

The Rev. R. P. (Robert Peter) MacKay: Pietist as Denominational Executive
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The Rev. Dr. Robert Peter MacKay¹ served as Secretary of the Foreign Missions Committee of The Presbyterian Church in Canada from 1892 to 1925, and then in a parallel role in the newly created United Church of Canada for two years. This paper seeks to do three things, locate MacKay, the first denominational program staff person in Canadian Presbyterianism, within the developing denominational bureaucracy and the growing use of business practices in the church; explore MacKay's connection with the broader trans-Atlantic Protestant mission enterprise; and finally, to delineate how MacKay's pietistic theology informed his leadership and administration of the Presbyterian Church in Canada's foreign mission. The paper makes extensive use of public addresses MacKay gave at various mission conferences which were subsequently published, and pamphlets and book chapters he wrote. Readers will notice little reference to MacKay's voluminous correspondence with missionaries in the field, or to the minutes of the Foreign Missions Committee. Exploring the longer published pieces provides a more cohesive picture of MacKay's missiological understanding than does piecing together such a picture out of situationally based letters, or administratively driven committee meetings.

The Foreign Missions Committee of The Presbyterian Church in Canada (hereafter FMC) faced a challenge as the overseas mission enterprise of the denomination grew through the late 1880's and early 1890's: handling the correspondence and administrative tasks connected to the mission was outstripping the time and energy Hamilton Cassels, the volunteer secretary of the Committee and also a partner in the prominent Toronto legal firm, Cassels, Brock, Kelley, and Falconbridge, had to give to the task. Both those inside the committee and those outside recognized the time had come for a full-time salaried secretary for the committee. Cassels' resignation in 1891 following three years as secretary opened the door for such an appointment. The FMC recommended to the 1891 Assembly the Rev. Dr. J. B. Fraser be appointed to the role. Fraser, an ordained minister and a medical doctor, had served as a medical missionary in Formosa (Taiwan) for three years before returning to Canada in 1877 with his children, following the death of his wife. Before the Assembly could deal with the recommendation, Fraser, who had been listening to informal comments made by commissioners, rose to suggest the Assembly needed to decide whether appointing a "salaried Secretary" was consistent with the denomination's polity and practice before deciding who should be offered the job.²

The proposal was made that a question be sent down to presbyteries: should the church appoint "an agent" whose tasks would be "to represent the Foreign Mission work among the congregations of the Church" and "to keep the minutes and conduct the correspondence of the Committee"? Following substantial debate the Assembly agreed to ask the opinions of the Presbyteries, along with requesting the submission of names of suitable candidates. Two issues troubled some members of the Assembly, first, the creation of a new paid position at the Assembly level, and, secondly, the lack of input from the wider church as to who might fulfill

¹ Robert Peter MacKay was known widely simply as R.P. – a "name" he had from his days at Knox College if not earlier. The spelling of his last name is somewhat unclear – he appears to have used MacKay, although at times his signature appears to be Mackay. A few times in the official record of the denomination it appears as Mackay, along with McKay. This paper will use MacKay.

² *Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly*, (hereafter *A&P*) 1891, p. 36 and App. 10, p. liv; *The Presbyterian Record*, Aug., 1892, p.208.

this position. While two full-time paid staff worked at the Assembly level – the church agent, Mr. Croil, and the editor of the Record, the Rev. E. Scott, the secretary of the FMC would be the first program staff appointment. Thirty-one of forty-six presbyteries responded to the question asked. Twenty-two said “yes” to the proposal and four said “no”. Among the suggestions from the other five presbyteries were: amalgamating the secretary-ship of the Home Missions Committee and the FMC into a single role or combining it with “some other office” and turning the position into a purely administrative one removing the promotion of the work of foreign missions from the tasks assigned to the secretary. The 1892 Assembly agreed to appoint a full-time salaried secretary whose skills would include both the ability to manage the administrative tasks of the FMC and “the power of effective presentation or address”. The roles of administrator and promoter of foreign mission were to remain together.³

The new secretary was to be responsible for “the preparation of information for the press”⁴ becoming the conduit through which the denomination’s foreign mission story would be communicated to church members and the wider community. Having a central clearing house through which the missionaries’ stories were told was efficient preventing overlap. In selecting what material to pass on to the press, the new staff person would mediate the foreign mission narrative to both supporters and critics.

The Committee of Assembly named to look at this matter recommended the Rev. R. P. MacKay “be called to this work.” Three other persons were nominated from the floor of the Assembly: the Rev. D. D. MacLeod of Barrie; the Rev. J. B. Fraser, M.D., who had been the FMC’s nominee for secretary in 1891; and the Rev. Alfred Gandier of Brampton, who would later become Principal of Knox College. The vote was by ballot, a candidate required 50% plus one of the ballots cast to be declared then winner. The name with the fewest votes was dropped from subsequent ballots. On the first ballot 132 votes were cast; MacKay received 63 of the needed 67 votes, Dr. Fraser received the fewest votes and was dropped. The only candidate with overseas mission experience had been knocked out of the running. On the second ballot 150 votes were cast and 84 were for MacKay. The Rev. R. P. MacKay took up his responsibilities as the new salaried secretary of the FMC in August 1892.⁵ MacKay was to become the FMC’s “best known-figure and its authoritative voice” playing until 1925 “a key role in determining the course of his church’s foreign missions policy.”⁶

Who was this first salaried Secretary of the Committee? The Rev. R. P. MacKay was born in East Zorra township north-west of Woodstock, Ontario on April 24, 1847. Zorra a hot-bed of Presbyterianism produced some fifty ministers. R.P. was encouraged by his older brother, Hugh, a doctor, to become a minister. Hugh promised to help pay for R.P.’s education. At the age of 24, MacKay entered the undergraduate program of the University of Toronto, living at Knox College. Graduating in 1875, he entered theology at Knox College and graduated in 1877. In October 1877, MacKay was inducted the minister at Agincourt, and within a month he married Margaret Smith, the eldest daughter of the Rev. John Smith, then minister of Bay Street Church in Toronto. The wedding was conducted by no less than three clergy: Principal William Caven and

³ *A&P*, 1891, p. 36; *A&P*, 1892, p. 32, 42.

⁴ *A&P*, 1892, p. 42.

⁵ *A&P*, 1892, p. 42-44.

⁶ Ruth Compton Brouwer, *New Women for God: Canadian Presbyterian Women and India Missions, 1876-1914*, (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1990), p. 24.

Professors MacLaren and Gregg, all of Knox College; one of the bridesmaids was Margaret Caven, daughter of Principal Caven. MacKay had connections within the denominational elite.⁷

The marriage was, by all accounts, a happy one, though marked by tragedy. A child was born in 1879, dying after only a few hours of life. A daughter, Margaret Smith, was born in February 1881; named for her mother who died five days after giving birth. MacKay never re-married, raising his daughter with the support of the congregation. MacKay served the Agincourt church another three years, before moving to Parkdale on what was then the edge of Toronto. There he led the congregation through the building of Dunn Avenue Presbyterian Church. Over the eight years he served the congregation (1884-1892), it grew to 550 members and nine of whom became missionaries either in Canada or overseas. One, Dr. William Wanless, a missionary in India, wrote of MacKay, "I owe much to him in my decision to become a Christian and ultimately a medical missionary."⁸ MacKay had a track record of promoting missions at the congregational level.

MacKay, a man of deep piety, believed prayer and the surrender of the will were central to the Christian's walk of faith. Little interested in theological debate, MacKay believed inter-denominational action was the way for future mission. Historian Robert Wright describes MacKay as a person of "evangelical conviction."⁹ This conviction was clear in MacKay's belief that people needed to hear and respond to the call of the gospel. Understanding a call to conversion as central to mission, historian Ruth Compton Brouwer notes, did not prevent MacKay from holding together "the liberal and conservative tendencies" within the Presbyterian Church.¹⁰ MacKay's piety allowed him to maintain the tension between the two "tendencies"; his focus on prayer and self-sacrifice were welcome among both liberals and conservatives who agreed these were important in the mission of the church. Further MacKay's "saintly" attitude cut across the tensions between liberals and conservatives calling both to deeper discipleship no matter how they defined that discipleship.

MacKay's thirty-five years as Secretary of the FMC can be divided into three periods. The first, 1892-1907, saw him grow into being a denominational mission administrator, creating a role which had not existed previously. Until 1906, MacKay served alone, including being his own secretary. While R.P. was on his eighteen month long tour of the Asian mission fields (1906-1907), the Rev. Allan Egbert (Bert) Armstrong, served as temporary Secretary. Armstrong, a 1904 graduate of the Knox College, had been accepted as a missionary but failing the medical requirements had gone into congregational ministry. In 1908, the FMC accepted MacKay's suggestion that Armstrong be appointed Assistant Secretary. The addition to the FMC's administrative team was in response to the growth in the denomination's mission enterprise. The second period from 1908 to 1913 saw dramatic organizational change in the work of the FMC as efficiency and business approaches were built into the structures of the denomination. During this time MacKay was elected Moderator of the PCC (1911) and was involved in the development and promotion of Canada's Mission Policy. The third period was 1914 to 1927.

⁷ Andrew Thomson, *The Life and Letters of Rev. R. P. MacKay, D.D.: A Record of Faith, Friendship, and Good Cheer*, (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1932), p. 18-27.

⁸ Thomson, *Life and Letters*, p. 58.

⁹ Robert Wright, *A World Mission: Canadian Protestantism and the Quest for a New International Order, 1918-1939*, (Montreal-Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992), p. 122. Wright notes MacKay served on the boards of both Toronto Bible Training School and the Canadian section of China Inland Mission, both evangelical institutions.

¹⁰ Brouwer, *New Women for God*, p. 24. Brouwer goes on to say that MacKay combined these "within his own complex personality, the widowed MacKay made foreign missions his passionate, lifelong interest..."

MacKay turned sixty-seven in 1914 and was moving into the role of respected statesperson within the denomination and among other mission executives, leaving much of the day to day concerns and even many policy matters to Armstrong.

1892-1908

The PCC's foreign mission fields when MacKay was called to be Secretary included: the New Hebrides in the South Pacific; Trinidad primarily among Indian immigrants; Formosa (Taiwan) and Honan, both part of the Chinese mission effort; Central India; Palestine among the Jewish population; work among Chinese immigrants in British Columbia; and with Native peoples on the Canadian Prairies and in British Columbia. Notably, no mission work was being done in Africa or in Korea. The work in Canada was considered Foreign Missions due to its cross-cultural nature. A total of seventy-nine Canadian staff (not including the spouses of missionaries) working for the FMC in 1892, twenty-six in Canada and fifty-three overseas.¹¹

Sixteen years later the number of missionaries had nearly doubled to 152, with ninety-eight missionaries (not including spouses) overseas and fifty-four in Canada. Eighty-five percent of the missionaries serving in 1908 had been appointed during MacKay's time with the FMC, he had had direct involvement in their appointment including the selection of the field to which they were sent. The mission in Palestine had been dropped and four new fields opened up by 1908: British Guiana; Korea; and in China – Shanghai and Macao. This growth was not solely the result of MacKay's efforts; however he was a central part of moving people who were interested in missions through the process to become missionaries.¹² Thus he helped shape the denomination's mission staff and the mission itself.

Upon his appointment as secretary MacKay had a great deal to learn and to learn quickly. First, the administrative processes of the mission endeavour needed to be understood. The minutes of the first FMC meetings he attended indicate his grappling to understand and improve the various policies of the FMC both the written ones and the unwritten ones.¹³ MacKay not only had to understand and be able to explain the policies of the FMC to missionaries and missionary candidates, he also had to be able to explain those policies to the wider church. Within a year of MacKay's appointment he was struggling to explain how funds given to the Women's Foreign Mission Society (hereafter WFMS) were not in fact being given to the work of the FMC. Careful to not create friction between Home Missions and Foreign Missions, MacKay argued both needed to be funded in ways that avoided any "unfairness in the distribution of funds as will create antagonism and strife." But an unfairness was creeping in. Some congregations looked upon the funds raised by the WFMS as being part of their support of foreign missions, and were

¹¹ "Resolutions relating to the Foreign Mission Work of the Presbyterian Church in Canada adopted by the General Assembly, 1893 with notes by Rev. R. P. MacKay", (Toronto: Press of the Canada Presbyterian, 1893), 1-3. This pamphlet was published the first year MacKay was secretary, in subsequent years no such pamphlet was published.

¹² *A&P*, 1908, Appendix, 191-194.

¹³ See for example *Minutes of the Foreign Missions Committee of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, vol. 5*, Executive Minutes, Nov. 15, 1892, 41. "The Secretary reported that Dr. MacLaren and he had carefully revised the manual submitted by the Board of the WFMS that they found that in two or three places authority was assumed by the Board instead of being stated as belonging to the Committee, and that the outfit allowance for Lady Missionaries was stated to be \$250 instead of \$150 as fixed by the Committee's regulations. It was agreed to alter the Manual so as to make it conform to the Committee's regulations and authority, and that the Secretary forward it, as altered, to the Board of the WFMS with approval. Also that the Board should be informed that if they will state their reasons for wishing to increase the outfit allowance, the matter will be brought under the notice of the Committee at the next meeting." The challenge of working out the authority of each of the FMC and the WFMS would remain ongoing.

subtracting the amount raised by the WFMS from the amount they aimed at contributing to the FMC. MacKay argued strongly the “original intention of the WFMS was that their gifts should be *over and above* what was given [to foreign mission] by the congregation and should not interfere with it.”(emphasis in original)¹⁴ The financial support of the foreign mission cause was both aided by and complicated by the efforts of the WFMS to raise funds, and also wanting a say in how those funds were expended. Working with the WFMS remained a challenge for the first two decades of MacKay’s time as Secretary.

A second set of knowledge MacKay needed to master was where the PCC’s missionaries were serving and the opportunities and challenges they faced. Only as he demonstrated knowledge of their situation would his correspondence with them be meaningful and helpful in addressing their concerns. Further he required a detailed knowledge of the missionaries’ work if he was to be able to present the missionary story effectively to the denomination. Thomson in the biography of his father-in-law notes R.P. upon being appointed secretary made a careful and systematic study of the contexts in which the church was doing foreign mission.¹⁵ This careful study was evident in a 1893 pamphlet containing MacKay’s comments on the FMC’s recommendations adopted by the General Assembly. He introduced readers to the challenges of the Geary Law “An Act to prohibit the coming of Chinese persons into the United States”, highlighting the dehumanizing language used, the undermining of legal protections, and the risk of a potential backlash against missionaries in China. The pamphlet also explained those with “no social standing” in the Indian sub-continent who were being attracted to the Christian faith.¹⁶ Over his years as Secretary of the FMC MacKay worked hard at staying up-to-date on the changing international situations impacting the PCC’s mission.

The only way to correspond with missionaries when MacKay became secretary was by letter. Even though other means of communication gradually became available during his time in the FMC office, the alternative means, such as telegraph, were expensive and not effective means of communicating anything but short messages.¹⁷ The letter books of the FMC indicate in the first fourteen years as secretary R.P. wrote nearly 8,000 letters, virtually all of them longhand. Additional letters would have been written from home or while traveling to various engagements. His correspondents wrote as many, if not more, letters to him, letters which he read and responded to in some way. At times that meant writing a return letter; remarkably MacKay often responded to missionaries in field less than 48 hours after receiving their letters. Principal Alfred Gandier of Knox College, who also served for fifteen years as Chair of the FMC and therefore knew of MacKay’s patterns said, “He was a father and a never-failing friend to every single missionary of the Church, man and woman. And what a ministry he exercised through his writing of letters.”¹⁸

At times the letters from the field contain information that could be passed on to the press for publication. Other matters needed to be taken to the FMC for their consideration. MacKay was well aware of his dual role in the lives of missionaries, as the official voice of the church he was required at times to present information and to explain policy to missionaries in the field, and, secondly, his calling was to be the voice of pastoral care for missionaries in difficult situations

¹⁴ Resolutions related to Foreign, 18-20.

¹⁵ Thomson, *Life and Letters*, 68. “. . . he devoted himself to a study of mission lands and missions. The piles of notes in his handwriting show both how extensively and how thoroughly he dug down to the basal principles of the religions of the East.”

¹⁶ Resolutions related to Foreign, 10-12.

¹⁷ Direct Canada to India and Canada to China telegraph was not available until 1902.

¹⁸ Thomson, *Life and Letters*, 168.

far from home. At times these roles merged, as when a missionary or family member was ill and the possibility of an early return to Canada was under consideration. In these situations MacKay needed to both express pastoral concern for those who were sick, and play the role of mission administrator in insuring the interests of the church and its mission were considered.¹⁹ Historian Ruth Compton Brouwer has argued MacKay at times overstated the level of agreement present within the FMC on a given issue.²⁰ The members of the committee were leading Presbyterians who brought diverse opinions to the table, and differences of opinion were common. MacKay, however, was charged with communicating the views of the majority, which was the decision of the committee.

An interesting letter writer, MacKay inquired after the spouses and children of his correspondents by name. He included details such as the weather at the time of writing and people who had recently dropped into the FMC office. A letter to the Rev. John Wilkie serving in Indore, India, demonstrates MacKay's use of humour to communicate his message: "I would just mildly admonish you to beware lest these Assembly reports should come into my hands so late as to make it impossible to use them for the General Assembly. Should that be so, you will find yourself so:" following which appeared a sketch of a person being hanged.²¹ In a letter to a missionary in Honan, China, he wrote, "It must be your Highland ancestry that had given you such a cool and level head; for you will, of course, agree with me that all virtues belong essentially to the Highlander."²²

Immediately upon becoming Secretary MacKay was forced to address a problem on a distant field. Through the 1880's the FMC sought ways to integrate its work with the WFMS in Central India. A joint council had been tried, with men and women having equal voice. This had failed. As the FMC receiving correspondence from various sources on the field and had a few opportunities to speak to missionaries on furlough it modified its policy, but little seemed to solve the tension on the field. At times MacKay would write a letter containing a FMC-proposed solution, only to have it rejected by a party in the conflict before the proposal ever reached India. Such were the challenges of making decisions for a mission located half a world away. By the mid-1890's the FMC reached the conclusion that the Rev. John Wilkie, who had been in Indore since 1878, was a significant part of the problem. Such a realization would have been difficult for MacKay. Wilkie and MacKay had been at Knox College together and considered each other friends. In the end MacKay as Secretary of the FMC informed Wilkie of the June 1902 decision to recall Wilkie as a missionary of the PCC. Wilkie, a gifted promoter of his missionary efforts and his plans to expand that mission, had during his twenty-four years as a missionary endeared himself to a number of powerful Presbyterians in Canada, especially women. Wilkie, returned to Canada and following an unsuccessful attempt to get re-appointed to the PCC's mission to India, created an independent work: the Gwalior Mission in Jhansi, Central

¹⁹ Thomson, *Life and Letters*, 72-73. In a letter to the Rev. W. A. Wilson in Indore, MacKay gently indicates Wilson's departure from the field would have a negative impact on the Evangelistic Campaign Wilson was instrumental in starting and therefore he should consider staying. Wilson was the son-in-law of William Caven, Principal of Knox College.

²⁰ Ruth Compton Brouwer, *New Women for God: Canadian Presbyterian Women and India Missions, 1876-1914*, (Toronto, University of Toronto, 1990), 152.

²¹ Thomson, *Life and Letters*, 69.

²² Thomson, *Life and Letters*, 70.

India. Despite Wilkie's skills in mobilizing support, MacKay and the FMC weathered the storm. Their decision appeared justified as calm came to the mission in Central India.²³

Throughout his time as secretary of the FMC MacKay had an ambivalent relationship with the leadership of the WFMS and its successor, the WMS. Prior to MacKay's appointment the FMC had been exploring how best to address the WFMS's concerns about inadequate training opportunities for women missionaries. Male missionaries trained at one of the denomination's theological colleges; no such opportunities existed for women preparing to go overseas. Through the 1890's the Committee explored various options which were consistently rejected by the WFMS who had set their vision on a women's missionary training center operated by the Canadian Presbyterian Church. One of the options seriously considered in 1895 was having the women attend the newly formed Toronto Bible Training School. MacKay was connected to TBTS, serving on the Board of the institution and becoming Vice-Chair of the Board for a time. Another FMC member, the Rev. Dr. D. McTavish served on the founding board of TBTS. This openness to inter-denominational ventures was a hallmark of the foreign missions community, one with which the WFMS was out of step as they rejected any proposal along "distinctively inter-denominational lines." In the end the WFMS got its wish and the Ewart Missionary Training Home was opened in 1897. MacKay taught courses on missions at Ewart in the first decade of its existence and served on its Board. With his round-the-world tour in 1906 and the evolution of Ewart into a deaconess and missionary training center in 1907, MacKay's involvement at Ewart diminished.²⁴

MacKay, in 1893, became a founding member of the Conference of Foreign Missionary Boards and Societies in the United States and Canada, an organization which through its annual meetings and networks was to influence his thinking about mission and give him a forum beyond the PCC to discuss issues of mission. The Foreign Missions Conference of North America, as the organization eventually became known as, held its annual meeting usually in early January each year, first starting in New York, but later were held in various North American cities. The conference was designed to meet the needs of mission board executives, as R.P.'s description makes clear,

...the best experience of all the Boards, old and young, was placed on the table and notes compared. It was thus missions gradually became a science, not each taking an independent course, but each taking advantage of the experience of all. Out of this grew comity in Missions, that is, each respecting and not invading the territory of others. Out of this grew also co-operation....It was a liberal education to be present at these discussions and feel the atmosphere of these assemblies of men who were not only

²³ Wilkie appealed to General Assembly in 1902 (*A&P* 1902, 35, 39, 40, 47, 58) and the Assembly upheld the decision of the Foreign Missions Committee, choosing to not send the issue to a commission. Between Assembly 1902 and Assembly 1903, a significant number of "Kirk sessions, individual ministers and members of the church" indicated through their Presbyteries their dissatisfaction "with the disposal made...regarding the affairs of the Church's Mission in Central India." Therefore the 1903 Assembly named a commission (*A&P* 1903, p. 31, 32, 49, 50, 60), which reported back in detail to the 1904 Assembly (*A&P* 1904, 26, 38-42, Commission Reports, v-xiii). The result was that Wilkie was to be found "a suitable field of labour in India". The FMC was unable to find such a field for Wilkie. For further discussion of the Wilkie Case see Ruth Compton Brouwer, *New Women for God*, (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1990), 130-161.

²⁴ For further discussion of the founding of Ewart College and the FMC and WFMS, see Peter Bush, "The Ewart Missionary Training Home, 1897-1908" (Unpublished essay, 1989).

scholarly but Christian gentlemen, illustrating what Christian courtesy, consideration and brotherly love mean.²⁵

At these gatherings MacKay met John R. Mott, Robert Speer, and A. T. Pierson, and other leaders in the American and international mission community. MacKay's preferred approach in conversations about missions was to come from the perspective of spiritual commitment and the spiritual discipline of prayer. Through the annual gatherings of the Conference he learned to speak about missions in scientific and methodological terms. The gatherings demonstrated the divisions between and competition among denominations which were part of the North American religious terrain were largely irrelevant in a mission context. Such crossing of denominational and theological lines was not difficult for MacKay who served on the boards of both the Toronto Bible Training School (subsequently Toronto Bible College, Ontario Bible College, Tyndale College and Seminary) and the Canadian Board of China Inland Mission (subsequently Overseas Missionary Fellowship).

MacKay's formal contributions to these annual gatherings often related to issues he was facing in his role as secretary of the FMC. Immediately prior to the inaugural ecumenical gathering of Foreign Mission executives, Presbyterians from across North America held a meeting. At that gathering, MacKay who had been on the job about six months, presented a paper on the challenge of converts to Christianity moving from one denomination's mission to another. Such movement was a problem for three reasons, first, "It destroys the Spirit of brotherhood [sic] that ought to characterize all churches everywhere, especially in the foreign field." One convert's moving created questions about whether others in the church should make the same move, creating unease in the congregation. Second, it harmed the witness of the entire Christian community as outsiders saw division within the community rather than a Spirit centered harmony. Finally, the person "who proves unfaithful in one place is likely to do so in another." The convert who moved once to "greener pastures" was more likely to do so again, never being satisfied. The answer to this "evil" MacKay argued was for mission agencies to be less focused on their number of converts and more concerned about having missionaries and "native preachers and helpers" in their field follow "the laws of Christian courtesy" and "the most honourable principles of action." He believed if a number of missions "conducted themselves generously and refused to be provoked into departing from their principles" public sentiment would force other mission groups to change their pattern of behaviour.²⁶ In this early presentation themes central to MacKay's missiology can be seen: his openness to seeing God at work in other missions leading to his desire to act cooperatively with others; his focus on the proclamation of the gospel as the primary goal of mission; and his ability to frame pragmatic questions in spiritual terms.

MacKay presented a paper at the 1896 ecumenical gathering: "How to increase the efficiency of missionaries on the field". It is hard not to read his words against the background of the conflicts on the mission field in India. All new missionaries should be of the very best quality, "a select few chosen with Gideon-like discrimination, will accomplish more than the great multitude lacking in spiritual attainment."²⁷ Great care was required in determining if candidates

²⁵ Thomson, *Life and Letters*, 103-104.

²⁶ MacKay, "How to meet the Difficulty Arising from Receiving into Communion Converts who are under discipline in other missions", *Conference of the Officers and Members of the Foreign Missionary Boards and Committees of the Various Presbyterian Bodies in the United States and Canada, held Jan. 11, 1893*, (New York, 1893), p. 23-24.

²⁷ This reading of the Gideon story gives Gideon more control over the size of his "army" than the Biblical narrative would indicate.

had “that experimental knowledge of the power of prayer and fullness of the Spirit requisite for powerful effective service in a warfare that is not with flesh and blood.” College standing and glowing letters of reference from pastors did not answer questions about a candidate’s spiritual fitness. This was factor MacKay believed would most impact a missionary’s effectiveness. If the mission boards expected missionaries to be persons of deep spirituality, then the members of the boards were called to be examples of the spiritual commitment they desired in candidates. Board members were to be “pre-eminently” people of “prayer, every moment being begun and carried on in the spirit of dependence and intercession.” This spirituality had a practical component to it. Missionaries on the field needed to exercise self-care, which he called “self-culture”. While mission boards could insist and missionary colleagues could challenge one another to exercise self-care “the exercise is a personal one...and cannot be done by substitutes.” Among the things mission boards could do to support missionary self-care were: ensuring helpful and challenging reading material was available to all missionaries, developing retreat centers and organizing retreats for missionaries, and re-invigorating mission prayer meetings in the sending churches. The focus on prayer and personal spirituality were to be a hallmark of MacKay’s message for the next thirty years.²⁸

The Foreign Mission Boards of North America organized an Ecumenical Missionary Conference held in New York City, April 21 to May 1, 1900. MacKay served on the General Planning Committee and spoke at the conference. His presentation was the kick-off piece to a conversation about the selection, qualifications, training, and personal health and well-being of the missionary. As he had argued four years previously, the selection and preparation of candidates was essential, for the quality of the mission personnel impacted the effectiveness and spiritual impact of the mission. The theological colleges needed to expose students to the “climatic and social conditions, and the intellectual and spiritual requirements” of their denomination’s mission fields. But nothing could replace “thought, and conference, and fasting, and prayer, as much as in Antioch in apostolic days” in the selection process. Just as the church in Antioch had prayed and set apart Paul and Barnabas so the church at the turn of the twentieth century needed to do the same in setting apart missionaries. Among the practical questions facing denominational mission administrators were: what was the proper level of financial support that missionaries should receive; was it wise for missionaries to marry before going to the field, and how often should missionaries get furloughs? MacKay’s answer to each of these questions was, with the right people in place the questions would solve themselves. The right people would use funds prudently both to maximize its impact but in ways that did not risk the missionary’s health and ministry by false economies. The right women and men would not consider it impossible “to abstain from some domestic comforts for His sake, who became poor that we might be rich.” The right people would find ways to use furloughs, which MacKay was critical of, to serve the ultimate goal of mission; “the glory of God in the salvation of souls.” The spiritual character of the missionary was the primary thing. Prospective missionaries needed to enter a period of self-examination before applying to be a missionary. The selection of missionaries was more spiritual discernment and less the evaluation of personality types. MacKay in eight years as Secretary had learned how challenging the selection of missionaries

²⁸ MacKay, “How to increase the efficiency of missionaries on the field”, *Interdenominational Conference of Foreign Missionary Boards and Societies in the United States and Canada*, (New York, 1896), pp. 24-29.

was, and how important their personal commitment to serve the greater cause of the salvation of the world was given the difficulty of managing missionaries on the field was.²⁹

Having argued a candidate's spiritual commitment was the most important factor in determining their effectiveness as a missionary, did not mean there was to be no missiological method. As part of the educational resources of the Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions (hereafter SVM), MacKay was invited to write a biography of George Leslie Mackay, the iconic Canadian Presbyterian missionary to Formosa (Taiwan) and a relative of R.P.'s.³⁰ The essay was included in a collection with four other missionary biographies: David Livingstone; Isabella Thoburn (American Methodist missionary to India and early Deaconess); Cyrus Hamlin (founder of Robert College in Constantinople); and Joseph Hardy Neesima (Jo Nijima) (pioneer of Japanese Christianity). In G. L. Mackay's missionary activity R.P. found a mission strategy worthy of imitation. Learning the language of the people was essential if effective work was to be done. Coupled with learning the language was acquaint oneself with the religious outlook and practices of the people. In this way Mackay sought to find "common ground" so the gospel might gain a hearing. R.P. argued the wise Christian missionary recognized "truth wherever it is found" and showed "that these fragments of truth are united and perfected and personified in Him who is the Truth and the Life."³¹ This evangelistic methodology combined with prayer, R.P. affirmed would lead to conversions. Once the first conversions had happened, the mission would grow naturally for "every convert is expected to be a missionary".³² R.P. was ambivalent about the development of mission institutions such as formal schools and permanent hospitals. He understood the so-called "peripatetic school" which occurred as Mackay traveled through the countryside of Taiwan followed by a group of young men who he disciplined along the way and the roving dental clinic which Mackay operated, pulling thousands of teeth, had a spiritual vitality and broad reach which the formal classrooms of Oxford College (named for Oxford County, Ontario) could not duplicate. Even as he described Mackay's methodology, R.P. argued the mission in Taiwan grew because Mackay took with "no weapons or guides other than the Word of God and his own voice....The Word without the voice God has not largely used, nor yet the voice without the Word; but when the living Word is upon lips that have been touched with a living coal from off the altar, we have God's instrument and something is going to be done."³³

The first two months of 1902 were hectic for leaders in the Canadian mission community. The Conference of Foreign Mission Boards met in Toronto on February 25 and 26 that year, and their gathering was followed immediately by the quadrennial conference of the SVM at Massey Hall (Feb. 26-Mar. 2). MacKay served as secretary to the committee of arrangements for the mission boards' conference held at Knox Presbyterian Church which at the time faced Queen St.

²⁹ R. P. MacKay, "Choice and Qualifications of Missionaries", in Chapter XII "The Missionary", in *Ecumenical Missionary Conference, New York, 1900, vol. 1* (New York, American Tract Society, 1900), 301-304. MacKay had addressed this same topic at the 1899 Interdenominational gathering of Foreign Mission Boards, see "Qualifications of Missionary Candidates", *Conference of Mission Boards and Societies*, 189, pp. 27-30. The Rev. John Wilkie was also a participant at the conference speaking on the attitudes towards Christianity among various groups in India, and their implications for missions in India.

³⁰ R. P. MacKay, "George Leslie Mackay" in *Effective Workers in Needy Fields*, (New York, Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions, 1902), p. 35-81.

³¹ MacKay, "G. L. Mackay", p. 53-54. A similar mission methodology was discussed at the Presbyterian Indian Workers Conference held at the Round Lake Residential School, Saskatchewan in the summer of 1908. See Bush, "'Spoken with Native languages': Presbyterian Evangelistic Efforts among the Native People of the Prairies, 1908-1909", *Canadian Society of Presbyterian History Papers*, 2008,

³² MacKay, "G. L. Mackay", p. 55.

³³ MacKay, "G. L. Mackay", p. 44.

West between Yonge and Bay. Henry Frost, of the China Inland Mission, also served on arrangements committee.³⁴ Not surprisingly, the SVM conference with its 2,953 delegates captured Toronto's attention.³⁵ Leading lay people from Protestant churches in Toronto served on the General Convention Committee as did the principals/provosts/chancellors of the five Protestant theological colleges in Toronto and President Loudon of the University of Toronto. Notably neither MacKay nor Alex Sutherland, MacKay's Methodist counterpart, served on the committee, instead they headed up Section Conferences which were part of the larger event. MacKay chaired the sub-conference discussing the best methods for evangelizing the Jews.³⁶ MacKay's role at these conferences was not as one who addressed the delegates from the podium but rather as an organizer and a voice that led in prayer and spiritual practices. Into these roles MacKay was to move ever more significantly in the years ahead.

With transportation improving the FMC decided to send MacKay on a tour of the PCC mission fields in Asia, a trip that would take over a year.³⁷ The trip was designed to allow MacKay time to experience the missions he would be visiting and to preach and speak. May 1906 witnessed the marriage of his daughter, Margaret, to the Rev. Andrew Thomson. Two weeks later, having sold his house in Parkdale, where he had been living since his appointment as Secretary, MacKay headed east. Two weeks after his departure, the Thomsons headed west on their way to Honan to serve as missionaries.

MacKay's trip to Asia coincided with the Korean Revival. He visited Honan in May 1907 and invited the Rev. Jonathan Goforth to join him for the trip to Korea. Goforth "greatly rejoiced at such an opportunity". They visited Pingyang, one of the centers of the revival. Goforth wrote,

One evening, Dr. MacKay and myself were invited to attend the missionary prayer meeting. Never have I been so conscious of the Divine Presence as I was that evening. Those missionaries seemed to carry us right up to the very Throne of God. One had the feeling that they were indeed communing with God, face to face. On the way back to our host's residence, Dr. MacKay was silent for some time. I could see that he was greatly agitated. Finally, with deep emotion, he exclaimed: "What amazing power! You missionaries in Honan are nowhere near that high level."³⁸

One of MacKay's regular themes in preaching was the call to "intercession", and links drawn between prayer and the revival would have fit his theological understanding. On Goforth's telling R.P. turned the prayer meeting experience into a challenge to Goforth and the other missionaries in Honan, including his daughter and son-in-law, to reach the same "high level" of prayer that was being exhibited among the missionaries in Korea. Goforth returned to Honan fired to see a similar revival, stoked by the same fuel of prayer.³⁹ MacKay made his way home to

³⁴ *Proceedings of the Ninth Conference of Foreign Missions Boards*, 1902, p. 3.

³⁵ *Montreal Gazette*, March 3, 1902, p. 7. There were 2,296 student delegates, 212 university professors, and 445 missionaries, mission executives, and mission journal editors.

³⁶ J. R. Mott, ed., *World-Wide Evangelization, Toronto 1902*, (New York, SVM, 1902), p. 637-9.

³⁷ Not everyone in Canada was thrilled at the FMC's decision. "The missionaries in our Indian work in the West are very indignant with R. P. MacKay, he was out visiting the fields and they say he just sat about and took no pains whatever to learn anything about the work; apparently he was not observant of anything, and they thought it just a waste of money to send him out to India." Mary Baker McQuesten (mother) to the Rev. Calvin McQuesten (son), July 4, 1906, Whitehern Museum Archives, W5524, online at www.whitehern.ca (accessed May 24, 2010).

³⁸ Jonathan Goforth, *By My Spirit*, (Minneapolis, MN, Bethany Fellowship, Inc., 1964), (original publication 1942), 22-23.

³⁹ MacKay did not always see eye to eye with Goforth. Goforth addressed the 1910 Assembly and urged those gathered to publicly confess their sins as a precursor to a revival fire sweeping through Canada as was sweeping

Canada by way of a second visit to Honan. There in November 1907 he had the joy of baptizing his infant grand-daughter. He arrived in Canada in January 1908.

1908-1913

MacKay returned to his role as Secretary of the FMC to discover a number of things had changed while he had been away. First, there was now an Assistant Secretary, A. E. Armstrong, who was kept on in a permanent capacity with the FMC. The relationship between MacKay and Armstrong was strong as MacKay, who had sold his Toronto house in 1906, moved in with Armstrong and his family living there until 1912. But far more significant for the Foreign Mission enterprise of the church was the introduction of business practices to the work of the church, especially its mission.

The long-time Agent for the Western Section (everything but the Maritimes) of the PCC and the Junior Clerk of the General Assembly, the Rev. Robert Warden died in 1905. The 1906 Assembly, which MacKay was not at, appointed the Rev. John Somerville, long-time minister at Division Street Presbyterian Church, Owen Sound, Ontario to take up the role. Somerville brought his extraordinary administrative ability to the task, including getting a handle on how the funds collected by the various “schemes of the church” were being used. The denomination’s auditors in 1907 noted, “the impossibility of a satisfactory audit under the existing system” highlighting special concerns about whether the funds approved by the FMC were actually used in the ways approved. Somerville took it upon himself to build new financial accountability into the life of the denomination. MacKay and Somerville worked at the church’s offices in the Confederation Life building at the corner of Richmond and Yonge, and Somerville’s vision impacted the way in which the denomination functioned. Introducing business practices to the handling of the denomination’s money opened the door to business concepts such as efficiency and economies of scale entering the program and mission life of the church.⁴⁰

While MacKay had been away, a group of prominent Canadian lay people from business and politics (such as Chester Massey (of Massey Harris, later Massey Ferguson Tractors) and S. H. Blake (prominent Ontario politician)) followed the lead of their American counterparts in launching a Canadian Laymen’s Missionary Movement (hereafter LMM). A series of missionary conferences were held through the fall of 1908 across the country as men were challenged to do their part in the evangelization of the world. Women through the various denominational Women’s Missionary Society were mobilized and connected with the mission of the church; the LMM was an attempt to mobilize men. The question asked at each gathering was “Will Canada evangelize her share of the world?” Canada’s fair share was determined to be 40,000,000 people living in “non-Christian lands”.⁴¹ Raising funds to support the mission endeavour was a central focus of the LMM, the business and political figures involved in the campaign brought their business skills and backgrounds to the effort. This further highlighted the need for proper accounting and the adoption of other business practices into the administrative task of leading the church’s mission. The 1908 round of LMM meetings concluded with a national conference in

through China. MacKay wrote to Donald MacGillivray of Shanghai, “I do not remember another man who came home with such an asset and who made so little of it.” (MacKay to MacGillivray, 24 Mar 1910, FMC, PCC, UCA).

⁴⁰ For more on Somerville see: Chris Redmond, “John Somerville in the General Assembly: Case Study of a Presbyterian Unionist”, *Canadian Society of Presbyterian History Papers*, 1988, pp. 31-47.

⁴¹ The estimate was there were 1 billion unevangelized people in the world in 1908, North American Christians were responsible for reaching half that group. Given the home mission challenge facing Canada, 40 million people was agreed to be Canada’s fair share. Further, given the size of the PCC, 14 million persons were to be reached by the mission efforts of the Canadian Presbyterian church.

Toronto in the spring of 1909 attended by over 4,000 men, who responded to the question being asked with a “clear and unequivocal: “Canada can and will.””

MacKay at the January 1909 gathering of the Conference of Foreign Mission Boards invited American mission leaders to attend the Toronto convention declaring, “We have had a rather remarkable movement in Canada....There was not a city or individual touched that did not fall into the movement....That movement continues to expand...” The Rev. J. Campbell White, Secretary of the American Laymen’s Missionary Movement who had been one of the keynote speakers in the meetings leading up to the Toronto gathering said, “I believe there is every indication that [the Toronto] meeting is to be the most inspiring convention of men ever met in connection with a missionary conference.” Even if the language seems excessively positive, there was something afoot in Canada that White thought American laymen needed to see, “the finest type of manhood I have touched in the world is in Canada. I believe we can well exert ourselves to get our [American] men in touch with them. Many [Canadian men] have decided never to add another dollar to their capital, but to give to the spread of the Gospel. We can go to some trouble to get our [American] laymen into touch with such men.”⁴² Such a spiritual movement would have deeply impressed MacKay who, as we will see, had growing concerns about the growing impact of materialism in the life of Canadian Christians. MacKay, committed to the work of the LMM, convinced the FMC of the PCC to second Armstrong half-time to the LMM. This would have further opened the door for the discussion of business methods making their way into conversations about the PCC’s mission policy and practice. Canada’s Missionary Congress ran from March 31 to April 4, 1909, as prominent speakers from Great Britain, the United States and Canada urged the audience to work hard for the goal of the evangelization of the world. The senior mission executive from the Anglican Church, Canon H. J. Cody addressed the gathering, as did his parallel from the Methodist church, The Rev. Alex Sutherland. MacKay did not give a speech, instead he closed the entire gathering with prayer.⁴³ MacKay’s piety and commitment to prayer were highly regarded by all within the missionary movement.

The LMM sought to bring good business practices to the mission of the church, this entailed two things, a clear plan for the mission and the efficient use of the funds given towards the mission of the church. The organizers of the Movement were astute enough to recognize unless clergy were supportive of the plans it would be virtually impossible to reach their goals, therefore this lay driven effort functioned in close connection with denominational leaders and other clergy. A centerpiece of the shared vision was “Canada’s National Missionary Policy” which was endorsed by both the LMM and the Protestant churches in Canada.⁴⁴ The policy began with a bold statement, “In view of the universality and finality of the Gospel of Christ, and in view of the spiritual needs of mankind (sic), we believe that the Church of our generation should undertake to obey literally the command of Christ to preach the Gospel to every creature.” This spiritually rooted call led to a series of practical commitments: clergy and lay people were equally responsible for praying for and working for the coming of the Kingdom of God; each Christian had a role to play in the world’s evangelization; Canadian churches

⁴² *Conference of Foreign Mission Boards*, 1909, pp. 67-8. MacKay gave the meditation at the closing service of the 1909 gathering. His theme was “God is love.” See pp. 99-102.

⁴³ *Canada’s Missionary Congress*, (Toronto, Canadian Council Laymen’s Missionary Movement, 1909), p. v, 320. The prayer, unlike the speeches, was not printed.

⁴⁴ Among those offering their names to the LMM and thereby to the National Missionary Policy were: Earl Grey, Governor-General of Canada; J.M. Gibson, Lieutenant-Governor of Ontario; D.C. Fraser, Lieutenant-Governor of Nova Scotia; and Sir James Whitney, Premier of Ontario. The state was whole-heartedly in favour of the church’s mission overseas.

committed themselves to reaching 40 million people overseas; raising \$4.5 million annually for foreign and home missions; and seeking ways to co-operate thereby avoiding “unnecessary duplication”. Not just a call to hard work, this was an invitation for men to find their highest purpose: “the principles and spirit of Jesus Christ, presents itself to every man his supreme opportunity of development, usefulness and satisfaction, and we appeal to men everywhere to invest their intelligence, their influence, their energy and their possessions in the effort of combined Christianity to redeem the world.” The drafters of the policy were

...deeply persuaded of the power of combined and co-operative Christianity to solve all the problems of human society, we desire to unite with the Churches of our sister countries throughout Christendom as loyal servants of the King of kings, in a comprehensive and adequate crusade for the winning of mankind (sic) to Jesus Christ, Who is the Way, the Truth and the Life, the Desire of the nations and the Light of the world.⁴⁵

The National Mission Policy used business practice to advance the kingdom of God for the gospel could be spread by business means. Further business people had no qualms about their names and reputations being used to advance the gospel.

The LMM had a life beyond the 1909 conference. Mackay, who praised the Movement as “a valuable educational agency and a distinct stimulus to the missionary enterprise”, highlighted that it did not send missionaries itself or raise money to send missionaries, rather it brought “new life to existing missionary organizations” by distributing missionary literature and “secur[ing] the adoption by every congregation of the system of weekly contributions for missions, and to induce every individual to contribute.” The LMM also encouraged “laymen to visit foreign fields at their own expense.” As travel networks became simpler to negotiate, lay leaders were encouraged to visit foreign mission fields so they would return home educated about the mission effort and prepared to contribute generously.⁴⁶

The Laymen’s Missionary Movement and Canada’s Missionary Policy had painted in broad strokes the overall vision; it was up to denominational leaders to work out what the policy meant in practical terms. The Presbyterian Church in Canada was responsible for reaching 14,000,000 unevangelized people. MacKay was insistent that Presbyterians could meet this commitment without adding any new mission fields. The present fields simply needed to be worked more intensively. The goal was to staff “the present fields sufficiently to enable them within one generation to overtake the work so far as making the offer of salvation to every [person] is concerned.”⁴⁷ The goal was in one generation to raise up self-propagating indigenous churches capable of carrying on the work of evangelism to their own ethnic/people group. A clear end goal had been established against which the success of the mission could be evaluated. In framing the goal in this way, MacKay and other mission thinkers were planting the seed for the growth of indigenous churches throughout the world, including on fields served by the Presbyterian Church in Canada.

R.P. authored a pamphlet outlining the denomination’s foreign mission activities and what work still needed to be done. Using the LMM’s estimate that one missionary was required for every 25,000 people in a mission field, MacKay argued for a five-fold increase in the number of

⁴⁵ *Canada’s Missionary Congress*, 248-9.

⁴⁶ R. P. MacKay, “Missions: Teacher Training Handbook #7, Presbyterian Church in Canada”, (Toronto, R. Douglas Fraser, 1911), p. 63-64.

⁴⁷ R. P. MacKay, “Bird’s Eye View of our Foreign Missions”, (Toronto: Presbyterian Church in Canada, 1909?), p. 2.

Canadian Presbyterians missionaries. For example, instead of six staff in Taiwan, the denomination should have forty missionaries to reach the one million people to whom they were called to proclaim the gospel.⁴⁸ Over half, eight million of the fourteen million people, the denomination had committed itself to evangelizing were in Honan, China. MacKay outlined immediate needs for twelve staff, with the hopes that the number of missionaries would grow to over 300 in this field.⁴⁹ Native people in Canada were also part of the mission commitment of the denomination, but MacKay described the motivation for reaching these people with the gospel in different terms than he did other people groups with whom missionaries worked.

The Indian has a claim which ought not to be ignored. He [sic] has the claim of the weak and helpless, and in his weakness lies our peril as an element in our national life. There are about 100,000 Indians in the Dominion. Neglect them and they will poison the atmosphere. Christianize them, and they will contribute to our national vitality and strength.⁵⁰

Because the Native People were in Canada, their conversion was not simply a matter of spiritual import; it was also of political and cultural significance. If they were not “Christianized” the implication was clear, the Native People could limit Canada’s ability to reach the rest of the world with the gospel message. On the basis of the LMM’s calculations, one person for every 25,000 people, only four missionaries would be required to evangelize all the Native people in Canada, but the Presbyterians alone in 1909 had more than four times that many staff seeking to proclaim the good news to the Native People with whom they had contact.

MacKay ended “Bird’s Eye View” with a double call to people sitting in the pews of Canadian Presbyterian churches. First, there was a pledge form through which people could give either to “the foreign mission work of the Church” in general, or “to aid any particular field” if they so wished. Second, a call to prayer and action appeared on the inside back cover, the last four bulleted points were:

4. A need, and the power to meet that need, constitute God’s call.
5. Let missions find a place in your prayers. The “Lord’s Prayer” was a world-wide scope.
6. Christ wants your sympathy, wants your help, wants you in the effort to save a lost world.
7. Let us advance on our knees, -- **“I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me.”** (emphasis in original)⁵¹

The call to prayer came as no surprise, for prayer was central to MacKay’s life of faith. MacKay freely borrowed rhetorical turns of phrase from other mission advocates, for within the international mission community there was regular sharing of ideas and approaches; borrowing ideas, content of speeches, and recruitment techniques were common. MacKay expected the entire church, lay people, elders, ministers, and missionaries to join in the task of evangelizing the 14 million people the Presbyterian Church in Canada had accepted as its responsibility.

The focus on Foreign Mission was sharpened by the planning for and the activities of the World Mission Conference held in Edinburgh in the summer of 1910. R. P. MacKay did not attend the Edinburgh Missionary Conference of 1910; instead A. E. Armstrong led the Presbyterian Church in Canada’s delegation. No explanation for MacKay’s not attending the

⁴⁸ MacKay, Bird’s Eye View, p. 7.

⁴⁹ MacKay, Bird’s Eye View, p. 17-18.

⁵⁰ MacKay, Bird’s Eye View, p. 31.

⁵¹ MacKay, Bird’s Eye View, inside back cover.

conference appears to be extant; making it easy to speculate he was concerned about an attempt by some to have him elected Moderator of the 1910 Assembly. If that had happened his commitments in Canada would have interfered with the events in Scotland. MacKay made clear he did not want to be Moderator, and in 1910 Dr. John Forrest of Halifax was chosen to lead the Assembly. MacKay was elected Moderator in 1911.

MacKay did have a role in the lead up to the Conference, serving as one of the North American representatives on Commission I; he was the sole Canadian on the Commission. This commission was tasked with describing how the gospel was being carried to the non-Christian world. As Brian Stanley has shown in his history of the Edinburgh Conference, there was significant debate within the commission about what constituted the non-Christian world.⁵² Almost as an after-thought the Commission's 240 page "Survey of the Non-Christian World" concludes with twenty-one pages on the challenges of carrying the gospel to the non-Christian world present in the Western Hemisphere. Four pages cover mission to "The Indians in Canada" and "Orientals in Canada". These two sections were almost certainly written by MacKay, the only Canadian on the Commission and the writing style is consistent with MacKay.⁵³ Notably the hallmark themes of prayer and spirituality are missing from MacKay's discussion here.

After briefly outlining the size and location of the Native peoples population in Canada, and their religious affiliation, the report described the kind of work being done among the Native peoples. The various churches engaged in "regular evangelistic work" and the Anglican and Methodists each operated hospitals, but "the great correlating agency among the Indians is education." MacKay noted while the "Dominion Government" was responsible for the education of the Native peoples since the Native peoples were "Government wards under treaty", the churches were "so anxious to maintain a religious influence over their respective Indian communities that they are willing to share in the expense of their education so as to retain the right of nominating the teachers." The Government was responsible, but the churches were prepared to pay for the right to have a religious influence in the lives of Native people. The Native peoples were "Government wards" and lived in communities that had been assigned to a given denomination by church leaders living far from the Native communities and with no consultation with the communities. No room for the agency of Native peoples existed on this understanding. Not surprisingly, such a perspective provided little room for Native leaders to arise and be recognized. Further, the failure to recognize Canada's Native peoples' agency stands in stark contrast to the Edinburgh Conference's recognition of the significant role indigenous church leaders were playing in the advance of the Gospel throughout the world.⁵⁴

Finally in the discussion of mission to Native peoples in Canada MacKay turned to a theme dominating many discussions about mission in the opening decades of the 20th century: efficiency. Efficiency dictated the government bringing compulsory education for all Native children; MacKay estimated half of Native children ages six to eighteen were enrolled in either a residential school or a day school. Efficiency dictated that Native and non-Native congregations in close geographical proximity share a minister. In such an arrangement, it is hard to imagine many non-Native congregations being happy being served by a Native person who had learned English as an alternative language to their mother tongue. Such sharing of a minister was yet one

⁵² Brian Stanley, *The World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh 1910*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2009), esp. 49-72.

⁵³ "Indians in Canada" and "Orientals in Canada" in *Carrying the Gospel to all the Non-Christian World, Report of Commission I: World Missionary Conference, 1910*, (Toronto: Fleming H. REvell Co., 1910), 260-262, 262-264.

⁵⁴ "Indians in Canada", 260-262.

more way to subsume Native peoples into the dominant Euro-Canadian culture. These calls to efficiency were also calls for the further assimilation of Native culture.⁵⁵

The report on mission to “Orientals in Canada” described the ways in which Methodist, Presbyterian and Anglican denominations were using night school English classes and Sunday School programs to reach Asian immigrants to Canada. While the principal focus of the work was in British Columbia, Canadian Christians were doing mission work among Chinese in Montreal, Toronto, and Winnipeg. The Presbyterian Church had started a mission in Macao, south-eastern China, creating a connection between the Canadian church and the part of China from which many Chinese immigrants to Canada came. The Methodists had done significant work among the Japanese including operating “mission dormitories” for young single men. Little or no work was being done among immigrant groups from India.⁵⁶

MacKay argued for a more efficient deployment of mission efforts “in a thoroughly organized plan, without denominational claims or distinction.” The mission would be best advanced if carried on by “Canadian missionaries possessing qualities of leadership, and especially having knowledge of the Chinese language and familiar with Oriental characteristics.” Seeking missionaries who spoke Chinese and understood Chinese culture stood in contrast to the lack of any such requirements for missionaries working among the Native people of Canada. Knowing Chinese culture and language was a priority for missionaries seeking to carry the good news of the gospel to Chinese; it was not a priority for missionaries carrying the gospel to the Native people of Canada. The seeming respect shown to Chinese culture did not mean Chinese immigrants should be allowed to keep their culture unchanged; it was of “the utmost importance that the Oriental communities now established in Canada should be permeated with Christian standards and ideals of life.”⁵⁷

While the techniques employed in the two missions differed, a similar set of goals underlay both missions: the preaching of the gospel would transform both Native peoples and Asian immigrants into Christians living by the gospel values mediated through Canadian middle class constructs.

With interest in missions growing among Presbyterian lay people, MacKay was invited by the editors of the “Teacher Training Handbook” series to write the material for a correspondence school course on Missions. The course consisted of twenty sessions, each including about three pages of written content and some questions to help readers review the material studied. The course was to be taken over the course of three months, and at the end of that time students who had covered the material could sit a written exam. Exam sites were located throughout the country. Students getting a mark of fifty percent or better on the exam received a certificate from the denomination that they had completed the one course, those who completed all eight courses in the Advanced Standard series received a diploma.⁵⁸

MacKay began the course by laying out a Biblical foundation for a world-wide mission rooted in the desire of God to redeem the whole world. No people group and no part of the world

⁵⁵ “Indians in Canada”, 260-262.

⁵⁶ “Orientals in Canada”, 262-264.

⁵⁷ “Orientals in Canada”, 262-264.

⁵⁸ R. P. MacKay, *Missions*, Teacher Training Handbook, #7, Advanced Standard Course, (Toronto: R. Douglas Fraser, 1911, back pages. The other courses in the series were: “The Books of the Old Testament” by Prin. Scrimger; “The Life and Times of Our Lord Jesus Christ by Pres. Falconer and Prof. Ballantyne; “A Summary of Christian Doctrine” by Prof. Kilpatrick; “From one to twenty-one: Studies in Mind Growth”, Pres. Walter C. Murray, U of Sask.; “The Teacher and the School: Studies in Teaching and Organization” by Prof. Frederick Tracy, U of Tor.; “The Books of the New Testament” by Prof. Kennedy, New College, Edin.; and “Church History” by Falconer.

was to be left out of the redeeming “universal remedy” which was “effectual in every land.”⁵⁹ The next seven sessions laid out the history of Christian mission from the book of Acts to Count Zinzendorf. Among the figures appearing in the very brief history are Patrick, Columba, and Augustine of Canterbury, all figures important to the rise of Christianity in the British Isles. More surprising is the space given to the challenge of Islam, which MacKay called “Mohammedanism”. MacKay made the claim, “In all history there is no more remarkable movement than the rise of Mohammedanism...of all mission fields the Mohammedan world has proved the most difficult and unfruitful.”⁶⁰ Christian mission had not been effective, although one figure stood out in Christianity’s attempts to proclaim the gospel to Muslims, Raymond Lull (1235-1315).⁶¹ The section on Islam demonstrates MacKay’s connections with the larger world of mission, for Canadian Presbyterians had no mission fields in the Middle East or Africa in 1911. His willingness to give space to Lull is an example of MacKay’s ecumenical breadth.

MacKay lays out in four chapters an overview of the church in Africa and Asia, in which special attention is given to China and India, along with Korea which is described as “perhaps the most attractive and responsive field”.⁶² Treading carefully, MacKay described Protestant mission to Roman Catholics in southern Europe and South America, a controversial addition to the course material given the virtual silence at the 1910 Missionary Conference about this mission. South America, MacKay wrote, “has been dominated by a debased form of Roman Catholicism. The problem for Protestant Missions is to replace this with pure Christianity.”⁶³ MacKay saw strengths in Roman Catholicism at its best, but a “debased” form of the Catholicism was not Christianity and therefore South America was a mission field even though many people living in South America would identify themselves as Christians.

The last third of course was a standard retelling of the Presbyterian Church in Canada’s mission both in Canada, including both Home Missions, with figures like James MacGregor, James Nisbet, and James Robertson, and Foreign Missions, with figures like John Geddie, John Morton, and G. L. MacKay. Throughout the material MacKay acknowledged the role women played through the Women’s Missionary Societies, both Home and Foreign. “Ever since the beginning of the nineteenth century,” he wrote, “a considerable portion of the money for Foreign Missions has been collected by societies of women.”⁶⁴ And MacKay recognized the WFMS (Western Division) “had done much to promote the intelligent study of missions throughout the church and call into greater activity the power of prayer.”⁶⁵ Students completing this course would have had a solid grounding in the mission experience of Canadian Presbyterians and some basic knowledge to help them understand information they gleaned from letters and reports from missionaries appearing in both the religious and secular press.

The 1911 General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, meeting at Knox Church in Ottawa, elected MacKay its Moderator. That year’s Assembly had a number of important, and potentially contentious, issues to discuss, and “the prophecy was freely made that it would break the record in length of time required for the dispatch of business.” As it turned out the Assembly was shorter than some, and a “reasonable and kindly spirit... pervaded the discussions”. The reporter for *The Presbyterian* noted,

⁵⁹ MacKay, *Missions*, p. 3-5.

⁶⁰ MacKay, *Missions*, p. 17.

⁶¹ MacKay, *Missions*, p. 18.

⁶² MacKay, *Missions*, p. 34.

⁶³ MacKay, *Missions*, p. 36.

⁶⁴ MacKay, *Missions*, p. 23.

⁶⁵ MacKay, *Missions*, p. 61.

It was noticeable also that, more largely than in most Assemblies, the devotional element was present. There is a tendency in Church courts to dispatch business simply as business and to forget that our business is, in the strictest sense, religion. Dr. MacKay did not allow us to forget that. More than once or twice, in the middle of a session, the proceedings were interrupted that prayer might be offered in connection with the matter in hand.⁶⁶

MacKay's prayerful presence in the chair influenced the whole of the Assembly as it discussed issues such as Church Union and the restructuring how the denomination funded its mission and ministry.

During his year as moderator MacKay traveled the country, often accompanied by the Rev. Andrew Shaw Grant⁶⁷, who three years earlier had been appointed General Secretary for Home Missions, introducing the new financial system to the denomination. Until 1911, the denomination had had as many as nine funds to which congregations and individuals could contribute. Among the funds were: foreign missions fund, home mission fund, Francophone mission fund, augmentation of minister's stipends fund, aged and infirm ministers' fund, widows' and orphans' fund, and Assembly expense fund. Having numerous funds to which congregations and individuals could contribute directly raised a number of concerns among denominational executives. Somerville and the auditors believed in order to provide adequate financial oversight there should be fewer funds requiring monitoring. Other national program staff members were aware there appeared to be competition among the various funds as overlapping and conflicting appeals requested financial support of each of the funds. As well, denominational leaders who made budgeting decisions were dissatisfied with allowing congregations to choose which national programs to support. By amalgamating the funds into one budget, clear lines of financial accountability could be established, the competition among the funds would be reduced and there would be more predictability about the funds available for the various boards and committees of the church. Moving to a single national budget meant congregations could start using the duplex offering envelope – in one side of the envelope donors placed what they wished to give for local congregational support, in the other half of the envelope what they were giving to the work of the national boards and committees. Individual congregation members were being given the ability to control how much they wished to contribute to the national budget; in the process congregational leaders lost the ability to pinpoint which ministries they wished to support. While individuals were now able to choose how much to give to the work of the denomination, they did not have the ability through the duplex envelope to control the ministries their funds supported. The funds received in support of the national budget were divided among the various projects funded by the budget. Both congregations and individual members were being asked to give over their ability to make funding decisions to the Board of Finance which brought annual budgets to the General Assembly for approval. Further the committees and boards of the church lost the ability to appeal directly to congregations and individuals, all funding would come through the work of the Board of Finance.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ "Notes on The Assembly", *The Presbyterian*, June 22, 1911, as quoted in Thomson, *Life and Letters*, p. 112.

⁶⁷ Andrew Shaw Grant spent ten years in the Yukon as missionary and minister (1898-1908) and then became General Superintendent for Home Missions in 1908. In 1925, he was the most senior church bureaucrat to not enter Church Union, and served as Secretary for the General Board of Mission until his death in 1935.

⁶⁸ *A&P*, 1911, App. 227-232; *A&P*, 1912, App. 264-273; *A&P*, 1913, App. p. 258-263. A complete discussion of the funding changes taking place is beyond the scope of this paper. This fundamental change is worth some careful analysis, for the approach set up in the pre-WWI years remained in place into the 21st century.

The 1911 General Assembly approved a combined national budget of \$1,000,000 for 1912; the first time the combined budgets of the boards and committees of the church had reached this level. MacKay and Grant's tour explaining the new approach to funding the national work of the church became known as the Million Dollar Tour. Giving by congregations and through offering envelopes to the work of the national church rose from almost \$525,000 in 1911 to just over \$685,000 in 1912, thus missing the Million Dollar target but giving did rise 30%. At the same time total giving to local congregations from all sources rose by 12%. The Board of Finance chose to argue the move to a unified National Budget and the widespread introduction of the duplex envelope were responsible for the significant growth in giving to the national programs of the church. Further, having two prominent denominational leaders touring the country in support of the Million Dollar Budget helped increase interest in and financial support of the national budget.⁶⁹

As the budgets of the committees and boards of the national church were brought together under the Board of Finance, it became apparent the boards of the church had differing methods of determining what their staff should be paid. By 1912 ten Secretaries or Associate Secretaries, or equivalents, (there was not yet agreement on nomenclature) were employed at the national level to oversee denominational programs and ministries. These staff were in addition to the two co-Clerks of Assembly, the two legal agents of the church, and the editor of the Record. The Assembly instructed the Board of Finance to develop a pay structure for these "church officials". In the creation of a single national budget and the development of a salary grid for the national staff, the Assembly had put in place a church bureaucracy whose task it was to manage the mission and ministry of the church. The work of the denomination was to be mediated through these agents of the church, reducing direct connection between the local donor and the recipient of the funds.⁷⁰

General Assembly met in Edmonton in June of 1912; as out-going Moderator, R. P. MacKay preached the opening sermon. MacKay's text was Isaiah 21:11,12, from which he preached a sermon entitled "Messages of the Night and Morning". He called on clergy, to whom his sermon was directed, to be prophets of the time. "All Christians are priests", but to ministers fell the task of the prophet. Such a call sounded like the opening to a sermon pushing the claims of the social gospel, and certainly the first two-thirds of the sermon fit such expectations as MacKay raised a series of challenges facing the church in Canada and around the world: excessive funds spent on military expansion, tensions between labour and capital as they "locked horns", challenges of immigration, prostitution, alcohol abuse, and "the peril of wealth". After this litany of concern, he asked, "Is there any power that can care for the spiritual interests of the world, that can resist their foes, enter open doors and win the world for Christ?" The "commercial, educational, and administrative problems" would find solutions, the "moral and spiritual interests" were a more difficult task. It is easy to read these comments against MacKay's year as moderator and wonder if he is here reminding his fellow denominational executives that there were more important issues than the development of the perfect denominational structure and that the reign of God would not be brought about by improving the systems of the church. The church did indeed have the resources to address the "moral and spiritual" challenges: the "resources of the Godhead"

⁶⁹ *A&P*, 1913, App. 260, 525. One of the questions that needs to be explored is: What long term impact did disconnecting donors and recipients have on financial support from congregations and individuals and in their sense of participation in the church's mission?

⁷⁰ *A&P*, 1913, App. p. 262. The Assembly and the Board of Finance called the remuneration to be paid to the "church officials" "salaries", while referring to the funds received by parish clergy as "stipends".

which were “without limit.” But the church was making use of the resources at their disposal, it was up to clergy to tap into the resources found by people like, and here MacKay named four evangelists: John Wesley, George Whitefield, Charles Finney, and D.L. Moody. Two things prevented the ministers of the Presbyterian Church in Canada from tapping into the power of God, a failure to see the “unseen things”, the realities of the business world and concerns about the things of this world meant the church and its ministers were losing “the vision of the eternal.” The church was called to speak “believingly, with the ring of reality, about the eternal weight of glory” which made the present afflictions “not worthy to be named.” Connected to this loss of vision was a “loss of conviction of truth”, there was “less certainty than there used to be regarding fundamental truth.” MacKay was not interested in pinpointing the cause, his focus was the “disastrous” effects of “weakened character” and “an inefficient ministry.” The question was not one of orthodoxy versus heterodoxy, but rather about the conviction of the preacher. Preachers need not be “profoundly learned”, instead they needed to be able to say “We speak that we know and testify that we have seen.” In noting those things preventing the church from tapping into the power of God, MacKay had challenged those committed to the social gospel and those open to higher critical methods to find in God the spiritual center for their lives and ministry. He had also made clear that the purpose of Christian ministry was winning the world for Christ, and by naming the four evangelists he had framed such a winning in terms of conversion. In the opening to his sermon, MacKay noted prophets were intercessors, and he ended by returning to the theme of prayer, noting it was the best way to ensure one’s ministry and the church one served were focused on Christ. MacKay in this sermon had laid out the heart of his theology, his vibrant spirituality was rooted in the life of prayer which motivated a warm proclamation of the gospel message and invitation to conversion. Life in the present world was to be lived in joyful expectation of God’s coming reign and the glory of eternity.⁷¹

MacKay’s moderatorial year completed he returned to his work as Secretary of the FMC. There too changes were occurring as the denomination’s structures were streamlined. All work among native people in Canada was shifted to being a Home Missions Committee responsibility. The logic at work was Native ministries were in Canada, and only work outside of Canada should be considered foreign missions. That argument broke down when it came to work among Chinese immigrants in Canada, that mission endeavour remained part of the FMC’s work, the rationale being the majority of the immigration to Canada was coming from Macao and the FMC supported a mission in Macao. Maintaining the links between the Macao mission and the Chinese work on Canada was simpler if the two remained under one committee. Shifting the Native mission to be Home Mission, was following a pattern adopted in the United States in 1908 when a number of denominations shifted Native mission to their Home Missions Committees. MacKay with his connections to the Conference of Foreign Mission Boards in Canada and in the United States would have been aware of the shifts being made and the reasons being argued for these changes. As Pierce Beaver has argued this change cut the missionaries working among the Native people and the church leadership responsible for overseeing these missions off from the most recent thinking and research on cross-cultural ministry. Instead, the shift in oversight connected work among Native peoples to the assimilative mission goals of the Home Mission work.⁷²

⁷¹ Thomson, *Life and Letters*, reprints MacKay’s sermon notes, p. 114-122.

⁷² *A&P*, 1912, App. 6, 272. Pierce Beaver, *Church, State, and the American Indian: Two and a Half Centuries of Partnership in Missions Between Protestant Churches and Government*, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House,

A further organizational shift orchestrated by MacKay and others was the amalgamation of the WFMS and the WHMS into the WMS; in part a result of the transfer of Residential Schools from being Foreign Missions to becoming Home Missions. The organizational supports that handled many of the Residential School concerns were being shifted to the Home Missions side, and those women who provided that support were moving with the schools therefore bringing the two women's groups together was logical. This shifting and the ending of two groups did not endear MacKay to many within the WMS. Mary Baker McQuesten, a key leader in the WFMS, called him "Dr. Grinch".⁷³ But the feeling was mutual. When it was suggested in 1912 that the Conference of the Mission Boards of the United States and Canada enlarge to include the leaders of Women's Missionary Societies, MacKay, who was chairperson of the Conference, spoke against the idea,

I do not like to say what I am going to say, yet I think it ought to be said. The character of this Conference will be very much changed if we have lady delegates as members. I say this with as much appreciation as anyone here of the great work being done by lady members of our churches. Yet as far as my experience has gone, it is that a Conference like this, when it is a mixed conference, does to have that freedom of discussion that we have when we meet as we now meet....It is not that women are less wise than men, nor inferior in ability, but if we are to retain that freedom of discussion and fellowship which we have had in the past, we would better continue as we are.⁷⁴

MacKay's experience in dealing the Wilkie Case during the first ten years of his secretary-ship, the unwillingness of the WFMS to support the development of an inter-denominational training center for women missionaries, and the challenges of negotiating funding issues with both local and national level women's missionary societies had all taught him to be guarded in his conversation. He saw the annual Conference as a place where he was free to speak his heart, raises concerns, and try out new ideas. MacKay believed the presence of women would prevent that from happening.⁷⁵

Early 1912 proved a busy time for MacKay. In January he was in Garden City, New Jersey to chair the annual meeting of the Foreign Missions Conference of North America. At that gathering he spoke of the need for the Conference to develop a Board of Missionary Studies. Here he returned to issues he had written about fifteen years earlier, how to get the best candidates into the right positions on the field. He placed candidates in three categories: potential leaders who should be nurtured and given training to understand the administrative tasks needed to lead a mission; "one talent" people who would be great workers on the mission field if given the space to use their one talent; and those who resisted learning while in theological college and would do the same overseas likely causing problems. More important than all of this, MacKay was looking for candidates "whose consecration" was such that they were willing to "fully

1966) 208; Bush, "The Presbyterian Church in Canada's Mission to Canada's Native Peoples, 1900-2000" (unpub. essay, 2010).

⁷³ Mary Baker McQuesten to the Rev. Calvin McQuesten, April 7, 1916, (Letter #W9180), Whitehern Museum Archives, www.whitehern.ca, accessed May 24, 2010.

⁷⁴ R. P. MacKay, "Discussion", in Report of the Annual Meeting of the Conference of Foreign Mission Boards in Canada and in the United States, (New York: Foreign Missions Conference of North America, 1912), p. 46-47.

⁷⁵ The forced amalgamation of the WFMS and the WHMS had implications for the role of women in the denomination and their work within the church, questions beyond the scope of this paper. Also beyond the scope of the present work is an examination of what the amalgamation meant to donations and the financial strength of the newly formed WMS.

prepare” to be a missionary.⁷⁶ Education and skill could only get missionaries so far, spiritual consecration was essential.

As MacKay would note later in the same conference, this consecration was needed not just by missionaries but by everyone involved in the missionary endeavour. Over the course of the conference there had been discussion about the importance of prayer both in formal sessions and informally as people had gone for walks together. MacKay, whose commitment to prayer was well-known, was asked if he would “not say something about prayer” when he lead morning devotions on the last day of the conference. Here he was treading familiar ground as he discussed the many Biblical promises about prayer, the examples of prayer heroes both in Biblical times and through the history of the church, and the fact that human beings need to be taught how to pray. As he concluded MacKay issued a clear challenge:

May I venture this: If there is a body on the face of the earth today, I am not exaggerating when I say that it has influence, it is this conference that touches such a tremendous population and the religious activities of this great continent. Is it possible for us to set the example and pray? Would it be possible to suspend the program and give this afternoon to prayer, would it be possible?...We ourselves will be the intercessors of the world, and we will gather about us as many as will join us, and we will enter into the larger problem of promoting the world’s spiritual welfare. Is it possible for this conference to go to the very root of the matter and deal with this question of prayer and not deal with it in an academic way, but deal with it in a practical way and get it under way? Perhaps, two or three will lead in prayer.⁷⁷

The printed proceedings of the Conference indicate that they did not choose to suspend the afternoon session, nor did two or three people pray immediately following MacKay’s challenge. However MacKay’s words did produce an engaged conversation about the state of prayer in the mission community. And he was named to chair a new sub-committee of the Conference charged with responsibility for “Spiritual Emphasis.”

MacKay was back in New York on Feb. 29, 1912 as part of the conference on the “Situation in China”. The Qing (Manchu) Dynasty was collapsing and in the midst of the turmoil the missionary community saw both risk and opportunity. To aid mission leaders and others in their reflections about the transitions taking place in China, a conference, involving seventy-five mission board officials and members and furloughing missionaries from twenty-eight mission agencies, was held with speakers addressing various aspects of the question. MacKay spoke, not as an expert on China, not as an expert on dealing with missionaries in the midst of international crises (although his daughter and her family were impacted by the turmoil) rather MacKay spoke as an expert on prayer. His paper made little direct reference to China, focusing instead on prayer as the most effective weapon the church has in the face of chaos, evil and destruction. MacKay called those at the conference to join a partnership of intercession, for “The problem of China is not too great for such a partnership, but it is too great for anything else.” Prayer could bring the changes needed, but only prayer could make the difference. A 72-page pamphlet of the papers and “The Message of the Conference” was published. Included was a page of specific prayer items which the churches and church members were asked to include in their prayers.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ *Foreign Missions Conference*, 1912, 66.

⁷⁷ *Foreign Missions Conference*, 1912, p. 238.

⁷⁸ MacKay, “Intercessory Prayer”, in *Papers presented at Conference on The Situation in China (The Foreign Missions Conference of North America)*, (Northfield, Mass.: Northfield Press, 1912), pp. 41-46.

Having, in 1912, been named chair of a sub-committee charged with enhancing the spiritual emphasis of the Conference, MacKay brought to the Conference's Committee on Reference and Counsel (the executive committee) a detailed plan about how mission agencies could do exactly that. The sub-committee's report, presented to the entire conference at its 1913 meeting, identified a tension in the church. At the very time there were "very many [people]...seeking the best, who are reaching forth to the things that are before, striving for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus", there was a growing sense of "insufficiency and need" within the church that "her present spiritual equipment is not equal to the requirements of the day." While fully aware of the risks inherent in developing "machinery" to enhance prayer, the report proposed no less than twenty ways in which prayer could be cultivated in the lives of congregations and individuals. MacKay's hand can be seen at a number of points in the report.⁷⁹

The arrival of Dr. A. S. Grant brought new energy to the growing team of denominational executives at the Confederation Life building. Grant envisioned a congress to which every Presbyterian minister in the country would be invited, having their way paid to attend. The congress would be an opportunity to communicate the vision for the church and to challenge church's leaders to find their place in the vision. The vision was large, including foreign missions, home missions including ministry to non-Anglo Saxons, social service including temperance, evangelism, and stewardship. The Pre-Assembly Congress, held from Saturday, May 31 to Wednesday, June 4 at Massey Hall in Toronto, heard from numerous speakers from the ranks of Canadian Presbyterianism both clergy and ruling elders and three speakers from the United States. MacKay served as the chairperson of the conference. In his introduction to the published proceedings of the gathering, MacKay painted a glowing picture of the future, "We have not yet reached the perfect day, but the earliest rays of the dawn are as truly of God as the full blaze of the risen sun." "Vast problems" confronted the church in Canada and overseas which were "truly unparalleled". But this should not cause despair "Our helplessness in the presence of unprecedented problems is our hope. His strength is perfected in our weakness." MacKay identified the Congress' mood as "The Great Head of the Church has in store for the Canadian Presbyterian Church greater things than she has hitherto known, if she will but follow where He leads." MacKay's brief introduction barely hints at the fact that much of the Congress was focused on "methods and policies" including the promotion of business practices in all areas of church finance including determining the most effective use of the funds raised.⁸⁰ The Pre-Assembly Congress was a high point in the life of denomination. Few could have predicted that in two years the optimism would turn to despair. MacKay was again framing pragmatic concerns in spiritual terms, a pattern which appeared frequently in his writing and speaking.

Despite prayer and spiritual grounding being MacKay's preferred approach to addressing questions in mission, his reputation and longevity as a mission executive forced him into being a spokesperson for mission agencies on more political questions. The 1913 Foreign Missions Conference of North America had been challenged to respond to the exploitation, oppression, and murder taking place in the rubber producing Putumayo District of Peru. Articles in the press in the fall of 1909 had brought the treatment of the Native people, who were treated essentially as slaves, in the region to the attention of the British and American publics. A series of investigations had taken place, and action taken against the Peruvian Amazon Company, but the oppression and violence against the Native people continued. The conference charged MacKay, a past chair person, with developing a position for the Conference on this matter. Working on such

⁷⁹ *Foreign Missions Conference*, 1913, 138-143.

⁸⁰ MacKay, "Introduction", *Pre-Assembly Congress*, (Toronto, Board of Foreign Missions, PCC, 1913), p. v-vi.

an issue was not typically MacKay's role in the Conference, but there were two advantages in asking his to do this work. First, the issue involved both British and American interests and MacKay, as a Canadian, it was hoped would be able to stick-handle between the two. Second, the PCC had no mission work in South America, reducing the chances of MacKay being charged with being in a conflict of interest.⁸¹

MacKay presented his report to the leadership team of the Conference in late 1913 and it was taken to the whole Conference in January 1914. Entitled "The Protection of Native Races", the report outlined in brief the situation in Peru and the state of the various investigations. It noted both the British Aborigines Protection Society and the Lake Mohonk Conference of Friends of the Indians and Other Dependent Peoples had been working on this. MacKay saw a role for the Foreign Missions Conference in cooperating with and being supportive of any group seeking to bring about transformation in the region, but not seeking a leadership role. He had sympathy with the view that too much time was being spent ensuring that none of the activists were having their toes stepped on, "We are playing football with the question, and in the meantime the Indians are being killed."⁸² He also believed that the British needed to take the lead, since ...there is a special difficulty in taking the needed action on the part of the United States, inasmuch as it is said that there exist amongst South American republics jealousy and suspicion of United States intrusion – that in spite of all assertions to the contrary, they feel that Pan-Americanism really means, not "America for the Americans," but "America for the North Americans." If such a feel exists, it is no doubt a reason for carefulness, but not for inaction. "We have not received the spirit of fear, but of power and of love, and of a sound mind."⁸³

MacKay showed courage in confronting American mission leadership with an opportunity to see themselves as others saw them. But consistent with his practical pietism, he wrapped his concern in a spiritual blanket. "If we are really animated by His Spirit, who came not to be ministered unto, but to minister," MacKay wrote, "there seems to be no option but to do something, and do it quickly, to put an end forever to the intolerable situation" not only in South American districts but in other rubber growing parts of the world like West Africa and the New Hebrides. Nor were these challenges related only to the rubber industry, "in almost any place where native races are found, are also found wicked men [sic] ready to exploit them to their destruction." Efforts needed to be taken to protect Native peoples even though trying to do that was "hard and discouraging because of political complications."⁸⁴ MacKay was unable to see that the mission efforts of the PCC and other Canadian denominations working among the Native peoples of Canada might be regarded as exploitative and destructive. Or that the church was aiding political leaders in the assimilation of Canada's Native peoples. MacKay, from his vantage point at the end of 1913, had a naïve optimism about the ability of human governments to assist in bringing about the reign of God,

The American and British nations by joint action can hasten the advent of that day when the slave trade will be a thing of the past, and thus another step be taken towards the glad

⁸¹ MacKay, "The Protection of Native Races: A Statement submitted by Rev. Dr. R.P. MacKay, Secretary for Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, to a joint meeting of the Committee of Reference and Counsel and Advisory Council of the Foreign Missions Conference of North America at New York on 23rd December, 1913" (New York: Foreign Missions Conference of North America, 1914).

⁸² MacKay, "Protection of Native Races", p. 4.

⁸³ MacKay, "Protection of Native Races", p. 6. The Scripture reference is to 2 Timothy 1:7.

⁸⁴ MacKay, "Protection of Native Races", p. 6.

day when “They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain—when the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as waters cover the sea.”⁸⁵

The members of Conference were called to use their influence to promote government action that would “end as speedily as possible the painful conditions that exist in the rubber producing areas of South America.” Human governments could be trusted to seek the good of people and the church should actively lobby governments to be agents of God’s coming reign. This optimistic view of human government and willingness to trust government to seek the best for people was soon to be destroyed in the “War to end all wars”, as Christians fought Christians.

1914-1927

The war impacted everything, including the mission efforts of the church. With money flowing to the war effort there were fewer resources available support missionaries overseas. The limited dollars that were available were stretched even further by war-time inflation; MacKay wrote to the Rev. J. Fraser Campbell, long-time missionary in Central India, about “the panicky state of the funds.”⁸⁶ But of deeper concern were the lack of students in the theological colleges and therefore the lack of potential missionaries. A hint of despair can be heard in MacKay’s words,

College classes are almost extinct. Where is the supply of men to come from? IT will take years to replenish unless very many now in the trenches will return, and return with a new baptism. If some of the self-sacrifice of the trenches could be poured into our pulpits and churches what might not happen! We ever in thought return to the same thing—the imperative need of a deeper and fuller experience a vision of things unseen.

The value of the work done is not depreciated but the possibilities and the urgent need of the larger and fuller are enhanced by the events of the day.⁸⁷

MacKay had a sense the war was changing things, that the mission of the church was regarded as being of lesser value. In the face of that challenge, he believed what was needed was a new and deeper commitment to the unseen vision of God. MacKay recognized such a commitment would require God’s action in bringing a new baptism, what he failed to understand was just how dramatically the trenches were going to change the theological understanding of those who fought in them.⁸⁸ The PCC’s mission enterprise which MacKay had worked so hard at building since his arrival as Secretary in 1893 was going to be fundamentally changed over the next twenty years. Some of those changes MacKay played a role in bringing about, some of the changes he could never have anticipated.

One of the changes MacKay played a role in was the creation of the United Church of Canada As was the case with most mission executives, MacKay was predisposed towards ever increasing circles of cooperation. His experiences with the Foreign Missions Conference of North America had taught him of the benefits of cooperation and the dangers of competition, his connections with business leaders through the Laymen’s Missionary Movement taught him there were economies of scale to be realized by being bigger, and his regular contact with missionaries on the field taught him that the theological divisions that might have made sense in Canada made little or no sense on the mission field. MacKay served as a member of the Presbyterian

⁸⁵ MacKay, “Protection of Native Races”, p. 6. The Scripture reference is to Isaiah 11:9.

⁸⁶ Thomson, *Life and Letters*, p. 75

⁸⁷ Thomson, *Life and Letters*, p. 75-76.

⁸⁸ For more on this issue see Duff Crerar, *Padres in No Man’s Land: Canadian Chaplains and the Great War*, (Montreal-Kingston: McGill-Queen’s Press, 1995).

committee negotiating the union through most of twenty-three years of negotiations. His involvement included being on the committee drafting the Basis of Union for the United Church of Canada. Prof. Francis Huston Wallace, who taught New Testament at Victoria College, and who as a young man had rejected his Presbyterian roots on the basis of his disagreement with the Westminster Confession of Faith, reported on MacKay's role. At a point in the discussion when an impasse had been reached between Victoria College Chancellor Nathaniel Burwash and Knox College Professor William MacLaren on the role of the Westminster Confession of Faith in the new denomination, MacKay pulled from his pocket a copy of Henry Van Dyke's "Revision of the Confession". Both MacLaren and Burwash said they could accept its statements about the faith.⁸⁹ This incident took place sometime between 1902 when Principal William Patrick first suggested union and 1909 when MacLaren died. MacKay found a way to keep the movement towards union alive, by framing doctrine in poetic and spiritual terms.

By the war's end, MacKay was seventy-one years old and had clearly moved into the role of senior statesperson within the mission enterprise of the PCC. The day to day operational concerns were handled by A. E. Armstrong as were many of the policy development tasks. The Foreign Missions Conference marked its twenty-five anniversary in 1918, and MacKay who was also marking twenty-five years as Secretary of the FMC spoke on "The Conference as a Means of Spiritual Power". MacKay remembered some of the figures who had attended annual meetings in the past, noting that meeting mission leaders in person made the missionary call real and "concrete". He celebrated the unity present in the gatherings which had grown into "a recognition and a degree of mutual confidence between different churches". The growing unity was a result of Jesus "steadily if imperceptibly realizing the answer to His own prayer "That they all may be one." The conference reminded attendees that "Every new revelation of the immensity and difficulty of the problems the Church has to face also compels the conviction of the Omnipotence of that Saviour who can satisfy the need of every living thing." There was a Saviour for the whole world, this was not a limited salvation but a salvation offered to all. The conference stimulated prayer, MacKay argued, but maybe more accurately it was MacKay who promoted prayer in the life of the conference.⁹⁰

MacKay was invited in 1920 to write the Foreword to a Mission Education Movement book entitled, *Canada's Share in World Tasks*. MacKay challenged the books readers to respond to the call issued to the people of Israel to become a "a king of priests and a holy nation". Canada would do this by "the consecration of wealth and life to Jesus Christ". Fulfilling this call to spiritual commitment was "the highest ideal of Canadian patriotism" for it would assist in making the prayer "Thy Kingdom Come" a reality.⁹¹ MacKay was again seeking to place pragmatic action within the context of a pietistic call to advance the reign of God.

The PCC was deeply concerned about the take over of Manchuria and Korea by the Japanese. A.E. Armstrong was sent on a fact-finding mission and MacKay had a personal involvement as

⁸⁹ Thomson, *Life and Letters*, p. 123. Andrew Thomson heard this story second hand from Prof. W. R. Taylor, Professor of Semitics at the University of Toronto and later confirmed it with R. P. MacKay, Thomson's father-in-law.

⁹⁰ MacKay, "The Conference as a Means of Spiritual Power", *Foreign Missions Conference of North America*, 1918, p. 233-240.

⁹¹ H.C. Priest, *Canada's Share in World Tasks*, (Toronto, Canadian Council of the Missionary Education Movement, 1920), xiii-xv. Robert Wright, in *A World Mission* see p. 122, argues that MacKay's presence among the authors of this book demonstrates MacKay's ability to bridge liberal and conservative aspects of the mission movement. I am unconvinced by Wright's contention. I think MacKay was seeking to do what he had always done, frame the whole mission endeavour in spiritual terms coming from his pietism.

his daughter and her family continued to serve in China.⁹² MacKay's role as senior statesperson included chairing the Committee on Foreign Missions of the North American section Commission of Reformed Churches meeting in Pennsylvania in 1921. At the gathering MacKay read a report from the Committee condemning the Japanese treatment of Koreans in Manchuria, calling it "unique in modern times...comparable only to Turkish massacres in Armenia" and describing what was witnessed by missionaries in Manchuria as "fiendish inhumanity."⁹³

When Church Union was consummated on June 10, 1925, MacKay was given the honour of being the first Presbyterian to sign the Basis of Union. MacKay stayed on as Secretary of the newly merged mission board of the UCC for two years, retiring at the age of eighty, after thirty-five years of service as a denominational executive. R. P. MacKay died on May 27, 1929.

Principal A. Gandier of Knox College, a friend and long-time member of the FMC gave the funeral address. Mackay was buried beside his wife in the Agincourt Church cemetery.

J. R. Mott, the iconic mission promoter, wrote to MacKay on the occasion of MacKay's twenty-fifth anniversary as Secretary of Foreign Missions,

You have been a wise guide in the missionary policy of your own denomination and you have also rendered invaluable service in promoting, on sound lines, the movement of cooperation among the missionary forces of all Protestant communions. With great faithfulness and power you have placed the emphasis on the life-giving processes. What do I not owe to you personally for your burning messages on Prayer and on the Lordship of Jesus Christ!⁹⁴

MacKay brought his personal piety to his role as denominational executive. His pietism sought a connection with anyone who shared the same passionate commitment to Jesus, regardless of their doctrinal understandings. This allowed for the evolution of the Presbyterian mission enterprise rooted in spiritual commitment and the practice of personal spiritual disciplines rather than in a shared theological understanding. Further MacKay was a master at framing the practical issues of the mission, like the introduction of business practices and administrative tasks, in spiritual terms. In this way MacKay was able to lead The Presbyterian Church in Canada's foreign mission enterprise for thirty-five years.

⁹² For more on Armstrong's involvement on this issue see "Uncensored Account of Korea's Revolt", *The New York Times*, April 23, 1919 and Barbara Legault and John F. Prescott, "'The arch agitator:' Dr. Frank W. Schofield and the Korean independence movement", *Canadian Veterinary Journal*, Vol. 50, August 2009, p. 865-872.

⁹³ "Denounces Japan's Killing of Koreans", *The New York Times*, Feb. 17, 1921.

⁹⁴ Quoted by Thomson, *Life and Letters*, p. 62