Dry Patriotism: The Chiniquy Crusade

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BETWEEN 1848 AND 1851 thousands of French-speaking Catholics in the Province of Canada came forward in their parish churches to take the temperance pledge. As word of this conversion reached non-Catholics across North America, the reaction was one of pure astonishment. For several decades evangelical Protestants had laboured long and hard to eradicate drunkenness; and now a Catholic priest was securing more converts in a single day than these earlier workers had won with years of steady effort. Contemporaries shook their heads and laid it down to the eloquent charm of Father Charles Chiniquy. This idea has stood the test of time; the full-length biography of Chiniquy published by Canadian historian Marcel Trudel in 1955 attributed the priest's vast influence to 'honeyed flattery' and other excesses of his oratory.[1]

When we move beyond personal qualities to examine Chiniquy in the context of his times, however, it appears that his popularity was not a product of eloquence alone. The man's impact was greater than this exclusive emphasis on his speaking ability would suggest. One function of charismatic leaders is to mediate between old and new authority,[2] to usher in a changing of the guard. Chiniquy was part of a much broader process in which a whole people took a turn to the right, rejecting radical politics and turning instead to ecclesiastical leadership in time

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1 M. Trudel, *Chiniquy* (Trois-Rivières 1955), 47

2 On this subject see the discussion by Charles Taylor in T. Hockin, ed., *Apex of Power: The Prime Minister and Political Leadership in Canada* (Scarborough, Ont. 1971), 112.

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of change. Since former anti-clericals became ardent admirers of the church-led temperance crusade, it seems quite possible that this startling success played a part in establishing the Catholic church as arbiter of social questions in French Canada. Because the church retained this decisive influence for a full century, Chiniquy's contribution to its prestige at a crucial time was more important than his fleeting effect on the consumption of alcohol.

The greater submissiveness of French Canadians after 1840 is in little doubt, not just on the question of drinking but in a general receptivity to the teachings of their church. Historians have noted the transformation of French-Canadian society in the dozen years following the rebellions of 1837–8.[3] Before the rebellions the *parti patriote*, led by the flaming orator Louis-Joseph Papineau, commanded both the Assembly and the popular imagination. Besides objecting to British rule, these leaders also acted in opposition to their own clergy, who acquiesced in that rule. Many *patriotes*, inspired by liberal currents in Europe and America, opposed church control in such vital areas as education and tithing. Before the 1830s ended, thousands of people joined the uprising which the *patriotes* led. In the decade that followed, though, the church recovered the popularity it had lost, and a new fervour arose among the people.

There were many signs of Catholic renewal. The clergy grew in number and offered an unprecedented variety of institutions and services. Processions and pilgrimages proliferated, and streets were renamed in honour of saints. The hierarchy began to forge an alliance with elected politicians, and an agreement with the Reform party on an education bill was one important outcome. Impressed with this new vigour in an old institution, influential individuals began to endorse its efforts. Etienne Parent, longtime editor of *Le Canadien* and French Canada's leading intellectual, abandoned his former scepticism to support an activist social catholicism which envisioned priests as national leaders. Another intellectual and former patriote, François-Xavier Garneau, held out slightly longer. A critical attitude towards the clergy surfaced in the first volume of his *Histoire du Canada* in 1845. By

3 Jacques Monet observed that French-Canadian nationalism 'became ultramontane' in the 1840s; 'French Canadian Nationalism and the Challenge of Ultramontanism,' Canadian Historical Association, *Historical Papers*, 1966, 41. Fernand Ouellet remarked upon a 'révolution psychologique' among the bourgeoisie in the same period; *Histoire économique et sociale du Quebec 1760–1850* (Montreal 1971), 591. On the growing influence of the church during this period see also Michel Brunet, 'L'Eglise catholique du Bas-Canada et le partage du pouvoir à l'heure d'une nouvelle donne (1837–1854),' Canadian Historical Association, *Annual Papers*, 1969, 37–51; and P. Hurtubise, ed., *Le laïc dans l'Eglise canadienne française de 1830 à nos jours* (Montreal 1972), 4.

the time the third volume appeared four years later, Garneau, after weathering much criticism, was ready to concede that religion and nationality were inseparable. It took some time for the changed climate to affect everyone. Enthusiastic converts to secular liberalism did not relinquish their ideas without resistance, and it was not until Confederation that conservative Catholic influences really stifled liberal expression.[4] By 1850, however, it was clear which way the wind was blowing.

In the midst of this reorientation of French-Canadian society, the temperance movement enjoyed its years of greatest success. The movement appears to have made its own contribution to the church's newfound prestige. It created a large, enthusiastic body of supporters for the clergy's vision of moral reform. It also propelled a priest into the position of national hero. Cutting down on drinking was a surprisingly popular idea that enhanced the status of Father Chiniquy and other priests who championed it.

A distinctive feature of the French-Canadian temperance leadership was the near absence of 'self-made men,' the evangelical businessmen and labour aristocrats who were prominent in other places with strong temperance movements such as the United States, English Canada, and northern England. Perhaps because of the relative scarcity of French-Canadian entrepreneurs, the initiative remained largely in the hands of the priests. Nor does temperance seem to correlate as closely as it did in America and Britain with industrialization,[5] since the movement peaked before Montreal's industrial transformation of the 1850s and, in any case, enjoyed more enduring success in rural parishes than in urban ones. Priestly monopoly of leadership also meant that women played a less active role in French-Canadian temperance campaigns than they did elsewhere.[6]

4 F. Ouellet, 'Nationalisme canadien-francais et laïcisme au XIXe siècle,' in J.P. Bernard, *Les idéologies québécoises au 19e siècle* (Montreal 1973), 55. On the changing position of F.-X. Garneau see *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. IX, 'Garneau, François-Xavier.'

5 For a cogent analysis of up-and-coming commercial-industrial centres as seats of temperance sentiment see Ian Tyrell, *Sobering Up* (Westport, CT 1979). In Canada West the movement enjoyed greater longevity in rural districts than in urban areas, just as occurred in Canada East; but Toronto remained a temperance stronghold during the second half of the nineteenth century in a way that Montreal did not. J. Noel, 'Dry Millennium: Temperance and a New Social Order in Mid-19th Century Canada and Red River (PHD thesis, University of Toronto, 1987), chap. 6.

6 Although women joined French-Canadian temperance societies, the president of each local society was almost always the curé, and temperance orators were drawn almost exclusively from the male clergy. This stood in contrast to English-speaking communities in the Canadas, where in the 1840s women were active in fundraising, preparing temperance ceremonies, and selling the *Canadian Temper-*

Two distinctive currents accounted for anti-drink sentiment in French Canada. The first was a desire for a more progressive society on the part of the left-leaning professionals, the group associated with rebellion in the 1830s and in subsequent decades with the *rouge* political group and with the Institut canadien. The other current stemmed from the program for an uncompromisingly Catholic state presented by ultramontane clergymen from the 1840s on through the nineteenth century. This concurrence on temperance is noteworthy in light of the fact that the more usual stance of liberals and ultramontanes was poles apart, with swords drawn.

Part of the reason temperance could appeal to both liberals and conservatives was that drinking had become a serious problem among the predominantly French-speaking population concentrated in Lower Canada (or, as it was renamed in 1841, Canada East). The habitant had kept much of his French culture intact after the British takeover in 1760, but he had the misfortune to adopt the drinking habits of his British and American cousins. Although Governor Murray had reported in 1762 that the newly conquered population was a sober one,[7] things changed with the influx of cheap rum from the British West Indies. When British traders who had recently settled in the country discovered that rum was one of the few trade items which the relatively self-sufficient farmers were willing to buy, they made the substance available in quantity. By the 1790s travellers were reporting that the French Canadians were heavy drinkers.[8] To add to the already

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ance Advocate door-to-door. Like American women, English Canadians began founding separate female temperance societies in the 1840s and appearing as platform speakers in the following decade. See Noel, 'Dry Millennium,' chap. 4. The subordinate role of women in French-Canadian temperance is seen in the Société de la Croix, which became the leading temperance organization in the 1850s after Chiniquy's departure. Women and children were not permitted to join this society as individuals; if the *paterfamilias* joined, the whole family was automatically enrolled. See Alexis Mailloux, *La Société de Tempérance dite Société de la Croix* (Quebec 1848), 5.

7 G. Malchelosse, 'Ah! mon grand-pèr', comme il buvait!' *Cahiers des Dix*, 8 (1943): 142

8 See, for example, Malchelosse, 'Ah!' 142; Gerald Craig, ed., *Early Travellers in the Canadas* (Westport, CT 1955), 8. On the expanding trade in rum with the habitants see Allan Greer, *Peasant, Lord, and Merchant* (Toronto 1985), 157–9, 284–5 n47. Greer writes that rum, imported at low prices from New England and the British West Indies, 'appears to have been the most important vehicle of growth' in the trade of Anglo-American merchants in Quebec. 'It quickly became the liquor of mass consumption in the Canadian countryside after the Conquest ... [and] the habitants ... soon gained a reputation as drinkers.' Greer explains that peasants, like native peoples, had 'a limited capacity to absorb imported commodities. Hence the recourse to liquor with its ... property of creating an escalating demand.'

abundant supply, local production of alcohol also increased in the early nineteenth century; and the introduction of a steam process for distilling made domestic liquor cheap as well. In 1807 *Le Canadien* expressed alarm that the taste for spirits 'has spread markedly in this country.'[9]

Everywhere reasons arose for taking a glass – or four. As the towns grew, sanitation problems increased, and Montrealers began to doctor their dubious water with brandy before drinking it. Towns also suffered from a lack of recreation facilities, and drinking was one of the few amusements available to the lower classes. This is not to imply that their 'betters' were more temperate. Gentlemen saw no disgrace in bibulous banquets and late-night carousing, and moralists began to attribute the decline of many seigneurs' sons to drink.[10] The bitter climate also invited heavy use of the liquor now so freely available; outdoor labourers, carters, and farmers came to consider alcohol a necessary warmer and stimulant. According to both clerical and lay observers, drinking reached its height in many parishes in the 1830s. Indeed, when French-Canadian temperance groups began to appear after 1837, one society's idea of reform was to restrict members to six small glasses of liquor a day.[11] Forces were in the making, though, to curb this convivial lifestyle.

Particularly keen on transforming French Canada was a cluster of ultramontane clergy who believed the church should play a decisive role in both the social and political spheres. Their leader was Ignace Bourget, who became bishop of Montreal in 1840. Often viewed as a reactionary, Bourget was in some ways a most effective social reformer. He laid the groundwork for a system of local schools by recruiting large

9 *Le Canadien*, 15 août 1807. On the growing domestic production see H.A. Innis and A.R.M. Lower, eds., *Select Documents in Canadian Economic History, 1783–1885* (Toronto 1933), I, 65; F. Ouellet, *Eléments d'histoire sociale du Bas-Canada* (Montreal 1971), 85; G. Hildebrand, 'Les débuts du mouvement de tempérance dans le Bas-Canada 1828–1840' (MA thesis, McGill University, 1975), 16.

10 On seigneurial and upper-class drinking see *Canada Temperance Advocate* (CTA), Sept. 1836; Malchelosse, 'Ah!' 146–7; and Jane Brierley, ed., *A Man of Sentiment: The Memoirs of Philippe-Joseph Aubert de Gaspé* (Montreal 1988), 69, 120, 211, 250, 263, 380. Urban drinking practices are noted in W.H. Parker, 'The Towns of Lower Canada in the 1830s,' in R.P. Beckinsale, ed., *Urbanization and its Problems* (New York 1968), 400, 416.

11 Camille Roy, 'Panégyrique de Messire Edouard Quertier,' *Les leçons de notre histoire* (Quebec 1929), 272. On drink as a protection against the elements see Hildebrand, 'Les Débuts,' 20; *Les mélanges religieux* (MR), 6 juil. 1849, 8 jan. 1850; *Journal of the Legislative Assembly of (the Province of) Canada* (JLAC), 1849, app. zzz. On the excesses of the 1830s see Hugolin Lemay, *Bibliographie de la tempérance* (Quebec 1910), 25; Innis and Lower, *Select Documents*, II, 256; and D. Levack, *Un pionier de l'abstinence totale: Mgr. Ignace Bourget, 1799–1885* (Montreal 1945), 10.

numbers of clergy to teach in them. When concern arose that too many French Canadians were emigrating to New England, he helped to arrange settlement in the Eastern Townships and other regions where farmland was still available. As local farm folk and Irish immigrants poured into Montreal, Bourget's clergy created a whole range of magdalene homes and orphanages, hospitals, and asylums, and a school for the deaf founded on the most up-to-date principles.

Responding dynamically to the grave concerns of the day, the ultramontane wing of the church had not yet assumed its classic conservative, or *bleu*, coloration. Bishop Bourget was in many ways a thoroughly modern man of the 1840s. He identified more with the reforming middle classes than the comfortable aristocracy. He seemed to find the nostrums of Samuel Smiles congenial; like Protestant reformers, he encouraged prudence and thrift. He declared idleness the mother of all vice. He urged college directors to place less emphasis on Latin and more on preparing the young for farming and trade. Along with practical education, he encouraged workers' savings banks and insurance schemes.[12]

Another modernizing feature of the bishop's program was temperance. Despite the movement's American origins, Bourget did not dismiss it as a Protestant cause the way his predecessor, Bishop Lartigue, had done. On the contrary, he was convinced that drunkenness was the 'mal capital de ce pays,'[13] that drinking on Saints' days was a prime cause of sexual immorality and domestic strife, and that it was possible to change such customs. Indeed, he supported radical change. By 1845 the prelate had accepted another conclusion Protestant temperance leaders had reached: that total abstinence was the only way to prevent backsliding in a world where there was such constant temptation to overindulge in drink. Like the Protestants, Bourget upheld the extreme measure as a charity the strong should undertake to help other, weaker souls who were unable to drink a little without drinking a lot.[14] Bourget was a key figure in mid-century temperance efforts in French Canada, which would begin with a religious revival in 1840 and reach a crescendo in the Chiniquy crusade of 1848–51.

12 On Bishop Bourget's reforms see J. Grisé, *Les conciles provinciaux de Québec et l'Eglise canadienne (1851–1886)* (Montreal 1979), 52; Leon Pouliot, *Monseigneur Bourget et son temps*, III (Montreal 1972), 144–6; *Mandements, lettres pastorales, circulaires et autres documents publiés dans le diocèse de Montréal depuis son érection jusqu'à l'année 1869* (Montreal 1887), II, 194; *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, XI, 'Bourget, Ignace,' and X, 'Berthelet, Antoine-Olivier.'

13 Hurtubise, ed., *Le laïc*, 33–4; *Mandements, lettres pastorales*, jan. 1849, II, 188

14 For the bishop of Montreal's endorsement of total abstinence see *Mandements, lettres pastorales*, jan. 1842, I, 197.

Although a few temperance societies modelled on those in Catholic Ireland appeared around Quebec City in 1838, French-Canadian temperance did not reach a wide audience until Bishop Bourget invited a hellfire-and-damnation preacher from France to conduct a series of parish revival meetings in 1840–1.[15] Tactics such as darkening the church and recreating the sounds of hell so vividly that women and children were warned to stay away helped touch off a *reveil religieux* in some sixty parishes from Gaspé to Bytown. Many lapsed Catholics used the occasion to return to the sacraments, and a number of parishes erected large public crosses to symbolize their newfound fervour.

To help sustain penitents now resolved on sober virtue, temperance societies were set up at the time of the *reveil*. The response, though not overwhelming, was positive. At the close of sessions held in September 1840 at the parish of Notre-Dame de Québec, a great crowd of men and women, including prominent citizens and people from surrounding parishes, joined the new temperance organization. There was also a favourable response at Trois-Rivières. But Montrealers, who were not noted for obedience to the clergy and who lived in a distilling centre, were not so enthusiastic. The town's elite demurred, and the women did not join. Unlike Quebeckers, few Montrealers pledged total abstinence; but several thousand men did promise greater moderation – and men, as the heavier drinkers, were the major focus of temperance work in French Canada.[16] Montreal's journal *L'Aurore* called upon the principal citizens to support the society, urging that it was not, as many supposed, only for drunkards. Still, most of the early members were drawn from the lower classes, who were willing to brave such prejudice.[17]

Overall, the *reveil* gave impetus to reform. Several priests began to circulate to preach temperance, and in 1844 it was reported that there

15 N.-E. Dionne, *Monseigneur de Forbin-Janson: Sa vie, son oeuvre en Canada* (Quebec 1895), discusses this episode, as does Louis Rousseau, 'Les missions populaires de 1840–42: acteurs principaux et conséquences,' Société canadienne de l'Eglise catholique, *Sessions d'étude* 53 (1986): 7–21. For reports of the rapid growth of temperance societies in Quebec after the bishop's visit see *Le Canadien*, 20 déc. 1840 and 15 jan. 1841; J.S. Buckingham, *Canada, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick and the Other British Provinces in North America, with a Plan of National Colonization* (London 1843), 261. The support in the Trois-Rivières district, which grew to 10,000 temperance society members by April 1841, is reported in MR, 30 mars 1841, and *Le Canadien*, 9 avril 1841.

16 Although the stories in Chiniquy's temperance manuals suggest that ordinary farm wives (and not just disreputable women in the towns) drank, the hierarchy identified intemperance as a male vice. MR, 12 mars 1844

17 *L'Aurore*, 8 jan. 1841; MR, 18 juil. 1843. On the preference for moderation over total abstinence see MR, 19 and 22 jan. 1841.

were 75,000 Catholic temperance society members in Canada East.[18] They seem to have had some impact on drinking habits, too. Archbishop Joseph Signay of Quebec congratulated his people on a marked increase in sobriety. Individual rumsellers noted a drop in buyers, and there was a decline in imports of the hard liquor these early societies condemned. While there was no dramatic change in custom, it appears that a number of people in the region around Quebec City did reduce their consumption of alcohol.[19]

Involved in Quebec temperance work from its beginning was a small, dark-eyed priest named Charles Chiniquy. The son of a Kamouraska notary, Chiniquy had lost both parents early in life. He had been encouraged by a friendly local priest to enter the seminary, and after ordination he began his priestly career as a chaplain at the Quebec Marine Hospital. There he had worked with Dr James Douglas,[20] a Scottish-born temperance advocate, and had begun to read English-language temperance literature. Before long, Chiniquy was convinced that many of the ills he saw at the hospital could be traced to drink. He and several other priests had begun preaching temperance some months before the religious revival got underway.[21] Their hopes had been raised by the temperance work of Father Theobold Matthew in Ireland, a campaign which was said to be creating a moral revolution among his people. After founding a temperance society in his own Beauport parish in 1839, Father Chiniquy perceived such a dramatic

18 C. Chiniquy, *Manuel ou règlement de la Société de Tempérance* (Quebec 1844), 125

19 Lemay, *Bibliographie*, 22, reports Archbishop Signay's remarks. Further evidence of the decline in hard liquor consumption is found in Ouellet, *Histoire*, 617; and NA, MG 28, III, 18, vol. 239, Robin, Jones and Whitman Company Correspondence, 1841–3, letter of clerk Elias de la Parelle from Caraquet, 24 Aug. 1841: 'A number of the folks here have joined the Temperance Society and the remainder will do so very shortly; so that we will not require rum next season.'

20 James Douglas (1800–1886), who established a medical practice in Quebec City in 1826, subsequently directed the Marine and Emigrant Hospital and co-founded the city's first mental asylum at Beauport. Physicians played a considerable role in temperance reform. The nineteenth-century movement traced its intellectual origins to the Philadelphia surgeon Dr Benjamin Rush, who demonstrated that many mental and physical illnesses could be traced to the heavy drinking of the day. Though doctors frequently prescribed alcohol, a number of them endorsed the teetotal movement. This was much more true of the United States than of Britain, where the temperance movement was often perceived as an attack on the medical establishment. A number of leading Lower Canadian physicians endorsed Chiniquy's temperance manual and the then-controversial notion that teetotalism would not be injurious to one's health.

21 Early workers in the field included Father Pierre Beaumont of St Jean Chrysôstome parish and Father B. Durocher of Château Richler, as well as Father Dufrene of St Gervais. *Bulletin des recherches historiques* 3 (1897): 12, 44–5; G. Lemoine, *L'association Catholique de Tempérance de la Paroisse de Beauport* (Quebec 1843), 7

new commitment to morality and to schooling that he had a temperance column erected in order to record for future generations the miraculous transformation of the people of Beauport. This ceremony was no trifling affair. It included seven choirs of women in snowy robes, an equestrian contingent, a sea of banners, dozens of ecclesiastics, and 10,000 chanting parishioners, all marching in procession to immortalize Chiniquy's accomplishment.[22] The little Quebec suburb was perhaps a modest stage for this maestro; but his day would come.

As the 1840s progressed, French Canada was to face increasing difficulties. Appalling misery and growing fears of crime accompanied the influx of Irish famine immigrants after 1847; meanwhile, French Canadians migrated in swelling numbers to the United States. Respected figures in the community would join Chiniquy in relating the problem of drink to poverty and crime, and to French Canada's ability to survive in the midst of the rapidly advancing anglophone communities in North America. While the religious revivalists had presented temperance as a path to personal salvation, the emphasis during the second half of the decade would shift to drying up the vale of tears here below.

This more worldly wave of temperance sentiment had some radical associations – most notably Judge Mondelet. Serving first in the circuit and then in the superior court at Montreal, Charles Mondelet was one of the few laymen in French Canada to become a leader in the temperance cause. He was a man of independent mind whom one historian has called a follower of Voltaire.[23] No party man, he had broken with the *patriotes* in the 1830s over what he considered their extremism; yet he acted as defence counsel for those same *patriotes* when they were imprisoned in 1837. In 1838 he too suffered arrest. In the following decade he published his *Letters on Elementary and Practical Education* which heavily influenced the provincial Education Act of 1841. Mondelet had not taken the clerical path to temperance beliefs; his conversion was probably due not to the *reveil* but to the influence of his father, a coroner who had long maintained that drink was largely responsible for crime.[24] On good terms with the city's young liberals,

22 *Le Canadien*'s description of the event is reprinted in Victor Levy-Beaulieu, *Manuel de la petit littérature du Québec* (Montreal 1974), 103.

23 Marcel Trudel, *L'influence de Voltaire au Canada* (Montreal 1945), 159

24 CTA, July 1836. The strong correlation between drinking and crime was pointed out by a number of judges, grand juries, and prison officials, as well as by the Parliamentary Inquiry into Intemperance in 1849. See J. Noel, 'Temperance Evangelism: Drink, Religion and Reform in the Province of Canada (MA thesis, University of Ottawa, 1978), chap. 4. The mid-nineteenth-century prohibition drive in the United States has been characterized as a response to the spectre of pauperism and

the judge was invited to address the Institut canadien on a variety of subjects during its peak of popularity in the late 1840s. There he dispensed modernizing advice: to rise early, eat and drink moderately, and keep busy; to educate women, that they might raise the moral tone of the whole household; to make tomorrow's society a rational one by keeping the young away from superstitious nursemaids.[25] When Mondelet became a temperance activist around 1845, he introduced a secular and *rouge* strain into what had hitherto been a religious movement among French Canadians.

Mondelet presented alarming evidence to the public. He had determined that drink was a contributing factor in seven-eighths of all crimes committed. Releasing to the press examples gathered during his years on the bench, he claimed that case after case had shown that excessive use of drink occasioned violence, arson, and theft. His hand was strengthened when both his fellow judge, J.S. McCord, and the city jailor also acknowledged a strong correlation between drunkenness and crime. Mondelet further insisted that young criminals were learning their skills in taverns – veritable academies of crime, which drained off the money which should have been spent on education of a more wholesome kind.[26] The judge insisted that the wealthy, as well as the poor, were guilty, and he supported the point by publicizing the drunken misconduct of seigneurs' sons, including the death by *delirium tremens* of a young gentleman at Longueuil. The outspoken judge predicted that a sober population would wear a dramatically different character. Arson, suicide, and drunken accidents would become rare occurrences; public health and conduct would improve. The desire for education and self-improvement would become general and would lead Canada to new prosperity. In Mondelet's view, eliminating alcohol would bring about 'a complete revolution in human affairs.'[27]

When the felonies and tragedies were tallied, it seemed that curbing drink might be a progressive step. Mondelet's ideas appear to have found favour with the young intelligentsia, and discipline became more fashionable than dissipation. *L'Avenir*, the journal of the left-wing intellectuals, exhorted its readers to pass the long winter evenings in study and other forms of self-improvement. Young French-Canadian leaders, the influential journalist Etienne Parent proudly

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urban crime. Tyrell, *Sobering Up*, 216. Canada's Maritime regions have been particularly well served with illuminating discussions of the interrelation between criminality and alcohol abuse. See Judith Fingard, *The Dark Side of Life in Victorian Halifax* (Halifax 1989), and Peter McGahan, *Crime and Policing in Maritime Canada* (Fredericton, NB 1988).

25 *L'Avenir* 31 déc. 1847, 12 fév. 1848

26 CTA, 1 Feb. 1845; MR, 22 oct. 1847; JLAC, 1849, app. zzz

27 MR, 24 oct. 1848

noted in 1848, no longer fell prey to the dissipated habits that had claimed so many of their elders.[28] Many other reformers became convinced that temperance was vital. The editor of the *Lower Canadian Agricultural Journal*, for instance, said sobriety would improve farming in the most basic way, by making the farmer more vigorous.[29] School Superintendent J.B. Meilleur, who had long advocated levying higher liquor taxes as a source of school funding, approved for use in the schools a temperance manual which had been written by Chiniquy.[30] Political radicals such as T.S. Brown and Wolfred Nelson also endorsed the campaign against drink. Brown, who had led *patriote* forces at Saint Charles, became a platform speaker on temperance, presenting 'King Alcohol' as the great oppressor of the poor.[31]

By the late 1840s, when Judge Mondelet called for the abolition of taverns, others were sufficiently alarmed about Montreal's growing crime and misery to agree. *La Revue canadienne* argued that for *les grands maux* one needed *les grands remèdes*. Since it was intemperance that filled the streets with ragged beggars and the jails with criminals, then '*down with licenses for taverns*, which for the most part are infamous hangouts for brigands ... down with these useless places full of idlers and sluggards who are the terror and the dread, the shame and despair of the towns and villages.'[32]

Another cause of great concern was the growing number of French Canadians who were emigrating to the United States. Here, again, there were those who posited drink as a contributing factor. A legislative committee appointed to enquire into French-Canadian migration singled out intemperance as a leading cause, finding that lumberjacks who frittered away their wages on wild living had no savings to fall back on when periodic slumps hit the timber trade. Thus, unemployed lumbermen were forced to emigrate. The committee also unearthed cases of farmers compounding the chronic problems of scarce land and capital by drinking themselves into such heavy debt that they had to sell out and leave.[33]

As such testimony mounted, those who worried about French

28 Parent's comments are found in J. Huston, comp., *Le répertoire national* (Montreal 1893), IV, 81. *L'Avenir*'s call for self-improvement is found in the 16 octobre 1847 issue.

29 *Lower Canada Agricultural Journal*, Sept. 1848

30 MR, 3 mai 1849; Charles Chiniquy, *Manuel de la Société de Tempérance dedié à la jeunesse canadienne* (Montreal 1847), preface; *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, X, 'Meilleur, Jean Baptiste'

31 *Speech of T.S. Brown, Esquire, at the Union Tent, I.[ndependent] O.[rder] of R.[achabites] Soirée, March 23, 1848* (Montreal 1848), 3–5; Chiniquy, *Manuel des Sociétés de Tempérance dedié à la jeunesse du Canada* (Montreal 1849), 85

32 Cited in MR, 2 nov. 1847

33 MR, 4 déc. 1849

Canada's future began to see drink as a menace. The Quebec Committee on Reform and Progress passed temperance resolutions, and the Montreal Institut canadien chose Father Chiniquy as the appropriate lecturer for the subject of 'National Industry and Economy.' Hector Langevin, then at the beginning of his long political career, declared that drunkenness had become so serious that it had replaced assimilation as the great national peril: 'This small people has grown ... its language and customs will not perish. But an even greater danger threatens it; this time it doesn't concern anglicization; it's the canker of intemperance that is devouring it, ravishing the dignity of the rational man.'[34] By the second half of the 1840s, temperance had sufficiently strong endorsement to become a French-Canadian national crusade. The little curé's hour had come.

Father Chiniquy's message can be summed up in one sentence: the national survival of French Canadians depends upon temperance. Avoiding the polarizing political issues of the rebellion era, Chiniquy focused on social and economic modernization that the people must undertake together. In the crisis atmosphere of the late 1840s he offered simple, timely relief. Giving up drink might be unpleasant, but it was preferable to the decay and disappearance of a people. By linking sobriety to patriotism, Chiniquy was able to unite religious and secular temperance supporters and to create a mass temperance fervour which had no parallel elsewhere in British North America.

When he gathered a broad segment of the laity behind him in a national campaign, Chiniquy was exercising the expanded priestly leadership which lay at the heart of the ultramontane programme. For, despite the fact that he was well regarded by liberal nationalists, he was an ultramontane Catholic who championed an extension of church authority. He publicly proclaimed the rights of the church and the duty to submit to the pope. With the ultramontane's disregard for the dividing line between religion and politics, Chiniquy pronounced in favour of the Reformers in parliament in a way even their leader, Louis-Hippolyte La Fontaine, considered improper.[35] When the developing rift between Bishop Bourget and some of the more anticlerical *rouges* forced Chiniquy to choose a side late in his campaign, he was to declare that 'all that which relates to virtue, order, justice and law is the domain of the priest, know that well.'[36] His visits to hundreds of parishes reinforced this authority on the local level. When he took

34 Chiniquy, *Manuel* (1849), 8

35 P. Sylvain, 'Quelques aspects de l'antagonisme libéral-ultramontain' in Bernard, *Les idéologies québécoises*, 135; Trudel, *Chiniquy*, 301

36 *La Minerve*, 21 juin 1849

his leave, a delegation of the local notables frequently came to thank him for changing their lives. He responded with unequivocal advice about where people were to turn in future difficulties. They must, as he told the people of St Geneviève in the spring of 1849, 'follow their good curé's wise counsel.'[37] This is not to argue that everyone who heard such advice took heed, but it certainly did the church no harm that the most popular hero of the decade endorsed its claims. While the austere bishop worked away in Montreal laying the solid foundations of the ultramontane state (whose symbolic capitol was the imposing new Dorchester Street cathedral modelled on St Peter's in Rome), the flamboyant lieutenant was out riding the highways and byways winning recruits for that state. The temperance pledge might perhaps be regarded as a pledge of allegiance.

The evangelist began visiting parishes in the Montreal diocese to preach temperance in the early months of 1848.[38] After hearing his orations, hundreds, and sometimes thousands, in parish after parish stepped forward and pledged never again to drink. In the first eighteen months of campaigning, Chiniquy visited 110 localities and persuaded 200,000 men, women, and children to take the pledge. He generated much excitement because, to a considerably greater extent than during the earlier campaign, there clearly was a mass renunciation of alcohol. Believing, as nineteenth-century temperance converts tended to do, that a dry world would be much brighter, the people became collectively optimistic. For once, they were the ones in the vanguard of progress. They said Chiniquy reminded them of the *patriotes* and they called him the new Papineau – for like the rebel hero, he offered them a vision of a radically better future. As the crusade progressed along the dusty backroads of Canada East, it swelled to a triumphal march. Whole parishes turned out to greet the temperance priest with flags and marching bands, militia musters and cannonades. They quickly bought up 10,000 copies of his temperance manual, and they proudly hung his picture on their walls.

Chiniquy continued to campaign through 1850 and most of 1851, towards the end preaching in the Quebec diocese as well. Largely due to the excitement that he generated, even parishes he did not visit hastened to take the pledge from other, lesser known itinerant preachers. By 1850, 400,000 teetotallers,[39] which amounted to nearly

37 Ibid., 7 mai 1849

38 There are accounts of the Chiniquy crusade in Trudel, *Chiniquy*, 87–130, and in P. Berton, *My Country* (Toronto 1977), chap. 8.

39 MR, 6 sept. 1850; G. Carrière, 'L'Eglise canadienne vers 1841,' *Revue de l'Université d'Ottawa* 24 (1954): 72

half the population of Canada East and a clear majority of the francophone population, had been won.

Those who attribute this striking upsurge to Chiniquy's eloquence are not entirely mistaken. There was some real substance to his message, but there was also plenty of style. The young priest combined his timely nationalism with a platform manner that was almost irresistable. Editors seldom reprinted his speeches, and when they did, they paired them with apologies, complaining that they were unable to capture his effect.[40] Part of this sprang from the suspense he built up by using stage effects, such as sudden unexpected appearances which led to rumours that he had arrived by miracle. When he strode out to face his audience, Chiniquy used his diminutive frame to maximum effect. People sometimes felt he was overrated when they first saw him, for he had the sad, sheepish look of a loser. But he approached the altar so solemnly that the crowd suddenly sensed a greater force than his own slight person at work. One observer reported that during the course of his sermons he seemed to transform himself from a lamb into a lion. At the climax he raised a large golden crucifix the pope had given him and asked various groups in the audience to strike down the Goliath of drink. He ended on an exultant note, urging mothers to dry their tears, and children and pastors to rejoice, together the parish was going to strike a blow on their behalf. Chiniquy's performances moved people to weep.[41]

The curé did not mince words with his audiences. Out in the country parishes, he spoke about farm life and daily concerns, a departure from the usual formal sermon style. Farm families, shaken by several decades of agrarian crisis, were worried about competition from British and American immigrants who seemed to till the soil so successfully. 'How you complain,' he told the people who packed into the village churches, 'of the newcomers who seem to be invading our land, of the contemptuous way they treat you.'[42] Immigrants had already acquired the best town properties, ancient families were being driven from their seigneuries by the creditor's whip. 'Your turn is coming,' Chiniquy warned his audiences: 'Yes, it is with a heart full of inexpressible sadness that I tell you: before many years, if a prompt and universal change doesn't take place among you, you will be driven from your houses, and your children will remain there in the capacity of servants and slaves.'[43] God had deliberately sent the English, Scots,

40 MR, 10 oct. 1848

41 This description is drawn from MR, 30 mars 1849; CTA, 1 May 1849; Trudel, *Chiniquy*, 94.

42 Chiniquy, *Manuel* (1849), 143–4

43 Ibid.

Irish, and Americans to punish Canada. The immigrants were not to blame, for their methods were entirely honourable: frugality, hard work, and a commitment to educating their children. It was almost a foregone conclusion that the French Canadians would lose their lands to these more disciplined people unless they were willing to give up the ruinous addiction that left them sluggish and disorganized.

Chiniquy called town audiences, too, to embark on a new age of industry: 'We ought not to bring from Europe what we can get at home. We have been upwards of two hundred years in Canada and we manufacture nothing, not even a pin or a button. I have been ashamed while travelling in the United States, and seeing their extensive manufactures, to think that we are yet in our cradles. Last year I heard a party of gentlemen on board a steamboat conversing about some *great progress*, which turned out to be the establishment of a manufactory of *tobacco pipes*! We suffer from a want of nationality, a want of union, a want of energy.'[44] Sober, schooled, and enterprising, French Canada would at last, the preacher promised, hold its own among the advanced countries of the world.

One of Bishop Bourget's aims in establishing temperance societies was to replace the political clubs of the Rebellion era, to align the people with the curé rather than the tavern Dantons.[45] There is plenty of evidence that Chiniquy did indeed sway the group it was hardest for the clergy to sway: Papineau's followers. Mondelet had already convinced a number of liberals that a sober people might have considerably fewer social problems, but the populist priest moved reform out of the realm of theory. He actually persuaded the thirsty thousands to stop drinking; he seemed able to reverse longstanding customs in a way few would have predicted possible. In 1848 *L'Avenir* singled out Chiniquy as a priest moved by reason and love of country, a philanthropist who would relieve the people's distress by making them thrifty and sober. Public accolades for his work arrived from Mondelet and his friends, with the judge presenting Chiniquy with a gold medal before a crowd of some 8000 people in a ceremony at Longueuil. One convert in the parish of St Caesaire who combined hatred for the political union with English Canada with love for Chiniquy expressed the utopianism of the hour: 'The Union destroyed with time, and drunkenness gone, Lower Canada will be at the door of all the happiness we could wish for here below.'[46]

When Chiniquy rode into the former rebel stronghold of St

44 CTA, 1 May 1849
45 Brunet, 'L'Eglise,' 92
46 MR, 2 juin 1848. *L'Avenir*, 6 sept. 1848, applauded Chiniquy's patriotism.

Eustache in March 1849, the clerical victory seemed nearly complete. No rebels now, the people lined up to take the pledge. Thanking their visitor afterwards, the villagers compared themselves to the ancient Israelites. In what was perhaps an allusion to the rebellion or to Governor Colborne's repression afterwards, they lamented that 'the walls of the temple had risen up against them.'[47] They blamed it on their worship of a false god, the golden calf of drink. Now 'Moses' – Chiniquy – had come to lead them into the promised land. There, with God's help and their curé's approval, they would find a new life. Any lingering doubts about their public submissiveness to bishop and governor were laid to rest in their spokesman's final ringing declaration: 'Peace on earth to all men!' The sheep may have converted to the stern new moral order during the *reveil*. Chiniquy was now performing the harder task; he was bringing in the goats.

Not only were priests and patriotes reconciled; class distinctions too, were temporarily blurred. Earlier temperance campaigns, in French Canada and elsewhere, had drawn most of their support from the working classes; Chiniquy brought people of influence into the fold as well. By the autumn of 1848, *rouge* and ultramontane newspapers agreed that he had won over 'all the most respectable inhabitants of the country' and 'all of French Canada's most eminent people.'[48] Mayors and other local notables came out to greet him; they chaired meetings which passed resolutions seeking tighter restrictions on the sale of drink.

Even Protestants recognized the campaign as an unprecedented success. The Rev. William Taylor, a longtime leader in the English-Canadian temperance movement, at a huge rally held in Montreal, congratulated the priestly orator for his remarkable accomplishment. Also impressed was the parliament of the Province of Canada, which awarded Chiniquy an honorarium of £500 for outstanding service to the country and passed restrictive tavern legislation which he had helped to draft.

The fact was that French Canada had become quite startlingly dry. The 400,000 pledgetakers of 1848–51 had clearly stopped, or at least greatly reduced, their intake of alcohol. Taverns, which often closed when Chiniquy came to town, stayed shut after he left. By the autumn of 1848, forty parishes and townships in the Montreal district had closed their drinking places. By the next summer, seventy-five parishes across Canada East were dry. By June 1849, nearly all the distilleries had suspended their operations,[49] and scores of puncheons had been

47 MR, 30 mars 1849

48 *L'Avenir*, 6 sept. 1848; MR, 8 sept. 1848

49 MR, 19, 26 sept. 1848, 1 juin 1849; see also JLAC, 1849, app. ZZZ; CTA, 1 Jan. 1849.

TABLE 1
Canada East Distilleries

Year	Gallons produced
1847	645,386
1848	317,840
1849	246,920
1850	79,914

SOURCE: Ouellet, *Histoire*, II, 617

returned by country merchants who had no buyers. Molson's, the largest distillery in the province, which had weathered earlier temperance campaigns without any serious inconvenience, reported a loss of £15,000 in 1849.[50] When the Chiniquy crusade got underway, imports of alcohol sank to the lowest point in decades. Domestic production also hit bottom as the campaign crested in 1849–50. By 1850, Chiniquy had apparently succeeded in turning a society long known for its *joie-de-vivre* into the most bone-dry temperance stronghold in North America.

Yet trouble was stirring. By September 1851 Bishop Bourget had received so much disturbing information about his prize preacher that he could delay action no longer. He had just received a woman's testimony – later affirmed under oath – that Chiniquy had attempted to seduce her. This was all the more worrisome because there was solid evidence that Chiniquy had done the same thing several years earlier. He had made overtures to a woman in the parish of St Pascal during a week of temperance preaching there in 1846 – only to be thwarted by the local curé who, notified by the woman, had appeared in her stead at the appointed place of rendezvous. This incident, never publicized, had been whitewashed; Father Brassard, a longtime friend of Chiniquy's, had convinced Bourget that the conduct ascribed had not been serious enough to warrant taking action against the promising young preacher. Evidence continued to mount, however, that Chiniquy was making advances to women he met in the course of his travels. By 28 September 1851 Bourget had heard enough. He wrote a letter ordering his troublesome hero to cease all pastoral work in the Montreal diocese.[51]

Thus it was that in October 1851 Chiniquy boarded a westbound train and went to work as a missionary to French-Canadian settlers in

50 M. Denison, *The Barley and the Stream: The Molson Story* (Toronto 1955), 119, 195, 207

51 Chiniquy's amorous adventures are traced in Trudel, *Chiniquy*, 66ff, 126–35.

Illinois. Within five years he incurred the wrath of the bishop of the Chicago diocese when he became the subject of allegations of sexual misconduct and disobedience to his superiors. Excommunicated from the Catholic church in 1856, he converted to Presbyterianism, married, and returned to Canada. He carved out a second career for himself, becoming a world-renowned writer and lecturer against the Catholic church. To the end he retained a fiery tongue which he used to inflame the hearts of men.

The most dramatic effects of the Chiniquy crusade did not last. While the orator's disgrace was not generally known, his absence was sufficient cause for a rapid plunge in enthusiasm. Tavern-keepers began setting up shop again when Chiniquy's campaign ground to a halt in the autumn of 1851. By 1852 Bourget was lamenting that enemies of temperance were attacking 'de tous côtés, et avec fureur.'[52] Liquor consumption began to climb again. In 1853 brewer-distiller Thomas Molson wrote to a friend that the temperance movement had relaxed and plans were underway for expansion of his Montreal distilling operation.[53] It is true that many of Chiniquy's rural converts continued to shun alcohol, and pockets of teetotal farmers in Quebec remained for decades afterwards. But in the towns, particularly, many people returned to their old ways.[54]

Chiniquy's more significant contribution was probably that of mediating between old and new authority. Canadians of the 1830s had witnessed the failure of the radical and often anti-clerical *patriotes*. In the following decade the people had responded by turning their backs on radical politics and finding their hero in a temperance priest who championed the authority of the church. Chiniquy's devoutly Catholic phase did not last very long, but it seems quite possible that, as historians uncover more material on popular religious attitudes, we may find the dry crusade helped consolidate the new, enduring power of the church.

Chiniquy had clearly secured a firm hold on the popular imagination; he had, as one contemporary put it, built 'an altar in the heart of every *Canadien*.'[55] The church was slow to dethrone the popular idol

52 *Mandements, lettres pastorales*, 19 mars 1852, II, 293

53 Denison, *Barley*, 234

54 JLAC, 1859, vol. 17, no 5, app. 43; JLAC, 1856, vol. 14, no 6, app. 62; J. Douglas, *Journals and Reminiscences of James Douglas M.D., Edited by His Son* (New York 1910), 211; A. Mailloux, *Essai sur le luxe et la vanité des parures* (Ste Anne de la Pocatière, Québec 1867), 129. Post-Confederation temperance drives seemed to reinforce this early pattern; in 1917 it was reported that 'rural Quebec was and is, aridly dry, the City of Montreal was and is soaking, sopping wet.' Ben Spence, *Quebec and the Liquor Problem* (np, nd [1917]), 33

55 Trudel, *Chiniquy*, 216

even after he gave offense. Hoping to avoid scandal, Bishop Bourget kept silent about the priest's sexual misdemeanours, and the full story did not come out until the publication of Marcel Trudel's biography of Chiniquy in 1955 – more than a century after his expulsion from the Montreal diocese. Upset by Chiniquy's attacks on the Catholic church after his departure, the hierarchy did forbid the populace to attend a series of inflammatory lectures he gave on a return visit to Canada East in 1859; but the crowds simply could not stay away. Fifty years after his brilliant temperance crusade, an enormous contingent of French Canadians joined his funeral procession when he went to his final resting place in Montreal's Côte des Neiges Cemetery. Another fifty years had passed when Professor Trudel observed in his biography of Chiniquy: 'Certainly, in our French Canadian society, one speaks constantly of Chiniquy, he has even become with us an immense figure of legend.'[56]

The mischievous Father Chiniquy turned well-established categories on their head in his own day as in our own. The preacher of the dull virtue of sobriety became the stuff of legend; the priest who would all too soon leave the church became a great Catholic *patriote* in the public mind. By means of his *tour de force* of 1848–51, Chiniquy in all likelihood helped to forge the new and lasting image of the church as guardian of the national destiny. His work embodied the new catholicism championed by Bishop Bourget and Etienne Parent. Losing the stigma of a reactionary, anti-nationalist force, the church re-emerged as the patriotic champion of reform. Today, when the legends have lost their listeners and the church is a shadow of its former self, perhaps Chiniquy can still surprise us, forcing us to re-examine a nineteenth-century society that has often been regarded as a paragon of Catholic isolationism. The popularity of the temperance movement, with its Protestant origins and its emphasis on Weberian virtues such as thrift, prudence, and industry, suggests a surprising eagerness on the part of French Canadians to come to an accommodation with an anglophone continent. In the 1840s Chiniquy's promises of *survivance* won support for virtues more commonly associated with the Anglo-American, Protestant side of Canada's heritage. Hoping to save itself, little Rome-on-the-St Lawrence crooked its knee to Samuel Smiles.

56 Ibid., 308