

La Croix de Montréal (1893-1895): A Link to the French Radical Right¹

by Phyllis M. SENESE
University of Victoria

In the late nineteenth century, newspapers in Quebec appeared and disappeared with regularity; some that were announced never saw the light of day. Without the considerable, and reliable, funding of party patronage or outright ownership, it was a rare newspaper that survived. Few special interest groups could sustain the financial commitment necessary to publish a paper for very long, if at all. Advertising had not yet evolved into the major source of newspaper revenue that it was later to become. In this journalistic jungle, dominated by the rivalries and resources of the party press, it is surprising that any small paper prospered. *La Croix de Montréal* was one such little paper that managed to get into print. While it could scarcely be said to have prospered, it does deserve to be rescued from obscurity and benign neglect.

La Croix de Montréal defined its mission as one of regenerating Catholicism in Quebec and of shaping the future leaders of the province. Lionel Groulx observed that both Tardivel's *La Vérité* and *La Croix de Montréal* influenced him and his generation of students in the 1890s. A close look at Groulx, his work and that of many of his contemporaries reveals a continuity on a number of issues from *La Croix de Montréal*. This newspaper, its ideas, attitudes and preoccupations, was a link between three generations of Catholic activists.²

La Croix de Montréal, a militant Catholic newspaper in the ultramontane tradition of Bourget and Laflèche,³ appeared between 30 May, 1893

¹ While lengthy quotations have been translated into English, I have retained in French certain expressions which would lose too much in translation. The research for this paper was greatly facilitated by the hard work of three students – Joanne Eby, Elsbeth Heaman and Donald Fyson. My thanks goes to Joyce Gutensohn who has typed this paper through all its transformations.

² This paper is a preliminary report on a major project in progress which focuses on *La Croix de Montréal* in order to trace the links between three generations of militant Catholics in Quebec and the consequences of their ties to like-minded Catholics in France.

³ The term “ultramontane” has been used in Quebec historiography to describe generally those conservative Catholics with a definite nationalist bent who followed the prescriptions of Msgr. Bourget, later expanded by Msgr. Laflèche and

and 31 May, 1895. From 28 July, 1894 until it ceased publication it was retitled *La Croix du Canada* in an unsuccessful effort to attract a wider readership and boost its paid subscriptions. While its editors occasionally tinkered with type size and column widths, the basic format of the paper was always four pages. Initially, the paper was published on Tuesdays and Fridays. It was a daily from 28 July, 1894 to 16 February, 1895, when it resumed twice-weekly publication as its fortunes failed. The content of the paper was eclectic, running the gamut from reprinting papal encyclicals and apostolic letters to hard news coverage of the Sino-Japanese conflict in the summer of 1894, the Pullman strike in the United States, the daily politics of France, the educational crisis in Manitoba. It contained brief news items from virtually every corner of the globe and columns of local news on every conceivable topic. Suitable novels were serialized in its pages, poetry of a pious or nationalistic character was a regular feature, as were recipes, lists of saints' days, market prices, stock quotations, train and boat schedules, occasional sports stories and help- or job-wanted listings. Advertisements for a wide range of businesses eventually filled two full pages. While *La Croix de Montréal* vowed to shun sensationalism, it was not above retelling some lurid tale of violence or personal tragedy if it could be linked, even tenuously, to repugnant and degenerate practices such as over-indulgence in liquor, drugs, dancing or – worst of all – reading novels.

La Croix de Montréal was modelled directly and explicitly on the Assumptionist paper *La Croix*, based in Paris, which had been launched in 1883. The Paris paper was a highly successful promoter of a militant Catholicism whose chief interest was in reigniting Catholic zeal among the masses in France. It was an enthusiastic proponent of the view that a vigorous Catholic press – *la bonne presse* – was essential to combat the spread of odious ideas. Its cause was given a tremendous boost in the 1890s when Leo XIII called for the expansion of an independent Catholic press. *La Croix* in Paris also drew inspiration from Pius IX's observation that the greatest danger to Catholicism in France was the "enemy within" – those

popularized by Jules-Paul Tardivel, to struggle against liberalism in religion and in politics. The term has a broad compass and often lacks precision in its application. To underscore the link to *La Croix* in Paris, I will use the term "Catholic militants," a term used in the historiography of French Catholicism, which more accurately portrays the Montreal and Paris groups. For a discussion of the problem of defining ultramontanism in the context of Quebec, see: Philippe Sylvain, "Quelques aspects de l'ultramontanisme canadien-français," *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française* [RHAF], septembre 1971, pp. 239-244; Jean-Paul Bernard, "'Définition du libéralisme et de l'ultramontanisme comme idéologies,'" *Ibid.*, pp. 244-246; René Hardy, "Libéralisme catholique et ultramontanisme au Québec: éléments de définitions," *Ibid.*, pp. 247-251.

Catholics who behaved with indifference to the fate of the Church in France.⁴

The Assumptionists were in the vanguard of religious revival in France after 1870. The shock of the loss to Prussia in the war that year and the catastrophe of the Commune generated a new militancy among many Catholics who saw in defeat God's retribution for France's revolutionary past. As Louis Veillot put it, "We believe that it is not by revenge against the Prussians that France will regain its glory, but by revenge against its sin."⁵ A wave of popular piety led by the Assumptionists, with the revival of pilgrimages and the fund-raising to build Sacré Coeur on Montmartre which they promoted, placed the order in the forefront of the new militancy.⁶

The key to the Assumptionists' success was recognizing the importance of organization and of new printing technologies to propagate its message in a France that was becoming increasingly literate. Rather than stress the formulation of right ideas, the Assumptionists in the 1870s and 1880s were convinced that if the right *enthusiasms* were encouraged, right ideas would follow. In a time of mass pilgrimages and renewed devotions enthusiasm was everything. In 1872 the Assumptionists had begun publication of *Le Pèlerin*, devoted to pilgrimage news, miracles and popular piety; it had become, by 1879, the first illustrated weekly magazine in France and enjoyed enormous success. *Le Pèlerin* alone could do little to draw the masses of Catholics into militant action on behalf of the Church, but it did point the way to a broader enterprise. To secure their objectives, the Assumptionists launched *La Croix* in Paris in 1883 for "Catholics who need to know the news every day."⁷ Before long it would grow to become one of the most important dailies published in France.

By 1889, however, *La Croix* in Paris had added new elements to its message of Catholic militancy, elements which would increase its immediate popularity but lead ultimately to its demise. In the national elections that year

⁴ A brief summary of the history of *La Croix* (Paris) can be found in Judson Mather, "The Assumptionist Response to Secularization, 1870-1900," in Robert J. Bezucha, ed., *Modern European Social History* (Lexington, Mass., 1972), pp. 59-89. A detailed study of several aspects of the paper that pertain to this discussion is Pierre Sorlin, "*La Croix*" et les Juifs (1880-1899): contribution de l'antisémitisme contemporain (Paris, 1967). Michel Guy's *Vincent de Paul Bailly: fondateur de "La Croix": cinquante ans de lutte religieuse* (Paris, 1955) adds valuable information. A short history of the paper appeared in *La Croix de Montréal*, 29 mai, 1894, pp. 1-2.

⁵ Louis Veillot, cited in Mather, p. 62.

⁶ Eugene Jarry aptly has described the Assumptionists as "the last of the papal Zouaves": L'Orientation politique de *La Croix* 1895 and 1900," *La Documentation Catholique*, 23 août, 1954, p. 1059. Thomas A. Kselman in *Miracles and Prophecies in Nineteenth Century France* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1983) details the revival of pilgrimages and popular piety which set the stage for the Assumptionists' success.

⁷ *La Croix* (Paris), cited in Mather, p. 66.

La Croix issued an election manifesto that clearly went beyond a preoccupation with devotions to embrace nationalism and antisemitism:

No more thieves. No more laicizers. No more persecutors. No more Freemasons. No more Jews. No more Prussians. No more foreigners to govern France. Nothing but honest men. Nothing but Catholics. Nothing but Frenchmen.⁸

This shift to a much broader attack on what it perceived as the enemies of Catholic values was accompanied by a phenomenal growth in *La Croix*'s financial resources, printing facilities, staff and distribution. Circulation was boosted after 1889 by establishing a network of subscription committees throughout the country that numbered over 1,800 by 1893. Through this organizational device copies of the paper were sent in bulk to local committees which undertook their distribution and solicited new subscriptions. This network gave *La Croix* a personal contact with its readers that other papers lacked and provided it with a constituency that it could draw on to support its activities. In 1888 the paper also began to publish regional supplements, most of them weeklies, although dailies were able to flourish in large urban centres. By 1895 *La Croix* claimed that 110 regional papers had been established, with plans for continued expansion into areas of France that were not noted for their Catholic sympathies.⁹ The mission of cultivating a militant Catholic laity that could be mobilized in the name of Catholic interests was not to be restricted to France. In the early 1890s zealous Catholics in other places, using *La Croix* and its regional offshoots as inspiration and an inexpensive source of material to reprint, were to found *La Croix de Lorraine*, *La Croix de Belgique*, *La Croix de l'Algérie*, *La Croix de l'Île Maurice*, and, in 1893, *La Croix de Montréal*.¹⁰

The brief existence of *La Croix de Montréal* is an integral part of the little-studied history of militant Catholicism in Quebec. Although it was not until the turn of the twentieth century that Leo XIII sanctioned and encouraged the organization of the laity in Catholic Action movements, in Quebec this practice had grown deep roots in the 1840s when Msgr. Bourget drew heavily on French sources in his drive to regenerate and strengthen Catholicism in the Montreal diocese, a drive which included a concern for social and national issues, encouragement of popular devotions and involvement of the laity in Catholic causes. While nineteenth century

⁸ *La Croix* (Paris), cited in Mather, p. 70.

⁹ According to Sorlin the weekly readership of *La Croix* and all its subordinate papers approached 500,000 while that of *L'Univers*, which faithfully reflected papal policy, was only about 20,000.

¹⁰ See *La Croix de Montréal*, 15 janvier, 1895, p. 4.

Catholics were divided on a number of crucial issues, they shared a growing consensus that, in the context of the times, mobilization of the Catholic masses was vital for the security of the Church and its interests. In both France and Quebec the Catholic journalist came to be viewed as a worthy apostle of Catholicism. By the 1880s the Catholic press was praised as an essential instrument in combatting religious indifference among Catholics and in engaging dangerous ideologies and values in an unending battle for the minds and souls of the masses. In France Louis Veuillot was the exemplar of the Catholic journalist. In Quebec Jules-Paul Tardivel had founded *La Vérité* in 1881 and had succeeded as an independent Catholic journalist and publisher. For young Quebec Catholics of the 1880s and 1890s they were models of the type of Catholic journalist whose role was to lead, to encourage, to cajole and, if necessary, to harangue the faithful to new heights of enthusiasm for the survival and expansion of the Church.¹¹

One young Québécois who was attracted by their example was Joseph-Marie-Amédée Denault (1870-1939), the founding editor of *La Croix de Montréal*. He was to describe himself as having discovered in 1889 a “vocation d’apôtre laïque ... ac[tion] cath[olique] avant la lettre.”¹² Denault spent the years before the appearance of *La Croix de Montréal* writing for *La Minerve*, editing *Le Monde illustré* and publishing prose and poetry in a variety of Quebec publications as well as contributing to journals in France. After *La Croix de Montréal* collapsed he worked for several different papers before accepting an invitation in 1909 to join the editorial staff of the newly established *L’Action catholique*, where he was to remain until his retirement in 1932. Denault spent his entire life involved in Catholic journalism and in a multitude of lay organizations that were expressly dedicated to the ideals of lay activism.¹³ It was this commitment to action that prompted Denault, then a law student at Laval in Montreal, and a group of equally fervent fellow students to spearhead the beginnings of *La Croix de Montréal*.

¹¹ See Pierre Savard, *Jules-Paul Tardivel, La France et les États-Unis 1851-1905* (Quebec, 1967), pp. 79-128 for an introduction to their respective careers. Veuillot exercised a considerable influence on opinion in Quebec; See A. I. Silver, *The French-Canadian Idea of Confederation 1864-1900* (Toronto, 1982), p. 230, note 46.

¹² *Fonds Joseph-Marie-Amédée Denault*, Archives of Laval University; undated notes in Denault’s handwriting. In early 1891 Denault wrote Tardivel about his desire to engage in journalism as a means of defending the faith. Tardivel replied immediately to encourage Denault saying, “our country has a great need of Catholic polemicists who are independent of political parties.” He urged Denault to write ceaselessly and to “enter the arena of militant journalism.” *Fonds Denault*, Tardivel to Denault, 31 mars, 1891.

¹³ A good summary of Denault’s early career is located in *L’Étincelle*, novembre 1909, pp. 110-111, 122-123. More details on the *La Croix de Montréal* years can be found in the large collection of obituaries in the *Fonds Denault*

The desire to begin a Montreal offshoot of *La Croix* had French sources of inspiration as well as the example of Tardivel's success to draw on. From the 1840s, contacts with France had been growing on many levels, especially between Catholics on both sides of the Atlantic.¹⁴ Newspapers and journals in Quebec carried numerous items about the growing lay activism in France, particularly among the young, and there were those in Quebec eager to emulate their French counterparts. Their links to France were enhanced by the close connections the Quebec Zouaves had to France through their *Union Allet* which arranged exchanges of visits and information on both sides of the Atlantic. Among the growing number of French nationals resident in Montreal were lay enthusiasts who encouraged the zeal and ambitions of Denault and his friends. For example, Alexandre Maupetit, a businessman from Limoges with direct ties to *La Croix* in Paris, was a regular resident in Montreal. During his stays he was a frequent and popular lecturer at the Cercle Ville-Marie in which Denault was active. One of his lectures in early 1893 about the Paris *La Croix* helped spur Denault and his friends to launch their paper.¹⁵

In an attempt to raise the \$10,000 to \$15,000 necessary to fund the establishment of *La Croix de Montréal*, Denault offered shares in the enterprise for \$ 10. A number of his friends were prepared to pledge \$ 5 per month for a year on the condition that sufficient funds be forthcoming from other sources as well. Several bishops made small contributions, as did individual clergy or religious houses. But throughout its existence, capital, or rather the lack of it, was a chronic and insoluble problem. Following the Paris example, *La Maison de la Bonne presse* was established in Montreal to print the paper as well as other suitable newspapers, pamphlets and books. It attempted to increase the revenues available to *La Croix de Montréal* by accepting commercial printing contracts. As late as March, 1895 yet another effort was being made to set up a syndicate to raise \$20,000 to keep the paper going; three months later it ceased publication.¹⁶

¹⁴ For example, see Abbé Arthur Maheux, "Le nationalisme canadien-français à l'aurore du XX^e siècle," *Canadian Historical Association Report*, 1945, pp. 58-59.

¹⁵ *La Croix de Montréal* carried numerous items on the French community in the city and gave extensive coverage to Maupetit's many visits: see 6 juin, 1893, pp. 2-3; 18 juillet, 1893, p. 3; 27 avril, 1894, p. 1; 19 novembre, 1894, p. 4; 26 novembre, 1894, p. 4.

¹⁶ No business records have yet been found that shed light on the paper's true financial state. In April, 1894 Denault published lists of donations, most for small amounts and listed anonymously. Only a careful reading of these lists reveals that the same information was reprinted several times, giving the impression of a much longer list of contributors. These lists suggest wide support for the paper but without financial records it is hard to reconcile the claim of support with the plea of poverty that filled the paper's pages. A notarial contract dated 1 March, 1895 detailed the last attempt to refinance the paper just prior to its final collapse.

Several problems limit discovering much about the inner workings or finances of *La Croix de Montréal*. Few papers or business records have come to light. Many of the participants were young, with limited means, struggling to finish their studies in law or medicine at Laval in Montreal, or just starting on their careers. Some of them went on to relative fame; most remained obscure. As was often the practice in enterprises of this sort pseudonyms masked the identities of many of these participants, pseudonyms behind which many of them are still hidden.

Since *La Croix de Montréal's* records are scanty, little can be said about its readers. Denault hoped for an eventual subscription of at least 10,000 but claimed only 3,500 subscribers at the end and even that figure is suspect.¹⁷ He urged readers to volunteer to send in local news and to set up local committees, as in France, to distribute the paper and solicit subscriptions from those who “aiment la Religion et la Patrie.”¹⁸ Readers were regularly admonished to do more to ensure the survival of the paper. After all,

Look at the socialists, the anarchists, how they devote themselves and sacrifice for their diabolical cause . . . Each of us must examine our conscience before God.¹⁹

One reader offered to urge all the Montreal area members of the *Société St. Vincent-de-Paul*, all 2,200 of them, to subscribe, while another suggested passing the paper on to friends when finished with it – neither scheme produced subscriptions.²⁰ The hope that the bishops and clergy of Quebec and throughout French-speaking North America would strongly endorse the paper and organize subscription drives, as did many bishops and clergy in France, was never fulfilled. The final editorial of May 31, 1895 stressed the lack of episcopal and clerical backing as a contributing factor in the paper's

¹⁷ The final editorial of 31 May, 1895 stressed a figure of 3,500 subscribers. Although it can in no way be substantiated at this time, it has been accepted as the standard reference point for the paper: see A. Beaulieu et J. Hamelin, *La Presse québécoise des origines à nos jours*, III (Québec Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1977), p. 303. In May, 1893 Denault dispatched a letter to the clergy of Quebec inviting subscriptions and active support for the paper: it resulted in only a modest number of subscriptions. In the summer of 1894, Denault had sent a lengthy memorandum to the bishops of Quebec asking for support and stressing that if all Catholics united behind *La Croix de Montréal* it might attain 8,000-10,000 subscribers. This appeal, too, produced few tangible results. By May, 1895 when the paper folded, of its total readership, only one-seventh was composed of clergy.

¹⁸ *La Croix de Montréal*, 29 août, 1893, p. 1; see also 22 juin, 1894, p. 1; 19 octobre, 1894, p. 3; 31 octobre, 1894, p. 4; 9 novembre, 1894, p. 1; 24 mai, 1895, p. 1.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 23 janvier, 1894, p. 2.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 10 avril, 1894, pp.1-2; 24 juin, 1894, p. 1.

collapse. By the end, the editors of *La Croix de Montréal* were extremely bitter that an independent Catholic paper could prosper in France despite “l’impiété officielle” while it seemed impossible in Montreal, where the problems were so few and so small by comparison.²¹ In looking for an explanation for low readership *La Croix de Montréal* never looked at itself.

A large part of the first issue of 30 May, 1893 detailed the programme of the paper. It was to be the voice of “la grande cause de notre religion et notre patrie,” totally independent of any group or party. It pledged itself to devote particular attention to the problems of workers, agriculture and the young. Drawing on the militant language of *La Croix* in Paris, the Montreal paper saw itself as an instrument of combat against “l’impiété franc-maçonnique,” “the irreconcilable enemies of the French race and the Catholic faith,” and promised that it would never cease “to oppose the audacity of evil with the audacity of good.”²² Denault and his group quickly received recognition and warm praise from *La Croix* in Paris.²³ Just as quickly, *La Croix de Montréal* came to rely on *La Croix* in France – in Paris and 31 other centres – as a ready-made source of much of its copy, simply reprinting items in Montreal. This meant that from its very beginnings the Montreal paper dedicated a considerable amount of its space to French news and the state of the Church and Catholic interests within a strictly French context which had little to do with the reality of Quebec. More space was used in *La Croix de Montréal* to quarrel with local rivals than to offer detailed coverage and analysis of local Catholic and secular issues. *La Croix de Montréal* frequently failed to live up to the high standards of journalistic integrity that it demanded of others; the way it treated issues in its pages often was less likely to produce Catholic unity and activism than discord, distrust and indifference, if not outright hostility between Catholic groups.

La Croix de Montréal committed itself to treating the problems of labour but did so in such a way as to secure for itself little support among workers. Its touchstone was *Rerum novarum*, which it repeatedly cited and frequently reprinted in whole or in part.²⁴ Labour news was always reported in such a way as to reflect the paper’s dedication to the encyclical. And like *La Croix* in Paris, the Montreal approach to labour was decidedly bourgeois. It had no

²¹ *Ibid*, 31 mai, 1895, p. 1. When Denault sent circular letters to the bishops of Quebec asking for moral and financial aid the replies were usually brief, underlining the need for *la bonne presse* but sending no significant sums. Archbishop Taché in St. Boniface and Bishop Laflèche of Trois Rivières wrote more lengthy letters but they sent little else.

²² *Ibid*, 30 mai, 1895, pp. 1-2.

²³ *Ibid*, 4 août, 1893, p. 1; 14 novembre, 1893, pp. 2-3; 15 décembre, 1894, p. 3.

²⁴ *Ibid*, 13 juin, 1893, p. 2; 13 octobre, 1894, p. 1; 16 octobre, 1894, p. 1; 9 novembre, 1894, p. 1; 11 janvier, 1895, p. 1; 15 février, 1895, p. 4.

notion of how to implement the intent of *Rerum novarum* except to fall back on two safe positions. Firstly, *La Croix de Montréal* never ceased to insist that the working class was responsible for its condition through indolence, alcoholism or ingratitude. The social question would resolve itself when workers committed their energies to being good Catholics rather than organizing strikes.²⁵ As a result, the paper paid little attention to the rapidly growing slums in Montreal, the steady impoverishment of the city's working class and the mounting problems generated by cyclical and seasonal unemployment locally, insisting instead that unemployment figures for Montreal were exaggerated.²⁶ Secondly, the paper asserted that the social question could be resolved when the lay elite, particularly Catholic employers, recognized and accepted their responsibilities to their employees and for charitable works. The paper held up as a model the work of Albert de Mun and Léon Harmel in France where they organized employers and employees into *patronages* animated by the spirit of *Rerum novarum*. This essentially paternalistic form of organization was intended more to contain worker discontent than to remove the underlying causes of working class poverty. It had only a small following among workers but was immensely popular with Catholic intellectuals and to some extent laid the foundations for the Catholic unions that were to develop later.²⁷ *La Croix de Montréal* was willing to champion workers only if they first accepted Catholic social views and abandoned conventional labour positions and practices.

La Croix de Montréal preferred to ignore women in the urban workforce as much as possible. Women were to accept their domestic roles, the paper argued, and stay at home, leaving jobs available for men. The paper was able to recognize that many women did work outside the home as the wages of men were often inadequate to support families. It believed that the answer to the problem of low wages was for women to stay home and employers to pay men a living wage as counselled by *Rerum novarum*.²⁸ As for women's issues in general, the paper was eager to denounce women's suffrage, the newly formed National Council of Women and feminism in every form, while urging women to direct their energies to their families, the Church and

²⁵ *Ibid*, 5 décembre, 1893, p. 3; 21 novembre, 1894, p. 4; 12 janvier, 1895, p. 1; 2 avril, 1895, p. 1.

²⁶ *Ibid*, 28 janvier, 1895, p. 4.

²⁷ The efforts of Albert de Mun and Léon Harmel received extensive coverage in *La Croix de Montréal*. For the best examples, see 28 novembre, 1893, pp. 1-2; 5 décembre, 1893, pp. 2-3; 12 décembre, 1893, pp. 2-3; 5 janvier, 1894, p. 1; 16 avril, 1895, p. 1; 19 avril, 1895 p. 1.

²⁸ *Ibid*, 3 août, 1894, p. 4; 10 août, 1894, p. 1.

charitable works in the community.²⁹ The two continuing features of the paper that aimed at a female readership were suitable novels in serial form and an endless stream of recipes and household hints.

Agriculture fared far better in *La Croix de Montréal*, especially in the form of *colonization* schemes. Denault and others writing on the topic regarded agriculture as the life blood of the nation. It was clear to them that agriculture had suffered years of decline in Quebec and that that decline was responsible for the influx of population into the cities and for the massive exodus of people out of the province to the United States. If people could be persuaded to return to the land, several benefits to the province would result immediately. Increased manpower in the countryside would boost agricultural productivity and, in turn, raise the level of prosperity in the province generally. Since urban social problems were the direct result of emigration from the countryside, once population was diverted back into rural areas those problems would disappear.³⁰ In its efforts to rehabilitate agriculture, *La Croix de Montréal* reported on agricultural conferences, supported agricultural education and provided farmers with market information as a regular feature. Columns of information for farmers on the latest techniques in crop rotation, the care and feeding of livestock, poultry raising and the effective use of manure were frequently featured in the paper.

As was the case in dealing with the labour question, *La Croix de Montreal's* assesment of agriculture often strayed rather far from the real situation in Quebec.³¹ Like many in Quebec, Denault and his colleagues tended to romanticize agriculture and the land. Rural life was portrayed as pure, pious and relatively prosperous, the solution to all urban ills. Colonization was a way of fulfilling this romantic notion of an agricultural golden age that could be recaptured in the northern forests. Denault was actively involved in colonization societies and made several trips into the north to colonization settlements but never seemed to see the harsh realities of the colonization efforts. Nothing was said in the paper about the exploitation of the colonists by timber companies or the legislative preferences given by the provincial government to lumber and railway interests at the expense of colonists.³² For *La Croix de Montréal* it was simply a matter of packing up and going back to the land to solve the

²⁹ For examples of attacks on the National Council of Women and women's suffrage, see *ibid*, 4 avril, 1894, p. 2; 13 avril, 1894, p. 2; 16 avril, 1894, p. 1; 10 mai, 1895, p. 1.

³⁰ *Ibid*, 7 avril, 1894, p. 1; 31 juillet, 1894, p. 3; 27 octobre, 1894, p. 1; 14 février, 1895, p. 4; 19 avril, 1895, p. 3.

³¹ See P. A. Linteau, R. Durocher, J.-C. Robert, *Histoire du Québec contemporain: de la Confédération à la crise (1867-1929)* (Montreal, 1979), pp. 116-124, 428-446.

³² *Ibid*, pp. 124-137.

economic and social problems of the province while ushering in a new era of Catholic piety in rustic surroundings. This myth of rural piety and going back to the land would be proposed as a cure for social ills by many Catholics in Quebec down to World War II.

As for the young, *La Croix de Montréal* stressed the urgency of preparing young men to assume the responsibilities of leadership of the militant laity that it was necessary to cultivate. “In Canada, as in France, today everywhere is imposed on Catholic youth the duty to prepare itself to defend the faith.”³³ Young men needed to learn the skills to effectively organize, expand and direct lay organizations; the nation’s survival depended on it. The Catholic youth movements that were beginning to grow in France were warmly described and held up as models in the pages of the paper. Twenty years before Lionel Groulx published his book, *La Croix de Montréal* was promoting la croisade d’adolescents.

There were two important themes in *La Croix de Montréal* that had rated little discussion in its initial description of its programme. They illustrate the link to Paris. One theme might be best described by the expression “Dieu et Patrie” which represented a form of militant nationalism that *La Croix* in Paris was espousing in the 1890s. The second was the hunt for the “enemy within,” who was no longer the indifferent Catholic. Both themes were to inject a strong measure of antisemitism into *La Croix de Montréal* as it mimicked the passions of *La Croix* in Paris in its quest to reveal the Jewish-Masonic plot to destroy France.³⁴

The ultramontane tradition in Quebec had always linked God and the nation; in this regard *La Croix de Montréal* was simply following the pattern long established by Bourget, Lafèche and Tardivel. Increasingly, however, the paper linked Catholicism and nationalism so tightly that they were all but inseparable and synonymous. A good Catholic was a true Québécois and a true Québécois was a good Catholic. Any attack on, or slight of, the one was equally an affront to the other. Behind the rhetoric a particular dynamic was at work. *La Croix de Montréal* always stressed its independence from every political party and urged Catholics to avoid as much as possible political contamination. In the paper, the nationalist activities were portrayed as effective and appropriate substitutes for political parties. This formula blurred the distinction between the sacred and secular worlds. All forces for good, inside the Church and out, were to be united under Catholic leadership to do combat with the real enemies of the nation – Freemasons and Jews.

La Croix de Montréal was intent on unmasking Freemasonry in all its disguises and on warning Quebec Catholics to keep their distance from any

³³ *La Croix de Montréal*, 8 mai, 1894, p. 3; see also 27 octobre, 1893, p. 2; 7 novembre, 1893, p. 4; 20 juin, 1894, p. 1.

³⁴ Sorlin, *op. cit.*, pp. 79-89; Guy, *op. cit.*, pp. 145-153.

organization not operating under Church auspices: “Freemasonry directs, more or less, every association that the church does not lead.”³⁵ To help its readers, the paper ran a 28-part series of articles through 1893 and 1894 describing Masonic rituals and rites in detail and recounting everything known about this evil organization that seemed to be omnipresent. A disturbing feature of much of the anti-Masonic writing in the paper was its willingness to follow the lead of *La Croix* in Paris in considering the Freemason to be an “apprentice Jew.”³⁶

Antisemitism in Quebec in its modern guise was an import from France in the late 1880s. The French had given sporadic attention to the “Jewish question,” but until the mid-1880s it was not one of their major concerns. However, the publication in 1886 of Edouard Drumont’s two-volume diatribe, *La France juive*, opened the floodgates of antisemitism in France. Tardivel brought the book to the attention of his readers and printed favourable comments on it not long after its appearance, as did *La Revue canadienne* two years later. As Jewish immigration to Canada increased in the early 1890s, with a significant number of the new arrivals settling in the Montreal area, antisemitism flared up in the city.³⁷ Where once Tardivel had complained of the “Jewish invasion” (Drumont’s phrase) of France, by 1893 he was complaining of a Jewish invasion of Quebec and his views were echoed in *La Croix de Montréal*.³⁸ Tardivel was frequently quoted and the opinions of Zacharie Lacasse, o.m.i., received extensive coverage in *La Croix de Montréal*. Extracts from his *Dans le camp ennemi* (1893), which was an attack on Jews and Masons, appeared in the paper.³⁹

³⁵ *La Croix de Montréal*, 12 janvier, 1895, p. 1.

³⁶ *Ibid*, 12 septembre, 1893, p. 4.

³⁷ Savard, *op. cit.*, pp. 302-312; Sorlin, *op. cit.*, pp. 129-183. A brief introduction to the Montreal context of antisemitism in the late nineteenth century can be found in G. Tulchinsky, “The Contours of Canadian Jewish History,” *Journal of Canadian Studies*, Winter 1982-83, pp. 48-49 and in his examination of “The Third Solitude: A.M. Klein’s Jewish Montreal, 1910-1950,” *Journal of Canadian Studies*, Summer 1984, pp. 97-99. Economic and cultural anxieties were responsible for a large part of the anti-Jewish hostility. The new Jewish arrivals were poor Eastern European refugees, culturally and linguistically far different from the wealthy, assimilated, established Jewish community of Montreal.

³⁸ Savard, *op. cit.*, pp. 302-312; Sorlin, *op. cit.*, pp. 129-183. For an introduction to the context of *La Croix de Montréal*’s antisemitism, see the prefatory essay by A. I. Silver to J.-P. Tardivel, *For my country* (Toronto, 1975), pp. vi-xxxvii. In *The French-Canadian Idea of Confederation 1864-1900* (Toronto, 1982), pp. 228-235 Silver sets out very clearly the international context within which Catholics like Denault viewed the threats to Catholicism.

³⁹ For an introduction to the ideas and career of Larasse, see Magella Quinn, “Un prêtre bien de son temps: Zacharie Lacasse o.m.i.,” *Recherches sociographiques*, X, 2-3, 1969, pp. 419-425.

Antisemitic articles in *La Croix de Montréal* were most numerous between November, 1894 and March, 1895. A large number of vicious pieces were precipitated by the arrest and conviction of Captain Alfred Dreyfus. A significant portion of this antisemitic writing consisted of reprints of pieces from *La Croix* in Paris, from a number of its regional supplements and from Edouard Drumont's *Libre-Parole*. As the Dreyfus affair unfolded and was chronicled in *La Croix de Montréal*, the paper turned on the Jewish community in Quebec. Denault seized on the rapid rise in the number of Jewish children in Montreal's schools to warn against the "hideous spectre of *la juiverie*" that was about to overwhelm Quebec.⁴⁰ The paper attacked Jewish peddlers in Montreal and Quebec. The most violent articles that were not French reprints were written by Raoul Renault, who wrote in the same vein for Tardivel's *La Vérité*, and who praised Drumont as an authority on the Jewish question. Renault enjoined Quebec Catholics to "wage war" on the Jews.⁴¹ As the Dreyfus case faded from the headlines in the spring of 1895 antisemitism diminished in *La Croix de Montréal* but did not disappear entirely from its pages.

Given these preoccupations, what significance can be attached to *La Croix de Montréal*? Why should it be rescued from oblivion and be examined more extensively?

The link to France is of singular importance. *La Croix de Montréal* imported *en bloc* ideas and attitudes from Paris so that it tended to foster a France-centred rather than a Quebec-centred set of priorities for its readers. This tendency to view Quebec's problems and hunt for solutions to them through a Paris prism would only gradually diminish before World War I and did not disappear entirely until after Lionel Groulx's Quebec-centred nationalism dislodged it in the 1920s. For more than a generation after the disappearance of *La Croix de Montréal* there remained to a significant degree a habit among many Catholics in Quebec of looking to France for authoritative ideas, a practice which served often to import the worst rather than the best that France had to offer.⁴²

In the 1890s few Catholics in Quebec appreciated the degree to which many Catholics in France were being captured by the extreme political right in the battle for control of the Third Republic. The Assumptionists and *La Croix* in Paris were in the forefront of those Catholics rushing to embrace the

⁴⁰ *La Croix de Montréal*, 26 novembre, 1894, p. 1.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, 8 janvier, 1895, p. 1

⁴² For a discussion of the extent to which militant Catholics of the next generation suffered from the same problem, see Susan Mann Trofimenkoff, *Action Française: French Canadian nationalism in the twenties* (Toronto, 1975), pp. 18-26. The type of antisemitic writing that was featured in *La Croix de Montréal* survived in the Catholic press well into the twentieth century: see Richard Jones, *L'Idéologie de L'Action Catholique (1917-1939)* (Quebec, 1974), pp. 59-92.

radical right.⁴³ By tying itself to the Paris paper, *La Croix de Montréal* championed views that were remote from the needs and concerns of Quebec Catholics.

Consider the question of politics. *La Croix de Montréal* always stressed its independence from political parties. Central to this was a fundamental distrust and rejection of party politics. This rejection required an abdication by Catholics of an effective role in shaping the legislative agenda of the province, for distrust and rejection of the party system led to reluctance to engage in the political process. Like those French Catholics who shunned Leo XIII's *Ralliement* with the Third Republic, this point of view contained an implicit rejection of the existing political order itself. While this might enable these Catholic militants to feel they were preserving their integrity by remaining aloof as critics, rather than sully themselves as participants, it was an attitude that had little practical value in Quebec; it only ensured that their concerns and proposals as Catholics could be, and were, easily shunted aside by politicians. This attitude on the part of Catholic militants invited politicians to manipulate Catholic opinion for their own purposes, or it underscored the divisions among Catholics: Catholic militants were a minority, but a very vocal one that, when it was politically expedient or desirable, could be portrayed, and discredited, as the voice of Catholicism. In its political attitudes, which had its roots in the French-inspired ultramontanist of Bourget and Lafleche and through the influence of *La Croix* in Paris, *La Croix de Montréal* represented a dangerous potential for division and discord among Catholics. Only in the 1930s did these Catholic militants begin to abandon this attitude toward the political process.

In linking religion and nationalism *La Croix de Montréal* provided a platform for the antisemitism that shaped the extreme right in France and that was vigorously promoted by *La Croix* in Paris. By uncritically, unthinkingly, accepting *La Croix* in Paris as an authoritative source of inspiration and direction – not to mention copy – the Montreal paper became a voice of antisemitism in that city. The history of antisemitism in Quebec remains to be written;⁴⁴ only when that has been done can the role of *La Croix de Montréal* in fostering antisemitism be determined with precision. However, in its unthinking parroting of Drumont and the Paris *La Croix*, *La*

⁴³ In addition to Sorlin, see also John McManners, *Church and State in France 1870-1914* (London, 1972); Zeev Sternhell, *La droite révolutionnaire 1885-1914: les origines françaises du fascisme* (Paris, 1978); René Rémond, *L'anticléricalisme en France: de 1815 à nos jours* (Bruxelles, 1985).

⁴⁴ A great deal of superficial and shallow writing on antisemitism in Quebec is in print but the topic is still awaiting substantive treatment. Comments by Cornelius Jaenen in 1977 are still germane: "Thoughts on French and Catholic Anti-Semitism," *Jewish Historical Society of Canada Journal / Société de l'Histoire juive canadienne*, April, 1977, pp. 16-23.

Croix de Montréal made its own contribution to a climate of opinion that was hospitable to antisemitism. Like many other Christians, the paper's staff and supporters failed to question the fundamental contradiction between the message of Christ and the promotion of hatred.

La Croix de Montréal remains something of a mystery. Much has yet to be learned about its finances, its readership and its support before it is possible to say a great deal about its historical importance. In any attempt to assess Catholic attitudes in Quebec and measure the influence of Catholic militants generally, it is essential to recreate the history of *la bonne presse* in Quebec which *La Croix de Montréal* championed. Did the paper stand alone? Did its staff, writers and readers represent and speak only to each other? There is much to suggest that while the timing may have been all wrong for Denault and his friends to succeed with *La Croix de Montréal* they represented a type of militant Catholicism that had emerged in previous generations and would continue into the twentieth century. Despite its collapse, the paper lived up to Denault's desire that it demonstrate how

the young of the past defended the Church with a sword; those of today defend it by the pen; one a military calling; the other militant.⁴⁵

La Croix de Montréal was militancy personified.

⁴⁵ *La Croix de Montréal*, 22 août, 1893, p. 1.