

The Nomination of Michael Fallon as Bishop of London

Pasquale FIORINO

At the turn of this century, the population of the nine counties that comprise the Catholic Diocese of London, Ontario had reached 500,038. Of these 11.24% professed the Catholic faith, 5.31% claimed French as their ethnic origin, and 21.49% were of Irish descent.¹ Given the size of its ethnic population and the agrarian nature of its economy, the London Diocese did not seem to pose any threat to the social and religious peace of the Dominion, but it was soon to become a much debated topic among Catholics and Protestants. This upsurge in fame was the result of two events which occurred less than a month apart: the nomination of Michael Francis Fallon as Bishop of the Diocese in December 1909 and the French-Canadian Educational Congress held in Ottawa in January 1910. For the next two decades, Bishop Michael Fallon's relationship with French-Canadians was a controversial issue in Canadian social and religious life.

The investigation of the candidacy and the appointment of Michael Fallon as Bishop of London has been shrouded in mystery and unconfirmed rumours. The Roman hierarchy does not disclose information regarding its methods of investigation or its findings. However, this paper will present the fruits of my research at the Vatican Archives with respect to the nomination of Fallon to the episcopal see of London.

On 25 June 1908, the Bishops of Toronto, Hamilton, Sault Ste. Marie, Kingston, Peterborough, and Alexandria met in Toronto to compile a list of three candidates – known as a *terna* – for the London See which had become vacant following the translation of Bishop Francis Patrick McEvay to the Archdiocese of Toronto. The Bishops felt confident that Rome would easily accept one their candidates. In fact, in their correspondence to the Apostolic Delegate, Archbishop Donatus Sbarretti, they indicated that all three candidates had been nominated unanimously. The Bishops' first choice, *the dignissimus*, was Fr. John Mahoney of the Diocese of Hamilton; their second choice, *the dignior*, was Fr. John Hogan of the Diocese of Kingston; and *the dignus*, Fr. Dionysius Morris of the Archdiocese of Toronto was their third

¹ Fourth Census of Canada, 1901, King's Printer, Ottawa 1902 Vol. pp.3, 320-340. Since the census does not give a break down of the religious affiliation of the Irish, we cannot determine what percentage of the Irish population residing in the Diocese were Catholics. With respect to the French-Canadian population of London, we can safely assume they nearly all professed to be Catholics.

choice.² The Bishops' optimism regarding their choices was shared by Sbarretti.³ In forwarding to Bishop T. J. Dowling of Hamilton "the usual lists of questions concerning the candidates,"⁴ Sbarretti tacitly acknowledged that he foresaw no difficulties with any of the three. However as soon as the Apostolic Delegate began his official investigation of the terna, the winds of discontent made themselves felt in Ottawa, creating an obstacle to the nomination of the new Bishop. The appointment turned out to be far more complicated than the Ontario Bishops – and the Apostolic Delegate – could ever have expected.

The first hurdle was the unpopularity of Fr. Mahoney of the Diocese of Hamilton. No sooner had McEvay vacated his office that rumours began to circulate as to possible replacements. Rumours form interesting opinion polls that indicate, in a crude and unsolicited manner, the popular priests among possible candidates to the episcopacy, along with the reasons for supporting or opposing the rumoured individuals. A number of priests from London Diocese decided to convey their opinion on the rumoured candidates to the Apostolic Delegate. In June of 1908, an anonymous letter – simply signed "priests of London" – was received by Sbarretti. It supplied information on four priests who had been rumoured as possible candidates for London; among the names mentioned was that of Mahoney.⁵ As chancellor of Hamilton Diocese and a close friend of Bishop Dowling, Fr. Mahoney was considered the favoured candidate. The information supplied on Mahoney by the anonymous writers, however, was not very flattering in that they felt he had won neither the respect nor the friendship of his fellow diocesan priests. They mistrusted him and considered him to be simply his Bishop's pawn. His inability to bond with the clergy, even in a superficial manner, far outweighed, in the opinion of the anonymous writers, the administrative abilities of Dowling's close ally. They concluded that a 'caveat' should thus be placed on his episcopal nomination. Somewhat alarmed by the effect these sentiments might have on the terna, Sbarretti decided to unearth the truth of these rumours.⁶

The views of the anonymous writers were to be confirmed by Sbarretti's own inquiry. Fr. Schweitzer, a member of the Congregation of the

² Archivio Secreto Vaticano Delegazione Apostolica Canadese (hereafter referred to as: ASV DAC) 19 Dossier 10/1, Dowling to Sbarretti, 25 June 1908.

³ Archbishop Donato Sbarretti was Apostolic Delegate in Canada from 1902 to 1910. In 1916, he was named a Cardinal by Pope Benedict XV. He died in 1939.

⁴ ASV DAC 19 Dossier 10/1, Sbarretti to Dowling, 1 July 1908.

⁵ ASV DAC 17 Dossier 27, Priests to Sbarretti, June 1908. The names of the other priests mentioned in the letter were: Fr. J. Meunier of London Diocese, and Fr. J. McCann, both of Toronto, and the rector of the Basilian college in Toronto, Fr. J. Teefy.

⁶ ASV DAC 19 Dossier 10/1, Sbarretti to Teefy, 10 July 1908.

Resurrection who resided in Berlin, Ontario, affirmed Mahoney's unpopularity among the clergy of Hamilton and went on to say:

It is hard to say whether all this is due precisely to an arbitrary and imperious spirit, or to too much zeal to please the whims of his bishop, or to a somewhat apparent *desiderium episcopatus*.⁷

A Father Connolly, in response to Sbarretti's inquiry, claimed that Mahoney was unpopular because of his "arbitrary and mistrustful ways,"⁸ while Fr. Coffee, a Jesuit, reported to the Apostolic Delegate:

I have often heard him referred to as arrogant, ill-tempered and tricky in his dealings. The fact that he generally acts as the Bishop's spokesman and representative in episcopal affairs may account for the unconcealed antipathy of many of the clergy toward him.⁹

These unflattering reports on Fr. Mahoney undermined but did not totally destroy Sbarretti's hopes of a quick appointment for London Diocese. After all, Mahoney was not the sole nominee. One of the other two candidates could still be deemed capable of holding an episcopal office. Sbarretti's investigation revealed, however, that none of the three candidates were endowed with the abilities for such an office.

Reverend J. R. Teefy, Rector of St. Michael's College, Toronto, who was personally acquainted with all three, was most critical and found them to be "ordinary parish priests whose scholarship, powers of preaching, and cultured education are below the ordinary."¹⁰ The Reverend Rector therefore suggested that a new terna be compiled.

In a subsequent letter to the Apostolic Delegate, Teefy, after discussing Mahoney's unpopularity, raised the issue of the unsuitability of the candidates. In his opinion, Mahoney had been proposed only because he was being promoted by his Bishop. The Rector of St. Michael's College proceeded to accuse the English-speaking Bishops of Ontario of favouritism in nominating episcopal candidates. It was this favouritism, claimed Teefy, that produced candidates who were unfit for the job.

Ontario is the leading English-speaking Province in the Dominion. The system maintained for the naming of our bishops brings forward mediocre men, men who for want of learning and culture give a poor impression of

⁷ ASV DAC 19 Dossier 10/1, Schweitzer to Sbarretti, 27 July 1908.

⁸ ASV DAC 19 Dossier 10/1, Connolly to Sbarretti, 23 July 1908.

⁹ ASV DAC 19 Dossier 10/1, Coffee to Sbarretti, 31 July 1908.

¹⁰ ASV DAC 19 Dossier 10/1, Teefy to Sbarretti, 6 July 1908.

hierarchy.¹¹

Acting on Teefy's claim of the mediocrity of the candidates, Sbarretti solicited further information, in particular pertaining to the candidates abilities or lack thereof.¹² The majority of the responses received by Sbarretti indirectly confirmed the candidates' inferior qualifications. Fr. Connolly, a Jesuit at Guelph, described Mahoney as being "zealous for what is true and right."¹³ Of Fr. Morris, he said that he was a man "possessing a great business ability and a strong and independent character."¹⁴ Connolly's religious confrere, Fr. Coffee, saw Mahoney as an

... excellent administrator from a business point of view... of fair general ability. As a pulpit speaker, however, he does not and probably never will create a favourable impression ...¹⁵

A further response from Joseph Schweitzer of Berlin not only echoed Teefy's claim of the inferiority of the candidates and of favouritism by the English-speaking hierarchy, but also gave an analysis of the ethnic situation in London Diocese.

On looking over the names of the priests of that diocese (London), you will notice that the majority of them are not of Irish extraction – and I also know that a very great proportion of the faithful are French. Since the majority of our good bishops of Ontario are either Irishmen born in Ireland or of Irish descent, it seems to me ... that perhaps too little attention is paid by them to this peculiar condition of the above-named diocese, as well as to that of other dioceses. To be candid to your Excellency, it looks very much as if the Irish try to monopolize the Episcopacy of their nationality in Ontario as well as in the United States.¹⁶

The proponents of the terna had attempted to placate the desires of the French-Canadian element of London Diocese by indicating that all three candidates had a working knowledge of the French language. Mahoney was said to be able to speak French, while Hogan could "speak French with ease"

¹¹ ASV DAC 19 Dossier 10/1, Teefy to Sbarretti, 10 July 1908.

¹² ASV DAC 19 Dossier 10/1, Sbarretti to Schweitzer, 18 July 1908; Sbarretti to Connolly, 18 July 1908; Sbarretti to Roche, 25 July 1908.

¹³ ASV DAC 19 Dossier 10/1, Connolly to Sbarretti, 23 July 1908.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ ASV DAC 19 Dossier 10/1, Coffee to Sbarretti, 31 July 1908.

¹⁶ ASV DAC 19 Dossier 10/1 Schweitzer to Sbarretti, 27 July 1908. Fr. Schweitzer's comment on the manipulation of the Irish Bishops of episcopal candidates reflected the German-Irish tensions in the Diocese of Hamilton, a matter with which Fr. Schweitzer was personally familiar.

and Morris was “well versed in the French language.”¹⁷ The Bishops, however, did not consider it necessary for the candidates to have had some pastoral experience among the French-Canadian population.

Sbarretti forwarded the results of his investigation to Rome. In his comments he emphasized the extensive disapproval surrounding all three candidates. To Cardinal Gotti of Propaganda Fide, Sbarretti wrote that he favoured none of the candidates.¹⁸ He highlighted Mahoney’s poor relationship with the Hamilton priests and expressed regret that those providing information did “not shed that light on the candidates that I had hoped for.”¹⁹ Sbarretti was silent on the linguistic issue for one of two possible reasons. He either believed that the information provided in the terna on the candidates ability to speak French would satisfy his superiors in Rome or that the linguistic issue would not have a major impact on the final decision. But in fact, it did. The question of familiarity with French caused Rome to delay its decision for a further six months.

Rome saw two difficulties with the 1908 terna: Mahoney’s unpopularity and the candidate’s inability to speak fluent French. Mahoney’s administrative qualifications alone, under normal circumstances, should have won him the episcopal nomination. But the negative reports concerning Mahoney caused the Congregation to take a cautious approach. The Consistorial Congregation held two meetings to discuss the proposed terna: the first on 3 December 1908 and the second on 11 February 1909. In its first meeting, the Congregation

... fixed their attention on the first candidate proposed, Rev. D. Mahoney, from the Diocese of Hamilton. Before arriving at a final decision, however, they agreed it was necessary to obtain further information regarding, in particular, the character of the candidate who some deemed to be somewhat harsh and therefore not very likeable, as well as his knowledge of the French language which was considered necessary in that region.²⁰

As a result, the Congregation decided to carry out its own investigation of the terna; the committee elicited the opinion of the Archbishop of Montreal and

¹⁷ ASV DAC 19 Dossier 10/1, McEvay et al to Gotti, 28 July 1908.

¹⁸ In June of 1908, Propaganda Fide lost its jurisdiction over Canada and the United States. As a result, the nomination of Bishop McEvay’s successor for the Diocese of London was now the responsibility of the Consistorial Congregation.

¹⁹ ASV DAC 19 Dossier 10/1, Sbarretti to Gotti, 17 August 1908. All translations from Italian into English have been done by the author. The original correspondence between the Apostolic Delegate and his superiors in Rome is in Italian. All translation of these documents has been done by the author.

²⁰ Archivio Secreto Vaticano Secreteria di Stato (hereafter referred to as ASV SDS) 1910 Rubrica 283, Fascicolo 1, Relazione con Sommario, protocollo 40682, pp. 134, 135.

the Bishop of Pembroke. The Archbishop of Montreal happened to be in Rome at this time and though unable to give insight into the character of Mahoney, he advised the Congregation to seek the opinion of the Archbishop of Ottawa.

Cardinal Merry Del Val wrote to Archbishop Joseph Thomas Duhamel asking him to provide information on Mahoney's character and his facility with the French language. The Archbishop of Ottawa not knowing Mahoney personally, contacted three priests whom he hoped would provide the information requested. In his response to Merry Del Val, Duhamel quoted from each of the three priests without disclosing their identity. Only one of the responses received by Duhamel was favourable. He said that the candidate possessed "... the qualities of a good priest, he was pious and experienced, one of those who may be considered as a worthy candidate for an episcopacy ..."²¹ The other two opinions reiterated the information Sbarretti had already communicated to Rome, i.e. that Mahoney was unpopular in his Diocese. On the issue of the French language, Duhamel did not, however, give any specific information on Mahoney's ability to speak French or on the general situation of the French-Canadians in the London Diocese. He simply referred Merry Del Val to a report that he, along with the Archbishops of Quebec, Montréal, and St. Boniface, had submitted to the Congregation the previous year. That report stated in part:

In the Province of Ontario, there are, however, only two bishops whose native language is French: the Archbishop of Ottawa and his only suffragan, the bishop of Pembroke. Both have a command of English, can speak it well and preach just as well in that language as in French in all their parishes and missions with a few English-speaking Catholics. It would be quite easy to submit a list of French-Canadian candidates, worthy of the episcopacy, who speak both languages.²²

That particular report had been submitted on the occasion of the episcopal vacancy in the Archdiocese of Toronto, and Duhamel now wished to apply its contents to the nomination for a Bishop of London.

Following their second meeting on 11 February 1909, Sbarretti was advised that the Cardinals of the Sacred Congregation:

... have recognized, however, that due account must be given in this case, to the need for a shepherd who also has a good command of the French language. And therefore they invite your Excellency to order, in the name of the Holy See, the formulation of a new terna of candidates with good command of both the English and French language, so that they may

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

perform their pastoral ministry well with all concerned.²³

The stage seemed to be set for the nomination to London Diocese of a Bishop who had a strong command of the French language and who could provide spiritual leadership to the French Canadian element of his Diocese. Those who had hoped for such a scenario were to be disappointed.

It would be an understatement to say that the drafters of the 1908 terna were not amused by Rome's response. After receiving an English translation of Rome's letter,²⁴ the former ordinary of the Diocese of London wrote a short but strongly worded response to the Apostolic Delegate:

Of course the French question was duly considered at the last meeting for the terra. However, we have suffered a long time in school and state matters on account of a few Bishops, Priests and Politicians trying to make French the only language in this country. And now it is becoming more serious in this Protestant and English speaking Province of Ontario.²⁵

Sbarretti realized that tempers were running high among the Ontario hierarchy and advised McEvay "to exercise your influence that everything may go off smoothly especially at this moment when we are about to celebrate the Plenary Council."²⁶ Although the Apostolic Delegate may have sympathized with the Ontario Bishops, he could not openly express any support nor could he question Rome's decision. If Rome had placed blame on the compilers of the terna for having failed to nominate candidates who could serve the French-speaking population of London, Sbarretti must have felt culpable for he had failing to raise the linguistic issue with Rome after it had surfaced during his investigation. McEvay was requested to provide information on the "French Canadian population in the Diocese of London, in order that I may be able to expose the situation in this regard clearly and exactly to the Sacred Congregation."²⁷

Within three days Sbarretti had received the information from McEvay. The Archbishop's feelings were still volatile. He could not accept the fact that the terna had been rejected for linguistic reasons. As far as McEvay was concerned, the candidate's knowledge of the French language had been discussed and taken into account when the terna had been drafted. All the candidates had a working knowledge of French and this should have satisfied Rome. McEvay wrote on behalf of the Ontario Bishops and provided the

²³ ASV DAC 19 Dossier 10/1, De Lai to Sbarretti, 2 February 1909

²⁴ ASV DAC 19 Dossier 10/1, Sbarretti to McEvay, 8 March 1909.

²⁵ ASV DAC 19 Dossier 10/1, McEvay to Sbarretti, 10 March 1909.

²⁶ ASV DAC 19 Dossier 10/1, Sbarretti to McEvay, 12 March 1909.

²⁷ ASV DAC 19 Dossier 10/1, Sbarretti to McEvay, 25 March 1909.

statistical information Rome requested along with an unsolicited commentary on the French population of London Diocese:

It is the first time in the history of the Church in these parts that the united voice of the Bishops of both provinces has been rejected by the Holy See. The Ontario Bishops have done their full share to meet – even the whims of some of these French people, but a line must be drawn somewhere as other people have souls and spirits also. We desire to respectfully submit that the French portion of the population was duly considered in the preparation of the first terra and that the French people of this province have always been given an ample supply of French Priests and have been encouraged by the Bishops to retain their beautiful language.

However in this civil Province of Ontario Catholics meet with many difficulties. This whole Province is strongly Protestant. The Catholics being about one seventh of the population and in the diocese of London about one tenth. The Government, the officials, the courts, the commercial and Education interests are to a great extent Protestant and the only language recognized is the English. Even in Catholic Schools the French language is merely tolerated as a medium to learn English.

The result is that all people living in this province are compelled sooner or later to learn English and where the French people have been for generations as in the diocese of London, they know English much better than French. Some 20,000 of the Catholics in London diocese have French names and nearly all ... speak English. In some country parishes the French language is retained and about 10,000 speak French imperfectly and very few can read and write correctly in French, and this is no wonder since English is the only language properly taught in the schools.

Then the Bishops vented their anger in the concluding remarks:

... our efforts for the spiritual well-being of our people, especially in the great work of Catholic Education have been for years much hampered by the injudicious interference of a few French Prelates – Priests and Politicians who seem to place race before religion.²⁸

Bishop Dowling of Hamilton also joined in the linguistic debate. In a letter to Merry Del Val, he defended the actions of the Bishops of Ontario and attempted to discredit any information that Rome might have received with respect to the French-Canadians of Ontario. Dowling wrote to the Cardinal that certain “statistics lately published in the province of Quebec relating to the Catholic people of Ontario are inaccurate and misleading.” Dowling then defended the accuracy of McEvay’s report by saying that it had also been approved by Archbishop Gauthier of Kingston, a French-Canadian

²⁸ ASV DAC 19 Dossier 10/1, McEvay to Sbarretti, 1 April 1909.

who was “emphatically opposed to what he calls French aggression and ‘impertinent interference with the affairs of English speaking provinces’.”²⁹

At the end of March, 1909, a second terna was drafted proposing Fr. John Aylward of the Diocese of London as Dignissimus, Fr. Robert Brady of the Diocese of Hamilton as Dignior, and Fr. Michael Fallon, a member of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, as Dignus. The contents of this new terna differed significantly from that of 1908. The 1908 terna had stressed the candidate’s pastoral and administrative qualities along with their work experience, both as pastors and educators. As already indicated, a passing remark had been made regarding their ability to speak French. The 1909 terna, given the restrictions placed by Rome on the candidates, stressed Aylward’s and Brady’s knowledge of the French language and their work experience among French-speaking faithful. With respect to Fallon’s ability to handle French, the terna simply said: “... he speaks English, French and Latin with ease.”³⁰

On 14 December 1909, Cardinal Raphael Merry Del Val notified Sbarretti that the Dignus, Fr. Michael Fallon OMI had been chosen as the new ordinary for the Diocese of London.³¹

Although he had resided in the United States since 1902, Fallon was not a total stranger to the Ontario scene.³² His years as professor at the University of Ottawa had won him fame for more than just his teaching abilities. He had become vice-rector of the University at a very young age and had immersed himself in the language controversy that shook that institution at the end of the century. He was a staunch defender of the English-speaking population of Canada and was regarded an antagonist of French-Canadians. Even during his “exile” to the United States Fallon had not remained in seclusion. He had been placed in a position of authority with his appointment as provincial of the American province of the Oblates, and had kept alive his contacts with the Canadian scene by travelling throughout the Western provinces giving retreats and conferences to both Catholics and Protestants. It was these trips to Canada’s west, and particularly Fallon’s work of evangelization among Protestants of that region, that caught the attention of the Apostolic Delegate, Archbishop Sbarretti.

Sbarretti’s correspondence with Fallon had begun in 1903 when the Apostolic Delegate asked the Oblate Provincial to submit a report:

²⁹ ASV SDS 1919 Rubrica 283 Fascicolo 1 Dowling to Merry Del Val, 26 March 1909, protocollo 40682, pp. 167-168.

³⁰ ASV DAC 19 Dossier 10/1, McEvay to Sbarretti, 25 March 1909.

³¹ ASV DAC 19 Dossier 10/1, Merry Del Val to Sbarretti, 14 December 1909.

³² R. Guindon, *Coexistence Difficile*, University of Ottawa Press, 1989 Chapter VII is a very good study of Fallon’s years at the University of Ottawa.

... regarding the differences in ecclesiastical discipline in force in the several provinces – especially in the English and French sections – of the Dominion³³

Fallon responded that: "... he was unable ... to give any reliable information."³⁴ Five years later Sbarretti, once again, looked to Fallon for concrete advice and service. In April 1908, the Apostolic Delegate asked the Oblate to submit a report on the Church in Western Canada.³⁵ A month later, Fallon was appointed as Sbarretti's delegate to handle a delicate situation in the British Columbia mission of Kamloops where the priest had been charged by his parishioners with illegal activities. Unable to obtain a satisfactory solution from the Bishop of New Westminster in appointing a new pastor for the mission, Sbarretti decided to investigate the matter for himself. He wrote to Fallon:

... knowing your prudence, knowledge of ecclesiastical law and probity of character, we have decided at the suggestion even of the Rt. Rev. Bishop of Westminster, to entrust you with the solution of the case..³⁶

Fallon's investigation of the case did not take long, for in July Sbarretti wrote to Fallon expressing his satisfaction with the work done.³⁷ Fallon's ability to handle delicate pastoral situations was not the only trait that Sbarretti recognized in the Oblate Provincial. What caught the eye of the Apostolic Delegate was Fallon's report of his work among the Protestants of Western Canada.

I gave a week's mission to non-Catholics in Winnipeg after the Catholic mission last March. Thirty-one non-Catholics were left under instruction, a number more have since joined the class, and still others will come. It is the invariable experience. I have done a considerable amount of this work in different districts; I know of no place where the prospects are more promising or where the results would be more abundant – or more fruitful in good, than in the cities and towns of the Canadian North West. But instead of anything being done to attract non-Catholics, much is done, no doubt unconsciously, to repel them.³⁸

³³ Archives of the Diocese of London Fallon Michael Francis (hereafter referred as ADL FMF) Dossier Correspondence with Apostolic Delegate, Sbarretti to Fallon, 27 May 1903.

³⁴ ADL FMF Dossier Correspondence with Apostolic Delegate, Fallon to Sbarretti, 3 June 1903.

³⁵ ASV DAC 112 Dossier 3, Sbarretti to Fallon, 24 April 1908.

³⁶ ADL FMF Dossier Correspondence with Apostolic Delegate, Sbarretti to Fallon, 7 May 1908.

³⁷ ADL FMF Dossier Correspondence with Apostolic Delegate, Sbarretti to Fallon, 1 July 1908.

³⁸ ASV DAC 112 Dossier 3, Fallon to Sbarretti, 12 July 1908.

Evangelization of the Protestants was an issue close to Sbarretti's heart. Once he realized Fallon's enthusiasm for such work, the Apostolic Delegate became a strong supporter of the Oblate provincial.

It was after receiving Fallon's report on his work in Canada's West that Sbarretti began to promote Fallon for an episcopal See in Canada. Soon after receiving Fallon's response, the See of Victoria, British Columbia became vacant. The bishops of the region, however, were at a loss to propose possible candidates for the empty See and they asked the Apostolic Delegate to suggest priests for the terna.³⁹ Sbarretti suggested two names, one of which was that of Michael Fallon. Neither of Sbarretti's suggestions was placed on the terna and so the Apostolic Delegate could do little to promote Fallon.⁴⁰

Once Fallon's name figured on the 1909 terna for London, however, there is no doubt that the Apostolic Delegate threw his entire support behind him. In the 1908 terna, Sbarretti had sought the advice of six different priests; in 1909, for all practical purposes, the only person from whom he solicited information was Bishop Colton of Buffalo, in whose Diocese Fallon was residing.⁴¹ With respect to the other two candidates, Sbarretti limited himself to seeking information only from Fr. Lecoq, the Sulpician rector of the Grand Seminary in Montreal where both Aylward and Brady had been students.⁴² Having thus completed this skeleton survey of the candidates, Sbarretti forwarded the documents to Rome. As far as the Apostolic Delegate was concerned, there was only one possible choice for Bishop of London.

In the first part of his report to Rome, Sbarretti gave his personal analysis of the French-English situation in Canada. Sbarretti emphasised that the social, political, and economic forces of the country were controlled by English-speaking Protestants. This reality had convinced the Apostolic Delegate of the need for the Church in Canada to have English as its first language in order to survive the attacks of her Protestant enemies and play a significant role in the formation of Canadian society. He highlighted the importance of the English language by saying that even the French-Canadian members of Parliament used it in Parliament in order to be understood by their fellow members of the House of Commons.⁴³ Like his predecessor Falconio, Sbarretti believed that English was the language of the future for

³⁹ ASV DAC 98 Dossier 10, Dontenwill to Sbarretti, 23 May 1908.

⁴⁰ ASV DAC 98 Dossier 10, Sbarretti to Dontenwill, 29 May 1908.

⁴¹ ASV DAC 19 Dossier 10/1, Sbarretti to Colton, 28 March 1909. Bishop Colton described Fallon as one who "has shown zeal for Catholic Education. He is looked up to as a leader, and is much admired for his ability and energy by not only those of our own Faith, but by non-Catholics." ASV DAC 19 Dossier 10/1, Colton to Sbarretti, 4 April 1909.

⁴² ASV DAC 19 Dossier 10/1, Sbarretti to Lecoq, 28 April 1909 and 5 May 1909.

⁴³ ASV DAC 19 Dossier 10/1, Sbarretti to Merry Del Val, 25 May 1909.

the Church in Canada. He was convinced that Canada was a bilingual nation in theory. The commercial and political affairs of the country were conducted in English and, more importantly, immigrants to Canada who spoke neither of the official languages:

... if they do not wish to remain in a perpetual state of inferiority, they must learn English: and their children who are born in Canada, will be obliged by the circumstances to learn this language.

The French-Canadians living outside the province of Quebec understand and need to understand and speak the English language if they do not wish to jeopardize their own legal interests. The English language is destined to dominate more and more in this country. The sooner one recognizes this situation, the better it shall be for all. The claim made by some French-Canadian nationalists to want to place French on the same level as English in the whole of Canada is, in my opinion, a utopia: and the energy that would be used toward that goal would, in my view, openly undermine the real interests of the Church.⁴⁴

But there was another consideration that forced Sbarretti to promote English as the main language of the Church in Canada: English was the language of the Protestants. And it is here that Sbarretti and Falconio broke with the French-Canadian mentality. For French-Canadians, learning English was synonymous to losing the Catholic faith, to becoming Protestant, for in Canada Protestants spoke English and Catholics spoke French. The first two apostolic delegates shared this view, realizing that the majority of Protestants spoke English. However for them, the English language was not a hindrance to the faith but an avenue for the conversion of the Protestants. The language of the Church in Canada should be English if any evangelization was to take place among them. For French-Canadians maintaining the French language was the most effective method of preserving the Catholic faith; for the Apostolic Delegates, the English language was the most effective means of evangelizing, of bringing Protestants converts to the Catholic faith.

A Canadian Church whose language was predominantly French would also cause divisions between English-speaking and French-speaking Catholics. A Church whose membership pledged allegiance to a variety of ethnic or linguistic groups, could neither withstand the attacks of the strong Protestant class nor perform any work of expansion. It was essential for the survival and expansion of the Church in Canada for her to be united in language and outlook.

The sublime truth of our faith, if exposed in a manner that is neither aggressive nor controversial, but in a clear, calm, rational and eloquent

⁴⁴ Ibid.

manner, would not fail to produce a great deal of good ... [and] an infinite number of prejudices against the Catholic Church would disappear. I am convinced that it is the duty of Catholic Bishops to enlighten the Protestants and to do their best to bring them back to the true faith. Up to now, very few efforts have been made in this direction; in fact, I notice with a great deal of displeasure that the heretical ministers do much more to lead Catholics astray than do our Catholic clergy to convert Protestants.⁴⁵

Sbarretti saw Fallon as an exception to this lack of initiative by the Catholic clergy. The Apostolic Delegate's enthusiasm stemmed from Fallon's ability to convert Protestants to the Catholic faith. Sbarretti's enthusiasm for Fallon was not based on personal ties, nor on a need to find a vacant episcopal See for a close acquaintance. Nor was he motivated by any conscious anti-French sentiments which would lead him to prefer a seemingly well-known antagonist of French Canadians to be appointed Bishop of London. Fallon possessed the qualities the Apostolic Delegate sought and knowledge of the French language ranked very low on his list of priorities.

What attracts my attention in particular is that Mons. Fallon gave missions for Protestants in the United States and Canada explaining to them the main Catholic truths they have refuted and he has born much fruit ... I am sure that Mons. Fallon would use all of his energy and ability to initiate ... a movement destined to dispel the ignorance and prejudices of the Protestants, to make them understand and appreciate the purity and beauty of our faith and thus attract them to the fold of Jesus Christ.⁴⁶

Before Rome reached a decision on the new Bishop of London, Sbarretti had another opportunity to make a pronouncement on Fallon. The city of Regina had been made into an episcopal See and its first Bishop had to be nominated. Sbarretti took the initiative to recommend Fallon, even though his name did not appear on the terna for Regina. And once again, Fallon's work among the Protestants figured strongly in Sbarretti's recommendation.

Although the Rev. Fallon is not on the list for Regina, I am convinced that he is the most qualified person for the position, given his knowledge, eloquence, zeal for souls and especially because he has worked and is still working even for the conversion of non-Catholics. He has already given conferences for them in several cities in the Canadian West. I am sure that the Rev. Fallon would initiate such a movement in a diocese where a large number of Protestants arrive daily, many of whom are prepared to listen to

⁴⁵ ASV DAC 19 Dossier 10/1, Sbarretti to Merry Del Val, 12 June 1909.

⁴⁶ Cf. Sbarretti to Merry del Val, 25 May 1909.

explanations regarding Catholic truths.⁴⁷

By the spring of 1909, Rome realized that it could no longer delay the decision for London. From the reports received from Sbarretti, the Cardinals realized that the rejection of the 1908 terna had created a great deal of anger among the Bishops of Ontario. The Congregation was as anxious as the Bishops in appointing a suitable candidate. The documents presented to the Cardinals of the Sacred Consistorial in the winter of 1909 began by mentioning that this was the third meeting with respect to the choice for the Bishop of London and gave a summary of the decision taken in the previous meeting of February 1909.⁴⁸ The Cardinals' attention was drawn to Sbarretti's letters of 25 May 1909, which accompanied the terna for London, and of 12 June 1909, which was enclosed with the terna for Regina, and to the fact that in both of these documents, the Apostolic Delegate had strongly supported the candidate Fallon. Dowling's confidential letter to Merry Del Val, in which the Bishop of Hamilton saw Fr. Brady as the most suitable candidate, was also mentioned in the report. Sbarretti won the day with the Cardinals of the Sacred Consistorial, for on 14 December 1909, he was informed by telegram that Fallon had been nominated as the new Bishop of London. Much to the disappointment and total disbelief of the French-Canadian hierarchy, on 25 April 1910, Michael Francis Fallon was consecrated as the fifth Ordinary of the Diocese of London.

⁴⁷ Cf. Sbarretti to Merry del Val, 12 June 1909.

⁴⁸ ASV SDS 1910 Rubrica 283 fascicolo 1 *Relazione con Sommario* protocollo 40682, pp. 136-141.