although tensions continued to exist between "rough" and "respectable" elements, participation by elite Orangemen began to increase, leading to the Twelfth becoming a symbol of Protestant unity and support for Unionism.<sup>149</sup> Montreal's predominantly middle-class Irish-Protestant community may have been influenced by the new-found "respectability" of Orange processions in Ireland, although the obvious difficulty of conducting dignified parades in full Orange regalia in Montreal suggests that

144 Cross, "The Irish in Montreal", pp. 169, 171; Paul-André Linteau, *Histoire de Montréal depuis la Confédération* (Montréal: Boréal, 1992), pp. 68–69. For further discussion of Protestant-Catholic relations in Canada during this period, see Clarke, "English-Speaking Canada From 1854", pp. 300–302.

145 Orange troubles during the 1870s were not confined to Canada. New York, for instance, experienced one of the bloodiest police confrontations in its history when Orangemen paraded to celebrate the Battle of the Boyne in 1871 (See Moss, "St. Patrick's Day Celebrations", p. 141).

146 For further information on the Orange Order in Montreal and the province of Quebec more generally, see Cecil J. Houston and William J. Smyth, *The Sash Canada Wore: A Historical Geography of the Orange Order in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), pp. 49–56.

147 Dominic Bryan, *Orange Parades: The Politics of Ritual, Tradition and Control* (London: Pluto Press, 2000), pp. 38, 41–43.

148 *Ibid.*, p. 47. A *Party Processions Act* was in force, though not necessarily implemented, in Ireland from 1832 to 1844 and from 1850 to 1872 (Bryan, *Orange Parades*, p. 38). Cronin and Adair point out that St. Patrick's Day processions continued to be legal in Ireland even while the *Party Processions Act* was in effect because the ecumenical origins of St. Patrick's Day meant that it was considered by the authorities to be a "national anniversary" rather than a "party procession" (*The Wearing of the Green*, p. 54). A controversial *Party Processions Act* was also on the books in the United Canadas between 1843 and 1851, although it was unevenly implemented (Kealey, "Orangemen and the Corporation", pp. 52–54, 60–61).

149 Bryan, *Orange Parades*, pp. 47–51.

Orangemen were responding primarily to local sectarian tensions.<sup>150</sup> Violence greeted the march in 1876, although no one was seriously injured.<sup>151</sup> Fears of violence led to the cancellation of the Orange march planned for Montreal on July 12, 1877, following extensive negotiations on the part of representatives of the city's various elite Irish, English, Scottish, and French-Canadian societies.<sup>152</sup> Strong feelings had nevertheless been aroused, and a young Orangeman, Thomas Hackett, was fatally shot as the Orangemen (not wearing their regalia) dispersed following a special service at Knox Presbyterian Church.<sup>153</sup> Hackett's funeral was transformed into a demonstration of Protestant strength as approximately 1,200 Orangemen from Ottawa, Kingston, and Cornwall descended upon Montreal.<sup>154</sup> Under threat of renewed violence the following year, members of the Orange Order were persuaded to abandon their march on the Twelfth as a result of the publication of legal opinions stating that the Orange Order was an illegal organization according to the 10th chapter of the *Consolidated Statutes of Lower Canada* (1861), and that its members consequently had no right to walk in procession.<sup>155</sup> The provincial legislature subsequently passed legislation prohibiting party processions in public thoroughfares, which (for the time being) put an end to Orange demonstrations, but did not affect St. Patrick's Day processions as long as they retained their religious character.<sup>156</sup> Montreal's Orangemen nevertheless held firmly to the belief that "the cause of liberty would assuredly triumph and that walking in Montreal was but a question of time", while their allies in Toronto continued to hope that Orangemen in Montreal would soon be "as free to come and go in Montreal as the Roman Catholics are in Toronto".<sup>157</sup>

The troubles associated with the activities of the Orange Order were con-

150 For a full description of local events connected with the Orange processions in Montreal, see Cross, "The Irish in Montreal", pp. 169–173.

151 *Ibid.*, pp. 168–169.

152 *Ibid.*, p. 171; *Montreal Star*, July 10 and 11, 1877.

153 Cross, "The Irish in Montreal", pp. 171–172; *Montreal Star*, July 12, 1877.

154 Senior, *Orangeism*, p. 76.

155 *Montreal Daily Witness*, July 11 and 12, 1878.

156 Cross, "The Irish in Montreal", pp. 165–166. Article 2940 of the *Revised Statutes of Quebec 1888, Volume 1* states, "No assemblage of persons shall parade the streets of the city of Montreal, or march in procession therein to celebrate or commemorate any political anniversary or event having reference to religious or other distinctions existing between any class of the subjects of Her Majesty, or to make any demonstration of such religious or other distinctions" (41–42 Vic., c.9, s.1). Article 2945 adds the proviso that these regulations did not "extend to any procession of the clergy or of the faithful of any church or other communion or religious belief, which shall take place in the exercise of public worship, or to celebrate any religious ceremonies or in obedience to the usages or discipline thereof, and in which the priests or ministers of such church or other communion or religious belief shall take part" (41–42 Vic., c.9, s.4). This legislation, which was a direct response to the July 12 processions in Montreal, was passed by the legislature of Quebec on July 20, 1878 (*Statutes of the Province of Quebec*, 41–42 Vic., cap. ix).

157 *Montreal Daily Witness*, July 14, 1879.

ned to the appearance of a new Irish-Catholic society in Montreal. Attention was drawn to the Irish Catholic Union of Montreal when a local newspaper reported that approximately 260 of its young men had participated in the St. Patrick's Day parade in 1877.<sup>158</sup> With rooms on Centre Street,<sup>159</sup> close to the heart of Irish Montreal, the association had as its stated aim to defend Catholic interests and to strive to bring about a spirit of harmony and union among Catholics of all nationalities.<sup>160</sup> The Irish Catholic Union played a prominent role in the outbreak of violence that took place on July 12, 1877 between Irish Catholics and Orangemen. In the *Montreal Star*, the Union was accused of maintaining a position "of menacing hostility".<sup>161</sup> "Such an order", the writer maintained, "has no reason for existence in a community like ours.... We feel pretty sure that the honour and dignity of the Irish Catholic people require no such defence as this organization, revolver-armed, pretends to offer."<sup>162</sup> While the Union was singled out as a provocateur, the intentions attributed to the organization were repudiated by its "best" members, who disclaimed all connection with the "idlers and rowdies" responsible for the riots.<sup>163</sup> Despite the Union's supposed participation in the riots and the newspaper's description of it as "a secret society of the kind condemned by the Church",<sup>164</sup> the pastors of St. Patrick's and St. Ann's reported to Bishop Charles-Édouard Fabre the following year that, as "a separate and independent organization", its constitution contained nothing objectionable.<sup>165</sup> They noted, however, that its situation had been radically altered since its establishment so that "it now stands before us not as a separate and independent society, but only as part of a more general organization".<sup>166</sup> The pastors warned that the Supreme Council of the "Catholic Union of Canada" (referred to elsewhere as the Irish Catholic Union of Canada)<sup>167</sup> "may cast aside the rightful authority and control of the Bishop and of the Pastors of Montreal over their flocks, and refuse to account for their action to anyone", concluding that the Irish Catholic Union of Canada was "wrong in princi-

158 *Montreal Star*, March 17, 1877.

159 *Montreal Star*, July 13, 1877.

160 ACAM, 355.121 Fonds Paroisse St. Patrick, 878-3, Promises required to be kept by members of the ICU, n.d.; 878-5, J. R. Ouellette, p<sup>te</sup>, to M<sup>gr</sup> Fabre, Opinion of the ICU, May 21, 1878.

161 *Montreal Star*, July 11, 1877.

162 *Ibid.*

163 *Montreal Daily Witness*, July 10 and 13, 1877.

164 *Montreal Star*, July 11, 1877.

165 ACAM, 355.121 Fonds Paroisse St. Patrick, 878-1, Frs. Dowd and Hogan to M<sup>gr</sup> Fabre, Opinion of the ICU, March 7, 1878.

166 *Ibid.* Organizations with similar names existed in other cities, including Quebec City and Ottawa. See *Toronto Daily Globe*, March 19, 1878; *Montreal Daily Witness*, March 18, 1878; *Toronto Daily Globe*, March 18, 1879.

167 ACAM, 355.121 Fonds Paroisse St. Patrick, 878-5, J. R. Ouellette, p<sup>te</sup>, to M<sup>gr</sup> Fabre, Opinion of the ICU, May 21, 1878. The *Montreal Daily Witness* (March 18, 1878) noted that the Catholic Union had dropped the word Irish from its name "with the hope of gaining over the aid and comfort of the French".

ple”.<sup>168</sup> Their fears were soon realized when, on St. Patrick’s Day in 1878, between 1,500 and 3,000 members of the Irish Catholic Union marched in a procession, accompanied by a number of French Canadians, despite a request by the clergy that they not do so.<sup>169</sup> A Protestant newspaper noted:

The procession was not the usual religious procession in honor of St. Patrick; that is in the hands of St. Patrick’s Society, and was omitted out of respect for the memory of the late Pope.<sup>170</sup> The Catholic Union also received a request from the clergy not to march. Their procession could not therefore pretend to be a national religious one. It was no more and no less than what an Orange procession is said to be — a mere sectional offensive and defensive display.<sup>171</sup>

Under sufficient provocation, a break — strongly resembling the rifts that occurred with greater frequency in Toronto — was effected in Montreal between the clergy and lay societies determined to promote and defend Irish-Catholic interests. This rift resulted in a procession composed in large part of “mere youths” and described as being “meagre in the extreme” due to the non-participation of the usual national and religious societies.<sup>172</sup> The clergy moved quickly to reassert authority over the dissident group. Soon after the St. Patrick’s Day procession of 1878, members of the Irish Catholic Union were informed that the changes made to the constitution and rules of their society did not meet with Bishop Fabre’s approval and that it was

168 ACAM, 355.121 Fonds Paroisse St. Patrick, 878–1, Frs. Dowd and Hogan to M<sup>gr</sup> Fabre, Opinion of the ICU, March 7, 1878.

169 *Montreal Daily Witness*, March 18, 1878; *Montreal Star*, March 18, 1878; *True Witness and Catholic Chronicle*, March 20, 1878; *Montreal Herald*, March 18, 1878. Despite the numerous accounts of the Irish Catholic Union’s parade in the Montreal papers, the *Irish Canadian* (published in Toronto, March 20, 1878) did not acknowledge that a procession of any sort had taken place in Montreal. It included Montreal in a list of places where “there was the usual observances of the day as a festival of religion”, but where the “holiday of Irish Canadians as such was completely ignored [with the exception of events such as concerts] by the success of the intriguers who have caught our nationality in a complete surprise”.

170 The death of Pope Pius IX was the reason given for the decision by many Irish societies not to march on St. Patrick’s Day in 1878. The *Irish Canadian* (March 27, 1878) reported that the various societies in Kingston, for example, resolved not to hold the usual procession due to the death of Pius IX, adding that they were assisted in carrying out this intention by the falling of March 17 on a Sunday. The *Irish Canadian* (March 13, 1878) implied that in Montreal the Pope’s death was simply being used as an excuse for abstaining from a procession. Many may indeed have been relieved to have had an honourable reason for not getting involved in a procession that was likely to exacerbate already strained tensions between Catholics and Protestants. In his “Letter From Montreal”, “Clonmel” complained that, if Catholics in the city were to protect themselves from Orangeism, “It will not do for one half of our party to preach and practise meekness, whilst the other portion prepares for resistance” (*Irish Canadian*, March 20, 1878).

171 *Montreal Daily Witness*, March 18, 1878.

172 *Montreal Star*, March 18, 1878.

unlawful for them to take the oath of secrecy that the local union had recently introduced.<sup>173</sup>

The Irish Catholic Union decided not to participate in the St. Patrick's Day procession the following year "out of a desire to avoid giving any semblance of offence to their Protestant fellow-citizens", and no evidence was found of its subsequent participation.<sup>174</sup> Evidence presented in 1879 during a court case emanating from the arrest of a leading Orangeman the previous year sheds light on the ultimate fate of the organization. When interviewed by the court, Bernard Tansey, a well-known Irish-Catholic innkeeper in Montreal, stated that he had refused to join the Union upon finding out that it was a secret society. He believed that the organization no longer existed and suggested that "the clergy were instrumental in smashing it".<sup>175</sup> While the decision of the Irish Catholic Union not to march and to disband was partly a response to the exertion of clerical authority, the local social and political context likely also played a decisive role. Once the immediate threat of Orange demonstration had been removed, groups claiming to act in defence of the Catholic majority no longer had any rationale for marching. Given that the St. Patrick's Day procession was only acceptable because it constituted a "religious procession", presumably many members of the Irish-Catholic community felt that nothing should be done to jeopardize this status. The success of the Irish Catholic Union in transforming the 1878 St. Patrick's Day procession into a defensive sectarian demonstration indicates just how easily the cooperative relationship between the clergy and lay societies could be disrupted under conditions in which the Irish-Catholic population felt itself to be under threat. This rarely happened in Montreal, with its large Catholic majority, but, when it did occur, at least some elements within the community were willing to part ways with their clergy in order to assert their rights. While it is unclear whether the Irish Catholic Union of Montreal also promoted an Irish nationalist agenda, what is interesting is the extent to which it presented itself as an organization designed to protect broader Catholic interests as a means of making common cause with Montreal's French-Catholic majority.

There was also sectarian violence in Toronto in the late 1870s, but in contrast to the developments in Montreal, Toronto's events placed Irish Catholics in a very vulnerable position when it came to participating in public demonstrations.<sup>176</sup> It seems unlikely to have been a coincidence that in Prot-

173 ACAM, 355.121 Fonds Paroisse St. Patrick, 878-4, Fr. Dowd's condemnation, on behalf of M<sup>gr</sup> Fabre, of the oath and constitutional changes of the ICU, March 31, 1878.

174 *Montreal Daily Witness*, March 18, 1879.

175 *Montreal Daily Witness*, October 3, 1879.

176 Gregory S. Kealey, "The Orange Order in Toronto: Religious Riot and the Working Class", in Gregory S. Kealey and Peter Warrian, eds., *Essays in Canadian Working Class History* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1976), pp. 13-34. For further discussion of the social, national, religious, and residential characteristics of Toronto's Orangemen during this period, see Houston and Smyth, *The Sash Canada Wore*, pp. 101-111. They conclude, "The Orange community was largely indistinguishable from the rest of the protestant city" (p. 111).

estant-dominated Toronto St. Patrick's Day processions were halted in the same year as Orangemen were effectively prevented from marching in Catholic-dominated Montreal. Michael Cottrell argues that St. Patrick's Day processions were discontinued after 1877 because Irish-Catholic Torontonians were becoming increasingly anxious to remove obstacles to their participation in mainstream Canadian society.<sup>177</sup> Ethnic isolationism, he argues, was no longer seen as desirable once "Irish Catholics were afforded the same social acceptance as other groups", and Irish nationalism, he suggests, "was largely discarded because of its fundamental incompatibility with the prevailing English-Canadian ideology".<sup>178</sup> Cottrell concludes that the abandonment of the parades in the late 1870s can therefore be seen as a sign of Irish assimilation.<sup>179</sup>

This interpretation fails to take into account the tensions that continued to exist between Irish Catholics and Protestants during this period, which resulted in Toronto's two largest riots of the nineteenth century: the Jubilee riots of 1875, during which Catholic pilgrims walking in procession to mark the jubilee proclaimed by Pope Pius IX were persistently harassed, and the attack on St. Patrick's Hall on St. Patrick's Day in 1878.<sup>180</sup> Brian Clarke, who interprets the discontinuation of St. Patrick's Day processions in 1878 as an "unmistakable assertion of lay autonomy", points out that nationalists began holding their own lectures and concerts on the Day rather than attending church-sponsored charity concerts.<sup>181</sup> This suggests the need for a closer examination of the events that took place on St. Patrick's Day in Toronto in 1878. The newspapers reported that quietness was the order of the day: "There was no procession, the various Irish Societies, in obedience to the request of His Grace Archbishop Lynch, having agreed to desist from any public demonstration of the kind."<sup>182</sup> Nationalist societies still attended the special St. Patrick's Day mass as a group, where they, along with the rest of the congregation, were warned to be peaceful and not to commit any act liable to provoke a breach of the peace.<sup>183</sup> In other words, the various societies were encouraged not to march by their archbishop, who, like the clergy in Montreal, wished to avoid yet another outbreak of violence. Towards evening, the aspect of affairs changed very considerably, and trouble appeared to be brewing. The principal point of attraction was St. Patrick's

177 Cottrell, "St. Patrick's Day Parades", pp. 72–73.

178 *Ibid.*, p. 73.

179 *Ibid.*

180 Clarke, *Piety and Nationalism*, pp. 208–210; Peter G. Goheen, "Negotiating Access to Public Space in Mid-Nineteenth Century Toronto", *Journal of Historical Geography*, vol. 20, no. 4 (1994), pp. 442–445. Cronin and Adair question Cottrell's interpretation for similar reasons (see *The Wearing of the Green*, pp. 80–82).

181 Clarke, *Piety and Nationalism*, p. 216.

182 *Toronto Daily Globe*, March 19, 1878.

183 *Montreal Daily Witness*, March 18, 1878; Clarke, *Piety and Nationalism*, p. 216.

Hall, where Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa, "head centre" of the Fenian Brotherhood,<sup>184</sup> was advertised to lecture. A loyalist crowd made an unsuccessful attempt to prevent him from addressing the Irish Catholic Benevolent Union and then proceeded to engage in violent protest and riot, with voices in the crowd calling for "Revenge for Hackett".<sup>185</sup> The invitation of such a provocative figure to lecture (with the support, according to Clarke, of both moderate and radical nationalists)<sup>186</sup> does not seem to signify a strong desire for assimilation, at least on the part of those involved, and the violence associated with the event also seems incompatible with Irish Catholics being afforded the "same social acceptance as other groups".<sup>187</sup> Under such conditions, the decision by Irish Catholics not to hold a St. Patrick's Day procession was probably dictated as much by the realization that their minority position would render such a demonstration foolhardy as by a desire to obey their clergy. Inviting O'Donovan Rossa to speak provided a means of satisfying the desire of nationalists to support the Irish cause and to express their defiance towards the Orange element without exposing themselves to the dangers of the streets.

It is also important to note that Cottrell's assertion that "1877 saw the last public St. Patrick's Day celebration in Toronto for over a century" appears to be incorrect, since parades took place again in the 1890s.<sup>188</sup> Only the Ancient Order of Hibernians (which had been established in Toronto the previous year) and the Emerald Beneficial Association participated in the 1890 procession.<sup>189</sup> Both societies were organized along parochial lines by this point and had strong connections with the Catholic Church.<sup>190</sup> By 1891 the parade, consisting of some 1,500 men, had expanded to embrace a larger number of Irish societies including the Irish Catholic Benevolent Union and the Celtic League.<sup>191</sup> "Old timers" reported that the procession of 1892 was

184 Clarke, *Piety and Nationalism*, p. 210.

185 *Toronto Daily Globe*, March 19, 1878; Clarke, *Piety and Nationalism*, p. 210. Toronto's Irish Catholic Benevolent Union may have been affiliated with the same nation-wide union as the Irish Catholic Union of Montreal. Brian Clarke (*Piety and Nationalism*, pp. 204–205) describes this as a period when province- and Canada-wide affiliations for nationalist societies took on growing importance. Some societies also became affiliated with organizations such as the Irish Catholic Benevolent Union of the United States.

186 Clarke, *Piety and Nationalism*, p. 214.

187 The quotation is taken from Cottrell, "St. Patrick's Day Parades", p. 73.

188 Cottrell, "St. Patrick's Day Parades", p. 72. For descriptions of Toronto's St. Patrick's Day processions in the 1890s, see *Toronto Globe*, March 18, 1890; March 18, 1891; March 18, 1892; March 18, 1893; March 18, 1894; March 18, 1895; March 16, 1896. The newspapers reported on St. Patrick's Day in 1898 that "all the parades and street demonstrations which have characterized former celebrations were dispensed with", although it was noted that the shamrock was well-represented in the city streets (*Toronto Globe*, March, 18, 1898). In light of past pronouncements on this topic, it would seem unwise to assume from this that no subsequent parades were ever held.

189 *Toronto Globe*, March 18, 1890.

190 Clarke, *Piety and Nationalism*, pp. 235, 238–239.

191 *Toronto Globe*, March 18, 1891.

“the largest ever held on St. Patrick’s Day” and it was felt to be “a subject for congratulation that St. Patrick’s Day is fast becoming the Irishman’s day, a day to be celebrated by men from the ‘black north’ as well as the wilds of Galway and Clare”.<sup>192</sup> These observations undermine Cottrell’s argument that the abandonment of processions in the late 1870s can be read as evidence of “Irish assimilation” and as a sign that Irish Catholics were willing to abandon demonstrations of distinctiveness once “political and economic structures began to embrace them”.<sup>193</sup>

Cronin and Adair’s observation that St. Patrick’s Day processions in many American cities experienced “fluctuating fortunes” during the 1880s, but picked up again in the 1890s, suggests possible alternative explanations for the situation in Toronto.<sup>194</sup> They point to anti-Catholicism as providing part of the explanation, but also argue that parades were cancelled in many cities in the early 1880s because Irish Catholics felt that the funds should instead be used to assist and fight for the rights of small farmers in Ireland who were facing bankruptcy, starvation, and eviction as a result of crop failures in 1878–1879.<sup>195</sup> In other words, the decision not to march during the early 1880s could also be interpreted as a sign of devotion to the Irish nation. Regardless of the presence or absence of St. Patrick’s Day processions in Toronto during the 1880s and 1890s, Brian Clarke and Mark McGowan have persuasively argued on other grounds that Irish nationalism was a waning force in Toronto’s Irish-Catholic community in the late nineteenth century, both stressing the growing desire of English-speaking Catholics to become more integrated into mainstream Canadian society while retaining their Catholic faith.<sup>196</sup>

The decision to suspend Orange processions in Montreal and St. Patrick’s Day processions in Toronto in the late 1870s appears to have stemmed from related causes. In a climate of intense hostility between Catholics and Protestants, the minority positions of Irish Catholics in Toronto and Irish Protestants in Montreal meant that any attempt to parade in the streets of their respective cities was liable to produce turbulent results unless given extensive police protection. The questionable legality of their procession ultimately dissuaded the Orangemen from marching in Montreal. In Toronto, the desire for acculturation and acceptance as part of Canadian society (assimilation goes too far) may well have been a factor in bringing about a discontinuation of the St. Patrick’s Day parade, but it is impossible to ignore the coercive influence exerted by sectarian tensions. At the same time, the Catholic clergy in both Montreal and Toronto were actively attempting to

192 *Toronto Globe*, March 18, 1892.

193 Cottrell, “St. Patrick’s Day Parades”, p. 73.

194 Cronin and Adair, *The Wearing of the Green*, pp. 72–73.

195 *Ibid.*; Meagher, “ ‘Why Should We Care For a Little Trouble or a Walk Through the Mud’ ”, p. 9;

Moody and Martin, *The Course of Irish History*, p. 285.

196 Clarke, *Piety and Nationalism*, p. 260; McGowan, *The Waning of the Green*.

maintain authority over the laity and prevent lay national and nationalist societies from gaining too much influence. In both cities, however, the desire on the part of certain elements within the Irish-Catholic population to respond to Orange threats put pressure on the cooperative relationship between the clergy and more extremist lay-run societies. In Montreal, this resulted in a rare departure from the “usual religious procession” on St. Patrick’s Day.<sup>197</sup> While no procession took place in Toronto, the invitation of O’Donovan Rossa to speak could be seen as an equally defiant act by a minority whose members, like the Orangemen in Montreal, were in no position to defend themselves on the streets.

### Conclusions

There is little reason to doubt the claim made in the opening quotation of this discussion that the “unanimous” celebration of St. Patrick’s Day around the globe acted as a powerful means of symbolically “annihilating” the physical space that distanced diaspora Irish communities from one another. Cronin and Adair express a similar concept in a more modern idiom when they suggest, “St Patrick’s Day has been a major contributor to the rise of a global ‘imagined community’ of otherwise disparate Irish people.”<sup>198</sup> Thus the St. Patrick’s Day processions that took place in the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand in the nineteenth century produced a dramatic sense of the national and religious bonds that continued to hold a scattered people together, in spite of state boundaries that divided them.

Yet Irish Catholics had at the same time to contend with a wide range of local conditions, not just economic, but also socio-cultural and political in nature, in the places in which they had settled. St. Patrick’s Day celebrations were also a product of these conditions, and this fact explains why processions in Montreal and Toronto reveal significant variations in the extent to which national-religious or more secular nationalist elements came to dominate the Day. The usually successful efforts of Montreal’s Roman Catholic clergy to exercise control over the St. Patrick’s Day procession, both directly and by exerting pressure on national and nationalist societies, meant that an important religious dimension was fused into the celebrations and reproduced in the processions from year to year. The clergy likewise exerted influence over the processions in Toronto, which, when the clergy’s efforts were successful, as they often were, resembled those in Montreal. The presence of a substantial Orange element in the Toronto population, hostile to Irish-Catholic interests, nevertheless placed members of the clergy in a difficult position. If they discouraged St. Patrick’s Day processions or distanced

197 *Montreal Daily Witness*, March 18, 1878.

198 Cronin and Adair, *The Wearing of the Green*, p. xxi. Their use of the phrase “imagined community” refers to Benedict Anderson’s understanding of the nation as “an imagined political community”. See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991), p. 6.

themselves from such processions to avoid being associated with potentially violent demonstrations, they created a vacuum of leadership that the lay-run societies were only too willing to fill. At the same time, many Irish-Catholic clergymen were sympathetic to the nationalist cause and also deeply aware of the discrimination encountered by their parishioners in Toronto. This sentiment explains the ambivalence of their position in relation to nationalist societies that not only sought to liberate Ireland but also claimed to protect the interests of Irish Catholics in Canada. Militant nationalist forces never prevailed in Toronto's St. Patrick's Day procession for any length of time, and most eventually reached some sort of accommodation with the Catholic Church. This development is not surprising, given that in the longer term such expressions were incompatible with securing progress and respectability for the community in a British Dominion. As a result of these very different local environments, St. Patrick's Day processions generally ran relatively smoothly from year to year in Montreal, whereas they were more sporadic and changeable in character in Toronto, where both clergy and national societies were constantly adjusting to the sectarian climate of the city.

Despite differences between the processions in Montreal and Toronto, closer examination of the relationship between the clergy and national societies and the debates surrounding St. Patrick's Day processions reveals that very similar tensions surrounded the processions in the two cities. Montreal's processions may have operated more smoothly, but, as in Toronto, they acted as a catalyst for discussions concerning the relationship between Protestants and Catholics, the question of loyalty to Canada versus loyalty to Ireland, and the balance between lay initiative and clerical authority. While the procession in Montreal was a vehicle around which competing aspirations within the Irish community were negotiated, this did not always lead to communication of these differences in the public streets. An appearance of consensus was generally achieved through the exercise of power on the part of the city's Irish-Catholic clergy and through compliance on the part of the city's Irish national societies. The exceptional 1878 St. Patrick's Day procession emphasizes, however, the fragility of the relationship between lay-run societies and the clergy when faced with an external threat to the Irish-Catholic community. The deluge of Orangemen that had descended on Montreal during Hackett's funeral the year before made Catholics in Montreal feel vulnerable, despite living in a city in which they belonged to a Catholic majority. Such feelings generated a defensive reaction that resulted in an outcome resembling events in Toronto in 1856 and 1866. The Irish Catholic Union defied the wishes of the clergy and the more moderate Irish national societies and transformed the St. Patrick's Day procession into a defensive demonstration which bore little resemblance to the usual religious-national celebration. In other words, small variations in local circumstances could profoundly alter the meanings conveyed by St. Patrick's Day processions, changing a religious procession, which caused little annoyance to other groups in the city, into a demonstration expressly designed to intimidate.

As we have seen in the Montreal case, and in Toronto as well, an interpretation of processions limiting itself to the reported pageantry of parades would miss much of their real significance. The full import of such events can only be uncovered through detailed examination of the decision-making and negotiations surrounding processions, even those that did not take place. While there has been a tendency to see parades as a means by which insights can be gained into the attitudes of subordinate and often illiterate groups towards the political economy of the urban industrial city,<sup>199</sup> the level of intervention by the clergy and other elites in St. Patrick's Day decision-making demonstrates the limits of such an approach. Findings reported here are consistent with observations of scholars such as Susan Davis, who argues that parades are shaped by power relations and that "[i]mages of social relations were filtered through a complex process of inclusion, exclusion, influence, and planning, until the parade expressed power and special interest more than unity and consensus".<sup>200</sup> Parades, even those taking the form of religious processions, can thus have a powerful political dimension. As this study of St. Patrick's Day celebrations in Montreal and Toronto demonstrates, the politics of Irish communities were complex, embedded not just in the local politics of the two cities, but in the national politics of Canada, the politics of governance of Ireland, the British imperial project, and also in the politics of the Catholic Church, which possessed local, national, and international dimensions.

199 Marston, "Public Rituals and Community Power", p. 256.

200 Susan G. Davis, *Parades and Power: Street Theater in Nineteenth Century Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), p. 5.