

**The Canadian Society
of
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Charles F. Johnston, Historian
of the Edict of Nantes
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ELIE BENOIST, HISTORIAN OF THE EDICT OF NANTES

by Charles F. Johnston

The revocation in 1685 by Louis XIV of the Edict of Nantes resulted in the immediate exile of all ministers of the Reformed Church not amenable to conversion, the illegal flight of several hundred thousand of their fellow-believers to neighbouring Protestant lands, and the nominal conversion under duress of the rest to the Roman Catholic Church. It also precipitated a literary polemic in which Protestant writers protested vigorously the injustice of revoking an "irrevocable" edict, and the cruel and oppressive measures preceding and accompanying it, while Roman Catholic counterparts asserted that on the contrary the Edict had been a temporary expedient to end civil strife, extorted forcibly by a naturally rebellious and turbulent minority.

This issue was indeed the culmination of a controversy of long standing. In a recent book Elizabeth Israels Perry has pointed out that after more than a century in which the Protestant-Catholic polemic had focussed upon disputed points of doctrine the arena of battle had shifted. Between 1671 and 1691 history replaced theology as the focus of debate in France: Perry has examined more than a hundred books and pamphlets comprising this literature which appeared in those two decades. It includes works by Nicole, Claude, Maimbourg, Bayle, Varillas, Jurieu, Bossuet, and Ancillon.¹

It was in response to the Revocation and the questions it aroused that Elie Benoist, former minister of Alençon, at the time Refugee minister of the Walloon Church in Delft, undertook the task of writing a history of the Edict of Nantes itself: out of what circumstances it arose, how it was obtained, what its terms were and under what guarantees, how and in what degree it was implemented, how it was circumvented, undermined, eroded, and finally annihilated. From 1687 to 1695 Benoist was heavily engaged in this demanding project, the fruit of which was the publication between 1693 and 1695 of five massive folio volumes entitled History of the Edict of Nantes.²

To this undertaking Benoist brought the advantages of a solid education, a capacity for meticulous detail and painstaking research, honesty and integrity in the use of his sources, and a desire to be fair while at the same time ardently seeking to vindicate his people. If being existentially involved, by physical presence or imagination, in the events which they interpret is essential for good historians, as affirmed by authorities as widely separated in time as Michel de Montaigne and Paul Tillich, then Elie Benoist was pre-eminently qualified, since his long life spans the reign of the King, and he was an eye-witness of the twenty years of repression that reached a climax in 1685. To this experience we shall first turn.

* * * * *

Benoist was born January 10th, 1640, to parents of modest means, his father being a caretaker for the Paris estate of the Duchess de Trémouille. Both her husband's

family and her own — she was a daughter of Marshall de Bouillon — had in a previous generation represented outstanding Protestant leadership, but — significantly — the Duke had not long before been converted. Young Elie was privileged to share in the instruction supplied by a tutor and in the Reformed worship held in the Duchess's household.³

Recognizing their son's superior intellectual gifts his parents did their best to provide him with further educational opportunities. He did well at first, successfully resisting the efforts of his teachers to convert him; then came a period of rebellion, climaxed by the squandering of the small legacy left him at the death of both his father and mother. Eventually he found what he had been searching for, through the study of theology in the Huguenot College of Montauban. His sojourn there happened to coincide with an incident typical of the time, and which he was later to describe vividly in his History. The trouble began over a trifle: the Jesuits, to whom by a previous order one half of this Protestant building had had to be turned over, asked permission to erect a stage which by mistake or by design blocked one of the entrances used by the Huguenot students. With the rashness of youth the latter tore down the stage, and when some of the culprits were imprisoned their comrades released them. At the complaint of the Jesuits this insult was used as the grounds for turning over to them the Reformed half of the College as well. Huguenot staff and students were transferred to Puylaurens, some distance off.

Thus it was from Puylaurens that Benoist graduated in 1664, and within a year was called to be one of the two (later three) ministers of Alençon. There for the next two decades he would serve, under the necessity of employing all the gravity, tact, firmness that natural endowment, training and experience could bring to his aid. The original Temple of the Reformed Church in the downtown area had been ordered demolished the year before. Its successor was built on rising ground just outside the city. Paul Pascal describes it with some precision:

[The Temple] of Charenton was taken as a model. First a large wall of enclosure pierced by a carriage entrance with two gates, and by a small door at the side. Isolated from all sides, between the courtyard and the garden, rose the Temple building and a house joined to it containing the vestry, the consistory-room, and the caretaker's residence. The Temple was a rectangle measuring within 84 feet in length by 62 in width . . . and able to contain about 1500 persons. It was walled with clapboards, and its roofing [was] of tiles, surmounted by a weather-cock, symbol of vigilance and emblem of the Nation. Entrance to the interior was by three large doors with entrance-halls. Sixteen windows provided light, eight on each side, four above and four below. It was furnished with 59 benches, each seating from 12 to 20, and quite a number of stools, with a lectern covered in green serge for the reader, and with a large pulpit. The Commandments of God in letters of gold on a background of blue canvas were to be seen in a large gilt frame.⁴

This then was to be the scene of Benoist's ministry. He married a young widow shortly after, related to one of the leading families — unhappily, as it turned out. Chauffepié has preserved a sentence in Latin from a vanished autobiography, in which with a frankness suggesting that the matter was common knowledge Benoist states: "He took a wife . . . enveloped with all the faults which can be serious for a peace-loving husband: miserly, rash, quarrelsome, undependable and changeable, with a tireless love of argument, for forty-seven years she made her husband miserable in every terrible way."⁵ Of four children, two daughters survived to maturity.

It is an indication of the state of siege under which the ministers laboured that in 1676 one of Benoist's colleagues, la Conseillère, was silenced and sent to Nantes for six months for having said in a sermon in the hearing of a Capuchin friar that when Kings commanded something against the service of God, it was necessary to remember the apostolic maxim, "We ought to obey God rather than men."⁶

A friendship developed between Benoist and the local Intendant, Barrillon de Morangis, which was to stand the Minister and the Church in good stead for a time at least. Father de la Rue, professor of rhetoric and humanities at the Jesuit college in the city, who engaged Benoist in controversy on a number of occasions, and once accused him of lèse-majesté in attacking the King's religion, found no support from the Intendant.

Severer tests were to come. On June 17th, 1681, a Royal Declaration decreed that children of seven years and older might be converted to the Roman Catholic faith. In practice this meant that if children could be induced to make the sign of the cross or repeat a "Hail, Mary", they could legally be taken from their parents. The response of the Reformed was in horror and foreboding to hold special fast-days and services. Thus, after three weeks' preparation, on August 10th in that year, three successive services were held in the Temple of Alençon. Father de la Rue, Benoist's old adversary, announced that he would be present at the third of these services when Benoist would be preaching. Although the priest did not do so, the expectation of a confrontation drew a large crowd of seven or eight hundred Catholics who gathered in the courtyard outside. Meanwhile the piety of the Huguenots had outlasted the patience of the official informers. The officers of justice, and the clergy, who had been present at the first two services, reluctant to remain another three hours, took their departure, without being successful (despite the pleas of the Elders) in dispersing the noisy mob outside. "Those who remained committed a thousand insolent acts while the Minister was preaching. Some mimicked the preacher; others sang at the top of their voices; still others, carried on the shoulders of their comrades, climbed up on the windows, where they troubled the whole congregation by their grimaces, their poses, their insolent words."

The riot which followed can perhaps best be described in the words of the "Preacher" himself:

Those who were within the enclosure seized the gates and opened to those who were outside. The greatest firebrands jumped over the wall; and all together surged into the Temple, at the very moment when the kneeling Congregation was bringing the devotions of the day to a close with prayer. When someone tried to snatch off the hat of one of these wicked men who refused to uncover, the rascal seized him by the throat; and at once, everyone throwing himself upon his neighbour, they began to fight one another in the Temple itself. There were at the very most among the Congregation about a hundred men each with a cane in his hand, which they had taken more for the sake of appearances, than to defend themselves from insult. Nevertheless, when they stood up at the noise, raising their canes, fear seized the Catholics and they took to their heels as though pursued by a host of enemies. This was not easy for them, because their own men rushing in at the noise blocked their way, and for a long time sealed the exits. But at the same time some began to throw stones and clubs through the windows; and a stone falling on those who had not left their places, and drawing blood, all these people, and especially the women, thought they were going to be massacred without mercy. One clung about the neck of her husband or brother, to prevent him from exposing himself to the fury of the multitude; another hid under the benches to escape being hit by the stones; another threw herself to her knees and clasped her hands, as if to await in an attitude of devotion the stroke of an imminent death; another rushed to the aid of her fainting daughter or neighbour; most people were running from one end of the Temple to the other . . . ; all together were making a clamour that had something frightful about it, by reason of the cries, the tumult, the effects of distress and terror.

Nevertheless, the counter-panic, caused by the gentlemen with the canes, spread so rapidly that the crowd of more than four hundred fled back into the city, to broadcast the alarm that the "Huguenots" were massacring all the Catholics! The local Seigneur, the King's niece, the bigotted Duchess de Guise, vowed vengeance. In this crisis, Benoist frankly admits, "it is certain that the wisdom and moderation of the Intendant saved both the Reformed and the Temple." He himself came in his carriage to conduct the weary worshippers home in safety. Later, after the witnesses for both sides had been heard, he sent an extremely restrained and fair account of all that had happened to the Court.

Thus in a time when in place after place Temples were being closed or demolished on the flimsiest of pretexts, and the inhabitants denied all public worship, the Church of Alençon which had dared openly to resist suffered in this instance only a two hundred pound fine for a member of the congregation who became a scapegoat, and — a more serious loss — the exile of one of its ministers, again la Conseillère, accused of comparing the Declaration affecting the children to Herod's massacre of the innocents. La Conseillère went to Hamburg.

There are extant in the French National Archives documents which exactly confirm Benoist's account, one among many instances in which his scrupulous honesty

and veracity have been verified by later documentary discoveries. We have for example the official complaint of the Reformed Congregation, signed by the ministers and forwarded by the Intendant. There is the 22-leaf summary of evidence from the 40 witnesses from the congregation; there is the accused minister's statement, a hostile counter-statement, and a letter from the Intendant in accord with Benoist's portrait of him:

. . . The information will acquaint you in detail with what happened; but as the proceedings embittered spirits and condemnations might take away what union and inter-relation remain, which seem to me most necessary for the service of the King, and for the peace of his peoples, I believe that it is more expedient to hush this matter up than to investigate it further. Nevertheless I do not think that it is possible to pass over in silence what the minister la Conseillère set forth in his preaching the day of the uproar, all the more that he has already fallen into an offense quite similar, as it will appear to you by the decree I am sending you. He is a man of bold spirit, and far removed from the moderation which appears in the addresses of the two other ministers who are here.⁸

Also in the National Archives is to be found the official report of the visit of a delegation composed of the Intendant Jubert de Bouville, Morangis's successor, and three ecclesiastics, to the Consistory at Alençon, on July 4th, 1683. The occasion, paralleled in every Reformed Church in France, was the reading by royal command of the "Avertissement Pastoral" or Pastoral Admonition issued by the Assembly of Clergy. It took the form of a fraternal appeal to the Reformed to end the schism and return to the Church — but with a sting in its tail, since it ended with the warning that if this plea went unheeded, then, "because this last error will be more criminal in you than all the rest, you must expect troubles incomparably more horrible and more disastrous than those which your revolt and schism have brought you to this present time."⁹

The fatal blow fell on Alençon's Reformed congregation in the Fall of 1684. On August 21st a royal declaration ordered that at the first summons the registers and accounts of the consistories should be surrendered to the directors of the hospitals, in order to make sure that all legacies and funds donated for charitable purposes had been turned over to them, as a previous declaration of January 15th, 1683 had commanded. The Consistory of Alençon was accordingly summoned to present its records for examination on October 3rd: Benoist and Boullay an elder were delegated to represent it.

They tried evasive tactics in vain, being obliged eventually to produce four such books, including a register covering the years 1656 to 1680 in which about one hundred and twenty entries proved to have been obliterated by what the authorities declared to be "fresh ink". It appears that Benoist was largely responsible,

and the deputies justified the action on the ground that these particular entries contained references to the private lives of individual members brought before the Consistory for moral lapses, and hence not properly open to public scrutiny. There had been other account books, but the two deputies stated that these had been burnt three years before. Upon this they were declared liable for the prescribed penalty, the Church was condemned to a fine of five hundred pounds applicable to the hospital, and public worship in Alençon was provisionally forbidden until such time as they could produce the missing accounts.¹⁰

Not long after this, prosecution began against Benoist himself. Since his presence in Alençon was dangerous for him and for others he went into hiding in Paris, and was there at the time of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, October 18th, 1685. Under the order obtained against him by the Duchess de Guise his goods had already been seized and he was liable to arrest. The royal command that all ministers should leave France within fifteen days, on pain of galley-slavery, took precedence, however, and he was able to obtain a passport for himself and his wife, though having perforce to leave his daughters behind.

The haven of refuge in this case was to be the Netherlands. Only 45 years old at the time of his exile, Benoist was soon to find a congenial sphere of work as third minister of the Walloon congregation in the city of Delft, which worshipped then as now in the ancient chapel adjacent to the Prinsenhof. It was to be a ministry there extending over thirty years, followed by thirteen years of what appeared at times to his successor to be irritatingly active retirement!

In taking up his new duties in Delft Benoist did not simply divest himself of the old ones. One of his earliest published works is a letter written to his former parishioners in Alençon, many of whom had succumbed to the violence of the dragoons billeted in their homes. The letter exhorted those who had denied their faith to recover their courage and cease their hypocrisy.¹¹ As events proved, his confidence in them was soon to be vindicated: resistance grew, no less than eight of the elders were imprisoned; many of the Protestants of Alençon withdrew to foreign lands, a number of them finding their way to Delft publicly to repent their abjuration and to be received back into communion. Among the latter were Benoist's daughters.¹²

It was a period of intense activity: defending publicly the retreat of the pastors into exile, against those who charged them with cowardice and desertion;¹³ at the same time working with a group on a secret project to send ministers back to France disguised as peasants, to areas where they were not known, in order to provide support and leadership to their persecuted people. About one hundred and ten exiled pastors were ready to undertake the dangerous mission. One of the group's members turned out to be a collaborator in the pay of the French government, the plans were betrayed, and the disguised ministers arrested on arrival in France.¹⁴

It was not only the pastors, however, who needed defending against misrepresentation at this time. Authorities in France, sensitive to the bad publicity occasioned by the flight of tens of thousands of refugees, were encouraging the circulation of stories of the rebelliousness and disloyalty of the Reformed subjects of the King, despite the latter's "kindly" treatment of them. And so the moment had arrived for their vindication, that those who had taken all else from them might not be allowed to take away their good name as well. This was the incentive for the writing of Benoist's major work and the one for which he is primarily known, his History of the Edict of Nantes.

* * * * *

The trail was blazed by two works with the identical aim, although far less comprehensive in scope. The first of these, justly famous for its clarity and eloquent directness, with the dimensions of a pocket-book, was The Complaints of the Protestants cruelly oppressed in the Kingdom of France by Jean Claude, exiled minister of the Paris congregation of Charenton, who had taken refuge in The Hague.¹⁵ Written only a few months after the Revocation, the little book is a poignant cry for understanding and for justice. Claude undertakes to show how the very loyalty of the Reformed during the disturbances of the "Fronde" in the King's youth was turned to their hurt by their enemies who poisoned the King's mind against them, such that the resolution was formed to destroy them.

The means adopted Claude analyzes as six "ways of persecution". First, the perversion of justice in the courts of the realm, to enable the despoiling both of Reformed communities and individuals. The second was the gradual loss by orders-in-Council of all the civil rights guaranteed by the Edict of Nantes, including those of holding office, and entering professions or trades. The third was the discovery of ingenious possibilities of circumventing the Edict through ambiguities in its wording, and books were written by Meynier, Bernard, and Fillau, for the express purpose of showing how this could be done. The fourth way of persecution was a multitude of restrictive regulations of all sorts, designed to inhibit contact and mutual support, and to expose the young and the elderly to conversion pressures. Claude saw as the fifth way the deliberate creating of the illusion that however far the authorities might go in restricting Protestant rights, they would stop short of actual proscription. The sixth and last way was the encouragement of the people to hate and despise the Reformed, enlisting the aid of writers like Arnaud, Soulier, and Nicole.

So at length comes the climax in the "dragonnades" and the Revocation: harrowing examples of the torments suffered are provided, as recounted by the refugees streaming into Protestant lands at that very moment. There follow Claude's reflections

upon the tragic consequences of these events. It has profaned the dignity of the King, who has been persuaded to break his own pledged word. It has done great harm to the nation itself through the loss of a population active in industry and trade, including many persons distinguished in gifts and skills, and through loss of public confidence in the integrity of the state. It has injured the relations of France with its neighbours. Not least it has dishonoured the Pope and the Catholic clergy through what has been identified as the result of their pressure on the French government. With a vigorous and moving protest against the harm done, and the sufferings cruelly and unjustly inflicted upon his compatriots, Claude lets the defence rest.

Benoist was to describe his History of the Edict of Nantes later as "only properly an extension of these Complaints [of Claude], accompanied by factual proofs and a large number of examples."¹⁶

Two years later, in 1688, there appeared an anonymous work, in due course identified as that of Gaultier de Saint-Blancard, entitled History and Apologia, a Defence of the Liberties of the Reformed Churches of France.¹⁷ The author was a former minister of Montpellier, now court chaplain in Berlin. As in the case of Claude, his aim was to vindicate the Reformed against the misrepresentations current, and notably the book of a converted minister, David-Augustin Brueys, Reply to the Complaints of the Protestants, in which Brueys interpreted the Edict of Nantes as a provisional and temporary measure, and denied that the coercive actions taken in the case of the Reformed could be described as persecution, but simply as the paternal correction undertaken by the King to bring rebellious and schismatic subjects to a right mind.¹⁸

In the first section of his three-part work therefore Saint-Blancard sets out to demonstrate that the Edict of Nantes, being a genuine treaty between the King of France and his subjects, was indeed "perpetual and irrevocable", and could not properly be abrogated unilaterally by royal authority without the breaking of faith.¹⁹ Then comes a survey of the history of the persecutions during the twenty-five years preceding the Revocation, grouped in the manner of Claude under twelve categories, the history of each being examined in turn. The third section describes the suffering and disastrous consequences of the Revocation. The final volume contained a collection of documents supporting the author's claims.

Already there was taking shape in Benoist's mind the project of a much more comprehensive historical vindication, despite his sense of inadequacy for the task. In the General Preface to his History he was later to say, "What confirmed me the more in this feeling is that other persons having worked on the same subject a short time before I set myself to the task, I found in their Writings too much apologia, and too

little history; although I discovered in them much that was sound. Now it is precisely this that seemed to me quite indispensable, in describing what happened for and against the Reformed, namely to give in sufficient length the facts which concern them; in order that it may be easier in considering them from every aspect to judge whether they are the marks of a factious, libertine, & restless spirit."²⁰

Such was the genesis of the History of the Edict of Nantes, requiring eight years for its completion, a work of five large volumes, in quarto, beautifully bound in leather, and clearly and accurately printed. The initial two volumes were published in 1693, the first of which describes in comparatively brief compass the antecedents of the Edict of Nantes, and the circumstances of its granting and enforcement, until the assassination of Henry IV in 1610, and the second of which carries on the story in laborious detail until the death of Louis XIII in 1643. The third part in three more volumes of equal girth appeared in 1695, of which the third volume covered the period from 1643 to 1665, the fourth that from 1665 to 1683, and the fifth that from 1683 to 1687, describing the events immediately preceding the Revocation, and its consequences during the two following years. The work includes a dedicatory epistle, a general preface and a preface for each of the three parts, three lists of the principal sources, extensive topical indexes, and is moreover buttressed by no less than four hundred separate documents in small print at the end of Volumes I, II, III, and V, and indexed in their turn.

Now it is quite obvious that an undertaking of such dimensions, involving extensive research, was beyond the modest means of a refugee minister. But William of Orange, soon to be King of Great Britain, was prepared to encourage such writings, as he had already that of Claude, in order to focus European indignation against the aggressive policies of France. Accordingly the Estates of Holland in November, 1687, voted Benoist a pension of 315 guilders "to write a history of the religious persecution in France", and in 1695 voted him a like sum upon its completion.

It may be of some interest to spend a little while examining the sources used by this 17th century historian. Among the one hundred and thirty-eight items listed in his bibliography there are, as one might expect, works of general history,²¹ mémoires and journals in profusion, letters and biographies. There are the Mercure Français, and the Mercurio of Vittorio Siri. There are the minutes of National Synods, Provincial Synods, Colloquies, and their political counterparts, General Assemblies and Provincial Assemblies; and along with them those of the Assemblies of the Clergy of the Catholic Church. There are the works of Filleau and Bernard, showing how the Edict of Nantes was open to restrictive interpretation; and the highly critical polemics of Meynier and Soulier, together with the Protestant response. There are a number of collections of royal declarations, decrees of the Council and of individual

Parlements, judgments, sentences, records of criminal proceedings involving ministers and consistories, and of cases concerning the right of public worship.

In 1689 Benoist fell heir to a valuable collection of documents. They had been accumulated through a number of years by Abraham Tessereau, Sieur de Bernay, an elder of the Paris congregation of Charenton, who had been Secretary of His Majesty from 1653 to 1673. He was the author of a carefully researched history of the French chancery, and of a history of the Reformed congregation of La Rochelle. Although some of the documents which he had assembled with a view to writing a more general history were lost on the way to the Netherlands where Tessereau died in 1689, Benoist found among the remainder materials otherwise inaccessible.²²

Benoist expresses regret that there are unavoidable gaps in the documentation: consistorial records, deeds, and titles, had to be surrendered to the authorities to justify the right of public worship when this was challenged, and they were usually not returned; moreover, the manuscripts in the Royal Library, and in the Library of the Sorbonne, were not available, nor could he find anyone who would dare to make extracts from them for his purpose. He had tried in some measure to compensate for this by carefully collecting such extracts as appeared in the mémoires he used, and in printed works. For the rest, he says, "it seemed to me more appropriate to be brief on certain subjects than to make up for the lack of Titles & Mémoires by the boldness of my conjectures."²³

It is evident that he was thorough and indefatigable in his research. There is extant a letter of Benoist's addressed to a colleague in Berlin, from which the following passage is taken:

. . . I shall reiterate, Monsieur, [my] most humble thanks . . . for the trouble you have kindly taken to draw up such exact and useful Mémoires, from which I have already profited, and hope to benefit still more. It all reached me in good condition. The Mémoires are contained in a book of 120 pages, very appropriately bound and covered with camleted paper [marbré], and the letter was inside, very ample, very obliging, and very instructive. I could have wished indeed that you had added the Catalogue of printed Mémoires with which you are acquainted, and which you might have considered of possible service to me. It may be that you know some one which the others did not bring to my attention. Diverse persons have pointed out to me the work of M. de Belloi which you mention; but I have not yet been able to find anyone who could lend it to me or tell me where I might find it. It is the same with the work of Father Meynier printed in Béziers, and different from the one in which he deals with the Six Truths. I wanted to have them sent from France; but instead of what I asked for they sent me at great expense some absolutely useless books. It would be of no little help to communicate to me either the works themselves, or judicious extracts such as an intelligent man might make. For the rest, Monsieur, I shall make use of the Mémoires which you had the kindness to send me with the discretion you desire, and you will not be named . . .²⁴

More than a century ago there also turned up a printed brochure or circular from an historian, requesting materials "concerning the reformed religion and the freedom of its practice" during the reigns of Henry IV, Louis XIII, and "under the present reign". It is addressed to the victims of the Revocation in France and abroad. In form it is very complete and thorough. There are four categories of information sought for the reign of Henry IV relating to the securing of the Edict of Nantes, public opposition and resistance, the implementation, and the resulting effects. For the reign of Louis XIII materials are sought concerning both the confirmations of and infractions to the Edict, the related wars and civil strife, the measures planned or undertaken against the Reformed. Then no less than thirty-six categories of materials for the period from 1643 to 1685, followed by sixteen more from 1685 to the moment of writing. There are more exhortations to provide all that could be useful, now and also later if further matters of interest come to light. The packages are to be sent to ——— but the name and address have unfortunately been left blank!

The 19th century editor of this interesting document was inclined to date it, on the basis of internal evidence, around 1690 or possibly 1700; he thought that its author was himself a refugee; he characterized the spelling as that of writings printed in Holland towards the end of the 17th century. He suggested the names of five persons with whom it might have originated: Elie Benoist, Saint-Blancard, Claude Brousson, Abraham Tessereau, Charles Ancillon.

The author of this paper finds the attribution to Benoist by far the most plausible, for these reasons: the fact that the document appears to come from Holland, and from a refugee; the fact that it is so thorough, that it covers precisely the period dealt with in Benoist's History, that in the materials asked for it focusses explicitly on the Edict, its winning, implementation and undermining; the fact that its categories cover precisely the matters dealt with in Benoist's work, and in exhaustive detail. There are other points of contact: for example, the intention of the brochure's author to deal with the material chronologically — and this is Benoist's general scheme, dealing with a year at a time, rather than as with Claude and Saint-Blancard surveying a particular form of persecution over an entire span of twenty-five years; again, the circular asks for information about "the prestige, the number and the quality of the nobility in the [Reformed] party", whereas Benoist justifies in his General Preface the attention given to the nobility on the ground that "they are everywhere to be found, & one cannot speak of the Churches without having occasion to to speak of these distinguished persons, who either strengthened them by their protection, or ruined them by their squabbling,"²⁶ Further, we have mentioned already Benoist's criticism of his predecessors, that in what they had written there was too

much apologia and too little history — writes the author of the circular:

[Those who read this] are asked just as much to communicate what seems reprehensible on the part of the Reformed, if they know something of that sort, as what seems advantageous to them, respecting all that is listed above: [for example] conspiracy, disloyalty, rash enterprises, such as the circumstances of case, capture, trial and execution of Marcilly, and all things of the same nature, in order not to be open to criticism by those who would take offence at such omissions, etc.²⁷

The unknown author of the brochure also uses a similar vocabulary, and notably a phrase found now and then in Benoist's History, a reference to "la cause commune", the "common cause" of the Reformed in their union as a people.²⁸

If then, as seems likely, the anonymous circular issued from Benoist, it would reinforce the impression of careful and painstaking research that his work itself conveys.

* * * * *

Benoist's way, then, of vindicating his people against the cruel misrepresentations then current was to focus attention upon their charter, the Edict of Nantes: the circumstances in which it was granted, the nature of the rights it was meant to secure and the safeguards it contained, the manner and degree of its implementation, the anxiety produced by early attacks upon it and the divisive and abortive attempts to defend it, the means devised to undermine its provisions, the accelerating pace of erosion leading to complete overthrow in the act of revocation.

What sort of document was this Edict of April, 1598, which becomes at once the hero and the villain of the tale that is to follow? It was curiously complex, strictly speaking not one document but five: the Edict proper consisted of 92 articles; in addition, there were 56 secret articles, and three letters-patent, and these various components were not necessarily regarded as having equal weight. Indeed ambiguities abounded, making it notoriously vulnerable to malevolent interpretation later. In brief résumé its terms contained these essential points:

1. Worship: the right of private worship everywhere; the right of public worship wherever it had been authorized by a previous Edict in 1577, and wherever publicly carried on in 1596 and 1597, with the grant of an additional place in each bailiwick and senechaussée. Included was the right of each higher noble to have worship on his estate, the lesser gentry being limited to the attendance of 30 persons not part of the family.

2. Finances: The King would provide a subsidy for the payment of ministers, in return for which the Reformed would continue to pay tithes. The secret articles permitted the receiving of legacies by Churches, and the raising of money from the people.

3. Education: The Reformed were to be permitted to teach in and attend Universities and Colleges, and have their own Colleges and Schools if they so desired.

4. Offices: They were to be admitted on equal terms with Catholics to all offices, and to be eligible to enter trades and professions.

5. Property: They were granted all property and succession rights.

6. Justice: The so-called Chamber of the Edict, with minimal Protestant representation, was maintained in Paris, and similar Chambers set up in two other places; Bipartite Chambers (6 Protestants, 6 Catholics) were to function in four places in areas with larger Protestant populations. All of these courts were for referral of cases involving the Reformed.

7. Security: all the military strongholds then being held by the Reformed were to remain in their hands for a period of eight years, the Protestant garrisons to be paid by the King, except in the case of fortresses belonging directly to individual nobles. Benoist believed that only about 100 all told were capable of being seriously defended.²⁹

It is difficult in an essay of this scope to convey the flavour of Benoist's work. It does not read like a novel! Its force is deliberately intended to rest on the cumulative weight of literally hundreds of individual cases involving Reformed persons, churches, or institutions, in which justice was done or subverted, and in which the provisions of the Edict were maintained or weakened. Petitions sent to the King from time to time, often having to do with specific grievances, are carefully analyzed for the light which they shed; so are important books of controversy from both the Catholic and the Protestant side. It is important for Benoist to trace the local origin of some particular infraction, in a given community or province, by which a precedent is set for a more general decree of the Council of France, or in turn for a Royal Declaration making it the law of the land.³⁰

Let us limit ourselves by way of overview to the main conclusions which Benoist reaches, and which he endeavours to demonstrate with all the evidence he has mustered. In broad outline they are these:

(1) That the Edict was not extorted by force but given and received in good faith, and as such was intended to be indeed "perpetual and irrevocable". Benoist makes abundantly clear that during the five years of negotiation preceding the granting of it the forces of the Catholic League were still holding out, and that it was only after their commander, the Duke de Mercoeur, had made peace and Henry IV had no further enemy to face that he came to Nantes at the head of his army. There, despite later tales of Huguenot intimidation, their representatives "received the Edict disarmed, & as though reduced to the King's discretion; whereas the King gave it armed, & having the [Reformed] Assembly at Châtelleraud, so to speak, under his guns."³¹

(2) That the actions of Henry IV in its implementation confirmed this intention. Benoist describes the firmness, even sternness, of the King in insisting on its ratification by reluctant Parlements, at the cost to be sure of some significant modifications

in the terms. The Commissaries or Commissioners, one Catholic, one Protestant, sent into each Province acted for the most part with scrupulous observance of those terms, and if they could not agree and the matter was referred to the King, he usually decided for the broader and more favourable interpretation of the Edict's articles. Admittedly, in the interests of securing papal favour he might be prepared to see his friend and confidant du Plessis-Mornay publicly humiliated, but the evidence is strong that he intended the Reformed to have the protection of their Edict as long as they needed it.³²

(3) That Henry IV's assassination gave rise to understandable anxiety, reinforced by the overt hostility of the Regency. Though four times in almost as many years Royal Declarations confirmed the Edict of Nantes, the steady whittling away of its provisions had begun. The Court knew how to manipulate the divisions within the ranks of the Reformed, playing on the fears of some, and the ambitions of others, to frustrate the satisfying of grievances, and to sow suspicion.

(4) That the turbulence of aristocratic factions and feudal resistance to growing centralization contributed to the troubles of the 1620's. Benoist recognizes that Huguenot nobles were often rash, self-centred, power-hungry, and not infrequently sought to use the Reformed as a party to advance their own interests. They had their Catholic counterparts. On the other hand, the King's ministers saw and made him see as his particular mission the reduction of all secondary centres of power, leaving only himself as the source of all authority and might. Some of the more discerning Catholics, says Benoist, recognized the threat: for example, "[they] laboured with regret to take this town [la Rochelle] & clearly foresaw that its ruin would be for all the Kingdom the beginning of slavery: but by a strange curiosity of the human spirit it often happens that it prepares for itself the pitfalls where it will be caught, & forges for itself the chains it will be made to wear."³⁴

(5) That the Reformed were justified in taking up arms, and that this was not to constitute "a state within a state". Benoist asks if there are ever occasions when subjects may legitimately resist their sovereign: his conclusion is

That though to be sure it is always to be desired that people will never take up arms, & though it is even helpful to overdo submission and patience, nevertheless there may be occasions when oppression is so evident, the good of the State so openly attacked, the holiest rights of Justice & Liberty violated with so little restraint, that the defence of the oppressed cannot be regarded as illegitimate, and one cannot fairly blame them for taking up arms for their safety.³⁵

That this was such an occasion Benoist endeavours to show by recording the numerous attacks already made on the Edict, with little or no redress obtained, the angry impatience of the King and his dark suspicion of Reformed Synods and Assemblies,

and especially his invasion of his independent kingdom of Béarn, which had been largely Protestant for sixty years: restoring by force former Catholic property to that Church, and obliging the Protestants to surrender temples, cemeteries, and the main sources of revenue for education and poor relief, as well as half the public offices.³⁶

The Reformed had been put on the defensive, and their very fear had led them to take measures which added to Court hostility. Alongside their ecclesiastical constitution of church courts for discipline, they had long since developed a political constitution going back in its conciliar form to the 1570's, with provincial assemblies and councils, and a general assembly to take counsel for the protection of the "common cause". In the present crisis, when the Court resolved on war against Protestant strongholds, the General Assembly set up a complete military establishment, with eight "Circles" or groups of Provinces, each under a general, and with (at least on paper) special provisions for taxation, for courts, etc. When war came, however, a considerable part of the Reformed community abstained, from loyalty to the King, prudence, or self-interest, or put up only a token resistance.³⁷

(6) That once disarmed the Reformed ceased to constitute any kind of threat to the royal authority, and remained unshakably loyal royalists despite the increasing tempo of restriction and persecution. Benoist lays stress on their important role in the failure of the rebellion known as the "Fronde". The young Louis XIV was indeed fleetingly moved to grateful recognition, re-affirming the Edict in a Royal Declaration of May, 1652, which stated that he was thus inclined, "the more so that our said subjects of the So-called Reformed Religion [la Religion Prétendue Réformée] have given us clear proofs of their affection & fidelity, notably in the present circumstances, with which we are most content."³⁸

The negative side of this royalist sentiment, for Benoist, was a passivity in the face of depredation, and an adulation of the King that verged on idolatry, and encouraged dependence and sycophancy. The fulsome speech of a Protestant consul of Montélimar already in 1622 leads Benoist to comment: "These excessive flatteries are always either the effects or the forewarnings of servitude: & subjects renounce the right to complain that their Sovereign raises his power above Justice, when they raise him above mankind by such praises. That is why we see today that flattery has no limits in places where liberty no longer has any resources."³⁹

(7) That the Roman Catholic clergy of France played the major role in suggesting and pressing for restrictive measures. This for Benoist is particularly obvious during the reign of Louis XIV. The strong protest of the Assembly of the Clergy in 1656 succeeded in having nullified through a new Royal Declaration the concessions that had been made in response to the loyalty of the Reformed during the Fronde. A similar Assembly in 1661 through its spokesman called upon the King to purge the State of a heresy which was

robbing it of the honour of its ancient piety. From the same Assembly went published Mémoires to each diocese, showing how by a proper interpretation of the Edict the privileges of the Reformed might be curtailed: namely, by reading it in the light of all the previous edicts of pacification — as though these had not been superseded — and in the light of all subsequent declarations and decrees.⁴⁰

This was the prelude to a series of books, the authors of which vied with, and learned from, one another concerning the rigorous ways in which the Edict could be interpreted so as to reduce drastically the powers of the Reformed. Such books were written in turn by Filleau, Advocate Royal in Poitiers, in 1661, published at the expense of the clergy in 1668;⁴¹ by the Jesuit Meynier in 1662, 1665, and 1670;⁴² by a lawyer of Béziers, Bernard, in 1664 and 1666.⁴³ Meynier indeed accompanied the Commissioners on their rounds, as a new investigation of titles began in the 1660's. If a particular Church's title was based on its having carried on worship publicly "in 1596 & 1597", Bernard insisted that it must be able to produce documentary proof that worship was continued consecutively throughout both years. Otherwise an evident, unchallenged existence for 60 years carried no weight. By such harsh, not to say unreasonable, demands the Churches of Poitou, for example, had been reduced by 1671 from 61 to 13, and those of Guyenne from 80 to 3.⁴⁴

Benoist finds the clergy demanding the expulsion of the Reformed from trades and crafts, the elimination of the Chambers of the Edict, permission for children to be converted at the age of seven, and denial to all Catholics — and especially "new converts" — of the right to change their religious allegiance: all of these and numerous others before they were in due course enacted into law by Royal Declarations.⁴⁵ Yet the Assembly of the Clergy in 1685, on the eve of the Revocation, could through its spokesman congratulate the King that "it was in winning the hearts of the Heretics that [he] had conquered the obstinacy of their spirit," by his "favours" contended with "their obduracy", so that "they would never perhaps have returned to the bosom of the Church in any other way than by the road strewn with flowers that [he] had opened before them."⁴⁶

(8) That Gallican tendencies in the Roman Catholic Church in France created tensions between the royal government and Rome which were not infrequently a factor in the treatment accorded the Reformed. Benoist has occasion at the very beginning of his History to explain the draconian measures taken against the Protestant "heretics" by Henry II in 1551 in terms of a quarrel involving the King and the Pope, and he comments: "This policy was often followed in France, to persecute the Reformed when there were disagreements with the Pope: & never did they have worse times to pass through than when there were disputes between the Courts of France and of Rome."⁴⁷ We have taken note of another example from the reign of Henry IV. Perhaps the most striking instance

is the "Pastoral Admonition", ordered to be read formally in every Consistory, in order to recall these erring "brothers" to the fold. It appeared precisely at the time when the Pope was incensed over the Gallican Articles which challenged his authority. The Admonition speaks unctuously of the Pope as one "whose life and character . . . make visible to all in our time the most perfect model of complete sanctity." So the Reformed are invited to reconcile themselves "with this holy Pope whose totally reformed life is a living school of all Christian virtues."⁴⁸

Benoist states that Innocent XI, "who was without question one of the greatest men to occupy this See for several centuries, was not taken in by these contortions", and his supporters might well have retorted with the text, "And they said to him, Hail King of the Jews, & struck him with their rods"!

(9) That the treatment of the Reformed, far from being a "road strewn with flowers", was a cruel and ultimately violent persecution. To cover only the last twenty years before the Revocation Benoist gives us in his collection of documents more than two hundred edicts, decrees, and declarations, by means of which by 1685 their Churches, which had numbered some 760 in 1598, had been reduced to 50 or 60; they had lost their Colleges, and most of their Schools; most professions and trades had been closed to them; their chambers or courts had been suppressed; their collective property had been seized, even their cemeteries in places where public worship had been prohibited, and many individuals and families had been ruined by fines or disproportionate taxation or by the billeting of troops.⁴⁹

The latter, always a burdensome exaction, became for the first time in 1681 a systematic campaign of physical violence. Initiated by the Intendant of Poitou, Marillac, the Reformed of that province underwent nine months of torment at the hands of those who were popularly called "booted missionaries", a practice quickly imitated by de Muin in La Rochelle. The result was 33,000 forced conversions, but naval desertions from La Rochelle, and the desolation of Poitou caused by large numbers fleeing the province, temporarily discredited these means. Nevertheless the program was resumed in Béarn in 1685, with such outward success that the royal Council decided to extend it throughout the Kingdom. Before the Edict was revoked nearly ten provinces were being subjected to the barbarities of the so-called "dragonnades", although other troops besides dragoons were given free rein in this enterprise.⁵⁰

(10) That the consequences of the Revocation were disastrous, not only for its victims, but also for the Church of France, and for the Kingdom itself. Benoist tells dramatic and moving tales of the sufferings and trials of those who left all behind to flee the country: concealing themselves in ingenious ways on board ships, or setting out to cross the Channel in small boats; or those who in an infinite variety of disguises attempted to cross a frontier, often through extremely rough terrain. All of them

did so at the risk of life-long galley-slavery for men, and prison for women, if they were caught.⁵¹

Those who had abjured under duress were troubled by remorse, and as soon as the soldiers were sent elsewhere absented themselves from Mass: whereupon they were threatened with renewed violence, and a special place was set apart for them in the Church, their attendance being taken at the door. Those who in illness refused the sacrament were by a new Royal Declaration to be sent to the galleys if they recovered, or their bodies to be dragged through the streets on a hurdle if they did not.⁵²

This kind of forced communion scandalized many devout Catholics, who were also disgusted and horrified by the barbarous treatment of the dead. They foresaw, and Benoist was in full agreement, that so to profane sacred rites can only lead ultimately to irreligion. Benoist was to state this quite explicitly in a manuscript *Mémoire* surviving among his papers: ". . . wise policy requires that each person be allowed the freedom to follow the inclinations of his conscience: because between irreligion and forced Religion there is little difference, and because the constraint which accustoms someone to profess to believe what he does not believe disposes him to believe nothing at all."⁵³ So an age of irreligion was being prepared.

Apart from the hurt to be suffered by the Church through this self-inflicted wound, France itself had suffered a loss in prestige and in credibility. How could its neighbours henceforth put faith in its pledged word to them if a "perpetual and irrevocable" Edict could thus be written off as "provisional"? The actual embarrassment of the Court of France had been manifested alike by its encouragement of defamatory writings about the supposed disloyalty and groundless complaints of the Reformed, by its largely vain attempts to persuade the refugees to return, and by the harsh measures taken to prevent others from escaping. Despite such efforts Benoist declared that about two hundred thousand had already fled from France at the time of publication of his *History*: they included members of the nobility, merchants, artisans, soldiers, sailors, including many officers. If some were destitute, others had found ways of bringing considerable wealth with them or sending it ahead of them, in cash or merchandise. So France, by driving from its midst a skilled, industrious, and loyal population who posed no threat, had wronged and injured itself.⁵⁴

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How have these conclusions fared under the analysis of later historians, permitted greater objectivity because less immediately involved. The answer is, remarkably well. There is substantial agreement on all of these points, with a few notable exceptions.

To be sure, both from the Catholic and the Protestant side important nuances have been added. E. G. Léonard in *Le Protestant Français* lays particular stress on

Benoist's description of the unrealistic expectations of the imminent triumph of the Protestant cause in France current among the Huguenots at the time of the granting of the Edict, and he goes beyond Benoist's ultimate disillusionment with the Edict by quoting with approval the words of F. Strowski:

The situation henceforth imposed on the Reformed completed their overthrow. The Edict of Nantes closed in upon them like a tomb. Under its encouragement there were established political and social conditions, manners, urbanity, worldliness, a monarchical cult and intellectual tastes which for a second time, and more effectively than the impotent dragonnades would do, killed the soul of Anne du Bourg, the Martyr, and the spirit of Calvin, the Master."⁵⁵

While acknowledging the strength of the leadership provided by both ministers and consistories, Léonard underlines the tendency of the latter "to transform a worship in spirit into a religion of works and prohibitions", and sees the preoccupation of the ministers with catechetical instruction, controversy, and above all preaching — often "didactic, sober, cold, essentially anti-Catholic" — as tending to crowd out a pastoral ministry to personal needs.⁵⁶ Granted the political, economic, and social pressures, working for conversion, and the self-interest involved, to which Benoist rightly points, there is little recognition by him of the genuine appeal of Catholic missionaries skilled in addressing such spiritual hunger, and of a Catholic Church in process of renewal.

With regard to the irrevocability of the Edict, there are differing views. The Catholics believed the Edict provisional, Lavissee declared.⁵⁷ Said Mariéjol: "This progress was the work of circumstances much more than of desires. . . Tolerance had no guarantee but the will of the sovereign: everything was against it, institutions and men." And again, "it is not to be doubted that Henry IV desired, like all men of his time, unity of faith in his kingdom."⁵⁸ But others agree entirely with Benoist: "perpetual and irrevocable", says Viénot,⁵⁹ and Baird insisted that it "could be abrogated only by the united action of all parties concerned."⁶⁰ Léonard qualifies this recognition by noting that it was inevitable that legislation born of particular circumstances would continue to be influenced by changing needs and conditions "despite all its declarations of irrevocability and its green seal, symbol of everlasting charters."⁶¹

Opinions are sharply divided about the justification and the wisdom of the measures taken for self-defence in the years preceding the outbreak of war in 1621. Were they not unnecessarily provocative? Did they not create the impression that the Reformed were ready on whatever pretext to risk civil war?⁶² A number of historians are convinced that putting the General Assembly on a war-footing in 1621 was indeed to set up a "state within a state".⁶³ On the other hand, was it not the disturbing memory of this active resistance, abortive though it proved, that postponed the execution for more than fifty years, and thus won a reprieve, albeit of slow strangulation?⁶⁴

There is division on this point, as also with respect to the related charge of republicanism. Substantial evidence exists to justify Benoist's defence of the loyalty of his people, and for his contention that during these years of the reign of Louis XIV when their ruin was being contrived they "loved their Prince almost to the point of adoration, & carried their homage & their dependency to a degree a little too close to idolatry."⁶⁵ Yet their political constitution was a natural development of their ecclesiastical polity, and that in turn an inherent aspect of their Calvinism. Representative church courts consorted ill with absolute monarchy. Significantly, not only was the government reluctant to allow the meetings of synods, but as far as possible contact with foreign Protestants was prevented. In the instructions to commissioners attending National Synods it was explicitly declared: "The Political State conforming easily to the Ecclesiastical, it is important that those who teach Theology in a Monarchy shall not have been imbued with Democratic or Aristocratic precepts."⁶⁶ The King was reminded publicly in 1680 that the overturning of the altars in England had been the prelude to the overturning of thrones.⁶⁷ Elisabeth Israels Perry has shown how from 1672 on, writing in defence of their history, the Protestant apologists had implied that there were strict limits to the powers of a ruler, relating to the laws of nature, the laws of the people, and the laws of Christianity. The claim is even made that these historical judgments "frightened the government", so that the Reformed thus "wrote their own epitaph". At the least one can say that there is evidence for the consequent deepening of suspicion and the widening of the gulf.⁶⁸

Benoist himself remains throughout obstinately loyal to the King, preferring to believe that the policies adopted with respect to the Reformed were due to ignorance, through information being deliberately withheld from him, or to prejudice encouraged by the malevolence or hostility of his advisers under clerical influence.⁶⁹ Later historians have shown that the King was in reality well aware of what was going on, and was impatient to see its culmination.⁷⁰

The usefulness of Benoist's work to succeeding generations, however, has not only been in the defensibility of its main conclusions, but also in the information preserved about a multitude of local incidents, persons, and circumstances not otherwise available, and especially in the insights he provides into the daily lives, customs, and attitudes of those about whom he writes. The five volumes have been abundantly mined by historians of the period: and the evidence of his reliability and conscientious fidelity to his sources has been added to over the years as scores of previously unknown manuscripts have come to light, many to be published in the Bulletin of the Société de l'Histoire du Protestantisme Français. This is what he himself sought, as the last sentence of his History implies: "It is enough for me to have accomplished the Work I had undertaken, with all the care of which I am capable, & all the faithfulness I promised."⁷¹

It is not unusual to encounter the elder statesman turned historian, who interprets for his own and succeeding generations the events of his time seen from the perspective of one who helped to shape them. What is less common is the historian turned politician, who because of his historical research becomes the indispensable political consultant and adviser. The latter role is one that Elie Benoist filled conspicuously during the latter part of his life, and the account of it forms a necessary postscript to our study.

Protestant successes in the War of the League of Augsburg awakened hopes that its conclusion might witness a reversal of French policy, and the return and rehabilitation of the Reformed, either through the good offices of the Allies, or through an act of grace on the part of the King of France. With the encouragement of William III and of Heinsius, Grand Pensionary of Holland, a small committee with Benoist as a member began to serve as an instrument and channel of communication in order to influence peace negotiations towards this end. Both within and outside the Committee there soon appeared strong differences of opinion. These are clearly reflected in a large number of mémoires and letters contained in the unpublished papers of Benoist in the Antoine Court Collection in the University of Geneva, most of them in his own handwriting. They reveal unmistakably his own position in the controversy.

On the one hand, in agreement with the Committee as a whole, but in opposition to widespread sentiment among the scattered colonies of refugees, Benoist insists that their one hope is to depend entirely on the goodwill of the Allies. Humbly to petition the King for re-instatement is to use a method vainly tried over and over in earlier years; it would be to ask the King, who has always shown an invincible aversion to the Reformed faith, to undo an act in which he takes particular pride; to present a petition in the name of Protestants still in France would incriminate them since it is now a criminal act for them to meet together for common action, whereas to present it in the name of the Refugees is to speak on behalf of those whom the King regards as rebels; it would undermine the intervention of the Allies, since the King would have reason for saying that it was a domestic matter under advisement; it would be the request for an act of grace, rather than the demand for an act of justice backed up by the authority of their Allied protectors.⁷²

On another related matter, however, Benoist stood almost alone. Most Refugees tended to idealize the Edict of Nantes in retrospect, and to see its re-enactment as their objective. But Benoist knew — who better than he? — what an ambiguous and unsatisfactory charter it had proved to be when there were deliberate efforts to circumvent its provisions. He doggedly insists that a completely new Edict must supplant everything that has gone before. In a remarkable document, in which he sounds at times like someone writing in 1789 rather than 1695, he calls for terms that include: Freedom of conscience based on "natural and Divine Right", freedom of domicile and private

worship, extended freedom of public worship and of the exercise of discipline, freedom of education and of poor relief, impartial administration of justice, freedom to enjoy natural and civil rights regarding the holding of property, the rearing of children, and eligibility for trades, professions, offices, and dignities. The safeguards are spelled out with equal care, including if possible acceptance by the Estates General, the public display of the Edict like a Bill of Rights, and above all the guarantee by the Allies, among them the English Parliament.⁷³

In the event, the hopes of the Committee were doomed to disappointment. Despite strong support from the Lutheran powers, the Allied plenipotentiaries were unable to write such terms into the Treaty of Ryswick in 1697, but had to settle for a powerfully worded Mémoire, asking the King of France to restore confidence in his genuine desire for peace with the Protestant nations by restoring his own Protestant subjects.⁷⁴ When the long-delayed reply came, however, it was devastatingly intransigent. Wrote Benoist to the Refugees in Lausanne: "Then our Sovereigns reported to us that the King of France had declared by his plenipotentiaries that he would not permit a single one of those who had left his Kingdom for the sake of Religion to return there, on any pretext whatsoever, except on the condition of submitting to his will, and converting to the Roman Communion. . ."⁷⁵

There was to be one more chance. The later War of the Spanish Succession ran its course: in 1711, two years before the peace was actually signed, a new commission was appointed by the Walloon Synod, with Benoist a member, the only personal link with the former Committee. In his correspondence he is as adamant as ever that the Edict of Nantes must not be restored. In its place the aim should be the securing for the Reformed of the freedom to practise their religion in public and private, and to exercise their discipline, without loss of civil rights or the forcing of their conscience.⁷⁶

It was to be the same story. The Treaty of Utrecht of 1713, despite "mémoires, letters, petitions, journeys, urgent pleas," contained no relief, no re-establishment.⁷⁷ Yet for Benoist, old and infirm and on the point of retirement, there was to be one ray of consolation: through the indefatigable efforts of the Marquis de Rochegude, and the generous and determined intercession of Queen Anne, the King of France in May, 1713, signed an order for the release of 136 Huguenot galley-slaves, and in March, 1714, released 44 more.⁷⁸

Such were the meagre results of twenty years of earnest activity on the part of Benoist and his colleagues to win through political channels the re-establishment and restoration of the Reformed Church of France, and the rehabilitation of those who had suffered and were suffering for the sake of conscience.

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NOTES

1. Elisabeth Israels Perry, From Theology to History: French Religious Controversy and the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973).
2. [Elie Benoist], Histoire de l'Edit de Nantes, contenant les choses les plus remarquables qui se sont passées en France avant & après sa publication, à l'occasion de la diversité des Religions: Et principalement les Contraventions Inexecutions, Chicanes, Artifices, Violences, & autres Injustices, que les Reformez se plaignent d'y avoir souffertes, jusques à l'Edit de Révocation, en Octobre 1685. Avec ce qui a suivi ce nouvel Edit jusques à present (Delft: Chez Adrien Beman, 1693 [I-II], 1695 [III-V]). (Abbreviation: Histoire)
3. The most important sources for biographical information about Benoist are as follows: Jaques-George de Chauffepié, Nouveau Dictionnaire Historique et Critique pour servir de supplément ou de continuation au Dictionnaire Historique et Critique de Mr. Pierre Bayle (Amsterdam et la Haye, 1750), I, 228-242; Eugène & Emile Haag, La France Protestante (Paris, 1879), II, cols. 269-276; Paul Pascal, Elie Benoist et l'Eglise Réformée d'Alençon (Paris, 1892). In addition there are the consistory records in the Municipal Archives in Delft, the records of the Synod of the Walloon Church in the Municipal Archives in Leyden, and a number of Benoist's unpublished manuscripts, mémoires and letters in the Antoine Court Collection in the Archives of the University of Geneva; some are also to be found in the Library of the Société de l'Histoire du Protestantisme Français in Paris.
4. Pascal, Elie Benoist, p. 31.
5. Chauffepié, Nouv. Dict., p. 228.
6. Benoist, Histoire, IV, 335-338.
7. Histoire, IV, 465f.
8. Archives Nationales, TT3, 230: 17(9-19); cf. Pascal, Elie Benoist, pp. 164-178.
9. Archives Nationales, TT3, 230: 17(52); Histoire, IV, 551.
10. Archives Nationales, TT3, 230: 17(53,54); cf. Pascal, Elie Benoist, pp. 189-195.
11. Lettre d'un pasteur banni de son pays à une église qui n'a pas fait son devoir dans la dernière persécution (Delft, 1686).
12. Municipal Archives of Delft: Register of the Consistory of the Walloon Church, pp. 48ff, 60, 61.
13. Histoire et apologie de la retraite des pasteurs à cause de la persécution de France (Francfort, 1687); Défense de l'Apologie pour les Pasteurs de France, Contre le livre intitulé Sentimens Désintéressez sur la Retraite des Pasteurs etc. (Francfort, 1688).
14. Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire du Protestantisme Français (Abbreviation: Bull.), vol. 61 (1912), pp. 425-434: "Un Dessein des Pasteurs Exilés en Hollande". The spy's name was Pierre-Louis de Pons, seigneur de Tillières et Desforges: his treachery went undiscovered for three years. Benoist states that he was killed at the time of his arrest: Archives of the University of Geneva, Court Collection, vol. 15, folio 48ff: "Suite de l'Histoire de l'Edit de Nantes", p. 28.
15. [Jean Claude], Les Plaintes des Protestans cruellement opprimez dans le Royaume de France (Cologne, 1686).
16. "Suite de l'Histoire de l'Edit de Nantes", p. 7.
17. [Gaultier de Saint-Blancard], Histoire Apologétique ou Défense des Libertez des Eglises Réformées de France, 3 vols. (Mayence, 1688).

18. David-Augustin Brueys, Réponse aux Plaintes des Protestans Contre les moyens que l'on employe en France pour les réunir à l'Eglise, seconde édition (Paris, 1686).
19. Cf. [Charles Ancillon], L'Irrévocabilité de l'Edit de Nantes, Prouvée par les principes du Droit & de la Politique (Amsterdam, 1688).
20. Histoire, Préface Générale, folio d4.
21. Benoist pays tribute especially to the integrity and fairness of the Roman Catholic historians, Jacques-Auguste de Thou, author of Historia sui temporis (Paris, 1604-1620), and François Eudes de Mézeray, author of Histoire de France depuis Faramond jusqu'à Louis le Juste (Paris, 1685).
22. Histoire, Préf. Gén., folios d3, e3; III, Préf., folio ***2f; IV, 313.
23. Histoire, Préf. Gén., folio e2.
24. The manuscript is in the Library of the Société de l'Histoire du Protestantisme Français: printed in Bull., vol. 38 (1889), pp. 411ff: "Une Lettre inédite d'Elie Benoist". Pascal, Elie Benoist, p. 117, makes a persuasive case for identifying the recipient of the letter as Joseph Ancillon, rather than as his nephew Charles Ancillon as suggested by the original editor.
25. Bull., vol. 7 (1859), pp. 274-290: "Appel d'un Historien du XVII^e Siècle".
26. Histoire, Préf. Gén., folio e2.
27. "Appel. . .", p. 289.
28. Histoire, I, 123, 127.
29. Histoire, I, 226-240; documents (I), pp. 62-98.
30. For example, a Decree of the Parlement of Toulouse, September 4th, 1681, that all illegitimate or exposed children must be raised as Catholics; followed on January 31st, 1682, by a Royal Declaration ordering that all those exposed or of illegitimate birth of whatever age (i.e. even octogenarians) must be instructed and raised as Catholics: Ministers, Elders, and Consistories, being subject to a fine of four thousand pounds for resistance to this command. Histoire, IV, 507, 536f; documents (V), CXXVI.
31. Histoire, I, 224.
32. Histoire, I, 273-278; 298; 362-366, 378-384, 392, 411; 340-354.
33. Histoire, II, 3-70.
34. Histoire, II, 23, 34; 179f, 331, 389f; 188-206, 208-223, 230-232; 486.
35. Histoire, II, Préf. d-d2.
36. Histoire, II, 274-286; documents (II), pp. 49-53; II, 287-298.
37. Histoire, II, 58-60: cf. I, 126-129; II, 353-355; 359-408.
38. Histoire, III, 158; documents (III), VI. "Religion Prétendue Réformée" had been the official designation for the Reformed since the 1570's, an instance occurring as early as 1562: Bull., vol. 88 (1939), p. 357.
39. Histoire, II, 413-414; 577.
40. Histoire, III, 203-208, 212f; 340-342; 367-392; documents (III), XL.
41. Jean Filleau, Décisions catholiques, ou Recueil général des arrests rendus en toutes les cours souveraines de France en exécution ou interprétation des édits qui concernent l'exercice de la religion prétendue réformée, avec les raisons fondamentales desdits arrests tirées de la doctrine des pères de l'Eglise, des conciles, et des lois civiles et politiques du royaume (Poitiers, 1668).

42. Bernard Meynier, s.j., De l'Execution de l'Edit de Nantes (1662); Véritez (1665); De l'Edit de Nantes executé selon les intentions de Henry le Grand, en ce qui concerne l'établissement d'exercice public de la R.P.R., avec les articles secrets de l'édit du 17 septembre 1577 (Paris, 1670).
43. Pierre Bernard, Maximes à observer au jugement des partages faits par Messieurs les Commissaires executeurs de l'Edit de Nantes (1664); Explication de l'Edit de Nantes par les autres édits de pacification et arrêts de règlement (1666).
44. Histoire, III, 573f; documents (III), LXXXIV, MaximeX; IV, 195.
45. Histoire, IV, 26; 100-108; 296f; 520-522.
46. Histoire, V, 794.
47. Histoire, I, 12.
48. Histoire, IV, 550-553; documents (V), p. 143.
49. Histoire, V, 729-742 et passim.
50. Histoire, IV, 459-469; V, 832-865.
51. Histoire, V, 946-957, 962-984.
52. Histoire, V, 979-988.
53. Archives of the University of Geneva, Court Collection, vol. 48, #XXX: "Mémoire touchant le traitement fait en France cy-devant aux Réformez et celui qu'on devoit leur faire à l'avenir".
54. Histoire, V, 1012; 957-962. Vauban and Saint-Simon among contemporaries perceived this clearly.
55. F. Strowski, Pascal et son temps (Paris, 1907), vol. I, p. 1: cited in E. G. Léonard, Le Protestant Français (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1955), p. 33; cf. also Samuel Mours, Le Protestantisme en France au XVIIe Siècle (Paris: Librairie Protestante, 1967), pp. 45ff.
56. E. G. Léonard, Histoire Générale du Protestantisme, 3 vols. (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1961-1964), II, 317-319, 350f.
57. Ernest Lavisse, Histoire de France, vol. 7 (Paris, 1906), II, 43.
58. J. H. Mariéjol in Lavisse, Hist. de France, vol. 6 (Paris, 1905), I, 423; II, 86.
59. John Viénot, Histoire de la Réforme Française, 2 vols. (Paris: Librairie Fischbacher, 1926, 1934), I, 453.
60. Henry M. Baird, The Huguenots and Henry of Navarre, 2 vols. (New York, 1886), II, 429f.
61. Léonard, Le Protestant Français, p. 32
62. Baird, The Huguenots and the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, 2 vols. (New York, 1895), I, 73, 76.
63. Cornelis de Witt, Au service de la Cause (1621) (Paris: Librairie Fischbacher, 1922), p. 30; Lavisse, Hist. de France, vol. 6: II, 214; Henri de la Garde, Le Duc de Rohan et les Protestants sous Louis XIII (Paris, 1884), p. 4.
64. Léonard, Le Protestant Français, p. 34.
65. Histoire, V, 1013-1014: a position endorsed by Léonard, Hist. Gén., II, 362-364, and Mours, op. cit., pp. 45ff.
66. Histoire, documents (III), p. 15.

THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND AND THE HIGHLAND CLEARANCES

by

Donald C. Smith

On June 3, 1846, Thomas Chalmers, the greatest Scottish churchman of his day, probably the greatest since John Knox, delivered the address at the laying of the foundation-stone of the new Free Church College in Edinburgh. On that day in the middle of the 'forties' - after a decade of appalling misery and want for great masses of the labouring population, and in a year when tens of thousands of poor Highlanders were suffering from starvation - those assembled at the head of the Mound, including many of the working classes, heard him declare:

"We leave to others the passions and the politics of this world; and nothing will ever be taught, I trust, in any of our halls, which shall have the remotest tendency to disturb the existing order of things, or to confound the ranks and distinctions which now obtain in society. But there is one equality between man and man which will be strenuously taught - the essential equality of human souls; and that in the highest count and reckoning of eternity, the souls of the poorest of nature's children - the raggedest boy who runs along the pavement, is of like estimation in the eyes of heaven with that of the greatest and noblest of our land."¹

Continuing his address, Chalmers defended the existing pyramidal social structure of society with the monarchy and aristocracy perched 'upon its summit', the other privileged and 'respectable' classes immediately below, with a gradual widening in the descent downwards to the great masses at the base of the pyramid - 'the mighty host who swarm upon its surface'. He expressed a desire for the elevation of those at the base, but not by claiming for them the privileges of, or equality with those above them, but by lifting the whole base, with superstructure intact a little higher:

"Let kings retain their sceptres, and nobles their coronets - what we want is a more elevated ground floor for our general population, and this without derangement to the upper stories of the social and political edifice."²

Thus spoke the most representative churchman of his day - the man who, more than any other, concerned himself with the moral and social well-being of the people. Such was the social outlook of the Church in the first half of the 19th century.

I begin this lecture on the Scottish Church's attitude toward the infamous Highland clearances of the early 19th century with Chalmers' words, because Chalmers' views as here expressed reveal something of the extent to which the Church of his day had abdicated its historic Reformed responsibility for prophetic social criticism. In this crucial period in the development of modern industrial society, the Reformed Church in Scotland, in all its branches, failed to exercise its prophetic task in relation to the social, political and economic issues of the time. This abdication, some reasons for which we will examine in due course, had fateful consequences for the Church's witness in a rapidly changing society, particularly in terms of its relationship to various popular movements of the day seeking social and political change.

When first asked to prepare this paper, it was my intention to deal with the topic "The failure of social criticism in 19th century Scottish Presbyterianism." However, after some thought, it became clear that this was too vast and complex a topic to deal with in one 40 minute lecture. This morning, therefore, I will focus on only one small aspect of the Church's failure in social criticism - namely, its response to the Highland clearances.

Probably no single event in Scottish history betrays more dramatically the disastrous consequences of the 19th century tendency to sacrifice human beings to economic needs than the Highland clearances. Over a period of almost a whole century - from the late 18th to the late 19th century - tens of thousands of Highlanders were forcibly evicted from their homes, their crofts, and even from their native land, often in ruthless fashion, so that the land might be more profitably used for sheep-runs or a pleasant hunting-ground for a non-resident aristocracy. Such was the extent of the injustice which could be perpetrated on a plea of economic necessity.

As a background for these events, it must be remembered that in the historical development of the Highlands and Islands, the Highland chief in the clan system possessed limited civil and criminal jurisdiction over his clansmen. However, the clansmen were neither serfs nor vassals but free men; and the clan was really a great family. The land belonged communally to the clan and not to the chief as a private landlord. After the crushing of the Stuart threat to the throne in 1745, however, the government at Westminster sought to assimilate the chiefs to the nobles and great landowners of England. Soon the chiefs were transformed into private landlords and their rights regarding the land extended. But the ancient rights of the clansmen were ignored and the people were deprived of their status as free men. A system amounting to a modified feudalism resulted. Entails became common, and by marriage, inheritance and purchase the great estates became still greater and passed into fewer hands. By the beginning of the 19th century, the high rents offered the Highland landlords by Lowland sheep farmers made it highly profitable for them to 'dispose' of their small tenants. Thus followed the clearances in which the landowners were able to exercise irresponsible, despotic power over their former clansmen by evicting them at will.

The most extensive of the Highland clearances - the infamous Sutherland clearances - took place in the first 2 decades of the 19th century. The Sutherland estate contained over 700,000 acres and covered over one half the county. It was inhabited by some 15,000 small farmers, almost all of whom were forcibly driven from the crofts in the course of the clearances and replaced by 39 sheep farmers and a few shepherds. Those who were evicted from their homes and farms went either to the sea coast where small patches of land, consisting often of moor and bog quite unfit for cultivation, were allotted to them - or else they emigrated to Canada.

Though the story of the Sutherland clearances is well-known and has in recent years been investigated afresh in several published works, the shocking succession of forced evictions in Scotland continued for yet another 60 years, ending only in the 1880's when at

last legislative action was forthcoming to bring them to an end.

Such eye-witnesses of the Sutherland clearances as Donald MacLeod and Donald Sage have left to posterity terrifying descriptions of the manner in which the irresponsible power of proprietors was exercised against poor and helpless crofters. Sage was parish minister of Achness when the clearances of 1819 took place. Both he and the entire population of 1600 among whom he laboured were forcibly evicted from their homes and crofts in that year. Sage described the events in his reminiscences Memorabilia Domestica, published after his death.

Donald MacLead, a stone mason, in his book Gloomy Memories, gives this first hand account of evictions carried out in 1814 by the notorious Patrick Sellar, factor of the Duchess of Sutherland:

"In the former removals the tenants had been allowed to carry away this timber to erect houses in their new allotments, but now a more summary mode was adopted, by setting fire to the houses! The able-bodied men were by this time away after their cattle or otherwise engaged at a distance, so that the immediate sufferers by the general house-burning that now commenced were the aged and infirm, and the women and children ... These proceedings were carried on with the greatest rapidity as well as with most reckless cruelty. The cries of the victims, the confusion, the despair and horror painted on the countenances of the one party, and the exulting ferocity of the other, beggar all description . . . Many deaths ensued from alarm, from fatigue, and cold; the people being instantly deprived of shelter, and left to the mercy of the elements. Some old men took to the woods and precipices, wandering about in a state approaching to, or of absolute insanity, and several of them, in this situation, lived only a few days. Pregnant women were taken with premature labour, and several children did not long survive their sufferings."

MacLeod's description of another clearance in Sutherland several years later is no less shocking:

"The consternation and confusion were extreme; little or no time was given for removal of persons or property - the people striving to remove the sick and the helpless before the fire should reach them - next, struggling to save the most valuable of their effects. The cries of the women and children - the roaring of the affrighted cattle hunted at the same time by the yelling dogs of the shepherds amid the smoke and fire - altogether presented a scene that completely baffles description:

it required to be seen to be believed. A dense cloud of smoke enveloped the whole country by day, and even extended far on the sea; at night an awfully grand, but terrific scene presented itself - all the houses in an extensive district in flames at once! I myself ascended a height about eleven o'clock in the evening, and counted two hundred and fifty blazing houses . . . The conflagration lasted six days, till the whole of the dwellings were reduced to ashes or smoking ruins."⁴

The Strathnaver clearance in Sutherland in 1819 has been vividly described by Donald Sage. He tells of one aged widow

"who, by infirmity, had been reduced to such a state of bodily weakness that she could neither walk nor lie in bed. She could only, night and day, sit in her chair; and having been confined for many years in that posture, her limbs had become so stiff that any attempt to move her was attended with acute pain."⁵

When the evicting party arrived,

"her family and neighbours represented the widow's strong claims on their compassion, and the imminent danger to her life of removing her to such a distance as the lower end of the Strath, at least ten miles off, without suitable means of conveyance. They implored that she might be allowed to remain for only two days till a conveyance could be provided for her."⁶

This request, however, was bluntly refused, and she was ordered out of the house immediately before it was burned. The pathetic creature

"was, therefore, raised by her weeping family from her chair and laid on a blanket . . . All this she bore with meekness, and while the eyes of her attendants were streaming with tears, her pale and gentle countenance was suffused with a smile. The change of posture and the rapid motion of the bearers, however, awakened the most intense pain, and her cries never ceased till within a few miles of her destination, when she fell asleep. A burning fever supervened, of which she died a few months later."⁷

Although they were on a smaller scale than the infamous Sutherland clearances, those later in the century, in the 1840's and 50's, were carried out with no less cruelty and harshness. One newspaper reporter writing in 1849 condemns the ruthless manner in which evictions were still being carried out in that year - those by the Duke of Argyll, Mr. Baillie of Glenelg who sent 500 to America, Col. Gordon who cleared off 1800 from South Uist, and Lord MacDonald who removed 600 to 700 from North Uist and who was threatening 3000 more in Skye. Writing at the end of the century, the biographer of Principal Rainy of New

College, Edinburgh, remarks in the first volume of his work that 50 years ago "in Uist, many of the people fled to the hills to escape being taken away, and they were pursued and brought down to the emigrant ship, handcuffed like felons."⁸

Yet in spite of the appalling hardships the poor crofters had to endure at the hands of a selfish and irresponsible landed aristocracy, they offered virtually no protest or resistance. This is perhaps the saddest part of the whole story of the evictions - a noble, brave and manly race passively allowing despotic landowners to treat them with less consideration than the sheep which displaced them. They were deprived of their ancient rights as free men, were threatened and driven off their land, had their houses and crops burned, and their women and aged thrust outside sometimes to die of exposure and shock, they were exploited, starved and degraded. Yet they made hardly any attempt at resistance. Certainly it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that if the Highlanders had resolutely opposed these acts of cruelty and oppression, and drawn public attention to the injustices to which they were subjected, reluctant governments would have been forced to act on the matter in the early part of the century - as they did in the case of conditions in the factories and mines - instead of waiting until the 1880's when, after a century of evictions and steady depopulation, the manhood and energy of many highland districts had already been drained away.

What, we may well ask, was the cause of this tragic passivity on the part of a proud and noble race of people? In a word, the answer is that the pious, law-abiding, and loyal crofting population had learned well over the years the clergy's teaching on 'passive obedience' to the divine will and constituted authority. For decades, the Church's social teaching had inculcated the Christian duty of 'passive obedience' to the 'powers that be'. 'The powers that be are ordained of God' was interpreted in countless sermons and articles as meaning that the existing order in society - social, political and economic - was ordained by God. Therefore, to oppose the 'status quo' was an act of

disloyalty both to the civil authority and to God who ordained it. By virtually deifying the 'status quo' in this way, it was inevitable that the Church tended to regard all movements advocating any basic structural change in society, be it social, political or economic, with suspicion, if not horror. Therefore, in these early and middle decades of the 19th century, in opposition to the growing democratic sentiment in Scotland, and the widespread demands for more liberal institutions, all branches of the Church tended to stress only one aspect of biblical teaching - the Christian duty of accepting the existing order. In contemporary Church teaching and preaching almost no attempt was made to indicate the other aspect of biblical teaching: that the Gospel demanded social justice and righteousness as well as social peace, harmony and order, and that in attempting to preserve the latter, the former could not be sacrificed. Biblical passages which emphasized an unconditional 'passive obedience' were favourite texts of the time. Romans 13, 1st Peter 2 - "Submit yourself to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors . . . for so is the will of God," and Proverbs 24:21 - "Fear thou the Lord and the king; and meddle not with them that are given to change," were particularly useful sermon texts to discourage Christian support for those advocating any basic reforms in society. This determination to preach to the masses a gospel of contentment and obedience to the civil powers was professed annually by the General Assembly in the Loyalty Addresses to the King or Queen. Typical was one addressed to the Queen and government by the Church of Scotland conveying

"the strongest assurance of the resolution of the Ministers and Elders of this Church to inculcate the duty of combining with the offices of piety, fidelity to the Sovereign, respect for the laws, and submission to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake."⁹

Fortunately, said one Free Church minister in a sermon on "Christian Loyalty," true Christians are not among those who seek to change our institutions. Indeed, he says

"those who are best acquainted with such matters will be the first to state that the discontented, on such occasions,

mainly consist of persons who make no profession of religion at all; and that their dissatisfactions are restrained and rendered safe by the sounder and more loyal principles of their fellow-workmen, who, as part of their religion, 'fear God' and 'honour the king'."¹⁰

In sermons of the day, it was common practice in preaching submission and obedience to the poor to appeal to the Incarnation - to the 'passive obedience' and submission of Christ to the will of God and his meek acceptance of his poor and lowly state among men, as the divine example for them to emulate. If the Son of God was willing to accept this lowly position on the social pyramid, never complaining about his poverty, and passively submitting to unjust treatment, cruelty and even death, it obviously amounted to something like blasphemy for the lower classes to murmur and complain about the lowly station God had assigned them. As the minister of the Tron Church in Edinburgh expressed it:

"In Jesus we perceive a humility which cheerfully performed the meanest offices which duty or affection could dictate, a patience and resignation which endured the severest calamities without a murmur, and in the darkest hour of adversity cheerfully acquiesced in the will of heaven; a meekness which remained calm and unruffled amid insult and oppression; and a godlike compassion which implored forgiveness and mercy to its bitterest enemies. The cultivation and practice of such dispositions, are, indeed, suited to every situation of human life, but to the poor they possess a peculiar value. They enable them to tread with a firm and undaunted step the rugged path of sorrow, and teach them in this imperfect state, to acquire that temper and spirit which will prepare them for joining the society of the blessed inhabitants of the realms of glory."¹¹

Along with this teaching on the duty of 'passive obedience' the prevalent theology of the day was such that it contributed to the Church's fateful social conformity and prophetic silence. The rigid theological doctrines of orthodox Calvinism harmonized well with the Church's equally rigid understanding of natural law embracing all the immutable divine laws - moral and physical - built into the structure of the universe. Scholastic doctrines such as that of double predestination lent strong support to deterministic notions of the operation of divine providence in the natural order. It was accepted, for example,

that inequality and privilege was the mark of all the activity of God's providence, both in the 'spiritual world' - in the divine act of election and reprobation - and in the 'physical world' - in the divine ordering of men's lives and of social and economic relations. The existing arrangements in society, like the divine plan of salvation, were determined by the inscrutable will of God. Social elevation and material comforts, like salvation, were not intended for all but were, in the wise providence of God, reserved for the few. The divine structure of the universe permitted no other arrangement. Just as sinful men could not question the justice of the divine decree of election, so they were not allowed to criticize the natural laws by which God governed the world. Neither salvation nor a just society could be achieved by human effort. Social privilege and economic inequality, like sin, was part of the structure of the universe.

It is not surprising that the rigidity and inflexibility of this Calvinist orthodoxy prevented the Church from interpreting the Gospel in a living and relevant way to the far-reaching changes taking place in society. The static rationalistic doctrines of such a theology only bulwarked the prevalent social and economic dogmas of the period and utterly failed to provide an adequate vehicle through which the dynamic power of the Gospel could be expressed. God himself had become imprisoned within a rigid and impersonal system known as divine providence. And so men too were in the grip of this rigid necessity which they conceived to be God's will.

In the light of these theological tendencies and the social and economic presuppositions of the Church generally in the first half of the 19th century, let us look at the responses of the Highland clergy to the treatment of their people during the Highland clearances.

Donald MacLeod and other eye-witnesses and authorities who were familiar with the clearances rightly saw that it was primarily the influence of the clergy that led the Highlanders to passively accept the injustices inflicted upon them. In the words of MacLeod:

"The clergy, also, whose duty it is to denounce the oppressor, and aid the oppressed have . . . found their account in abetting the wrongdoers, exhorting the people to quiet submission, helping to stifle their cries, telling them that all their sufferings came from the hand of God, and was a just punishment for their sins!"¹²

Ministers "were continually preaching submission declaring these proceedings were fore-ordained of God, and pronouncing the vengeance of Heaven and eternal damnation on those who should presume to make the least resistance." When, in 1841, a few crofters, faced with evictions, did offer some resistance to a new clearing at Durness, the parish minister

"made himself useful on the occasion, threatening the people with punishment here and hereafter . . . According to him, all the evils inflicted upon them were ordained of God, and for their good, whereas any opposition on their part proceeded from the devil, and subjected them to just punishment here and eternal torment hereafter."¹³

MacLeod summed up his condemnation of the clergy by saying:

"I am truly sorry that truth has obliged me to represent the character of these latter gentlemen in an unfavourable light, but I am convinced that had they done their duty, in denouncing the wrongs perpetrated before their eyes, instead of becoming auxiliaries, the other parties (landlords and factors) would have been unable to proceed. The oppressors always appealed to them for sanction and justification and were not disappointed. The foulest deeds were glossed over, and all the evil which could be attributed to the natives themselves, such as severe seasons, famine and consequent disease, was by these pious gentlemen ascribed to Providence as a punishment for sin . . . Such was the holy teaching of these learned clerics. They had always the ear and confidence of the proprietors, and I put it to their consciences to say how often, if ever, they exerted that influence in favour of the oppressed. To the tribunal of that Master whose servants they pretend to be I cite them, where hypocrisy and glaring perversions will not avail."¹⁴

Other authorities also attest to the fact that it was only the powerful hold of the Church upon the minds of the Highland peasantry that prevented organized and sustained opposition to the clearances. A special correspondent for the Times, describing the cruelties which attended an extensive clearing at Glencalvie, Rossshire in 1845, claimed that:

"so strong is the feeling of the poor Highlanders at these outrageous proceedings, so far as they are concerned wholly unwarranted from any cause whatever, that I am informed on the best authority, and by those who go amongst them and hear what they say, that it is owing to the influence of religion alone that they refrain from breaking out into open and turbulent resistance of the law." 15

It is clear from contemporary sources that in keeping with a dominant tendency in the Calvinist orthodoxy of the time, all the clergy - even those most sympathetic with the sufferings of the poor Highlanders - were the victims of a disastrous theological error brought about by their rigid, deterministic understanding of God's providence. This was the error or regarding every human event and activity - including all the evil and injustice caused by the wickedness of men - as somehow the positive expression of the will of God. Thus, even Norman MacLeod, one of the few post-Disruption Church of Scotland ministers to display any marked sympathy for the plight of the exploited Highlanders, at a public meeting called in Edinburgh to rally aid and relief for the famine-stricken crofters in 1846-7, could propose a motion in the following terms:

" 'As it pleased God in his mysterious providence to visit the Highlands and Islands of Scotland with Famine on account of their sin, that it behoved Christians of all denominations who were blessed with the means to come forward liberally that the Highlanders might be saved'." 16

So also Donald Sage, whose sympathies were genuinely on the side of the oppressed crofters, was prevented from taking any positive action to assist his people by his bondage to a deterministic view of God's providence which demanded an unquestioning 'passive obedience' even in the face of unjust treatment. He shared the universal belief that the people must not murmur or complain against those that persecute them for, behind it all, it was God who was punishing them for sin. Therefore, to passively accept the decrees of 'the powers that be', however cruel and unjust, was to obey God; to offer any resistance or even to criticize such decrees was blatantly to flout the divine will. Sage's belief in such a doctrine is evident in his description of his people's response to the news of their impending eviction:

"The people received the legal warning to leave forever the homes of their fathers with a sort of stupor - that apparent indifference which is often the external aspect of intense feeling. As they began, however, to awaken from the stunning effects of this first intimation, their feelings found vent, and I was much struck by the different ways in which they expressed their sentiments. The truly pious acknowledged the mighty hand of God in the matter. In their prayers and religious conferences not a solitary expression could be heard indicative of anger or vindictiveness, but in the sight of God they humbled themselves, and received the chastisement at His hand. Those, however, who were strangers to such exalted and ennobling impressions of the gospel breathed deep and muttered curses on the heads of the persons who subjected them to such treatment. The more reckless portion of them fully realized the character of the impenitent in all ages, and indulged in the most culpable excesses, even while this divine punishment was still suspended over them. These last, however, were very few in number - not more than a dozen." 17

Here again, it seems, the Gospel had been so robbed of its power of dynamic and radical criticism that it amounted to little more than the 'opiate of the people'.

Such was the extent to which the Scottish Church in these early years of the 19th century had lost its ability to sound forth a prophetic word in the name of the God of justice and righteousness. The Church was firmly in the grip of that most terrible and perhaps most universal of human maladies - the belief that principles, doctrines and dogmas were more sacred than human beings. Thus it was that while men could well lament the occurrence of such acts of inhumanity as the clearances, they could do nothing about them.

FOOTNOTES:

1. The Witness, June 6, 1846, p.2
2. Ibid.,
3. Donald MacLeod, Gloomy Memories, pp. 8-9
4. Ibid., pp. 16-17
5. Donald Sage, Memorabilia Domestica, p. 217
6. Ibid., pp. 217-8
7. Ibid., p. 218
8. P.C. Simpson, The Life of Principal Rainy, vol.1, p. 464
9. Acts of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, 1848, p.42
10. Rev. John G. Lorimer, Christian Loyalty, p. 35
11. The Scottish Christian Herald, June 22, 1839, pp. 385-6
12. MacLeod, op. cit., p. 4
13. Ibid., p. 58
14. Ibid., p. XVI
15. The London Times, May 20, 1845
16. MacLeod, op. cit., p. X
17. Sage, op. cit., p. 215

DR. JOHN McNICOL AND TORONTO BIBLE COLLEGE

by Warren Charlton

I. JOHN McNICOL -- THE FORMATIVE YEARS

"His Students Crossed the Seven Seas" was the way that one periodical summed up Dr. John McNicol's years as principal of Toronto Bible College.¹ Another stated, "If the life you live is the lesson you teach, then we know that by Dr. McNicol's life, as much as by his teaching, he has left an indelible impression on those thousands of young people who have gone through this place."² Principal W. W. Bryden of Knox College saw Dr. McNicol's significance in his devotion and loyalty to the Bible as the Word of God. "Today scholarship is beginning to affirm ... what I feel in a sense this man has stood by all his days. That to my mind, ... is the significance of his life."³ A former student and colleague stated that in a very unique way, far surpassing the personality cults of today, the vast majority of Dr. McNicol's students would rise up and call him blessed.⁴ To these, many more superlatives could be added.

John McNicol, the eldest child of a civil servant, spent his formative years in Ottawa where he was a member of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church. He not only received his basic education there, but undoubtedly he was confronted often with the truths of God and their claim upon his life. To these truths John McNicol dedicated his life.

With this solid Christian grounding, McNicol entered the University of Toronto where he earned his B.A. degree with honours in Classics in 1891. He not only showed academic excellence, but also a penchant for sports as a cricketer and tennis player. His writing career began when he became part of the editorial staff of the Varsity, which already boasted of Stephen Leacock and G. Howard Ferguson as members. While a student he became Secretary of the University Y.M.C.A. and later

was involved in the Student Volunteer Movement. Years later he told a student gathering that while at the University of Toronto he worked at the old Elizabeth Street Mission.⁵

McNicol entered Knox College in 1892 to study to be a Presbyterian minister. There he received his B.D. degree with first class honours in the largest class in the history of the College to that time.⁶ Principal Bryden commented on this, "I wonder if we quite appreciate the fine scholar that Dr. John McNicol is. I have often heard the older men of Knox College say that he stood out in his courses in an exceptional way, much above many men who have since gained a reputation for scholarship in the academic world."⁷

From this academic basis Dr. McNicol went on to the augmented charge in Alymer, Quebec, where he was inducted and ordained March 1896 for the Presbyterian ministry, where also his work deepened the spiritual life among the churches. This ministry was to last until 1901 and he was to be appointed as "Instructor in English Bible" in the Toronto Bible Training School in 1902.

II. TEACHER AND PRINCIPAL

"Resolved that Rev. John McNicol, B.A., be appointed an instructor for one year beginning September, 1902 -- chiefly in Bible Introduction and Exposition."⁸ This statement from the minutes of the Board in 1902 was amplified by the comments of the Recorder, "In a providential way the attention of the President and others was turned to Rev. John McNicol, B.D., Ottawa, who is believed to possess excellent qualifications ... He comes to us with the highest recommendations of prominent ministers and others who have known of his work and worth. One of our friends ... wrote to Dr. Harris ... 'there is none other in sight who is likely to bring ability and spiritual force to the service, as well as an attractive personality'."⁹

Much of those providential ways and the names of people who recommended McNicol for the post are lost forever to posterity. At a later date McNicol remarked, "I came up from Ottawa to attend a Student Volunteer Convention in January 1902. Dr. Harris, whom I already knew, and Dr. Stewart, asked me then if I would consider accepting an invitation to join the Staff and help in the Toronto Bible Training School."¹⁰ How was it that this young Presbyterian minister knew this famous Baptist preacher, Dr. Elmore Harris? Was it through his work in the Y.M.C.A.; or Student Volunteer Movement, in which Harris was often a conference speaker? Conceivably McNicol knew William Kilborne Stewart, the son of Principal Stewart of the Toronto Bible Training School. William K. Stewart had graduated from the University of Toronto in 1897 two years after McNicol; and though his father was a prominent Baptist clergyman, listed himself as Presbyterian.¹¹ Perhaps Stewart drew his father's attention to this young man. Principal Wm. Caven of Knox

College who was a special lecturer at Toronto Bible Training School in 1899, may have suggested McNicol as a possible teacher. Whatever the connection, John McNicol and his bride, Louisa Maud Burpe, granddaughter of Sir Leonard Tilley, came to Toronto from Ottawa to take up their new work.¹² McNicol not only became Instructor at the Toronto Bible Training School, but also became the assistant to Dr. A. B. Winchester at Knox Presbyterian Church in Toronto. Later he gave up his assistantship and became an elder when his duties at the College later became too great.¹³

The Toronto Bible Training School, founded by Dr. Elmore Harris, had as its "great design", "The training of consecrated men and women for Sunday School workers, Pastors' assistants, city, home, and foreign missions. It is intended for those who believe they have been called of God to Christian service, and for age or other reasons cannot pursue a full collegiate and theological course of study."¹⁴ It was an interdenominational school where "no sectarian or merely denominational tenets are taught or discussed in class."¹⁵ The School offered a two year course of study with three basic aims -- "A consecrated Christian life; adequate knowledge of the Word of God; and effective use of the Holy Scriptures in Christian service".¹⁶ Its doctrinal statement would in today's terminology be called fundamental and evangelical which shows the school's position in the contrast to any Ritschlian German liberal theology which was beginning to disturb some people.¹⁷

McNicol's yearly appointment was renewed each year until June 1, 1906 when he was appointed as principal for one year and in the same year was elected as a member of the Board.¹⁸ This arrangement continued until April 26, 1907 when the General Council recommended to the Board his election as permanent principal with this resolution, "So complete

was the satisfaction expressed by Dr. Harris and everyone present at the thorough and successful work of Mr. McNicol that it was agreed that there was but one course open to the Council and therefore on motion of Dr. F. E. Howitt, seconded by Mr. B. W. Robertson, it was resolved that the Council recommend to the Board the election of Mr. McNicol as permanent principal of Toronto Bible Training School in full confidence of his ability, successfully to direct the work of the School in the future."¹⁹ This statement reflects McNicol's influence as a teacher in the School and this favourable impression he made on all by his Christian character and devotion in four short years.²⁰ A later student of McNicol (i.e. 1933-36) commented that McNicol showed, in a humble and quiet fashion, a deep understanding and familiarity with the Scriptures. He lectured without notes, yet was in command of his material. He answered questions in a kindly fashion, not disparaging the questioner. His main aim was to point his students back to the Bible and what the Bible says, rather than directing them to extra-Biblical textbooks. McNicol's most important contribution even over the content of his courses, was to give to his students an enthusiasm for personal study and research, rather than a reliance on others at all times.²¹

"The central feature of the curriculum is a thorough study of the English Bible, book by book. This study is the regulating centre of the whole course of study."²² McNicol insisted always that, "Personal contact between teacher and student is an important element in our method of training."²³ McNicol practiced what he preached for one student testifies, "The most accessible person in the Toronto Bible College is its principal. At an early hour before lectures, in brief moments of recess, after work is over for the day, he is to be found in his study -- that study which is the most accessible

room in the College."²⁴

Mrs. McNicol did much to extend this unique relationship for she was affectionately known as the 'College Mother'. Each week she opened her home to a group of the College students; she carried on extensive correspondence with graduates, especially those on foreign fields; and she became a valued and trusted friend and counsellor to many. The McNicol's sought to go through the entire student population systematically when they opened up their home to these groups of students. To many these times remain fond memories.

As well as being teacher and principal, McNicol was also a prolific writer. As early as 1909 he contributed an article to the well known series called, The Fundamentals, which eventually sold over three million copies. His article called, "The Hope of the Church", set forth the basic truth, "the hope of the Church, then, is the personal return of her Lord"; and McNicol's emphasis was to point out that it was the Lord Himself and His personal return which was the characteristic New Testament concept of hope. He realized that this vital belief in the personal return of the Lord Jesus Christ "has a vital relation ... to some points of our faith which are being attacked or obscured by the subtle tendencies of modern thought".²⁵ In the belief that "the spread of the Gospel and the interests of the Kingdom of God have a place for accomplished scholarship", prominent churchmen such as S. D. Chown, Geerhardus Vos, Adolf Deissman, and Principal John McNicol wrote for the Biblical Review.²⁶ McNicol wrote such articles as, "The Peril of Special Emphases in Christianity" (Vol. VIII, No. 3, July 1923); "The Essential Reality in Christianity" (Vol. IX, No. 4, Oct. 1924); and "The Kingdom of Heaven in the Mind of Jesus" (Vol. XI, No. 2, April 1926).

The well known periodical, The Evangelical Quarterly,

also called on Dr. McNicol for contributions, and he offered for example, "The Righteousness of God in the Epistle to the Romans" (Vol. VI, No. 3, July 14, 1934); and "The Spiritual Blessings in the Epistle to the Ephesians" (July 15, 1932). Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship in its first volume of The New Bible Commentary, used McNicol's comments on "Luke".

His book, The Christian Evangel, was written for the American Tract Society and although it did not win the one thousand dollar first prize, the editors noted that "the manuscript was of such exceptional value and merit that its publication was strongly advised ..."²⁷ The Recorder added, "He took this as a challenge to set forth in a systematic form the essential elements in the Christian faith as they are taught at Toronto Bible College"; and thus he dedicated the book, "To my students, scattered throughout the world on the business of Christ ...".²⁸ "In answer to persistent requests from friends and former students Dr. McNicol undertook to put his Bible lectures in permanent form."²⁹ This resulted in the four volume work, Thinking Through The Bible in 1941. The Bible's Philosophy of History was a series of three lectures given at the Alumni Jubilee Conference, September 1944. Besides these works Dr. McNicol wrote extensively in the Toronto Bible College Recorder.

Throughout his writings, Dr. McNicol avoided controversy. He felt that a positive assertion of 'the faith once delivered to all the saints' was better than engaging in the polemic warfare. This fact is of extreme importance, because during McNicol's term as principal (1906-1946) we have at least four areas of controversy through which the Church went. The first was the problem of 'Higher Criticism'. McNicol did not dismiss all Higher Criticism as being of no value whatsoever, for he says in his "Prologue" to the Christian Evangel

regarding higher criticism of the Old Testament, "A great deal of good work has been done, much light has been thrown on the Hebrew Scriptures, and some valued results been obtained. But a critical hypothesis has been assumed, and it has been maintained with so much iteration that it has been widely accepted as true."³⁰ His contention always was the Bible should interpret itself.

Secondly, in reference to the "Modernist-Fundamentalist" problem, McNicol refused to be labelled a Fundamentalist or to join their ranks, although undoubtedly he felt the positive, quiet, unobtrusive adherence to the doctrinal statement of the College helped the Fundamentalist cause. He did in fact speak out against the extremism of Ultra-Fundamentalism.³¹ The "Church Union" movement caused another controversy, except at the College where good fellowship was maintained with all the denominations, even when McNicol stayed a Presbyterian while Dr. R. B. MacKay, the Chairman of the Board, went into the United Church.

From one specific controversy, the split among the Baptists in the mid 1920's, McNicol and the College remained entirely aloop treating it as a purely denominational matter. This neutralism occasionally put him in difficulty with some Baptist constituents of the College, but he maintained his ground.³² Principal Bryden pointed out in a succinct way regarding McNicol, "He has an ingenuous way of avoiding trouble. In other words, 'he is all things to all men', -- yet not in an ordinary common way but in a real Pauline sense."³³ D. C. Percy also points out that McNicol never separated himself from the main line churches. He was a churchman of dignity and reputation and he saw the Bible College as the hand maid to the churches.³⁴ The presence of at least four heads of major denominational seminaries at the

dinner for McNicol in 1946 is evidence of the high regard for him by the major denominations.³⁵ At the Jubilee Graduation service in May 1944, the platform party included the Anglican, Dr. H. J. Cody, Principal of University of Toronto; Dr. G. C. Pidgeon, first moderator of the United Church; Dr. W. A. Cameron and Dr. J. B. McLaurin, secretaries for the Foreign Mission boards of the Presbyterian and Baptist churches respectively.

One offshoot of the "fundamentalist-modernist" controversy did, however, affect the interworks of the College, and caused McNicol to abandon his former neutralism and enter the fray. This issue was the "Fundamentalist-Dispensational" controversy. Therefore to answer criticism against the College, he wrote the article "Fundamental but Not Dispensational", in March 1946 which went through 15,000 copies. The criticism of the College came from three areas, but was basically the same. "It is due to the fact that the Principal ... does not follow the system of interpreting prophecy that prevails in American Fundamentalism ... He is not a Dispensationalist ... but holds the position of the Protestant Reformers. During the past decade a number of young ministers, zealously fundamental and ardently dispensational ... When these pastors find that prophecy is not taught in this Canadian institution as it is taught in the Fundamentalist institutions where they received their training, it is quite natural for some of them to think that the Toronto Bible College is "off the track", or even "Modernist". This same charge against the College was made by some members of a certain Missionary Society of which McNicol was a council member, and by some graduates of the school who were ardent dispensationalists.³⁶ McNicol intended to show in a kindly way why the College rejected Dispensationalism and held to the Reformed and evangelical view of Scriptures.³⁷ McNicol put forth eight reasons why he

and the College rejected Dispensationalism and concluded the article by saying, "Perhaps the greatest disservice which Dispensationalism is doing to the cause of Christ is in propagating the idea that the professing Church is apostate. This has produced a process of disintegration among the denominations, which is spreading widely and has given rise to innumerable independent and undenominational groups ..."³⁸

Dr. G. L. Douglas, former librarian of Knox College, and who was to work with Dr. McNicol on an article on "Dispensationalism" for the Articles of Faith Committee of the Presbyterian Church in Canada stated that at this time the Bible College was under severe financial pressure to become a dispensational school.³⁹ This was confirmed by D. C. Percy who related that some people said they would give funds if the College became dispensational.⁴⁰ Thus it would seem that McNicol was a man of courage as well as conviction. The general response to his article was however very favourable and letters came from many and varied sources.⁴¹ Regarding this article, "Fundamental, But Not Dispensational", W. W. Bryden commented, "I give it as my humble opinion that you have in that article as fine a theological insight for this present time, as accurate knowledge and interpretation of history, and as exceptional exegetical scholarship as can be found in any article."⁴² There were some negative reactions as can be seen in the cancelling of the College advertisement by The Sunday School Times, who felt the College was going modernist. This opinion was corrected by a lengthy letter by Principal Rhodes dated Sept. 15, 1949 and a favourable reply was received from the Times on Sept. 27, 1949 when the ad was renewed.⁴³

Three special lectures on the same topic were given by Dr. McNicol on "special request of the session in 1946-47", entitled, "What is Dispensationalism?", "How Dispensationalism

Arose and Why", and "How Should We Interpret Prophecy?".⁴⁴ McNicol, as the official spokesman of the Bible College, had come out and with firmness, marked by charity, declared the official position of the school. This did not preclude anyone who was dispensational from becoming a member of either the student body or faculty. Strong ties of fellowship with others were maintained and the school's conservative, fundamental and evangelical moorings even more firmly declared.

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III. PRINCIPAL AND VISIONARY

Graduates of Toronto Bible College under McNicol remark of studying there as being a unique Christian experience. A oneness, a unity existed then and still exists among the alumni of the McNicol era. This was largely achieved by Mr. and Mrs. McNicol taking a personal interest in 'their college family'. This was not achieved because the student population was smaller than at present, for in the year 1938-39 there were 380 students in Day Classes and 392 in the Evening Classes for a total of 772 students. Seventy-four students graduated from Day Classes and 17 received Evening Class Certificates in 1939.⁴⁵ Today the total student population for the year 1975-76 is 698 and the Class of 1976 will boast approximately 80-90 graduates.

McNicol impressed most with his godliness as the chief administrator of the College. He believed in and worked hard to achieve a 'spirit of unanimity through the Holy Spirit' at all levels of School operations. The Board, the Faculty, and the Student Cabinet would not come to a final decision unless there was complete unanimity. McNicol stated in 1943, "The principle upon which the life and activities of the College proceed is the leadership of the Holy Spirit in corporate group."⁴⁶ On another occasion, he declared, "that the three basic principles of Toronto Bible College training are; the Lordship of Jesus Christ; the fellowship of the Spirit; and the personal freedom of the individual believer. We do not impose laws to be obeyed: we inculcate principles to be followed."⁴⁷

For McNicol the Bible was "the regulating centre of the Toronto Bible College curriculum" and thus for forty years the course of "Thinking Through the Bible" became the main

core of the curriculum. Other courses were only added to complement this core subject. McNicol was also known for his progressive spirit, for only three years after he had assumed the principalship he introduced a third year to the curriculum as a post-graduate year. Diplomas were still awarded after two years of study, but the third year was highly recommended by McNicol. By 1923 the third year had become a requirement for the Diploma. As the curriculum increased in length the entrance requirements were also raised so that high school matriculation was desired for entrance. Hence in 1932 a "Preparatory Year was started to help those students who were unable to acquire a high school education."⁴⁸ Yet with all these academic additions, the devotional spirit of the College remained alive.

McNicol never envisioned the Bible College taking the place of the Theological Seminaries. He could say in 1914, 1919, 1922 and even in 1943, that the Bible College is for the training of the rank and file. "The Toronto Bible College is not one of the theological colleges of the country. Although its curriculum is theological as well as Biblical, yet its purpose is not primarily to train men for the Christian ministry. Many have gone on to the ministry (over 200) ... because our course of training has been an effective agency in recruiting men for the ministry. The business which the Toronto Bible College has taken upon itself is the training of the Christian rank and file, and the results speak for themselves."⁴⁹ "The Bible College is not in the same class with the Theological Colleges, for they are on the great highway of church life and work and we are only on the sidelines."⁵⁰ Yet McNicol felt and experience proved that Toronto Bible College graduates could and did perform creditable service in home, city, and foreign mission societies. Since the demand for theologically trained personnel far outstrips

the supply, McNicol saw the College performing a valuable service in Canada by being allowed to exercise its gifts in varied forms of ministry.⁵¹

From the beginning of Toronto Bible Training School to Toronto Bible College to Ontario Bible College, a strong missionary emphasis has been evident and encouraged. Dr. McNicol kept this spirit alive with many missionaries and mission orientated people present at chapel services. Dr. McNicol saw the Bible College as his special calling because this emphasis on world evangelism, especially on overseas work, had to a large extent been lost at the theological seminaries. In 1926 he stated, "The Bible College has always been a recruiting ground for foreign missionary service. The evangelization of the world is ever kept in the foreground as the great task of the Church."⁵²

In the choice of faculty for Toronto Bible College, the Board had the final decision, but McNicol did much of the spade work and recruitment. He spoke of J. B. Rhodes "as a man after my own heart."⁵³ Dr. W. A. Cameron said regarding the Bible College faculty, "A scholarship well balanced and forward looking ... having well trained and well furnished minds."⁵⁴ These remarks and historical evidence show proof that McNicol sought the right man for the task. One who could combine sound scholarship with a fervency of spirit towards the Lord and one who would befriend his students.

Dr. McNicol's devotion and duties at Toronto Bible College kept him so busy that he often refused speaking engagements which might interfere with his preparation or the execution of his ministry at the College. Besides being an elder at Knox Church, he served as a charter and council member for the Sudan Interior Mission and the China Inland Mission. In recognition of his long and faithful service the

British and Foreign Bible Society elected him a life-time governor. He was also an associate member of the Victorian Institute of London, England (i.e. the Philosophy Society of England) and of the American Schools of Oriental Research.⁵⁵

In summary Dr. John McNicol was an able teacher, principal and administrator, a man with a vision who lived to see that vision accomplished. He faithfully laid the groundwork and moulded the character of the Toronto Bible College. Because of his scholarship, his administrative ability and the tremendous influence he had not only on the College, but upon thousands of young people, Knox College awarded him the degree of Doctor of Divinity (honoris causa) in 1935.⁵⁶ A perusal of student testimonies in the Recorder bear witness to the great appreciation his students held for his courses and their contents, his attitudes and character and indeed for the personal example he set before them. Those who had the privilege of sitting at McNicol's feet were indeed blessed of God and their appreciation was clearly shown in June 1932 -- during the Depression, when his students gave Dr. and Mrs. McNicol \$ 1,111.00 for a trip to Palestine. One summed up McNicol's forty years at Toronto Bible College as principal by saying, "he himself has given the College its character and direction".⁵⁷

In John 1:6 we read, "There was a man sent from God whose name was John . . ." Certainly by application this also can be said of Dr. John McNicol -- whom many still call their beloved Principal.

FOOTNOTES

¹Editorial, "His Students Crossed The Seven Seas," The Presbyterian Record, (November, 1946), p. 313.

²Editorial, "A Gala Occasion", Toronto Bible College Recorder, LII (December, 1946), 4, p. 5.
Remarks by Dr. A. E. Armstrong.

³Ibid., "A Gala Occasion", Toronto Bible College Recorder, LII (December, 1946), 4, p. 7.
Remarks by Principal W. W. Bryden.

⁴Personal Interview with Mr. D. C. Percy, December 22, 1975.

⁵J. McNicol, "Principal's Report," Toronto Bible College Recorder, XXXVII (March, 1931), 2, p. 3.

⁶Editorial, Toronto Bible College Recorder, LXII, (November, 1956), 4, p. 14.

⁷Editorial, "A Gala Occasion", Toronto Bible College Recorder, LII (December, 1946), 4, p. 7.
Remarks by Principal W. W. Bryden. Professor A. L. Farris, Archivist of Knox College states, that Dr. McNicol won the Gold Medal for his work in Hebrew while a student at Knox College.

⁸Board of Incorporation of Toronto Bible Training School, Minutes of Board Meeting, March 18, 1902.

⁹Editorial, "Our New Instructor," Toronto Bible Training School Recorder, VIII (June, 1902), 3 & 4, p. 7.

¹⁰J. McNicol, "How I Became Principal," Toronto Bible College Recorder, LIV (September, 1948), 3, p. 4.

¹¹Henry J. Morgan, (ed.), "Stewart, William Kilborne", The Canadian Men and Women of the Time (Toronto: Wm. Briggs, 1912) p. 1065.

¹²Ibid., "McNicol, Rev. John", p. 789.

¹³Rev. J. M. Laird, Address at J. McNicol's Funeral, September 4, 1956, Copy available at office of Secretary to the President at Ontario Bible College, Toronto.

¹⁴ Catalogue and Announcement of the Toronto Bible Training School, "Design", 1895, p. 4.

¹⁵ Ibid., 1902, p. 8.

¹⁶ Ibid., 1895, p. 5.

¹⁷ J. W. Grant, The Church in the Canadian Era (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1972), p. 64 cf. also, C. A. Armstrong, "The Bible College Movement and T.B.C.," Toronto Bible College Recorder, LV (March, 1949), 2, p. 6.

¹⁸ Board of Incorporation of Toronto Bible Training School, Minutes of Board Meetings, June 1 & August 27, 1906.

¹⁹ General Council of Toronto Bible Training School, Minutes of Council Meeting, April 26, 1907.

²⁰ Editorial, Toronto Bible Training School Recorder, XII (June, 1906), 3 & 4.

²¹ Personal Interview with D. C. Percy, December 22, 1975.

²² Catalogue of Toronto Bible College, "Course of Study", 1925-26, p. 8. This core subject was taught by McNicol.

²³ Ibid., "Course of Study", 1931-32, p. 8.

²⁴ E. M. McCarthy, "The Family Spirit in the Bible College", Toronto Bible College Recorder, XLVIII (December, 1942), 4, p. 5.

²⁵ J. McNicol, "The Hope of the Church," found in The Fundamentals For Today (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1958) Revised Edition, Vol. II, p. 627. Carl Henry, as quoted from the dust jacket of this book, says regarding the series, "... creditably reflects a scholarly competence of refreshing range of interest, and application of Biblical Christianity to the wide problems of life and culture ..."

²⁶ The Biblical Review, A quarterly published by The Biblical Seminary in New York.

²⁷ J. McNicol, "Publisher's Preface", The Christian Evangel, (New York: American Tract Society, 1937) p. 7.

²⁸ Editorial, Toronto Bible College Recorder, XLIII (June, 1937), 2, p. 9.

²⁹ Editorial, Toronto Bible College Recorder, XLVII (March, 1941), 1, p. 6.

³⁰ J. McNicol, "Prologue", The Christian Evangel (New York: American Tract Society, 1937) p. 10.

³¹ J. McNicol, "The Dangers of Ultra-Fundamentalism", Toronto Bible College Recorder, LV (March, 1949), 1, p. 1.

³² J. McNicol, "Founders' Day Address", Toronto Bible College Recorder, LIX (September, 1948), 3, p. 2.

³³ Editorial, "A Gala Occasion", Toronto Bible College Recorder, LII (December, 1946), 4, p. 7.

³⁴ Personal Interview with D. C. Percy, December 22, 1975.

³⁵ Editorial, "A Gala Occasion", Toronto Bible College Recorder, LII (December, 1946), 4. These men were, Provost Seeley of Trinity College, Principal Armitage of Wycliffe College, Principal Bryden of Knox College, and Dean Matheson of Emmanuel College.

³⁶ J. McNicol, "Fundamental, but not Dispensational", Toronto Bible College Recorder, LII (March, 1946), 1, p. 1.

³⁷ J. B. Rhodes, "The Reaction To Our Answer", Toronto Bible College Recorder, LII (September, 1946), 3, p. 1.

³⁸ J. McNicol, "Fundamental, but Not Dispensational", Toronto Bible College Recorder, LII (March, 1946), 1, p. 10.

³⁹ Telephone Interview with Dr. G. L. Douglas, November 14, 1975.

⁴⁰ Personal Interview with D. C. Percy, December 19, 1975.

⁴¹ J. B. Rhodes, "The Reaction To Our Answer", Toronto Bible College Recorder, LII (September, 1946), 3, p. 1. See also J. B. Rhodes, "Continued Reaction To Our Answer", Toronto Bible College Recorder, LIII (March, 1947), 1, p. 8. Such notable persons as Dr. Bruce Metzger of Princeton Theological Seminary considered it an excellent article and requested 200 copies for the Book Room at the Seminary.

⁴² Editorial, "A Gala Occasion", Toronto Bible College Recorder, LII (December, 1946), 4, p. 7.

⁴³These two letters were loaned to me by Mr. D. C. Percy. Rhodes in his letter said everyone on the Faculty held to the premillennial position. Dr. McNicol was still lecturing at the College and thus we are able to conclude that McNicol was an Historic Premillennial. In the T.B.C. Recorder, LIII (September, 1946), 3, Rhodes revealed also, "A few as we quite expected ... candidly disapproved of the article. Significantly enough, not one of these critics of the article made any attempt to meet or refute the actual arguments set forth within it."

⁴⁴J. McNicol, A Series of Special Lectures on Dispensationalism, 1946-47 - "given by special request of the session". These lectures can be found in the Knox College Library - BT 157 M3 (65054). The last lecture was reproduced in the Toronto Bible College Recorder, LIII (September, 1947), 3. These three lecturers were used in the preparation of an article called "Dispensationalism" by Rev. G. L. Douglas for the Article of Faith Committee of the Presbyterian Church of Canada in the early 1950's. I was unable to discover the place or what session requested McNicol to give these lectures.

⁴⁵Calendar of the Toronto Bible College, 46th Session, "The Class of 1939", p. 5.

⁴⁶J. McNicol, "Principal's Report", Toronto Bible College Recorder, XLIX (March, 1943), 1, p. 2. This is not true today at least at the Student Council level.

⁴⁷J. McNicol, "The Principles of T.B.C. Training", Toronto Bible College Recorder, LIII (December, 1947), 4, p. 1. This address was given to the Student Body at the opening session of each School year.

⁴⁸"Principal's Report", Toronto Bible College Recorder, XXXVIII (December, 1932), 4, p. 1.

⁴⁹J. McNicol, "Post-War Outlook", Toronto Bible College Recorder, XLIX (June, 1943), 2, p. 5. In 1976, many of our graduates are encouraged to seek further theological or university training; but those with the B. Th., or B.R.E. degrees are accepted for pastorates by the Fellowship Baptists, Associated Gospel Churches and Mennonite denomination. Even the Convention Baptists will accept our graduates with the possible addition of at least one year of Seminary or University.

⁵⁰Editorial, "A Gala Occasion", Toronto Bible College Recorder, LII (December, 1946), 4, p. 13. Remarks by Dr. J. McNicol.

⁵¹ Editorials, "Alumni Missionary Symposium", "Alumni Ministerial Symposium", "Alumni Lay Symposium", Toronto Bible College Recorder, L (March, September, December, 1944), 1, 3, 4 respectively.

⁵² J. McNicol, Toronto Bible College Recorder, XXXII (March, 1926), 2, p. 1.

⁵³ Editorial, "A Gala Occasion", Toronto Bible College Recorder, LII (December, 1946), 4, p. 15.

⁵⁴ Dr. W. A. Cameron, "Look at the Faculty", Toronto Bible Recorder, XLIX (March, 1943), 2, p. 2.

⁵⁵ Obituary Notice in the Globe and Mail, September 4, 1956. Found on microfilm XIV, p. 64 in the Public Archives at Toronto Public Library, "Toronto Room".

⁵⁶ F. G. Vesey, "Presentation of Rev. John McNicol, to the Senate of Knox College, University of Toronto, for the degree of Doctor of Divinity", 1935. This speech is available from the files of the Secretary to the President at Ontario Bible College, Toronto. I was also told by Dr. G. L. Douglas, former librarian of Knox College, that in 1926, after Church Union, John McNicol was considered a serious candidate for the Principal's chair at Knox College.

⁵⁷ Editorial, "A Gala Occasion", Toronto Bible College Recorder, LII (December, 1946), 4, p. 2.

THE GREAT DIVORCE AND WHAT HAPPENED TO THE CHILDREN

An Investigation concerning the effects of the "Dis-Union" of 1925 on the Foreign Mission Fields of the Presbyterian Church in Canada.

by Zander Dunn

On June 10, 1925 the United Church of Canada came into existence. Into this new Canadian ecclesiastical ecumenical experiment entered the Methodist Church, the Congregational Church and approximately two-thirds of the Presbyterian Church in Canada. The Methodist and Congregational bodies had very little difficulty in bringing almost all their members into the Union. With the Presbyterians it was an entirely different story. The Presbyterians who entered the union believed that the Presbyterian Church in Canada had entered that union as a body. But those who refused to join the United Church of Canada considered themselves the true Presbyterians and viewed their former colleagues as having left the faith to join a new Church. The "continuing Presbyterians", as the Presbyterians who remained out of the union were called, thought not in terms of "union" but in terms of "dis-union" when they beheld the remnants of the post-1925 Presbyterian Church in Canada.¹

Dr. Ephraim Scott, editor of the Presbyterian Record, one of the strongest anti-unionists and the moderator of the "continuing" Presbyterian Church in 1925, expressed the sentiments of the non-concurring Presbyterians when he wrote:

Our good ship, the Presbyterian Church in Canada, has had, for over fifty years, its official log-book, the Presbyterian Record, to record its work

and progress from month till month.

In June, 1925, a year ago, some of the crew left this ship. To their leaving there was no objection. But in doing so they attempted to sink her and attempted also to seize and carry off her log-book, and whatever else they could take from the ship, and for a little time all effort by local hands on board was devoted to the saving of the ship.

The monthly 'log' for June, 1925, was not written up and published till towards the end of that month when the crisis was safely past and the good ship, with never a beam broken, nor a bolt loosed, nor a plank started, nor a timber strained, and with a loyal, happy crew, was once more fairly on her way.²

The crew was loyal but certainly not happy for the once great Presbyterian Church in Canada, the largest Protestant denomination in the country, was completely disrupted. The United Church of Canada might rejoice over the "union" but the Presbyterian Church in Canada could only lament the "dis-union".

While Ephraim Scott saw the Presbyterian Church as a ship, much lighter in 1925 because of the departure of the mutinous crew members, the Presbyterian Church after the "dis-union" can also be viewed as a family suffering the problems of working out the arrangements for a divorce. The parents in this analogy are the two sides of the Presbyterian Church in Canada. The children are the overseas mission fields to which they gave birth. There were eight "children" in the "family" - Trinidad, born in 1868, Formosa, 1872; Central India, 1877; British Guiana, 1885; North China, 1888; Korea, 1898; South China, 1901; Gwalior, in India, 1904.³

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the

settlement that the divorced parents made concerning the children. And it is the thesis of this paper that, as is the case in most divorce proceedings, the decisions concerning the welfare and future of the children were made by the parents with no word from the children. In other words, the decisions as to which foreign mission fields of the Presbyterian Church in Canada should be awarded to the continuing Presbyterian Church and which should be awarded to the United Church were made in Canada, by Canadians, influenced by Canadians abroad with almost no reference to the desires of the "native" churches. There is no record that any overseas "native" church body was consulted - probably because few of the churches had structures which allowed the "native" churches to express themselves in any meaningful way but also because the Canadians, on both sides of the conflict, did not think it any of the natives' business.⁴

Lest the reader think that this is bad historiography because the involvement of the "native" churches was not an issue in those days he should know that one of the guiding principles the unionists set for themselves in any attempt to divide the fields was that the rights of the "native" church in each field would be taken into consideration.⁵

Not only does the lack of evidence concerning the participation by the overseas "native" churches implicitly support the thesis but the documentation on the Canadian side explicitly bears out the argument that the divorce proceedings were the exclusive undertaking of the "parents" while the "children"

had no say as to which "parent" they would be assigned.

THE PROBLEM

It is not the purpose of this paper to rehash the Church Union Controversy in Canada but one cannot understand the problems with which this paper deals without some reference to it. As we have seen the controversy was the concern of the Presbyterian Church in Canada. For the two decades prior to 1925 the Church had debated the matter through the courts, in sermons, on paper, over the air and had even had two very inconclusive nation-wide votes on the issue. As the date drew closer for a final decision as to whether the Presbyterian Church in Canada should enter a new church with the Methodists and Congregationalists the Unionists and the anti-Unionists prepared for battle because it became increasingly clear that the Church was deeply divided.

The anti-Unionists were afraid that by giving their money to the General Assembly Budget of the Presbyterian Church in Canada before 1925 they would be supporting the Unionists who controlled the chief offices in the Church. They also feared that if the majority decided to enter the Church Union the anti-Unionists would lose what money they had given to the Church and would have no funds with which to carry on the "continuing" Presbyterian Church.

By 1923 the anti-Unionists were crippling the overseas missions work of the Presbyterian Church in Canada by withholding their donations to the Budget of the General Assembly. The overseas missions received a certain percentage of the

General Assembly Budget and when donations fell the foreign fields suffered.

Other factors also combined to hurt the overseas work. During and after the First World War the cost of living in Canada and overseas had skyrocketed. To keep missionaries on the fields special grants to them had to be made. The exchange rates, especially in China, were astronomical and cut the value of the Canadian dollar in half. During the war the Church in Canada had not had to support a number of missionaries who had joined the army. But at the end of hostilities the missionaries, most of whom were from China and India, wanted to return to their fields. The Presbyterian Church felt it had a moral obligation to reassign them to their former fields, not only because the missionaries wanted to return but because they were needed. It was expected that at the end of the war great possibilities would open up and many workers already saw "the fields white unto harvest" lacking only the necessary "laborers". Along with these expenses went the increased cost of transportation to the faraway lands. In addition, after the war the people of the Presbyterian Church in Canada had not increased their givings to the Church by very much.⁶ All these factors combined to produce an oppressive debt, in 1922, of over \$166,000 on the books of the Foreign Mission Board alone.⁷ One report claimed that "in 1924 the Foreign Mission Fields were handicapped for workers, for equipment and for funds. As a Church we were trying to carry on a work which required \$750,000 with less than \$500,000 contributed."⁸ The financial

boycott by the anti-Unionists worked only too well in 1924 as far as the overseas work was concerned.

Sum total received was \$463,561.78, a shortage on appropriation of \$36,438.22, and of the \$463,561 the W.M.S. contributed \$49,475 and there was taken from the reserve fund \$97,956.85, so that from the Church at large there was received only \$316,130.87. The call from the Foreign Field in 1924 and for several years preceding was 'Send us more missionaries and more funds.'⁹

Although the Rev. A.E. Armstrong, Assistant Secretary for Overseas Missions, wrote, "There is a very sincere desire on the part of most of those opposed to Union to stand by our missionary work in the meantime"¹⁰ he and Dr. R.P. MacKay, the Secretary of Overseas Missions, later concluded that the \$100,000 which they had heard the continuing Presbyterians were trying to raise to fight legal battles could only be realized at the expense of home and overseas missions work. In another letter to all mission fields Dr. MacKay warned that no new appointments could be made and that financial reductions would have to be implemented. He concluded bitterly, "That is what comes of our Union negotiations."¹¹

The lack of money caused discouragement and upset on the foreign fields. Financial stringency even forced some of the Mission Councils on the overseas fields to send some of their members back to Canada. The situation in British Guiana is a good example. In 1923 the Mission Council, which had drawn up a budget of \$40,000 was informed by Canada that it would have to operate on a budget of \$30,000. The Council adjusted to that without too many complaints. But when in 1924 it was cut back twice to a budget of \$26,000, of which

only \$19,400 was to come from Canada, the Mission Council was in trouble. The British Guiana Mission Council, like every Mission Council pared the budget as far as possible. But it was not enough. A missionary and his wife had to be sent home to Canada in order to allow the Council to function on its reduced allocation.¹²

These troubles only confirmed the Unionists in their belief that union was the only answer. They saw the anti-Unionists as opposed to overseas missions and disrupting the Church at home as well as abroad. The anti-Unionists, on the other hand, felt the Unionists were selling the great Presbyterian Church in Canada for a mess of pottage. Some of them felt that the Presbyterian Church in Canada still had work to do but that the Unionists were wrecking the Church on some unproven idea of union.

There is no doubt where the majority of the overseas missionaries stood in relation to the Church union question. By a great majority they were for Church union in Canada and abroad. In Honan, with a staff of 33 men, 30 wives and 30 single women only Dr. and Mrs. Goforth were opposed to the Church union and they were in Canada on furlough. In South China, out of a staff of 8 men, 8 wives and 8 single women, five were against union but only one was remaining on the field. In Formosa, with a staff of 7 men, 7 wives and 10 single women only Mr. and Mrs. George W. MacKay spoke against the union. In Korea, where 17 men, 15 wives and 17 single women worked, five couples refused to vote for union, includ-

ing the Rev. Luther Young and his wife. In central India all of the staff of 28 men, 28 wives and 33 single women concurred in plans for union except for Dr. and Mrs. John Buchanan, Miss Bertha Robson and the Rev. and Mrs. D.E. MacDonald. Trinidad, with 9 men, 6 wives and 5 single women had no anti-Unionists. British Guiana's entire staff of 5 men, 4 wives and one single woman were concurring although Dr. James Cropper said he would work with the continuing Presbyterians if necessary. The only field in which the majority were non-concurring was the Gwalior field in India (the smallest overseas field) with 3 men, 3 wives and 2 single women. The two single women were pro-unionists.¹³

Why did the majority of the missionaries favor Church union? The reasons are not hard to find. The missionaries were men of their age - an age of liberal theology which was characterized by the "social gospel". The concern in all the churches was for the needs of people, not for the niceties of professions of faith. Theological differences were glossed over as men tried to co-operate in preaching and enacting the gospel. The missionaries saw denominationalism as a divisive influence and considered it irrelevant and harmful on the mission field. As Armstrong put it:

There is absolutely no doubt about the fact that the greatest hindrance to the progress of Christ's gospel in non-Christian lands is our many divisions. From every missionary land this complaint and protest comes to us.¹⁴

The missionaries believed that the church would be much stronger if it would stop competing and start co-operating

overseas. The missionaries deplored the terrible waste of men, money and material when these things were duplicated by denominations in the same area. The missionaries in Central India wrote:

The more we have been brought into contact with the needs of the great world, the more thin and artificial have seemed the partitions which divided the different bodies of Christ's followers from one another, and the more wasteful and inefficient has appeared the overlapping which is the inevitable concomitant of narrow denominationalism.¹⁵

If the missionaries of India (where there was no Methodist or Congregational work under Canadian auspices) felt this way then we can be sure that the missionaries of the China fields (where the Canadian Methodists were strong) would agree. Also, the Presbyterian missionaries thought that more money might become available to them for their work if they joined with the Methodists and Congregationalists.

When the United Church came into being the Christian Century exulted:

Put down a new monumental date in ecclesiastical history - Wednesday, June 10, 1925. On that day took place the first large-scale achievement of organic union of separate denominational families since the Protestant Reformation.¹⁶

Professor A.A. Scott, of India concurred in that evaluation of the event and probably spoke for the majority of the missionaries.

When we tell you that we consider the Union which was consummated on June 10 as the greatest and most glorious event in Canadian Church History and indeed one of the greatest events in the history of the entire Church it will be quite clear to you where we stand in the matter of Church union.¹⁷

And on that great day in June all the overseas mission fields of the Presbyterian Church in Canada automatically went into the United Church of Canada under the terms of the United Church of Canada Act.

Immediately the continuing Presbyterians in Canada demanded that some of the fields be assigned to them. They not only regarded the United Church Act as an autocratic and illegal piece of legislation but they considered it very unfair that no overseas fields were given to them. And there were some very strong-willed missionaries who demanded to be part of the Presbyterian Church. Negotiations, with a view to getting some of the fields, were carried on between the continuing Presbyterian Church leaders in Canada and the anti-Unionist missionaries. Of course this greatly annoyed the Foreign Mission Board executive who had gone into the United Church. For example A.E. Armstrong, the former Assistant Secretary of Overseas Missions of the Presbyterian Church in Canada and who continued on in that position in the United Church of Canada, wrote to the Central India Mission Council complaining "that correspondence has been indulged in by missionaries in the Southern Bhil Field with Anti-Unionists in the Church in Canada, which seems to have been looking towards the carrying out of an apparent desire to have that area."¹⁸ Armstrong firmly believed that the Presbyterian Church had entered the United Church and all correspondence from foreign fields should go through the United Church structures. Therefore, he could write:

The Mission Council should know that non-concurring missionaries who wish to continue their services in that work would be expected to regard it as part of their loyalty to the Mission and the Boards that they discontinue such correspondence, and leave it to negotiations in Canada should any proposals be made for the transfer of that district.¹⁹

It should be noted here that Armstrong says negotiations concerning the future of the mission should be left to the Canadian bodies and makes no reference to native churches.

The Rev. John Buchanan, the missionary referred to on the Southern Bhil field and an anti-Unionist, replied indignantly:

You will see that as an anti-Unionist I am ordered to discontinue correspondence with anti-Unionists (nearly half of the old Presbyterian Church, my wife one of them) on the subject of what is to be done to save the Southern Bhil Field in the Vindhia Mountains of Central India, where we were appointed in 1895 i.e. thirty years ago. Is that the unpardonable sin? Is that Christian democracy?²⁰

One can sympathize with Dr. Buchanan, to some extent, for his whole working life had been invested in the Bhil field and because of his convictions he could not be expected to remain loyal to the Foreign Mission Board which he considered had betrayed him and the Church. His loyalty was to the one third of the Presbyterians who continued to present, what he considered, the true Presbyterian witness.

THE NEGOTIATIONS

The Dominion Properties Commission was set up in Canada to settle the legal, financial and material issues about which the United Church of Canada and the Presbyterian Church disagreed - often with unChristian vehemence. It was

also charged with the responsibility of dividing the various overseas mission fields between the two churches. The Commission had so much work to do in Canada alone and it knew so little about the overseas fields that it despaired of ever working out an equitable settlement. But the leaders of the overseas departments of the two churches were confident that they could reach an agreement which the Dominion Properties Commission could easily approve. The continuing Presbyterians suggested that "The Foreign Mission question, if amicably settled by us, will save the Federal Commission much worry and time, our Churches much expense, and the Foreign Mission cause much harm."²¹ The Commission, pleased that they would be relieved of that extra burden and encouraged by the spirit of co-operation and good-will which characterized the negotiations between the leaders of the foreign missions work, told the two overseas committees to proceed to a settlement.

Perhaps it was because Dr. Andrew S. Grant of the Presbyterian Church and the Rev. A.E. Armstrong of the United Church had never visited any of the overseas fields, and therefore had no personal stake in them, that they were able to decide so amicably the fate of the fields. Certainly their correspondence shows a mutual respect and a common concern that the settlement be made as quickly and as fairly as possible. They both felt that the work was more important than the matter as to who was to manage it and they often expressed their support for overseas fields and for those who worked them whether they were Unionists or anti-Unionists. In fact

their solicitude was often misunderstood. If they referred to "our" missions in their letters they could be sure of a reply from some missionary indignant that he or she had been grouped with the other party. Typical of this attitude is a letter Dr. Grant and the Rev. N.H. McGillivray received from the Rev. J.T. Taylor of Central India. "You address us as 'our missionaries', a statement frequently repeated in your letter. We are missionaries of the United Church of Canada."²²

At the beginning there was a difference in approach between the United Church and the Presbyterian Church to the question of what should be done with the foreign fields. The United Church suggested that the two boards should co-operate in the same fields. The anti-Union missionaries would be supported and directed by the Presbyterians in Canada, the Unionist missionaries would be supported and directed by the United Church. Both types of missionaries would work side-by-side in their common tasks. In this way the least possible dislocation to the work would result. Armstrong wrote to Grant:

Let me say personally that I would like to see the principle of co-operation between the two Boards tried out in some field.... I am sure that when the present feeling on the part of some in Canada dies away as it inevitably must, it will be found that there will be no difficulty at all in co-operation, and especially on mission fields where there is no such feeling existing between those who are Unionist and those who are non-concurring.²³

The Presbyterians, on the other hand, wanted to have their own separate fields of work. They distrusted any co-operative schemes because they knew that their missionaries could always be outvoted and they thought their money might

get siphoned off to support the Unionist endeavors.²⁴ They honestly believed that they were capable of supporting their own mission fields. In 1926, after the losses of the "dis-union", they declared:

We are today one of the strongest branches of world-wide Presbyterianism.... Our membership strength today is well over the 150,000 mark and our budget for the year calls for an expenditure of \$600,000. In five years time, from January 1, 1927, we believe our budget will be \$1,000,000 a year, nearly equal to what it was before the dis-union.²⁵

The United Church, by 1926, realized that there was very little possibility of co-operation on the mission field with the Presbyterians. They stated, therefore, that "the Board is quite willing, and indeed anxious to transfer any section of the work for which the non-concurring Church can provide staff."²⁵ But the United Church leaders were confident that the Presbyterian Church could not raise enough staff to take over more than one or two of the smaller fields. When the Rev. N.A. MacEachern was reported to have claimed that there were forty-seven non-concurring missionaries remaining with the Presbyterian Church and that "the next General Assembly will see the Presbyterians covering such a wide scope of mission work as will challenge that being carried on by any other church in Canada or elsewhere", Armstrong responded, "we do not know of even twenty who are available for them, unless they count certain missionaries who are not available, though non-concurring."²⁶

On the other hand, the Presbyterians were equally

confident that they could raise and support a large mission staff. When they finally decided which fields they wanted they calculated they would require

a staff of 73 workers and 34 wives. To get these workers there are several sources. (1) Our own missionaries as already at work on the field. (2) Others on the field who would work under us, if the fields were granted to us, and have so declared themselves. We could mention names, but refrain from doing so. (3) Other workers serving outside our own Church altogether, who have expressed a desire to help us in our Foreign Mission work. (4) Volunteers from our own land who have already declared themselves, and more are ready to do so as soon as fields are definitely appointed to our Church.²⁷

The Presbyterians felt able to support such a large staff because

We are stronger for Foreign Mission work now than ever before, because owing to conditions over which we had no control much Home Mission work has passed out of our hands, and so we have greater strength for Foreign Mission work. Before disunion many congregations in Ontario were responsible for the full salaries of certain missionaries. The majority of these congregations voted to remain Presbyterian and are willing to repeat their support of special missionaries.²⁸

Therefore, the Presbyterians asked the United Church to assign to the Presbyterian Church the Gwalior and Bhil fields of Central India, the South China field, British Guiana, Formosa and Korea. This would have left the United Church with the large Honan field, the greater part of the Central India field and Trinidad.

The only two fields which were never discussed were Gwalior and Trinidad. Gwalior had been founded in 1904 under the leadership of the fiery John Wilkie who had split off from

his brethren in the Indore mission of Central India because of a disagreement on policy. The mission came under the wing of the Presbyterian Church in Canada in 1918 but continued to be dominated by the flinty Wilkie. When Wilkie and the two other couples on the field stood with the Presbyterian Church in Canada the United Church was glad to be rid of him and immediately gave the field to the Presbyterians. Trinidad had always been considered a Union stronghold since 1910 when

Dr. Morton moved a resolution (which was so unanimously passed that no discussion was held) "That this Presbytery approve of the Union of Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational Churches in Canada on the basis reached by the joint committee and adopted by the General Assembly.'29

As we have seen the missionaries of Trinidad voted unanimously for union in 1925. At no time did the Presbyterians ask for Trinidad and at no time was it offered to them by the United Church. In fact the United Church never offered any field to the Presbyterians. It only offered to discuss the possibility of the transfer of various fields or parts of fields to the Presbyterians. For example, in response to the Presbyterian request, the United Church stated that it was prepared to discuss the possibility of transferring British Guiana, the San Ui and Kwong Moon districts of South China, some parts of Korea, and was open to discuss the problems of India and offered to consider co-operative work in Formosa.³⁰

The Presbyterians demanded British Guiana because they wanted a Caribbean field. They argued that the fields overseas should be divided on the basis of the strength of

the Church at home and on that basis the Trinidad field would go to the United Church and the British Guiana field would go to the Presbyterians. The Presbyterians could say this because they believed:

The Church overseas belongs not to the missionaries, but to the Church at home, therefore, the Foreign Mission assets are the property of the home Church and in the final analysis, the problem of Foreign Missions is the problem of the home Church.³¹

The United Church felt quite differently. They had been shocked by the number of Presbyterians who refused to enter the union and did not want to lose that proportion of the overseas work. Moreover, an overwhelming majority of the missionaries were Unionists and the United Church felt their wishes should be largely influential in any settlement.

But before the two overseas boards could meet to decide on the various fields a document arrived from the Mission Council in British Guiana which virtually assured the Presbyterians of that Field. In a long statement the missionaries of British Guiana reaffirmed their Unionist sentiments but indicated their willingness to turn the field over to the Presbyterians. "We feel constrained," they said, "to face the thought that the non-concurring church should be given, as an act of Christian fellowship and generosity, some share in the Foreign Mission work built up by the whole church."³² They realised that it would be very difficult for the United Church to hand over any other field besides Gwalior because the large majority of missionaries in all the fields were Unionists. Therefore, the missionaries of British Guiana felt obliged to

ask

in the hope of conciliation, whether it may not be our duty, from a sense of Christian generosity, and in the spirit of sacrifice, if this Mission may not be given over with less hardship to the Mission concerned than any other and thus to express to the United Church our readiness to concur in such action, if after due consideration of all the interests involved such a course be thought admissable by the United Board? There are not very many missionaries here and of these Dr. Cropper is willing to continue his life service with the non-concurring church, if this mission be assigned to them. The problem of language is not so serious here, as in the fields of India or China and therefore the non-concurring Church should be able at an earlier date to man the work with their own missionaries.³³

When Armstrong received this statement he wrote to Grant that the way was now open for a transfer of that entire field to the Presbyterian Church. Ironically, the Presbyterians, who had argued that the problem of foreign missions should be decided, not by the missionaries, but by the home Church, received Gwalior and British Guiana because of the decisions of the Canadian missionaries in those fields, none of whom took much account of the feelings of the "native" churches.

As for Korea the Executive of the Korean Mission Council wrote in January 1926 that they had agreed unanimously in regard to the participation of the Board of the non-concurring Presbyterian Church in the work in Korea, that the field should not be divided and that it should remain in the United Church. If the Presbyterian Board wanted to work in Korea it could send funds or support a certain number of workers. Later, after further consideration the missionaries of Korea

suggested that non-concurring Presbyterians could take over the Lungchingsun district in Manchuria. Armstrong explained the decision:

The Mission is all the more desirous of seeing this transfer made because not only do they want to have your Church continue to share in the work which the Presbyterian Church in Canada built up, but they know that the United Church is not able to grant funds necessary to care adequately for the work, and therefore they see a way by which the work can be better cared for, if you take part of it.³⁴

The non-concurring missionaries said they would continue to work with the United Church, if necessary, for a time at least. But the Presbyterians in Canada insisted that they have the entire field, or nothing.

It was the same story in South China. The United Church offered to transfer the districts of San Ui including Kwong Moon but stipulated that the whole field would be under one Mission Council. The Presbyterians again insisted that "they must have an absolutely independent Mission they can call their own."³⁵

This seems to be about as far as the bargaining ever got concerning these two fields. The United Church did not feel it could turn over these fields against the wishes of the missionaries there. In fact, on the United Church side "the missionaries [were] the determining factor.... In every field missionaries have stood by their guns and have not been tempted by any allurements submitted to them. They recognized, with few exceptions, the trend of the times the world over."³⁶

The Bhil field in India where Dr. John Buchanan held

forth was only one part of the large Central India field. Buchanan was a strong anti-Unionist and wanted to remain in his area and work under the Presbyterian Church. The Presbyterians argued that they should get that district as a separate field because the Bhils were a separate race within the Central India area and the district was a distinct entity in itself. They felt certain they could man the field well.

The United Church argued that the field should remain with them in the Central India area so that the Bhils could be brought closer to their Indian brothers. To put them in a separate mission would be to slow their integration into the greater India. The Rev. J.R. Harcourt was particularly concerned. He said:

To make any distinction between the Bhils and the other races of India in our Christian work, or even to appear to do so, is something that should never be laid at the door of our Church in Canada. It is a problem that we should help the Indian Church to fight out and allow them to solve for themselves. The terrible task facing the Indian Church of Race and Caste and their Unity in Christ should not be added to by any further divisions among ourselves or the work to which we have set our hands.³⁷

The missionaries in India were also concerned that if the field were legally handed over to the Presbyterians the Indian potentates would either oppose the move or would simply take over the land before the proper legal transactions could be effected. The missionaries were greatly annoyed because "the claim for such a division is all due to the request of one man, who at best cannot have many more years of service in the country."³⁸ That one man, Dr. Buchanan, was the key to

the final surrender of the field to the Presbyterians. The Mission Council were unanimous in their decision that the field should not be given to the Presbyterians (obviously Buchanan was not at the meeting) but it became Presbyterian largely, one suspects, because Buchanan refused to move. Moreover, the United Church knew they had to give up something. The Presbyterians had only Gwalior and British Guiana, the two smallest fields. The Bhil district was another small item. It would have to go to the Presbyterians.

The Bhil field is linked to the Formosan field insofar as their fates were decided together. When the Mission Council in Formosa was asked by the Foreign Mission Board of the United Church if they would be willing to work under the Presbyterian Church the Mission Council replied that that field "should remain in its entirety a Mission of the United Church of Canada."³⁹ But that was before Mr. George W. MacKay, the son of the founder of the Mission, the Rev. Dr. George Leslie MacKay, proposed a plan of co-operation whereby the Presbyterians would support him and various other aspects of the work. The United Church, even as late as August, 1926, did not feel they could veto such a scheme even though they knew the Presbyterians wanted the whole of Formosa. The next thing we read in the correspondence files is a letter from Armstrong to Grant reporting that the United Church Foreign Mission Board, at a meeting on September 16, had decided to comply with the Presbyterian Church offer to consider the question of the division of the foreign fields closed if the

Presbyterian Church in Canada received British Guiana, Gwalior and the Bhil fields in India and the entire Formosa field.⁴⁰

What happened between August 5 and September 20 is explained by Armstrong in a long letter to Miss Jane M. Kinney, secretary of the Formosa Mission Council. August was a holiday month so no meetings were held. On September 11 Grant and McGillivray of the Presbyterian Church Board submitted their modified proposal requesting British Guiana, Gwalior, the Bhil district and Formosa. The United Church Board met on September 14, a subcommittee met on September 15 and a decision was made on September 16 to accept the offer. This haste, which prevented the United Church from consulting with the missionaries involved, was necessary in order to obtain the approval of the Dominion Properties Commission which was meeting on September 20. If the two churches had not come up with a plan to divide the overseas fields by that date the Commission would have had to step in and make the decisions for them.⁴¹ The United Church wanted to avoid that for as Armstrong put it:

It was the feeling among those who are in a position to know that if we had not arrived at an agreement it is possible that the Commission would have ordered more property to be transferred to the Presbyterian Church than the twenty-nine per cent of the overseas property which is being transferred with the areas given to the Presbyterians.⁴²

The United Church also felt that it was only fair to give the Presbyterian Church a field in the Orient. They had been unable to decide on Korea or China and the Presbyterian Church with fields only in India and British Guiana needed Formosa

for balance. Armstrong added "It seemed wise also to affect an agreement, if possible, in order that we might promote the friendly spirit which you will recognize should characterize both Christian Churches in Canada."⁴³ Evidently the agreement had the desired result for Grant wrote to Armstrong:

I wish to assure you that we appreciate very much the spirit in which these negotiations have been carried on and hope that in the future we will be able mutually to be of help to each other in arranging and carrying on the work in the Foreign Fields without injury to the work in any way, or injustice to the workers.⁴⁴

THE SETTLEMENT

As we have seen the Presbyterian Church emerged from the Church union negotiations with four fields in three countries - British Guiana, Formosa and the Gwalior and Bhil fields in India. One of the most significant aspects of this settlement concerned the leading missionaries in these areas. They shared a number of common characteristics. All were "pioneers". Dr. James Cropper had been the one to restart the work in British Guiana in 1896 ("The foundations of this Mission I laid thirty years ago"); Dr. John Wilkie, after pioneering the work in Indore in 1879, opened the Gwalior field in 1904; Buchanan had been in the Bhil district since 1895; G.W. MacKay was the son of the much revered Dr. G.L. MacKay who had opened Formosa in 1872 and had died in 1902. These were old men, conservative in their theology and in their life-styles. And they all shared a devotion to the Presbyterian Church which, in most cases, made them opposed to the United Church of Canada. Even Dr. Cropper, who claimed he was willing to work with either

church had been suspected by his fellow missionaries of trying to pull wires to get the British Guiana field under the Presbyterian Church before the Union.⁴⁵ It strikes the investigator that for the next few years the Presbyterian work overseas was to be controlled by conservative old men whose best years were behind them and whose negative stand on the Church Union issue was probably the best indication of their attitude to life. We know that all of them were rather difficult to work with. Cropper was accused by one of his comrades of suffering from an "autocracy complex".⁴⁶ Wilkie broke with the Mission Council at Indore after many stormy years and started up his own work in Gwalior.⁴⁷ Buchanan ran his own field and tolerated no criticism by others. (It is significant that after the September 1926 settlement "a cable reached the non-curring Mission Board from Drs. Wilkie and Buchanan in India stating that they declined to accept Dr. Colwell as Unionist missionary."⁴⁸) MacKay was one of the dominating figures in a little circle of people which practically ran the Church in Formosa.⁴⁹

The United Church did a statistical analysis of the overseas fields handed to the Presbyterians in the settlement of 1926. In Formosa, out of a staff of 25, all were Unionists but two. In British Guiana all 12 missionaries were sympathetic toward Church Union. In Central India 87 of the 92 missionaries were Unionists, only 5 being anti-Unionists. Only in Gwalior did the anti-Unionists have a majority - 6 out of 8 missionaries. In other words, according to the United Church,

the Presbyterians inherited a staff of 134 missionaries, 126 of whom were Unionists. The Presbyterians could count only 11 missionaries who were committed to their cause in these fields.⁵⁰ Although these figures indicated the general preponderance of Unionist missionaries in the Presbyterian fields they are an example of how anybody can twist statistics. Take British Guiana for instance. Miss Mabel Anthony, the Rev. and Mrs. George MacLeod and the Rev. and Mrs. Neil Rattee either returned to Canada on furlough shortly after Union or were in Canada during the Union and never returned to British Guiana. Dr. Cropper, although he said he considered himself a United Church minister, had been sympathetic to the Presbyterian cause before Union and afterwards had declared himself willing to work with either church. The Rev. Gibson Fisher was a Unionist but he had been a Methodist and was an Englishman who had been to Canada only once in 1906. What happened in Canada did not really affect him and he continued to work in British Guiana for the Presbyterians until his death in 1933. The Rev. James Scrimgeour, although a strong Unionist, was more concerned to work in British Guiana than to go to a United Church field. He would have remained in British Guiana if he had not had so many bad experiences with people like Mrs. M.C. McKerroll, a hyper-anti-Unionist who, as a member of the Board of Foreign Missions, made Scrimgeour so uncomfortable on his furlough in Canada that he felt he could not return to British Guiana to work under the Presbyterian Foreign Mission Board.⁵¹ It is not really accurate, therefore, to say that

all the missionaries of British Guiana were Unionists. They were primarily missionaries to British Guiana and were not particularly interested as to whether they were labelled "antis" or "unionists" and one suspects that many missionaries on other fields felt the same way. The truth is not fully served by dividing all missionaries into two camps. The missionaries' motives were too complex for such a simplistic analysis.

Exception must also be taken to the figures the United Church itemized for Central India. Their figures of 87 Unionists and 5 anti-Unionists out of a total of 92 Missionaries are for the entire Central India field. But as we have seen, the Presbyterians received only the Southern Bhil and West Nimar districts while the rest of the field went to the United Church. Although figures concerning the actual number of missionaries involved in these fields are unknown it is likely that approximately 10 were transferred to the Presbyterian Church. The figures then become something like 45 missionaries in the Presbyterian fields of whom 11 were anti-Unionists.⁵²

The United Church also concluded that the Presbyterians took over only 29% of the total overseas property (including Women's Missionary Society property). It also pointed out that 20% of the total overseas property was in Formosa. The Presbyterians had received one large field and three very small ones. They took an even smaller proportion of the Overseas budget - 19.75% of the foreign Mission Board expenses and only 14% of the Women's Missionary Society expenses abroad.⁵³ No

doubt these figures were marshalled many times to prove the better deal that the United Church had made on the settlement. Armstrong received a number of letters from men and women who had served in Formosa or were related to missionaries there who lamented the loss of so great and good a "child". They all felt the Presbyterians could not possibly man so important an outpost. Armstrong could only reply. "We could not very well question their ability to provide staff for these areas transferred. They assure us that they can do so and we have to accept that as a fact and hope that the passage of the years will see their fulfilling the obligations they are incurring."⁵⁴

This concern for Formosa and the feeling of guilt about how it had been "sold out" to the Presbyterians lingered for a long time among United Churchmen. Dr. Alfred Gandier, Principal of Knox College until 1925, visited Japan, Korea and Formosa as Chairman of the United Church Foreign Mission Board. In his report on that tour he opined that the United Church had treated the missionaries in Formosa badly. When they heard the news of the transfer in Formosa it had hit them like "a bolt out of the blue" because they had never been consulted about the change. The missionaries felt the Church had cast them off. He compared the situation in Formosa to that of Knox College in Toronto.

Just as Knox is the most beautiful and valuable single property the Church has here at home, that is the old Presbyterian Church, and that went as a sacrifice, so in our Formosa Mission we have the most beautiful and valuable property that was

in any single Mission of the Church and we have sacrificed the best and most beautiful thing we have.⁵⁵

Although the United Church gained the bulk of the former Presbyterian overseas work by taking over the fields in China, Korea, Trinidad and Central India (except for the Bhil and West Nimar districts) the secretary of the United Church Foreign Mission Board felt compelled to circulate a memorandum drawn up in November 1926 concerning "the advantages and disadvantages of assigning certain areas abroad to the non-concurring Presbyterian Board of Missions." This memorandum merits close scrutiny for it sums up the thinking of the United Church at that time. There were twelve disadvantages and twelve advantages listed. The disadvantages included:

1. The transfer was bad because the Presbyterian Board was unfamiliar with the history of the work abroad and the methods of work used in the fields.
2. The work could be carried on only if the Unionist missionaries remained in Presbyterian fields.
3. But the Unionist missionaries would not work as well as before because they would disagree with the views of the Presbyterians and they would be trying to leave the fields as soon as possible.
4. It was doubtful if the Presbyterians could get enough qualified missionaries to carry on.
5. The "native" churches would not want to work with the Presbyterians "especially as they have not been consulted

in the matter. (The Indian Churches and Christians in the transferred area in Central India are part of the United Church of India North and have sent a message protesting against the division of their Church)". (emphasis mine.)

6. The "native" Christians would not be happy when the Unionist missionaries, whom they loved, left the land and young, inexperienced missionaries replaced them.
7. The United Church would have to spend money in re-settling the Unionist missionaries.
8. The Formosa and British Guiana missionaries would have to be transferred to new fields and would have to acquire new languages. (Only Scrimgeour, in British Guiana, was transferred to Trinidad where no new language was needed. In Formosa very few missionaries left the work and it is not known that they had to acquire new languages.)
9. It was doubtful that the Presbyterians could adequately finance the work they had received.
10. In Central India the rulers would probably welcome a change of auspices to appropriate the properties for the state.
11. The fields retained by the United Church in China were the most unstable politically for in them were large pockets of anti-foreign sentiment.
12. Some Presbyterians felt the division was incomplete and were demanding a field in South China.

The Advantages of the settlement were:

1. Grant and McGillivray assured the United Church that they

- considered the Foreign Mission property question settled.
2. The settlement promoted friendly relations between the two Churches.
 3. The Presbyterians received a share in the overseas work.
 4. The settlement proved that the United Church was willing to divide the Foreign Mission work with the Presbyterians even though most missionaries were unionists.
 5. The Presbyterians now had a chance to show that they could support the overseas work properly. It had suffered greatly prior to Union.
 6. The transfer released funds and personnel for other needy fields in the United Church.
 7. The Presbyterians had agreed to treat all Unionist Missionaries who stayed on their fields without prejudice.
 8. The fields handed to the Presbyterians were the most trouble-free.
 9. There was less property involved than if the transfer of any other areas had been made.
 10. The Presbyterians would have greater security of title than if fields in China had been transferred.
 11. Political questions caused no anxiety in the fields that the Presbyterians received "and therefore the non-concurring Presbyterians should consider this if the point is raised that the United Church retains too large a share of the work."
 12. In Formosa there was a vigorous Chinese Church which would make work there easier for the Presbyterians.⁵⁶

After the settlement the Presbyterian Church opened up two mission fields. The decisions to start work in Japan and Manchuria were based on the need for ex-patriate personnel in these areas and on the availability of missionaries who had been dis-located by the Church Union settlement. However, in the case of Japan the local people had a large part in the decision to invite the Presbyterians in to carry on work. The Rev. H.T. Yamamoto, the Rev. Mr. Takakura and the Rev. Mr. Texaka of the Japanese Christian Church were consulted and welcomed the possibility of the connection with the Presbyterian Church. But because the Presbyterians were considering sending the Rev. Luther Young, formerly of Korea, to work among the Koreans in Japan it was decided to seek the advice of the committee in Korea under whose charge and by whose support the Korean work in Japan had been carried on. The work was languishing for lack of funds and staff so the committee - six Koreans and four missionaries - rejoiced that the Presbyterians were prepared to send in Young, a veteran missionary who had founded over 70 fields in the Hamheung area of Korea between 1904 and 1926.⁵⁷ The Church was called the Korean Christian Church in Japan and Young was made superintendent of the field. The Presbyterians budgetted \$7,000 for the first year of work in 1928. Young was in his late fifties when he started work in Japan.⁵⁸

The Presbyterians felt that they had the money and manpower necessary to open even more work for they accepted the invitation of the Irish and Scots Presbyterians laboring

in Manchuria to open work there. Dr. Goforth, in Honan China since 1888, and the Rev. Allan Reoch, a recent graduate of Knox College, and two lady missionaries opened up work in North Manchuria. Szepigkai, a city of 50,000 on the Manchuria railway, was chosen to be the headquarters for outreach into an area where missionaries had never been before.⁵⁹

Goforth was an old man going blind but he felt he had to serve overseas. His support came largely from Park Street church in Boston and from St. John's Church [Toronto?]⁶⁰ Evidently Goforth had been at one time a Unionist but came to oppose Church union in Canada on theological grounds and because he did not trust the Methodists.⁶¹ Both he and Young, like the leaders in the other Presbyterian foreign fields, were conservative in their theology and life-style. It was under such leadership that the Presbyterian foreign mission fields entered the long years of depression in the thirties.

The United Church, on the other hand, was gripped by the optimism of their new experiment and encouraged by their new strength. In 1927 the United Church of Canada published a pamphlet entitled With Christ in the Fellowship of Service which epitomized the spirit of the new church. The section of the Foreign Missions Report was entitled, "The Sun Never Sets on the Work of the United Church." The Congregationalists had brought the Angola field into Union while the Methodists had contributed great fields in China and Japan. These, combined with the former Presbyterian work in Trinidad, China, India and Korea, employed 614 missionaries and more than 2,000

"native" Christian helpers in evangelistic outreach, in thousands of schools, in hundreds of outstations, and in scores of hospitals, colleges and seminaries. The attitude of the "native" Christians in the foreign fields was summed up by Dr. J. Endicott, "In India they listen eagerly to the Gospel but they say continually, 'If only we could banish the barriers, if only we could take away denominationalism.' That is what they are saying too in China."⁶² And yet, as this paper has sought to show, the "native" Christians had no role in determining what would happen to their churches in the Canadian Church Union Controversy of 1925.

One anti-Unionist, a Mr. T.H. Litster, in a letter to The Globe and Mail, argued that the "native" churches should have been allowed to express themselves on the issue and he was sure that if they had voted they would have chosen to remain with "the Auld Kirk" along with the majority of the missionaries.⁶³ Armstrong replied first, that the majority of the missionaries overseas were Unionists and second, that the "native" Christians had no say in what was to be done with Canadian properties and interests. He wrote:

Of course you know that Formosan pastors and Church members could not possibly be given a vote in a Union that does not concern their Church. A Church on the Field is not a part of the Church in Canada.... Had they, however, been entitled to a vote on the question of the union in this country, there is no doubt whatever of the way in which they would have voted. It is universally true in all our Mission Fields that the people deplore the divisions of western lands which we have imported into their countries....⁶⁴

Armstrong was right - the "native" Christians would have voted for union, perhaps for the reasons he gave but probably because they would have followed the lead of their white missionary mentors. In British Guiana, when the Unionist missionaries decided to offer the field to the Presbyterians there is no evidence that any "native" Christians questioned the decision, let alone rebelled against it. The protest from the "native" Christians in India came because many of the white missionaries were unhappy that the Bhil field was given to the Presbyterians without their approval. In Gwalior and Formosa the "native" Christians did not protest remaining with the Presbyterian Church in Canada.

In another letter to Litster, Armstrong made it very clear that what happened to the overseas fields was a Canadian matter which did not involve "native" Christians in those fields at all. In speaking of Honan he said:

There are two Chinese Presbyteries in Honan, one in the North and the other in the South end of the Field. These have no connection whatever with the Church in Canada but are part of the Church in China. These two Presbyteries form a Synod of the Church in China. My statement, therefore, is absolutely correct that the Christians and the Churches in our Asiatic and African fields could not possibly have been entitled to a vote in the matter of Church Union in Canada. What the churches in Canada do in the matter of uniting with one another is of no concern whatever to the Oriental churches (except as a matter of interest, and I believe they are intensely interested in our Union). It is, therefore, only the Canadian missionaries who form the Honan Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church in Canada who are now constituted as a court of the United Church of Canada....⁶⁵

Yes, the "Great Divorce" was settled by the Canadian

"parents" with no reference to the "children" abroad. But at least it was done with concern by both sides that the best thing possible be done for the "children" in light of the conflicting claims. And it is heartening to read that in this part of the "DisUnion" settlement a spirit of co-operative good-will prevailed in spite of the unChristian hassle that went on over issues at home.

FOOTNOTES to "The Great Divorce and What Happened to the Children"

1. In this paper the one-third of the Presbyterians who remained outside the union will be referred to as the non-concurring Presbyterians or the anti-Unionists and the two-thirds of the Presbyterians who entered the union will be referred to as the United Church or the Unionists. For years after 1925 both the continuing Presbyterians and the Unionists considered themselves to be "The Presbyterian Church in Canada". The strong feelings about which church should use the name "The Presbyterian Church in Canada" came out in a report of the United Church of Canada Executive Committee:
 - (c) That in all further negotiations with the non-unionists they should be asked, in describing the institution which they represent, to conform themselves to the phraseology of the United Church of Canada Act, "The Church of the non-concurring Churches."The United Church of Canada Year Book and Record of Proceedings (1926), p. 170.
2. The United Church Archives, Victoria College. A paper entitled, "From Dr. Scott's Record of May-June" stamped July 6, 1926.
3. J.T. McNeill, The Presbyterian Church in Canada 1875-1925 (Toronto: The General Board, The Presbyterian Church in Canada, 1925), pp. 116-136.
4. For example, one of the most advanced churches abroad, the church in Trinidad, had a Presbytery, with native representation, but it was dominated numerically and psychologically by the missionaries.
5. A.E. Armstrong, letter to all overseas missionaries, undated, quoted in the British Guiana Mission Council Minutes July 2, 1926. The other two principles were 1) that any division would involve no injury to the work on the fields; 2) that any division would not violate the rights of the missionaries to determine their church allegiance and sphere of service.
6. R.P. MacKay, "The Foreign Mission Fund", The Presbyterian Witness (January 17, 1920).
7. R.P. MacKay, letter to J. Scrimgeour, April 20, 1922.
8. The Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada (1926) Appendices p. 13.

9. Ibid.
10. A.E. Armstrong, letter to J.B. Cropper, July 25, 1923.
11. R.P. MacKay, letter to N. Rattee, April 7, 1924.
12. C.A. Dunn, "The Canadian Mission in British Guiana: The Pioneer Years 1885-1927" unpublished M.A. Thesis, Queen's University, 1971. p. 174.
13. The United Church Archives, "Statement re Foreign Missionaries of the United Church of Canada." Undated.
14. A.E. Armstrong, letter to J.W.H. Milne, January 22, 1926.
15. A.E. Armstrong, letter to J.H. Lemon, January 22, 1926. This is a quotation from the August editorial of "The Central India Torch" published by the Mission Council.
16. Quoted by R.P. MacKay, A.E. Armstrong and A. Gandier, letter to all missionaries, November 3, 1925.
17. A.A. Scott, letter to A.S. Grant, September 10, 1925.
18. A.E. Armstrong, letter to the Central India Mission Council, undated, quoted by J. Buchanan in a letter to The Montreal Witness, written July 8, 1925 and published by The Montreal Witness August 12, 1925.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid.
21. The Acts and Proceedings (1926) Appendices p. 12.
22. J.T. Taylor, letter to A. Grant and N.H. McGillivray, September 3, 1925.
23. A.E. Armstrong, letter to A.S. Grant, August 5, 1926.
24. R.P. MacKay, letter to all missionaries, May 27, 1926.
25. The Acts and Proceedings (1926) pp. 12-13.
26. A.E. Armstrong, letter to J.W.H. Milne, January 22, 1926.
27. The Acts and Proceedings (1926) pp. 12-13
28. Ibid.

29. The Presbyterian Witness (February 4, 1911).
30. A.E. Armstrong, letter to A.S. Grant, July 16, 1926.
31. The Acts and Proceedings (1926) p. 12.
32. The Minutes of the British Guiana Mission Council, July 2, 1926.
33. Ibid.
34. A.E. Armstrong, letter to A.S. Grant, April 6, 1926.
35. R.P. MacKay, letter to the Missionaries of our Foreign Fields, May 27, 1926.
36. Ibid.
37. J.R. Harcourt, letter to Armstrong, January 1, 1926.
38. J.S. MacKay, letter to A.E. Armstrong, December 16, 1925.
39. Quoted from the Minutes (undated) of the Formosa Mission Council by A.E. Armstrong, letter to A.S. Grant, August 5, 1926.
40. A.E. Armstrong, letter to A.S. Grant, September 20, 1926.
41. A.E. Armstrong, letter to J.M. Kinney, September 25, 1926.
42. Ibid.
43. Ibid.
44. A.S. Grant, letter to A.E. Armstrong, September 20, 1926.
45. J. Scrimgeour, letter to A.E. Armstrong, July 1, 1925.
46. A.E. Armstrong, letter to A.S. Grant, March 3, 1927.
47. J. McNab, They Went Forth (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1933) p. 97.
48. A.E. Armstrong, letter to G.W. Mason, November 10, 1926.
49. A. Gandier, Speech to the Foreign Mission Board, October 4, 1927.
50. The United Church Archives, a mimeographed paper entitled, "Missionaries in Fields Transferred September 20, 1926".

51. Dunn, p. 203. Interview with Margaret Scrimgeour, November 7, 1970.
52. The Acts and Proceedings (1927) pp. 39, 77.
53. "Missionaries in Fields Transferred September 20, 1926".
54. A.E. Armstrong, letter to J.M. Kinney, September 25, 1926.
55. A. Gandier, Speech to the Foreign Mission Board, October 4, 1927.
56. The United Church Archives, "Memorandum re Advantages and Dis-advantages of assigning certain Areas Abroad to the Non-concurring Presbyterian Board of Missions". November 9, 1926.
57. The Acts and Proceedings (1928) Appendices p. 40.
58. Ibid.
59. Ibid. p. 44
60. M.H. Brown, The History of the Honan Mission 1887-1951 Vol. III, Chapter LXX p.2.
61. Ibid.
62. United Church Archives, The United Church of Canada, With Christ in the Fellowship of Service, 1927.
63. T.H. Litster, letter to The Globe and Mail, undated, printed June 28, 1926.
64. A.E. Armstrong, letter to T.H. Litster, June 29, 1926.
65. A.E. Armstrong, letter to T.H. Litster, July 7, 1926.