

## Charles Chiniquy: The Making of an Anti-Catholic Crusader

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On the sixteenth of January, 1899, Charles Paschal Telesphore Chiniquy died in his ninetieth year, leaving a long record of religious and oratorical activity in both English and French. He also left a large legacy of anti-Catholic hate literature which is still being published and used around the world today. Chiniquy, as Pierre Berton describes him, was the

most controversial of all Canadian zealots in the 19th century ... In the 1840s Chiniquy was perhaps the best-known Roman Catholic priest in the country. In the 1880s he was, probably, the best-known Protestant.<sup>2</sup>

This is his importance; he claims our attention as one of the rare French-Canadian Roman Catholic priests who converted linguistically and theologically to become an English-speaking Presbyterian minister.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, he was able to seize newspaper headlines in Ireland, England, continental Europe, Australia and throughout North America, in the entire latter half of the nineteenth century.<sup>4</sup> His influence across national and linguistic barriers indicates a personality essential to the understanding and assessment of nineteenth-century religious mentalities, especially nineteenth-century bicultural Canada.

What was present in Chiniquy's environment to help create an anti-Catholic out of a Roman Catholic priest? This paper presents two structural

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<sup>1</sup> The author would like to thank Fr. Alphonse de Valk and Dr. Brian Clarke for commenting on a previous version of this article.

<sup>2</sup> Pierre Berton, "Legends in the Rough," in *The Canadian*, 11 September 1976, p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Rieul-P. Duclos, *Histoire du protestantisme français au Canada et aux États-Unis*, 1913 (2 vol.). This work enumerates some of the other Canadian Roman-Catholic priests in the nineteenth century who became French Protestant ministers. Chiniquy seems to be the only one to have also overcome the language barrier.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, the Baptist Historical Archives, McMaster University, File, "Newspaper Clippings." Also, Library of the Faculty of Religious Studies, McGill University, Chiniquy scrapbook.

aspects to answer this question: biography and analysis. A brief chronology of Chiniquy's life will serve as the introductory framework to a discussion of five prominent influences in Chiniquy's life: morality, ultramontanist, temperance, emigration, and the nature of religious language. This discussion of a character in context will help make sense of nineteenth-century Canadian religion.

## BIOGRAPHY

Chiniquy's career has been amply documented elsewhere, especially by himself in his two massive books, *Fifty years in the Church of Rome* (1885) and *Forty Years in the Church of Christ* (1900) which, together, chronicle his lengthy life and reprint many of his written works.<sup>5</sup> In summary: Charles was born in Kamouraska, Quebec, in 1809 and studied at the local seminary in Nicolet. Fatherless in 1821 at the age of 12, he was supported by an uncle until the age of 16 whereupon two priests at the school paid for his tuition. Fulfilling their hopes, Charles succeeded in winning the prizes of verse recitation one year and of *amplification française* in the year devoted to studies in rhetoric. The young man was quickly distinguishing himself as an orator.

Ordained in 1833, he served in the parishes and in the naval hospital of Quebec City. In 1838, he became pastor of the large and important parish of Beauport and, there, began his famous temperance crusades. He left Beauport suddenly in 1842 for Kamouraska and then joined the Oblates of Mary Immaculate in 1846. Dismissed from the novitiate as unsuited for Oblate community life, he resumed his effective and popular temperance preaching in the diocese of Montreal at the invitation of the formidable Bishop Ignace Bourget. Here he published his *Manual of the Temperance Society* (1847) which soon became a widely-read handbook in Quebec.<sup>6</sup> His reputation as a saint grew with his oratorical successes. Paintings of him similar to the

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<sup>5</sup> Marcel Trudel's *Chiniquy* (Trois-Rivières, Québec, 1955) is the only major biography. Its critical tone offsets Chiniquy's own dubious assertions. Unfortunately, it has never been translated from the original French and has been long out of print. Other works are merely re-issues and edited versions of Chiniquy's *Fifty Years in the Church of Rome. By Father Chiniquy, the Apostle of Temperance of Canada. Author of "The Manual of Temperance." "The Priest, The Woman, and The Confessional." "Papal Idolatry," "Rome and Education," Etc.* (Chicago, 1885), xvi-832 pages, and the posthumously published *Forty Years in the Church of Christ* (Chicago, New York, and Toronto, 1900), 498 pages. Most of the letters or pamphlets Chiniquy wrote as an anti-Catholic are included in these works. The only other biography of Chiniquy written in English is a short sensational chapter, relying heavily on Trudel, in Pierre Berton's *My Country: The Remarkable Past* (Toronto, 1976), pp. 138-54.

<sup>6</sup> Charles Chiniquy, *Manual of the Temperance Society, Dedicated to the Youth of Canada* (Montreal, 1847).

iconography of saints, particularly the popular St. Louis de Gonzague, were produced and circulated.<sup>7</sup>

Bishop Bourget of Montreal commissioned Father Charles Chiniquy, by 1851 a famous Quebec orator and temperance preacher, to meet and debate with French-speaking Protestants who had begun to proselytize the French-Canadian Catholics. The religious line dividing the French Protestant from the French Catholic was very sharply drawn, but there existed another difference between the two – the French Protestant was more than likely to have come from French Switzerland.<sup>8</sup>

“Les petits suisses,” or the “little chipmunks,” as French Canadians still pun, popped up here and there, travelling, as did Vessot, from one small town to another as “colporteurs” or pedlars of religious books and pamphlets. The religious authorities of these predominantly Catholic towns were disturbed at the steady attacks made on the Roman Catholic faith and at the small raids made on their flocks’ numbers. Debates were common forms of educational entertainment.

A closer look at the 1851 Chiniquy-Roussy debate is useful since it contains in miniature many of the elements prominent in Chiniquy’s life. Records from both sides of the debate have been kept.<sup>9</sup> Chiniquy’s side, claiming victory, put forward “unanswerable” arguments supporting the “one, holy, [and Roman, of course] Catholic, and apostolic Church” on the grounds of Petrine authority and episcopal succession. The Bible had to be interpreted in line with traditional Roman Catholic teachings, because the Apostles were not commissioned to have a non-existent Bible read, but to have the Gospel – no book at all, but the good news – preached. For Roman Catholics, this meant a continuing, authoritative church community to which the written form of the Gospel in the Bible belonged. These were ancient arguments used against every individual or group who decided to interpret the written word of the Bible independently of the community.

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<sup>7</sup> Trudel, p. 104, draws our attention to this detail. A similar picture is also present in the 1888 16th edition of Chiniquy’s *Fifty Years*.

<sup>8</sup> David-Thierry Ruddel, *Le Protestantisme français au Québec. 1840-1919: “Images” et Témoignages* (Ottawa, 1983), p. 25. Ruddel published the fascinating journals of well-known anomalies: French-Canadian Protestants. In Joseph Vessot’s journal, kept from 1840 to 1863, Roman Catholicism was seen as “la religion de satan, les fruits de l’ignorance et de la superstition.” Such superstition, it was believed by the French Protestants, comprised the errors about saints, confession, fasting, and, in a word, “toutes les erreurs qu’ils enseignent et que L’Écriture sainte condamne” (p. 20).

<sup>9</sup> Charles Chiniquy, *Le Suisse méthodiste confondu et convaincu d’ignorance et de mensonge* (Montreal, 1851). Louis Roussy, *Appel d la raison et à la conscience des habitants des paroisses de Ste-Marie et de St-Grégoire* (Napierville, Quebec, 1851).

Chiniquy's opponent, the Swiss pedlar Louis Roussy, however, had his own arguments. He denounced innovations introduced into the religious beliefs and practices of the people (the rosary, devotion to the Sacred Heart, and to Mary, etc.) by the ultramontanists, such as Bishop Bourget and the Jesuits. The Roman Catholic Church hierarchy was not, he declared, faithful to the early church's beliefs and had, therefore, forfeited its claim to be the Church Universal. Of course, with a centralizing Church under Pope Pius IX, and the popular piety encouraged after the European revolutions (such as that which surrounded the concept of the Immaculate Conception, solemnly defined in 1854), Roussy believed himself entirely justified in his opinions. Chiniquy championed Pius IX and the centralized papacy of the ultramontanist theorists in clever invective, even abusive language, against "the ignorance of all these creators of new religions."<sup>10</sup> Whether Chiniquy actually *won* the debate is another question. Roussy also claimed victory.

Shortly after the 1851 Roussy meeting, Chiniquy requested permission from Bourget to go to the United States and minister to the French Catholics in Illinois. Settled in Kankakee, he and his parish quickly found themselves, as did French and other immigrant communities elsewhere in the States and Canada, at odds with the Irish Bishop.<sup>11</sup> One year after the 1851 debate, Chiniquy was a schismatic who did not acknowledge the authority of his Bishop over him or the French-Canadian parish. A new bishop, O'Regan of Chicago, finally excommunicated Chiniquy in 1856. Chiniquy and his followers formed the "Christian Catholic Church" and then quickly threw in their lot with the numerous Old School Presbyterians of Illinois. His career of world travel, lecturing, and publishing as a famous ex-priest and popular speaker "about the plots of the Catholic hierarchy and the debauchery of the priests and nuns" then began.

It is an extraordinary conversion. The personal transformation of a French-Canadian Roman Catholic priest into an English-speaking Presbyterian minister almost defies understanding. It surely defied the comprehension of his former co-religionists, who could not revile him enough! In French Canada, he was considered a monster; he was compared to the devil and to excrement.<sup>12</sup> He was reviled by those who wished to prove their

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<sup>10</sup> Chiniquy, *Le Suisse méthodiste*, p. 17.

<sup>11</sup> Jay P. Dolan's works, *The Immigrant Church. New York's Irish and German Catholics, 1815-1865* (Baltimore, 1975) and *The American Catholic Experience. A History from Colonial Times to the Present* (New York, 1985) explore this theme for the United States. Robert Choquette's *Language and Religion. A History of English-French Conflict in Ontario* (Ottawa, 1975) begins the study for Canada.

<sup>12</sup> As Thomas Chapais wrote, "Un Canadien français qui n'est pas catholique est une anomalie. Un Canadien français qui l'a été et qui ne l'est plus est une monstruosité." Cited in Pierre Savard, *Aspects du catholicisme canadien français au*

own French Canadianism which was considered one with Catholicism. Protestants were English or, if they spoke French, Swiss. Chiniquy proved that they could also be Canadian. It was fear that the same could easily happen to other French Canadians that brought out the denunciations of the insecure French-Canadian Catholic élite. Chiniquy's famous oratory matched their invective. He reviled the Church, priests, monks, nuns, the doctrines of Mary, transubstantiation, and the papacy. What made this possible?

### MORALITY

Marcel Trudel, Chiniquy's only serious biographer, saw Chiniquy as a proud, sensual, unscrupulous hypocrite. He reached that conclusion by relying heavily on a written 1884 report, which he terms absolutely reliable, to explain the motives in Chiniquy's life.<sup>13</sup> This document is crucial in the debate about Chiniquy's morals. It was vigorously denied by Chiniquy, his family and his admirers. What did it say? When Chiniquy's uncle stopped supporting him in his studies, Chiniquy merely ignored the incident and claimed his family's poverty after his father's death was to blame.<sup>14</sup> Trudel relies on the document to assert that Chiniquy had sought the virtue of one of his uncle's daughters. Trudel also uses it to make similar accusations to explain Chiniquy's rapid transfer from Beauport in 1842 (the seduction of one of his parishioners), his sudden vocation for the Oblates in 1846 (a similar discovery), and his growing desire to minister to exiled French Canadians in Illinois in 1851 (Montreal Bishop Bourget's last chance to Chiniquy).<sup>15</sup> Relying then on these assertions about Chiniquy's morals, Trudel believed the worst about Chiniquy's motives throughout his turbulent career. The famous British Jesuit pamphlet writer, Sydney Smith, used the

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*XIXe siècle* (Montreal, 1980), p. 19. An example of the passions aroused by Chiniquy's conversion is the delightful X.Y.Z. *Honte et mépris au renégat. La vie et mort de l'apostat Chiniquy* (Montreal, 1875), which took pleasure in predicting in graphic detail the obviously horrible, satanic death the excrement-like Chiniquy would experience. Chiniquy probably disappointed many by merely outliving his critics.

<sup>13</sup> Trudel, p. 8, n. 20, "tout à fait sûr, dont nous n'avons cependant pas encore le droit de révéler l'auteur." This report rests in the Archives of the Archdiocese of Montreal (AAM), Box 402-102, File 1883-1908, Document: Montréal, 25 février, 1884. We have received permission to reveal the author's name as the Rev. Fr. Resther, S.J.

<sup>14</sup> *Fifty Years*, p. 738.

<sup>15</sup> Trudel, p. 49, n. 66 and p. 67, n. 20, respectively.

same anonymous document to fight Chiniquy's influence in the British Isles.<sup>16</sup> Unfortunately, this particular document is based on hearsay.<sup>17</sup>

Trudel's use of the 1884 document was restrained; he used it explicitly only three times. His certainty, however, and his tone throughout the remainder of his otherwise credible work show he gave these accusations greater weight than something written in Chiniquy's polemic-charged later life deserved. Although Trudel's historical judgement seems skewed by this dubious report, Trudel's work must not be dismissed; there is other evidence; there are affidavits from women in the Roman Catholic archives of Quebec.<sup>18</sup> When Chiniquy was to leave for the United States in 1851, Bishop Bourget wrote to Chiniquy advising him to take strict precautions with "*personnes du sexe*."<sup>19</sup> As Trudel elaborates, this is strange advice to an older priest – he was forty-two at the time – who should have known this already. Such indications, as well as the reports of contemporaries, those puzzling changes in Chiniquy's vocation, place of residence, and the widespread opinion which Têtu relates, lends more credit to Têtu's, Smith's, Resther's, and Trudel's explanations. Until researchers gain access to the Chiniquy family papers, historians can conclude that one of the major reasons Chiniquy converted was immorality.

The archives are filled with complaints of wrong-doing, but the fact remains that excommunication and conversion came years later. So immorality is not the only reason. Other priests were immoral and left home dioceses to rebuild their careers in the mission fields of other countries.

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<sup>16</sup> Sydney Smith, S.J., *Pastor Chiniquy. An Examination of His "Fifty Years in the Church of Rome"* (London, c. 1908), p. 17. Smith was no doubt asked to counteract Chiniquy's influence in the U.K. and was sent the same document upon which Trudel relied.

<sup>17</sup> The report was written almost sixty years after the first alleged lapse in morality. Trudel (p. 8, n. 20) states that it was based on Mgr. Henri Têtu's notes. An English translation of these notes, deposited in the Archives of the Archdiocese of Montreal, says:

In 1846, tradition relates that he [Chiniquy] was caught in the very act of sin against morals; he was thereupon obliged to leave the diocese of Quebec, and entered the noviciate of the Oblates at Longueuil. The archives of the Archbishop's House, in Quebec, contain no official document regarding the above crime, as there had been no canonical inquest held in the case.

So Trudel and Smith relied on an anonymous document which in turn had relied on Têtu's hearsay. "Biographical Notes Concerning the Apostate Chiniquy. By Msgr H. Têtu, Procurator of the Archbishop's House, Quebec" c. 1907, AAM (402-102) 1931-1962. Têtu, by the way, was the grandson of Chiniquy's uncle. This raises an interesting problem about the reliability of family tradition.

<sup>18</sup> The Quebec and Montreal Archdiocesan Archives have been well-researched by Trudel, pp. 130-131. See also AAM (402-102).

<sup>19</sup> Trudel, p. 129.

Others had left the Roman Catholic Church in the nineteenth century. Chiniquy went further. He became an anti-Catholic crusader. Why? What other elements drove Chiniquy to revile his former faith, his coreligionists? One must not categorically rule out, as Trudel, Smith, and others do, other motives in Chiniquy's conversion and later anti-Catholic career. It is important in the debate about Chiniquy to note that he attracted a large audience who believed his innocence and believed he was a Canadian reformer like Knox, Zwingli, Calvin, or Luther had been for their countries.<sup>20</sup> Some French-Canadian Catholics had believed him to be a saintly temperance preacher before his publicized troubles; many Protestants (and some Catholics who became Protestants) continued to believe this of Chiniquy afterwards. To understand why Protestant historiography has accepted Chiniquy's conversion as genuine, the historian has to go beyond the sterile debates of moral guilt or innocence to look at the other contextual elements in Chiniquy's life. How else are we to begin to understand Chiniquy's conversion in its radical opposition to Roman Catholicism, and in Chiniquy's ability to convince others of his innocence and good faith?

#### ULTRAMONTANISM

The first element evident in Chiniquy's intellectual world is that of ultramontanism.<sup>21</sup> For the purposes of this paper, ultramontanism is to be understood as the belief that the Pope is to be followed in both policy as well as doctrine, in political matters as well as religious ones. The two areas overlap, of course, as the ultramontanists argued, but the liberal division of Church and State has almost entirely succeeded, so that we sometimes forget that theocracy was once a Western ideal.

In Lower Canada, ultramontanism was heavily invested with nationalism and became an important rallying point for conservatives. The *Rouges* or French Liberals were a party comprised of liberal Catholics, agnostics and republicans, like the venerable Louis-Joseph Papineau, the anti-clerical leader of the 1837 Rebellion. The famed *Institut Canadien*, a nationalistic, liberal debating society, had both Catholic and Protestant members eager for political liberalization and progress.<sup>22</sup> A French-Canadian

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<sup>20</sup> "Introduction. Charles Chiniquy: His Life and Work. A Character Sketch, by Rev. Principal D.H. MacVicar, D.D., LL.D." in the post-humously published *Forty Years in the Church of Christ*, pp. 5-16.

<sup>21</sup> Nive Voisine and Jean Hamelin, eds., *Les Ultramontains canadiens français*, (Études d'histoire religieuse présentées en hommage au professeur Philippe Sylvain) (Montreal, 1985), shows the continuing interest and importance of this subject in understanding Canadian religious ideas.

<sup>22</sup> Rieul-P. Duclos, Vol. 1, p. 152.

who was not too particular could have a wide choice of political and religious stances from which to choose. There were many listeners who stood between the Roman Catholics and the Swiss Protestants. One of the main reasons Bishop Bourget called in the famous temperance preacher, Chiniquy, was that many politically liberal Catholics were being attracted by religious liberalism, either the soon-to-be-proscribed Catholic variety or Protestantism. Those wavering between the two religious poles who were in favour of the progressive aspects of the temperance crusade might give Chiniquy's Catholicism a hearing.<sup>23</sup> Brought into the spotlight by his oratorical talents, Chiniquy fought the Protestants' theology and their political liberalism. He became an ultramontane hero whose temperance crusades were regularly reported in the press. Hector Langevin, editor at the time of *Les mélanges religieux*, Bourget's paper, wrote a glowing biographical notice for Chiniquy's 1849 *Manuel des sociétés de tempérance* which called him the messenger of peace, the apostle of temperance, similar to the ultramontane French Bishop Forbin-Janson of Nancy. Langevin's hagiographical work probably embarrassed him in later years.<sup>24</sup>

Ultramontanism as an ideology, in all its occasional vagueness and its growing legitimacy enshrined in the Vatican Council, became an underlying unifying element in the better-known movements of temperance, emigration, lay trusteeship, and the vigorous flowering of rhetoric in religious language. It played an important part in Chiniquy's life, first by raising him up through his oratory in the causes dear to French-Canadian ultramontanes. It will be seen how ultramontanism played a part in later bringing him down.

## TEMPERANCE

Previous writers have not bothered to trace the connections between Chiniquy's later Protestantism and his earlier involvement in the temperance movement. This element in Chiniquy's world was of great importance to English and French religious leaders throughout the nineteenth and the early part of the twentieth centuries in North America. Chiniquy's temperance crusades were immensely popular, pleasing everyone in Lower Canada except the tavern keepers. The French conservative (Bleus) and the social-reform-minded liberal (Rouges) political parties could unite with the English-speaking Tory and the Reform (Grits) parties in one of the greatest

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<sup>23</sup> Jean-Paul Bernard, *Les Rouges. Libéralisme, nationalisme et anti-cléricalisme au milieu du XIXe siècle* (Montreal, 1971), pp. 74-75.

<sup>24</sup> Hector Langevin's editorial activities in two newspapers diffusing ultramontane ideology was noted by Nadia Eid in *Le clergé et le pouvoir politique au Québec: une analyse de l'idéologie ultramontaine au milieu du XIXe siècle* (Montreal, 1976), p. 48.



moral crusades of the English-speaking world; a medal and money was presented to Chiniquy by the Parliament of the United Canadas to commemorate his temperance work.<sup>25</sup> In truth, English-Protestant Upper Canada had about a hundred societies by 1831. Chiniquy had taken up moderate temperance only in 1839 (after some Oblates had done so successfully) and became a teetotaler in 1841.<sup>26</sup>

In Chiniquy's *Fifty Years in the Church of Rome*, the relations between temperance and religion were very much in evidence. Drunkenness was on a par "with immoralities of the most degrading kind." Alcoholic beverages "are cursed in hell, in heaven and on earth" and are "the most formidable enemy of our dear country and our holy religion": for "alcohol kills the body and damns the soul of its blind victims."<sup>27</sup> *His Manual of the Temperance Society* was filled with stories of deaths, murders and the damnation of drinkers to convince its readers of the religious (if not superstitious) significance of the virtue of temperance. Chiniquy pictured temperance societies as "nothing else than drops of living water which comes from the fountains of eternal life to reform and save the world."<sup>28</sup> The 1849 edition had been approved by no less than four bishops and had included psalms, prayers, and scripture passages. Chiniquy perceived all opposition to himself and his activities as irreligious. Did not even Methodists and Presbyterians abhor alcohol? Was not Theobald Mathew revered throughout the English-speaking world? And was Chiniquy not called the 'Father Mathew of Canada'?<sup>29</sup>

There was opposition. Many of the temperance societies set up were animated by Protestant laity and clergy. Some French Catholics could have been scornful at the sometimes single-minded effort in the odd Protestant denominations to make temperance almost the sole repository of salvation. Later in his career, Chiniquy invariably labelled his opponents, especially the Irish priest and bishop, as drunkards. He also claimed that bishops and priests perceived temperance societies as Protestant schemes for spreading Protestant heresy.<sup>30</sup> The temperance crusade brought Chiniquy into sympathetic contact with like-minded English Protestants who deplored, with him, the weaker Christians. Here is a sign of Chiniquy's beginning dis-

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<sup>25</sup> Trudel, pp. 110-111. Trudel sees this award as the result of crass political posturing on Chiniquy's part during the passage of the Temperance Bill.

<sup>26</sup> Trudel, pp. 32-34.

<sup>27</sup> *Fifty Years*, pp. 386, 280, 343, and 369, respectively.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 350.

<sup>29</sup> Trudel, pp. 37-38. See especially Hector Langevin, "Notice biographique," pp. 5-15 in Chiniquy, *Manuel des sociétés de tempérance dédié à la jeunesse du Canada*, 3rd edition, (Montreal, 1849), *passim*.

<sup>30</sup> *Fifty Years*, p. 346.

enchantment with the Roman Catholic Church and his growing attraction for a Reformed Christianity.

Nive Voisine in his article, “Mouvements de tempérance et religion populaire,” defined the temperance movement as a collective action tending to produce a change in ideas or in social organization.<sup>31</sup> Liberal reformers were greatly attracted by the aspect of the temperance movement which emphasized the education of the masses to produce new ideas. Like the revivals popular in the eastern United States and elsewhere, the temperance crusade attempted the immediate personal conversion of individual hearers to the Church and to a renewal of faith.<sup>32</sup> Voisine’s general insight can be seen in the individual, Chiniquy.

Familiarity with the conversion experience in the temperance movement probably made the concept of conversion itself easier to accept. Jay P Dolan has discussed how the mission revival’s emphasis on conversion was a common element in both Roman Catholic and Protestant missions.<sup>33</sup> There is a need to look at the writings of individual Canadian temperance preachers, both Protestant and Catholic, to see if this hypothesis is valid. For now, let us suggest that Chiniquy’s familiarity with temperance preaching and Protestant theology, as in his debate with the Swiss in 1851, probably made it easier to integrate himself into the common beliefs and practices of Protestantism. Conversion and repentance were well-known to Chiniquy through his work in temperance and his meetings with the Swiss. When he proclaimed his conversion to Bible (and T -total) Christianity, Chiniquy had carried out his earlier lessons.<sup>34</sup>

## EMIGRATION

In the same year, 1851, that Chiniquy debated with the Swiss and praised temperance, he emigrated to the United States. After ultramontanism and temperance, Chiniquy then made a virtue of his exile to the frontier and began yet another crusade, this time for French-Canadian emigration to more prosperous southern lands. He wrote to the newspapers,

But, my dear son, if thou hast no more room in the valley of the St. Lawrence, and if, by the want of protection from the Government, thou

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<sup>31</sup> Nive Voisine, “Mouvements de tempérance et religion populaire,” in Benoit Lacroix and Jean Simard, eds., *Religion populaire, Religion de clercs?* (Quebec, 1984), p. 67.

<sup>32</sup> Voisine, p. 73. See also Jay P. Dolan, *Catholic Revivalism: The American Experience. 1830-1900* (Notre Dame, Indiana, 1978), pp. 91-112, 190-95.

<sup>33</sup> Jay P. Dolan. *The Immigrant Church*, pp. 155-58.

<sup>34</sup> *Fifty Years*. p. 795, for example, describes Chiniquy’s conversion experience.

canst not go to the forest without running the danger of losing thy life in a pond, or by being crushed under the feet of an English or Scotch tyrant ... Go to Illinois.<sup>35</sup>

Though the references to English or Scots tyrants were acceptable in French (and Irish) circles, the encouragement of emigration to the English, Protestant United States was not. Such a scheme, to build a FrancoAmerican West, would draw away precious human resources from French-Canadian plans to reconquer Canada from the British. Emigration to another country did not receive as sympathetic a hearing as temperance from the French-Canadian and Catholic leaders. Temperance was an attempt to build a better French and Catholic world in Canada; therefore, it was acceptable to the French-Canadian élite. To go to the United States would mean an overwhelming of both French and Catholic elements. This was unacceptable to the French-Canadian élite.<sup>36</sup> An added ultramontane consideration was the fact that Roman Catholics were leaving a Canada they could have influenced through sheer weight of numbers; the United States, however, constitutionally separated Church and State.

Chiniquy's arguments for emigration were economically sound, but the political and cultural arguments for keeping the French Canadians in the Canadas prevailed among the élite. Although thousands continued to stream south, the leaders of Lower Canada did not encourage the emigrants. Chiniquy's scheme was a contradiction of French-Catholic plans for the Canadian North-West. Newspaper battles began.

Tied to emigration in Chiniquy's conflicts with the Roman Catholic hierarchy is the well-known controversy over American-Catholic land trusteeship. Trudel himself analyzed the development of Chiniquy's arguments with Bishop O'Regan about the ownership and control of church property by the parish as opposed to the diocese.<sup>37</sup> In English-speaking colonies and the United States, the Irish diaspora gave an added impetus to Propaganda Fide, but with the lack of state patronage of Church rights and privileges in the United States the conflicts over trusteeship exploded on the American frontier. The temporal goods of the parish, in theory, were the property of the

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<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 511. Bourget, as a result of similar letters had also warned him against rousing national hatreds (Trudel, p. 127). Notice how, as a Roman Catholic, he identifies the foes as English and Scots, not Irish. In 1851, prior to his battles with Bishop O'Regan, the Irish question was not an element in his thinking.

<sup>36</sup> Trudel, p. 147. For a sociological discussion of the messianism inherent in French-Canadian emigration, see Gabriel Dussault, *Le Curé Labelle. Messianisme, utopie et colonisation au Québec 1850-1900* (Montreal, 1983). One of the more valuable works for a study of popular opinion and messianism ideology, although uneven in quality, is Fernand Dumont, *et al., Idéologies au Canada français 1850-1900* (Quebec, 1971).

<sup>37</sup> Trudel, pp. 176-77.

Church, administered by the Bishops, yet the frontier had few priests and bishops and little church land. The young American Catholic Church was often democratically organized and controlled by lay trustees years before the hierarchy was present to guarantee its interests.<sup>38</sup>

In Kankakee, Illinois, where Chiniquy had gone to hide his shame at seducing a series of women in Quebec while preaching temperance, another trustee conflict with an unusual twist began. Chiniquy upheld the claims of the French parishioners (including himself who naturally controlled the parish) to their donated property and opposed the Irish bishop's efforts at control.<sup>39</sup> Although Chiniquy's own desires on the rough frontier prompted him to continue the conflicts, ethnicity and lay control – both inherent in the immigrant American-Catholic experience – also played roles in helping Chiniquy to develop a critique of the Roman Catholic Church during his stay in the mission fields of the United States. One must wonder also at what impact the American frontier had on his already developed liberal sympathies for Protestant enthusiasm and revivalism, which evolved during his temperance crusades. Naturally, the public fights with the Irish-American Bishop O'Regan over Chiniquy's disobedience, in not leaving the French parish and in disputing the transfer of the French parish church to Irish Catholics, also led to Chiniquy's excommunication. For the bishops of Quebec, he had caused too many scandals and made too many mistakes. After Montreal, Chiniquy was given a last chance in the mission fields of the United States. For Bishop Vandevelde, the mistakes continued but Chiniquy avoided censure. American bishops were desperate for priests and Chiniquy stayed. Finally, under Bishop O'Regan, his last mistake was to claim rights to the church property in the name of the French settlers who had paid for it. For his direct challenge to the church's administration, he was interdicted for all his faults.

## RELIGIOUS LANGUAGE

A final element in Chiniquy's history is language. Many writers have noticed Chiniquy's language; Jean-Paul Bernard, in *Les Rouges*, mentions "des outrances verbales de l'abbé Chiniquy" during his 1850s temperance speeches.<sup>40</sup> Letters of the time denounced him and his exaggerations, because

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<sup>38</sup> This is a well-known frontier phenomenon which has been retold by Jay Dolan in *The American Catholic Experience*. Less well-known is the Canadian version hinted at in Pierre Savard's "La vie du clergé" in *Aspects do catholicisme canadien -français au XIXe siècle* (Montreal, 1980), p. 27.

<sup>39</sup> *Fifty Years*, pp. 617ff.

<sup>40</sup> Bernard. *Les Rouges*, p. 76: "the verbal outrages of Abbé Chiniquy."

they sometimes caused crowds to mob and destroy distilleries.<sup>41</sup> Although high passions were raised by the temperance question in the nineteenth century, Chiniquy's speeches were inflammatory. He once called Rome "a viper" which the United States "feed and press upon their bosom. Sooner or later that viper will bite to death and kill this Republic."<sup>42</sup>The introduction to Louis Roussy's 1851 pamphlet asserts that Chiniquy, in a light, mocking tone, "shamed, slandered and outraged his opponent in the most hateful and indecent manner"<sup>43</sup> Rieul Duclos, who knew him personally, judged that the Protestant Father Chiniquy expertly used the weapons of ridicule and sarcasm in debate.<sup>44</sup> Marcel Trudel refers to Chiniquy's language as "honeyed flattery, imposing humility, using excessive phrases, and overabundant examples" in his writings to his superiors, while his opponent received "sacrilegious and blasphemous language . . . which made his listeners finally cry out with horror."<sup>45</sup> Everyone is agreed that Chiniquy's use of religious invective was unsurpassed.

This leads to a consideration of the rhetoric of anti-clericalism itself. Muted and not-so-muted protests against the priesthood have been recorded in every civilization sophisticated enough to support a professional clergy. In the Christian tradition, there has been a continual discontent on the part of many dissidents with the Constantinian cooperation between Church and State resulting in an organized, hierarchical Church. With the creation of the sixteenth-century Reformation churches, mediaeval anti-clericalism and its special rhetoric split into strong anti-Roman Catholic and anti-Protestant traditions. Both streams drew on pre-Reformation traditions, but the changes in the respective institutional and religious camps during the Reformation caused renewed criticism and controversy. Through Luther, the Enlightenment humanists, the industrial revolution and the development of the printing press, the myth of clericalism became a stock element of nineteenth-century liberal, literary and intellectual culture.<sup>46</sup>

In the Canadas, political and economic sectional tensions between Upper-Canada English and Lower-Canada French were increased by Protestant-Catholic religious differences. The politically powerful Upper Canadian, George Brown of *The Globe*, kept up a running battle with

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<sup>41</sup> Bernard, p. 90: also, Trudel, p. 114.

<sup>42</sup> *Fifty Years*, p. 673.

<sup>43</sup> *Roussy, Appel à la raison*, pp. 3-4.

<sup>44</sup> *Duclos*, Vol. 1, p. 152.

<sup>45</sup> Trudel, pp. 47 and 219, quoting the newspaper, *Le canadien*, 11 February 1859, p. 4.

<sup>46</sup> José Sanchez, *Anti-clericalism: A Brief History* (Notre Dame, Indiana, 1972), p. 3. Canadian anti-clericalism can be studied in Marcel Trudel's two volume *L'Influence de Votaire au Canada* (Montreal, 1945).

French-Catholic ultramontane assumptions about Church and State (Clergy Reserves, Jesuit Estates, separate schools) which, in turn, threatened English-Protestant assumptions of superiority, rights and privileges, including the liberal desire for the separation of Church and State. The polarized atmosphere erupted into riots around Alessandro Gavazzi, a visiting Italian ex-priest, in 1853.<sup>47</sup> Throughout the nineteenth century, the French Roman Catholics faced the English-Protestant Orange Lodge; there seemed to be very little middle ground. French Catholics who were willing to cooperate with English Protestants were sometimes reviled as crypto-Protestants or “vendus” – French Canadians who had “sold out” to the English conquerors. The English Catholic and the French Protestant both seemed partially assimilated to the English-Protestant foe. Chiniquy, in the English-Protestant American world, may have felt the need to emphasize his French background in the battle with the English-speaking Bishop and his willingness to cooperate with Protestants in the temperance crusade. In the growing battles between the French-Catholic ultramontanes and English Orange Lodge, he may have felt the need to make a choice. He chose to remain French and to abandon the Roman Catholic Church, since the Church had abandoned him. Ironically, by doing so, most of the remainder of his career was spent in preaching and publishing in English. Language and religion were closely intertwined for the French Canadian.

The question remains, why did Chiniquy go further to become an anti-Catholic crusader? An answer to this question can also be found in the very nature of religious language. In the United States, intellectual historians have studied a similar context surrounding the growth of religious invective. John Higham, summarizing their findings, writes that some historians regarded nativism and anti-Catholicism as more or less synonymous. More importantly, in describing this phenomenon, he describes the language as drawing

heavily, for example, from the very beginning of the Reformation on a conception of popery as steeped in moral depravity. Generation after generation of Protestant zealots have repeated the apocalyptic references of the early religious reformers to the Whore of Babylon, the Scarlet Woman, the Man of Sin, to which they have added tales of lascivious priests and debauched nuns.<sup>48</sup>

Examples can be found in the writings of Samuel F.B. Morse, who began his anti-Catholic career in 1832. Parson William Craig Brownlee

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<sup>47</sup> Robert Sylvain, *Clerc, garibaldien, prédicant des deter mondes. Alessandro Gavazzi (1809-1899)*, 2 Vol. (Quebec, 1962).

<sup>48</sup> John Higham, *Strangers in the Land; Patterns of American Nativism 1860-1925* (New York, 1974), p. 5.

began the *American Protestant Vindicator* which publicized Rebecca Reed's lurid stories of the Charleston Ursuline Convent leading to its lynch-mob destruction in 1834.<sup>49</sup> The controversies raised by sensational crusaders in North America or by European events such as the Tractarian movement or Catholic Emancipation, gave rise to serious anti-Catholic (and anti-Irish) nativist riots such as in Kensington, Philadelphia in May, 1844. Organized religious nativism in the States, as in Canada throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, was periodically inflamed by travelling speakers such as Maria Monk. Her *Awful Disclosures of the Hotel Dieu Nunnery of Montreal* (1836) gave readers a "heady mixture of sex and religion" in sordid accounts of priests and nuns.<sup>50</sup> When Chiniquy finally made the break with Catholicism in Illinois, he could make a living by choosing from a wide range of authors to fill out an anticlerical and anti-Catholic repertoire. He joined the lecture circuit.

A clue to the development of Chiniquy's anti-clerical vocabulary is inherent in his oratorical training. Once standard for all of Europe, Chiniquy's childhood subject, rhetoric, emphasized exaggeration, expansion, and description. Ultramontane writing also had particular features using frequent references to the sacred, an accentuated stylistic lyricism, and a dramatization through striking, descriptive images.<sup>51</sup> Chiniquy certainly was familiar with rhetorical licence and certainly was a master of the striking and the descriptive, as seen in the speeches preserved in his temperance manual, books, and pamphlets.

Another element of nineteenth-century oratory was the common use of abusive and insulting language or invective. The growing polarization between liberal (usually Protestant) and conservative (usually Catholic) wings of European culture gave rise to vigorous denunciations. Stock images of Mary, celibacy, auricular confession, the Papacy, etc., which distinguished Chiniquy's later writings, were also present in the 1851 debate with the Swiss Protestant Louis Roussy, as well as in other contemporary anti-clerical works. This shows again that the anti-clerical genre was fuelled by repetition. Each side "amplified" the polemic, repeated their assertions, added details, and sometimes even deformed the original stories. Gilles Charest, in a humorous work, writes that speakers usually do not invent language; they use blasphemy because they have learned it from someone. Swearing and insults form part of the cultural heritage of a people.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Thomas Curran, *Xenophobia and Immigration, 1820-1930* (Boston, Massachusetts, 1975), p. 26.

<sup>50</sup> Curran, p. 27.

<sup>51</sup> Eid, pp. 183-84.

<sup>52</sup> Gilles Charest, *Le livre ties sacres et blasphèmes québécois* (Montreal, 1974), p. 66.

Although speaking about French Canadians, his findings are valid for countries with large Roman Catholic populations. Anti-clericalism forms a repeated stock element with little references to facts in the speech of a nation.<sup>53</sup>

Chiniquy adopted the anti-clerical arguments. In fact, on the surface, Chiniquy's extremes of language as a Roman Catholic were then repeated as a Protestant. So, while there seemed to be a wild swing in the content of Chiniquy's beliefs, there was continuity in his verbal context. He travelled from his conservative, Catholic stance at the beginning of 1851 to his Protestant anti-Catholic position through the mediating tendencies of temperance, emigration, and the peculiarities of anti-clerical religious language. Trudel believes, quite rightly, that Chiniquy's immediate problems were due to his own pride and moral weaknesses, but this is not the complete story, since other priests also moved to the frontier to give their vocation a second chance.

## CONCLUSION

In the frontier atmosphere of Illinois, Chiniquy and his French--Canadian followers no longer recognized the authority of their Irish bishop. Chiniquy was excommunicated in 1856 for the constant sexual scandals, the complaints of female parishioners, the real misappropriation of parish funds, the lack of any sign of repentance or obedience and, most importantly, his challenge to the institutional Church's authority. Chiniquy quickly founded the Christian Catholic Church – Chiniquy's Church, as it became known – to hold on to a small group within the parish community who either did not know of his failings or did not care. The fact that such a group formed around Chiniquy attests to the importance of other elements in Chiniquy's history: temperance, emigrant lay trusteeship on the frontier, battles with centralizing ultramontanists and the charisma of a powerful master of religious language.

In 1859, often in the company of the French Swiss he had once fought under the Canadian Catholic hierarchy's eyes, he toured Montreal and Quebec. Greatly publicized riots followed in the wake of his remunerative sermons.<sup>54</sup> In 1860, Chiniquy attached his followers to the Old School Presbyterian Synod of Chicago in exchange for a premium paid for each convert. A slight misunderstanding over the number of converts was settled

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<sup>53</sup> Resther, and X.Y.Z., quoted above, for example, illustrate this tendency for anti-Protestantism while Chiniquy's works do so for anti-Catholicism.

<sup>54</sup> Robert Lindsey, "Evangelization of the French Canadians by the Presbyterian Church. 1863-1925," Presbyterian Church of Canada Archives (unpublished B.D. thesis, Toronto, 1956), p. 17.



amicably with Chiniquy leaving Illinois for his first European tour, paid by the Synod. On his return, he was suspended for having solicited funds for a non-existent theological college and for slandering a fellow Presbyterian minister who had criticized him. Chiniquy's story continues beyond his conversion.

Alexander Ferrie Kemp, who had been sent from the Montreal Presbytery to investigate Chiniquy's desire to join that body, made the case that Chiniquy's language was at fault and could be excused. Chiniquy's education in the Roman Catholic Church was blamed! Also, the word *collège* had a different meaning in French Canada, where it referred to a classical preparatory school educating boys until they were ready for professional training. The American Presbyterians' accusations of fraud stemmed from their expectations of a university-level institution. There were certainly some young boys living and studying with Chiniquy and other teachers.<sup>55</sup> Again, the questions of language and the emigrant's experience on the frontier played a role in Chiniquy's life.

Eager for such a notable French Canadian, the Montreal Presbyterians made Illinois a mission field in 1863. In 1864, Chiniquy "gave what his new friends doubtless regarded as a signal proof of the soundness of his Protestantism.... he married his housekeeper."<sup>56</sup> One moral weakness, perhaps, was solved. Protestant evangelicals compared him to Luther, to Calvin, Zwingli, and to Knox. At the age of seventy, he went travelling again, to Hobart, Tasmania, Ballarat and Horsham, Australia, to the Washington territories, and to California. Everywhere, there were riots among the Irish immigrant populations still struggling with the problems of a new land and a new identity.<sup>57</sup> In 1878 the legal battles with the Bishop of Chicago ended with the French-Canadian parishioners winning possession of the land, school and church.<sup>58</sup> Were his complaints about the Irish bishop's oppression of the French indeed justified? His followers chose to believe so.

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<sup>55</sup> Alexander Ferric Kemp, *The Rev. C. Chiniquy, the Presbytery of Chicago and the Canada Presbyterian Church* (Montreal, 1863).

<sup>56</sup> Smith, *Pastor Chiniquy*, p. 63.

<sup>57</sup> For a not overly accurate description of his adventures in his later years, his own *Forty Years* can be read. There is also *Auricular Confession in Australia, by Pastor Chiniquy. And Chiniquy Vindicated. (Front the "Protestant Standard")* (Melbourne, Australia, 1879), 16 pages, and *Papal Idolatry: An Exposure of the Dogmas of Transubstantiation and Mariolatry. Dedicated to Archbishop Vaughan, of Sydney, with "The God of Rome Eaten by a Rat" ...* (Melbourne, 1879), 48 pages. This last work is one he dedicated to different Catholic prelates depending on the country in which he was working at the time.

<sup>58</sup> "États-Unis" in "Nouvelles et Faits divers," *L'Aurore* Vol. 13, no. 27 (4 July 1878), 5.

Chiniquy's derivative language, his experiences in emigrating to the United States, in the temperance movement, and in the liberal-ultramontane debates within the Catholic Church as well as between the Protestant and Roman Catholic churches made him a stock figure, too, a legend, and a new element in anti-clerical language. Importantly, his works are still being printed and surface occasionally during anti-Catholic movements.<sup>59</sup> He died in 1899, still writing, still publishing, and proclaiming his anti-Catholicism. One newspaper obituary acknowledged Chiniquy's importance to the Protestant-Catholic debates of the time by exclaiming that: "The thought that he never was even once killed in a religious riot must have embittered his last hours."<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Canada in 1984 experienced a revival of this: see "Curb the flow of hate" (editorial) *Montreal The Gazette*, 2 April 1984; "Task force of 2 ferreting out hate literature" by Warren Potter, *Toronto Star*, 1 September 1984; "Anti-Catholic books capitalize on Pope's visit" by Eleanor Boyle, *The Gazette* of Montreal, 5 May 1985. Most of this literature is published also by Chick Publications, Chino, California, the present publishers of Chiniquy Comic Books as well as Chiniquy's biographies.

<sup>60</sup> Canadian Baptist Historical Archives, File "Charles T. Chiniquy, Obits." Newspaper clipping, 17 January 1899.