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The Backwash of Disruption

A Church Divided

Even before that fateful day, 18 May, 1843, when Dr. Thomas Chalmers led 202 other commissioners out of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland to found the Free Church, considerable colonial sympathy had been expressed for the cause of these protesters. As in those schisms of the eighteenth century, the basic issue in this Great Disruption was the relation of church and state rather than any doctrinal difference. The specific controversy concerned that old grievance, the right of lay patrons to nominate ministers to parishes. Church and state, it was held, were both of divine origin, but the jealously-guarded spiritual independence of the church required that the civil courts should never interfere in ecclesiastical matters. The Kirk had protested vainly against the re-establishment of lay patronage by the British parliament in 1712, but by the latter half of the eighteenth century the ruling Moderate party in the Church of Scotland had come to accept the practice because it provided a measure of freedom from congregational controls. Only when the theologically conservative Evangelicals became a force within the Kirk after 1800 did the parishioners find a voice and an ally in their long struggle to restore the Reformation practice of congregations “calling” ministers.

The ideal of non-intrusion — who pays the piper does not call the tune — was tested by several court cases in Scotland after 1834, and in every instance

the decision went in favour of the lay patrons who had “intruded” by forcing their ministerial nominees into specific parishes. The nonintrusionists, who usually were liberal or even radical in their politics, had the sympathy of reforming politicians and of the United Secession Church formed in 1820 of all the secession bodies that believed in voluntarism or the complete separation of church and state, even though the nonintrusionists themselves still held that the state was obligated to support the church. The final blow to the Kirk’s spiritual independence came in 1842 when the civil courts interfered with the composition of church courts. The seceders from the Kirk, over one-third of the ministers, resigned in 1843 to found, “not a voluntary Church, but a voluntarily endowed and supported Church.”¹

In the spring of 1842, when disruption seemed inevitable in Scotland, a number of sympathizers in Toronto asked Peter and George Brown, father and son expatriates from Edinburgh then operating a newspaper in New York, to establish a journal in Canada which would defend the Free Church cause and support the local Reform party. The issues of patronage and of state domination over church courts did not exist in the colonies, but nonetheless this transplanted involvement with Scottish affairs, especially among recent settlers west of Toronto, led to the appearance of *The Banner* in August of that year. Already in 1841 the Canadian Kirk Synod, not one minister of which was Canadian, had unanimously expressed sympathy for the nonintrusionists and had called on the imperial parliament to intervene in Scotland.² Again in 1842 the synod unanimously repeated this call for peace and reconciliation in the mother church.

When the synod met in Toronto in 1843, two months after Chalmer’s Disruption, it recorded a three to one vote in favour of “the glorious cause” of nonintrusion, but because the synod claimed to be independent of the Church of Scotland’s jurisdiction, the motion stated that no decision on the issue was really required in Canada. This equivocal position was adopted because titles to church property, the share in the Clergy Reserves, and even Queen’s College charter, were held in the name of “the Presbyterian Church of Canada in connexion with the Church of Scotland.” The legal status and possession of these temporalities might be lost if the vague relationship to the mother Kirk was clearly ended. The Free Church in Scotland had willingly abandoned all property rights in the Kirk, but their sympathizers in the colonies were not in such a strong financial position. The Canadian resolution was a practical compromise, obscuring the fact that a few members favoured the “residuaries” in Scotland while a second minority, led by fiery John Bayne, minister at Galt, wanted to cut the umbilical cord to the old Kirk completely.

Between the synods of 1843 and 1844 the Canadian pro-residuaries, headed by Principal Liddell and Professor Campbell, began to organize a resistance party. At the same time, admirers of Chalmers sent money from Canada to aid the Free Church at home. Three related developments now combined to polarize this difference of colonial opinion. First, leading figures in the Scottish Establishment were accused of trying to buy Canadian support with pensions, thus denying the independence of the Canadian body. The Revs. William Smart of Brockville and Robert Boyd of Prescott, both former members of the United Synod and both assured of their government grants, withdrew from the Canadian Kirk in October as a protest against the continuing connection with the Church of Scotland. "I am not aware," commented Smart, "that any good has resulted from the connexion formed in 1840, and I do not see any in prospect."³

The second development was the introduction in the Canadian parliament of a Presbyterian Church Temporalities bill, to vest the administration of congregational property in local committees. Opposition to this bill appeared suddenly late in 1843 and was directed against one detail and two implications of the legislation. The bill provided for control by church courts rather than congregations; equally important its enactment would make the Church a creature of the state. The worst aspect of this bill, however, was that all Canadian temporalities would remain forever connected to the Kirk in Scotland. Several congregational meetings denounced the seeming haste and secrecy surrounding a bill that had been promoted by leading ministerial supporters in Canada of the residuary Kirk. The bill was ultimately abandoned, but the incident showed how the antipathy between the Canadian laity and their clergy became involved in the Free Church controversy, and why laymen like the Browns and the wealthy merchants, John Redpath and Isaac Buchanan, now demanded an unequivocal break with the Church of Scotland by the large middle-of-the-road party of ministers in Canada.

The third and decisive development was the visit to North America in the spring of 1844 by rival emissaries from the Church of Scotland and the Free Church, each sent to justify the stand of their own church and win approval in the New World. From the Free Church came Dr. Robert Burns, secretary and driving force behind the Glasgow Colonial Society and Dr. Cunningham, a leading figure in the Disruption. Burns visited Upper Canada where he was met and entertained by many former missionaries. At Hamilton he collected £350 for the Free Church; at a mass gathering in Toronto he called for Canadian Presbyterian independence; at Kingston he met the first resistance as he was barred from the local Kirk, but by the time he left there six of the seven theological students had decided to quit Queen's.⁴ The older

settled districts of eastern Upper Canada were less receptive to Burns's message, although from Brockville to Prescott he was escorted by a half-mile-long procession "of men on horseback, and women and children in all kinds of waggons and carriages."⁵ In Montreal he composed a widely-read propaganda tract, defending the Free Church as the true heir of the Scottish Reformation. His Canadian trip coincided with the bitter political crisis between the Canadian Reformers and Governor General Sir Charles Metcalfe, but wherever Burns went congregational meetings followed at which the consistent theme was recognition for the Free Church in Canada.

Burns' opposite numbers from the Church of Scotland, led by the Rev. Norman MacLeod, visited Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and Montreal before entering the crucial territory of Upper Canada.⁶ MacLeod got his warmest welcome from Gaelic-speaking Highlanders, especially in eastern Upper Canada, but his tour attracted nothing like the response accorded to Burns. Burns had also visited Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island, but apparently neither delegation went to New Brunswick. The fruits of these missions became evident in all the colonies during the summer of 1844. In Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island the Kirk Synod of Nova Scotia had already expressed unanimous approval for Chalmers's position and was following events in the Canadas with interest. When that synod met in July, 1844, it repudiated the Church of Scotland by adopting the ambiguous title, "Synod of Nova Scotia adhering to the Westminster Standards." Only two Kirk ministers remained in those colonies, the rest having left to take up newly vacated Church of Scotland parishes in Scotland. For the next decade no Church of Scotland presbytery existed in the two provinces. By contrast, the Synod of New Brunswick, which had received no visitors from Scotland, displayed almost complete loyalty to the Church of Scotland — only three of thirteen ministers withdrew to form a local Free Church presbytery in 1845.

The Disruption also had a disastrous if delayed reaction in Newfoundland. Although that island was Britain's oldest colony, it was virtually the last in British North America to have a Presbyterian church. The province's population was divided roughly equally among Roman Catholics, Anglicans and Methodists — all other religious denominations were miniscule minorities or non-existent there. The first attempt in 1838 to form a Presbyterian congregation at St. John's proved abortive, and it was not until the arrival of the Rev. D. A. Fraser from the Presbytery of Halifax in 1842 that a church was begun. After Fraser's death in 1845 the Free Church in Scotland supplied ministers to St. John's, but in 1849 the congregation split to form St. Andrew's Free Church and St. Andrew's Church of Scotland.⁷

While the arguments for and against the Disruption were the same in all the

colonies, they were more fervently and vocally debated in the Canadas than elsewhere. Motives for secession were many and mixed. The most obvious was a genuine loyalty to Free Church principles and concern for the church's spiritual independence. Isaac Buchanan, who described some ministers as "Vile Ecclesiastics," welcomed the Disruption for a different reason. "Scotchmen when they don't like or differ with their minister will have an alternative besides going to the Episcopalians and losing all his [*sic*] moral weight or to sects who are in too many cases little more than political dissenters."⁸ Opposition to the patronage system must, in the case of most ministers in British North America, have stemmed from the fact that they had come to the colonies because they could get no appointments in Scotland. Among the laity, less educated in and less sensitive to confessional arguments, the first concern was still to get a good minister from *some* branch of Presbyterianism, and in this the Free Church with its surplus of clergy had an obvious advantage over the Church of Scotland which could not, after 1843, fill the vacant pulpits of Scotland, much less those in the colonies. This shortage of ministers in the Kirk was underlined for colonial minds by the fact that at least twenty-three deputies of the Free Church toured Canada between 1844 and 1846, and with greater effectiveness than the few delegates that the Church of Scotland sent.

At least twenty congregations determined to secede before the crucial Canadian synod meeting in Kingston on 3 July, 1844, and widespread sympathy for their action had been shown by other denominations and by the secular press. The debates and manoeuvring in synod lasted a full week before resolutions in favour of independence from both Scottish bodies were passed by 56 to 40 over a motion by the Rev. John Bayne. Bayne, an outspoken Free Church supporter who had confronted Principal Liddell at a marathon five-hour debate in Galt in May, had wanted to condemn the Canadian Synod for partaking in the "sin" of the Church of Scotland. Immediately thereafter the anti-intrusionist minority withdrew to form a synod calling itself the Presbyterian Church of Canada, although commonly referred to as the Free Church. In a pastoral letter to all its supporters, the new synod admitted frankly that it had no "practical grievance" against the Church of Scotland, but, echoing Bayne's resolution, to countenance sin "is to become a partaker of . . . sin." The Church of Scotland had repudiated Christ's Headship over his Church and had surrendered its spiritual independence. The same "treachery" might be perpetrated in Canada if the connection was not dissolved.⁹

Of the Kirk Synod's sixty ministers, twenty-three left at Kingston to join the Free Church. Of those twenty-three, twelve had been missionaries of the Glasgow Colonial Society, six came from secessionist backgrounds, and three more had been sent to Canada by the Evangelical-dominated Colonial

Committee of the Church of Scotland which absorbed the Glasgow Colonial Society in 1840. At most only ten Glasgow Colonial Society missionaries remained with the Church of Scotland Synod, and of these only two appear to have been located west of Toronto. Records are inadequate for a more precise analysis.¹⁰ Obviously the new Presbyterian Church of Canada was evangelically oriented, and strongest in the western parts of Upper Canada since thirteen of its twenty-three ministers were west of Hamilton and seventeen west of Kingston! The Free Church in Canada might be the minority, but it was self-confident and aggressive. One month after the Canadian Disruption it founded its own official mouthpiece, *The Ecclesiastical and Missionary Record*. In its four presbyteries, Hamilton and Toronto started with fourteen ministers, Cobourg had four, Kingston three and Montreal two. Within weeks, so the *Record* of September, 1844, reported, they were joined by eleven other ministers and five students, as well as an unrecorded number of congregations. Within two years of the Disruption the Free Church had expanded to seven presbyteries.

The Problems of the Free Church

The Free Church Synod's first meeting, in the autumn of 1844, was visited by William Proudfoot and two other ministers of the Missionary Synod of the United Secession Church in Canada, with a view to possible church union. To the same session the seven ministers and fifteen congregations of the independent Presbytery of Niagara also sent delegates to discuss union. The scene had been set for these moves by two resolutions of the new synod — one to promote union with evangelical churches in Toronto, the other favouring "union with Orthodox Presbyterians" in Canada, "when it can be obtained without the compromise of truth."¹¹ One year later some of the Niagara Presbytery ministers and congregations did join the Free Church, but the possibility of union with the voluntarist United Secession Synod soon ran afoul of the establishment principle, as Proudfoot and others had feared.¹² Not until 1846 did the Rev. Alexander Gale, convener of the Free Church's union committee, report that meetings had been held, and at those meetings differences had appeared over "the practical bearings of the doctrine of the Headship of Christ." This announcement sparked a violent verbal attack on the Secessionists by the fiery Dr. Burns.¹³

The Free Church position, that Christ was King of the Nations, meant approval of the principle of state support for religion — the United Secessionists were of course dedicated to the separation of church and state. Since the Free Church no longer received Clergy Reserves monies, the issue might

seem academic, but on matters of principle no Presbyterian could easily see the rightfulness of another's convictions. Through 1847 and 1848 discussions dragged on about "the power of the Civil Magistrate." To the Free Church separation of church and state on the voluntary principle would deny Christ's headship over the state, and a godless state, even if it did not give endowments to religion, could also refuse to support church policies for maintaining a Christian nation. A call for mutual forbearance and acknowledgement of the inexpediency of state aid was lost in the Free Church synod by twenty-six votes to five and the negotiations were virtually abandoned in 1850. The United Presbyterians then had eighteen congregations and twelve stations, but the rapidly expanding Free Church had increased in just seven years to sixty-three congregations and forty stations. By that date, however, two leading voluntarist ministers in the Free Church, Robert Peden and Andrew Ferrier, had been expelled: Peden for questioning predestination, and Ferrier to join the United Secessionists because of the voluntarism expounded in his pamphlet, *The Tower of Babel; or... Civil Establishments of Religion, a fertile source of strife and division in the Christian Church*.

In the Maritimes similar overtures towards Presbyterian union had been made between the Presbyterian Church of Nova Scotia and the Free Church by 1848, while at the same time the small Free Church Presbytery of New Brunswick was moving towards union with its sister body in Nova Scotia. The Presbyterian Church of Nova Scotia now had thirty-four congregations and nearly twenty thousand adherents, but it was no longer expanding at a time when the Free Church seemed everywhere on the march. By 1850 both Nova Scotian churches had decided against union on the grounds that the other was less than firm regarding the Westminster Standards, a charge that probably masked much deeper reasons for continued separation.

In Canada the Church of Scotland Synod had also approached the Free Church on two matters — the question of disputed property, and direct negotiations for reunion. The Free Church replied that the property should be divided "on the principles of Christian equity," but that reunion could only come if the other synod renounced all association with its mother Kirk in Scotland. The Church of Scotland Synod refused to dissolve its connection with the Scottish Establishment, and, not surprisingly, refused any settlement regarding disputed church property.¹⁴ The Free Church then complained that the law which sustained the Kirk's position on property was unjust, and thereafter all relations between the two churches ended.

The tension between laity and clergy evident at the time of the Temporalities bill seemed to be inherited by the Free Church. At the Disruption Isaac Buchanan offered £500 towards the building of ten Free churches, providing

lay trustees retained control of each property. The Rev. William Rintoul commented to Buchanan that the Presbyterians of Chinguacousy Township were “pretty well imbued with an *Ecclesiastic-phobia*.”¹⁵ One further evidence of this tension was the divided opinion over the voluntary principle. Incipient voluntarism could be found, especially among the laity, while the Church was still in the womb, but after the Disruption support for the idea of separation of church and state gradually became both vocal and respectable thanks to two diverse developments.

Before the Disruption the Governor General had warned Burns that a Free Church in Canada could only claim a share of the Clergy Reserves funds if the Kirk Synod were unanimous in a decision to separate from the Church of Scotland. At the Free Church Synod’s first full meeting in October, 1844, its moderator, Mark Y. Stark, asked the governor general “to continue those allowances from the government enjoyed by some of their number,”¹⁶ but after consulting with its legal experts the government replied that this would be impossible because of the “new position” held by the Free Church Synod. For the continuing Church of Scotland this was good news, since it meant that the Presbyterian share of the Reserves’ money would now be divided among a reduced number of ministers. Only Smart, Boyd, and two others were exempted from the ban imposed on the Free Church because they had been given their allowances before their union with the Church of Scotland in 1840. The best hope of the Free Church clergy for some future government income lay in the possibility of a Clergy Reserves fund surplus to be divided later among all denominations.

Since the Free Church, at least for the moment, had no government grants, it was in practice, if not in theory, a voluntarist church. Henry Esson, an anti-establishmentarian and professor of literature and science at Knox, the newly created Free Church college in Toronto, was joined by William Rintoul, another voluntarist who became professor of Hebrew and editor of the *Record* in 1847. By 1849 Esson’s thinking had become so voluntarist that he issued a pamphlet entitled *A Plain and Popular Exposition of the Principles of Voluntaryism*. These two men must have influenced some of their students to conclude that the state endowments under any conditions were wrong. A minority of the older Free Church ministers still insisted that Christ’s headship over the nations required state support for religion, yet in Canada where government grants were given even to the Roman Catholic Church, they could only escape this dilemma of religious pluralism by appealing to “expediency” — refusing to take money (which was not offered) from a state that did not distinguish between truth and error. The result was not true voluntarism, for that would deny God’s ubiquitous sovereignty, but at least

one Free Church congregation, in Ingersoll, split to form a United Secession church because a majority of members still rejected theoretical voluntarism.¹⁷ Three years later, when the Free Church resolved no longer to accept the annual £300 donation to Knox College from the Scottish Free Church, the *Canadian Presbyterian Magazine* announced in June, 1854, that the Free Church was now “completely voluntary.”

In the meantime the Browns had become embroiled in the question of clerical supremacy within the Free Church. Their *Banner* had been silent in their Church’s claim to the Clergy Reserves, but when an abortive “Sustentation Fund” scheme was proposed in 1844 to provide each minister with a minimum income by pooling resources, Peter Brown again saw the hand of the clergy grasping for power over the temporalities.¹⁸ After a second thought, which took half a year, Peter Brown decided that a successful sustentation fund would free the church from any financial dependence on government — Peter Brown had apparently accepted voluntarism, but if his church ever followed suit it would most likely be from necessity rather than conviction. George Brown too was undergoing a conversion experience regarding church-state relations, perhaps because of his four visits in London to the voluntarist William Proudfoot,¹⁹ but certainly because of contemporary events in England where the defection of several leading Anglicans to the Catholic Church had raised widespread fear that the ritualistic Oxford Movement, or Puseyism as it was called after its most forceful exponent, was leading to a growth of popery.

Puseyism was marked by a romantic return to medieval ritualism, but, like the Free Church movement in Scotland, it stood for spiritual independence of the church from the prevalent parliamentary interference. This latter aspect of the Oxford Movement (stressed in those *Tracts for the Times* that gave the movement yet another title, Tractarianism) received little public attention — it was the “Romanizing” tendencies of the Oxford “Apostles” that struck terror in the hearts of Reformed churchmen. The *Banner*, the *Record* and the *Presbyterian Witness* of Halifax all echoed this concern at the advances being made by the “Man of Sin” with the connivance of a British government that had actually endowed a Catholic college in Ireland to the tune of £30,000. Better a total separation of church and state than public support for “error” in Britain or in British North America. Anti-Romanism, voluntarism, and Reform party politics got increasing coverage in the columns of the *Banner* and its secular offspring, the *Globe*, while beneath the surface of the Free Church in Canada ran a current of congregationalism that feared and opposed any measure that would make ministers financially independent of their flocks, or make ecclesiastical courts dominant in the life of that church.

The End of the Clergy Reserves

The moment of truth for the Free Church — the choice between the voluntary and the establishment principles — came in January, 1848, just after the Reform party of Robert Baldwin and L. H. Lafontaine had gained power in a general election. The official government gazette announced that the surplus of £1800 accumulated in the Clergy Reserves was to be divided according to the terms of the 1840 Act among any denominations that applied before the first day of July. Baptists, Congregationalists, the three smaller groups of Methodists and the United Secessionist Presbyterians would certainly never yield to the temptation of accepting public money for religious purposes and thus becoming a “hireling ministry” — they wanted the Clergy Reserves monies used for general education. The churches of England and Scotland were already in possession of their shares of the Reserves funds — they could have no more. But what would the Wesleyan Methodists, who despite their voluntarism accepted government grants for Indian mission work, say about this offer to other denominations, and what would be the response of the Free Church which had lost its share of Clergy Reserves because of the Disruption?

The Wesleyan Methodists Conference applied for funds to aid education and distressed parsonages; the Free Church Synod could not respond because it would not meet until after the July deadline. Nevertheless five congregations in the eastern Upper Canadian Presbytery of Brockville petitioned for some of the proffered money. When the synod did meet, an overture from the Brockville Presbytery and two congregational petitions asked synod to “secure a just proportion of said fund to the ministers of this Church.” A synod committee reported that while state endowments might be legal, their acceptance must be “determined on the grounds of Christian expediency.”²⁰ The Synod decided to reject the overture and forbid any applications from congregations, because acceptance of such monies would impair the Church’s witness to Christ and “sow division and jealousy among our people.” Government endowments were being offered “without reference to the distinction between truth and error”; “their acceptance would tend to diminish the usefulness of ministers and the liberality of the people in contributing to the support of the Gospel”; they would permit “the evil influence which an irreligious government might exert through dependence upon the State... .” Under these circumstances Synod decided to reject the overture and forbid any application from congregations for a share of the Clergy Reserves’ surplus. The Synod concluded its discussions by appointing a commission that included William Rintoul, one of the leading voluntarists,

to visit the “erring congregations” and “persuade up the false position which they had assumed.”²¹ That visitation proved unnecessary — the pressure of voluntarist sentiment and lay power had carried the field. The Free Church of Canada had accepted the voluntary principle in just four years.

This was not the end but the beginning of the last act of the Canadian Clergy Reserves drama. The United Presbyterian Church (as the Secessionist Missionary Synod was called after 1847) reaffirmed, along with other voluntarist bodies its conviction that the Clergy Reserves should be used for education. It was an opinion apparently shared by most Upper Canadians, including even some staunch Anglicans and Kirkmen. After all, a Reform cabinet, Canada’s first “responsible government,” had just taken office in the united province. Surely it would, at last, separate the things of Caesar and the things of God by removing religious inequality once and for all. The same legislature that witnessed the Rebellion Losses Riots and the burning of the parliament buildings at Montreal in 1849, contained some radical backbench Reformers who wanted to abolish both Clergy Reserves and rectories. Their government promised action soon, which rank-and-file supporters and voluntarists interpreted as meaning next year. The Clergy Reserves question had been reopened and a “final” solution of the conflict between denominational and national interests could not be postponed indefinitely.

Sometime in the second half of 1849 a new political party appeared in Upper Canada — old Reformers of 1837 united with new-wave mid-Victorian radical liberals to demand a thorough-going modernization and secularization of Canadian life. Contemptuously dubbed “Clear Grits” by George Brown, these nineteenth century radicals demanded inexpensive and efficient government. In the field of church-state relations they called for nationalization of the Clergy Reserves, rectories and universities, and an end to all denominational privileges in education. Another typical contemporary product of mid-Victorian liberalism was the Anti-Clergy Reserves Association which included among its active leaders the Rev. John Jennings of the United Presbyterian Church, Dr. Robert Burns, Dr. Michael Willis, abolitionist and professor of theology in Knox College, and of course the two Browns, Peter and George.

When the next session of the Canadian parliament opened in 1850 without any reference to the Clergy Reserves question in the Speech from the Throne, the Grits and the Anti-Clergy Reserves Association both expressed strong dissatisfaction. Their discontent was largely silenced by the thirty-one resolutions of J. H. Price, Commissioner of Crown Lands. The first twenty-seven resolutions related the history of the question, the next one

asserted that the Canadian parliament should have been allowed to settle the issue in 1840, two more declared that no denomination had any vested right to the Reserves but that present beneficiaries should be treated liberally, and the final resolution asked for the repeal of the Act of 1840 to allow a Canadian settlement to be made in Canada. The passing of these crucial resolutions, although only by two votes, seemed to win general approval from the Free Church, but the announcement that the imperial government would pass the desired enabling legislation caused the Church of Scotland Synod to send William Morris to England again, this time to defend, not demand the Kirk's share of the Reserves. Both the synod and its mother church in Scotland asked the imperial government to reconsider its decision and to maintain the multiple establishment in the Canadas.²²

In Scotland Morris was busy showing his petitions — sixty-two from Canadian Kirk congregations — when Bishop Strachan cut the feet from under the Church of Scotland by advocating, indirectly, a denominational division of all the Reserves. Morris was warned by the Colonial Secretary, Lord Grey, that the best that could be hoped for was a guarantee of present government salaries, and that only thanks to the efforts of L. H. Lafontaine and his Roman Catholic Reform supporters who feared that nationalization of the Reserves would invite attacks on the large Roman Catholic endowments. At least Morris learned that he could count on little or no support from the Kirk in Scotland, but the Canadian synod was saved from “spoliation” by the decision of Britain's government to delay action for another year. Before leaving Britain Morris published in pamphlet form the arguments of the Canadian Church of Scotland for retaining its share of the Reserves, but the Rev. Alexander Mathieson had already advised him that many Canadian Kirkmen were pleased with the anti-Clergy Reserves agitation because they saw it as a prelude to a crusade against Roman Catholic power.²³

In Canada the friends and foes of the Clergy Reserves argued their cases vehemently and occasionally attacked each other's meetings physically. In 1852 the Synod of the Church of Scotland again petitioned the Queen to uphold their establishment; the United Presbyterian Synod, with Andrew Ferrier as moderator, passed resolutions in favour of voluntarism and issued a manifesto condemning the government's slowness in ending church-statism.²⁴ The Free Church remained silent — its position had already been made clear, and in any case its most prominent layman, George Brown, was leading the anti-Clergy Reserves movement both in and out of parliament. This whole situation was confused by the announcement of a new Tory government in Britain that it would not honour its Liberal predecessor's promise of enabling legislation to permit a made-in-Canada settlement of

the question; the Clergy Reserves must never be diverted from their pious purpose to secular uses. By the end of 1852, however, that Tory government had fallen. The respite for the Reserves was over. The next Liberal government made good the promise of enabling legislation in May, 1853, and the Clergy Reserves question at last became a purely Canadian matter.

Before a Canadian settlement could be reached, a new political crisis rocked the colony. Faced with a loss of popularity for its policies, the Reform government first procrastinated and then called a snap election in May, 1854. The election doomed that government but it did produce a number of Conservative candidates who announced that now even they favoured secularization of the Reserves. As soon as the new parliament met that September a coalition of Upper Canadian Conservatives and Lower Canadian Reformers took office, pledged to end once and for all this question that had distressed the province for thirty years. The driving force behind the new Liberal-Conservative government was John A. Macdonald whose Clergy Reserves bill was introduced in Parliament three weeks later. Its terms were a compromise — the Clergy Reserves funds would be made available to the municipalities as development loans, but the incomes of clergy now receiving stipends from the funds would be guaranteed for life. This guarantee was less than voluntarists had demanded, yet it might still have been accepted reluctantly for the sake of peace had it not been for the additional provision that the life stipends could be exchanged for lump sums as a cash settlement. This commutation clause infuriated voluntarists because it allowed the four benefiting churches (including the Church of Scotland which got £105,665 or twenty-eight per cent of the total paid out) to retain these sums after the death of the commuting clergymen through investments as permanent endowments.²⁵

In 1854 and again in 1855 the Free Church Synod officially condemned this commutation of the Clergy Reserves salaries because “all the evils flowing from the previous system have been perpetuated and confirmed.” Seventy-three ministers of the Church of Scotland commuted their stipends but eleven more who had joined the Synod in 1853-4 were permitted by synod to share in the funds so that each of the eighty-four received £112 per year instead of the £150 originally guaranteed to the commuters. To manage the Church of Scotland’s commuted sums a Board of Management of the Temporalities’ Fund was approved by the provincial legislature, but three bank failures soon after Confederation cost the Board \$150,000 of its investments. At the time of Presbyterian union in 1875 the Temporalities’ Fund was ignored in the negotiations and allowed to continue as a body quite separate from the new church, despite several law suits subsequently brought against the Board by nonconcurrents in the union. After the union it became necessary to use

capital to meet obligations, and by 1900 the remaining \$88,731 was distributed in cash settlements to the last twelve commuting clergymen and to sixty-two widows and orphans.²⁶ Thus ended Presbyterianism's involvement in the abortive and stormy attempt to create and endow state churches in Canada.

The University Question Revived

The creation of the Free Church in the colonies introduced a new element into the simmering university question, especially in the United Canadas. The difficult financial situation facing Queen's was now compounded by the fact that nineteen of its thirty students had left the college to support the Free Church. The Free Church did not share the Kirk's admiration for denominational colleges — even before the Disruption the *Banner* had voiced its preference for theological seminaries attached to a nonsectarian provincial institution which would provide education in arts and sciences for future ministers as well as for others. Before the end of 1844, however, it was being rumoured that William Morris had drafted a new university bill to save Queen's by amalgamating it with King's College, and of course with King's endowment. Immediate opposition to the rumoured bill came from all denominations, except the churches of England and Scotland, but the measure actually introduced in parliament by Prime Minister William Henry Draper in March, 1845, was quite different from Morris's supposed bill. Draper's legislation provided for the amalgamation at Toronto of King's, Queen's, Victoria and any future denominational colleges which might be founded. All would receive small government grants but a new "University of Upper Canada" would do all teaching in arts and science and would acquire King's endowment. The *Globe* and *Banner* denounced the plan as "a mass of High Churchism," but in any case Draper agreed to postpone the bill for a year because his own party was divided over it.²⁷ A year later when Draper had done nothing more about the university question, a private member reintroduced Draper's bill but it was easily defeated. The amalgamation principle was not revived for another two generations.

The university question, however, had not been resolved, and in 1847 two new bills were produced by Draper's new Attorney-General, John A. Macdonald, described by the newspapers as an unknown, "third rate lawyer" from Kingston. Macdonald's plan was to leave the existing colleges in their present locations, but to give the endowment to a representative board, which would distribute the funds to these and any future colleges. The basis of this policy was denominational division of the endowment, yet the three

large churches — Anglican, Kirk and Wesleyan Methodist — had barely managed to establish colleges and the numerous smaller Presbyterian and Methodist bodies, as well as Baptists and others, certainly lacked the means to do so in the foreseeable future. In any case, these other denominations were determined to block any sectarian division of an endowment intended to support a provincial university serving all Upper Canadians. The *Globe* called on its readers for a “flood” of petitions to protest this bribery offered to three particular churches. “Insist that all denominations shall have an equal claim to manage and enjoy the benefits of this great institution, and that not one copper of the funds shall be alienated from its original purpose.” The fact that the Kirk and the Wesleyan Methodists approved Macdonald’s bill “is enough to stamp the measure as utterly base and worthless.”²⁸

Late that year, 1847, a crucial general election was held, ostensibly on the issue of responsible government but really on the question of the university reform. The Free Church and the voluntarist denominations threw their weight behind Baldwin’s Reform party — Dr. Robert Burns, for instance, addressed a series of open letters to the Governor General through the columns of the *Banner* in defence of one provincial, secular university. Members of no less than nine denominations signed an “Address to the People of Canada from the Central Committee at Toronto for promoting University Reform.” “Fellow Countrymen!,” ran the address, “You have been asked to sacrifice the most magnificent Educational Endowment...to a few Sectarian Colleges already languishing, because of the exclusive principles on which they are founded.” “We do not deprecate Theological Learning, but we think it may well be taught by the several sects out of their own funds.”²⁹

If the election returns of 1847 are judged by the standard of popular approval of Macdonald’s University scheme, the results were indecisive. The Reformers won in the new areas west of Niagara, the Conservative strength was in the eastern region. The solid Reform vote from Lower Canada was the real key to the heavy defeat of the Conservatives in the united Canadas. The “Great Ministry” of L. H. Lafontaine and Robert Baldwin, which met the new parliament for one month in 1848, did not try to accomplish much in the first session, but it was not allowed to forget the Upper Canadians who had voted for it, nor the issues of church-state relations — Clergy Reserves, rectories, and above all the university question — on which action was now expected. Dr. Burns continued his agitation for a single provincial university and was appointed chairman of a Free Church Synod watchdog committee to press for an end to “sectarian management” of King’s College.

Near the end of 1848 the *Globe* announced that the government was preparing its new university bill, more radical than that of 1843. That bill,

introduced in 1849, obliterated every vestige of denominationalism from King's — all religious tests and the chair of divinity were abolished; no clergyman could be chancellor or president: theological halls could affiliate but would get nothing from the endowment which was preserved exclusively for the new University of Toronto. Queen's and Victoria were obviously expected to die of financial starvation for the benefit of the "godless institution," while the Church of England was "despoiled," in Strachan's opinion, of its college. The trustees of Queen's protested that the bill "dissolves the connection which ought always to subsist between Religion and Education" and prevented any "generous rivalry....between kindred institutions."³⁰ Queen's would never surrender her charter, a determination shared by Victoria College. Such protests were in vain — Baldwin's university act became law as everyone expected, to the great joy of the Free Church and the thorough-going voluntarists who so firmly believed in the separation of church and state in education as in all other fields.

For the Free Church this marked yet another victory at the expense of the Church of Scotland. Students who left Queen's at the Disruption had become the nucleus of a "Theological Institution" in Toronto. A class of fourteen, under the Revs. Andrew King (a deputy from the Free Church in Scotland) and Henry Esson, had gathered in Esson's home in 1844 for theological education, a visible witness of the dedication of thirty-three ministers and thirty-nine congregations to the principle of "spiritual independence." Two years later this college, now in rented quarters, was renamed Knox's College. Robert Burns had replaced King as professor of divinity with Michael Willis as assistant, and in 1848 they were joined by William Rintoul and William Lyall, while Alexander Gale was made principal of a preparatory department of the college. The number of students increased by leaps and bounds; by 1847 there were forty-four, and a year later fifty-two, four times as many as in the college's first year. After 1848 the college occupied a four-dwelling building in central Toronto, but by 1855 it had purchased a larger home where it remained for the next twenty years. Knox's students attended the University of Toronto from its inception for their undergraduate work, an arrangement that suited the Free Church educational philosophy as well as saving money for their church.

In the Maritimes the Disruption had led to similar educational developments. In view of the lack of any government college (Dalhousie was still closed), there was some feeling that a Free Church denominational college should be established, but in the end only a seminary to train a native ministry was created. Despite an early shortfall in subscriptions, the Synod of the Free Church of Nova Scotia opened its theological hall and preparatory

academy at Halifax in 1848 with Andrew King, transferred from Toronto, teaching theology and the Rev. John C. MacKenzie handling philosophy and literature. The Halifax seminary was first intended to serve Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island, but an early plan to have a similar Free Church institution at Saint John, New Brunswick, was apparently abandoned in favour of building up a stronger one at Halifax to serve the whole Maritime region.

Unlike the Church of Scotland in the Canadas, the Synod of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island had no college at the time of the Disruption and failed in efforts to create one after 1845. Funds were raised instead to send ministerial candidates to Queen's or to Scotland, but when Dalhousie College was revived in 1863, the Synod took advantage of the new college act to collect \$2400 as the endowment of a theological chair within the college. The Kirk Synod of New Brunswick, although less affected by the Disruption, had followed the Nova Scotian example of sending its young men to Queen's or Scotland. As for the older indigenous Synod of Nova Scotia, it had in 1844, the year after Thomas McCulloch's death, begun the revival of Pictou Academy by appointing the Rev. John Keir as professor of theology, and by 1848, when the student body numbered fifteen, had added two more professors. A year later a preparatory school was opened at West River. By the late 1850s the number of students at Pictou stood at over fifty, and McCulloch's son, Thomas, had been added to the faculty of his father's Academy to teach science and mathematics.

In Canada the third Presbyterian body to establish a seminary was the Secessionist United Missionary Synod. Its Divinity Hall had opened in London in 1844, the same year that Knox College was founded. William Proudfoot was its only professor, teaching philosophy, classics, and theology in addition to his regular pastoral duties. Two years later the synod resolved to extend the course of study to four years and add a second professor in the Hall. No professor was found, but the Rev. Alexander Mackenzie was hired to teach Hebrew for two weeks each term. With the passing of Baldwin's University of Toronto Act, the Divinity Hall was moved to Toronto in 1850 so that its students were put on the same educational basis as those of Knox College. This relieved Proudfoot of responsibility for philosophy and classics, but he did not enjoy the respite long. Within a year he was dead, and the Synod found a replacement in the Rev. John Taylor from Scotland.³¹ By 1856 Divinity Hall contained thirteen students, but interestingly not one of those in the first year of courses was a Canadian.³² In all these small seminaries the human and physical resources were obviously very limited, yet they fulfilled their objective of training a native ministry and in some cases contributed scholars of outstanding ability to Canadian Presbyterianism and

to Canada. Proudfoot's Hall graduated twenty-six students in its eighteen-year life — Queen's produced only fifteen ministers for the Church of Scotland in its first quarter-century. One of the Hall's most famous alumni was Proudfoot's own son, J. J. A. Proudfoot, lecturer in Practical Theology at Knox College for thirty-five years.

Despite the affiliation of Knox College and Divinity Hall with the University of Toronto, Baldwin's University Act of 1849 never succeeded in its aim of creating a single secular provincial institution. Queen's and Victoria lived on at Kingston and Cobourg, although reduced for several years to a mere handful of students. Dr. Liddell had resigned from Queen's in 1846, and although he was later offered a professorship he did not return to Canada. Queen's did not get a full-time principal again until 1860 when the Rev. William Leitch arrived from Scotland. The effects of frequent changes in staff at Queen's certainly retarded its growth in terms of students, standards and influence throughout these many years. At the same time the growing affluence of the colonies in the 1850s encouraged other denominations — Catholics, Baptists, and Methodist Episcopalians — to found their own colleges, not to mention John Strachan who, having lost King's, began at the age of seventy-two to build a new "Church University," Trinity College. Meanwhile another Act in 1853 made the University of Toronto into an examining body and created University College to provide the teaching. Provisions of the new law allowed other institutions to affiliate with the University and to share any surplus in its endowment fund. No surplus was ever permitted to accumulate, since the university deliberately spent all available money on University College, and when depression struck the country in the late fifties, only University College in Toronto did not feel its effects.

By 1859 expressions of discontent at this lavish expenditure — £16,000 per year — on University College were being voiced openly by its poverty-stricken rivals. Spokesmen for Victoria and Queen's agreed to make "a mutual effort" to get more equitable treatment.³³ Deluged with petitions — over 120 from the Wesleyan Methodists alone — the government of John A. Macdonald and George Etienne Cartier agreed in 1860 that a select committee of the Legislative Assembly should investigate complaints. Egerton Ryerson appeared before the committee on behalf of Victoria, and Dr. John Cook for Queen's. The evidence presented dealt with all aspects of the university question — finance, curriculum, academic standards, teaching and administration — but much of the discussion degenerated into personal vilification by the opponents and defenders of the "godless university." Prominent among its defenders were George Brown, journalist, Reform politician and most conspicuous layman of the Free Church, and Daniel



Queen's University
Kingston, ON

First Classes Held Here

No attempt was made by Presbyterians in the Canadas to establish theological colleges until the 1840s. When the provincial government agreed to give a grant to support a chair of theology in a Kirk-sponsored school, a building was found when Queen Victoria in 1841 approved the name Queen's, and granted a royal charter. With Professor Liddell as principal, 15 students met and rented quarters, 1842.



John Keir



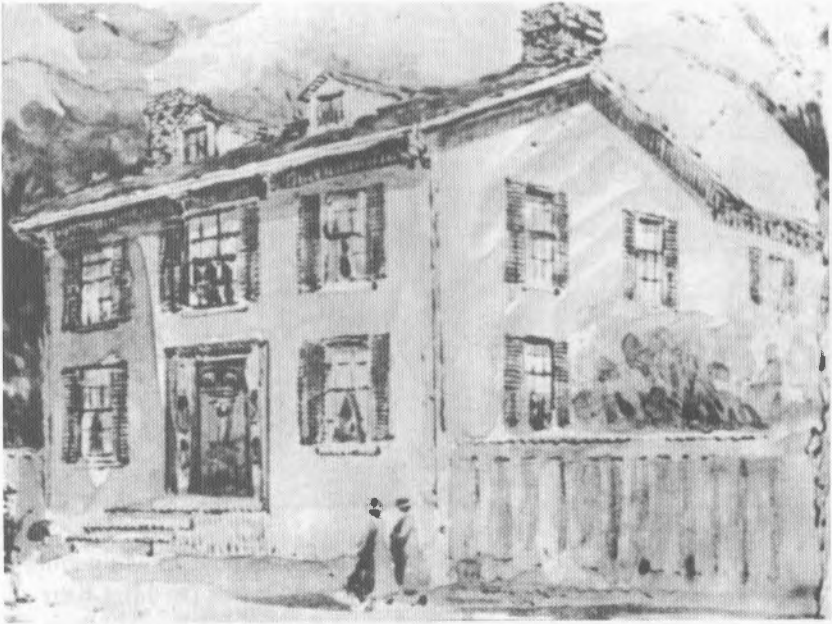
The stately Keir house in Malpeque, P.E.I., was home of Dr. John Keir and once housed the Presbyterian Church's first Theological College.



George Brown



William King, Buxton Mission



Original Knox College, Toronto, ON

Wilson, another product of Edinburgh and professor of history and literature in University College. External support for the existing arrangements came, naturally, from the United Presbyterians and the Free Church whose seminaries in Toronto gave them a vested interest in maintaining the *status quo*. Two diametrically opposed reports were prepared by members of the committee, but neither were submitted to the government, and John A. Macdonald, "Old Tomorrow," was unwilling to take any action that would endanger his shaky government.

Both Queen's and Victoria mounted publicity campaigns in 1860 and 1861 for action at the next legislative session to divide the university's endowment. With a general election approaching Macdonald promised a royal commission to investigate the university. He won the election by a small margin, and established the commission. The commission reported that expenditures on University College had in fact been too large and it recommended equal aid for the other degree-granting institutions. One week before this report was submitted, Macdonald's government resigned, to be succeeded by a Reform-Liberal cabinet whose educational policy remained ominously undisclosed. In fact other issues, such as the near involvement of Britain and British North America in the American Civil War, were distracting public attention from the university question.

Not until 1863 was the commission's report made public, and when it did appear there was an immediate and loud reaction from all those opposed to "spoliation" of the provincial university for the advantage of denominational colleges. Student power emerged at a turbulent "indignation meeting" in Toronto that was widely publicized by the *Globe*, and the university Senate defended the integrity of their institution with all the power and more success than John Strachan had defended King's College in 1849 against Baldwin's University Act. In vain Queen's and Victoria protested against this sidetracking of university reform. The governments of Canada (four different ones in two years) were too preoccupied with political deadlock and the possibility of Confederation to worry about the state of higher education. The University of Toronto was allowed to retain its secure hold on the endowment, to the great relief of the United Presbyterians and the Free Church, among others.

A Revolutionary Decade

As the British North American colonies entered the second half of the nineteenth century they also entered a revolutionary decade that brought drastic and disruptive changes in the colonists' ways of living and thinking,

on a scale and with a rapidity unequalled in any similar period of the nation's history. The coming of the railways, the telegraph, daily newspapers, stock exchanges, steam-powered factories and agricultural improvements introduced the provinces to the age of machines and all the problems related to industrialization and urbanization. Equally unsettling were the new ideological forces of nationalism and materialism, carried from Britain and Europe by the press and by a new wave of educated, articulate and politically active immigrants. The Age of Reform had begun with the acceptance of responsible government or the cabinet system in 1848, and in the secular sphere the 1850s witnessed the inauguration of a host of features of modern, democratic government, such as bureaucracy, municipal government, and free schools. In the religious sphere, however, the apparently irresistible Reform juggernaut seemed to falter after its first victory — the secularization of King's College in Toronto. It had taken another five years to achieve an unsatisfactory settlement of the Clergy Reserves, and the rectories were never in fact abolished. The ever-growing demand for separation of church and state was seemingly stalemated, and the apparently boundless religious energy released during the decade was diverted into new channels and against new enemies.

The first of these "enemies" to appear was not new to Presbyterianism — it was that ancient foe, the political power of the Church of Rome. In 1850 Pope Pius IX unilaterally reconstituted a Roman hierarchy in England, three centuries after the Henrician Reformation had excluded papal authority. The anti-Catholic outburst in England against this "papal aggression" was viewed sympathetically by recent immigrants to British North America, especially those in Canada where half the population was Catholic. The Pope's action was, in the opinion of the *Record*, an "impudent assumption of the Man of Sin."³⁴ "Papal aggression" had no direct bearing on colonial affairs, but when George Brown took up a challenge to publish in the *Globe* a defensive letter from an English cardinal, he added his own condemnation of Catholic interference in Canadian politics and thereby sparked a bitter controversy that lasted for years. Sectional tension between French-speaking and Catholic Lower Canada and English-speaking, Protestant Upper Canada was compounded by economic and political factors, but the most obvious differences were languages, religion and life-style. The angry Catholic reactions to Brown's editorial were matched by equally emotion-charged rebuttals from Protestants as both sides found themselves pushed into more extreme positions. This ferment of words was barely abating when Alessandro Gavazzi, an ex-priest and Italian nationalist, toured Canada in 1853 denouncing the reactionary policies of the papacy. At Quebec his lecture

was halted by a religious riot; at Montreal troops were called out as police fired into the crowd dispersing after Gavazzi's lecture, killing almost a score. The Kirk Synod protested directly to the Queen that these riots were "encroachments on the Freedom of Conscience and Liberty of Speech" of British subjects.³⁵

Two years after the Gavazzi riots, the acquittal of the Catholic murderers of a converted Irish Protestant near Quebec started a series of armed clashes between Roman Catholics and Orangemen in Upper Canada. Through all these "no popery" troubles George Brown stood out as the champion of Protestantism and the target of Catholic attacks in newspapers and at elections. The secular presses carried the brunt of this battle, but religious newspapers were not far behind in denouncing their particular opponents. The appearance of this common enemy — "popery" — and the disappearance of that old source of denominational strife, the Clergy Reserves, paved the way for increased Protestant co-operation and the discussion of church union in all the colonies. Puseyism and popery had already attracted Presbyterian attention in the late 1840s in the form of newspaper articles on the history of the Inquisition, and on Catholic responsibility for revolutions and political subversion. The events of the 1850s simply fanned old embers into new flames.

One reaction of Upper Canadian Protestants to "papal aggression" was the formation of the Protestant Alliance of which George Brown was a founding father. The Alliance, which included members of most Protestant denominations, specifically advocated church union as a defence against militant Catholicism, and soon was also involved in the defence of "the free unsectarian system of schools in Upper Canada."³⁶ Since 1851 the Roman Catholic bishops of Canada, supported by the solid block voting of Lower Canadian Catholic members of parliament, had pushed relentlessly for a separate Roman Catholic schools system in Upper Canada, a system that would have its own provincial superintendent, the power to tax all property and to use the municipal governments as tax collectors. An Act of 1855, railroaded through parliament without warning, virtually assured the Upper Canadian separate schools of public finances from provincial and local sources.³⁷ Almost immediately the Roman Catholic bishop of Toronto, Armand de Charbonnel, a French count and ultramontanist, announced that this new law did not go far enough, but all the political pressure that the Church of Rome could bring to bear in parliament did not achieve any significant changes until the 1860s. The most vocal and effective opponent of separate schools during those years was George Brown's *Globe*, whose description of the 1855 Separate School Act as "outrageous" and "infamous" accurately reflected the opinion of most Upper Canadian Protestants.³⁸

Objections to the extension, and indeed to the very existence of denominational schools, was founded in part on the new sense of Canadian nationalism which demanded a unitary, province-wide, secular system of education, from the elementary to the university level. Among Presbyterians the Secessionist United Presbyterian Church led the way in expressing this sense of a Canadian identity. As early as 1846 William Proudfoot had complained of Presbyterians, "We are too Scotch — our habits, our brogue, our mode of sermonizing are all too Scotch. The thistle is everywhere seen...our mission is a foreign affair. And so it will be until we employ the country born, divest it of its Scotch character, and make it Canadian."³⁹ To produce that "country born" ministry he had founded his Divinity Hall, just as the Presbyterian Church of Nova Scotia and the Free Church in Nova Scotia and in Canada had established their theological colleges to train a native ministry. "We are now strictly and properly a Canadian Church," the *Record* had announced proudly in November, 1847. Taking up the theme of Canadianization, the *Canadian Presbyterian* of February, 1857, warned the Free Church against following "in a slavish spirit the forms and customs of older churches." "Our Church," the same paper remarked in April, 1858, "must open her doors and bid all Canadians to enter..." "Papal aggression," Puseyism, and the end of the Clergy Reserves were creating a climate of Canadianism that encouraged talk of Presbyterian union. Nevertheless it was 1858 before the Free Church got its first Canadian-born moderator in Thomas Wardope, or the Church of Scotland could boast that it had six Canadian-born ministers.⁴⁰

As Canadianization increased in the 1850s the use of Gaelic in worship services seemed to decline, probably because the bulk of Scottish immigration to the colonies at this time came from the Lowlands. By the 1860s no Church of Scotland congregations in Lower Canada and only five in Upper Canada reported that Gaelic was used in the church.⁴¹ No statistics seem available from the Free Church in Canada or from the Maritime Presbyterians, but in 1854 the Canadian Free Church Synod received a complaint from King, near Toronto, about a presbytery ruling against occasional Gaelic services. Synod rejected the appeal and also denied it had the right to interfere in congregational affairs.⁴² A proposal made in 1848 for a Canadian Gaelic newspaper was generally opposed, outside of the synod, as being unjustified by the small number of potential readers.⁴³

Another significant development in the 1850s was the rapid spread of the Sunday school movement. William Smart had organized the first Sunday school in Upper Canada at Brockville as early as 1811, and other Presbyterian congregations copied this example in later years. The Church of Scotland in Kingston reported that its Sunday school was operating with

nearly seventy pupils in 1832 and boasted that the school had a library of one hundred books for children and one hundred and fifty for adults.⁴⁴ In 1836 the Canadian Sunday School Union, closely modelled on and influenced by the American Sunday school movement, was formed in Montreal. By the time this Canadian Union held its first Convention in Kingston in 1857, its orientation had swung sharply towards British counterparts, with missionary interest holding a high priority. By this time a second body, the Sunday School Association of Canada, was emerging with close links to the American National Sunday School Convention and an emphasis on the more traditional type of Christian education.

Among Canadian Presbyterian churches the Church of Scotland was slower to develop Sunday schools than either the Free Church or the United Presbyterian Church. Sunday schools were to be found in virtually every congregation of these latter two bodies. Lesson materials, library books and Sunday school papers seem to have been obtained from Britain and the United States, but also some of the literature was Canadian in origin. Although the Free Church Synod had created one standing committee on Sabbath schools in 1852, and another in 1853 to prepare lessons, its Sunday schools and indeed those of all denominations were generally established by local initiative and with little supervision from central organizations. Unfortunately little research had been done on the whole development of Christian education in Canada, and this is particularly the case in connection with the pre-Confederation history of the British North American colonies.

The growing wealth in the British North American colonies during the 1850s contributed to many new evidences of sophistication in Presbyterian church life, none of which was so bitterly contested as the introduction of musical instruments and new music into the worship services. American Presbyterians had led the way in this direction in the eighteenth century by the introduction of instrumental music and Isaac Watts's "imitations" of the psalms, but as late as the mid-nineteenth century "lining" of the old psalm forms was still the norm in the British colonies. Since the psalms were divinely inspired, rehearsals for choirs, where choirs existed, were forbidden. Congregations and choirs were expected to rely on some instant musical inspiration, which by all reports did not descend universally or frequently on the worshippers. When a precentor of Knox Free Church in Ottawa resigned in 1858, an attempt was made to organize a choir, but the novelty proved a failure and so a new precentor was found to lead the congregation in the familiar pattern of worship.

Of the three main bodies of Presbyterians in the colonies the Free Church seems to have been the most conservative in its worship practices. The United

Presbyterians were the most progressive — they produced their own hymn book in 1853, after several unauthorized collections of hymns began to appear after 1850. Despite a synod decision of 1855 against instrumental music as “unscriptural,”⁴⁵ the United Presbyterian congregation in London acquired an organ about 1856, and when its presbytery asked synod for a judgement on the legality of this move in 1857, the synod forbade the use of organs.⁴⁶ Nevertheless the London congregation ignored synod’s ruling and continued to enjoy organ music for another year until the offending instrument was finally sacrificed because it was an impediment to impending union with the Free Church.⁴⁷ The first Church of Scotland in British North America to use an organ in worship was St. Andrew’s, Toronto, the same congregation that decades later introduced choir gowns. St. Andrew’s got its organ about 1851 or 1852, but no objections were raised until 1859 when a new and larger instrument was acquired.

The pioneer of instrumental music in all Canadian Presbyterian churches, was, however, William Smart, who had also established the first Sunday school. As early as 1817 Smart used instrumental music in his services, and by 1855 Smart’s church at Brockville, where he had resigned in 1849, got an organ. St. Matthew’s Church, Halifax, began in 1842 to use Isaac Watts’s hymns, accompanied by a “Kirk Fiddle” (probably a cello, since violins were associated in Presbyterian minds with “sensuous amusements”). Whatever instruments were used, however, it was generally agreed that other denominations who did not share the Presbyterian attitude, enjoyed much better musical worship. Somehow organs seemed to be the greatest threat to Presbyterian purity. Organs were condemned by the Free Church Synod in 1855, yet the Brockville congregation ignored the prohibition until 1857.⁴⁸ The controversy over the use of organs (referred to by opponents as “the carnal instrument”), had in fact barely started in the 1850s, and it is interesting as one of the few evidences of American influence in the development of Canadian Presbyterianism. Perhaps it is significant that the independent American Presbyterian Church in Montreal had acquired an organ in 1831, probably the first in a Presbyterian Church in British North America.

The growth of urban centres, where sophistication was most apparent, may also have contributed to a change of emphasis in the temperance movement by throwing into even starker relief the evils resulting from excessive drinking. Suggestions for the total prohibition by law of the liquor traffic had been heard in the 1830s in all the colonies, but the passing of the famous prohibition law by the state of Maine in 1846 was an inspiration to all who believed in compulsory sobriety. While the most vocal exponents of teetotalism were usually Baptists and Methodists, all Christian denominations sup-

ported the movement in some degree. Presbyterians, however, reflected the greatest diversity of opinions on temperance to be found in any one communion."⁴⁹ On the whole the United Presbyterians and Free Churchmen were more likely to favour prohibition than members of the Church of Scotland, and these temperance attitudes bore a direct relation to one's politics. "Almost all men who are right on the liquor law question are also right on the Clergy Reserves question," wrote one Reformer in 1854.⁵⁰ George Brown, although not himself a teetotaler, gradually moved towards support of prohibition in the Canadas, where, as he stated in parliament, there were 3,430 taverns, 930 whisky shops, 130 breweries and 135 distilleries for a population of less than two million.⁵¹

Of the several American temperance organizations that formed branches in the British North American colonies, the first and most important was the Sons of Temperance who had groups in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and both Upper and Lower Canada by 1848. Another body, the Independent Order of Good Templars, had 20,000 members in 350 lodges in Upper Canada alone by 1860. Although private prohibition bills were introduced in the colonial legislatures in the 1850s, only in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick were they passed into law, and there they were soon replaced by a form of local option adopted by Upper and Lower Canada in 1853 respectively.

Concern for such contemporary social issues as temperance was also directing the attention of Presbyterians in all the colonies towards the increase in "sabbath profanation" resulting from technological changes during this revolutionary decade. Sunday mail deliveries in Canada, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island were criticized as unnecessary. In Halifax the fish market and grocery stores stayed open on Sunday and the public houses closed only during the hours of worship.⁵² The *Presbyterian Witness* of Nova Scotia demanded that the provincial legislature pass a law to end violations of the sabbath. Sunday postal operations continued to be the main culprit in the early 1850s, as a Sabbath Alliance was organized in Nova Scotia and a local option sabbath observance bill was lost in the Canadian parliament by only one vote. This defeat was blamed on those politicians who were "the pliant tools of a rampant Priesthood."⁵³ As the miles of railway lines grew in the colonies, however, the Sunday operation of trains was particularly denounced, even though railways were admitted to be a wondrous gift from God to spread the Gospel. In 1853, 17,500 signatures were collected in Upper Canada, and 3,000 (all Protestants) in Lower Canada, favouring sabbath observance legislation, and the Kingston Sabbath Reformation Society announced that the third Sunday in January would be a special "Lord's Day observance."⁵⁴ In the autumn of 1854 George Brown introduced the first

Sabbath bill in parliament, to control post office operations. Two years later a similar bill that proposed to include canals as well, won Brown the full support of the Free Church synod.⁵⁵ As in the case of temperance, however, the churches made little concrete headway with sabbath observance legislation during the Revolutionary Decade, beyond arousing the public conscience on the issue.

Presbyterian concern for the spiritual and physical welfare of others was not confined to the problems facing colonists of European origin — they were equally disturbed by the existence of slavery, that “monstrous iniquity” as George Brown called it. Although slaves had been kept as domestic servants in all the colonies in the early days of settlement, the economy of the country did not lend itself to their mass employment as in the southern United States. By 1833, when slavery was officially abolished throughout the British Empire, it had already disappeared in the North American colonies. Christians in these colonies were sympathetic to the aims of American anti-slavery movements, and long before the American Civil War began Canadian Free Church Presbyterians had become involved indirectly in that campaign. In 1848 the Rev. William King, a missionary of the Scottish Free Church in the United States who had inherited fifteen slaves, approached the Free Church Synod seeking aid to settle his freed blacks in Upper Canada.⁵⁶ The synod was unwilling at first to take direct responsibility for such a venture but it did appoint a committee to help form a supporting association when Lord Elgin donated nine thousand acres near Chatham. A year later King was received on trial for ordination and a committee was appointed to superintend his Buxton mission to freed slaves and those arriving in increasing numbers after the passing of the American fugitive slave law.

The Buxton Mission was subsequently put under the care of the Home Mission Committee and by 1853 was so firmly established that another committee was directed to seek ways of liquidating the debt of the joint stock company that operated the settlement. Presbyterian contributions to the mission, which had been averaging some \$450 per year, rose dramatically to an annual average of about \$1,300, and for both 1854 and 1858 donations were close to \$1,900 King’s settlement⁵⁷ at Elgin proved to be one of the most successful of such black communities in Canada West. It was noted particularly for its internal harmony, a fact probably explained by King’s patience and devotion and by the nondenominational backing that it received as two of its stockholders were Jewish. Most blacks, however, were Baptists or Methodists; very few were Presbyterians. The two hundred families reported at the Buxton Mission in 1857 probably represented fairly accurately the total of Presbyterians among the forty thousand blacks in the

province.

In the broader field of anti-slavery work, Free Churchmen played a prominent role. The Rev. Michael Willis, professor of theology and later principal in Knox College, was president of the Toronto-based Anti-Slavery Society of Canada, and the ubiquitous Dr. Robert Burns was also a leading anti-slaver. The Free Church Synod regularly passed resolutions condemning the “peculiar institution” — in 1845 it had scolded the American Old School Presbyterian Church for its “sinful apathy” towards slavery — and throughout the 1850s it officially condemned American slavery while disclaiming “any design of officious intermeddling.”⁵⁸ American Presbyterians had replied bluntly that slavery was no concern of the Canadians but the unrepentant Free Church resolved in 1856 to examine the attitude of ministerial candidates to ensure its own purity. In 1859 it refused to send fraternal delegates to the American New School Presbyterian Church because of the latter’s stand on slavery and because of its doctrinal liberalism which ran counter to Canadian Presbyterian traditions.

Even these forthright policies were not enough to satisfy J. J. E. Linton, a Scottish Free Churchman settled in Canada since 1833, who in 1854 demanded an end to the distribution of all literature from American pro-slavery bodies. Most Canadian Presbyterians responded by boycotting publications of the Old School Presbyterian Board in favour of tracts, periodicals and books from Scotland.⁵⁹ Not until after the emancipation of America’s more than three million slaves were harmonious relations restored between Canadian and American Presbyterians, although Canadian Presbyterian involvement in the slavery issue had been almost entirely a Free Church concern.