Canadian Society of Presbyterian History

Papers 2019

Edited by Kate Revington

Canadian Society of Presbyterian History: Papers 2019 (Volume 44)

Published by the Canadian Society of Presbyterian History (CSPH) in Spring 2020

The papers featured in this publication were presented at the CSPH annual general meeting, held at Knox College, University of Toronto, on 28 September 2019.

© Copyright is held by the authors.

Permission to reprint should be obtained from the appropriate author through the Canadian Society of Presbyterian History.

Contents

About the Canadian Society of Presbyterian History

Dedicated to the Study of Presbyterian History and Reformed History

The Canadian Society of Presbyterian History (CSPH) is a religion-centred learned society. It meets annually on the last Saturday of September. Since its founding in 1975, about 200 papers have been presented. A sampling is published on **csph.ca**.

Membership is open to individuals and institutions that share an interest in and a fascination for the study of Presbyterian and Reformed history.

About the Authors of the 2019 Papers

Robert K. Anderson enjoys reading, especially world history, and choral music, most recently with the Ontario Presbyterian Choir. Now a volunteer at the PCC Archives, he once served as a minister in places ranging from Whitehorse, Yukon, to Toronto, Ontario, to Truro, Nova Scotia. He has also served as a missionary, a minister, and even as associate to the general secretary of the Korean Christian Church in Japan. With this year's paper, he makes a personal connection with the work of the Glasgow Colonial Society.

R. Ritchie Robinson has served as the minister of St. Giles Presbyterian Church in North Sydney, Nova Scotia, for 18 years. In 2016, his CSPH paper focused on the Reverend Norman McLeod and his ministry in Cape Breton and New Zealand. He notes that his 2019 paper was suggested by former CSPH president A. Donald MacLeod: it marks the 100th anniversary of the election of the Reverend Dr. John Pringle as moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada.

Leslie-Elizabeth King is a retired United Church of Canada minister who spent nine years as the outreach minister for Swan Lake Reserve and Agassiz Presbytery in south-central Manitoba. Long before the political focus on reconciliation, Chief Roy McKinney asked her to write about the role of the church in the community and share that history with the wider church. She understands that the church can be an effective ally with Indigenous peoples only when it knows what its role has been.

Dave Lee is a Master of Divinity student at Knox College and currently serves as a student minister at St. Timothy Presbyterian Church in Etobicoke. His paper, "Apology in the Making," was originally written for Stuart Macdonald's Presbyterian Tradition in Canada course at Knox, out of his interest in the topic of the Presbyterian Church's response to the residential school legacy in Canada. Dave is set to graduate in May 2020 and will be pursuing congregational ministry in full capacity.

Anne McGillivray is a librarian and has worked in academic libraries for more than 30 years. She is currently the technical services coordinator at Caven Library, Knox College, where she organized the Ewart Historical Christian Education Curriculum Collection. Working towards a Master of Theological Studies degree at Knox, she first prepared her paper for a course on Presbyterian history in Canada, taught by Stuart Macdonald.

Stuart Macdonald, CSPH president, teaches church history at Knox College, University of Toronto. He also directs graduate degree studies and at time of writing serves as acting college principal. Stuart's special church research interests include 17th century Scotland and contemporary Canada, especially the Presbyterian Church. He and Brian Clarke authored *Leaving Christianity* (published in 2017). He is currently researching the history of the Presbyterian Church in Canada between 1945 and 1985.

The Glasgow Colonial Society

Robert K. Anderson

You have all received a list of the papers to be read today. I should like to make one correction. I will, indeed, be speaking about the Glasgow Colonial Society and its accomplishments in North America and in the course of it refer to Rev. James Anderson, my great-grandfather. His experience is, no doubt, typical of that of many, but he was only one of the men who were sent out by the Society during its 15 years of operation. The main story is that of the Society and the role it filled in the Christian witness in Canada during the years leading up to Confederation.

To begin at the beginning: Why was the Glasgow mission brought into being, and who was involved? Who was the target group? To answer these questions, we go back in history to the end of the Napoleonic Wars. The Scottish regiments had figured largely in these wars, especially in the battles leading up to and including the Battle of Waterloo. The "Royal Scots Greys" were one of the most feared regiments in the field.

But now the wars were over, and hundreds, even thousands of physically fit young men were returning to Scotland: to a country already poor in resources and unable to receive this great influx.

Just a ship journey away, however, was British North America. Over the next few years, tens of thousands of young Scots headed across the Atlantic Ocean, some leaving the real poverty of the Highlands behind for the possible riches to be found in a land new to them. As they looked at the depressed economy of their homeland, the promise of a new start in a new land must have been hard to resist.

Recognizing Pressing Needs in a New Land

But when the Scots arrived on the eastern seaboard of the British colony of Lower Canada, they soon discovered difficulties. Not only were food supply lines complicated and costly, but the ordinary services of a settled community were non-existent. Educational facilities were at a minimum, and churches and Presbyterian clergy were either absent or were few and far between.

At this time some men of vision in Scotland formed the Glasgow Colonial Society, or "the Society."[1] The first meeting was held in the Trades Hall in Glasgow and included several members of distinction, such as George Ramsay, ninth Earl of Dalhousie, and the Reverend Dr. Robert Burns, minister of St. George's Church, Paisley. Burns was to be remembered as one of the prime movers of the Society and its de facto spokesman and virtual administrator. That was because of his dominating personality and the fact that he was the principal secretary from its establishment in 1825 to its merger with the Colonial Committee of the Church of Scotland in 1840.[2]

The Glasgow Colonial Society recognized four pressing needs in the Church of the colonies. The Scots who migrated to the colonies found, first, that there were no churches or religious organizations in their new land affiliated with the Church of Scotland. Coming as they did from a land where there were churches in every community, this need was greatly felt. Second, parallel

---

1 The full name was "The Society (in connection with the Established Church of Scotland) for promoting the Religious Interests of Scottish Settlers in British North America." The Society was commonly known as the "Glasgow Colonial Society."

2 Brian J. Fraser, *Church, College and Clergy: A History of Theological Education at Knox College, Toronto, 1844–1994* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press), 3.

to this lack, was the need for some form of educational facility — a school or schools, the anchor of every community in the homeland, with a school master to teach and give stability to the community. Third, there was a need for books — books of all kinds, but especially religious books to stimulate the mind and stir the soul. Fourth, the presence of leaders fluent in Gaelic would serve some communities well because a good number of the Scottish settlers had come from rural settings, where Gaelic was the language mainly spoken.

Some of these needs had already been recognized by other bodies. For example, the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK), associated with the Church of England, had an effective publishing facility to help meet the need for Christian literature. It played, and continues to play, a vital role in supplying Christian literature. As for Glasgow Colonial Society members, after Knox College was established in Toronto in 1844, Burns arranged to contribute more than 2,000 volumes that he had specifically collected for the new Knox Library.[3] Others gave resources as well, intent on making the best of scholarly works available to the ministers in training.

Recruiting and Sending Ministers to the Colonies

The main function of the Glasgow Colonial Society was to recruit and send ministers to establish Christian congregations among the ex-patriot Scots who had settled in communities in the colonies, including Upper Canada (now Ontario) and Lower Canada (now Quebec). Candidates were searched out, carefully examined as to their motivation and orthodoxy, and sent with the blessing of the Society to their new fields. Although all the British colonies were eligible, the chief areas of concentration were Cape Breton Island, Prince Edward Island, and the mainland areas of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. In Upper Canada, the primary activity of the mission was along the shores of Lake Ontario, and west of Toronto to the Grand River, and north to Orillia.[4]

Now, in regard to the life and work of James Anderson and the church at Ormstown, Quebec, this is chiefly of interest to us as an illustration of how men were selected by the Glasgow Colonial Society and prepared for service.

At the beginning, the Glasgow Colonial Society made it clear that in reaching out to minister to ex-patriot Scots, they would consider only ministers from the Church of Scotland as candidates. As a result, they looked for men from Scottish seminaries as their first choice. In the course of their recruitment, they met James Anderson, a native of Cromarty and a graduate of the seminary in Glasgow. Despite his strong educational credentials, Anderson was thoroughly examined before being accepted. He was assigned to preach twice before selected members of the Society and then assigned to two churches in Glasgow: St. Enoch's and Tron. Two members of the mission council were assigned to be present, and both brought back favorable reports.

James Anderson at Ormstown, Quebec

A request had come in from Lower Canada for an itinerating missionary to serve the region of the lower St. Lawrence River, between Montreal and Trois Rivieres, and Anderson was appointed to do this. He sailed to Canada and itinerated for a short time until the charge at Ormstown became vacant. The Reverend Mr. Colquhoun left Ormstown to serve a church in Upper Canada.

---

3 H. J. Bridgman, "Burns, Robert," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 9 (Toronto and Quebec: University of Toronto/Université Laval, 1976), accessed 4 March 2020, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/burns_robert_9E.html.

4 In this area, there was considerable controversy in connection with the Clergy reserves and Bishop Strachan, which is outside our present subject of concern.

Anderson was to serve in Ormstown until his death in 1861.

Financial support of ministers was always a critical matter for the Glasgow Colonial Society. Originally, the Society had hoped to have its own funds for support. Other funds were hoped for from the home Church, the new congregations, and the state. Despite careful planning the funds always fell short. When Anderson served in Ormstown, it was said that they loved him much, but paid him little.

The Society's Legacy

The Glasgow Colonial Society continued to function until it amalgamated with the Colonial Committee of the Church of Scotland in 1840. During its life, churches were established and nourished in Cape Breton and Pictou County, Nova Scotia; in Prince Edward Island; in New Brunswick; and in Upper Canada and Lower Canada. Congregations still point proudly to their historical origins in the work of the Glasgow Colonial Society and to Robert Burns — later Professor Robert Burns of Knox College — as a spiritual ancestor.

John Pringle: Upstanding Champion of the Gospel

R. Ritchie Robinson

This year marks the centenary of the Reverend Dr. John Pringle's election as moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada. Having researched the life of Dr. Pringle, I have concluded it would be difficult to imagine his equal in our denomination. When it comes to varied ministry or degree of influence exerted in his various roles — pastor, preacher, builder, missionary, public servant, and soldier, among them — he is exceptional.

John Murray makes a telling statement about Pringle in his book *History of the Presbyterian Church in Cape Breton.* In a chapter about St. Andrew's Church, Sydney, where Pringle served from 1908 to 1925, Murray observes:

> The space at our disposal is too limited to say anything adequately about Dr. Pringle and the work he has done for Canada and the Empire as well as for the Church as a whole and St. Andrew's Church in particular. Nothing less than a volume could do justice to that subject and we forbear to touch it in this sketch of St. Andrew's and its ministry.[1]

Indeed, how does one capture the length and breadth of such a one as John Pringle?

At a symposium about St. Andrew's Church held in 1948 a similar sentiment was expressed: "So much could be written about him that [sic] it is to conform to the space at our disposal."[2]

One posthumous work on John Pringle exalts him significantly. It cites the Gospel according to St. John, chapter 1, verse 6: "There was a man sent from God whose name was John."[3] The authors did not, it would appear, deem it an overreach to compare the rugged missionary to John the Baptist, the rugged prophetic forerunner of Jesus Christ.

In its treatment of Pringle's life and career, this paper will be a mere scratching of the surface. It is hoped that at the end, we will have a fuller understanding of this largely forgotten Canadian Presbyterian — a giant in every sense of the word.

A Giant of a Man

John Pringle was born on the seventh day of June 1852, in Murray Harbour South, Prince Edward Island. He was the son of a military man. He was the eldest in a large family. His brother George, also a Presbyterian minister, was the youngest. The elder Pringle quipped that because of the age difference, he and his brother George were "distant relatives."

When he was a child, his father's regiment moved to Kingston, Ontario. It was there that he experienced something of the military life that would mark his experience many years later as an officer in the Great War.

Pringle entered Queen's University, Kingston, in 1871, graduating with a BA in 1875, the same year that the Presbyterian Church in Canada came into being. He was ordained in 1878. In 1904, Queen's conferred upon him the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity. In 1933, Pringle

---

1 John Murray, *History of the Presbyterian Church in Cape Breton* (Truro, NS: News Publishing, 1921), 21.

2 E. D. McFadyen, *Past-Present-Future, Saint Andrew's Congregation, United Church of Canada, a Symposium* (Sydney, NS: Lewis R. MacDonald, 1948), 37.

3 *"In Memoriam" Rev. John Pringle, D.D.; Lt. D., 1852–1935: For Sixty Years a Preacher of the Gospel: Pioneer-Padre-Pastor* (Sydney, NS: St. Andrew's United Church, 1935), 22.

addressed the students of his alma mater when he received a Doctor of Laws degree.[4]

"If he had faults, and he did have them, they were the faults that went naturally with a personality such as his — the faults of a man possessed by a passion and zeal for the mental, moral and spiritual uplift of his fellow man."[5]

According to the Canadian Great War Project, Pringle enlisted for duty to the empire on January 25, 1915, at North Tidworth, England. He was 62 years old. The War Project records that Pringle was six feet, two inches tall, had a chest width of 44 inches, and an expansion of three inches.[6] One could truly say that Dr. John Pringle was every inch a soldier.

Pringle entered the 9th Battalion infantry as a private and as a chaplain. He was promoted to the rank of lieutenant-colonel. He served in Canada, England, and France with the 9th Battalion, 17th Battalion, 30th Battalion, and 1st Canadian Infantry Brigade, involved with Shorncliffe Military Hospital, 1st Canadian General Hospital of Canadian General depot, and Shorncliffe and Chaplain Services.

Pringle was the first chaplain of the Great War to be mentioned in despatches. This took place on November 30, 1915, and reads as follows: "Canadian Forces Rev. J. Pringle Chaplain was mentioned in a Despatch from Field Marshal Sir John D. P. French for gallant and distinguished services in the Field. I have it in command from the King to record His Majesty's high appreciation of the services rendered." This is signed by the secretary of state for war.

Towards the end of Pringle's life, a correspondent from the *Villager* magazine in New York attended a service at Knox United Church in Blackett's Lake outside Sydney, at which Pringle presided. This is part of Emelyn Paige's account of him:

> Some people think of the First Division when they think of John Pringle, for he wears the famous little red button in his lapel. But most people think of the Klondike and the Yukon where Dr. Pringle is known from one end to the other. His long years of work are a part of the colorful history of that part of the world. And his sermon this morning to the thirty-odd men and women and children who make up his congregation was an inspiration to cherish for days and days to come. Dr. Pringle is over eighty, and looks a scant sixty-five. His roadster with its distinguishing blue and white cross is a familiar sight on the highways of Cape Breton and it is said that he knows more people than any other man in the Dominion.[7]

The fact that his son John had volunteered for service played no small part in Dr. Pringle's decision to enlist in the Canadian Expeditionary Force. His son came to make the supreme sacrifice in 1915. Obviously, this had a deep impact upon the elder Pringle. In an interview with R. E. Knowles of the *Toronto Star*, he said: "The most emotional moments of my life were in connection with my son. He walked 450 miles from the Peace River district to Edmonton to enlist for service and then he gave his life at Passchendaele."[8]

In September 1914, when he addressed a gathering of his congregation exceeding one thousand persons on the eve of his departure for the front, he said, "It came home to me when my own boy tramped five hundred miles to enlist, and then told me he had done so. I saw my duty clearly was to minister to the spiritual needs of the men who had so nobly heard their country's call, and had obeyed the summons."[9]

---

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid., 5.

6 Canadian War Project.

7 *In Memoriam*, 29.

8 Untitled new article, Sydney, NS, 1935.

9 *Sydney Daily Post*, September 24, 1914. Quoted in *Percy Willmot: A Cape Bretoner at War, 1914–1919* by Brian Tennyson (Sydney, NS: Cape Breton University Press, 2007).

In an article titled "Pringle — Father and Son," Harold R. Peat records the following about a service Pringle led aboard the transport ship *Zeeland,* later renamed *Northland* evidently because it sounded less German: "I went to the service. Maybe four hundred of the men all told stood to attention as Major John took his place before us. I went because he was Jack's father; I went because Jack did. I went because I had nothing else to do. As a boatload of men we were chary of sermons . . .[10]

"The Rev. John Pringle told of the trail of '98. He described to us he had battled in company with other men against nature on the Yukon Pass. He told of Dawson, he told of mines and gold and fights and deaths and conquerings . . . and here he was on the trail again. Major John. The deck would not hold the men who crowded up for the next service. No, sir! We wanted stuff like this . . . We got what we wanted, and the dredge of the Master Miner went to work on the sifting of our souls."[11]

Yet Pringle was a man of deep humility. Despite his many accomplishments, his numerous talents, and his larger-than-life persona, he was swift to give credit where he felt credit was due. In a 1915 letter from France, he writes the following to a girl named Jennie at his church in Sydney: ". . . my heart just goes right out to God for you all. Blessings on your dear young hearts & lives. The girls & boys of Sydney kept my heart from getting old & sour & hard. So you were God's blessing to me."[12] Wherever he was, John Pringle never forgot where he came from and never failed to remember anyone whom he felt had made a positive contribution to his life.

Rev. James Fraser, a student assistant to Pringle, described him this way: "Splendidly handsome, kind and dignified — too much praise cannot be given. He honored me with a lasting friendship and the love I bore for him never relaxed."[13]

Championing the Gospel

Once, in an after-dinner speech, Pringle said, "But it is my purpose tonight to play the role of the historian rather than the much more difficult one of a prophet, and turn your thoughts to the past.[14]

"I would like to, briefly, point out at least three fields in which the church has pioneered . . . and the three words are light, liberty, love."[15]

With reference to early Christians, Pringle said: "Instead of cultivating the ancient and honorable profession of fighting, these deluded creatures illuminated manuscripts, daubed on walls, composed music, designed and erected fantastic structures.[16]

"But never once in the records of Rome or Constantinople can you find mention of the erection of a single public charitable institution. Dig down into the tomb of old King Tut and his tribe. Interview those who have come back from excavating anywhere on the face of the earth, and nowhere will you find a single reference to any charitable institution for the alleviation of pain and suffering until after the time of Christ."[17]

---

10 Harold R. Peat, "Pringle — Father and Son," *Charlotte Observer*, June 30, 1918, 24.

11 Ibid.

12 Letter affixed to *In Memoriam*, November 16, 1915.

13 J. W. McLennan, *St. Andrew's Church, Sydney, N.S. A Historical Summary* (Sydney, NS: Don MacKinnon, n.d.), 57. Fraser named one of his sons Pringle, and that son later became a United Church minister. Born on June 9, 1925, the day before the United Church of Canada came into being, Pringle Fraser noted that he was "Presbyterian for a day."

14 John Pringle, *Toast to the Church* (undated).

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid.

17 Ibid.

In an article from a paper of St. Andrew's College, Winnipeg, there appears this illustration of the sort of Christianity that Pringle lived: "Dr. Pringle is ready for a race with any man in the world on snowshoes. He has a dog, too, Telegraph, from Penetanguishene, a St. Andrew's dog, who forms with his paws the cross of our patron saint every time he lies down."[18]

Consider Pringle's description of his experiences among Yukon gold-seekers. "Chatting with the boys, singing hymns with them in the evening and going with them in prayer to the Throne of Grace, telling them stories, and in every way possible to me, helping them to be better and of good cheer. They helped me also . . . I was always able to pick up something out of my fellowship with them and so helped my own life."[19]

Some of the following words are descriptive of the kind of situation in which pilgrims to the Yukon found themselves: "The drink shop, the gambling saloon, and the brothel, foul trinity of ill-will abound, and if left uncared for, multitudes of young men from good homes . . . will fall victims . . . Of the greatest importance, therefore, is that the church be on the spot from the first [to] remind our boys of home and heaven . . ."[20]

"A crowd of gold-seekers on the wing need the gospel more than any other mass of men I ever met. There are the reckless, the indifferent, the professing Christian without back-bone, the earnest Christians, the discouraged, the despairing, good and bad men . . . They all need Christ very much . . ."[21]

Pringle was not shy about scrutinizing the behaviour of his peers, either. While at Union Theological Seminary in New York, he visited with Professor E. F. Scott whom he had known from Queen's in Kingston. Scott was a heavy smoker. Pringle looked at Scott's desk and said: "Dr. Scott, as an old Queen's graduate I am glad to see you are here. Your presence is a comfort to us in Canada. We send many of our boys here for graduate work, and it worries us that sometimes they pick bad habits — smoking for instance." Pringle then pointed to six or seven pipes on Scott's desk — "I'm glad to see that you are taking their pipes from them!"[22]

Promoting Social Good

Pringle's move from the West to the East in 1909 may have been the direct result of his allegations of corruption and vice against the Yukon government. In his book *Reminiscences,* Clarence Mackinnon refers to Pringle's address at a General Assembly: "Dr. John Pringle had come hot-foot from the Yukon with a story of maladministration and immorality that made the country wince."[23]

Pringle's ministrations had involved not only the individual salvation of the souls of men, but also the social good of the territory. This latter concern resulted in one of the biggest battles of his life. Pringle experienced first-hand the adage *You can't beat city hall*.

"Exposed to every form of attack that iniquity could devise and literally taking his life in his

---

18 Anonymous, *East and West: Dr. Pringle at St. Andrew's College.*

19 John Pringle, *"Major Pringle's Letter to His People*," October 5, 1916.

20 Peter Bush, *Western Challenge: The Presbyterian Church in Canada's Mission on the Prairies and North, 1885–1925* (Winnipeg, MB: Watson & Dwyer, 2000), 168.

21 Ibid., 171. Clarence Mackinnon, in *Reminiscences* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1938), records, "I have seen as many as two thousand gather to hear a popular American preacher on a summer evening, and when Dr. John Pringle visited a camp no hut would begin to hold the crowd that surged to hear him" (200).

22 Angus James MacQueen, *Memory Is My Diary,* vol. 1, *The First Thirty 1912–1942* (Hantsport, NS: Lancelot Press, 1990), 172.

23 Ibid., 169.

hands, he [Pringle] carried the fight for moral and social righteousness through the Yukon Council, then to the Federal Administration . . .” Reacting to detractors, Pringle stated, “I shall meddle in politics as long as the devil meddles in politics.”[24]

His efforts were, in part, recognized. “That in view of the privations and hardships experienced during the past two years, the Rev. John Pringle be granted three months’ leave of absence, that he be allowed the sum of $225 to cover his travelling expenses.”[25]

Pringle played a large part in the formation of the Women’s Home Missionary Society. While stationed in Atlin, British Columbia, he came to realize that Gold Rush miners were not immune to such diseases as typhoid and pneumonia. There was no formal hospital in the area and there were no health professionals to diagnose illnesses or administer treatments. Pringle appealed for two Christian nurses to fill the void in health care. As a result, on March 15, 1898, the Atlin Nurses’ Committee was organized in Toronto. This committee played a leading role in forming the Women’s Home Missionary Society in 1903.

Elizabeth Mitchell and Helen Bone responded to the appeal and took up the cause in Atlin. “The work of the nurses for one month has done more to make people believe we have the spirit of Christ, than a year’s preaching could,” wrote Pringle. “. . . the gentle ministering hands of our nurses will open many a heart to the Gospel and Spirit of Jesus.”[26] The government agent gave them a cabin for a hospital. It consisted of a mud roof, a floor of sawdust, and two small panes of glass for a window. It had four cots with hay-filled pillows. In 1900, St. Andrew’s Hospital was built. It was the first Presbyterian mission hospital in Canada.[27]

Muscular Christianity Among the Prospectors

Prospectors were of necessity itinerant. Pringle, as well as his brother George, moved with them. They had an undeniable ministry of presence to the miners. Pringle wrote: “There are scores of outlying points which we cannot touch, and no one else thinks about. I wish the Home Mission Committee would appoint a good man for Eldorado, who could preach and visit, and let me loose to have the untouched and outlying districts as my parish, districts inhabited mostly by prospectors. These far away boys appreciate a minister’s visits as mothers do.”[28]

Pringle was one of the most tangible examples of “muscular Christianity” in the Presbyterian Church in Canada. John Moir notes and I quote: “Pringle made a three-week winter trek to Fort Wrangell, tramping through slush up to his knees . . . and eating the netting of his snow shoes to stay alive . . . By the time he reached his destination his hands were so torn by thorn bushes that for three days he could not hold a pen.”[29]

“Along that ‘Trail of ’98’ were strewn the wrecks of shattered dreams, of blasted hopes, and from that trail went up the cry of human need, not merely the need that human hands could meet but that deeper need that could only be met by those who had a firm grip upon the eternal realities.”[30]

---

24 *In Memoriam*, 7.

25 Charles W. Gordon (Ralph Connor), *The Life of James Robertson D.D.* (Toronto: The Westminster Company, 1908), 378.

26 Bush, *Western Challenge*, 172.

27 Anonymous, *The Women’s Missionary Society, 1903*, n.d.

28 *Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada* [*A&P*], 1902, 28. Quoted in Bush, *Western Challenge*, 167.

29 John S. Moir, *Enduring Witness* (Toronto: The Presbyterian Church in Canada, 1987), 162.

30 *In Memoriam*, 7.

Pringle ministered not only to the spiritual needs of the prospectors but also to their physical requirements. He did his part to attend to the whole person. One common disease was scurvy. In a history of the hospital it states that Pringle's treatment was "raw onions and raw potatoes, and they soon recovered."[31]

What was a typical day on the trail, if there was such a thing, for John Pringle? In his own words, the day began thus: "I take my morning wash in snow, stir the oatmeal into the boiling water, chop a wedge of beans out of the pot and put it into the frying-pan to thaw and warm, and make the coffee . . . A few verses from my Testament, my only book . . . a few requests at the throne of grace, and I am ready for breakfast and it for me. Porridge, bacon, beans, hardtack, coffee, sometimes with milk and sugar, sometimes with one, sometimes with neither.[32]

"At noon I have gone perhaps ten miles and am not tired but hungry. On a little shelf formed by the roots of a fallen tree I build a fire, melt some snow and make a cup of tea. My pockets hold half a dozen ship biscuits and three or four slices of fried bacon. These, with tea, are my lunch, and when I have partaken the trail does not look so hard. Grace before meat means more on the trail than amid the comforts and pleasures of the old conventional life."[33]

"So I move on hour after hour until at 3 o'clock, the sun's edge touches the horizon, and now I must stop, if I would camp in comfort. The dogs are let loose, a spot is trampled in the snow for the tent, a tree is felled upon the site of my new home, the branches cut off to make a floor, end and ridge poles for the tent carried in, a couple of short sills made ready to keep the stove from sinking into the snow, and in thirty minutes I am at home, a fire going and supper on the way."[34]

"Look into the tent at 11 o'clock you will see the minister reclining on his blankets reading his Testament by the light of a candle stuck in the corner of his grub-box . . . A verse or two of 'Sun of my Soul Thou Saviour Dear,' and he is off into the land of rest and dreams."[35]

"Three or four days of this and a cabin is reached where a man lies helpless as a mummy in his bunk — scurvy. . . . A day or two for rest, and then the return journey begins . . . The sick man is lashed on his blankets on the minister's sleigh . . . Not much, perhaps, in all this, no preaching. But a life is saved and the Gospel that reveals God in Jesus as man's friend is commended to hundreds who never knew, or had forgotten . . . Anyway, it was obedience in part to Him who commanded, 'Preach the Gospel and heal the sick.'"[36]

Some of Dr. Pringle's mining ministry is the subject of a poem titled "Thanksgiving Day Service in Cailbraith's Saloon." Here are several of its verses:

> Thanksgiving day down telegraph way,
> In the winter of ninety-eight,
> And the boys from the Junction and Summit
> Had come down to celebrate.
>
> For though it was snowin' and blowin'
> And howlin' to beat the band,
> When Parson Pringle dealt the cards
> All the boys took a hand.
>
> For he wasn't one of them gospel sharks,
> Or a collar and necktie swell,

---

31 Ibid., 8.
32 Ibid., 9.
33 Ibid., 10.
34 Ibid., 9.
35 Ibid., 11.
36 Ibid.

That tries to scar' you into Heaven,
With visions of red-hot Hell.

So he ran his sluice boxes up the hill,
To salvation creek above,
And washed the dirt of our sordid souls,
In the waters of God's own love.

So Calbraith's store was plump, jam full,
And the singin' was good and strong
And the Parson gave us his little bit;
And did not keep us too long.[37]

From everything that we read of John Pringle, it becomes readily apparent that his ministrations led him to wherever people were. He got his hands dirty and his clothes soiled. When it came to reaching "gamblers, robbers, evil doers of every description; whose chief aim was to prey upon their fellowmen and to stir up trouble at every opportunity," he feared no foe.[38]

Pringle describes what happened at a roadhouse during the Klondike rush as follows:

> One of those gangs had taken full charge and being armed, had the staff at their mercy . . . they drank freely and of course the profanity was shocking . . . In the morning the real trouble commenced as there was very little on hand for breakfast . . . After being seated around the table, I looked those men straight in the eye, and I said to them 'Men, this food looks good enough to ask God's blessing upon it.'. . . I never saw, nor did I hear of any more trouble.[39]

An account of a communion service led by Pringle is remembered in this way: "There were thirty-four men and four officers at the service. There was no table, so they fitted one up with two chairs and a door of the stable lifted off its hinges. It was not so inconsistent as it first appeared, for He whose love we commemorated that day was born in a stable. It was quite in harmony."[40]

Upholding Morality in the Yukon

In an address delivered in Dawson in February 1907, Pringle implored:

> But give us a clean, sane, upright man who will frown upon vice in official and private life alike, whose life itself will be a rebuke to the drunkenness, lust, gambling and graft which have been our shame; who has high moral ideals and the courage to move persistently if slowly towards their realization, and he will effect the contentment of the great mass of our people as to moral and material interests alike.[41]

Pringle's prayers seemed to be answered as of June 17, 1907, when Alexander Henderson was appointed Yukon commissioner. Henderson, like Pringle, was a Presbyterian. As Edward Bush writes, "The boy was raised in the Presbyterian faith and it is evident that he acquired a reforming and rather Puritan ideal from his background."[42]

But the two men did not prove to be soul mates. They locked horns. Henderson attacked Pringle by accusing the minister of sensationalism and spreading trumped-up charges for political

---

37 Ibid., 14.
38 Ibid., 11.
39 Ibid., 14.
40 Ibid., 13.
41 Edward F. Bush, *Commissioners of the Yukon, 1897–1918*, Canadian Historic Sites: Occasional Papers in Archaeology and History No. 10 (Ottawa: Parks Canada, 2006).
42 Ibid.

advantage. Young women in drinking establishments may have fleeced their patrons but that didn't mean that they were "ladies of the night," he argued. The territorial commissioner felt that Pringle's charges of immorality were exaggerated. As Bush goes on to say of Henderson: "He had originally conceived of the Presbyterian divine as an ally of his against vice, but now as a bothersome troublemaker and unjust critic of the territory."[43]

In the March 4, 1908, issue of the *Dawson Daily News* the lead article is revealingly titled "Yukon Spice Box in Parliament." Henderson is quoted as follows: "I unhesitatingly affirm that the Yukon, including Dawson, is as moral in all respects as any other part of Canada . . .[44]

"Before my arrival in the Territory I had heard that the question of dance halls had been brought prominently before the public through a letter addressed to a Winnipeg newspaper by the Reverend Dr. Pringle . . ."[45]

In the same issue, a letter from the territorial commissioner says, "On the 23rd October, 1907, Dr. Pringle advised me by letter, stating that he had decided not to take any part of the investigation which I was instructed to make into the charges against Messrs. Lithgow and Girouard [government officials] . . . Since Dr. Pringle's refusal to proceed with the investigation as herein before mentioned, Mr. Girouard has commenced an action against him for damages for libel and the action is now pending."[46] Pringle felt under pressure.

The Winnipeg Telegram of November 19, 1910, spells out in some detail the ramifications of Pringle's crusade for morality in the Northwest. In an article titled "Dr. Shearer and the Synod," the author says, "It was alleged that he [Rev. John Pringle], a man of spotless character, had frequented houses of prostitution in the Yukon and was therefore himself tainted with the vice which he condemned."[47]

The same article refers to another famous Canadian, minister, and author, C. W. Gordon, whose pen name was Ralph Connor. It is scathing in its opinion that Gordon stood by while his colleague's good name was dragged through the mud of Dawson and beyond: "He had not a word to say in defence of Rev. John Pringle, not a lance to break in behalf of the outraged name of the Presbyterian church. Calmly, he saw Rev. John Pringle driven from the Yukon, broken and penniless for no other offence than courageous devotion to duty."[48]

The article doesn't stop there.

In a final shot across Gordon's bow, it becomes very personal: "Rev. C. W. Gordon is a millionaire, but if he was one of those who contributed to the amelioration of Rev. John Pringle's misfortunes his generosity is not a matter of record.[49]

"Is the Synod aware that there was a man named Rev. John Pringle, a zealous churchman, an indefatigable missionary who carried the gospel into the Yukon and fought for it under most trying circumstances? Rev. John Pringle discovered in the Yukon vice and iniquity of almost unparalleled proportions . . . All the agencies at the command of a government under whose auspices these vices were countenanced in the Yukon rose in denunciation of Rev. John Pringle.[50]

"Rev. John Pringle was abandoned to the dogs of war turned loose upon him by the Ottawa

---

43 Ibid.

44 *Dawson Daily News*, March 4, 1908, 1.

45 Ibid.

46 Ibid., 4.

47 "Dr. Shearer and the Synod," *The Winnipeg Telegram*, November 19, 1910.

48 Ibid.

49 Ibid.

50 Ibid.

government without so much as a protest from the Presbyterian Synod."[51]

As popular and well regarded as John Pringle obviously was, he had outstayed his welcome in the Yukon as far as the political establishment was concerned. Pringle's outspoken views on what he regarded as low life in high places earned him enemies. Politicians in the Yukon brought great pressure to bear on this crusader for justice and truth.

Church Building in the East

Dr. Pringle's move from western Canada to eastern Canada was more than a physical transition. It would have been a major social and psychological transition as well. He was going from an itinerant wilderness ministry to a large city pastorate — from the rough and ready to a more sedate middle-class congregation. As a work on Pringle's life puts it, he was being asked to go to Sydney "after eleven years on the frontier, where he was Sexton, Session, Presbytery, Parson and Musical director combined — little wonder that he hesitated to give a direct and immediate answer to that question."[52]

There is little doubt that Dr. Pringle's decision to accept a Call to St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Sydney, was in no small way precipitated by his adversaries in Dawson. He needed a new start, a change in his life. He arrived in Cape Breton on February 16, 1909, and held his first meeting as moderator of the Session on February 19.

He entered upon his new mission with zeal and the congregation responded to him with equal zeal. Imposing man that Pringle was, someone of the time wrote, "Not only did Dr. Pringle fill the pulpit of St. Andrew's with his manly proportions, but he filled the church as well."[53]

Early in the new minister's tenure, it became necessary to build a new St. Andrew's. The old building was inadequate for the growing number of worshippers who made their way to Sunday worship. The congregation had grown prior to Pringle's time and he built on the momentum.

The Session minutes for May 26, 1909, record the following: "In view of the moderator's intention to attend the General Assembly, which meets this year in Hamilton, Ont., arrangements were made for the supply of the pulpit during his absence. It was also agreed that a meeting of elders and managers be called for the purpose of systematically canvassing the congregation for subscriptions in aid of the new church building."[54]

While he attended the Assembly, Pringle met with an architectural firm and returned with plans upon which the new St. Andrew's was built. It was dedicated to the glory of God on June 26, 1911, and for many years stood "as a memorial to his zeal."[55]

Return to the West

The end of John Pringle's ministry at St. Andrew's in 1925 came at the beginning of the United Church of Canada. Both he and the congregation entered the union. Yes, it was the end of his work in Sydney but not the end of his missionary endeavours.

The Missionary and Maintenance Board of the new denomination asked the veteran minister to begin a work in the North Thompson Valley in British Columbia. Pringle was now 73 years old.

---

51 Ibid.

52 *In Memoriam*, 16.

53 Ibid.

54 Ibid., 17.

55 Ibid.

So, "he laid aside his pulpit clothes and manners and again donned the togs of the trail."[56]

The first verse of a poem written for the occasion sums up John Pringle's pioneering spirit:

> Here's a welcome home to the West, Old Scout,
> Where a man's man ought to be;
> The effete East may be good for some,
> But was never meant for Thee.[57]

1919: Pringle as Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Canada

John Pringle was elected to the highest office of the Presbyterian Church in Canada in 1919, becoming moderator of the General Assembly when it met in Hamilton. The minutes of that Assembly record the election: "Principal MacKinnon moved that Lieutenant-Colonel John Pringle, D.D., Minister of St. Andrew's Church, Sydney, N.S., be chosen Moderator. The motion was seconded by Principal Baird, and there being no other nomination the motion was carried unanimously, and Dr. Pringle was declared elected."[58]

Perhaps the most significant action of the Assembly over which Pringle presided was the inauguration of the Forward Movement which included evangelism, missionary education, social concern, and a "Special Peace Thank Offering."

After the tragedy and uncertainty of the First World War, the denomination, no doubt, felt the need for a new beginning. The chairman of the Committee of Fifty, Dr. Alfred Gandier, put the urgency of the Forward Movement thus: "We are on the threshold of a new and larger manifestation of the Kingdom of God on earth but everything depends on this: Do we know the day of our visitation? . . . Who knoweth if we are come to the Kingdom for such a time as this?"[59]

Several million dollars were raised in "devout gratitude to God for victory and the possibility of a new start for the British Empire, and a war-cursed world."[60]

The minutes of the Assembly of a century ago record the confidence that the Assembly placed in its moderator when it was moved "that the Assembly request their Moderator to devote his time, from September to the end of the year, to the Forward Movement Campaign, giving such service as he only can give . . ."[61]

> Widely known by reputation, he toured the land throughout its length and breadth and thus became an actual living personality to thousands where heretofore he had been more or less of a legendary figure. So constant was the demand for his services and especially during this period of his moderatorship that he became affectionately known as 'The Minister of Railways.' Later on, when motor cars and greatly improved roads made travel by that means comfortable and safe, as well as speedy, this title was changed to 'The Minister of Highways.'[62]

A Great Man Fallen

Rev. Dr. John Pringle died in Lowell, Massachusetts, in 1935 at the age of 83. He had gone there to seek treatment for an illness of several months' duration. A Sydney newspaper said, "There is

---

56 Ibid., 27.
57 Ibid.
58 *A&P*, 1919, 17.
59 Ibid., 261.
60 Moir, *Enduring Witness*, 217.
61 *A&P*, 1919, 100.
62 *In Memoriam*, 22.

general rejoicing that he had lived so long and general sorrow and regret that he has died."[63] Pringle is interred in a graveyard called "John Pringle Cemetery."

Pringle served with enthusiasm until the very end. He had the privilege of ministering in many and varied capacities. His last work was in Bermuda. The text at his funeral service in St. Andrew's Church were the familiar words of David in the Second Book of Samuel, "Know ye not that a prince and a great man has fallen this day in Israel?"[64]

His brother George dedicated his book, *Adventure in Service*, to him with this verse:

> No one could tell me
> what my Soul might be.
> I sought for God
> and he eluded me.
> I sought my Brother,
> and I found all three.[65]

63 Unnamed newspaper article.

64 *In Memoriam*, 37.

65 Delores Smith, "Christianity Arrives in the Yukon," *Explore North: An Explorer's Guide to the North*, 2009, online: http://www.explorenorth.com/library/yafeatures/bl-christianity.htm.

Church Mission at Swan Lake Reserve

Leslie-Elizabeth King

Good afternoon. Thank you for this opportunity to share something of the role of the Church in the life of Swan Lake Reserve.

Swan Lake is an Anishinaabe community an hour's drive southwest of Winnipeg, Manitoba, on the shores of a small lake of the same name. It has sometimes been called "Yellowquill's Reserve," after the chief who negotiated Treaty #1 in 1871 and fought hard to have good agricultural land reserved for his people — it *is* top-quality land. It has also been called "Indian Springs" for the natural spring there. This part of the reserve had a post office and CNR siding with a few staff houses. A village five miles east is also called Swan Lake.

Research Sources and Perspectives

I began this research by talking to the Elders of the Swan Lake band and to their own treaty land entitlement researchers. The Elders were reluctant to say much — even the man who used to interpret for some of the missionaries. The researchers shared some of their findings with me. Band member Don Daniels had written the Swan Lake Reserve section of the Lorne Municipality history, which was useful. I consulted a number of older local histories by Rev. George Hambley and Rev. A. C. Garrioch, the local paper *Swan Lake Echo* (which became the *Swan Lake Echo and Somerset News* from 1903 to 1919), *Western Challenges* by Rev. Peter Bush and his paper on Rev. R. P. MacKay (thank you). I also looked at the United Church of Canada Archives, the Legislative Library of Manitoba, and Government of Canada documents. If possible, I spoke with ministers and presbyters who worked with the band.

The information that is missing for likely 99 percent of this 100-year history (30 as Presbyterian, 70 as United Church) is the conversation about the Church and Christianity within the Indigenous community and the background to cryptic statements in church and government reports, such as why no babies survived for several years in a row. Was starvation caused by the government withholding rations to pressure land surrender or have families send their children to residential school? Was it smallpox, present in 1906? How often did smallpox return? How did it affect the ministry? How did Christian doctrine affect the families whose children died?

The work of the Church needs to be understood within a wide social dynamic and we need to recognize that the people of Swan Lake Reserve were not passive recipients of what was happening to them. All human beings respond to what happens around them in a variety of ways.

A simple descriptive analysis of the role of the Church is of limited value for the Church today. Inference is needed but it must be exercised cautiously while we try to use this history to assist us as we live in a rapidly changing pluralistic world.

Primarily, this research and my writing comprise an act of reconciliation acknowledging the reality of the lives of real people.

Operating out of Our Cultural Identities

Jesus said, love one another as I have loved you.

The United Nations says that intentionally destroying a language or a religion, and removing

children from their families, community, and culture, is genocide.

Jesus said that he came to save the lost people of Israel, and the woman whose child was possessed said that even dogs eat crumbs that fall from their master's table (Matthew 15:21–28).

The *Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly* for 1908 state:

> When the Dominion of Canada was extended westward . . . No one could think for a moment of leaving half a continent in the possession of a race incapable of extracting from it more than the merest pittance of its wealth. Our race took from an Indian that which is enriching us . . . We destroyed his living. Were we not bound to help him to regain what he had lost? Does not that same bond hold us to our task still? It is vain to say that he belongs to a race of weaklings, and ought, therefore, to be allowed to sink to ever lower depths till he vanish from the earth. Are we not here to help him to become strong? Equally vain is it to plead that all our means and more are required for the stronger races, and therefore, this weak one should be left alone to perish. Rather is not this the little one, the weak one for whom we must care for the sake of Him who pitied our weakness, and bore it that we might become strong.[1]

That same year, Marjorie McIlwaine, in her annual report as missionary-teacher, stated: "The Government has discovered the number of Indians the schools have killed; let them find the number killed by whiskey."[2]

Jesus said, "I have come that they may have life and have it abundantly" (John 10:10) and "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled" (Matthew 5:6).

There is hope for our churches striving for righteousness, which failed to hear the voices of people who became possessions, and there is hope for the possessed. Just as Jesus did, we all operate out of our cultural identities, and just as Jesus did, when we hear and learn from people we encounter, we can change — and have changed — what we do. This history illustrates that.

Early Relationships with the Swan Lake Band

The relationship of the Swan Lake band to the Church began long before the Presbyterian mission was established. The band is one-third of the original Portage band, which was centred around Portage la Prairie, today a one-hour drive north of Swan Lake. In the 1850s, Anglican Archdeacon William Cochrane brought a group of settlers there, to Anishinaabe traditional territory. He knew Yellowquill and his people and ministered to them.[3]

As the disruption of being colonized became more intense, the band's situation became more desperate. Efforts to limit land speculation were assisted by John Garrioch, an Anglican lay reader. Garrioch wrote a letter to the settlers for them, asking the settlers to refrain from selling land until the treaty was signed. This letter was posted on the church door and published in *The Manitoban*. Garrioch was uncle to the second missionary-teacher, Kemper M. Garrioch. Both men were trusted by reserve members and spoke Ojibway.

On September 22, 1898, Rev. R. P. MacKay wrote to C. M. Jeffrey, secretary for Indian Work, of the Women's Foreign Missionary Society (WFMS), informing her:

> It was agreed to begin work amongst the three bands of Saulteaux Indians, when the Baptist Association signifies in writing that they have abandoned the field. It seems they have been labouring in one of the Bands."[4]

---

1 *Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada* [*A&P*], 1908, 181.

2 Ibid., 84.

3 A. C. Garrioch, *First Furrows* (Winnipeg: Stovel Company, 1923), 82–83.

4 R. P. MacKay, Letterbook, March 1898–July 1899, Box 9, 79.185C, United Church of Canada/Victoria University Archives.

In the next 100 years, the mission was served by 30 missionary-teachers, matrons, students, ordained ministers, a diaconal minister, and lay teachers. Mission workers were Presbyterian, Anglican, Mennonite, and United Church of Canada. There were blocks of time when no minister was present. The Church, except for the Roman Catholic Church and the occasional fundamentalist preacher, was always present with the permission of the Swan Lake band.

On June 1, 1898, Robert McKay was appointed as the first missionary-teacher because he spoke Cree; however, that was not the language Yellowquill's people spoke. They spoke Ojibway. McKay left after 18 months.

Kemper M. Garrioch, who had likely known Yellowquill in Portage la Prairie, was the second missionary-teacher. Although an Anglican, he had first been hired by the Presbyterian Church as a lay reader and attended Knox Presbyterian in Swan Lake village. Fiercely independent, this son of Métis free traders (smugglers) did not always follow the rules of either government or church, and post-Riel Rebellion, relationships between the Métis and settlers tended to be strained. For example, when the Christian businesses in Swan Lake village refused to advance credit to Swan Lake band members for traps and hunting supplies, Garrioch did. It was all repaid but was part of why he was removed: that and his debilitating grief over the death of his wife. Garrioch served as missionary-teacher for nearly six years and then moved to Indian Springs, within the reserve, till 1910. He appears to have had a good relationship with the fourth missionary-teacher, Marjorie McIlwaine, and with the town, where he interpreted for court cases and served on at least one jury.

The third missionary, Kate Cameron, stayed only eight months. She did not like the housing. Her first home visit was to a family with smallpox, about which she had not been notified.

McIlwaine, a Presbyterian, had taught at the Regina Indian Industrial School and was joined for one-and-a-half years by a graduate, Maggie Cote. They had an easier time than Garrioch had. More children came to the day school and up to nine of them lived in the mission house. This house replaced the loft that Garrioch's family of nine had lived in: the new one that Cameron had not approved of. McIlwaine and Cote did a lot of public speaking and brought groups to Swan Lake for programs. Cote was acknowledged to be a fine singer. More First Nations young people went to Regina to study, partly in response to Cote's example and partly because the federal government was pressuring families to send their children away to school.

McIlwaine took on the liquor trade. She had seen too many children drunk, too many adults injured and dead because of alcohol. After the trial of a French woman from Somerset for selling wood alcohol (essence of lemon), McIlwaine was so ill she had to take time off. When she returned to work, she accused the farm instructor, Malcolm Campbell, of selling liquor (a pattern seen by other missions, too). Their conflict lasted for several years after McIlwaine left to become lady superintendent and secretary at the Ninette Sanitorium for tuberculosis. Cote went to Crowstand as an instructor.

These two women were followed in 1919 by the Presbyterian sisters Jennie and Tena Bruce who continued in much the same manner. Like McIlwaine and Cote, they held Sunday worship in the school; Christian education work continued using picture rolls that the children could explain to their parents. Prayers assigned by the federal government were used in the school. WFMS groups heard them as speakers and visited the reserve. Sewing and needlework were taught. According to the *Swan Lake Echo*, the Bruces were well liked by the people of Swan Lake Reserve, including Indian Springs, and Swan Lake village. In October 1919, they retired to their brother's place in Lethbridge, Alberta.

Rev. James Donaghy and his wife arrived in April 1920. Donaghy was the first ordained missionary-teacher and his wife served as the matron. Among other things, she looked after

noonday meals for the students. Donaghy spent much energy raising funds through Presbyterian congregations in Ontario as well as trying to get more government money for the school and its programs. On the negative side, he actively interfered with traditional ceremonies, scheduling dinners, baseball games, or music when he knew they were on. He used magic tricks to discount what he called the magic tricks of Roman Catholic priests and of traditional Anishinaabe spiritual Elders. In the school he gave special rewards to the children he called "the better class."

After Church Union in 1925, Swan Lake, which became a United Church of Canada mission, was left off the list of missions to receive donations of clothing. Donaghy wrote pleading letters to church women in Ontario, seeming to emphasize the need for Christian charity. He described Swan Lake band members in racist, dismissive ways, especially the "useless women" who were far too independent to suit him. He did acknowledge that if the Indigenous conception of Manitou was not so like the Christian conception of God, it would be easier to convert First Nations people. Donaghy and his wife left in 1927, and the Presbyterian portion of this mission ended.

Missionary Dreams, Reserve Land Surrenders

During the Presbyterian years, McIlwaine attended a preparatory conference in Winnipeg for the National Missionary Congress of the Layman's Missionary Movement in Toronto in 1909. Her attendance reflected engagement with an international mission movement in which a Canadian report on missionary policy asserted Canada was to be responsible for evangelizing everyone in the country not yet Christian within a generation. As well as the Bruce sisters and James Donaghy, she was also a member of the Association of Presbyterian Workers Among the Indians of the Synods of Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

During these years there was a successful campaign by local settler communities to have parts (or all) of the reserve sold off to "real settlers." A petition was sent to Ottawa in 1903. The newspaper publisher, C. E. Pentland, promoted this for years with racist, misleading, and anxiety-producing articles reprinted from other papers, plus speeches from Hansard. (When he left the paper, he went into real estate.)

A Methodist missionary from Alberta, Rev. John McDougall, was appointed by the federal government to negotiate a surrender of much of the reserve land in 1907. McDougall had written to the papers about the rights of Indigenous people to hold traditional ceremonies in a modified form, and Yellowquill understood him to say that after the land was surrendered, they could hold a Sun Dance. But the government would not allow it and did not pay for the land as agreed. In 1909, Yellowquill and his Council wrote to the Governor General of Canada requesting payment. Yellowquill asserted that they believed a minister would always tell the truth, which was why they had signed. They also wrote to Frank Oliver, federal minister of the interior (1905–11) and an active Presbyterian.

The Influence of Presbyterian Politicians

Oliver was not the only Presbyterian who exercised a lot of power over Indigenous people and Swan Lake, in particular. David Laird was possibly the most influential. Laird served as minister of the interior, Government of Canada (1873–76), preparing the *Indian Act* of 1876. He had studied to become an ordained Presbyterian minister, was a member of the Foreign Mission Committee, and served on a church committee to "formulate views respecting educational work

among the Indians in the North-West, to be brought before the Government in Ottawa."[5] This initiative resulted in the creation of industrial schools, which then became the residential school system. Laird also served on the Winnipeg Presbyterian Protection of Church Property Committee when he was Indian commissioner for Manitoba and the North-West. On the local level, the inspector of Indian agencies, S. R. Marlatt, was a member of the Presbyterian congregation in Portage la Prairie and through his minister, participated in the process by which Kemper Garrioch was removed as a missionary-teacher by the denomination.

Church and Federal Government Tensions

The Church tied itself to the federal government for the authority to establish missions and run schools for children, who were more easily converted spiritually and culturally than their parents. It became dependent on government money and obliged to follow the government agenda even when it disagreed.

In the early years of the Swan Lake mission, the Church supported the development of Indigenous leadership and languages. It was easier to convert people using their own language and it lessened concerns about inaccurate interpretation; however, the federal government forbade the use of Indigenous languages in the schools. It even refused permission for the Church's Indigenous preachers to leave their reserves to preach elsewhere after an earlier successful series of preaching rallies.

It is easy, speaking like this, to emotionally separate church from government, but this would be a mistake. It has been my experience in Indigenous communities — the Haudenosaunee and Delaware, Mississauga, Anishinaabe, Cree, Dene, Sioux, and Haida — that there is no dualism between church and state. The actions of people identified as Christian are viewed as what Christianity is and what the Church does. I have found no historical record that indicates otherwise, although absence of evidence is not proof. There was no separation between church and state from the very start of this mission.

One Hundred Years of Mission: An Assessment

In all, the Swan Lake mission functioned for 100 years, ending in 1989 when funding could not be arranged. What are we to make of these years?

Generations of Swan Lake band members successfully resisted the organizational efforts of the Presbyterian Church in Canada and then the United Church of Canada. Traditional ceremonies have always been conducted in the community, although often in secret or modified form. Janet Silman (1978–81), Caryn Douglas (1983–86), and I (1986–95) were invited to observe and sometimes to take part in sweats or in the Sun Dance. Wakes, healing services, weddings, and funerals especially often combined traditional and Christian practices. Christianity, as a faith described in Christian teachings, had been converted into a form of spirituality more fitted to Anishinaabe culture.

I see two reasons for this. The first is the result of personal relationships between individuals in which mutual trust and respect were built and spiritual lives were shared. The second is the use that the band and its members made of Church resources. The Church was sometimes willing to

---

5 Foreign Mission Committee (Western Section) of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, minutes 9–10,17–19 June 1885, UCC-VU Archives, Toronto, 16.

use some of its power to provide what the people needed when they needed more power than they had on their own. Neither the relationship nor the journey was easy.

Yellowquill and his community faced crushing, overwhelming changes to their lives. Eventually every part of their lives as individuals and as a community was systematically attacked. The Church was a central part of that attack. First Nations people resisted with what today would be called non-compliance, but they also resisted by selectively taking what they could use in order to survive — and the Church provided some of that. However, the price the people paid should never have been required of them and should never be required again. That price is described in the United Nations definition of genocide: destruction of language, destruction of religion, the forcible removal of children, and more.

From the point of view of the Church goal to convert people to Christianity and grow a congregation with weekly worship services and church programs, these 100 years were almost a complete failure. But Jesus never called for the establishment of a hierarchical organization to control the lives of people. Jesus invited people into a deep personal relationship with God, our Creator, that would be expressed in every aspect of our lives. No matter who we are, that process is lifelong. Instead of their aiming to control people, Jesus told his followers that they were to serve people who tried to live in that way. In the 1970s, the mission was redefined as an outreach ministry and then in 1983, as a ministry-of-presence, it became something closer to what Jesus called for.

I would like to say that despite itself, the Church successfully served the people of the Swan Lake band in the way Jesus called it to — as a servant — but I am not sure that statement would hold up as true except from time to time. What I can affirm as true is that the people of Swan Lake Reserve, along with every other Indigenous community that has interacted with churches in Canada, changed the churches in a way that has made them more faithful to the life Jesus called them to live.

Apology in the Making

Dave Lee

The involvement of the Presbyterian Church in Canada in the residential schools will forever remain as the darkest period in the denominational history. Although its mission work among the Indigenous peoples began in the 1860s, it was not until the early 1880s that the Church partnered with the federal government in operating the newly established residential schools, with the latter providing much of the funds and oversight.[1] The implementation of the half-day system, centred on a mixture of classroom learning and vocational training, proved to be "the source of many ills,"[2] resulting in overwork, insufficient instruction in the classroom, and most notably, physical abuse at the hands of supervisors. The intent of the Church's participation was to assist Indigenous people in their adjustment to the Euro-Canadian majority,[3] but the harm done to the lives of the students — and their families — before the cessation of school operations in 1969 was irreparable.

In 1994, the Presbyterian Church in Canada came forward with a written confession and words of apology to Canada's Indigenous peoples. However, the Presbyterian Church was the last of the four churches involved in the residential school system — the United Church (1986), the Oblates (1991), and the Anglican Church (1993) — to issue an apology. Such tardiness ultimately begs the question: *What took them so long?*

This paper will explore the question in greater depth and demonstrate how the 1994 confession by the Church was, in fact, the product of a lengthy process characterized by the lack of denominational awareness; external political pressure; and the desire to be fair, truthful, and well-informed. Due to the specificity of the topic, this paper will focus solely on the period between 1986 and 1994; it will map a detailed progression of the events both within *and* outside the denomination leading up to the public presentation of the confession in Winnipeg on October 8, 1994. A closer look at the events throughout the years will reveal an internal turmoil within the Church amid the national crisis and the attempt by the Church to fully comprehend its role in its relationship with the Indigenous peoples of Canada.

The Awakening (1986–89)

The "quiet" awakening in the Presbyterian Church in Canada came in 1986, when the United Church of Canada — which had operated 13 schools — presented their apology to the Indigenous peoples for their role in the suppression of Indigenous spirituality. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the churches had supported Indigenous communities and organizations often in opposition to the federal government.[4] By the early 1980s, however, a group of First Nations leaders in the United Church sought "to have their voice heard within the structures of the church."[5] On the

1 The Presbyterian Church in Canada, "Brief Administrative History of the Residential Schools & The Presbyterian Church in Canada's Healing and Reconciliation Efforts," accessed February 27, 2019, https://presbyterian.ca/downloads/35602, 1.

2 J. R. Miller, "The State, the Church, and Indian Residential Schools in Canada," in *Religion and Public Life in Canada*, ed. Marguerite Van Die (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 112.

3 Ibid, 113.

4 J. R. Miller, *Residential Schools and Reconciliation: Canada Confronts Its History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017), 11.

5 Peter Bush, "The Canadian Churches' Apologies for Colonialism and Residential Schools," *Peace Research* 47, no. 1 (2015): 48.

evening of August 14, 1986, the Right Reverend Robert (Bob) Smith, the moderator of the year's General Council, spoke the words of the apology before a group of First Nations Elders who were already part of the Church.[6] In short, the apology addressed how the Church "confused the Western ways and culture" with the expansiveness of the gospel and thereby "helped to destroy the vision"[7] that was at the heart of Indigenous life and culture.

At the 113th General Assembly of that following year, Richard E. Sand, the clerk of Synod of Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario, filed an overture which recognized the bold steps taken by the United Church of Canada with their apology and urged the Presbyterian Church in Canada to recognize the requests of Indigenous peoples as "an indication that we are being called to move beyond the structures and practices of the past."[8] Furthermore, the overture pushed for a continuation and undertaking of new ecumenical discussions with the First Nations reserves on which the ministers of the Church worked. The Assembly responded with a recommendation that the overture be sent to the Board of World Mission and that the Native Ministry of Canada Operations Committee report to the Assembly the following year.[9]

In 1988, the committee reported to the 114th General Assembly that the requested review of the previous year's overture was not yet finished:

> At present these are in an embryonic stage and before discussing them publicly we feel that they need to be discussed and analyzed privately. It is our purpose [. . .] to hold discussions with the mission committees of particular Presbyteries in order to share information and achieve, if possible, some consensus among those who are most immediately affected by such ministries.[10]

As promised, the comprehensive report on Native ministries was presented at the 115th General Assembly in 1989. Noting the inadequacy of the present structures and concepts that inhibit the growth of Indigenous leadership in the Church, the report expressed the need for the denomination to embark on a much different path than before. It suggested that a committee be specifically established for this purpose, with much representation coming from both presbyteries and synods closely involved in Native ministry — including "Native Persons."[11] In other words, the Board of World Mission deemed it better for Indigenous people to speak for themselves than for the Board to speak on their behalf. This led to the formation of the National Committee on Native Ministry shortly thereafter.

There was, however, no visible sign from the Church of moving towards issuing an apology of their own to the Indigenous peoples as the United Church had. Was the Presbyterian Church in Canada hoping to quietly move on from the past by working diligently alongside Indigenous peoples in the present? Or was the Church simply oblivious to the seriousness of their involvement in the residential schools, perhaps due to their operating fewer schools than other churches had? The succession of events from the fall of 1989 went on to gradually reveal the inner thoughts and attitudes of the Presbyterian Church in Canada.

---

6 Ibid., 50.

7 "The Apologies," The United Church of Canada, accessed March 31, 2019, https://www.united-church.ca/sites/default/files/resources/apologies-response-crest.pdf.

8 *Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada* [*A&P*], 1987 (Board of World Mission report [BWM report]), 461.

9 Ibid., 430.

10 *A&P*, 1988 (BWM report), 478.

11 *A&P*, 1989 (BWM report), 466.

The Crisis (1989–93)

A series of events between 1989 and 1990 in Canada forever changed the conversation on residential schools and shaped the context in which the churches — including the Presbyterian Church in Canada — apologized.

In the fall of 1989, CBC Television aired the film *Where the Spirit Lives*, which told the story of a young Indigenous girl and her struggles to live in a residential school in the 1930s.[12]

In the summer of 1990, a 77-day confrontation between the First Nations and the police took place in Oka, Quebec. Also known as the "Oka Crisis," the highly publicized land dispute resulted in two deaths. The incident led to a much greater exposure of Indigenous issues, with further revelations made on the residential school legacy.

Later that fall, Chief Phil Fontaine, of Manitoba, shared his experiences of abuse in a residential school with a group of Indigenous high-school students. This telling led to an interview between Fontaine and Barbara Frum on CBC's *The Journal*.[13]

In 1991, the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate — which had operated 44 schools — issued their statement of apology to the First Nations of Canada on two separate occasions. The first was at the National Meeting on Indian Residential schools in spring; the second was in July, at Lac Ste Anne Pilgrimage in Alberta.[14] The Reverend Doug Crosby, the president of the Oblates Conference of Canada, delivered the apology and showed solidarity with the Indigenous peoples, especially in light of the upcoming 500th anniversary of European arrival on the shores of America.[15] The impact of the events of the preceding years on the content of the apology was evident. Specific apologies were made for such things as the following: "for the *existence of the schools themselves*," "for the instances of physical and sexual abuse that occurred in those schools," and "for our past dismissal of many of the riches of Native religious tradition."[16] Contrary to the apology of its predecessor, which had highlighted only the issue of evangelization and cultural assimilation, the apology of the Oblates addressed the residential school legacy for the first time.

Although things still seemed to be quiet among the other churches, there was a growing awareness of the residential school issue within the Presbyterian Church. Following the aforementioned events of 1989 and 1990, the Church was implicated in allegations of abuse and neglect by the Indigenous peoples, most notably by an Indigenous woman who had attended the Presbyterian residential school in Birtle, Manitoba.[17] In March 1991, Ian Morrison, the general secretary of Canada operations for the Board of World Mission, attended the gathering by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops; and in subsequent months, a team from the national head office visited the Birdtail Dakota Reserve in Manitoba to hear the stories of the survivors. Among those also present were Ray Hodgson, the general secretary for Church and Society, and June Stevenson, the editor of *Glad Tidings*. The overall experience proved to be shockingly revelatory for all, so much so that in the November 6 interview with John Congram, the editor of the *Presbyterian Record*, the following emerged:

---

12 Bush, "The Canadian Churches' Apologies for Colonialism and Residential Schools," 51.

13 Miller, *Residential Schools and Reconciliation*, 34.

14 Ibid., 36.

15 Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, "An Apology to the First Nations of Canada by the Oblate Conference of Canada," accessed March 31, 2019, http://www.cccb.ca/site/images/stories/pdf/oblate_apology_english.pdf, 1.

16 Missionary Oblates, "An Apology," 2.

17 John Congram, "No Clean Hands," *Presbyterian Record*, February 1992, 16.

> RECORD: What about an apology?
> JUNE: I think we need more than an apology; we need confession.
> RAY: Yes, first to God and then to those we have wronged. Then we need to tie it into specific actions.[18]

Shortly after the visits and the hearing of the stories of residential schools, the Committee of Reconciliation was appointed by the Board of World Mission. Rather than providing a mere apology, the committee, as echoed by Hodgson in the interview, sought to write a confession of sin which expressed the notion that all wrongdoing, first and foremost, is a sin against God.[19]

The draft of the confession was presented at the 118th General Assembly in 1992. Titled "Reconciliation with Aboriginal Peoples," the two-and-a-half-page document consisted of three sections: "Preamble," "Historical Context," and "Confession." In short, the confession implicated the Church in having "willingly adopted the goal of assimilation,"[20] while also recognizing the devotion of those who served in the mission field "in good faith."[21]

However, the confession was not adopted for approval. Rather, it was referred to the Life and Mission Agency "for a more balanced presentation of this Church's mission and ministry to native peoples, with the instruction that they listen to a broader spectrum of Aboriginal peoples [. . .] to former students of the residential schools,"[22] and to have it reported at the 1993 General Assembly. In short, the 1992 Assembly revealed the lack of awareness within the Church; many of the commissioners were unaware of the fact that the Church had their own residential schools. They also could not place the two schools that the Church had operated after 1925 — Cecilia Jeffrey, in Kenora, Ontario; and Birtle, in Birtle, Manitoba — on a map.[23]

The tension at the Assembly was clear; the motion to refer the confession was met with a number of dissents by those who believed that the "stories of Native people who have been abused need to be heard."[24] Such a divide served as a good indication that not everyone in the denomination saw the issue the same way. On one hand, there were those, like the dissenters, who were not afraid to voice and urge the Church to own up to their wrongdoing; on the other hand, there were those who genuinely did not see the Church as the source of blame in the matter — or who did recognize their fault, but sought to do as much damage control as possible.

The Women's Missionary Society (WMS), Western Division (WD), was certainly of the latter perspective. When the allegations of abuse surfaced regarding the Presbyterian residential schools, much of the finger-pointing and the blame were directed at the WMS as the "agency" of the Presbyterian Church in Canada. Although the Foreign Missions Committee had mainly operated the schools from early on under the authority of the General Assembly, the WMS gradually stepped into a greater role and assumed full responsibility for the schools from 1927 to 1969.[25] In addition to being involved in the administration of the schools, they provided financing not covered by the government grants. Hence, there was much indignation from the WMS at the slew of accusations concerning neglect, abuse, and exploitation. This resistance to apology was made clear in a testimony published in a 1992 issue of *Glad Tidings*: "There was no pattern to go by. The church

---

18 Ibid., 20.
19 Bush, "The Canadian Churches' Apologies for Colonialism and Residential Schools," 58.
20 *A&P*, 1992 (BWM report), 563.
21 Ibid., 564.
22 *A&P*, 1992, 73.
23 Bush, "The Canadian Churches' Apologies for Colonialism and Residential Schools," 59.
24 *A&P*, 1992, 74.
25 The Presbyterian Church in Canada, "Brief Administrative History of the Residential Schools & The Presbyterian Church in Canada's Healing and Reconciliation Efforts," 1.

was confronted with an entirely new situation and they did what seemed to be for the best at considerable expense and effort on their part."[26]

It was difficult for many to simply accept the claim of terrible things that had been done in their name, especially when the "positive results"[27] of the school system — such as education, and even a voice for the Indigenous peoples to speak up for themselves — seemed to be entirely overlooked and undermined. The truth of the matter was that there had, in fact, been some people who saw what the system was doing and tried to identify with their Indigenous counterparts, but despite their protest, they were silenced and ignored. Consequently, in the 1992 report to council executive, the WMS urged for distinctions to be made in the draft of the confession of the good work done by the missionaries in the field. The acknowledgment of this was later made in the confession: "We recognize that there were many members [. . .] who, in good faith, gave unstintingly of themselves in love and compassion for their aboriginal brothers and sisters."[28] Then, in the statement that followed, the Church also confessed their role in having ignored the insight of those who saw the damage that was being done.

This statement, however, did not signify the end of the contentious relationship between the WMS and those in the denomination who sought to get to the bottom of the residential school legacy. One of them was the Reverend Peter G. Bush, who was recorded as one of the dissenters at the 1992 Assembly. Bush first became aware of the residential school issue in 1989, while serving at his first pastoral charge in Flin Flon, Manitoba.[29] The ensuing events of that year and onwards heightened his interest and increased his involvement in the Church. Following the 1992 Assembly, he planned to submit a paper on the two Presbyterian schools for the gathering of the Canadian Society of Church History in May 1993. However, when he took a trip to the Presbyterian Archives in March, he was banned from accessing the WMS Records after the first day, only to find out that the order was given by none other than then-president of the WMS, Tamiko Corbett. The fear of facing potential lawsuits that he had sensed from the Church at the previous year's Assembly was still apparent. Eventually a compromise was reached between Bush and Corbett, and the boxes of microfilmed material were shipped back to Flin Flon with both parties paying the fees. Bush later reflected on his experience:

> I was hurt. I was devastated. I was angry. I did not understand how what I had been doing the day before was okay and now less than 24 hours later, it was not. The distrust was palpable. I was a minister [. . .] distrusted by the Church I served.[30]

As such, there was an internal turmoil in the denomination. The Church was charting its way through a rocky terrain, balancing the need for education and apology to the Indigenous peoples against the possible ramifications of acknowledging their responsibility in the matter.

The Confession (1993–94)

On August 6, 1993, the Archbishop and Primate Michael Peers delivered an apology to the National Native Convocation Minaki on behalf of the Anglican Church of Canada, which had

---

26 Lois Klempa and Rosemary Doran, *Certain Women Amazed Us: The Women's Missionary Society — Their Story, 1864–2002* (Toronto: Women's Missionary Society (WD), 2002), 369.

27 Ibid., 368.

28 *A&P*, 1992, 564.

29 Peter Bush, "Reflections on 25 Years of Writing About Residential Schools," *Canadian Society of Presbyterian History* (2017), 30.

30 Ibid., 31.

operated 21 schools. Being the sole representative of the Church, Peers used "I" rather than "We" in his apology, and expressed shame, humiliation, and the need for healing in order to move forward: "I also know that I am in need of healing, and my own people are in need of healing, and our church is in need of healing." Peers apologized even on behalf of "many who do not know these stories" and "those in the church who cannot accept the fact that these things were done in our name."[31] Pledging to walk with and work alongside the Indigenous peoples, Peers ended his apology by pointing to a sign of hope for life and fullness made possible by God raising Jesus from the dead. The apology was regarded by many Anglicans as a major event, but the subdued response of the Indigenous delegates at the event suggested that they did not deem the apology as closing the book on residential schooling issues for good.[32]

Meanwhile, just a few months prior, the Life and Mission Agency reported at the 119th General Assembly that while the confession was still in the works, some progress had been made: Hodgson, the associate secretary of Justice Ministries, was now working on material regarding the history of the Presbyterian Church's ministry with Indigenous peoples; Canada Ministries responded to the recommendations from the previous Assembly by having Hodgson and Florence Palmer attend a meeting held by the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, while Dr. Michael Farris was appointed to a working group consisting of Indigenous representatives and people of other denominations. Finally, it was reported that Hodgson was still working with the Aboriginal Rights Coalition on the ways in which the Church could assist in calling the Canadian government to acknowledge its harmful policies with the residential school system.[33] All in all, there were visible and concrete steps being taken by the Church towards raising awareness and broadening their understanding of the issue at hand. Throughout the intervening years, discussion of the schools continued to take place both in and outside the Church, and the Presbyterian-based publications (*Presbyterian Record*, *Glad Tidings*) published articles on the schools, as well.[34]

At last, the year 1994 marked the adoption and presentation of the confession to the Indigenous peoples by the Presbyterian Church in Canada. At the 120th General Assembly, the Justice Ministries presented a full report which was almost three times the length of the 1992 report. The eight-and-a-half-page document covered not only the historical context, but provided a historical chronological overview and personal testimonies, as well. The evidence of the work done by the Church in the previous years was apparent; in essence, the final report was much more detailed and nuanced in its presentation and treatment of the residential school legacy. For instance, the report addressed its new-found understanding of the Indigenous conception of justice in relation to the Eurocentric way, which was entirely absent in the 1992 report.

The revised confession was also presented to the Assembly for approval. Although its content remained unchanged, parts of the confession were edited and certain statements that were broken up as separate statements in the original draft were combined. In line with its theological intent, the confession began with these words:

"*The Holy Spirit, speaking in and through Scripture, calls* The Presbyterian Church in Canada to confession . . . "[35]

The confession acknowledged the complicity of the Church in the governmental policy of

---

31 Anglican Church of Canada, "The Apology — English," accessed March 31, 2019, https://www.anglican.ca/tr/apology/english/.

32 Miller, *Residential Schools and Reconciliation*, 37.

33 *A&P*, 1993, 261.

34 Bush, "The Canadian Churches' Apologies for Colonialism and Residential Schools," 59.

35 The Presbyterian Church in Canada, "The Confession of the Presbyterian Church in Canada," accessed on March 31, 2019, https://presbyterian.ca/downloads/355607, 1 [emphasis added].

assimilation as well as the residential school system, and asked for forgiveness from God and the Indigenous peoples.[36] Arguably the most theological of all apologies, the Presbyterian confession marked the "end of an evolution in the statements that began in 1986 with the United Church."[37] It was a product of not only the desire to set things right with those to whom lasting harm had been done, but also of a lengthy period of study, reflection, and deliberation. This time, the confession was adopted for approval by the Assembly, with recommendations to explore ways of bringing it to the Indigenous peoples and thereby further the reconciliation process.

October 8, 1994, marked a historic occasion as the Reverend George Vais, the moderator of the Assembly, formally presented the confession to Chief Phil Fontaine at the Forks National Site in Winnipeg. Those also present at the ceremony were Kay Cowper, president of the WMS; Tamiko Corbett, the executive secretary; and June Stevenson. Cowper took the time to offer her words of apology. The occasion proved to be unique and special in that, compared to the events held by the other churches, the Presbyterian Church carried out their ceremony in an Indigenous space (the Oodena Celebration Circle) rather than in a church space, thus making it a more "public" presentation of the apology than the others.[38] Fontaine accepted the apology on behalf of the First Nations people, while making it clear that he was not yet ready to offer forgiveness to the Church: "It is an important step towards healing and represents the hope of a brighter future."[39] The occasion served as a meaningful and important first step in the healing and reconciliation journey between the Presbyterian Church in Canada and the Indigenous peoples, one that would later prove to be fraught with many challenges and difficulties.

Conclusion

This paper has sought to demonstrate how the seemingly delayed presentation of the 1994 confession to the Indigenous peoples by the Presbyterian Church in Canada was a complex work of conflicting perspectives, intensive research, and intentional reflection on the denominational involvement in the residential school legacy. In retrospect, it could be said that to simply adopt the confession at its initial presentation to the Assembly in 1992 would have been premature, given the lack of awareness on the issue in the Church at the time. This, however, is not to suggest that the two years were all that the Church needed to comprehend the reality of its involvement and the aftermath; owning up to the truth of residential schools and living deeply into the confession still proved to be a challenge for the Church into the millennium.[40] To this day, we as the Church ought not to regard the apology as something of the "past," but that which must be continually spoken in new times and contexts, in order that we can reaffirm our commitment to walking together with the Indigenous peoples in the now and forevermore.

---

36 Ibid., 2.

37 Miller, *Residential Schools and Reconciliation*, 38.

38 Bush, "The Canadian Churches' Apologies for Colonialism and Residential Schools," 59.

39 *Glad Tidings*, December 1994, 21.

40 Bush, "Reflections on 25 Years of Writing About Residential Schools," 33–34.

Appendix A: Presbyterian Residential Schools

Ahousaht Residential School, British Columbia
Alberni Residential School, British Columbia
Birtle Residential School, Manitoba*
Cecilia Jeffrey Residential School, Kenora, Ontario*
Crowstand Residential School, Saskatchewan
File Hills Residential School, Saskatchewan
Muscowpetung ("Lakesend") Residential School, Saskatchewan
Portage la Prairie Residential School, Manitoba
Regina Industrial School, Saskatchewan
Round Lake Residential School, Saskatchewan
Stoney Plain Residential School, Alberta[41]

* Remained under the responsibility of the Presbyterian Church in Canada after 1925 until 1969

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, 1987–1994.

Anglican Church of Canada. "The Apology — English." Accessed March 31, 2019. https://www.anglican.ca/tr/apology/english/.

Bush, Peter. "Reflections on 25 Years of Writing About Indian Residential Schools." *Canadian Society of Presbyterian History*, 2017.

Congram, John. "No Clean Hands." *Presbyterian Record*, February 1992.

Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate. "An Apology to the First Nations of Canada by the Oblate Conference of Canada." Accessed March 31, 2019. http://www.cccb.ca/site/images/stories/pdf/oblate_apology_english.pdf.

The Presbyterian Church in Canada. "The Confession of the Presbyterian Church in Canada." Accessed on March 31, 2019. https://presbyterian.ca/downloads/355607.

The United Church of Canada. "The Apologies." Accessed March 31, 2019. https://www.united-church.ca/sites/default/files/resources/apologies-response-crest.pdf.

Secondary Sources

Aboriginal Healing Foundation. *Response, Responsibility, and Renewal: Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Journey*, edited by Gregory Younging, Jonathan Dewar, and Mike DeGagné. Aboriginal Healing research series. Ottawa: Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2009.

Bush, Peter. "The Canadian Churches' Apologies for Colonialism and Residential Schools." *Peace Research* 47, no. 1 (2015): 47–70.

Glad Tidings. December 1991.

———. December 1994.

Klempa, Lois, and Rosemary Doran. *Certain Women Amazed Us: The Women's Missionary*

[41] The Presbyterian Church in Canada, "Brief Administrative History of the Residential Schools & The Presbyterian Church in Canada's Healing and Reconciliation Efforts," accessed February 27, 2019, https://presbyterian.ca/downloads/35602.

Society — Their Story, 1864–2002. Toronto: Women's Missionary Society (WD), 2002.
Miller, J. R. *Residential Schools and Reconciliation: Canada Confronts Its History*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017.
———. "The State, the Church, and Indian Residential Schools in Canada." In *Religion and Public Life in Canada,* edited by Marguerite Van Die, 109–29. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001.
Milloy, John S. *A National Crime: The Canadian Government and the Residential School System, 1879 to 1986*. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1999.
The Presbyterian Church in Canada. "Brief Administrative History of the Residential Schools & The Presbyterian Church in Canada's Healing and Reconciliation Efforts." Accessed on February 27, 2019. https://presbyterian.ca/downloads/35602.

Educating Baby Boomers: Sunday School Curriculum Recommendations in the Presbyterian Church in Canada, 1940 to 1970

Anne McGillivray

Choosing Sunday school curriculum is not something one thinks of as a particularly political activity. One imagines the person or committee doing the choosing surveying the possibilities and finding the best fit theologically and pedagogically for the situation. But when one remembers the many people who have a stake in that choice, one begins to think of the political pitfalls associated with it. Students, their parents, Sunday school teachers, Sunday school superintendents, pastors, theologians, and publishers all have varying needs and expectations to be fulfilled in the curriculum.

From 1925 to about 2015, the Presbyterian Church in Canada made recommendations to the Church at large and its congregations regarding Sunday school curriculum, and for many years even published that curriculum itself. The recommendations came from the Board of Sabbath Schools and Young People's Societies, which became the Board of Christian Education in 1952, which became part of the Board of Congregational Life in 1973 (all of which will be referred to as "the Board" hereafter). This paper will look at the recommendations made between about 1940 and 1970. This is broadly the time when the baby-boom generation was attending Sunday school. From declining attendance in the 1930s and early 1940s, Sunday school attendance in Canada and in the Presbyterian Church went to all-time highs in the 1950s and 1960s. If the baby-boom generation can be said to be those children born between about 1947 and 1964, they were the target audience for the curriculum decisions made from early in the 1940s and into the 1960s. Through an examination of the Board reports and General Assembly minutes, it will be seen that while the committee was concerned to make wise pedagogical choices, they also faced influences from both inside and outside the denomination which affected their choices. Factors such as the attitudes of the denomination to cooperation with other communions, the opinions of congregations on curriculum, the costs of producing curriculum, and the availability of resources for producing it, external events, and availability of outside curriculum, all entered into the Board's recommendations.

While "curriculum" may refer broadly to all experiences contributing to learning, such as worship, fellowship, service, and study, this paper will focus on written, published curriculum used in Sunday schools, also known as Sabbath schools or church schools.

The 1940s: Challenges

The early 1940s found Canadians coming out of the Great Depression but embroiled in the Second World War. For Presbyterians, the memory of the dispute over Church Union was recent. The continuing Presbyterians constituted a much smaller denomination post-Union than the pre-Union Presbyterian Church in Canada, and their small size affected their ability to produce and publish their own materials. The Sunday school materials used before Union went into the United Church of Canada along with their publishing agency, and for the first few years after 1925, the continuing Presbyterians purchased materials from the publishing house of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, Westminster Press. Gradually they began to edit those materials for a Canadian

audience and then to publish their own materials. Rev. Norman A. MacEachern was a key person in this process; he was the one to edit the Westminster materials, and then to edit and write Presbyterian Church in Canada materials. In 1931, he became the publisher of those materials when he established Presbyterian Publications. In 1934, the General Assembly agreed to recognize Presbyterian Publications as the official publishing house for the Church's Sunday school publications. Presbyterian Publications was an integral part of the Board of Sabbath Schools and Young People's Societies, and later the Board of Christian Education. The editor, part of the Board, was invited every year to address General Assembly during the presentation of the Board's report to the Assembly. MacEachern was highly commended in those reports, and he seems to have worked sacrificially in his editing and publication roles.

By the early 1940s, the production of curriculum had stabilized in the Presbyterian Church in Canada. Indeed, by the mid-1930s, the Board could proudly report, "All helps for the International Uniform Lessons are now edited and printed in Canada. The Illustrated Sunday School papers are greatly appreciated . . . the Publications Department also supplies Graded Lesson material, Bibles, Books of Praise, Duplex Envelopes, etc."[1] The International Uniform Lesson Series was an outline for the study of the whole Bible to be completed in Sunday schools over a six-year cycle, which was produced under the auspices of the International Council for Religious Education. Established in the 1870s, it was used widely by many denominations in North America. While the council specified the content of the lessons, it appears that each denomination was free to edit or produce their own version of the lessons, or "lesson helps," and this is what Presbyterian Publications was doing into the 1940s. Annual reports of the Board expressed satisfaction with this situation and urged Canadian Presbyterians to show their support for Presbyterian Publications by ordering their Sunday school supplies from that company.

The first challenge to this equilibrium appears in the minutes of the 1942 General Assembly. The Board, concerned about "indifference to religion on the part of parents and the spiritual barrenness of home life,"[2] wanted a special committee appointed to deal with this. "Mr. A. N. Miller moved that the recommendation be further amended by the addition of the words, 'and also to consider the whole question of the relationship of the Sabbath Schools to the Church and the congregations, and the matter of the plan, curriculum, and objectives in the Christian education of the young.'" This amendment was lost, and the original recommendation for the special committee to be formed was adopted, but then an additional recommendation was moved by J. A. MacInnes, seconded, and adopted: "That a study of the possible advantage and greater benefit to the Sabbath Schools and Church, through a syllabus of Bible studies prepared and issued by the Assembly's Board be commended."[3]

Miller's amendment may reflect some dissatisfaction on the part of some in the denomination with the state of Christian education. New theories of education had entered the field of Christian education in the early 1900s, coalescing in the formation of the Religious Education Association in 1903. New advances in biblical studies and new theologies, such as neo-orthodoxy, had infiltrated the theological colleges and the clergy, but were not necessarily reflected in the Sunday schools or other forms of Christian education. Miller's amendment was lost, but that may have been because it was not really relevant to the initial recommendation, rather than because it had no support in the broader Church. MacInnes's later recommendation indicates that there was some impetus for change in the Sunday school curriculum at least, since it was adopted by the Assembly.

---

1 *Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada* [*A&P*], 1936, Appendices, 125.

2 *A&P*, 1942, App., 98.

3 *A&P*, 1942, 40.

It is uncertain just what the Church was looking for in seeking to produce its own curriculum. "A syllabus of Bible studies" was already being used in the International Uniform Lesson Series, was being adapted specifically for the Canadian Presbyterian audience, and was being published in Canada. At any rate, the Board undertook a study of the matter over the next year and came back in 1943 with this reply: "That having taken into account the whole field we seek to serve, we cannot see that we are in a position to produce any syllabus better than the one known as the International Lesson Series, and at the same time would intimate that if there is any syllabus known to anyone and held to be better, we are prepared to consider the same."[4]

The Board's minutes of their meeting earlier that spring reflect their thinking: "Dr. MacEachern supported this report mentioning the various objections raised against the Uniform Lessons, giving details of the other courses in operation at the present time and intimating the probable cost to our Church were we to embark upon a course of study of our own."[5] It is likely that there were few good alternatives and that producing their own curriculum was deemed too costly.

The 1943 Assembly accepted this reply. But the year following seems to have produced some new issues. The General Assembly of 1944 was asked to consider a recommendation from the Board "[t]hat the Board be granted permission to explore the possibility of co-operation with other communions in the production of lesson material."[6] A special committee was struck to consider the recommendation and came back with their response:

> Having heard a frank and full statement of the problems facing the Board of Sabbath Schools and Young People's Societies in the production of lesson material, especially under the new Uniform Lesson Series which becomes operative in 1945, and having learned that the Board of Sabbath Schools and Young People's Societies have the opportunity of sharing in the association known as the Canadian Bible Lesson Series recently formed for the production of lesson material in Canada on a cooperative basis, your Committee recommend that Recommendation No. 2 of the report of the Board of Sabbath Schools and Young People's Societies be amended by striking out all the words after "that" and substituting the following: "The Board of Sabbath Schools and Young People's Societies be granted permission to enter the Association known as the Canadian Bible Lesson Series for the production of lesson material for the use of our Sabbath Schools, without financial obligation to the Church and with the arrangement terminable on one year's notice."[7]

The special committee was thus recommending that the Board be allowed to enter an interdenominational cooperative venture to produce curriculum. In the custom of General Assembly minutes, we are not given the substance of the debate that followed. We do know that, "[b]y permission of the Assembly Dr. N. A. MacEachern spoke in connection with the proposal." We do not know what he said. But the outcome was this: "On the vote being taken, the motion was lost . . . ," and the Board was not to be allowed to enter the cooperative venture. Instead came this supplemental recommendation, moved by W. S. Reid: "That the Board of Sabbath Schools and Young People's Societies be instructed to continue the publication of Sabbath School material for our church and that the Board of Administration provide, if necessary, sufficient funds to enable the Board to carry out this instruction."[8]

There are three things to note here. The first is that there seems to have been some interruption

---

4 *A&P*, 1943, App., 125.

5 Board of Sabbath Schools and Young People's Societies, "Minutes of April 8, 1943," Presbyterian Church in Canada Archives.

6 *A&P*, 1944, App., 122.

7 *A&P*, 1944, 58.

8 Ibid., 59.

or change anticipated in the International Uniform Lesson Series. What that change might be is unclear, since the Lessons are still being produced to this day. Iris Cully offers some clues: "Until the 1940's the group-graded outlines were shared by several denominations — Methodist, Congregational, and Presbyterian — but the consortium fell apart. The impetus for change came through denominational responses to neoorthodoxy and its approach to biblical interpretation."[9] The Board had discussed their response to the anticipated change at one of their meetings in 1944, considering three options: "1) Choose our own series of lessons; 2) Select a uniform series of lessons based on the Uniform series, or 3) Seek cooperation in publication with other communions."[10] After discussion, they chose the latter, but as noted above, were not allowed to pursue that course.

The second thing to note is that the Canadian Bible Lesson Series was a proposal for cooperation with the United Church of Canada and the Baptist Federation of Canada. The events of 1925 were still fresh in the memory of many Canadian Presbyterians, and it may have been that they were still wary of any cooperation with other denominations, especially the United Church of Canada.

The third thing to note is that Norman MacEachern was invited to speak to the Assembly on the subject. As the owner of Presbyterian Publications, he could be expected to have a financial stake in any decision regarding Sunday school curriculum, and as editor-in-chief of the curriculum, his job would also be affected. In his early sixties at this time, he may not have wanted to embark on creating a whole new curriculum from scratch on his own, and he may have been wary of the financial commitment that Presbyterian Publications would have to make to either a cooperative venture or to the uncertain future of a new Presbyterian curriculum. What he said at the Assembly we do not know, but his remarks, reported above in the April 8, 1943, Board minutes, seem to indicate a reluctance to commit the Church to writing and producing their own curriculum.

Whatever the nature of the discussion, the Assembly had committed the Church to the publication of its own curriculum, a decision that they would live with for the next 20 years.

Is there an irony in the fact that the same year that the Presbyterian Church in Canada committed to producing their own curriculum, the Presbyterian Church in the United States recruited a Canadian Presbyterian to be editor-in-chief of one of the most successful Sunday school curricula of the twentieth century? James D. Smart, author of *What a Man Can Believe*, which had been published in 1943, and a minister in Peterborough, Ontario, moved to Philadelphia to take on this new venture of producing what was to become the Christian Faith and Life curriculum.

Smart was strongly neo-orthodox in his theology, something that he transmitted to the new curriculum. This new curriculum, in the works since 1937, was finally published in 1948. It followed a three-year cycle, emphasizing Jesus Christ the first year, the Bible the second year, and the Church the third year. William Klempa lists five of its hallmarks: (1) training for Christian discipleship, (2) emphasis on Bible and doctrine, (3) honesty about historical-critical scholarship, (4) the importance of church history, and (5) a program for church and home.[11] Besides the weekly lessons, study books for older students and beautifully illustrated picture books for younger students were produced. Pictures used as audiovisual aids were to be as historically accurate as possible, and writers and artists wrestled with presenting to children the difficulties of modern scriptural scholarship. Materials were also produced to train teachers and parents in child

---

9 Iris Cully, *Planning and Selecting Curriculum for Christian Education* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1983), 30.

10 Board of Sabbath Schools and Young People's Societies, "Minutes, April 20–21, 1944," PCC Archives.

11 William Klempa, "The Church Must Teach — Or Die!: James D. Smart and a Revolutionary Curriculum," *Presbyterian Record* 134, no.1 (January 2009): 29–30.

development and psychology. The result was a well-thought-out, good-quality curriculum.

The 1948 release of the Christian Faith and Life curriculum coincided nicely with the beginning of the baby boom as well as an increase in church and Sunday school attendance in North America. It was extremely well received. Writing 10 years later in 1958, Randolph Crump Miller discusses some of its history as well as its strengths and weaknesses, but concludes with an extremely positive review:

> When all is said and done, the Christian Faith and Life series is a whopping financial success, partly because it is used by 90% of the Presbyterians and partly because it is so good that parishes of other denominations use it. . . . I think it is the best series available for the average Protestant Church . . . When a congregation has used the Presbyterian materials for a period of years, some things become evident. The young people, after going through this experience, usually have become articulate, intelligent, and devoted Christians. They have a genuine grasp of the meaning of the Christian faith for their lives and they are able to think and reason about their faith. Because of the excellent leadership training, they have had teachers who are able to use the tools given them, and subtle changes have occurred in parish life which have transmitted the redemptive power of God's grace to the members of the congregation. The total result is good, for God is working through these people to teach, guide and redeem them.[12]

Meanwhile, back in Canada, the Presbyterian Church in Canada began producing its own curriculum. While the Christian Faith and Life series took years to move from conception to production, the Canadian church began to publish their new curriculum in 1945, just one year after they were mandated to do so. Admittedly, it was not much different from the earlier International Uniform Lesson Series. A 1945 leaflet about the new program described the Presbyterian Uniform Bible Lessons as covering the New Testament and portions of the Old Testament over the course of five years.[13] The lessons were for the junior department (Grades 4 to 6) through the senior department (Grades 9 to 12). There were no audiovisual resources supplied. For the younger children, the Board continued to recommend the International Uniform Lesson Series "in order that the classes of smaller children may make use of the coloured picture roll and coloured lesson cards available for this course."[14]

The production of the new curriculum was not without trouble. Norman MacEachern became sick and died in July 1945. His editorial duties were turned over to Neil Smith, a young minister who remained editor until 1953. In 1947, Smith reported to the General Assembly on "the various publications printed for the use of our Sabbath Schools and Young People's Societies and the loss incurred in connection with the preparation and publication."[15] The following year the Board's report included a paragraph on the serious difficulties in financing the cost of printing its publications. The paragraph concluded, "The action of the Board of Administration in reducing the amount available for the purpose of producing all of our own materials forced the Board to agree to co-operation in the production of our illustrated papers. We shall continue to produce our own lesson helps as we have hitherto done."[16]

Again, the General Assembly Acts and Proceedings do not record any discussion of the above statement. What was not stated in the report was the identity of the denominations with whom the Board was cooperating — the United Church of Canada and the Baptists, with whom they had

---

12 Randolph Crump Miller, "Christian Faith and Life Series," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 14, no.1 (November 1958): 44–45.

13 Presbyterian Uniform Bible Lessons, PCC Archives, Christian Education fonds, 1973-1018-1-2.

14 *A&P*, 1945, App., 108.

15 *A&P*, 1947, 27.

16 *A&P*, 1948, App., 100.

wanted to cooperate in 1944. The Board did not ask permission in the form of a recommendation and the report was accepted by the General Assembly. The outcry against this move began very soon. The September after that General Assembly, the Presbytery of Brandon submitted an overture saying the move had been made without the consent of the Church and that "the teaching in these papers has been found to be inconsistent with the Scriptures, beliefs and standards of our church," asking for "Sunday school papers which are in accord with the beliefs and standards of our church, being distinctly Presbyterian and Scriptural."[17] The Synod of Saskatchewan submitted a similar overture in February 1949 protesting the "apparent secrecy" of the move and asking for the discontinuation of the cooperation.[18] These overtures probably represent many other less formal complaints. The Board was forced to back down on cooperation but suggested (sarcastically?), "As Overture No. 1 requests 'distinctly Presbyterian' papers the Board welcomes contributions from writers who can offer suitable materials of this kind."[19]

It was not lost on Canadian Presbyterians that important things were happening with curriculum in the United States. Many would have been aware that one of their own people was the editor-in-chief of the new Christian Faith and Life series, and if they hadn't known that, J. D. Smart's "Philadelphia Letter," published regularly in the *Presbyterian Record,* would have given them a clue. In 1948, a motion was made in General Assembly to

> . . . instruct the Board of S.S. and Y.P.S. to make a thorough examination of the New Curriculum for Sunday Schools prepared by The Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., with particular reference to the advisability and the possibility of their use, either as they are or as revised, in The Presbyterian Church in Canada, and report to the next Assembly.[20]

The motion was laid upon the table and not picked up again. An overture in 1949 asked the Board "to explore the possibility of our Church making use of Religious Education Materials published by our sister church in the U.S.A."[21] Again, these formal requests probably represent many less formal requests received by the Board. (On the other hand, another overture in 1949 asked for a return to the International Uniform Lesson Series, which was not granted.[22]) In 1949, the Board announced that a committee on curriculum had been established, which, in 1949 and 1950, studied curricula from North America as well as Great Britain, Australia, and New Zealand. "Commendable features in these have been drawn to the notice of lesson-writers, and constant effort is made to make our Lesson Helps more useful. The Curriculum Committee is agreed that our own Presbyterian Lesson Helps should be used in our Sunday Schools."[23] In 1951, the Board recommended "that the new six-year Cycle of Presbyterian Uniform Lessons be authorized for use in the Sunday Schools beginning in October 1951."[24]

The 1950s: Advances

James D. Smart returned to Canada in 1950 as minister of Rosedale Presbyterian Church in Toronto. In addition to his pastoral duties, he was recruited to be on the Board of Sabbath Schools

---

17 *A&P*, 1949, App., 102.
18 Ibid., 104–5.
19 *A&P*, 1949, 47.
20 *A&P*, 1948, 78.
21 *A&P*, 1949, App., 104.
22 Ibid., 110.
23 *A&P*, 1950, App., 91.
24 *A&P*, 1951, App., 104.

and Young People's Societies, and on the Board of the Missionary and Deaconess Training School. One source says that he was a lecturer in Christian education at Knox College and the Missionary and Deaconess Training School, and professor of hermeneutics at Knox, as well as "editor-in-chief of Curriculum Publications for the Presbyterian Church of [sic] Canada."[25] That he was a lecturer in Christian education is confirmed by Smart himself in the preface to his 1954 book, *The Teaching Ministry of the Church*.[26] That he was editor of the PCC curriculum could not be confirmed nor is he listed as the editor in the 1950s publications. However, given his experience with the Christian Faith and Life curriculum, it is likely that he would have had a huge influence on the decisions of the Board and would have been able to mentor the new official editor, W. B. Fuller.

Whether or not James Smart had a hand in them, there were some significant changes for the Board in the early 1950s. In 1952, the name changed from Board of Sabbath Schools and Young People's Societies to the Board of Christian Education, reflecting a broader spectrum of responsibilities and a recognition that Christian education was for the whole Church, not just children and youth. Also in 1952, the Board recommended:

> That because we desire to have the children and youth understand that they belong within the fellowship of the Church, and because we desire to have the congregation mindful of their responsibilities for Christian nurture, the General Assembly authorize the use of the name "Church School" to replace the name "Sunday School."[27]

In 1953, editor-in-chief Neil Smith left Presbyterian Publications to become the librarian at Knox College, and the Board took the opportunity to make the position of editor a staff position of the Board, under their appointment rather than that of Presbyterian Publications.

Major changes occurred in the Presbyterian Uniform Lessons curriculum as well. In 1953, the Board announced that a new six-year cycle had been prepared with three major themes: the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, the Bible, and the Church. One cannot think that it is an accident that these are the same themes that were used in the Christian Faith and Life curriculum. There appears to have been much more thought and work poured into this new curriculum than the one developed in 1944 and 1945. Work on this curriculum was begun three years before its introduction in 1955, and two-day conferences for lesson writers were held at least twice. A prospectus for 1955–56 assured churches: "The lesson material which has been prepared and written by ministers of our church is Christ-centred and Bible-centred. It seeks to enlarge the pupil's understanding of Christ and the Bible, and to use the Scriptures honestly and in faithfulness to their true meaning. It is also Church-centred and mission-minded."[28] The prospectus listed the reading books of the Christian Faith and Life series as part of the supplies that could be ordered. The response to the new curriculum was very positive. Already in 1954, "On motion of Mr. R. E. G. Dennys, duly seconded, the appreciation of the Assembly was extended to the Board for the improvement in the Lesson series."[29] In 1956, the Board reported that sales were up by 40 percent for the junior lessons, 25 percent for the intermediate-senior lessons, and almost 20 percent for the young people's and adult classes.[30]

The year 1953 brought a change in curriculum for the younger children, as well. The home-

---

25 Harley Atkinson, "James D. Smart," *Christian Educators of the 20th Century Project*, edited by Kevin Lawson, accessed February 6, 2018, http://www.talbot.edu.ce20/educators/protestant/james_smart/.

26 James D. Smart, *The Teaching Ministry of the Church* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1954), 9.

27 *A&P*, 1952, App., 103.

28 *Prospectus: Christian Education Literature, 1955–1956.* PCC Archives, Christian Education fonds, 1982-1015-2-2.

29 *A&P*, 1954, 64.

30 *A&P*, 1956, App., 228.

grown Presbyterian Uniform Lesson series was written for the junior through senior departments, about ages 9 through 16. The Board of Christian Education recognized that the younger children needed a more closely graded curriculum and recommended the Canadian Graded Bible Lessons for children ages 3 through 8. Interestingly, in their report, the Board said that these lessons were "prepared by our Church in co-operation with the Baptists and the United Church,"[31] that is, the same cooperation that had been resisted by the Church in 1944 and 1948. Assembly minutes do not record that the Board had asked permission for this cooperation, nor do they record any opposition. Perhaps five years had made some forget their reluctance to cooperate, or people were getting tired of the International Lesson series. It may also have helped that the Board recommended the Christian Faith and Life series as an alternative to the Canadian Graded Bible Lessons for the younger children although only a small percentage of Sunday schools used Christian Faith and Life.

The 1960s: Diversifying

With a new curriculum for the older church school students in the Presbyterian Uniform Lesson series, and two options for the younger students — the Canadian Graded Bible Lessons or the Christian Faith and Life series — the curriculum situation was relatively stable for about five years. In 1959, though, the Board began to anticipate the need for change. "[T]he Curriculum Study Committee of the Board sees the necessity for producing a graded course which is particularly for our junior pupils. This would require a new Junior Teacher and Pupil Work sheets. Moreover, the Board foresees a situation arising in the near future which may require the Board to produce Primary Department material."[32] In 1960, this last statement was clarified in the Board's report: the Canadian Graded Bible Lessons would be discontinued in 1964.[33] The reason was that the United Church of Canada was developing a new church school curriculum to be introduced in 1964. The Board had considered various options, including "to adapt for our own use the new curriculum of the United Church of Canada now in preparation [or] to produce within our own Church a new curriculum for all ages."[34] In the end they decided to make the Christian Faith and Life curriculum the sole recommended curriculum for the younger children. That curriculum required more interpretation, promotion, and teacher training, and the next few years the Board staff were kept busy conducting that training around the country.

In 1960, the Board also recommended "[t]hat the General Assembly authorize the Board of Christian Education to undertake a programme of research for the development of a new curriculum for children, youth, and adults."[35] At about the same time, the Presbyterian Church in Canada had entered into a partnership with 15 other denominations, mostly American, to study curriculum development. The Co-operative Curriculum Project was sponsored by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches in the United States. It was not meant to produce a particular curriculum but rather to provide help in the development of denominational curriculum. It seemed a good time for the Board to be reviewing its curriculum. J. D. Smart had left Canada in 1957 to become a professor at Union Theological Seminary, but he left behind him a legacy of treating curriculum as a serious matter. The Board struggled for the next few years,

31 A&P, 1953, App., 326.
32 *A&P*, 1959, App., 359.
33 *A&P*, 1960, App., 408.
34 Ibid.
35 Ibid., 409.

trying to decide what to do about the curriculum, no doubt informed by the Co-operative Curriculum Project but perhaps also discouraged by the realization of rising expectations for curriculum. Gone were the days when the Church could blithely publish a new home-grown one-size-fits-all curriculum within a year of its conception. Educational standards were rising, audiovisuals were expected, and costs of production were going up.

In a supplementary report the Board recommended to the 1963 General Assembly ". . . that the General Assembly permit the Board to change from a uniform to a graded principle of curriculum in the junior, intermediate, senior and adult departments."[36] But over the next year it conducted a curriculum study on the feasibility of this course. The study committee was divided into three subcommittees for the junior, teen, and adult age groups. In particular, the subcommittee for juniors evaluated "the validity of the presupposition that the Presbyterian Church in Canada is not capable immediately of producing its own graded curriculum for juniors."[37] Looking at the considerable personnel resources that would be needed, the costs of writers' conferences and payments to writers, the potential use, and the publication costs, they concluded that the presupposition was valid. The subcommittee for teens also thought producing their own curriculum would be too costly for the Church. Both groups considered as alternatives the Christian Faith and Life curriculum as well as the Covenant Life curriculum being developed by the Presbyterian Church in the United States, the southern American Presbyterian denomination. The upshot was that, in 1964, the Board of Christian Education recommended to General Assembly that it cease to publish its own curriculum for the junior, intermediate, and senior departments, and the Christian Faith and Life curriculum be recommended for those departments. This would mean that all departments in the church school would be using Christian Faith and Life except for the adult department. As always, some did not want to change; an overture in 1965 asked for the continuation of the Presbyterian Uniform Lessons, citing the American content and supposedly greater expense of the Christian Faith and Life curriculum. The request was not granted.[38]

It had been 16 years since Christian Faith and Life was first published, and while some revisions had been made in the intervening years, by 1964, it was almost at the end of its life cycle. Almost immediately the Board became engaged in what they called "the next stage" of its development.[39] This time they were actively involved in developing the curriculum in cooperation with the United Presbyterian Church in the United States and the name of the Presbyterian Church in Canada was to be printed on the resources of what would become the Christian Faith and Action curriculum.

The PCC's Board of Christian Education was perhaps cautioned by the experience of the United Church of Canada. Their "New Curriculum," conceived in 1952, was developed over the next 12 years before being published in 1964. Despite the long period of development, its modernist perspective caught many United Church members by surprise. In his book, *After Evangelicalism: The Sixties and the United Church of Canada*, Kevin Flatt suggests that the elite leaders and many ministers of the Church were quietly modernist in belief but continued to promote evangelical practices in congregations. The writers of the New Curriculum were likewise modernists but determined to bring modernism into the curriculum. However, as its publication approached, the promotion of the curriculum gave little indication of its theological stance, according to Flatt, and so its naturalistic explanations of things such as miracles and the virgin

---

36 *A&P*, 1963, 62.

37 *Report of the Curriculum Study, 1963–1964*, PCC Archives, Christian Education fonds, 1982-1015-1-2.

38 *A&P*, 1965, App., 514.

39 *A&P*, 1966, App., 329.

birth took its users by surprise.[40] Many left the United Church over the controversy. Brian Clarke and Stuart Macdonald note that the United Church lost 100,000 Sunday school students from 1964 to 1965 and many of these left because of the New Curriculum, although Macdonald and Clarke warn against attributing all this loss to that cause.[41] The 1964/65 decrease in the United Church was especially precipitous, but many churches were beginning to experience declines in Sunday school attendance in the mid-sixties, including the Presbyterian Church.

Although the Presbyterian Church in Canada's Board of Christian Education makes no reference to the United Church or the New Curriculum in its reports in 1964 and after, it would have been aware of the events taking place and the strong reaction to the New Curriculum, as would congregants in the churches. Perhaps that is why it includes this statement in its report when referring to its part in the development of Christian Faith and Action:

> The next stage in the development of the Christian Faith and Life Curriculum is now beginning to take shape. The staff members of the Board have been participating in this development and have reported regularly to the Board and its Executive. The Board will try to do everything needful to keep the Church informed and to prepare for any new advances. At its annual meeting in March the Board, after careful consideration, re-affirmed its acceptance of the Christian Faith and Life Curriculum as being in harmony with the Westminster Confession of Faith.[42]

As promised, the 1968 Board Report gives copious details of the Christian Faith and Action curriculum.[43] Resources in this curriculum were to be available starting in 1969.

Despite the continued calls for Christian Faith and Life to be the recommended curriculum for the whole Sunday school, not everyone was happy. Some found Christian Faith and Life difficult to teach; other churches were not large enough to support a closely graded curriculum. In 1967, the Board recommended the new Covenant Life curriculum as an alternative to Christian Faith and Life. In 1968, it recommended alternatives to those closely graded curricula — the Broadly Graded Covenant Life Curriculum and the Uniform Lessons Co-operative Series, the latter published jointly by the United Presbyterian Church in the United States, the Presbyterian Church in the United States, and the United Church of Christ.

Perhaps tired of the wrangling over curriculum, the Board of Christian Education introduced in 1968 the principle of responsible congregational selection of curriculum for adults and teens. Congregations were free to choose their own curriculum, with guidance given from the Board of Christian Education through a list of suggested options. Without the financial investment in producing its own curriculum, the Board could afford to allow churches greater latitude in selection, and even listed the benefits in its report, such as choosing the curriculum according to local needs or current issues and using local talents and resources in Christian education. Churches had never had a legal obligation to use the resources recommended by the Board of Christian Education, although they may have felt a moral obligation to do so. Certainly, in nearly all their reports, the Board urged churches to use the recommended materials. This would have been partly for financial reasons, so that the Presbyterian Publications materials would pay for themselves. It would also have been for doctrinal reasons. The 1958 Board Report expresses this especially strongly:

---

40 Kevin N. Flatt, *After Evangelicalism: The Sixties and the United Church of Canada* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2013), 74–143.

41 Brian Clarke and Stuart Macdonald, *Leaving Christianity: Changing Allegiances in Canada Since 1945* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2017), 47–49.

42 *A&P*, 1966, App., 329.

43 *A&P*, 1968, App., 283–85.

> It is a matter of great concern to your Board when kirk-sessions do not exercise their authority and responsibility in determining what will be taught in the Church school and who will be the teachers. The use of a curriculum of studies which is not in harmony with the faith and doctrine of The Presbyterian Church is a much bigger question than that of loyalty to our own Church. It is a betrayal of their trust and responsibility for the ministry of God's Word and for the nurture of their people in the faith of Jesus Christ. To what extent may people be educated out of the Presbyterian Church through the use of curriculum materials which are not in harmony with the Biblical interpretation and doctrines of our Church?[44]

Compliance with the Board's recommendations varied. From 1940 to 1952, roughly 90 percent of Sunday schools used materials from Presbyterian Publications. Between 1954 and 1963, about 60 percent used the Board's recommendations for their primary department, with the vast majority using the Canadian Graded Bible Lessons in the 1950s. The number of Sunday schools using the Presbyterian Uniform Lesson series in the same years fell from about 63 percent to 51 percent. Always in this period there were about 30 percent to 40 percent of Sunday schools using materials other than those recommended, although the categories are not mutually exclusive. Churches could have been using a combination of recommended and other materials at the same time.[45]

Conclusions

The story told above shows the many elements held in tension in the recommendations for curriculum for Presbyterian Church in Canada congregations. Certainly, the chief concern for the Board of Sabbath Schools and Young People's Societies and subsequently the Board of Christian Education was to provide good-quality, theologically sound curriculum for the Church. But the Board served at the pleasure of the Church, and so its recommendations were affected by the opinions and decisions of that Church. The Board also had to work with available resources, whether in finances, personnel, or other curricula. Finally, the Board had to deal with external agencies and events, such as opportunities for cooperation in publishing and changing theologies and culture.

Forces internal to the Church were among the greatest of influences on Board recommendations. This was in evidence in a major way in 1944, when the Board, with the support of a special committee, advocated cooperation in publishing with other denominations but were, instead, directed away from that path by the Church. This decision affected them for 20 years. Had they entered into cooperation with the United Church and the Baptists, they would not have published their own curriculum independently, and the recommendations would have been for the Canadian Graded Bible Lessons for all grades for the next 20 years. It seems possible that the Church, with Church Union still in mind, turned away from cooperation due to an aversion to cooperation in general. That aversion was still in evidence in the late 1940s when reaction to cooperative Sunday school take-home papers was swift, but it seems to have been overcome by 1952 when the Presbyterian Church entered into the same cooperation with the United Church and the Baptist Federation of Canada, which was denied eight years before.

Although the decision of 1944 is a major example of the influence of the Church on the Board's recommendations, there is evidence of influence throughout the years from overtures and Board reports. Overtures requested many different things — consideration of outside curriculum, requests to return to former curricula, requests for adjustment to the content and organization of the

---

44 *A&P*, 1958, App., 310.

45 *A&P*, 1940–1970, App., Statistical reports.

curriculum, and so on. Each overture probably represented a quantity of less formal feedback given to the Board through letters and personal conversations. Although the Board was obliged to reply officially to the overtures, they would also have responded to the letters and conversations and taken them into account in their recommendations.

Decisions on curriculum recommendations were also affected by the resources available. Norman MacEachern probably influenced the recommendation for cooperation in 1944, but without him and his company, Presbyterian Publications, the Church might not have felt the confidence to direct the Board to produce a curriculum. Likewise, the expertise of J. D. Smart may have influenced the revision of the Presbyterian Uniform Lessons in 1953 and contributed to a better product. Costs of publishing were always an issue, as seen in the failed attempt at cooperation in 1948 and the 1964 decision to cease the publication of the Presbyterian Uniform Lessons. Leaving the financial investment of that series behind allowed the Board to recommend more alternatives. Resources in the form of other available published curricula were an influence in both their absence and presence. In 1943, the Board reported it could not find any curriculum better than the International Uniform Bible Lessons; in 1948, they began feeling pressure to recommend Christian Faith and Life. In 1952, the Canadian Graded Bible Lessons became a viable option, but the cessation of their publication forced a decision to recommend Christian Faith and Life alone. In the 1960s, the new Covenant Life curriculum became available as an alternative to Christian Faith and Life.

External agencies and events played a less obvious role in the Board's recommendations. Rising costs of publishing and paper influenced the failed attempt at cooperation in 1948. The baby boom and great increase in church attendance would have amplified the success of the Christian Faith and Life curriculum and the positive perception of it. The reaction to the United Church's New Curriculum would have been a cautionary tale for the Presbyterian Church.

Curriculum recommendations were not simple for the Presbyterian Church during the baby-boom generation's youth. It was an exciting time in the Church, with record numbers attending Sunday school, and an exciting time for curriculum, with advances in educational theory and Christian education. Curriculum developments from 1940 to 1970 were reflected in the actions and recommendations of the Board of Sabbath Schools and Young People's Societies and subsequently, the Board of Christian Education to the Presbyterian Church in Canada.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, 1940–1970.

Bailey, Albert E. "Curriculum Changes: The Church and Curriculum." *Presbyterian Record* 90, no. 6 (June 1965): 20.

Carter, R. P. "Curriculum Changes: New Tools for Teaching Juniors and Teens." *Presbyterian Record* 90, no. 7 (July/August 1965): 21.

Clarke, James S. "Curriculum Changes: Presbyterians Have a Right to Know." *Presbyterian Record* 90, no. 3 (March 1965): 16.

Presbyterian Church in Canada, Board of Sabbath Schools and Young People's Societies. *Minutes*. Presbyterian Church in Canada Archives.

Presbyterian Uniform Bible Lessons. Presbyterian Church in Canada Archives, Christian Education fonds, 1973-1018-1-2.

Prospectus: Christian Education Literature, 1955–1956. Presbyterian Church in Canada Archives, Christian Education fonds, 1982-1015-2-2.

Report of the Curriculum Study, 1963–1964. Presbyterian Church in Canada Archives, Christian Education fonds, 1982-1015-1-2.

Warne, D. M. "Curriculum Changes: What a Congregation Needs for Nurture." *Presbyterian Record* 90, no. 5 (May 1965): 14.

Secondary Sources

Archibald, H. A. "Curriculum." In *Harper's Encyclopedia of Religious Education*, edited by Iris V. Cully and Kendig Brubaker Cully, 174–77. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990.

The Church's Education Ministry: A Curriculum Plan: The Work of the Cooperative Curriculum Project. St. Louis, MO: Bethany Press, 1965.

Clarke, Brian, and Stuart Macdonald. *Leaving Christianity: Changing Allegiances in Canada Since 1945.* Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2017.

Cully, Iris V. "Changing Patterns of Protestant Curriculum." In *Changing Patterns of Religious Education*, edited by Marvin J. Taylor, 220–33. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984.

———. *Planning and Selecting Curriculum for Christian Education.* Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1983.

Flatt, Kevin N. *After Evangelicalism: The Sixties and the United Church of Canada.* Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2013.

Kennedy, William B. "Neo-orthodoxy Goes to Sunday-School: The Christian Faith and Life Curriculum." *Journal of Presbyterian History* 76, no. 1 (Spring 1998): 81–109.

Klempa, William. "The Church Must Teach — Or Die!: James D. Smart and a Revolutionary Curriculum." *Presbyterian Record* 134, no. 1 (January 2009): 28–30.

Miller, Randolph Crump. "Christian Faith and Life Series." *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 14, no.1 (November 1958): 37–45.

Moir, John S. *Enduring Witness: A History of the Presbyterian Church in Canada.* New ed. Don Mills, ON: Presbyterian Publications, 1987.

Nelson, C. Ellis. "The Curriculum of Christian Education." In *An Introduction to Christian Education*, edited by Marvin J. Taylor, 157–68. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1966.

Smart, James D. *The Teaching Ministry of the Church.* Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1954.

Tools of Curriculum Development for the Church's Educational Ministry: The Work of the Cooperative Curriculum Development. Anderson, IN: Warner Press, 1967.

Research Update: Presbyterian History — Where We Are and Where We Might Be Going

Stuart Macdonald

Over the last few years within this Society and beyond, there have been some comments and some questions about the interest in and purpose of denominational history, specifically Presbyterian denominational history. Do people care anymore? Do students, MDiv or graduate students, care about denominational history? Is there even an interest in the history of the church? My answer is a clear "yes." At the same time, I would suggest that this interest may express itself in different ways than it has in the past. Today, people, including students, are interested in history, but the approaches they might take, the questions they might ask, and the topics in which they might be interested will often differ from what was being considered a generation or more ago. I want to take the opportunity to make a few comments about the research that has been done in Presbyterian history, as well as noting some areas we might, or could, explore.

The history of the Presbyterian tradition in Canada stretches from roughly 1775 to the current day. We can divide it into three clear periods. The first period is the colonial period, going from the beginnings to the creation of the Presbyterian Church in Canada in 1875. In this period, we see the first missionaries, the first churches, and the different traditions come to what will eventually become Canada and gradually form the denominations that are the antecedents to the Presbyterian Church in Canada. The second period is the period of the Presbyterian Church in Canada from its founding in 1875 to the 1925 Church Union. The third and final period is everything after 1925.

Where We Are

Most of the books, articles, and biographies that have been published focus on the first two periods. There are exceptions, but the majority of the literature on the Presbyterian tradition focuses on the early years of settlement and then the early years of the Presbyterian Church in Canada itself, including the debates about whether or not to go into the proposed church union with Methodists and Congregationalists, which eventually took place in 1925. Church Union (1925) has been a mountain within the historiography. Like a mountain as it comes closer, it has dominated the horizon, and even after it has been passed, it continues to fill the rear-view mirror. Church Union has so dominated the landscape that the post-Union period has received far less historical scholarship. This is beginning to change, but this third historical period (1925–2019) has not been one to which we have paid a great deal of attention or about which much has been written. To use another metaphor: We have treated it like the second act of a musical, where all the great songs were in the first act and those are the songs that we have left the theatre humming. We didn't really pay attention to what happened in the second act other than noting it's what came after, waiting to have the songs from the first reprised.

Why We Shouldn't Overlook the "Recent" Past

Yet much happened following 1925 within the Presbyterian Church in Canada and we have not always realized how expansive it has become. It is 94 years — almost a century — since 1925! It

is 74 years since the end of the Second World War. We need to pay attention to this period. Greater and more significant changes have taken place in this period than we sometimes realize; the songs may be different, but once we pay attention, we may discover they are better than we thought they were. Although we need to keep doing historical work in the first two periods, I believe we can and need to support and encourage work in this more "recent" period, recognizing that we are talking about almost a century and it may be less recent than we have imagined. Encouraging research in this period is one positive way in which the Canadian Society of Presbyterian History can continue to fulfill its mission.

Another area where the Society can be helpful is in supporting and encouraging different ways of organizing studies.

Exploring History Through Biography

Biography, as we witnessed this morning,[*] is a very useful way to look at history. We need to keep doing biography. Indeed, this is an area where I believe we need to consider offering support and encouragement, specifically in the area of missionary biographies. This could be in the area of biographies of individual missionaries or collective biographies (the technical word is *prosopography*) which might include all the missionaries involved in a specific mission field. We have great resources that could support such a study, not only in the Presbyterian Church in Canada Archives, but also in the missionary biography section here at the Caven Library (Knox College) and elsewhere. There are sources. But it must be biography — *not* hagiography. Too often, a missionary biography can become a hagiography, or the life of a saint. We must place the missionaries in their context and look critically at what they did, considering both the positive and the negative. I think this is one area of enormous potential for historical research.

Using New Technologies to Aid Research

A second area for future research requires using new technologies. Computers and other technologies can be used as tools to answer questions or they can allow us to see things in ways we have not seen them before, and in so doing, raise new and different questions. I would want to stress technology as a tool: we should not use technology just to use it but use it where it can help to provide answers to questions we have.

Let me give a real example: examining how the Presbyterian Church rebuilt itself after the 1925 formation of the United Church of Canada. What was the impact on the continuing Presbyterian Church in Canada? We have long recognized that there were variations in how different regions within Canada voted and thus a difference in terms of who remained in the denomination after 1925. Computer mapping technology can assist us here, allowing us to generate maps and use these as tools for both presentation and analysis. For example, we have long known that the Prairies were greatly affected by Church Union, but by mapping the presbyteries in Saskatchewan before and after Church Union, and where those presbyteries were located, we gain a clearer picture of the impact. It is even possible to consider congregations in specific presbyteries before Union and see which ones voted for Church Union and which ones continued after 1925 as part of the Presbyterian Church in Canada. Computer mapping technology gives us new insights.

[*] September 28, 2019. See "John Pringle: Upstanding Champion of the Gospel," by R. Ritchie Robinson (pages 4–14 in this volume).

It makes us realize what an enormous task it was to rebuild and asks us to reconsider whether we have adequately recognized this reality in the historiography. New research technologies can serve as one of the tools we use in our analysis of the denomination.

Becoming Aware of Underused Primary Sources

Finally, I would suggest we need to be open to the use of different sources. The standard sources we rely on, such as denominational magazines, the yearly reports of General Assembly, and the minutes of various church committees, have all been invaluable and will continue to be fundamental to understanding the changes within Presbyterian traditions in Canada. Yet there are other sources we need to consider. One of these is Sunday school materials. Why have historians not taken seriously Christian education materials as a source for telling us what is going on in the church? These not only give insight into what the denomination was using with children but also contribute to broader understandings of issues and concerns. Changes in Christian education approaches, materials, curricula, and resources all provide a very rich source for historical analysis. The Caven Library at Knox College has recently catalogued its materials, a rich source for historical research.* And students are interested in this as well as in changes in worship — another area with its own set of underused primary sources, such as worship books and hymnals. We need to encourage researchers to look beyond the sources we have traditionally considered and look to new sources.

Denominational history is not dead. There is still a need for a Society like ours which focuses on the history within a specific Christian tradition. What we can encourage is research in new areas, research using new sources and technologies, and research addressing new questions. There is still a great deal we need to discover and share.

* See especially "Educating Baby Boomers: Sunday School Curriculum Recommendations in the Presbyterian Church in Canada, 1940 to 1970," by Anne McGillivray (pages 30–42 in this volume).