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“FOR LOVE OF GOD AND LOVE OF ARCHITECTURE” A Brief History of Architectural Ultramontanism at Our Lady of Lourdes Parish Church¹

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> EVAN MCMURTRY

Architectural style during the nineteenth century was a fraught territory. After the fashion for Gothic Revival in the second quarter of the nineteenth century, classicising elements were becoming important again for Roman Catholic ecclesiastical patrons, either for liturgical or theological reasons. It was for the last reason that the Archbishop of Toronto, the Irish-born John Joseph Lynch D.D. [1816-1888], built several classicising churches, including the parish church Our Lady of Lourdes at Sherbourne Street above Wellesley Street (1886) (fig. 1). The parish church was built to commemorate the Silver Jubilee of Lynch's installment as Bishop of Toronto.

The heritage value of Our Lady of Lourdes church lies in its unique status as a Renaissance Revival church at a time when the prevailing fashion in Toronto was for the Gothic Revival. The church was modelled on Santa Maria del Popolo in Rome (1472-1477) (fig. 2) along with references to St. Peter's Basilica (1506-1626).

As a memorial church, the original layout followed a chapel-like design with short transepts and a vaulted apse, but with a small footprint which lacked side aisles (fig. 3). All of this was surmounted by a Renaissance-inspired dome supported by an octagonal drum, which is significant because it made Our Lady of Lourdes the first domed church built in Toronto. The interior featured a coffered ceiling and massed columns, which would have led the eye to a tabernacle and an indoor grotto representing Our Lady of Lourdes (the latter is extant in the church). Despite the uniqueness of the church, it



FIG. 1. OUR LADY OF LOURDES PARISH CHURCH, TORONTO, ON. | EVAN MCMURTRY.



FIG. 2. SANTA MARIA DEL POPOLO, ROME. | VINCENZO PIROZZI, BRIDGEMAN IMAGES.



FIG. 3. OUR LADY OF LOURDES, TORONTO, ON, C. 1894. | COURTESY OF THE TORONTO PUBLIC LIBRARY.

has been the subject of very little secondary literature.

A major addition in 1910 by James Patrick Hynes² saw the construction of a much larger nave to the south, which meant that Law's original nave was transformed into the sacristy and transepts of the new church. It also meant that the liturgical east end, which had been located at the west of the church, was moved to the north end without the addition of an apse since there was no additional space on which to build. To accommodate parishioners, the porch entrance was shifted southward from the east end, but still facing east. Hynes's nave could seat over nine hundred people for its growing Irish congregation.³ When compared with the original church's capacity of three hundred parishioners, this was a dramatic addition. Nevertheless, Hynes maintained a sense of continuity with Law's classically inspired design.

COMMANDER FREDERICK C. LAW'S ARCHITECTURAL CAREER

The church was designed by Commander Frederick C. Law [1841-1922], who was born into a prominent English family who counted among their friends the leading English Catholic churchmen of the time. His father, William Towry Law [1809-1886], was an Anglican churchman and convert to Catholicism; his grandfather, Edward Law, first Baron Ellenborough [1750-1818], was England's Lord Chief Justice.⁴ The young Law was educated at Oscott College and distinguished himself during his service in the Crimean War aboard the Royal Navy HMS *Hannibal*. After immigrating to Canada in 1874 and marrying the daughter of the lieutenant-governor, he served as private secretary to successive lieutenant-governors of Ontario.⁵

Law had only two major commissions during his architectural career: Our Lady of Lourdes and alterations to the Bishop's Palace at Church Street north of Shuter Street (1845) with the addition of a third storey. It is unknown where Law received an architectural training or apprenticeship, especially since his time before emigrating to Ontario is undocumented; it has been suggested that he might have had training as a naval architect.⁶ In 1884, Commander Law worked in the offices of architects Frank Darling [1850-1923] and Samuel George Curry [1854-1942]. The former was to become a leading proponent of Canadian architecture.⁷ Darling was the president of the Ontario Association of Architects in 1895 and (with his partners) designed a large number of commercial, academic, and residential buildings in Toronto and across Ontario, such as Toronto's Bank of Montreal main branch, Front Street (1885-1886, now the Hockey Hall of Fame), and the original building for

the Royal Ontario Museum (1910-1911).⁸ It has been suggested that Darling would have had a hand in the design of Our Lady of Lourdes due to their proximity to their respective offices.⁹ Darling was apt to teach to Law the fundamental principles of the classical style apparent at Our Lady of Lourdes, as the former taught aspiring architects the Roman orders, as well as the fundamentals of Gothic and Renaissance architecture.¹⁰ There is no indication of Law practicing architecture after 1890 with no ensuing building permits, newspaper articles, or published articles in journals.¹¹

JOHN HENRY NEWMAN AND CLASSICISING ARCHITECTURE IN VICTORIAN ENGLAND

Without extant writings on architecture by Law, other significant commissions, surviving plans, or other materials related to Our Lady of Lourdes, it is challenging to understand the architectural sources and influences for his designs of the church. Before he emigrated to Toronto in 1874, however, Law was exposed to classically styled Roman Catholic churches being newly built in England. That new building campaign had been impelled in part by the Catholic emancipation process, in which prejudicial legislation that had been aimed at encouraging Catholics to join the established churches in the United Kingdom was revoked. Thus, new church construction arose due to Catholics' newfound ability to worship openly.

During that time, the theologian John Henry Newman [1801-1890] (canonized 2019) notably established an oratory at Birmingham and a Catholic university in Dublin. Before his conversion from the Anglican church, he was a leader of the Oxford Movement, also known as Tractarianism for its publication of articles or tracts that were favourable toward Roman Catholicism.¹² The High Church

movement drew its authority not so much from "the Church of England's legal Establishment, but from a new awareness of the Church's 'Apostolical descent.'"¹³ In 1879, Newman was recognized for his efforts by Pope Leo XIII, when he was made a cardinal.

Law had family connections to Newman. In 1845, Cardinal Wiseman confirmed Newman into the Catholic church at Oscott College, where Law would become a student. Newman was a friend of Law's father, William Towry, who paid him a social call in 1857.¹⁴ It is interesting to note that on May 26, 1852, four days after Frederick C. attended his brother Augustus Henry Law's [1833-1881] confirmation at Oscott College, the latter attended mass at Birmingham Oratory (1850-1852), which Newman presided over. Augustus described the building as "beautiful."¹⁵ In the early 1880s, Newman and William corresponded after Augustus died of yellow fever in Rhodesia while on missionary work for the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits), into which he had been ordained in 1865.¹⁶ William published Augustus's letters and diaries in three volumes, and included the letters from Newman. Another brother, Ernest Law, wrote a volume describing the history and architecture of Hampton Court Palace (1514-1521) where the family was then living.¹⁷

Newman was builder of four churches: the Gothic style Anglican Church of St. Mary and St. Nicholas (1835-1836) at Littlemore near Oxford, followed by an Oratorian chapel at Alcester Street (1849) in Birmingham (a converted gin distillery), the old Birmingham Oratory (1850-1852), and University Church in Dublin (1856). Newman's stylistic preferences evolved toward classical architecture. This was due to his need for his oratory churches to be open and spacious, partly because sermonizing to larger congregations demanded

it, rather than for any aesthetic choices, as he had at one point considered building the University Church in the Gothic style. The Classical style also allowed Newman to address practical concerns for increased space, affordability, and plainness of design, which gave the ability to gradually enhance decorations as church fundraising allowed.¹⁸

Newman's enthusiasm for classicising architecture had been sparked during his 1832 trip to the Mediterranean and Rome and increased over the next several decades; by 1850, he privately vituperated against Augustus W.N. Pugin's [1812-1852] churches that obstructed the Eucharist with their pulpits and rood screens, which went against the post-Tridentine ritual.¹⁹ Newman found this strict fidelity to historic details to be somewhat doctrinaire, and entered the debate between the Medievalists and the Classicists in the pages of the *The Rambler* that surrounded Pugin's use of rood screens.²⁰

Newman also took umbrage to Pugin's characterization of Classical style architecture as "pagan" due to its association with Graeco-Roman civilization: "The see of St Peter itself [...] is pronounced by him to be *pagan*, pronounced not historically, but contumeliously—or, to use the best word dogmatically, as if though infallibility in doctrine is found at Rome, a parallel authority in architecture was to be found in this century in England."²¹

Newman selected his architect for the chapel of the new University College in Dublin, John Hungerford Pollen [1820-1902], based on the criterion that he was not an "ultra-Puginian."²² Pollen, an associate of several prominent members of the Arts and Crafts movement as well as a fellow convert, drafted plans for a university chapel and later described Newman's preferences:



FIG. 4. BROMPTON ORATORY, BROMPTON ROAD, LONDON. | DAVID CASTOR, WIKIMEDIA COMMONS.

It covered the garden in rear of the University House; a plain brick hall with an apsidal end, timber ceiling etc. somewhat in the manner of the earlier Roman basilicas. He [Newman] felt a strong attachment to those ancient churches with rude exteriors but solemn and impressive within, recalling the early history of the Church, as it gradually felt its way in the converted Empire, and took possession.²³

In this setting, before his emigration to Canada, Law was exposed to the gravity with which architectural styles were adopted by ecclesiastical patrons, who were more men of letters than architectural critics. William Towry Law and his family were also friendly with a family of architects who were important to the revival of classicism in architecture, the architect Joseph John Scoles [1798-1863] and his son Ignatius [1834-1896], the latter who would become a Jesuit missionary alongside Augustus Law.

The meeting of William and Ignatius was mentioned in Augustus's letter to his father of 1870: "Do you remember the young man—an architect—son of Mr. Scoles, architect at Hammersmith? He told me he went with you once in a cab to visit some place for a convent."²⁴ He was perhaps referring to St. Mary's Convent located near Birmingham (1840-1841) that was designed by A.W.N. Pugin. Ignatius Scoles later remodelled St. Wilfrid's church in Preston, Lancashire (1879-1880), with Samuel Joseph Nicholl, which demonstrates a preference for classicising architecture. In 1853, his father, Joseph John Scoles, had designed both an oratory house in the Renaissance style and a temporary church for the Oratorians at Brompton Oratory in London (fig. 4), under the patronage of Newman's colleague and fellow convert, Father Frederick William Faber [1814-1863].

ULTRAMONTANISM AND PATRONAGE IN ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCHES IN CANADA

Not all churchmen of the time were of the same opinion as Newman on spiritual matters, as Newman was opposed to Ultramontane churchmen whom he felt were anti-modern in advocating for the papacy having temporal power.²⁵ The First Vatican Council (1869-1870) attempted to organize a response to international threats to the Church that had begun with the French Revolution and continued through the nineteenth century with the unification of Italy. The movement adopted the doctrine of papal infallibility and "the promotion of centralization of authority and influence in the Papal curia."²⁶

As Malcolm Thurlby has pointed out, Herbert Gribble's 1880 to 1884 classicising design for Brompton Oratory, along with other churches then being built, show the influence of Ultramontane views of the Church that looked toward the Papacy and its architecture.²⁷

Ultramontane views had a significant impact on the Church in nineteenth-century Canada, for example in Quebec where many churchmen believed secularization represented a significant and growing threat. The Bishop of Montreal, Ignace Bourget [1799-1885], visited Rome in 1841 and was impressed by the vigour of conservative Ultramontane thought.²⁸ He commissioned the rebuilding of Montreal's cathedral, Mary, Queen of the World (1870-1878) (fig. 5), several years after its predecessor, St. Jacques Cathedral, was destroyed in a fire. Bourget sent his architects Victor Bourgeau [1809-1888] and Joseph Michaud [1822-1902] to Rome to take measurements of St. Peter's Basilica (1506-1626) with the aim of recreating it at one-quarter scale. This was to be done as a sign of solidarity with the papacy, but



FIG. 5. MARIE-REINE-DU-MONDE BASILICA CATHEDRAL, MONTREAL, QC. | THOMAS LEIDL, CC BY-SA 4.0, WIKIMEDIA COMMONS.

moreover it was built in a predominantly Protestant area of Montreal. Bourgeau, however, asserted that replicating the basilica at that scale would be impossible, which led to Michaud's appointment as architect to finish overseeing the construction.²⁹

The response by churchmen in the Irish Toronto community, in addition to those in Quebec, was to strengthen religious devotional practices, such as the celebration of the Stations of the Cross, devotion to Our Lady of Lourdes, as well as to strengthening fraternal organizations.³⁰ Toronto's Archbishop Lynch, whose first visit to Rome was in 1849 and who took part in the Vatican Council, was exposed to classical architecture, with its ultimate expression in St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. His abiding preference for Roman Catholic architecture was in full relief in an 1873 sermon on the accomplishments of Catholic science and culture. Lynch denigrated "rival" Protestant churches as inferior to Catholic churches, which were "conceived by colossal minds." Lynch's list was extensive: "Westminster Abbey,

the Cathedrals of Cologne, Lincoln, Notre Dame of Paris, Strasbourg, Milan, Seville, and in numerous others all over France, Italy, Germany, Belgium, Spain, Portugal, and Mexico." St. Paul's Cathedral, London, which had been built to rival St. Peter's, "fell short of all expectations" and the "filth and blackness of the interior . . . is a standing reproach of even Protestant writers and travellers." Lynch continued stating that architects built their churches "not hampered by the lowly thoughts of economy, or deterred by the length of time required to construct them . . . men were found to work for love of God and love of architecture."³¹

His inclusion of Westminster Abbey (begun 1245) in this list of Catholic churches illustrates his belief that the churches of the Church of England were rightly Catholic, which his biographer Hugh Charles McKeown frequently termed the "true religion." This belief had earlier been illustrated by Bishop Michael Power [1804-1847] and his architect William Thomas [1799-1860], when their design for St. Michael's Basilica, Toronto



FIG. 6. ST. PAUL'S, POWER AND SHUTER STREETS, TORONTO, ON. | SIMONP, CC BY-SA 3.0, WIKIMEDIA COMMONS.

(1845-1848), was modelled on York Minster (begun 1220), which was the seat of the Archbishop of York. Furthermore, architectural fragments from York Minster were deposited when Bishop Power laid the cornerstone.³² To once more assert the Catholic Church's spiritual authority over Torontonians, in 1865 Lynch completed the tower and spire to be the tallest in Toronto, outdoing St. James Cathedral, Toronto (1853), the Anglican church then under construction for Bishop Strachan [1778-1867]. Eventually the St. James Cathedral's spire was built thirty feet taller, after Henry Langley [1836-1907] completed the design in 1870-1873.³³

Several of the churches Lynch commissioned followed what was described as a "Roman Renaissance" style, whereas the great majority were in the Gothic style. Earlier described by John Ruskin [1819-1900], it is inspired by St. Peter's Basilica and features a façade with an entablature dividing the upper storey and a lower storey with arches. This was achieved to great effect at St. Paul's Basilica at Power and Queen Streets (1889) (fig. 6) and at



FIG. 7. PRO-CATHEDRAL, DUBLIN. | ANTHONY-22, CC BY-SA 4.0, WIKIMEDIA COMMONS.



FIG. 8. ST. RAPHAEL'S CHURCH, SOUTH GLENGARRY, ON. | PAGE TOLES, IN MACRAE, MARION AND ANTHONY ADAMSON, 1975, *HALLOWED WALLS: CHURCH ARCHITECTURE OF UPPER CANADA*, TORONTO, CLARKE, IRWIN & COMPANY, P. 54.

St. Joseph's at Chatham (1886), as noted by Thurlby. At St. Paul's, Lynch's architect, Joseph Connolly [1840-1904], produced a classicising basilica plan design which adapted both Florentine and Venetian influences in the exterior, while the interior has been linked to St. Paul Outside the Walls and San Clemente, both in Rome.³⁴ The façade of Our Lady of Lourdes has a triangular pediment above the entablature over the second storey, which echoes Connolly's design for St. Paul's, though the former lacks the arches that would qualify it in Ruskin's definition of Roman Renaissance.

Due to his Irish birth and Parisian training for the priesthood, Lynch would have had plenty of opportunities to view Classical styled architecture. Roderick O'Donnell has noted the Greek Revival design of Dublin's Pro-Cathedral (1814) (fig. 7) by a committee of builders, being followed by St. Nicholas of Myra (1829-1835), St. Andrew, Westland Row (1832-1834), and St. Paul, Arran Quay (1835-1837), each with distinctive Renaissance or Baroque

styling.³⁵ Architects thus heeded Lynch's preference for classically styled architecture in their designs. Correspondence by architectural firm Kennedy, McVittie & Holland states that Lynch preferred the "Italian style of architecture,"³⁶ an insight which they gained from their work as supervising architects at St. Ann's Memorial (1884-1902) in Penetanguishene, Ontario, a project that Lynch had given approval for and which was built under the supervision of Father Theophilus Laboureau.³⁷

As a Roman Catholic ecclesiastical patron, Lynch had a local precedent in his enthusiasm for classical style. Round-headed windows at St. Raphael's (1821) (fig. 8), Williamstown, Ontario, clearly show that the church's patron, Alexander Macdonell, Bishop of Rhesina, had plans for a classicising church, partly out of consideration of space for accommodating a large congregation. The nave, short transepts, and apse follow the Basilica plan of St. Paul Outside the Walls, Rome, and are located at the east end. A conflict

with his master mason, Archibald Fraser (whom he had personally selected while travelling to Scotland), over cost overruns led to conflict also over the commission. Marion MacRae and Anthony Adamson recount how Macdonell had contributed over three thousand pounds to the endeavour and when it was not completed on schedule, reminded Fraser that he was a victim of his own "personal speculation," to which the latter replied with threats of bringing in the law and demands for payment in full.³⁸ This conflict ultimately compromised the appearance of the church, as the square windows on the east end facade were meant to have additional half-columns to provide vertical emphasis, the result being a "stark, incomplete look."³⁹

Furthermore, the preference for Ultramontanism in church design included the Maritimes, such as St. Ninian's Cathedral at Antigonish, Nova Scotia (1867-1886) (fig. 9), and St. John the Baptist at St. John's, Newfoundland (1838-1855). St. Ninian's follows a basilica plan



FIG. 9. ST. NINIEN'S CATHEDRAL, ANTIGONISH, NS. | MICHAEL SWAN, CC BY-SA 2.0, WWW.FLICKR.COM.



FIG. 10. SIDE ELEVATION, OUR LADY OF LOURDES, TORONTO, ON. | EVAN MCMURTRY.

without transepts and the side elevations employ nine round-headed windows below rose windows. There are prominent sandstone quoins linking and highlighting the exterior elevations. A Baroque feature is the gable over the central east entrance, consisting of an empty niche covered by an entablature and bordered by Doric pilasters. This feature echoes the bell gable at Gian Lorenzo Bernini and Carlo Fontana's Palazzo Montecitorio in Rome (1650-1697, now the seat of the Chamber of Deputies of the Italian Republic). The doors at the base of the two stately towers are each covered by a curvilinear portico that provides a welcome contrast to the central portico. The second storey has classicising features such as round-headed niches below a parapet flanked by decorative scrollwork.⁴⁰ The patron, Bishop Colin Francis Mackinnon, obtained his Ph.D. and D.D. degrees from the Collegio Urbano de Propaganda Fide, Rome, where he may have acquired a taste for Classical architecture. St. John the Baptist Basilica-Cathedral was at the time of its construction the largest church building in North America. It employs a triple-arched portal with Doric order pilasters that calls to mind Gothic cathedrals, which is mirrored

in the second level by three articulated arches with Corinthian order pilasters. The church's flanking bell towers are imposing with prominent quoining and an entablature that bisects the elevation between the second level and gable.

THE DESIGN OF OUR LADY OF LOURDES

It is difficult to analyze the pre-1910 construction of Our Lady of Lourdes as it should be noted that Law's role as architect compared to Lynch's is unknown. This is due both to Law's conflict with his patron and to successive alterations and renovations to the building's fabric. It is possible that the initial appearance of the church was an amalgam of the two architectural visions, both classically inspired. The tensions between Lynch and Law were over the excessive cost of Law's construction and also his adhering too closely to Santa Maria del Popolo in Rome.

That Our Lady of Lourdes was originally modelled on Santa Maria del Popolo is clear due to the presence of a Lombardic bell tower and dome at the crossing, as in a Basilica plan church. While the Italian

church has a slender profile like Our Lady of Lourdes, it features aisles with side chapels. It can furthermore be inferred that the portico that was formerly attached to the east elevation was Lynch's addition, because there is none at Santa Maria del Popolo.

Furthermore, Law and Lynch fought because the former would not relocate the tabernacle, after which "an angry Lynch wrote to an obstinate Law . . . that he had been criticized for giving 'an untried man' control and that he was annoyed that Law 'was now in a pout about it.'"⁴¹ It is unfortunately difficult to determine what the disagreement about the tabernacle was about, though it would appear Lynch was victorious as its location was standard for a church of that era.⁴²

Perhaps reflecting more of Lynch's classicising preferences, the exterior of Our Lady of Lourdes echoes St. Peter's Basilica. Pilasters repeat along each elevation, maintaining continuity and horizontal progression, and are continued at both transepts in the colossal order (fig. 10). They support a cornice and are



FIG. 11. DOME, OUR LADY OF LOURDES, TORONTO, ON. | EVAN MCMURTRY.

punctuated by round-headed windows. Unlike at St. Peter's Basilica, they are not paired but equidistant from each other. A feature that has its source in Roman Renaissance architecture is the square window in the centre featuring a broken pediment above with an inverted shell decoration, which is framed by pilaster jambs and a decorative console supporting the sill at each end.

The classicising dome at Our Lady of Lourdes also echoes St. Peter's Basilica, although it is not an exact replica (fig. 11). With round-headed windows and detached colonettes, the lantern replicates other elements located on the exterior, unifying the structure. The dome features consoles at its base, which do not appear in any church in Rome; their presence likely can be explained by the lack of an attic level to effectively resolve the upward thrust of the paired colonettes below. Between the dome and drum there is an entablature, which consists of a frieze and cornice that are articulated by

outward projections above the detached colonettes. The drum is punctuated with round windows that are framed by pilasters supported by plinths, which are both surmounted by lintels. The dome's interior features a blind arcade supported by paired pilasters that frame the round windows, which are set above a corbel table. This arrangement recalls Michelangelo's dome at St. Peter's, notwithstanding a significant difference in size and level of ornamentation.

CONCLUSION

This study has shown that classicism in Roman Catholic church construction was transatlantic during the nineteenth century, due mostly to the Ultramontanism present in the Catholic Church hierarchy as it responded to political threats posed by modernity and nationalism. Even before the Ultramontanism became prevalent, the classicism of churches like St. Raphael's and St. John the Baptist, as well as those in Britain and Ireland,

illustrate the time-honoured tradition of classicism in the Catholic Church. Its adoption in Great Britain and Ireland was spurred on by the theology and patronage of Cardinal Newman, who was generally suspicious of the fashion for Gothic church architecture, but also adopted it due to liturgical requirements. The fact that the architect of Our Lady of Lourdes was familiar with the churches commissioned by Newman, as well as his family associations with the Cardinal, suggest that this preference also influenced his design.

NOTES

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20. *Id.*, vol. XIX, p. 4.
21. *Id.*, vol. XII, p. 220-221.
22. *Id.*, vol. XVI, p. 301.
23. Quoted in Newman, *id.*, vol. XVI, note 471.
24. Law, *Memoir of the Life and Death*, *op. cit.*, p. 89.
25. For an in-depth discussion of Newman's stance on Ultramontanism, see Duffy, *John Henry Newman*, *op. cit.*, loc. 990-1003.
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prix Phyllis-Lambert prize

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Tous les deux ans la Société pour l'étude de l'architecture au Canada (SÉAC) décerne le Prix Phyllis-Lambert à un(e) candidat(e) qui a soumis la meilleure thèse de doctorat portant sur l'étude et l'histoire de l'architecture (histoire, théorie, critique et conservation). Le Prix consiste en un certificat de reconnaissance accompagné d'une bourse de 1 500\$. Le Prix est remis lors d'une activité spéciale, inscrite dans le programme du congrès annuel de la SÉAC.

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