

## **The Brothers of the Christian Schools in Canada, 1837-1904<sup>1</sup>**

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Translated from the French by Brother Leonard Marsh, FSC<sup>3</sup>

### **Introduction**

The Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools was founded in France in 1682 [sic] by John Baptist de La Salle, priest and canon of the cathedral of Rheims. This Institute, made up of non-clerical religious men whose mission was the education of the people, was the first of its kind in the Church. The first initiatives of its founder in the field of spirituality and pedagogy place the Institute among the glories of the Church and the kingdom of France in the seventeenth century. On February 25, 1725, six years after the death of De La Salle, Pope Benedict XIII in his official Bull bestowed pontifical status on the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools.

By 1695 New France had already welcomed in the person of Antoine Forget a teacher formed in the Lasallian tradition.<sup>4</sup> Later in 1718 one of the founders of the Hôpital de Montréal, Fr. Charon, approached De La Salle with the result that De La Salle accepted to send three Brothers to Montreal. But two days after selecting these Brothers the Founder with a prophetic intuition convinced Brother Barthélemy not to follow through with this project.<sup>5</sup> Then in 1736 the question of possibly establishing the Brothers in New France came up again. Bishop Dosquet of Quebec had just forbidden the Charron Hospital Brothers to recruit, so they were looking to join another congregation. After one of these Brothers visited Paris, Brother Superior General seemed to favor the idea of a new establishment but before giving his final answer he was set on sending Brothers Denis and Pacifique to Montreal to study the proposal on site. They would spend the summer of 1737 in New France but due to financial reasons the project failed.<sup>6</sup> Another century would have to go by before a third project could receive a favorable response.

In 1829 the Sulpicians under Fr. Joseph-Vincent Quiblier, superior of the Montreal Seminary, pressed Brother Anaclet to send De La Salle's Brothers to southern Canada. Even with the Brothers' long tradition of friendship with the Sulpicians in Paris, Brother Anaclet hesitated since the first two establishments in America, Martinique in 1774 and Louisiana in 1817, had been failures. Finally, the Most Honored Brother [Anaclet] acquiesced to Canada's request on May 18, 1836. On October 6, 1837, four Brothers left Paris and went to Le Havre where on October 10, they boarded the steamship *Le Louis-Philippe* destined for New York.<sup>7</sup> They set foot on American soil on November 3. Again by boat they went to Saint-Jean-d'Iberville and from there they went to Laprairie on the new railroad inaugurated just the previous year. Finally, exhausted after a month of travelling, they arrived in Montreal where they were welcomed by the Sulpicians who would be of great help to them in the first years.<sup>8</sup> As Labarrère-Paulé points out, these were the "second convoy" of Frenchmen from France who according to him were the most interesting.<sup>9</sup> The first had been about fifty priests who came to Canada at the time of the French Revolution.

Throughout this account, after briefly describing the educational situation in southern Canada in 1837, I will speak of the pedagogical contribution of the Brothers in Canada during the second half of the 19th century. Then, after outlining very briefly the liberal and ultramontane forces at work,<sup>10</sup> I will discuss the ideological and even political commitment of these Canadian teachers wearing the white rabato.

## Chapter One

### *The Pedagogical Contribution of the Brothers of the Christian Schools of Canada*

On November 7, 1837, the four Brothers from France, Brothers Aidant,<sup>11</sup> Rombaud,<sup>12</sup> Euverte<sup>13</sup> and Adelbertus<sup>14</sup> arrived in Montreal amidst a troubled situation. This was the day after the encounter on Saint-Jacques Street between the Fils de la Liberté [Sons of Freedom] and the members of the Doric Club; two weeks after the famous Assembly of the Six Counties of Saint-Charles; nine days before Governor Gosford published his order to arrest the leaders of the Papineau clan; and finally two weeks before the encounter between the English troops and the Patriots at Saint-Denis. But even this serious situation in Montreal did not slow down their preparation for the opening of school. On December 23, the Brothers admitted 200 students into their two first-level classes.<sup>15</sup> However, for their own safety and on the advice of the Sulpicians, they did have to exchange their three-cornered hat for the round hat worn by priests, which lasted until 1842.<sup>16</sup>

Not only was the political situation critical at the time, but the educational situation in 1837 was also disastrous. There was no higher education, no university. Secondary education, which was provided in high schools and seminaries, was generally well organized but only reached a small number of youth. But what about primary education? Young girls were more privileged and benefited from the devoted service of the Ursuline Sisters. But young boys were instead meant for work right away in the fields and woodlands. Speaking of this period of time, Brother Marie-Victorin wrote: "It can also be said that total ignorance was above all the fate of men ... The school [was] considered a women's concern."<sup>17</sup> The major laws of education propounded by Dr. J.-B. Meilleur and P.-J.-O. Chauveau would be voted in under the Government of the Union. The bilingual teacher training schools of Quebec and Montreal created under the law of 1835 would not play the role that was expected. Lay teachers, who at the time made up 96% of all schoolteachers, generally lacked competence, to put it mildly. Could it be otherwise? Labarrère-Paulé described the almost miserable condition of lay teachers of the time. They "do not make up a true corps of teachers" and are the object "of parliamentary abuse." "Mainly discredited," they have an average salary of "15 to 20 livres" while a sales clerk is fed and receives "35 to 40 livres." "Their salaries are not always regularly paid" and moral probity is often the only requirement for getting hired.<sup>18</sup> A Montreal newspaper even points out the fact that "fifty to sixty percent of them hand in their salary receipt signed with an X."<sup>19</sup> On November 28, 1836, [the newspaper] *La Minerve* does not go easy on the city of Montreal, saying there does not exist "one school where Canadian children can learn to speak their language, write it correctly, acquire the rules of grammar ..., [or] engage in business.... The education of Canadian children in the working class is in a miserable state."<sup>20</sup> This is the context and the environment in which the four new Brothers will courageously set out to work.

In a letter he wrote six months after his arrival, Brother Aidant gives his impressions on several subjects and, speaking of the first group of students in his school, he says: “We are reasonably happy with our little Canadian students; just a small number of them are afflicted with the country’s illness: laziness. But by enlivening them we can get something done.”<sup>21</sup> Success came fairly soon. Fr. Trudeau made reference to it when he spoke at the awards assembly in the auditorium of the Sulpicians. He is quoted in *Mélanges religieux* on July 30, 1841:

More than six hundred children, all at a tender age, all with the polite innocence that religion inspires, have produced before an astonished public a collection of projects perfectly completed on an array of topics—reading, perfected handwriting, spelling, grammatical analysis, arithmetic, even the planetary system with spheres and globes, geography in all its ramifications, history with all its wonderful progress, line drawing with its diverse applications – in a word, a complete course that includes admirably well all facets of education for business and industry. Oh, how much praise we have here for merit and virtue, for work and its success!<sup>22</sup>

What is important about this quote is not so much that the author lavishes so much praise but rather that the Brothers after barely four years had already designed such a program of studies and executed it with some degree of success. Certain people were anxious to go on site to verify the progress of the students and the value of the Lasallian method: the general governor Lord Sydenham on December 10, 1840; the bishops of Montreal, Quebec, Kingston, and Boston on October 8, 1842, accompanied by about fifteen priests; Bishop de Forbin-Janson of Nancy a few days later who was invited to speak in Canada.<sup>23</sup> But the Brothers experienced their greatest joy on All Saints Day of 1840 when four graduates from Montreal entered the newly opened novitiate. Recruitment was already taking place on site.<sup>24</sup> What is more, the insistent pleas of Fr. Quiblier and Brother Aidant along with the intervention of Bishop Forbin-Janson resulted in five new Brothers landing in Montreal on August 11, 1843. Several key figures proposed plans to Brother Aidant.<sup>25</sup> A great work has begun.

Perhaps the most important contribution of the Brothers to primary education in Canada was the authoring of varied textbooks adapted to Canada. At the time there was a lack of adequate textbooks. In 1843 the Brothers wrote a *Histoire du Canada*, an *Arithmétique* and an *Abrégé Géographie*. The texts surely acquired a certain value since a reporter in *Historique du District de Montréal* wrote that “a Mr. I. Thompson made a counterfeit edition of the *Histoire du Canada*, and the following year a Mr. L. Perrault published the *Géographie* and the *Arithmétique* also in counterfeit.” And the reporter didn’t stop there: “As the books were not signed by the authors, who for that matter were not naturalized citizens of Canada, and since they had not yet been officially registered, they could not take legal action.”<sup>26</sup> To these three volumes we must add a commentary on the *Catechism of Quebec* composed by Brother Adelbertus, as well as a few prayer books for worship. In 1869, “there was published a Canadian edition of *Devoirs d’un chrétien* [*The Duties of a Christian*] at the same time as a British translation of that so well-known work of Saint John Baptist de la Salle.”<sup>27</sup> An entire series of publications, some in French and others in English, formed the toolkit of Canadian Lasallian pedagogy. If we only take into account the texts officially registered in Ottawa,<sup>28</sup> we arrive at the astonishing number of eighty texts just for the period between 1837 and 1904.<sup>29</sup> Among the texts with greatest publishing

success were *L'Arithmétique commerciale* published in 1870,<sup>30</sup> three courses in *Langue française* published in 1883,<sup>31</sup> and the *Cours de style* of Brother Armin-Victor published in 1875,<sup>32</sup> to cite only three. Brother Adelbertus would be the author of about fifteen books, and Brother Aphraates would write at least twenty-five texts.<sup>33</sup> But the list in *L'Oeuvre d'un siècle* remains incomplete. As Brother André Dubuc recently remarked: "... it does not list the number of print runs and editions or the generations of students who used them; it cannot describe all the precious help that these early groundbreaking books brought to religious and lay authors of similar texts."<sup>34</sup>

The first successes of the Lasallian school were in stark contrast with those schools said to be of high rank and even the classy town schools. This led the religious and governmental authorities to request the services of the Brothers and to further support their demands. In an address to Brother Philippe, the new Superior General, Fr. Quiblier wrote: "The Governor General, to whom I have described at length the work of the Brothers, their teaching and their successes, told me that he would visit their classes and would gladly give them the management of the teacher training school."<sup>35</sup> And less than two months after, he added that "in order to respond to all the requests in the city, we would need eighteen or twenty classes".<sup>36</sup> After opening their novitiate in 1838<sup>37</sup> and then several years later a scholasticate to form new teachers, the Brothers in the District of Canada would set up structures for the education of boys from the working class.

In 1903, sixty-six years after their arrival, the congregation had 501 Brothers [in Canada] teaching 17,428 students in 49 schools.<sup>38</sup> Their schools were located for the most part in important cities and villages and provided an education ranging from elementary to courses in science and business. Thirty-two establishments located throughout the vast District provided elementary and follow-up classes, the equivalent of our seven or eight first years. In addition, according to Brother André Dubuc, "in several ... schools, among them Sainte-Brigite, Saint-Henri, and Sacré-Coeur in Montreal, Notre Dame in Hull, Saint-Jean-Baptiste in Quebec (just to cite the principal ones), the Brothers added commercial classes (also called business classes) to the course of study prescribed by most schools."<sup>39</sup> Brother André Dubuc continues to say the courses in science and business "were taught at Mont-Saint-Louis from 1888 and at the Académie De La Salle in Ottawa since 1899, two institutions bilingual in their program and school population. The science program included six years and began with the sixth class. The students at that time had greater knowledge than that prescribed by the official program of the seventh year of the current primary program. The commercial program, the first one set up at Mont-Saint-Louis, included four years of study that culminated in a special official diploma. This commercial program was also offered at the Académie de Québec, founded in 1862, at the Académie Piché in Lachine and the Académie De La Salle in Trois-Rivières.<sup>40</sup> Add to this an industrial program offered at St. John's Industrial School, a rehabilitation establishment. At L'Islet-sur-mer a program in hydrography, land surveying and telegraphy would produce numerous naval captains and notably the famous captain Bernier. In Quebec and Montreal, the Brothers from the start began to organize evening courses to reach adults and youth who worked during the day. In 1851 an agricultural school was opened for some years in Oka. In 1889, there was serious thought given to opening a school of agronomy which would be affiliated with the notable French Collège de Beauvais. In 1880 and 1881, there had also been thought to offer the Brothers a polytechnic school in Quebec and one in Montreal. Hundreds of petitions from the

counties of Quebec, Lévis and Gaspé were asking for it.<sup>41</sup> Newspapers repeatedly marveled at the often swift success of several schools of the “Brothers of Christian Doctrine [sic].”<sup>42</sup>

## Chapter Two

### *The Ideological Commitment of the Brothers of the Christian Schools of Canada*

In 1837, the Brothers of the Christian Schools arrived in lower Canada not only in the midst of a troubled political climate and a disastrous educational situation but also in a French Canada where the winds of anticlericalism collided with traditional institutions and attempted to spread European ideas of religious and political liberalism. It was from Europe and principally from France that nineteenth-century liberals and ultramontanes would find their sources.

André Siegfried was correct in 1906 when he wrote that “religious controversies are at the source of all divisiveness in Canada.”<sup>43</sup> During most of the nineteenth century, politics and religion existed side by side. On the one hand they were speaking an amusingly theocratic language, then on the other hand they were facing off with cries of separation of church and state and wielding the shocking pronouncements of the Vatican. On January 9, 1820, the abbot of Calonne, who was the chaplain to the Ursulines of Trois-Rivières, “had published in *La Gazette* of that city” an extract from the first volume of Lamennais’s *L’Essai sur l’Indifférence* of 1817.<sup>44</sup> “The [so called] Breton magician” would gain very great influence at the Collège de Saint-Hyacinthe and in numerous other cenacles. On December 27, 1839, an extract from Louis Veuillot’s *Pèlerinage en Suisse* started appearing in *Le Canadien*.<sup>45</sup> For Philippe Sylvain, “no other French writer had shaped more the French-Canadian mindset.”<sup>46</sup> Considerable influence was exerted by *L’Univers*, the newspaper founded by M. Veuillot. Remember that Henry de Courcy, the New York correspondent of *L’Univers* from 1845 would write between 1853 and 1856 for both *La Minerve* and *L’Univers* at the same time.<sup>47</sup> “For the ultramontane followers of Veuillot the political ideal was of a state officially Catholic shielded from the pressure of public opinion.”<sup>48</sup> In Montreal liberal tendencies, especially in *L’Institut canadien*, would find in Bishop Bourget a ruthless adversary. Bourget “had to struggle during his long episcopacy to lengthen and intensify this ultramontane movement so that he could make his episcopal city ‘a little Rome,’ as he wrote around 1872.”<sup>49</sup> Events in Europe were suited to provoke and fuel the struggle between liberals and ultramontanes: opposition to the Philippine monarchy, prosperity in France under the Catholic regime of Napoleon III, a slide toward the left in French politics around 1858, the Crimean war, a resolute and lively movement in the Piedmont, the Italian question ... all of these events were ready to shake up the two ideological camps. As for the Brothers, their arrival was announced in the newspapers with appreciation and also with reluctance. Six days after their arrival *La Minerve* reported:

We have learned that four Brothers of the so-called Christian Doctrine [sic] and two French priests were sent from Europe to give lessons in passive obedience to Canadian youth. We do not know how it is that the bishop of Montreal could have consented to bringing in these French churchmen after his formal statement to the contrary.<sup>50</sup>

On the other hand, two days after the article in *La Minerve*, *L’Ami du peuple* wrote in turn:

*La Minerve*, the voice of those patriots who pride themselves on being such great supporters of education, takes offense at the arrival of these respectable instructors and claims that they have come to preach passive obedience. We hope at least that they will succeed in protecting youth from the false political and religious doctrines that the voices of the subversive party aim to inculcate in them.<sup>51</sup>

Like many Quebecers of the 1850s, they had to begin to distance themselves from the party of Lafontaine-Morin to align with G.-E. Cartier and P.-É. Taché, the conservative party, “the party of order and the altar.” And we might apply to the Brothers of that time what Sylvain said of Bishop Bourget, namely that what separated them from liberal Canadians was “a whole world! The world coming out of the French Revolution.”<sup>52</sup> They had to align with the position of Joseph-Charles Taché which held that “the Roman question was above all a question between the Pope and the Church on one hand and Error and Revolution in any form on the other hand.”<sup>53</sup> It is true that on this issue they did not diverge from the opinion of the majority of the Quebec population. “With few exceptions, Catholics unlike the liberals did not understand the meaning of the aspirations of the Italian people and the will of its elites to obtain national independence.”<sup>54</sup> What we know for sure is that they distinctly espoused the ultramontane ideas of Bishop Bourget. On February 18, 1868, Brothers went to Notre-Dame church “to implore from the God of armies success and protection for the (350) young Canadian crusaders.”<sup>55</sup> At the request of Bishop Bourget, the Brothers took up a collection in their schools for the maintenance of Papal Zouaves [the infantry battalion dedicated to defending the Papal states]. And on January 11, 1869, children dressed as Zouaves handed to Bishop Bourget in his cathedral the sum of \$206.31.<sup>56</sup> On October 29, 1872, the *Historical Record (Historique)* of the District of Montreal paid tribute to the golden anniversary of Bishop Bourget as “the most solemn of displays that had ever taken place in Canada until that time.”<sup>57</sup> Three days before that the Brother Visitor had gone to the Archbishop’s Palace to present him with \$100.00 in gold in the name of the nine communities in the diocese. Gathered in the cathedral on the following day almost 3,000 students heard an address in English and in French. On that occasion the Bishop was given \$500.00 in gold. Four Brothers attended the banquet feast which took place in the city hall. In the evening of October 29, the Brothers’ schools were lit up and could be seen everywhere. Around ten o’clock, “young musicians traveled through the streets of the city on a cart playing festive songs in front of public monuments.”<sup>58</sup> These musicians were the students of the Brothers. Finally, in 1874, Canon Edouard Moreau, the military chaplain of a new group of Papal Zouaves, decided to organize a banquet before they left for Montreal. “For that event he asked the Brother Director of [the community on] rue Côté to use the great hall of Saint-Laurent school, which was generously made available to him.” The Brothers paid almost all the expenses of the reception. The banquet took place on June 25. Among the many toasts made, Pius IX’s knight of honor M.A. Laroque, who was also a member and counselor of the Zouaves, raised a toast to the Brothers of the Christian Schools, which was greeted with enthusiastic applause.”<sup>59</sup>

However, the finest example of the Brothers’ ultramontane allegiance in this period is without question Brother Réticius. Born in Bourgogne, France, he was an excellent teacher, a renowned director and was appointed Visitor-Provincial of America. *L’Oeuvre d’un siècle* acclaims him as “the most remarkable of major superiors in charge of Canada” who “for thirty-three years both as Visitor-Provincial and Assistant [councilor of the Superior General] managed and strengthened our economic, intellectual, pedagogical and especially religious life.”<sup>60</sup> In 1880, Brother Réticius

left France at a time when its education system was being transformed under the clever control of Jules Ferry considered by several ultramontanes as the Antichrist reincarnated. In Canada, “Jules Ferry became the specter that conservative polemicists raised to poor Canadians. Everybody began talking again about the horrors of the French Revolution.”<sup>61</sup> By the time Brother Réticius was assigned to Montreal, many influential people involved in public education had already been honored by “ungodly France.” In 1879, Father Verreau, his future adversary, was already honored with the officer’s insignia of the Academy given to him by Jules Ferry. Like several ultramontanes in French Canada, Brother Réticius would be convinced that a plot was being hatched by secret societies against the Christian school. Labarrière-Paulé describes the new 43-year-old Provincial as “impulsive, combative, energetic—who—has immense repugnance for all the half measures, compromises and concessions openly proposed or cleverly veiled by the subtilities of diplomacy.”<sup>62</sup>

The famous Réticius-Verreau dispute erupted at the beginning of his administration. Six months after Brother Réticius’s arrival, an exhibition on the Province of Quebec was held in Montreal. An entire series of minor incidents which I will not enumerate here would trigger both the anger of Father Verreau and the outrage of the Provincial.<sup>63</sup> Brother Réticius explained himself in a newspaper and Father Verreau responded with five letters which did not at all please his hot headed adversary. Finally, Brother Réticius published a booklet entitled *Réponse aux cinq lettres du R.M. Verreau*. In doing so, he wanted to set the facts straight and thus explain his understanding of Christian education.<sup>64</sup> This document is extremely important since it shows what this passionate ultramontane badgered by secularism really thought. Father Verreau was given such a hard time that one newspaper, *Le Canard* I think, printed a caricature of Brother Réticius spanking a student named Verreau. This booklet, a pamphlet really, caused a fuss and made people talk. I found in the archives of the Brothers of Montreal a letter from Father Aphraates of the Academy of Quebec. He writes to Brother Réticius on December 21:

(speaking of the pamphlet) ... a hundred of them would not be enough ... If you let me, I would publish 3 or 400 copies ... The pamphlet caused such a stir in the seminary. They all admit that you had the right [to reply] and that there was no reason to do so. But they find your tone too rough and the issue too tumultuous.<sup>65</sup>

Nine days later on December 30 he wrote back to tell him that “without a doubt apart from the seminary and the archbishopric the entire clergy of the city agrees with you and that includes the clergy in rural areas with some exceptions.”<sup>66</sup> On the preceding December 15, the more liberal archbishop of Quebec addressed a letter to the bishops of Trois-Rivières and Montreal denouncing Brother Réticius’s action:

It seems to me that this is a serious subject that touches close enough upon the relationship between Church and State that it needs to be authorized by the episcopacy before it is brought before the public. Dear Brother Réticius has already published an article that can provoke all parts of the province and cause precisely the damage it aims to avoid, namely a separation between Church and State with regard to education.<sup>67</sup>

Throughout the years that followed Brother Réticius would be constantly on the lookout for “the revolutionary serpent that is slithering all around and concealing in a thousand ways its devious

meanderings.”<sup>68</sup> Another proof of his committed support of this ideology is the famous ten-page letter he addressed “to Monsieur d’Odet d’Orsonens, president of the Catholic commission of Hull (P.Q.).”<sup>69</sup> In that letter he refutes certain statements against the Brothers during the previous royal commission and arranges in three and half pages two columns, contrasting on one side the papal and ecclesiastical declarations and on the other side statements made by adversaries such as Ferry, for example.

As I was going through Pierre Savard’s study of Jules-Paul Tardivel, I discovered that Brother Réticius was “the faithful friend of Tardivel throughout the latter’s stormy career.”<sup>70</sup> He attributes to him “without signing them a series of articles against the administration of Gédéon Ouimet”<sup>71</sup> and says that in 1884 in Paris “Brother Réticius was to meet Eugène Veuillot to propose to him an exchange of correspondence between *L’Univers* and *La Vérité*.”<sup>72</sup> Also, when a dispute broke out between Ouimet and Tardivel, the latter “made available all the important columns of his newspaper to Brother Réticius. In a series of articles on “Ouimet’s bibliothèque bleue [inexpensive, mass produced publications sold to peasants],” Brother Réticius aimed to show that Ouimet’s tenets ... derive directly from the theories of Luther, from France’s National Convention [of 1792] and from Bismarck.”<sup>73</sup> Then in the summer of 1901 when the editor of *La Vérité* went on vacation to Europe, he came upon his friend in Athis-Mons near Paris.<sup>74</sup> Jules-Paul Tardivel died on April 24, 1905, and rests in the Belmont de Sainte-Foy cemetery next to where twenty years later the Motherhouse of the Brothers of the Christian Schools would be constructed and where are buried many Brothers who so admired his writings. As for Brother Réticius, “he got so involved in controversies that Bishop Taschereau of Quebec asked for him to be called back to France.”<sup>75</sup> We know this from a letter of Father J.-C. Caisse addressed from Paris on July 3, 1885. Brother Réticius would keep his title of Provincial but would become for several years Visitor of the District of Baltimore. Then he would return to France and from 1893 to 1912 he would cross the Atlantic each year to exercise his duties as Assistant Superior General for America.

The expansion of the Brothers of the Christian Schools during the period we are studying is remarkable. If we follow only the statistics of the population recorded every twenty years, this is what we have: 1837, 4 Brothers; 1857, 131 Brothers; 1877, 290 Brothers; 1897, 500 Brothers; 1902, 525 Brothers. The geographic expansion is stunning. In 1857 after twenty years of presence in Canada the Brothers were spread out in places as far as Quebec, Toronto, Trois-Rivières, New Orleans, Washington, Montreal, New York, Oka, Baltimore, Detroit, Sorel, Saint Louis. They will attempt to get established in Manitoba (1854-1858), in Nova Scotia in Arichat (1860-1866), in Halifax (1865-1875), in Saint John, in New Brunswick (1866-1877), in Chatham (1876-1880), in Charlestown, Prince Edward Island (1870-1878). They will be concentrated more in Quebec and Ontario and in several states of the United States before thinking of going to other countries. In 1864 the District of the United States became independent and in 1888 the District of Toronto was created. In one year alone (1878) nearly 25 cities requested the Brothers for their schools.<sup>76</sup>

Attractive exchanges between regions as diverse as Quebec and New York permitted several Brothers to acquire great competence in various fields and to broaden their experience. Several hundred Brothers taught for more or less a long time in the United States. One research showed me that between 1837 and 1904 fifty French Canadian Brothers were buried in the United States

and that seven others are buried in Quito, Hong Kong, Alexandria, Colombo in Mauritius, in Marseille and in Fleury-Meudon.<sup>77</sup> Add to that 34 Canadian Brothers during that period who went to France to make their Second Novitiate in Paris for one year. Many Brothers were bilingual, being in frequent contact with Brothers coming from Ireland or having had training for some years in Ontario or America.

## Conclusion

I now arrive at the end of this study. Like my presentation, my conclusion will be in two parts.

First, the initial four Brothers of the Christian Schools and the fifty-four others<sup>78</sup> who came from France between 1837 and 1904 inherited a method of teaching popular for nearly two centuries. They arrived in a lower Canada that cared little for the education of the middle class and, together with more than two hundred French Canadian and Irish Brothers, they performed pioneer work in Canada and more particularly in Quebec. Brother André Dubuc in his recent study showed the pedagogical contribution of the Brothers when he wrote:

In setting up a framework for the education of boys from the working class they created tools adapted to the educational and ethnic circumstances of French Canada. In addition, by forming religious colleagues the Brothers partially filled the gap that separated the school from the rank of higher education and seminaries. As they initiated certain programs for commerce and industry outside the framework of classical education, they prepared what was, in a word, a working-class elite.<sup>79</sup>

The success of the Lasallian method went beyond national boundaries. In World Fairs like that of Paris in 1878 and 1900, London in 1884, Chicago in 1893,<sup>80</sup> it attracted the admirable attention of professional associations and publications both English and French, Catholic and Protestant. The Brothers were thrilled with their international success and had little competition in certain fields. However, it seems that around 1880 a certain educational conservatism took hold. Amidst the battles they sparked or of which they were the object they were not so bold as to push further their educational methods or even to reassess them, with some exceptions.

Second, just like the French priests who had come from France several decades before, the French Brothers would contribute to painting a picture of the French Revolution that was more terrifying than realistic. In a Canada shaped in part by *L'Univers* of Louis Veuillot, they took part in creating the myth of a “godless France” as opposed to a “Christian France.” Brother Réticius would be “a more efficacious ultramontane than those in other countries.”<sup>81</sup> As Labarrère-Paulé stated, he brought over “to Canadian soil the problems of the old mother country.”<sup>82</sup> What is more, along with Bishop Laflèche especially and with others of that school he “undermined the influence of the schoolteacher by supporting the confusion of lay people as enemies of religion.”<sup>83</sup> The concept of schoolteacher had already been threatened by rivalry in religious salaries and admitting women into the teaching profession. Then in 1904-1905 and 1906 Lasallian education found its second wind in the Brothers who were driven from France by the law forbidding religious congregations to teach. But this also accentuated the ultramontane spirit and highlighted for some time the difficulties experienced by lay teachers.

In fact, as Sylvain justly emphasizes, “the ideological and doctrinal clash between Canadian liberals and ultramontanes illustrates on the local level the vast drama that tore apart the 19th century: revolution or counter-revolution.”<sup>84</sup> In the middle of this struggle, tainted on both sides by reprehensible intolerance, the work of the Brothers of the Christian Schools in Canada appears to me in the end as providing impressive richness. But this richness is too animated by an ideology which, although sincere, is nonetheless destined to undergo the fate of all retrograde trends. The successor of Brother Réticius, Brother Allais-Charles, was to become Superior General. He and man of science and letters Brother Marie-Victorin both well understood in 1857 what was declared by Father Maret, dean of the school of theology at the Sorbonne: “[A]ny clash with the legitimate, necessary and providential course of events in a century is useless.”<sup>85</sup>

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## Appendix I

### *Statistics*<sup>86</sup>

| Brothers | Novices | Junior Novices | Communities | Students |
|----------|---------|----------------|-------------|----------|
| 1837 4   | 0       | 0              | 1           | 380      |
| 1842 13  | 4       | 0              | 1           | 1,103    |
| 1847 49  | 8       | 0              | 4           | 2,760    |
| 1852 92  | 25      | 0              | 9           | 4,777    |
| 1857 131 | 20      | 0              | 15          | 6,115    |
| 1862 118 | 53      | 0              | 13          | 7,710    |
| 1867 166 | 27      | 0              | 19          | 9,062    |
| 1872 239 | 19      | 0              | 25          | 11,203   |
| 1877 290 | 46      | 10             | 26          | 12,291   |
| 1882 294 | 29      | 15             | 27          | 10,226   |
| 1887 314 | 38      | 52             | 33          | 13,188   |
| 1892 378 | 49      | 71             | 34          | 13,922   |
| 1897 500 | 41      | 52             | 34          | 15,238   |
| 1902 525 | 41      | 104            | 39          | 16,824   |

## Appendix II<sup>87</sup>

In 1880 Brother Réticius writes:

... “Nothing new however in the tactics; it’s the doubtlessly unconscious repetition of the tactics used for twenty years in the mother country against religious congregations.”  
(page 3)

... [Here he cites Fr. Martineau, p.s.s., from the pulpit in Notre-Dame]: “The reason for this success is very simply this: God, the Holy Spirit, is the master teacher of science;

therefore any teacher who keeps close to God will immediately receive more beams of light from the divine abode; so, all thing being equal, it is clear that religious communities are closer to God than lay teachers; therefore their success will always cause the despair of their persecutors.” There was nothing more on this point in the entire sermon. No word of criticism was made about lay teaching; just an affirmation and blessing of the teaching by religious congregations. (pages 16-17)

... [In conferences to women teachers in Europe] The Veni Sancte Spiritus is not recited but La Marseillaise is sung. (page 19)

... [Concerning the law on distribution of books] A masterwork of cleverness and skill, this law is really a scorpion whose tail is cleverly hidden under its head and contains a deadly venom. (page 23)

... [He wanted to do justice to his Institute and] attract the attention of serious men. [He was] truly worried about the future of the country amidst a wave of ideas too much in line with ideas from overseas not to be feared. Ideas which in a not too distant future would result in terrifying consequences and painful effects.

... France, the country of revolutionary light.” (page 19)

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<sup>1</sup> De Lagrave, F. (1969). Les Frères des Écoles chrétiennes au Canada, 1837-1904. *Sessions d’étude - Société canadienne d’histoire de l’Église catholique*, 36, pages 29-47. Reprinted with permission. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1007293ar>

<sup>2</sup> François de Lagrave (1939-2021) of Trois-Rivières in Quebec, who held a diploma in education and catechesis, was a well-known historian and teacher.

<sup>3</sup> Brother Leonard Marsh, who earned his doctorate in French language and literature at Boston College, is a professor emeritus of La Salle University in Philadelphia.

<sup>4</sup> *L’Oeuvre d’un siècle*, page 33.

<sup>5</sup> Jacques Guibert, *Histoire de saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle, ancien chanoine de l’Église métropolitaine de Reims, fondateur de l’Institut des Frères des Ecoles chrétiennes* (Paris: Poussielgue, 1900), page 587.

<sup>6</sup> AFDM, section 17, folder 2.2.

<sup>7</sup> AFDM, section 17.

<sup>8</sup> Brother Adelbertus, one of the four founders, on the occasion of his Golden Jubilee in 1887 told of his arrival in Canada during the banquet given at the new Mont-De-La-Salle which was being inaugurated that same day. See also *L’Oeuvre d’un siècle*, pages 62-63.

<sup>9</sup> André Labarrère-Paulé, *Les Instituteurs laïques au Canada français, 1836-1900* (Québec: Les Presses de l’Université Laval, 1965), page 12.3.

<sup>10</sup> In this article the author uses the word “ultramontane” to refer to the religious and political forces exerted by the mother country of France [translator’s note].

<sup>11</sup> At 40 years of age, he was Director and first Provincial. He would return to France in 1848.

<sup>12</sup> At 25 years of age, he was teacher of the 2<sup>nd</sup> class. He would return to France in 1857.

<sup>13</sup> At 42 years of age, he was the cook. He was buried in Quebec in 1865 under the Church of Saint-Jean-Baptiste.

<sup>14</sup> At 26 years of age, he was teacher of the 1<sup>st</sup> class. He was buried in Montreal in 1889.

<sup>15</sup> AFDM, *History*, Roster I, page 64.

<sup>16</sup> AFDM, *History*, Roster I, page 63.

<sup>17</sup> “Un siècle de rayonnement lasallien” in *L’Oeuvre d’un siècle*, page 34.4

<sup>18</sup> André Labarrère-Paulé, page 3-48.

<sup>19</sup> *Mercury*, 1839, cited in Louis-Philippe Audet, *Le Système scolaire de la Province de Québec*, Vol I: Aperçu général (Québec: Les Éditions de l’Érable, 1950), page 34.

<sup>20</sup> Cited in André Labarrère-Paulé, page 33.

<sup>21</sup> Letter of May 21, 1838, to Brother Euloge in Orleans, cited in *L’Oeuvre d’un siècle*, page 65.

<sup>22</sup> Vol. II, page 48, cited in *L’Oeuvre d’un siècle*, pages 75-76.

<sup>23</sup> AFDM, *History*, Roster I.

- <sup>24</sup> Frère Symphorien-Louis, *Les Frères des Ecoles chrétiennes au Canada, 1837-1900* (Montreal: Les Frères des Ecoles chrétiennes, 1921), page 23.5.
- <sup>25</sup> Georges Rigault, *Histoire Générale de l'Institut des Frères des Ecoles chrétiennes*, Vol. 6: L'ère du frère Philippe, l'Institut parmi les nations (Paris: Plon, 1947), page 256.
- <sup>26</sup> AFCM, *Historique*, Register I.
- <sup>27</sup> Georges Rigault, Vol. 6, page 73.
- <sup>28</sup> The first three texts would be registered in 1869.
- <sup>29</sup> *L'Œuvre d'un siècle*, pages 525-527.
- <sup>30</sup> Within two years, it was published in its 4<sup>th</sup> edition.
- <sup>31</sup> They would undergo about thirty print runs.
- <sup>32</sup> Printed again in 1908.
- <sup>33</sup> The tradition was that the superior would often sign.
- <sup>34</sup> André Dubuc, *Le Combisme et les Frères des Ecoles chrétiennes au Canada français, Mémoire présenté à l'Ecole des Gradués de l'Université Laval pour obtenir le diplôme d'études supérieures* (Institut d'histoire, 1969), page 35.6.
- <sup>35</sup> Letter of April 23, 1839. *L'Œuvre d'un siècle*, page 57.
- <sup>36</sup> Letter of June 10, 1839. *L'Œuvre d'un siècle*, page 58.
- <sup>37</sup> In the former residence of Paul Le Moyne, gentleman of Maricourt.
- <sup>38</sup> Institut des F.E.C, *Cartes, Diagrammes et Statistiques* (Rome: Les F.E.C., 1960), page 22.
- <sup>39</sup> André Dubuc, page 39.
- <sup>40</sup> André Dubuc, page 38.
- <sup>41</sup> AFDM, Section 17, Chapter 21, where can be found the statement of the case laid out and the lists of petitions.
- <sup>42</sup> Philippe Sylvain, *La Voix du Travail, les Frères des Ecoles chrétiennes, 1945-1946*, Ecoles des Trois-Rivières (page 22), de Montréal (page 45), de L'Islet (page 68), de Sainte-Marie-de-Beauce (page, 83), de Lévis (page 170), de l'Académie de Québec (pages 107, 156, 215, and 280).
- <sup>43</sup> Le Canada. Les deux races, page 3. Cited in *La Voix du travail, les Frères des Ecoles chrétiennes, 1946-1947*, page 154, by M. P. Sylvain in the article "Les répercussions du Concile du Vatican au Canada."
- <sup>44</sup> *Le Canada. Les deux races*, page 155.
- <sup>45</sup> *Le Canada. Les deux races*, page 196.
- <sup>46</sup> Philippe Sylvain in *Le Bouclier d'Achille, regards sur le Canada de l'ère victorienne*, page 114.
- <sup>47</sup> See Sylvain's, *La vie et l'œuvre de Henry de Courcy, 1820-1861* (Québec: Les presses universitaires Laval, 1955), 347 pages.
- <sup>48</sup> M. Sylvain, "Quelques aspects de l'antagonisme libéral-ultramontain au Canada français," in *Recherches sociographiques* (P.U.L., 1967), page 277, vol. VII.
- <sup>49</sup> M. Sylvain, "Quelques aspects de l'antagonisme libéral-ultramontain au Canada français," page 276.9.
- <sup>50</sup> November 13, 1837, *L'Œuvre d'un siècle*, page 75.
- <sup>51</sup> November 15, 1837, *L'Œuvre d'un siècle*, page 75.
- <sup>52</sup> M. Sylvain, *Le Bouclier d'Achille...*, page 220.
- <sup>53</sup> *Le Courrier du Canada*, September 7, 1859, in Sylvain, *Le Bouclier d'Achille*, page 229.
- <sup>54</sup> M. Sylvain, *Le Bouclier d'Achille, regards sur le Canada de l'ère victorienne*, page 227.
- <sup>55</sup> F. S.-L., page 154.10.

- <sup>56</sup> AFDM, *Historique*, Folder I, page 80.
- <sup>57</sup> AFDM, *Historique*, Folder I, page 85.
- <sup>58</sup> AFDM, *Historique*, Folder I, page 85.
- <sup>59</sup> F. S.-L., page 158.
- <sup>60</sup> *L'Oeuvre d'un siècle*, page 113.
- <sup>61</sup> André Labarrière-Paulé, page 321.11.
- <sup>62</sup> André Labarrière-Paulé, page 337.
- <sup>63</sup> On this event, see AFDM, Section 17, Folder 22, Folder 32.
- <sup>64</sup> ADFM, Section 17, Folder 22, see Appendix II.
- <sup>65</sup> AFDM, Section 17, Folder 32, number 17.
- <sup>66</sup> AFDM, Section 17, Folder 32, number 18.
- <sup>67</sup> AFDM, Section 17, Folder 32, number 9.12.
- <sup>68</sup> AFDM, Brother Réticius, *Réponse aux cinq lettres du R. M. Verreau*, page 5, Section 17, Folder 22.
- <sup>69</sup> AFDM, Section I, Folder 36.
- <sup>70</sup> Pierre Savard, *Jules-Paul Tardivel, la France et les Etats-Unis, 1851-1905* (Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1967), 500 pages, page 105.
- <sup>71</sup> Pierre Savard, page 54.
- <sup>72</sup> Letter of Père Grenier to Tardivel, September 5, 1884, in Savard, page 110.
- <sup>73</sup> Savard, page 181.
- <sup>74</sup> Savard, page 446.
- <sup>75</sup> Savard, page 105.13.
- <sup>76</sup> Compiled from *L'Œuvre d'un siècle*, pages 547-554.
- <sup>77</sup> Compiled from *L'Œuvre d'un siècle*, pages 522-523.14.
- <sup>78</sup> Georges Rigault, Vol. 9, page 7. It comes to 32 from 1837-1874 and 22 from 1875-1904.
- <sup>79</sup> André Dubuc, page 37.
- <sup>80</sup> AFDM, Section 15, Folder 27, 28, 43, 44. AFDQ, Section 2, file 2.
- <sup>81</sup> Pierre Savard, page 105.
- <sup>82</sup> André Labarrère-Paulé, page 321.
- <sup>83</sup> André Labarrère-Paulé, page 459.15.
- <sup>84</sup> Philippe Sylvain, *Le Bouclier d'Achille*, page 251.
- <sup>85</sup> Abbé Maret, page 252.16.
- <sup>86</sup> *L'Œuvre d'un siècle*, pages 565-566. After 1864, the United States is not counted.
- <sup>87</sup> AFDM, Section 17, Folder 22, Frère Réticius, *Réponse aux cinq lettres du R.M. Verreau*.