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## Entering a New Age

*Faith and Form in Transition*

In creating an organic union of Presbyterianism the “Fathers of ‘75” had avoided any attempt to impose uniformity of worship on the uniting elements. During the nineteenth century differences in worship services had appeared throughout Canada reflecting no doubt both local preferences and departures introduced by later settlers. At Confederation a few country churches still separated the sexes to either side of the church and in one the whole congregation turned to face the rear of the church during prayer. Most congregations sat while singing, and singing as opposed to reading of the psalms was still the universal practice.

Nevertheless, the growth of a sense of corporate unity within the church gradually produced a desire to end certain customs that seemed antiquated if not irreverent. Popular pressure for the development of guidelines in connection with public worship was indicated by two requests from the synods of Hamilton and London, in 1891 and 1894, that General Assembly “take steps to promote uniformity in the matter of worship in the congregation.”<sup>1</sup> A committee for this purpose appointed in 1895 reported once, and then apparently ceased to function. Faced with adamant attachment of individual congregations to their accustomed forms of worship, it had made little headway towards uniformity. No more was heard of its mandate to prepare a “Directory of Public Worship.” A second committee was created to produce a “brief manual of family prayers”

for “promoting social worship among groups of settlers and others who for the time being find themselves removed from the regular church services....”<sup>2</sup> By 1902 this committee had produced a pamphlet entitled “Aids to Social Worship” that was in general use in home mission fields, but work on an order of service based on the Westminster Directory had received such limited support from the presbyteries that in 1905 the committee could only offer a letter of regret on its lack of progress. Three years later a pall of silence fell over the work of this committee and all plans for uniformity of Presbyterian worship in Canada seem to have been abandoned until after World War I.

The wide disparity of practices in the post-union generation was the natural product not merely of differing traditions among the churches but even among congregations. As frontier conditions waned, however, worship services became more sophisticated and more decorous. By the end of the century few congregations lacked at least a modest melodeon and all the larger city churches could boast of pipe organs which a few years before had been condemned as “carnal instruments.” Yet the criticism remained — with some justification — that congregational singing declined in inverse ratio as organs were introduced. A similar separation of the worshipper from the worship service was charged against church choirs which evolved in this period as a distinct, sometimes professionalized, body, physically separated from the mass of the congregation. This trend was reinforced after 1900 by the gradual adoption of distinctive gowns and head gear for the choirs. Choirs, intended to sing with the congregation, began more and more to sing at the congregation as anthems were inserted into the order of service.

While traditionalists might deplore this musical relegation of the congregation to a secondary role, the fact remains that many Canadians were deficient in both musical training and vocal ability. A sympathetic observer had remarked charitably in 1866 that, “Congregational singing, upon the whole, is very imperfectly conducted.”<sup>3</sup> Hymnals for the use of the church at large were produced in 1884<sup>4</sup> and 1897 but their compilers saw no necessity to include the appropriate music. Other changes in worship practices during the late Victorian period included the habit of wearing gowns and Genevan bands by all ministers, and replacing collection boxes with plates and metal communion tokens with printed cards. Presbyterian church buildings continued to be simple and unadorned to the point of severity, and if such bleakness was popularly viewed as a reflection of greater spirituality and faithful adherence to Reformation traditions, not everyone agreed that plainness equalled piety. J. T. McNeill, for one, believed that a “lack of appreciation for the worship-values of art and architecture” arose more from “philistinism and poverty than any puritanical considerations.”<sup>5</sup>

The most sensitive area of worship and the most resistant to change was the communion service. In the 1870s, especially in Highland churches, the practices of fasting before communion, the "Men's Day" service of interrogation and exhortation, and the "fencing of the table" were rigorously preserved to ensure that the infrequent communion was the high point of the church year. After warnings for several decades that a common communion cup could be the source of communicable diseases, individual cups were first used in 1897 at New Glasgow, N.S. and Summerside, P.E.I. Within two decades the use of such cups had become the rule rather than the exception. By that time the communion service among Canadian Presbyterians had already broken with another hallowed tradition of many centuries — unfermented grape juice had almost universally replaced wine in the service. Credit for this change belongs to the forces of temperance and especially to adherents to the Free Church traditions, for that church had always been in the forefront of the temperance movement.

Less obvious than changes in religious practices, but of more lasting importance, were the subtle shifts in theological thought which had begun as early as the 1850s. In general terms there was an increasing emphasis on sanctification by works and a relative de-emphasizing of individual conversion experience. For over a century Presbyterianism in Scotland and in the British Empire had been repeatedly split over the relation of church and state, but at least in the British North American colonies this issue had become academic because of the separation of the realms of Caesar and of God. Now the problems involved interpreting articles of faith within a new and more questioning climate of theological opinion. Furthermore, the cases that arose centred on the opinion or beliefs of individuals, although they did in large measure embody differences based on traditions of those bodies which had so recently formed the new Presbyterian Church in Canada.

The first such crisis developed just weeks after the union of 1875 and involved D. J. Macdonnell, the scholarly and popular thirty-two year old minister of St. Andrew's Church, Toronto, the only former Kirk congregation in that city, to which Macdonnell had been called in 1866. Under the title "Universal Salvation," a Montreal newspaper had reported a sermon of 26 September in which he expressed his long-held doubts that the Westminster Confession's statement on eternal punishment was consistent with biblical teaching. Three days later his similar remarks at the opening exercises of Knox College were criticized by two ministers for their "unsettling tendency."<sup>6</sup> A protest by his friends against the newspaper version of his sermon only served to draw public attention to his opinions. Macdonnell's two statements seemed to confirm the suspicion held before 1875 by some Free Churchmen

that the Kirk was theologically liberal.

The protracted “heresy trial” that followed divided the clergy more than the laity, since there was little popular understanding or support for Macdonnell’s doubts about damnation. Toronto Presbytery and its moderator, Dr. Alexander Topp, formerly of the Free Church, heard the charges late in 1875, when Macdonnell’s defence turned on the interpretation of certain Greek scriptural expressions. Principal Caven of Knox College and J. M. King, later principal of Manitoba College, vainly sought a compromise statement from Macdonnell, but his case was nonetheless brought to General Assembly in 1876 where Topp was elected Moderator. In Macdonnell’s defence Dr. John Cook, Kirkman and long-time minister at Quebec, lauded his “mental candour” and Caven acknowledged his “fastidious conscience” when presenting Macdonnell’s statement of belief, but Macdonnell’s interjection that Caven and King had put his position in “too favourable” a light embarrassed his friends and delayed a solution. Macdonnell’s stubborn honesty was pitting him against a majority of Assembly and J. B. Mowat, professor at Queen’s since Macdonnell’s student days, vainly defended his right to private judgement. Principal MacVicar of Presbyterian College exemplified the Free Church’s doctrinal rigidity in this ministerial dispute with his resolution condemning Macdonnell’s statement as unsatisfactory. Former Kirkmen, such as Principal William Snodgrass and Professor J. H. MacKerras of Queen’s, insisted that doubt was not denial and they were supported by William Cochrane, the energetic minister of the Free Church congregation in Brantford. Finally Macdonnell was given one year to reflect on his attitude towards the Church’s teaching.

That year was filled with advice from friends and abuse from enemies but when Macdonnell appeared before General Assembly in 1877 nothing had changed. In answer to a call for a cessation to debate, the persistent Dr. Topp carried a motion demanding a “categorical answer” from Macdonnell within forty-eight hours. It was Cochrane who found the way out through another committee which offered Macdonnell his choice of three different compromise statements, any or all of which Macdonnell was prepared to sign to prove his adherence to the teaching of the Church. Ironically he had been saved by his friends’ insistence on the Free Church tradition of asserting Assembly’s superiority to presbytery, but the doctrinal issue had in fact not been resolved. Only Macdonnell’s right to doubt had been acknowledged and on this negative note the new Church’s first “heresy trial” ended after the depth of its theological differences had been publicly revealed.

The trial had shown that Macdonnell was not alone among Canadian Presbyterians in placing biblical truth ahead of man-made creeds. George

Paxton Young, who had resigned his chair of philosophy in Knox College in 1871, disapproved of the trial of Macdonnell and soon left the Presbyterian ministry because he could not accept the Church's priority for the Westminster Confession. Macdonnell had studied in Germany and Young was an avid student of contemporary German philosophy so that both men had been influenced to a degree by the currents of theological study then active in that country. Macdonnell, who preached Young's funeral sermon in March, 1889, immediately thereafter introduced a resolution to the Toronto Presbytery calling for replacing the Westminster Confession with "some briefer statement of the truths which are considered vital."<sup>7</sup> It was indicative of the theological temper of the day that most members refused to vote and the motion was lost by four voices against eight.

The most important theological development of the late Victorian period was the emergence of "higher criticism"—the study of the literary sources and methods used by authors of the books of the Old and New Testaments in terms of form, authorship, date, interpretation and historical background.<sup>8</sup> Higher criticism began in France but was more fully developed in the German universities where several Canadians doing postgraduate studies came under its influence. Higher criticism became a storm centre, especially in the United States, when biblical conservatives accused its supporters of undermining the literal truth and divine inspiration of the Bible, but in the British theological climate of Bible-centred living, higher critics saw their mission as the reconciliation of "experimental religion" and "critical" study of the Scriptures. In Scotland, for instance, the only crisis in higher criticism involved a professor at Aberdeen who was fired more because of his arrogance than his theology and it was from this background that the Presbyterian Church in Canada acquired its most renowned higher critic, John Edgar McFadyen.

Only after it had been thoroughly disputed abroad did higher criticism reach Canada, and here its exponents presented their findings as academic hypotheses rather than as new and sensational dogmas. The only confrontation within the Presbyterian church involved charges of heresy against "higher critic" Professor John Campbell of Presbyterian College, but these charges were dropped by presbytery in 1894 in favour of a typically Canadian compromise statement about Scriptural inspiration. Therefore considerable informed and sympathetic interest in higher criticism already existed among the faculty members of Canadian Presbyterian colleges when McFadyen arrived at Knox College in 1898.<sup>9</sup> McFadyen, who had studied in Germany, married a German girl, and had just graduated as the best theological student in Scotland, was deliberately chosen for Knox because of his background and the receptive situation in Canada. He did not disappoint his sponsors —

his influence as an apologist of higher criticism extended well beyond his classroom at Knox. Of his nine books published in as many years, over half were specifically biblical studies. Throughout his writings he insisted that judgements based on the reconstruction of texts within their historical context were more reliable than blind tradition. The Bible was a witness to God rather than proof of his existence or its infallibility. McFadyen's personal piety, reasonableness, and his unquestioned scholarship disarmed most would-be opponents although one Toronto congregation refused to contribute to the College Fund in 1904 because of McFadyen's teachings. By 1911, when McFadyen left Canada, higher criticism was widely, but certainly not universally, accepted by Canadian Presbyterians.

Closely related to higher criticism in the popular mind was the theory of evolution developed by Charles Darwin two generations earlier in his *Origin of Species*. Confusion based on misreading or nonreading of Darwin had early produced statements that man was descended from monkeys, or the counter-credo of British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli, "I am on the side of the angels." Canadians were seemingly slow to take up this supposed challenge to established religious beliefs and it was not until after World War I, when Europeans had largely abandoned this discussion as fruitless and misdirected, that North Americans became excited about the physical shape and mentality of their ancestors. As a body the Presbyterian Church in Canada refused to be more than mildly interested in the theory of evolution, but Darwinism made itself evident and influential in a more sophisticated form through "social Darwinism"—the belief that man is shaped by his environment as well as his will.

Previous generations had been concerned by such problems as intemperance, gambling, political corruption, poverty, the "social evil" (a Victorian euphemism for prostitution), the neglect of children, imbeciles and the aged, but the solution had always been sought through moral regeneration of the individual. Attention to the effect of environmental conditions arose around the end of the nineteenth century coincident with the industrialization and urbanization of Canada. Big-city life and the factory system seemed to increase the prevalence of such problems as they affected society as a whole. Whatever the relationship—cause or coincidence—between the new industrial economy of Canada and increasing public concern over social problems and social environment, a definite shift in emphasis from individual salvation to collective action had already appeared before the turn of the century, and had taken form in the industrialized United States as "the Social Gospel."

Largely in reaction against higher criticism and the "humanizing" of religion through the Social Gospel, an extremely conservative theological party had

begun to appear in both Canada and the United States towards the end of the nineteenth century. From 1883 to 1897 an annual Prophetic Bible Conference, reminiscent of a camp-meeting, was held for one or two weeks at Niagara-on-the-Lake. The Conference was American-organized and interdenominational — Baptists, Anglicans, Methodists and Presbyterians were all involved — but the religious inspiration came from millenarians — persons concerned with the unfulfilled biblical prophecies and particularly the Second Coming. An American historian has described this movement as “a refuge for those whose basic orientation to Christianity was formed through the Calvinistic theological heritage,”<sup>10</sup> and it was also related to the conservative teachings of Charles and A. A. Hodge, the father and son team of professors at Princeton Theological Seminary. Although American Presbyterianism, the third largest Protestant denomination in the United States (and a small third at that), provided more leadership and more converts to millenarianism than any other church, many who were not millenarians nevertheless agreed with their emphases on the inerrancy of Scripture, especially the New Testament, the popular technique of expository Bible-reading, and the need for unswerving adherence to the historic standards.

Among Canadian Presbyterians involved in the Niagara Conference were T. W. Wardrope and Henry M. Parsons, an American called to Knox Church, Toronto, in 1880. When the Niagara Conference was reorganized in 1903 as the American Bible League, one of the directors was Principal William McLaren of Knox College,<sup>11</sup> whose students used the Hodges’ books as theology texts. As part of this movement to reassert the basic truths of the Christian religion, another American participant in the Niagara conferences, the Baptist A. C. Dixon, published twelve volumes of essays between 1910 and 1915, entitled *The Fundamentals*. Some of these papers were drawn from publications of the American Bible League, and one had been written by Principal Caven. Three million copies of the essays were circulated at a cost of only six cents each.<sup>12</sup> When the World’s Christian Fundamentals Association was formed after the war, Parsons’ successor at Knox Church, A. B. Winchester, was an active participant. Despite the obvious importance of these international connections, no assessment of the impact of *The Fundamentals* on the Canadian religious scene has ever been attempted.

### *Old Issues and New Forces*

Through the late 1870s General Assembly almost annually repeated its traditional condemnation of the “evils of intemperance,” its satisfaction with

the progress of anti-liquor legislation, and its pleasure at the growth of a healthful temperance sentiment throughout the land. This traditionally moderate stand of the church on the temperance issue changed suddenly after 1888 when its Committee on Temperance (created eight years earlier) displayed unexpected energy. The committee polled the opinion of synods and presbyteries on their attitude towards alcohol and reported its findings the next year at considerable length. Most replies suggested that the work of temperance societies had alleviated the critical situation of earlier years; most agreed that liquor was an enemy of religion and morality. There had been few verifiable results from the Assembly's recommendation to elect only temperance men to political offices, although over seventy per cent of all church officers announced that they were total abstainers. Existing provincial prohibitory laws were considered so unsatisfactory that "the vast majority of Sessions seem to have prescribed 'Total Prohibition', covering both manufacture and sale."<sup>13</sup> The General Assembly took its committee's report to heart by recommending a Dominion-wide prohibitory law. A sharp corner had obviously been turned in the history of Presbyterian attitudes to strong drink — a consensus had been reached from which the church did not thereafter retreat.

Plans for interdenominational co-operation were adopted to fight "the demon rum"; church courts and groups right down to Sunday schools were bombarded with annual questionnaires from the Committee on Temperance. The consumption of spirits and wine had actually declined since Confederation but thirsty Canadians were now consuming thirty-five per cent more beer instead,<sup>14</sup> and the church-going public was disturbed. A plebiscite held in Ontario in 1894 indicated the depth of that concern — sixty-three per cent of the voters favoured total prohibition! The report of the Committee on Temperance for that year announced joyfully, "the PROHIBITION SENTIMENT" was rising "into a mighty torrent" which would soon and surely carry away all opposition "like a Johnstown flood."<sup>15</sup> That prophecy was premature — a royal commission on the liquor traffic advised in 1895 against prohibition and in favour of preserving freedom of choice and a great revenue-producing industry. The General Assembly voiced its disagreement and disapproval in vain. The "mighty torrent" subsided faster than it had risen. No further report from the Standing Committee on Temperance was received by the General Assembly — the recommendations of the royal commission had apparently induced a silence of despair among the prohibitionists and when prohibition finally did come to Canada it owed as much to economy measures of World War I as it did to the vigorous campaigns mounted by the Presbyterian Church and other Christian denominations throughout the country.

The old issue of sabbath observance also became more acute in an



increasing secular society. On the one hand some industrial processes required uninterrupted week-long operation; on the other, railway and steamboat companies offered more Sunday excursions as relaxation for city dwellers. To counter such pressures a society called the Lord's Day Alliance of Canada was formed at Ottawa in 1888, and six years later the Presbytery of Hamilton urged the formation of similar societies throughout Canada. Early in 1895 the Lord's Day Alliance of Ontario was organized and after J. G. Shearer, minister of Erskine Church, Hamilton, became its field secretary in 1900, he undertook an aggressive membership campaign across Canada that led to the federation of all the provincial Alliances.<sup>16</sup> Shearer also edited the Alliance's monthly paper, the *Lord's Day Advocate*, from its appearance in 1898.

This festering question of Sunday labour became a major public issue when the courts decided on the basis of two cases in 1903 and 1905 that Sabbath regulatory laws came under the criminal code and so were exclusively a federal concern. The various provincial enactments, therefore, became ineffective and the Alliance realized that only a federal statute could achieve its objective of controlling Sunday work. Shearer immediately launched a massive propaganda campaign with support from all major Protestant denominations and from the Roman Catholic archbishops, as well as from labour unions. Federal politicians were pressured by letters, interviews and petitions to support the desired law; leading newspapers such as the *Toronto Globe* gave their blessing to the campaign; circulation of the *Lord's Day Advocate* doubled to 40,000 in two years (Shearer asserted that his paper actually reached 125,000 people, "including the most intelligent and influential of our citizens.")<sup>17</sup>

At first Sir Wilfrid Laurier's Liberal government at Ottawa stalled the introduction of such legislation but public pressure built up by Shearer was inexorable. Robert L. Borden, leader of the Conservative opposition, was a vice-president of the Lord's Day Alliance; organized labour threw its full weight behind the Alliance's efforts; and the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Montreal publicly refuted charges that Protestant Ontario was trying to coerce Catholic Quebec. At the opening of parliament in 1906 the government surrendered — it announced that the desired bill was being drafted. That same session saw the Lord's Day Act passed into law. Shearer and the Alliance, however, had been forced to compromise with the demands of certain industries for exemption. "The degree of secularity was so great by 1906 that no religious legislation involving appreciable social cost could be achieved in Canada. Whether even the 1906 Act could have been passed but for the support of Labour is questionable."<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless, the campaign for



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#### W.M.S Leaders

1. Mrs Thomas Ewart. 2. Mrs. R.F. Burns. 3. Mrs John Redpath.  
4. Mrs. William MacLaren. 5. Mrs. J.K. Macdonald  
6. Mrs. J.J. Steele. 7. Mrs. John Somerville.



The Birtle School work began in 1883 as a school and 1888 as residential. It moved with the times. One of the outstanding figures was Miss Annie McLaren, who won the esteem and confidence of the surrounding Indians, and ran a successful school for children.

Miss Annie McLaren



The Birtle School

the Lord's Day Act showed that, although church and state had been separated in Canada for half a century, religion and politics had not. The churches could still operate as effective lobbies when they were united on a public issue of social concern.

Shearer's successful campaign for the Lord's Day Act led immediately to his appointment as secretary of the General Assembly's new Department of Moral and Social Reform. This position provided him with a still wider outlet for his boundless energy, his organizing ability and his preoccupation with social problems. The Department's report to Assembly in 1910, running to twenty-one closely printed pages, was an exhaustive survey of temperance, gambling, sabbath observance, "social evil," industrial relations, and pornography, of the successes achieved by the Department's efforts and of the pressing work remaining to be done in these fields, as well as an account of the interdenominational federated Moral and Social Reform Council of Canada (of which Shearer was secretary). Appended to this report was an outline and bibliography for a home reading course in social science, "to stimulate an interest in the study of Social questions."<sup>19</sup> The 1911 thirty-four page report of the Board (of which George Pidgeon and C. W. Gordon were co-conveners) was in part the product of a two-year study of urban living — "The Problem of the Twentieth Century."

Even before the appearance in the 1890s of the suffragette movement for political, social, and legal equality of women, the Presbyterian churches of Europe and America had been awakened to the presence and value of this great reservoir of energy and ability in promoting Christ's Kingdom. Between one-quarter and one-third of the funds for foreign mission efforts of the Presbyterian Church in Canada were raised by the Women's Missionary societies. The first such society was formed at Halifax in 1876, the year after Presbyterian union, and nine years later it was enlarged to include two presbytery groups under the title of "The Women's Foreign Missionary Society of the Presbyterian Church in Canada (Eastern Division)." Home mission work was formally added in 1903 and the title changed appropriately to "Foreign and Home Missionary Society" in 1910. Its major foreign mission undertaking had been the opening of a Korean mission in 1898 and special support for women missionaries in Trinidad and British Guiana. When a Social Service department was added in 1914, the name was simplified to Women's Missionary Society, although its organization was still limited to the Maritime provinces.

For the rest of Canada, women's foreign mission work began with the formation of a parallel Women's Foreign Missionary Society at Toronto, also in 1876, although other and older women's groups had begun to expand their mission interests from the exclusively Canadian to the inter-national scene

somewhat earlier. This “Western Division” Society grew rapidly — after ten years it had sixteen presbyterial organizations, after thirty years, twenty-nine. By the beginning of World War I there were no less than forty-five presbytery groups with thirty-six thousand members in more than a thousand auxiliaries, supporting sixty women missionaries abroad. The western division was particularly successful at fund raising and administered its money at the amazingly low cost of two per cent. In both divisions the work had involved at an early stage the formation of children’s mission bands and the publication of periodicals for both juvenile and adult members, but the increasing overlap of functions among the two geographical divisions of Women’s Foreign Missions, and Home Missions, led to the amalgamation of the three bodies in 1914.<sup>20</sup>

In 1889 the Alliance of Reformed Churches received a strong report on a plan to organize women’s work and to recognize the workers, but the Church of Scotland had already set the pace a year earlier by establishing an order of deaconesses. Other denominations, including the Methodist Church of Canada, followed this particular example, but the Presbyterian Church in Canada showed little interest until the Presbytery of Winnipeg petitioned the General Assembly in 1907 to set apart deaconesses to “serve the Church as nurses, parish visitors, dispensers of charity, and in any other way that may prove desirable.”<sup>21</sup> An Assembly committee reviewed the precedents, need and programme for such an order in a thorough report, pointing out that in the past decade the Ewart Missionary Training Home at Toronto under the W.F.M.S. had in fact trained twenty-seven women for such home mission work, and that in creating an order of deaconesses the Assembly would merely be regularizing an existing system. The Assembly of 1908 accepted this advice, appointed the Ewart Home to be its official school for deaconesses, and a year later announced that twelve students were enrolled in a programme that was destined to become a corner-stone of the Church’s outreach. As late as World War I, however, no one had as yet proposed the logical sequel to the order of deaconesses — the ordination of women to the preaching ministry of the Presbyterian Church in Canada.

In the midst of these activities the General Assembly appointed a committee to herald the coming of the twentieth century by raising a special fund of a million dollars. Sixty per cent of this amount was to form a Common Fund for “the Missionary, Educational and Benevolent work of the Church” while the remainder would be used for property debt reduction. Despite the numerous claims on public charity, the Century Fund committee could report by 1900 that over seventy per cent of its objective had already been subscribed with more than half of the 1,200 congregations still to be heard from.<sup>22</sup> A year later the Debt Fund portion had received \$846,000 — more than double its target

— but just over half of the Common Fund objective had been reached. When the final reckoning was made at the end of 1902 both sections of the Century Fund had been oversubscribed — the Common Fund by \$8,000 more than the hoped-for \$600,000, and the Debt Reduction Fund which had aimed at \$400,000 had reached the amazing total of \$920,000. Nine hundred and fifty congregations had paid in full and less than seven per cent of the grand total had not yet come in from the subscribers. The Committee concluded modestly that Canadian Presbyterians were “trusty, as their forbears (*sic*) were,” and that “the rich blessing of the Father God will rest upon the children who have been faithful in providing for the work of His kingdom.”<sup>23</sup>

### *Outreach and Ecumenicity*

One positive result of the union of 1875 was a greater sensitivity and involvement in relations with other Christian denominations, both in Canada and abroad. Since the settlement of the Clergy Reserves question Presbyterians and other Canadians had found a common and unifying cause in such issues as sabbath observance and temperance. This was producing a sort of “omnibus Protestantism,” based on shared religious beliefs and social attitudes and on the abiding fear of Roman Catholicism. That constant fear of Roman Catholic domination, which had been at the root of so many of Canada’s troubles in the 1850s and 1860s, was reawakened in the 1870s by the aggressive interference of some priests in Quebec politics. One segment of the French-Canadian clergy had for decades equated their insular national and church ambitions with ultramontanism — the absolute obedience to the papacy in both secular and religious matters. These ultramontanists had made an ally of the Conservative party which they supported openly through the so-called “Catholic Programme.” In the 1880s more fuel was added to Protestant fires by Riel’s Rebellion and by Quebec’s final settlement of the rich Jesuit Estates. The pope’s role as invited mediator in the Jesuit Estates controversy was the occasion for another outburst of anti-Romanism in which several leading Presbyterians, including principals Grant, Caven and MacVicar, and D. J. Macdonnell, took an active part as members of the Equal Rights Movement in protesting political corruption in the name of Anglo-Saxon nationalism and imperialism.<sup>24</sup>

The trend towards Protestant co-operation was aided by the blurring of such denominational distinctions as forms of church government and particular theological traditions; thus the experience of Robertson in the West had proven the value of a flexible mission structure in certain conditions, and the declining

emphasis on predestination also brought Presbyterians and Methodists closer together. Co-operation between denominations was the watchword of the day, whether in missions, education, social reform or the thrust towards church union. Canadian Presbyterianism had long been active in the Evangelical Alliance, and in the forty years following the Union of 1875 the Presbyterian Church in Canada joined in and supported a wide variety of international and interdenominational organizations devoted to missions, youth work, sabbath observance, temperance and social and moral reform. The sum of all these developments, taken along with the growing sense of Canadian nationalism, produced more, if tentative, approval for interchurch co-operation, leading perhaps to church union.

If there was no immediate rush towards such an idealistic institution on the part of Protestants, neither was there much vocal opposition. After the union of all Methodists in 1884, however, the Canadian religious climate changed so markedly that a conference was planned to discuss a "Union of Protestants in the Dominion."<sup>25</sup> Crucial to any such discussions was the attitude of Anglicans, for the Pan-Anglican Council meeting at London in 1888 had issued the famous Lambeth Quadrilateral — a statement of four basic Anglican principles first formulated by the American bishops in 1887. The fourth principle reaffirming the centrality of "the historic episcopate" produced a strong reaction on the part of Canadian Presbyterians. The Council had overwhelmingly rejected recognition of nonepiscopal ordination, but the *Record* preferred to believe "that recognition of a more genuine and generous kind is in the air, and it will come before long."<sup>26</sup>

When the conference on Canadian Protestant union convened in April, 1889, the Anglican, Methodist and Presbyterian churches were well represented, with William Cochrane, Principal Caven, and Professor Proudfoot among the principal speakers. Corporate union, it was generally agreed, seemed premature for Canada, "but a true union there might be — in advancing Christ's work."<sup>27</sup> The "historic episcopate" was discussed calmly and the meeting closed with the feeling that another should be called. No follow-up meeting was ever held, however, and if Presbyterian relations to Anglicanism did not improve at least there was increased co-operation with the Methodist Church. "Overlap" in the western missions was such an obvious waste of resources that both churches soon agreed to avoid areas already being serviced by the other. In the field of higher education the two churches were also becoming aware of the similarity of problems to be faced. The high cost of courses in the physical sciences had sent Grant of Queen's and the Methodist Dr. John Potts on the fund raising trail at the same time. The *Record* of November, 1887 reported that Grant's health had broken down under the continuous strain of travelling and speaking,

as had Dr. Pott's health. It was not surprising that public opinion was once more suggesting the state take a greater financial responsibility for the cost of higher education which the churches had borne single-handedly so long.

These broadening contacts led for the first time to the importation of ideas and institutions from the United States. The American precedent of organizing church young people into Christian Endeavor societies was copied by many denominations in the eastern provinces during the late 1880s, while in western Canada the youth was being drawn into missionary societies. Although a constitution for a church-wide association of the latter was drawn up in 1891 the Christian Endeavor movement had already taken firm root in Canadian Presbyterianism and that year claimed to have 225 societies. The youth missionary groups soon disappeared after the church gave its support to the Christian Endeavor movement as an organization to harness the energies of its young people.<sup>28</sup>

So promising was this development of youth work that General Assembly appointed a permanent committee in 1895 to oversee the societies, but, interestingly, of the 31,600 members reported that year almost two-thirds were young women. Five years later the movement seemed to have reached a peak of almost seven hundred societies among Presbyterian young people. New indigenous church youth groups, such as the Westminster Guild and the Presbyterian Volunteer Movement, failed initially to develop any more attractive programmes. On the eve of World War I the Guild seemed on the brink of succeeding as it recorded membership of over 60,000, yet the outbreak of the war so disrupted youth organizations in the church that a virtually new start was needed four years later. Another American import of limited success was the Tuxis boys' groups established as an interdenominational programme in 1907, but no comparable work, either denominational or interdenominational, was undertaken for Presbyterian girls before the war.

Evidence of the church's increased stature both nationally and internationally came in 1892 with the meeting in Toronto of the fifth General Council of the Alliance of Reformed Churches holding the Presbyterian System. From its foundation in 1875, as an outgrowth of the Evangelical Alliance, this Alliance had numbered the Presbyterian Church in Canada among its strongest supporters, and William Cochrane, for instance, attended every meeting from 1884 to 1896 and for years chaired the Alliance's Sabbath School Committee.<sup>29</sup> For the 1892 sessions Cooke's Church, Toronto, was host to delegates from nine countries of continental Europe, from four African and four Asian states, from Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand, Trinidad and Jamaica, as well as from Canada and the United States. The Canadians had a prominent place in the Council's proceedings from the moment Principal



Caven delivered the opening sermon to his “affectionate farewell” to the visitors who had “helped the religious life of Toronto and Canada.”<sup>30</sup> W. A. Wilson from Indore spoke on the Canadian Presbyterian mission in India, Hugh McKay outlined the work among Canadian Indians, and Robertson described the great mission in the West.

After William Cochrane of Brantford reported as convener of the Alliance’s Sabbath School Committee, John Laing of Dundas returned to a national theme with his paper on French-Canadian evangelization. The most daring Canadian address, however, came from Queen’s Principal Grant, who denounced the wage system as unjust, defended trade unionism, strikes and co-operatives, and ended with a plea for profit sharing in industry. Poor workers in hovels viewing the rich palaces around them asked with justice if this was Christian civilization. “They do not understand Christianity,” Grant concluded, “nor do I,” to which a vocal American delegate retorted that some unions were unchristian, that righteousness, not labour relations, was the proper concern of the Christian church. Despite this exchange the Alliance’s general secretary was sure that this council had been “working on the lines of Presbyterian, — of Christian Reunion.”<sup>31</sup>

Such interdenominational interest in evangelism was epitomized in 1908 by a series of conferences organized by the Canadian Council of the Laymen’s Missionary movement on the theme, “Will Canada evangelize her share of the world?” The success of these meetings culminated in the following year in a National Missionary Congress, held at Toronto and attended by nearly five thousand. Only three prominent Presbyterians spoke to the week-long gathering — Professor Alfred Gandier, C. W. Gordon, and J. A. Macdonald. Gandier’s address, in a philosophical vein, called upon every minister to be an evangelist but Gordon and Macdonald, both speaking on “The Place of the Church in the Making of the Nation,” had more specific, even radical, recommendations to make. Gordon was angered that the churches did not extend the right-hand of fellowship to new Canadians. The church, even more than the government, had a responsibility to solve the problem of “the strangers,” “and we must draw them to us by the bands of love.”<sup>32</sup> Macdonald was even more critical of the church’s failure to Christianize civilization — “There is nothing more un-Christian, more utterly pagan, than the flaunting ostentation and pride and idleness of the members of the House of Have.” “Men who themselves are thrilled by the Christ-life and inspired by the Christ-spirit and constrained by the Christ-motive must go into the social life and into the business life and into the political life, and into all other avenues of thought and life, and there live out the Christ-idea.”<sup>33</sup>

One concrete form of such evangelical outreach was settlement work.

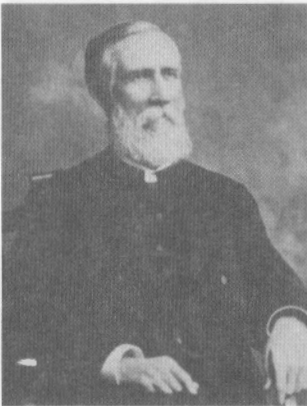


### **William Caven, 1830 - 1904**

Educated in the ministry in Proudfoot's Divinity Hall, Caven was pastor at St. Mary's, Ontario, from 1852-66. As principal at Knox College in 1873, assisted by his friend J.J.A. Proudfoot, he guided wisely and brought to the students in the college on Spadina Avenue such noted, liberal-minded scholars as J.J. McFadyen. Education, Sabbath keeping and temperance were some of his interests. He wooed church

union prudently, but died before 1925. The library in Knox College bears his name.

During his 31 years as principal he sat at the same chair; and from his desk he lectured on the Hebrew and Greek scriptures. Much loved by his students, still he rebuked them for "sloping" and for "cheek tobacco."



### **James Robertson, 1839 - 1902**

Robertson's concern for the West, where Black and Nisbet had laboured, lured him there. He ministered in First Church, Winnipeg. As superintendent of missions, he preached daily, reaching thousands. With Herculean stamina, he went wherever a church and a minister were needed. Robertson spoke wherever there was an audience - in baggage cars, bar rooms, stables, hotels, lumber shanties and railway

stations. He said "We must send men to turn the faces of these strong men heavenward." In Britain, he enlisted 42 men and raised \$10,000. His last grand adventure was on the Klondike. His influence on the Canadian West was greater than any western river, and as durable as the Rockies. "The story of his work is the history of the Presbyterian Church in western Canada, and while western Canada endures that work will abide."



Elizabeth Beatty



C.W. Gordon



J.G. Shearer



Lucy Maud Montgomery

Begun in 1884 by the Church of England at Toynbee Hall in London's sordid East End, the settlement movement had crossed the Atlantic to the slums of New York and Chicago before the turn of the century. Intended to bring the church back to the inner city where its message could be heard and seen in practical ways by the urban poor, the settlement idea was pioneered in Canada with American help by the Presbyterian Church, thanks to its energetic Committee on Moral and Social Reform. In 1911 the Board opened St. Christopher's House in Toronto as its first settlement, and as a training school to staff other houses in other cities. Recreational facilities, clubs for all ages and interests, reading rooms, language classes, employment bureaus, medical clinics, clothing depots, counselling and a dozen other services were offered in addition to religious meetings; the overwhelming success of St. Christopher's House soon led to the establishment of settlements in Montreal, Winnipeg, and Vancouver.<sup>34</sup>

Despite the growth of a Canadian nationalism after Confederation, Canadians felt no deep conflict between Canadian and imperial interests in the period before World War I. Rather they gloried both in being citizens of the young Dominion and subjects of an empire whose might and extent surpassed that of any power in modern history. Queen Victoria, the living symbol of this double loyalty, provided a cohesive centre for the affections of Canadians of all languages and religions. To Canadians as a whole this empire on which the sun never set represented not only the grandeur of power but God's appointed instrument for the civilizing and Christianizing of "lesser breeds without the law." Thus the outbreak of war with the Boers of South Africa offered not a testing of loyalty so much as an opportunity to express faith in the justice of Britain's cause and in Britain's manifest divine destiny.

One month after the Boers declared war on the empire, the *Record* of November, 1899, reviewed the events that had led to hostilities. This was of course a holy war, for religious as the Boers might seem, they had not been favourable to British missionaries "because the latter aimed to elevate the native black races to manhood, while the former sought to keep them in ignorance." The native South Africans were virtually enslaved by the Boers, a charge supported by the opinion of no less an authority than David Livingstone, the semi-legendary Presbyterian missionary explorer. War might be a "dark and awful scourge" but "most of the world's liberties have been purchased by it." Britain's sense of right required her and her children overseas to champion the oppressed. "Her's the freest flag that floats. And in this very fact it is becoming in growing measure not only the banner of an earthly Empire, but the symbol of a mightier, which, whatever becomes of Britain, shall never pass away." Such unqualified support of the mother country and

righteousness required no repetitions. If few Canadians rushed forward to aid Britain's holy cause, it was because she seemed capable of achieving victory single-handedly in South Africa.

### *Much for the Mind*

One of the first fruits of the union of 1875 was the creation of an official church newspaper, *The Presbyterian Record*, by merging the denominational journals of the four uniting churches. The *Record*, a monthly publication selling for twenty-five cents a year, was edited for its first fifteen years by James Croil, sometime farmer and amateur historian, who had filled numerous Church of Scotland offices in Canada, including secretary-treasurer of the Temporalities Board, secretary to the Ministers, Widows and Orphans Fund, and from 1872 to 1875 editor of the Kirk's monthly paper, *The Presbyterian*. Croil's dominant interest was in missions, so it is not surprising that reports on missions and particularly on home missions were the staple fare of the *Record's* pages. The deliberate policy of the paper was to avoid any mention of political affairs, and in this it succeeded completely. Temperance, sabbath observance and the problems of Canada's Indians were not, however, considered to be political, and occasionally during those years Croil used the editorial columns of the *Record* to expound the church's official stand thereon. The Riel Rebellion of 1885 was mentioned once obliquely, but the condition of the western Indians was the cause of General Assembly's strongly worded defence of "a people...who are being wronged and defrauded by those who are specially appointed to care for them and promote their interests..."<sup>35</sup> Canada's national political life, however, was totally ignored — the "Pacific scandal" was never mentioned, and the death of Prime Minister John Thompson was noted without even calling him by name. Croil's only comment on imperial relations was approval for Britain's support of heathen Turkey in its war with Russia, because Russia banned western missionaries from its territories.<sup>36</sup>

The *Record's* interest in temperance was spasmodic but it is noteworthy that from 1886, when Presbyterian laymen assumed prominent posts in the Dominion Alliance, attention to temperance in its columns increased. In August, 1887, the *Record* came out in favour of total prohibition and interdenominational action, one year before the General Assembly's Committee on Temperance adopted the same position. On the issue of sabbath observance, the *Record* spoke even less frequently and its policy was never fully articulated until 1888. Then the June number of the *Record* specified the forms of amusement that it opposed and added thereto "every kind of

unnecessary Sunday work that makes man toil for the recreation of another..." During the next six years the paper gave its support to the efforts of the Lord's Day Alliance and urged its readers to use their votes for the same cause, but after a federal sabbath observance bill was defeated in 1894, the *Record* lapsed into silence on this question. The generally conservative tone of the *Record* may have reflected church opinion at large on public issues, but it may also have reflected the Kirk background of Croil himself.

Croil was succeeded as editor by the Rev. Ephraim Scott at the end of 1891, but the pages of the *Record* did not show any noticeable change of policy or interests. Like most Protestant religious papers, it defended the right of Manitoba to abolish separate schools but it made no reference to the machinations of the political parties in the famous Manitoba Schools crisis. It was also strangely silent on certain exclusively Presbyterian church controversies. The Macdonnell "heresy" case was never mentioned, and Montreal Presbytery's condemnation of Professor John Campbell for his "higher criticism" was defended by the *Record* only because the *Toronto Globe* had questioned the presbytery's authority in the case.<sup>37</sup>

In addition to the *Record* several unofficial Presbyterian publications came into existence after the Union of 1875. The *Maritime Presbyterian* begun by Ephraim Scott in 1881 was merged with the *Record* when Scott became editor of the latter paper. The militantly Protestant *Presbyterian Witness* of Halifax, founded in 1855, was edited for the next fifty-five years by Dr. Robert Murray, an outspoken journalist as well as an accomplished poet and hymn-writer. The weekly *British American Presbyterian*, started at Toronto in 1872, became the *Canada Presbyterian* five years later and in 1897 was merged along with another Toronto paper, *The Presbyterian Review* (begun in 1885), the *Northern Presbyterian* of Collingwood and the *Western Presbyterian* of Winnipeg, into the weekly *Westminster* that had begun in 1896. Another Ontario paper, the *Dominion Presbyterian*, operated only from 1900 to 1911, and two smaller Manitoba papers, the *Prairie Witness* and the *Western Missionary*, had ceased publication by the end of the century. The *Westminster* absorbed the other unofficial paper, the *Presbyterian Review*, in 1902 and then continued as a monthly while the weekly edition appeared under the title of *The Presbyterian*. Their editor, the Rev. J. A. Macdonald, resigned in 1903 to manage the *Toronto Globe* but he continued to play an important role in the life of the church.

Macdonald was typical of many Presbyterian clergymen of the post-union period who made significant national contributions as writers in an age when Canadian literature was in its first full flowering. In addition to the many men who wrote for newspapers and periodicals, or who published sermons (a popular literary form during the nineteenth century), the church could justly boast of

many historians, biographers, poets, novelists and writers of *belles lettres* during the three decades preceding World War I. William Gregg's two monumental volumes on Canadian Presbyterian history remain to this day an essential reference sources alongside such famous parish and regional histories as Robert Campbell's exhaustive *History of the Scotch Presbyterian Church, St. Gabriel Street, Montreal* and J. M. MacLeod's *History of Presbyterianism on Prince Edward Island*. Biographies of prominent Presbyterian divines like James Robertson, D. J. Macdonnell, William Cochrane, and principals Grant, MacVicar and Gordon have more than a denominational interest because their subjects were leaders in civic life as well. The sheer volume of writings on and from Canadian Presbyterian foreign missions constitutes a library in itself, while in the fields of biblical studies, theology, devotional works and philosophy, Canadian Presbyterians made their mark as leaders in Canadian intellectual life. Several academics, such as Theophilus Meek, Richard Davidson and J. E. McFadyen, were scholars of international stature.

The Presbyterian contribution to Canadian literature did not, however, end with religious and academic subjects — their share in secular writings was equally outstanding. G. M. Grant's *Ocean to Ocean* and D. M. Gordon's *Mountain and Prairie* were important accounts of Canada's natural resources. *Rural Life in Canada — its Trend and Its Tasks*, written by Dr. John MacDougall at the request of the church's Board of Social Service, was widely read and discussed throughout the United States and Britain as well as Canada.<sup>38</sup> Dr. George Bryce, founder of Manitoba College, was the author of no less than ten volumes on western Canadian history, while C. W. Gordon, under the famous pseudonym 'Ralph Connor' wrote some twenty-five novels, several propounding a "Social Gospel" interpretation of contemporary economic and social problems. A number of Presbyterian women also gained national literary recognition during this period of whom the most popular remains L. M. Montgomery, authoress of the delightful "Anne of Green Gables" stories.

This literary production is the more remarkable because most of the authors were also regularly engaged in church work which left them little time for literary pursuits. That several were professors in the church's colleges did much to attract public attention to these institutions. G. M. Grant had a nationwide reputation as a civil servant and public speaker in addition to his fame as principal of Queen's University from 1877 to 1902. The vast cultural outpouring from the various colleges of the church was indicative of their new and important role in the life of the church and of the nation at large. Queen's had just gone through a desperate decade prior to the union because of the bank failure which decimated its finances in the 1860s and the cessation of government grants in 1868. Under the terms of the church union Knox

College, which offered only theology because the Free Church had favoured secular undergraduate education, received almost five times as much support from the church as Queen's where a full range of university courses was given in line with the Kirk's preference for denominational colleges.

Queen's was now saved from extinction by the energy and persuasiveness of Grant who launched a whirlwind endowment campaign that raised over \$150,000 in eight months. Thus, when the Ontario government promoted centralized university federation in 1885, Queen's was in a position to retain its independence and even to expand into new areas of study.<sup>39</sup> Nevertheless, the church, dominated by its Free Church educational tradition, still refused to support the Arts teaching at Queen's so that when Grant proposed in 1900 that Queen's should be freed of its church connection, the General Assembly seemed inclined to concur. Grant resigned in 1902, to be replaced by another Pictou County man, D. M. Gordon, whose career as churchman and educator paralleled Grant's very closely. Gordon soon discovered that neither the General Assembly nor Queen's trustees were unanimously in favour of separating the university from the church now that Grant's persuasive, even autocratic, influence was gone.<sup>40</sup> As this stalemate continued Queen's sought an endowment of half a million dollars which the church was unable to raise. By 1908, then, it was obvious that the university must become nondenominational to survive. Even so, the necessary legislation — and government money — was not obtained until 1912.<sup>41</sup>

The difficulties that faced Knox College during these years were quite different from those besetting Queen's. A magnificent and costly Gothic-style building had just been opened the year of union, and since the neighbouring University of Toronto provided facilities for undergraduate work, Knox could concentrate its finances and personnel on theological teaching. By 1900 Knox contained almost a third of all Presbyterian divinity students in Canada — as many as Queen's and Presbyterian College combined — and had graduated some eight hundred ministers — but lack of space and serious deterioration of the building on Spadina Avenue, Toronto, led to the decision in 1906, two years after the death of Principal William Caven, to erect a new college on the University of Toronto campus. Despite the presence on its faculty of such outstanding scholars as J. J. A. Proudfoot and J. E. McFadyen, the college's library was notoriously inadequate and inefficient and an undercurrent of unrest pervaded the institution.

A definite improvement in morale and facilities followed the appointment of Principal Alfred Gandier in 1908 and the move to the new college buildings in 1915. Responding to the rapid changes in Canadian society at the turn of the century and to student pressure for curricular reform, Knox College



instituted a department of practical training in 1907 and the following year added courses on the social teaching of the Bible, Christian ethics, the conduct of public worship, evangelism and church administration. The college's outreach had already assumed a new dimension after 1905 when the organization of a Y.M.C.A. branch within the college sparked renewed interest in missions — no less than forty of fifty-four student missionaries sent to Northern Ontario that summer came from the Knox College Student Missionary Society. In 1909 practical field experience in "Christian or Social work" became a requirement for all the students of the college.<sup>42</sup>

At the time of union it had been decided to maintain all of the six existing colleges. Despite the uneconomical geographic proximity of four of them, Morrin, Presbyterian, Queen's and Knox, all were within a two-hundred and fifty-mile radius. Morrin College at Quebec, with Dr. John Cook as principal from 1862 to 1892, began to lose students to The Presbyterian College and teaching was finally suspended in 1899, after which the endowment provided scholarships for theological students at the other seminaries. The Presbyterian College moved into permanent buildings close to McGill University in 1873 and continued to grow rapidly under the energetic direction of D. H. MacVicar, who had been appointed principal in 1868. MacVicar was soon joined by two other professors, John Campbell, a scholar proficient in French and German, and John Scrimger, an exponent of higher criticism who succeeded MacVicar on the latter's death in 1902. An important feature of the work at The Presbyterian College was the emphasis on French-Canadian evangelization for which a separate curriculum and faculty were established within the college. As the number of students, largely drawn from rural areas of Quebec, continued to grow, repeated additions were made to the college buildings. Unlike most Canadian colleges, The Presbyterian College never seemed to suffer from a shortage of funds. Thanks to the liberality of friends, both Presbyterian and other, an adequate endowment was built up and no serious financial crisis was encountered in the life of the college before 1914.<sup>43</sup>

The church's seminary in the Maritimes, Presbyterian College, Halifax (later renamed Pine Hill) existed in close connection with Dalhousie University, but its student enrolment remained small. Its faculty contained two prominent teachers — D. M. Gordon, who succeeded Grant as principal of Queen's, and R. A. Falconer, later president of the University of Toronto. One of the college's most significant steps in the decades before World War I was the beginning of postgraduate work in theology. The most remarkable chapter in the story of the church's educational institutions was provided, however, not by the older established institutions but by its latest foundation,

Manitoba College.

At the time of union when the cry was “too many colleges,” that pioneer school in the west was still in its infancy. Under George Bryce’s leadership, Manitoba College had just been moved from Kildonan to Winnipeg, the new gateway to the prairies with a population of one thousand. Already the college had almost forty students — thirty years later it had graduated 325 in arts and 133 in theology, and another sixty young men were then studying for the ministry.<sup>44</sup> This remarkable growth was based on three factors — location in Winnipeg, solid financing, and the attraction of an outstanding faculty. Bryce had been assisted part-time by John Black and by Robertson, but the second full-time faculty member, Thomas Hart, had come in 1872 as professor of classics and modern languages. A decade later the College’s theological department was founded by an outstanding churchman and teacher, John M. King, a graduate of Edinburgh and Marburg, who as principal created for Manitoba College an endowment and a reputation second to none until overwork caused his death in 1899.

In their years at Manitoba College Bryce and King both displayed great imagination and inventiveness in making the college fit the needs of that pioneer community. Bryce was responsible for building the college close to the Methodist and Anglican colleges and to the provincial university (which he had promoted), so that students could benefit from co-operation in teaching by all these institutions. In 1893 King began the theology classes during the summer months so that students could staff mission fields in the winter. This arrangement also allowed the college to obtain outstanding visiting lecturers to give specialized courses. King led the church theological colleges in practical curricular innovations such as clinical pastoral training, introduced in 1899. The spirit and aims of these remarkable men and their renowned college was summed up at the turn of the century by one of the professors: “Two great needs of the West, are sought to be met in the College. The first is Education of the highest order, conducted under Christian influence.... The second is an educated Christian ministry.”<sup>45</sup> Those two needs were fully met by Manitoba College, just as the other Presbyterian institutions of higher education were likewise adapting to the changing requirements of the Presbyterian church in the new industrialized and urbanized Canadian society of the twentieth century.

*“Practical Christianity”*

The forty years following the Presbyterian union were an age of maturing

for the young Dominion, and the Presbyterian Church shared fully in the achievements and the disappointments of Canada during that period. In 1875 Canada was still essentially an agricultural nation, dependent in many ways on Britain for its economic and political existence. By 1914 the nation had achieved a large measure of industrialization, thanks to the heavy investment of British capital and the tariff protection afforded by Sir John A. Macdonald's "National Policy." With industrialization had come urbanization — where eighty per cent of Canadians had been farm dwellers in 1871, by 1911 fifty-five per cent lived in cities. Canada changed drastically in the late Victorian Age and Canadian Presbyterianism changed with it to meet the challenges of the modern age and the opportunities created by union.

The closing decades of Queen Victoria's long reign were also marked in Canada by an unprecedented mixture of piety and patriotism that entered every facet of the daily life of all Canadians. Where older churches in older nations, including the United States, were lamenting the decline of church attendance and of religious influence, Canadian churches reported proudly their steadily increasing numbers of members in a nation that publicly gloried in the title "Christian." The census of 1881 recorded only 2,600 people of "no religion" in a population of almost four and a half million. Public leaders vied with each other to show that they personally and the parties or groups which they represented were worthy witnesses of His kingdom in Canada. Somehow their earthly dominion seemed to be purer, more holy, more Christian than those ancient, corrupt, worldly and apostate nations of old Europe, or even their own North American neighbour, the United States. Most Canadians were convinced that their homeland was a better, more Christian country than any other, and that its promise of physical and spiritual progress seemed unlimited and unquestionable.

By 1900 the facts did not really support such a characterization of non-Canadians nor the pious self-image of Canadians. The cities, old and new (and to a lesser extent the rural countryside too), were beset by social problems related to urbanization, industrialization, affluence and materialism. The increased prevalence of labour unrest, sabbath profanation, alcoholism, prostitution, gambling, substandard housing, child abuse, "sweat shop" employment, abortion, pornography, racial prejudice, political corruption and a host of related evils distressed concerned Canadians. Poverty of mind and body in the midst of plenty, social injustice in a self-proclaimed Christian nation, sin rampant among a church-going people — these were the issues, and "practical Christianity" was the proposed remedy.

The new approach to social problems, generally referred to as the Social Gospel, did not appear as a unified philosophy at a single moment or place.

Rather it took shape in the minds of different individuals at different times, in response to specific issues of the day. Even in the United States, where the movement emerged much earlier in response to the evils of industrialization, the Social Gospel never acquired any cohesive unity in terms of ideas or of personnel. There were always distinguishable differences of opinion on almost every question even among self-possessed Social Gospellers. Nevertheless, certain basic beliefs were held by most of its followers — the belief that perfection was attainable in this world, that social conditions must be improved if man were to achieve that perfection, that collective action must replace individual to effect changes, that legislation could produce morality or at least produce a social milieu conducive to morality. The sum of these ideas were generally included in “liberal theology,” or the “new theology,” which, by accepting the findings of higher critics regarding the Old Testament, tended towards humanism, anti-dogmatism and anti-confessionalism in religion.

In late Victorian Canada, where individual responsibility in business, politics, social behaviour and personal salvation had so long been the unquestioned rule of life, the Social Gospel was new, exciting, promising, or dangerous, depending on one’s convictions. The Social Gospel movement in Canada, based on the perfectionism of liberal theology, was largely independent of parallel movements in other industrialized nations and, significantly, its leadership in this country was provided by ministers of the Christian churches. Presbyterians like Robertson, J. G. Shearer, George Pidgeon and C. W. Gordon had already made their influence felt in connection with a variety of social problems, but the whole church, the whole nation, needed to be aroused to the present dangers. Gordon had moved the resolution in Assembly which created the Committee on Temperance and Moral Reform in 1907; Shearer, the crusader against white slavery, had publicly identified Winnipeg’s civic administration with the rise of that city’s “red light colony.”<sup>46</sup> It was Dr. Andrew S. Grant, founder of the Good Samaritan Hospital in Dawson City, General Superintendent of Home Missions, and president in 1908 of the Moral and Social Reform League, who conceived of holding a great congress of Canadian Presbyterianism to educate the whole church about these many problems of the day.

The meeting, convened in Toronto at the beginning of June, 1913, was billed as a Pre-Assembly Congress to which ministers, missionaries, their wives and one male representative of every congregation was invited. Some four thousand people packed Massey Hall to hear a roster of nearly fifty leading ministers and laymen and a few Americans deliver addresses on almost every imaginable aspect of the Church’s work. After an opening

session devoted to “Fundamentals” and “Training to Service,” C. W. Gordon addressed the audience on “The Canadian Situation.” He opened with a paean of praise for Canada’s natural and human resources, but emphasized the disparity between theory and reality — over four million Canadians claimed to be Protestants yet one-third had no church affiliation. The census of 1911 had reported over one million Presbyterians yet the church rolls recorded less than 300,000.<sup>47</sup>

W. D. Reid, prominent Montreal minister and newspaper writer, introduced the problems posed by the great migration of recent years with a speech on “Non-Anglo-Saxons in Canada — Their Christianization and Nationalization.” Admitting that among European immigrants intemperance and illiteracy were common, Reid defended the “noble qualities” of the newcomers as did subsequent speakers. Canadians, he warned, must abandon their “airs of superiority” — racial intermixing could strengthen the nation and Canadians must work to integrate the immigrants into Canadian society. Settlement work was a partial answer in his opinion, and other lecturers spoke against permitting the ghettoization of these people in either urban or rural life. The city and its problems were the central themes of all the addresses. Prostitution, liquor, drugs, white slavery, abortion, child labour, slum housing, and overcrowding were dealt with in turn. A recurrent topic was the demand for “social surveys” to point the way for policy making. Speakers drew heavily on reports by public officials in the medical services and social welfare fields to illustrate the need for action, and all these aspects were drawn together in a significant paper by J. G. Shearer, “The Redemption of the City.”

Shearer and Gordon had studied urban problems at first hand in New York City two years earlier and Shearer’s speech reflected a combination of years of thinking and practical experience. Canada’s population, he noted, was already one-third urbanized and the rate of increase was approximately one per cent each year; therefore the contagion would continue to grow and the problems to intensify. The cities, he asserted, must be “*redeemed socially*”; they must be redeemed as communities, they must be redeemed in their environment.” Shearer’s ideas were, however, more than mere simplistic determinism, as was shown by his next statement. “It is not enough to change the environment; it is not enough to transform social life. That is necessary, but it is not sufficient. It is essential that the heart be regenerated....” Shearer was critical of the church’s response to the inner city’s dilemma — “the church in our Canadian cities, as in American cities, is already running away from the incoming tide of non-Anglo-Saxon fellow countrymen....we need a consecration of the sense of smell. We will have to get over the feeling that

it is an unbearable thing to stand some of the odors that come out of the unsanitary buildings in which, by reason of our economic conditions, they are forced to live.”<sup>48</sup>

The problems of rural Canada were not neglected at the Congress, but they were presented in relation to urbanization. Agriculture was not sharing in the national prosperity; rural depopulation was the order of the day and would be tomorrow; the rural church was now caught in a financial crisis. Greater economic security for farmers would come through the co-operative movement and better social facilities could yet save the quality of rural life. As for the country church, church union would end “the overmanning of underpopulated districts” and “free [the church] for community service.”<sup>49</sup> Having thus surveyed the problems of the church in the urban and the rural life of the nation, the Congress was next presented with three papers on “The Social Application of the Gospel.”

The first speaker, Graham Taylor, professor of Social Economics at Chicago Theological Seminary and founder of the settlement movement in that city, had already performed as invited key-note speaker for the whole Congress. Now he reviewed the historical process by which the state had assumed many traditional social functions of the church. “The greatest cause on God’s earth to-day is the humanizing of the city and the Christianizing of the State.”<sup>50</sup> The church must share in urban life by taking religion out of doors, by breaking free of traditional and constricting concepts of the ministry. A paper entitled “The New Patriotism” followed, in which Murdoch A. MacKinnon warned that the existing social system based on public apathy, materialism, injustice and religious indifference must give way to “a social order where the good of each is based upon the good of all.” The last speaker on this theme, J. A. Macdonald, founder of the *Presbyterian* and now managing editor of the *Toronto Globe*, discussed the church’s relation to the social and industrial situation in Canada. Pointing to the alienation of the working class from organized religion, he challenged the church to witness the brotherhood of mankind through social radicalism, and to prove thereby that its love for men was more important than the numbers, wealth or social prestige of its adherents.

Only in its closing stages did the Congress turn to the specifics of action — evangelism, stewardship and temperance. One speaker on stewardship pointed out that Canadians had spent more money on chewing gum in 1912 than on missions. Another reported that Presbyterian Church members had given on an average that year only thirty-eight cents for all purposes and less than three cents of this had gone to the extension of His kingdom. On the perennial topic of temperance E. A. Henry, a “western advocate of reform,”

outlined the financial, social and moral cost of the liquor traffic with some terrifying examples of its effects. When W. H. Smith, a self-proclaimed “progressive,” called for the legal suppression of that traffic, Andrew S. Grant, convener of the Congress, introduced a series of resolutions calling for total prohibition. These resolutions were “carried unanimously by a standing vote amid a wild outburst of applause.”<sup>51</sup> The great Pre-Assembly Congress had reached its climax, and its conclusion.

Viewed in retrospect the Congress had been treated to a series of dynamic, church-centred statements of the Social Gospel, yet for all that the message had been balanced and moderate, precisely because Presbyterians like Grant, Shearer, and Gordon were in no sense doctrinaire reformers. They offered hope, but they did not offer any simple or easy solution to the problems besetting an urbanized industrialized and secularized Canada in the twentieth century. The Congress had been designed as an educational operation — its planners would have to wait to see how far they had succeeded in influencing Presbyterian — and Canadian — public opinion, and how far an aroused public could influence the life of the nation for good. No assessment could ever be made, however, for within fifteen months Canada was plunged into World War I whose horrors mocked the very idealism of all men of good will.