THE CANADIAN SOCIETY OF PRESBYTERIAN HISTORY PAPERS

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THE

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OF

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PAPERS

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THE WEST RIVER SEMINARY
1848 - 1858

R. Sheldon MacKenzie

The rural village of Durham in Pictou County, Nova Scotia, parallels both sides of the east River of Pictou. At present it consists of a canteen, a large white wooden church building and church hall, an automobile salvage yard and a number of houses surrounded by some of the richest farm land in the County. In common with many other local village areas [1] in Pictou County, Durham is not now what it was at the turn of the century, and a very different place from what it was at the time with which we are concerned in this paper. Long gone are the days when it was home to an important Post Office [2], an Inn with an enviable reputation for hospitality [3], several general stores, a shoe shop, tinsmith and blacksmith shops, a Grammar School [4] and two presbyterian churches, one on either side of the West River.[5]

All that remains of these signs of former prosperity is one of the two churches, the most imposing building in the village. With respect to educational facilities, there are no schools in Durham

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[1] e.g. Green Hill, Saltsprings, Rocklin, West Branch,etc., all of which were community centres with postal services, stores, shops, mills of various kinds and schools .

[2] Ranking second in the county and fourth in the province.

[3] The Temperance Inn, owned and operated by Mr. and Mrs. John MacCoul. There were four Inns in the village, three of them licensed.

[4] Daniel MacDonald, first school inspector for Pictou County, was teacher and Supervisor of the Grammar School.

[5] Central Church, on the west side of the river, established in 1856 and the old church on the east side of the river, near where the present community hall is located.

in the present day. However, there **was** a sign on the east side of the river, just as one crossed the bridge, that must have intrigued visitors to the area just as it was so much taken for granted by those who have always lived there that now it is largely forgotten. College Road runs down the east side of the river past more of the farming land for which the West River valley has long been renowned. College Road is the only reminder that for a space of ten years Durham was the home of the West River Seminary and Theological Hall. And might be today a centre of higher education in the province had not a series of political, economical and personal interests decreed that its usefulness to the Presbyterian Church of Nova Scotia would be better served if it were located in a larger centre of population. In 1858 it was moved to Truro, Nova Scotia, then to Gerrish Street, Halifax, and was later, in 1878, in union with the Free Church College, to become part of the Pine Hill Divinity Hall on the north west arm of the capital city. Pine Hill Divinity Hall became one of the founding theological institutions of the ecumenical Atlantic School of Theology.

The story of the West River Seminary has been told in a number of ways.[6] For the most part it has been told as one part of the larger

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[6] As for example in the short articles or papers by the following:John Currie, The Presbyterian College, Halifax,Its Past, Present, and Future,Presbyterian Witness, 7 Nov.,1891; K.J. Grant, Jottings, Reminiscent of Seminary Life At Durham, Pictou Co.,1848-1858, at the request of Principal Mackinnon, 24 Nov.,1920, n.p.; Ada S. MacDonald, The West River Theological Seminary,1848-1858, PANS, Vol.2., MG.1.; Clarence Mackinnon,A Hundred Years of Theological Education In The Maritime Synod,Presbyterian Witness, 23 Oct.,1920 ; James MacLean,Presbyterian College, Halifax, The Theologue, Vol. Vlll, March 1897, No. 4.pp. 101-106; Isaac Murray, Historical Sketch, Presbyterian Witness, 30 April, 1904; "A Presbyterian," Letter to the Editor, Presbyterian Witness,3 Nov.,1849. p.350; W. McCulloch Thompson, The West River Seminary,

history of arts and theological education in Nova Scotia generally.[7]

The scope of this present paper will be limited to an examination of various academic and non-academic matters as they relate to the Seminary alone. The focus will be narrowed, in the main, to deal with the curriculum and with other issues as they relate to it. In another paper the same approach will be taken toward the life and work of the Theological Hall which, although it operated in tandem with the work of the Seminary and was under the control of the same Synod and shared the same facilities, was a separate institution in its own right.

The first theological education in British North America in connection with the Presbyterian Church began in the autumn of 1820 in Pictou. Dr. Thomas McCulloch was the only professor and he taught his students in a room in the Pictou Academy. The Academy, about which much has been written, provided an Arts education preparing men for the study of law, medicine, theology and science. The theological instruction given by Dr. McCulloch, in addition to his heavy teaching and administrative responsibilities in the Academy, met an obvious need. In 1824 twelve students graduated from his program of instruction, some of whom were to become almost

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An Address At The Centenary, Eastern Chronicle, 23 Sep. 1948; William Verwolf, West River Seminary, The MacGregor Celebration Addresses, Frank Baird, ed.,1936. pp. 249-259. n.p.

[7] E. Arthur Betts , The Keir Period,1844 - 1860, pp.14 - 17 in Pine Hill Divinity Hall , 1820 - 1970 . Executive Print , Truro , N.S. 1970 ; J.W. Falconer, W.G. Watson , The West River Period,1848 -1858 ,pp.9 - 10 , in A Brief History of The Pine Hill Divinity Hall And The Theological Department of Mount Allison University , n.d.,n.p..

as legendary in their time as their famous professor did in his. The thoroughness of their education in Arts and Theology was confirmed when three of them, on going to Scotland, presented themselves for examination to the Senatus of the University of Glasgow.[8] They were granted the degree Master of Arts, with distinction, without further work or examination. It appears that the theological instruction given voluntarily and on his own time by Dr. McCulloch was resented in some quarters from its beginning. Interference from the Halifax Council, which vetoed funds to the Academy in favour of Kings College, Windsor, and the often aggressive hostility of fellow presbyterians, ministers of the Church of Scotland, who were contemptuous of any attempt to train a native ministry, meant that eventually the Pictou Academy and the Theological Hall along with it, were rendered unable to continue as they had hoped to do. In 1838 the Academy was reduced to the status of a Grammar School. In the same year when Dr. McCulloch went to Halifax, to assume the presidency of Dalhousie College, the Theological Hall went with him. It met in his home until his death in 1843. The Synod appointed as his successors Dr. Keir of Princetown, P.E.I., as Professor of Theology, and the Rev. James Ross, West River, as the Professor of Biblical Literature. The theological instruction then moved to Prince Edward Island, where once again it was located in the home of the professor. The students had the advantage not only of the erudition of their professor but easy access to his splendid personal library as well. The Theological Hall, a pretentious title for the theological

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[8] Messers John L. Murdoch, John MacLean, and R. S. Patterson.

instruction of the day, shifted once again in 1848. This time it moved to the West River and to the home of Professor Ross, with three students in attendance.[9]

The Synod, or at least a majority of the Synod, became increasingly unhappy with the failure, as far as they were concerned, of the reorganized Pictou Academy to provide the education necessary as a prerequisite to the study of theology. [10] Therefore, in 1848, the Synod passed a resolution to set up a Seminary of its own. Such a Seminary would provide an Arts education, independent of government control or interference and dependant solely on the voluntary support of the church. The Rev.James Ross, already the Professor of Biblical Literature in the Theological Hall, was elected Professor of the Seminary as well and charged with responsibility for the entire curriculum. [11] James Ross was not a stranger to the work of education. He had been a teacher in Sackville, New Brunswick,when, as a young man,in 1835, he responded to an invitation to succeed his father in the church at Durham. That he continued his interest in education prior to the opening of the Seminary, and while he was

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[9] The house and farm of James Ross eventually passed into the hands of the Maxwell family, and from the estate of the late William Maxwell to Mr. Arnold Cock, whose widow is the present occupant.

[10] There was a difference of opinion at the Synod meetings prior to the opening of the Seminary in 1848. There were those, in the minority as it turned out, who felt that the preparation at the Academy was adequate and, if not, that it ought to be restructured so as to be adequate, in preference to the creation of a new and therefore more expensive facility elsewhere.

[11] "For two years he carried on his college work in conjunction with that of the pastorate. He was then relieved of his charge, and for some years performed, alone, the work of a whole faculty of arts." (underlining mine). Tribute paid to Dr. Ross at Synod, Oct., 1855, reported in Presbyterian Witness, 20 March, 1886.

the Professor of Biblical Literature in the Theological Hall, is reflected in the minutes of Synod for 1847 .On that occasion he announced his intention " to visit some of the Theological Seminaries in the United States for the purpose of observing the manner in which these Institutions are conducted and of otherwise promoting the efficiency of the course of Theological Study to be prosecuted in the Church." [12] The Seminary, although established and funded by the Presbyterian Church of Nova Scotia, was, unlike Kings College, Windsor, without denominational limitations with respect to students.[13] From the outset the students were mainly from the parent denomination of the Seminary, but as time went on there were students from other presbyterian bodies as well. Then,too, while the Seminary was founded to prepare young men in Arts subjects for the study of theology prior to ordination, it provided the same liberal arts education to those who eventually pursued careers in teaching, law and medicine. [14] When the Seminary opened on 9th November, 1848, it had a registration of 12 students. Despite the criticism both from those who were opponents

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[12] Minutes of Synod,The Presbyterian Church of Nova Scotia,1847,p111.

[13] "There shall be no Religious test in the admission of Students." Article Xl of the Bye-Laws of the Seminary, as approved by Synod in 1852.

[14] "The Seminary shall be open to all who desire instruction in any of the branches therein taught." Article lX ,Bye-Laws of the Theological Seminary of the Presbyterian Church of Nova Scotia. Sanctioned By Synod, 1852. As witness the examples,for instance, of James McGregor, one of its brightest students, son of Dr. McGregor, who went into the business world, where he was a success and the founding member of what was for many years an important County business firm in New Glasgow and of Dr. David McLean, educatwd at the Seminary, who studied medicine at Philadelphia and Edinburgh, and who died in Stellarton on 30 August,1876.

of the project in principle,[15] and from those who sincerely believed the proposed scheme of education at West River to be impossible of achievement, the level of instruction from the beginning would seem to have been remarkably demanding. This is evidenced in a number of ways. There are, for example, the reports in the press of the day and in the minutes of the Board of Superintendence of the lectures with which each session of the Seminary and Theological Hall were opened and of the oral examinations with which each session of these institutions was closed. In conjunction with the method or system of examinations at the close of each session, to which I shall return later, there is abundant information on the number and nature of the essays written or other research projects carried out each session by the students in the Seminary and Theological Hall. In addition to the results of the instruction, as demonstrated in the examination process, we are fortunate to have at least one significant example of the instruction itself as it relates to the Seminary. This example comes in the form of Notes Taken From Professor Ross's Lectures On Moral Philosophy . The notes were taken by a student, John McDonald, in 1853. These notes, beautifully written in the manner and language of the time, and because of that very difficult to read today, represent some twenty-four lectures delivered and

[15] A memorial from the Prince Street Congregation, Pictou, to the Synod meeting in Pictou, 1850, asked " the Synod to reconsider its decisions in reference to the Philosophical classes recently established at the West River." The Synod gave full debate to the issue raised in the memorial and replied by reaffirming, in the strongest terms, its commitment to the Seminary as its best means of providing instruction preparatory to theological studies." Minutes of Synod, 28 June, 1850. p.168; Reported in Presbyterian Witness, 6 July, 1850. p.211.

recorded between May 5th and June 9th of that year. [16] The lecture sessions, given daily with the exception of Saturday and Sunday, must have lasted well beyond and hour in each case, with some lectures lasting easily two or three times that long. The notes taken by Mr. McDonald, occupying some 238 closely written pages, and concluding with the terse comment End of Part First , are a thoughtful development of the course description advertised in the public notice of the Seminary. [17] The notice, part of a scheme to make known the opportunities for a liberal education to the widest possible audience, [18] includes a brief description of the various course offerings for each of the four years in the Seminary. Moral Philosophy was offered to students in their second year, along with Greek, Latin and Mathematics. According to the course description for Moral Philosophy, it included "The origin of Action and the nature of Power; the freedom of the Will, the Mechanical, Animal, and Rational Principles of Action; the nature and standard of Virtue; the existence of the Deity; the immortality of the Soul; Duty, as indicated by the light of nature; Man in a state of nature; the origin and processes of the Arts and Sciences; Law;

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[16] The lecture notes were carefully transcribed for me by Miss Fern MacDonald, thus making available a wealth of information that is otherwise virtually impossible to read with any facility. I am further indebted to Miss MacDonald for the additional materials supplied me on a continuing basis as a consequence of her research in various archival centres in the course of her professional work.

[17] Presbyterian Witness, 25 Nov., 1854. p.190.

[18] By action of the Board of Superintendence, 1 March,1854, it was agreed that for at least three months in advance of the opening of the Seminary , notices should be placed in the Nova Scotian, the Eastern Chronicle, the Presbyterian Witness and the Missionary Register.

Government and Political Economy." [19] With respect to the notes taken by Mr. McDonald of Professor Ross' lectures we have this professional opinion:"The notes appear to be verbatim accounts of the lectures, given the very polished style and the appositeness of the terminology. The lectures are of a very high standard, certainly for the context. They are clear, well argued and suggest a very thorough acquaintance with the philosophical literature as it would have been in 1853. The standard would certainly be comparable to what one might expect in a good undergraduate course in moral philosophy in the context of a theology faculty - the theological interest is manifest e.g. in the discussion of "free will." It would certainly have been the foundation for a good first or second year university course text. The only additional thing one would expect in that context would be some more reference to the particular writers and schools of thought which are addressed sometimes in a rather general manner - in other words, we have the text without the footnotes. Professor Ross's students would appear to have benefited from a very clear, precise and informative account of the subject matter of moral philosophy, combining admirable precision of language with a good pedagogical approach. I am no authority on theological studies in the period concerned, but I suspect you would not often have found better or even as good in the seminary context - probably not in many universities either." [20]

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[19] Presbyterian Witness, 25 Nov., 1854. p.190.

[20] Professor Peter F. Harris, a senior member of the Department of Philosophy, Memorial University of Newfoundland , former Director of Studies, St. Edmund's House, University of

Entrance Requirements

The high level of instruction and examination in both the Seminary and the Theological Hall meant that some young men were unprepared by academic background to take advantage of the educational opportunities with which they were presented at both of these institutions. Likewise, the professors felt that the programme was jeopardized by inadequate prerequisite training on the part of some students. That this was a matter of considerable concern to the church is obvious from the several efforts that were made to correct it. [21]

By 1853 the entrance requirements for registration in the Seminary were as follows: " ... a competent acquaintance with the English language, Arithmetic, Geography, first three books of Euclid, Latin and Greek Grammars, first book in Latin, four books of Caesar, four books of Ovid, and Catalines Conspiracy, (or an amount of Latin equivalent thereto), first book in Greek and fifty pages of the Majora. Examination, for entrance, to turn on the foregoing

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Cambridge, kindly read the transcribed lecture notes and provided me with this opinion.

[21] The Presbytery of Pictou overtured the Synod in 1852 " to establish a standard of examination for applicants before admission to classes at the Seminary." This standard was to be advertised throughout the church and books, authorized by Professor Ross, were to be made available to students interested in attending the Seminary and anxious to meet the prerequisite standards. In addition, on the recommendation of Professor Ross, another term was added to the Seminary course, making four terms in all. Earlier in the same year, the Board of Superintendence, meeting at West River on 3rd March, requested Professor Ross to submit to the Board at its next meeting " a standard of qualifications for entrants into the Seminary," with which he complied and later read to the Synod, meeting in Truro, in the same year.

subjects." [22] The success of these entrance requirements was demonstrated within a year when, after examining new applicants for registration in the Seminary, the Board noted "much gratification in witnessing the decided superiority of their attainments to those of previous years and ... resolved to recommend them to the professor, as qualified to enter his Senior Class." [23]

The matter of inadequate preparation for classes in the Seminary was only temporarily solved and came up again in a series of meetings of the Board of the Seminary. For example, on 24 June, 1856, at Synod, the Board reported that " there should be a preparatory school of some description " to make up the academic deficiencies in some of those seeking admission to the Seminary. At a Board meeting in Truro on 15 Oct.,1858, the professors stated that they had accepted into their classes " some students whose proficiency fell far short of the standards required," but who had experienced particular difficulty in obtaining the necessary education before coming to Seminary. The same complaint was made again the next year at the autumn meeting of the Board. This time the professors felt that " the deficiency threatened to interfere seriously with the working of the classes in the event of these applicants being received." [24] In the spring of 1860 a special committee of the Board was set-up to assist the professors in the

[22] Bye-Laws of the Theological Seminary of the Presbyterian Church of Nova Scotia. Sanctioned by Synod, 1852, and published in the Presbyterian Witness, 25 Nov. 1854. p.190.

[23] Minutes of the Board of Superintendence, March, 1853.

[24] Ibid.,18 Oct.,1859 .

admission of students to the Seminary.[25] Previous to this, it had from the beginning been the responsibility of the several presbyteries " to examine applicants for admission to the Philosophical classes, on their classical and mathematical attainments, and to certify these to the professor in the same way in which students are certified on their admission to the Divinity Hall."[26]

Examination of Students

At the end of each academic session, the Board met at West River for the purpose of examining the students on the subjects in which they had been under instruction during the academic term. This must have been a most intimidating ordeal for the students. They were given an oral examination in the presence of the full Board and were expected to answer questions not only from their professors, but from any member of the Board and from anyone else who happened to be in the room at the time.[27] The examination-in-chief seems always to have been conducted by one of the two professors.

(Over the period of the life of the Seminary at West River there were 7 people who were responsible for the minutes of the Board. Of

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[25] Ibid., 18 Apr.,1860 .

[26] This was a decision of the Board at its first meeting on 22nd Aug., 1848, at Lower Stewiake.

[27] The nearest thing we have in academic circles today would appear to be the defence of a post-graduate thesis before a panel of experts deemed competent on the topic under discussion.

these 7 the most helpful for our purpose was James Watson, who was secretary to the Board from 1853 56. His accounts of the examinations are more detailed than those kept by any of his colleagues, although we have useful information from them as well.) The first examination, on 25th June, 1849, following the first academic session of the Seminary, was exceedingly thorough. Perhaps because it **was** the first examination and the Board was anxious to exercise its responsibility to the Synod in a responsible manner, George Christie, then Secretary, notes that " the classes were examined at great length in Logic, Latin, and Greek, and a class in Hebrew, to the entire satisfaction of the Board." [28]

After each of the examinations the members of the Board and other interested parties present, availed themselves of the opportunity to address the students. It seems that no matter how well the students had done in the examinations, they were always encouraged " to increased activity."

By October 2nd of the following year there were 21 young men present during the examinations, in two classes. As a result of a decision of the Board on that day, it was decided to invite members of the Presbytery of Pictou, presumably because they found it easier than most others to be present, and any other ministers who might find it possible to be present, to take part in the examinations with the Board. As a consequence of these invitations there was a large number of people present, including 13 ministers. The records of the Board for these particular examinations are scarce, but a correspondent for the Presbyterian Witness has

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[28] Minutes, Op. Cit., 25 June , 1849 .

provided an interesting account of them.

The first year group, the Junior Class, was known as the Logic Class. [29] These students were examined first. The examination was conducted by Professor Ross with the topics for the examination suggested by the members of the Board and other ministers present. The students read a number of essays, mainly on topics connected with Logic, and were closely questioned on them. Their answers revealed how much they clearly understood their subject. Since this was the Junior Class, some allowance was made with respect to composition which, although it was quite proficient, was not quite up to the standard it would achieve in the second half of the course. This assumption was clearly justified when the Senior Class, examined in Moral Philosophy, presented essays which were judged as models of composition.The Senior Class, in addition to its concentration on Moral Philosophy, was, like the Junior Class before them, examined as well in Geometry and Algebra, Latin and Greek. A group of these senior men, a class of 6 or 7, had also studied Hebrew and was examined on it as well. As much as a modern student must be impressed by the academic attainments of these students of 150 years ago, even more impressive is the fact that all of these subjects and the examinations in them were conducted by one man in the person of the Rev. James Ross. That his great gift as a teacher was to inspire students to teach themselves in no

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[29] "The Logic course embraces an analysis of the intellectual powers and their mode of operation, giving particular prominence to the nature and different kinds of evidence, and of prejudice, to the different modes of reasoning, and to fallacies,- Aesthetics, Universal Grammar,- Composition,- and Elocution". Presbyterian Witness, 25 Nov.,1854. p.190.

way takes anything away from the formidable task with which he was faced every day. In addition to his academic and administrative responsibilities at the Seminary, he was, at this time, the minister of a large and demanding congregation. That the Board should have been impressed by the professor and his students is not surprising. A certain Reverend Mr. Smith, present at the examinations in 1850, claimed that the demonstration of proficiency by the students in the examinations compared favourably with anything he had known "in the old country." [30] Once again, as in the previous year, at the close of the examinations, the students were addressed by most of the ministers present, commended on their attainments thus far, and "recommending increased exertion." [31]
In the autumn of 1851 (3rd Sep.,) the examinations were conducted with less than half the total number of students that had been presented themselves in 1850. [32] There were 3 students in the Logic Class and 7 in the class on Moral Philosophy. The essays of the students in each class were gathered and one from each series of essays prepared by the student concerned was selected by the

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[30] Ibid., 12 Oct.,1850. p.325.

[31] As reported in the United Secession Magazine, New Series, Edinburgh, Wm. Oliphant and Sons, MDCCCL1, p.37, included in correspondence to the Editor from a Nova Scotian, signed W.M., under date 12 Nov.,1850.

[32] Some students were absent due to illness and others were unavoidably absent for other reasons. It is not known whether some had dropped out of the course, temporarily or otherwise, between the first and second years.

Examiner and read by the young man who had written it.[33] (Each student had prepared, on an average, half-a-dozen essays during term.) The Professor then examined the student on the essay " in a rigorous course of interrogation." In both Junior and Senior Classes, the entire class was examined on topics to do with Logic or Moral Philosophy which were chosen by the Board and on which the students had done research and written essays. In addition to the proceedings having to do with Logic and Moral Philosophy, the several classes were " minutely inspected " in Latin, Greek, and Mathematics once again with excellent results. The Board, through its Convenor, expressed itself, without hesitation or qualification, impressed with the diligence and proficiency of the students and with the enthusiasm and effectiveness of their professor. One senses that there were times when the examination process was hurried beyond what was comfortable. One of these times was the examination of the Seminary in 1852 (31 August). The minutes of the Board report examinations in two classes - Logic and

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[33] Some indication of the seriousness of these essays will be obvious at once from the list of names and topics that follows:

(a) Logic - John Mckinnon -" The Modern Systems of Philosophy"
William Fraser - "The Different Modes of Reasoning"
Daniel MacDonald - " Sophisms "

(b) Moral Philosophy
Alex Cameron - " The Immortality of the Soul"
Allan Fraser - " The Freedom of The Will"
David Terhune - " The Advantages of a Liberal Education"
George Roddick - " Political Economy"
John Currie - " The Various Theories of Conscience"
John Hardie - " Autumn "
John Matheson - " The Existence of Deity "

The topics and names come from a report published in the Presbyterian Witness, 20 Sep.,1851. p.303 .

Natural Philosophy. According to the Bye-Laws of the Seminary, sanctioned by Synod in 1852 and advertised as the curriculum in 1854, this would mean the first and third year classes. In any case, there were 24 students in all,- 7 in the Logic Class and 17 in the Natural Philosophy group. The Junior Class was examined, as in previous years, by each man reading in turn from an essay, one of a series, he had researched and written during the term. In addition the professor examined them on the "External Senses."
The class in Natural Philosophy was examined in the same way, with the exception of the general topic of Optics, which the Board selected for examination, as was its privilege. In each of the several classes the examinations included the classical languages and mathematics as in previous years.These examinations went on "up until the time of the opening of the Theological Hall," which rather creates the impression of running short of time.

A change in the Secretary to the Board, from James Bayne to James Watson, means that the minutes of the Board are more detailed and therefore more interesting than they had been during the tenure of the previous Secretary. There is, of course, a repetition in the method of examination from year to year, and it would be tedious to record the separate examination details for each of the ten years the Seminary was at the West River. It is, however, more than ordinarily informative to **review** the content of the annual examination proceedings in order to appreciate the consistently high standard of instruction and research that marked the educational program at the Seminary.

For example, during the examination proceedings in the autumn of

1853 (31st August)," a few questions were put on Logic in general, and then a searching examination gone into on the power of conception and memory." The topic of the examination, chosen by the Board, gave the students no advance warning of what they might expect. They knew, of course, that they would read and answer questions from one of a series of essays they had prepared during the term. They knew too that the essay in question would be selected for them by the Professor and/or Board in consultation with him. What they did not know was the topic outside the interest of the essays that might be put forward for discussion and examination. The topics of the essays themselves indicate that they were well within the upper range of undergraduate work for that day, whether in Logic or Moral Philosophy. In the Moral Philosophy class of 1853 the topic selected by the Board for particular discussion was The Liberty of The Will . After a detailed questioning on this topic, the students read from one of their term essays, each one an essay on a topic different from his fellows. The Secretary commented:"The state of the classes seemed excellent, and in advance of what it was last year." [34]

With Mr. Watson as Secretary, we are given the content of the language examinations for the first time, [35] and some indication,

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[34] Minutes,Op Cit., 31 Aug.,1853 .

[35] Junior Class - examined in Latin on Virgil
" in Greek on extracts from Xenophon's Anabysis
Senior Class - " in Latin on Juvenal
" in Greek on extracts from the Odyssey

In geometry several problems were demonstrated on the blackboard and/or worked out on slates.

although no detail, of what was required in the area of mathematics. He included a comment which seems to have reflected the tone for the entire proceedings: "After tendering a few appropriate and solemn admonitions to the young men, the examinations terminated." Much, I should think, to the relief of the young men!

The examinations in 1854 (5th-6th September) were judged by the Board to have been the best of any until that time.[36]

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The examination of the young men in the Seminary maintained its integrity throughout the period of time at the West River. There is evidence, however, that with the appointment of a second professor in the person of Thomas McCulloch,Jr.,in 1854, and the addition of a new course from time to time, the examination procedure was more rushed than it had been at the beginning. Sometimes it had to be terminated by the Order of the Day for the opening of the Theological Hall, which met in tandem with the closing of the Seminary. And when the Seminary moved to Truro,Nova Scotia,the examination procedure was considerably revised in the interests of efficiency. There is no doubt though, that the students who went through the West River Seminary were worthy graduates of that little institution by the time they passed their final examinations.

The extraordinary quality of the lectures with which each session began, the cautious procedure that was followed for the appointment

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[36] Ibid.,7 Sep., 1854; Presbyterian Witness, 14 Oct., 1854. p.162.

of a second professor, the policies that promoted the growth of the Seminary library and the politics that determined the site of the Seminary are matters for which there is no time in this paper. One of the most interesting issues to come before the Synod on an annual basis, after 1848, was the determination of a permanent site for the Seminary. The personal and theological politics that lay behind the removal of the Seminary from the West River to Truro are at once disappointing and compelling in the light they shed on some of the most significant personalities of the day. That story, with the others, must await another opportunity of this kind.

"CANADIAN ARCHIVAL THEFTS 1977 - 1984 AND THE CONNECTION BETWEEN SOCIAL HISTORY AND POSTAL HISTORY:"

By Michael Millar, FRPSC.

This Paper is going to be vastly different from those usually presented to this Learned Society in that it is not going to deal specifically with an aspect of Presbyterian History. I should state at the outset that I am not an academic, but rather a person in a somewhat unique position who can view the problem of thefts from archival correspondence and document collections from, as it were, both sides of the carrel. I am a Director, as well as an Officer of the Royal Philatelic Society of Canada. In the latter capacity, I am the Chairman of the Society's Anti-Theft Committee.

Between 1977 and 1984 thefts from correspondence and document collections occurred at the following Canadian archives:- Archives of New Brunswick; Archives of Nova Scotia; Archives of the Presbyterian Church in Canada; Archives of Ontario; Queen's University Archives, Kingston, Ontario; and the Weldon Library, University of Western Ontario, London. In all of the above thefts people knowledgeable in what is termed "Postal History" were involved. It will be the object of this Paper to explain to you who are keenly interested in social history, just why these collections are of significance to another group of historians who are just as keenly interested in postal history.

Perhaps I should begin by stating that philately - and I'm sure that the Greek scholars present will have recognized the origins and meaning of that word by now - consists of two very broad divisions. One division is stamp collecting in all of its forms and I'm not going to outline them here because they have virtually no relevance to the present discussion. The second division is postal history, although there are times when the lines between the two divi-

sions blur, as I will show shortly. In Continental Europe and North America there are distinct differences in the accepted definition of this term. In Europe the term is defined literally as the history of the posts in all its forms, except the collection of postmarks. This is a very important distinction, which I will return to later. In Europe, a postal historian might be involved in the study of the establishment of postal service in an area, for example the Thurn & Taxis Postal System of the Holy Roman Empire, established by the Emperor Maximilian in 1491, which lasted until the formation of the North German Federation in 1867. This is also an example of blurred lines because Thurn & Taxis issued stamps in 1852. It might involve the growth of postal services in a single country - Britain, France, Germany etc., or a county or region - Brittany, Saxony, Yorkshire etc., or one of the European City States - Bremen, Hamburg, Venice etc.

I have a letter from the Venetian merchant bankers Corsini Brothers to their London office in 1591. This letter, which is acknowledging a £5 payment, probably travelled from Venice to London privately by ship because it carries no postal or rate markings. Had the letter gone overland it would have been handled by the Thurn & Taxis system and would have been marked to indicate this.

It might involve a particular period such as the inflation period of the Weimar Republic, May 1921 - 30 November 1923. Here again the divisional lines blur because this area involves stamps as well as envelopes and literature. In Europe the collection and study of postmarks is called marcophily and is considered to be a separate subject. However, for the most part in North America the term postal history, is generally accepted to mean the collection and study of postmarks, as well as the history of the posts. It goes without saying that there is a definite connection between these two elements of the

subject and North American postal historians generally feel that their European counterparts take too narrow a view of the term postal history.

I consider myself a postal historian rather than a marcophilatelist. My interests lie in the collection and study of the postmarks of England, Scotland and Wales. I do not collect Irish material except for one small subject where datestamps of a design common to the whole of the British Isles were used. In broad terms, the period I collect would cover the reigns of Queen Victoria - from 6th of May 1840 - and King Edward VIIth, but I do collect handstruck, as opposed to machine, postmarks right up to the present time. At one time I collected material from 1660 but disposed of that part of my collection in 1992. I should add that I am very interested in Canadian postmarks and postal history, but do not collect them.

North American postal historians who specialize in collecting postmarks will also, like their European cousins, collect postmarks of a country or group of countries; a county or district; a town or city; or a specialized subject such as maritime or railway post office markings. In Canada this type of collecting has many facets such as; Ontario County / District postmarks, for example Simcoe or Muskoka; postmarks of a town or city; a pre-1904 District of the North-West Territories such as Assiniboia; the St. Lawrence River or B. C. Coastal mail service postmarks; as well as the whole range of Railway Mail Service or R. P. O. postmarks. I'm sure that you get the picture.

The Province of Canada first issued postage stamps in 1851 but their use was not made mandatory for close to 30 years, well after Confederation, for one thing many small rural post offices did not have stamps. Postal patrons could go to the post office, hand in their letter and pay the postmaster in cash, the postmaster would then either stamp "PAID" and the amount on the letter or

endorse the amount and "PAID" in manuscript. The postmark of the office would then be struck on the letter. Many small offices did not have regular type-set datestamps but rather a name stamp and the postmaster would then have to write in the date. In addition, small country post offices often did not get a postmarking device for several years after they opened, in part because all of these devices were produced in England. The postmaster would write the name of the office and date of mailing in manuscript on the face of the letter. Examples of these will be discussed later in this paper when I deal with the thefts from the Proudfoot collections in the Presbyterian Church Archives. These items are highly regarded by postal historians because many of them are unique, in contrast to the volume of mail being generated from a large office such as Toronto. Thus we have many postal historians who collect only items without postage stamps on them and who will refer to their area of interest as the pre-stamp era for pre-1851 material, or the stampless era for post-1851 material. It is primarily in this area that postal historians and social historians come together. In order to understand this phenomenon a little background is required.

Envelopes did not come into general use until the early 1840's for the very simple reason that, prior to the introduction of uniform postal rates, their use would render the letter liable to a surcharge. In Britain, prior to the 5th of December 1839, postage rates were based on distance for a single letter, that is for one sheet of paper. If this sheet were enclosed in an envelope it was automatically charged as if it were for two sheets of paper, or a double. The usual method of correspondence was to write the letter on one side of the sheet, fold it until it was approximately the size of our #8 envelope, seal it with either a wax wafer or sealing wax and then address it. This practise was also followed in the British North-American Colonies. While

the social historian is interested in the inside, the postal historian is interested in the outside because this is where all the postal markings went. I use an example from my own collection to illustrate this point. It is addressed to Rev. Dr. Archibald McLea at Rothesay, Isle of Bute, Scotland. He was born in 1738, obtained his M. A. at Glasgow in 1756 and was licensed by the Church of Scotland, Dunoon Presbytery, Synod of Argyll on 2nd December 1760. He was ordained and inducted into the Isle of Islay Pastoral Charge of Kilarrow & Kilchoman on 19th May 1762. In October 1765 he was called to Rothesay and remained there for the rest of his life, dying there on 12th April 1824. I don't know how long he remained active as a Minister, but in the listing of Church of Scotland clergymen in the Knox College library it states that in 1818 he was their oldest officiating Minister. He was granted his D. D. by Glasgow University in 1801. [1] Several years ago, among a lot of over 400 British pre-adhesive letters I purchased, there were some 60 letters addressed to Dr. McLea at Rothesay covering the period from roughly 1780 to 1820. The contents of many of these are interesting, but just as interesting are the great variety of postal markings on the outside. The letter is from Inverness asking for assistance in locating a man who was alleged to have deserted his wife and was believed to have gone to Bute. The letter states that the husband had been seen sometime previously on the quay at Rothesay and asked if Dr. McLea would make enquiries. That is of interest to the social historian. The outside of the letter is of great interest to the postal historian. First, it is a very rare example of a domestic Soldiers' Rate letter and is rated one penny. Most Soldiers' Rate letters in this period went into the British Isles from overseas. The sender was a serjeant in the Inverness Militia at Inverness Castle. He endorsed the letter with his signature and this was counter-signed by an Officer, John Grant, the Quartermaster, as the regulations governing soldiers' letters required. Second, the Inver-

ness postmark is believed to be the earliest known example of this particular datestamp. However, part of the content of the letter is also of interest to the postal historian, the last line says "Please direct to me (1d paid with the letter)." The Soldiers' Letter Rate applied in both directions and this is confirmed by Sgt. McDonald's endorsement.

I hope the foregoing has given enough background information to assist you in understanding what postal history is all about.

Archives, as we all know, are one of our primary sources of research information. Early letter and document collections deposited in archives or reference libraries are also of great interest to postal historians because of the postmarks many of the letters carry.

The late 1950's saw a movement away from what is called traditional philately, that is the collection of stamps, towards the collection and study of postal history and postmarks. The reason for this is mainly one of economics, good early stamps were becoming more difficult to acquire and were becoming more expensive. On the other hand many dealers carried boxes of envelopes or folded letter sheets in their stocks priced very reasonably. One could often purchase Canadian late Victorian era envelopes with nice postmarks of small towns and villages for ten cents each or twelve for one dollar. King Edward VIIth period picture postcards, again with nice postmarks, were even cheaper at five cents. Folded letter sheets, because they were older, cost a little more, but were still very reasonable. Collectors found that they could put together a very attractive display by using this type of material, at relatively little cost. This type of collection provides more of a challenge than a regular stamp collection because of the intellectual exercise required to research the details of the each item and then write it up. As collectors

became more involved they searched for additional sources of material. Antique dealers, especially those in country locations, often had boxes of old letters and postcards - so did archives.

I don't want to create the impression that archival thefts has been, or is, a major problem. Practically all archives have procedures in place for access to correspondence and document collections, some more stringent than others, but even this is no guarantee. As we shall see, the thefts referred to at the beginning of this paper, were committed by just four people. For that reason I am not going to deal with them in strict chronological order, but rather chronologically by individual responsible. It is also quite possible that archives other than those noted above have also been victimized, but I am not aware of any others.

The first major collection to come on the market was that of the old Crown Lands Office in Toronto in the late 1940's. My understanding of this situation is that in the course of a general clearing out at Queen's Park someone discovered several thousand letters and envelopes destined for the garbage, in a basement storeroom. The vast majority of these letters were of 19th century origin from small post offices all over The Canadas, Ontario, Quebec, Manitoba and the North West Territories. Fortunately for postal historians these were salvaged and placed on the market. There are few collections of Canadian postal history today which do not contain a few Crown Lands Office covers. While some might consider this as being an archival theft, it really was not. The contents had already been removed and what was left were the envelopes, that the Ontario Archives had no interest in preserving.

One man was involved in the thefts from the Nova Scotia, Queen's and Western Archives. His name is Frank Henry Robertson, a sometime oil burner and furnace

technician from Kentville, Nova Scotia, who has a good knowledge of stamps and postal history. He is known to have used at least eight aliases and for one of these, Gary Porter, he had complete identification, including a driver's licence. He has a lengthy criminal record showing 27 convictions, mostly for theft, fraud and possession of stolen property. His record starts with a conviction for three counts of theft in Montreal in December 1965 and runs through to December 1985 when he was convicted on four charges in Springhill, Nova Scotia. There are strong suspicions that he was involved in the New Brunswick Archives theft because it is known that he sold some of this material in Winnipeg early in 1977.

Information concerning the thefts from the New Brunswick Archives is very sketchy, for example we don't know what collections were involved. Virtually no information was forthcoming, except that some material is unaccounted for.

The Nova Scotia Archives theft came to light in the Spring of 1977 when a collector went to the Archives seeking information on a letter he had purchased. Staff recognized the item as coming from the Des Champs document collection and started to ask questions. Police were called and the collector, who was not named in the proceedings indicated that he had purchased it from Mr. Jean Michaud, the then President of the Nova Scotia Philatelic Society. Mr. Michaud stated that he had purchased six documents from a man who had called at his home. He later identified this man as Frank Robertson. On the 14th of November 1977 Halifax Police executed a search warrant at Robertson's home and seized a briefcase containing 56 letters and documents. Subsequently five of them were identified as coming from the Des Champs collection. Apparently it was not proved that he was responsible for the actual theft from the Archives but he was convicted on the 21st of June 1978 of possession of stolen

property and sentenced to 1 year in prison. This sentence was later upheld on appeal to the Nova Scotia Supreme Court. Upon his release he continued with his criminal activites. His record lists convictions in Dartmouth, Fredericton, Halifax, Kentville and Springhill from March 1979 to December 1982. But all of the foregoing pales in comparison with the swath he cut through Ontario, Michigan, Illinois, New York, Pennsylvania and Maine in 1985. My file indicates 18 separate thefts during this period but there may well have been more than this, because we have no trace of him from the 25th of August 1985 when he was in Bangor, Maine and the 29th of April 1986 when he was arrested in Wolfville, Nova Scotia. It is believed that he spent the 1985/1986 winter in Florida. Two of the above thefts are Archival and a third could technically be described as one. They will also give you some idea of the economics of the postal history trade. But before I get down to specifics I will indicate Robertson's "modus operandi." In short, he financed his travels by going into stamp dealers asking to see material, and while the dealer's back was turned, slipping some of it out of the books and pocketing it. He would then go on to the next dealer, offer him the material he had stolen from the first dealer and while this was in progress steal material from the second dealer, and so on. Robertson surfaced first in Kingston on the 25th of May. He called on stamp dealer Glen McIntyre and then went to the Queen's University Archives. No record of his visit there exists. All visitors are required to complete a registration form. Robertson appears to have filled his in, but instead of handing it back he retained it. Four document collections were rifled and a total of 180 documents taken. These were from:- (1) Fairfield correspondence addressed to Collins Bay and Kingston, 1844 to mid 1850's and 1900 to 1930. (2) Andrew, Harold and Solomon Jones correspondence, addressed to Gananoque, 1820 to 1839. (3) McAuley correspondence, addressed to Kingston, period unknown. (4) Joel Stone correspondence, addressed to Gananoque, period un-

known. Mrs. Anne MacDermaid, the then University Archivist advised me the four groups of correspondence were left in quite a mess, totally disorganized and mixed up. These 180 items were sold on the 30th of May to a Toronto dealer for $1800. On the 1st of June this dealer sold them to an Ottawa dealer for $3600 who purchased them in spite of having been advised by two prominent Toronto postal history dealers, Allan Steinhart and Arthur Leggett, that the material, in their opinion, was "hot." The Ottawa dealer in fact sold many of these letters and then had to turn around and recover them when details of the theft came to light. In the end he was out considerably more than the $3600 he had paid for the letters. He had sold one of them for $1000 and the purchaser was extremely reluctant to hand it back. Mrs. MacDermaid advised me in October 1985 that she was satisfied that all of the stolen material had been returned. From the 25th of May to the 11th of June his philatelic misadventures victimized stamp dealers in Kingston, Toronto, Ottawa, Kitchener, Waterloo and London. Interestingly enough, one of the Ottawa dealers he hit was the same person who paid $3600 for the Queen's material. Robertson arrived at the Weldon Library, University of Western Ontario sometime during the morning of the 11th of June. Four collections were looted, these were:- (1) Thomas Talbot, Port Talbot, Upper Canada. (2) Edward Ermatinger, St. Thomas, Upper Canada. (3) Dennis O'Brien, London, Upper Canada. (4) William Barry, Hamilton and London, Upper Canada. All of this correspondence was in the 1800 to 1840 period. Robertson was back at the Weldon Library late the next morning and got into a collection pertaining to military matters. He removed several documents relating to the War of 1812 including two signed by Sir Isaac Brock. He also removed a handwritten illustrated book dealing with military subjects, produced by Thompson Wilson in London in 1835 as well as a small brass cannon. From Western he went back to London dealer Keith Greenham, with whom he had been negotiating the sale of several items

stolen from other dealers. He had selected several items from his stock, which Greenham had put aside for him, totaling around $1000. Robertson told him that he had to go to the bank to get the money but "to show good faith" would leave some material as security. The material he left was the cannon and the letters, but not the book, taken from Western earlier that morning. Mr. Greenham was suspicious and decided to call the Weldon Librarian, Dr. Ted Phelps. Phelps went to the store right away and immediately recognized the material as having come from the Library. Just at this time an employee of the store stated that he had just seen Robertson heading towards the railway station. Greenham and Phelps went to the station, saw Robertson but he eluded them. Early in August VIA Rail baggage staff in London opened an abandoned suitcase and discovered the missing letters and book. On the 7th of August 1985, Dr. Phelps advised me that he was satisfied all of the missing material had been recovered. From London Robertson went back to Toronto. Here he took some $10,000 worth of early Canadian stamps from a pre-auction viewing session at J. N. Sisson's Ltd., where he used the Gary Porter alias. He then went to the United States. He continued to finance his activities in much the same manner as he had in Ontario, victimzing dealers in Troy, Michigan; and New York City. It was in Philadelphia where he committed what could be described technically as an archival theft. A brief bit of background information must be given here. Prior to the American Revolution, Benjamin Franklin had been the Postmaster General for British North-America. In this capacity he had a Franking Privilege and endorsed his letters "<u>B Free Franklin</u>." In the historic section of Philadelphia there is a post office and small postal museum known as the B Free Franklin Post Office. The post office is on the ground floor and the museum on the second. The latter consists of a permanent display area plus a second area used for short term displays. When a new stamp is produced in the United States by the U. S. Bureau of Engraving & Printing

all of the artwork plus some imperforate proof sheets of the stamp are sent to the Smithsonian in Washington. In July 1985 some of this material was on display at the B Free Franklin Museum. Security was completely non-existent. Robertson was able to pry open one of the frames and remove a full sheet of the 1962 4¢ "Project Mercury" commemorative stamp, Scott #1193, [2] put it under his coat and walk out with it. The incredible thing about this theft is that the museum staff obviously didn't even know what they had in the display area. When one of the staff noticed the empty frame it was assumed that it had been left empty for some reason and they went to the storeroom and got another sheet of stamps to put into it. They were astounded when the F. B. I. called on them to check this theft some six weeks later. In the interim Robertson had tried to sell some of these stamps to at least three dealers in Chicago as well as the one in Bangor, Maine. Robertson returned to Nova Scotia in the Spring of 1986 and was arrested while committing a break-in at Wolfville. On 26th of June he was tried and convicted on some 40 assorted charges, several of which related to criminal activities in the Halifax area immediately prior to his arrival in Ontario. He was sentenced to 7 years in the Dorchester Penitentiary concurrent on all charges. Charges are outstanding in both Ontario and the United States, but it is my information that these will not be proceeded with unless he appears in these jurisdictions.[3]

As a complete contrast to the foregoing, the thefts in 1982 from the Archives of Ontario are relatively straightforward. These were committed by an employee who worked in the microfilming department. I am not sure how many collections were involved apart from the John Strachan and Peter Russell correspondence collections. Over 1100 letters were taken, regretably less than 100 have been recovered. The employee, who worked alone, was doing the microfilming and then taking the documents out of the Archives with him at the

end of the day. He sold many of them to a stamp and postal history dealer in Newmarket. His story was that an elderly relative had passed away in Scotland and that as his share of the Estate he had been given these old letters. Many more of these letters went through one of the smaller philatelic auctions in Toronto, one which subsequently sold many of the Proudfoot papers. Many of them ended up in Britain and Europe. Even though many of the purchasers are now aware of the origin of these items they will not return them. I was directly involved in this because I purchased one of the letters from the Peter Russell collection from the Newmarket dealer for $120. The letter was written, while Russell was a student at Cambridge University, to his father, who was serving with his regiment near Newcastle-on-Tyne. I had this letter in my exhibit at the STAMPEX show in Toronto in 1983 when I was summoned to the front desk and advised by a police officer that it was believed I had a stolen item in my exhibit. The officer, who was accompanied by an official from the Archives, had a print taken from the microfilm and there was no doubt that my letter and the one on the microfilm were one and the same. Naturally I had to hand it over. The Archives employee subsequently pleaded guilty to several charges and was given a prison term. The dealer compensated me for the item, so, apart from some embarrassment I suffered no loss. Another victim was not so fortunate, she had purchased a large camera from this man for $700. It had been stolen from the Archives, was given back to them, and she received no compensation.

We now come to the Presbyterian Church in Canada Archives thefts from the William and John Proudfoot collections. These occurred in 1979/80 and were committed by a Divinity student at Knox College who was supposedly doing research in the Archives. This man has a criminal record including a conviction for the theft and sale of rare books from the library at McMaster Uni-

versity. He is also very knowledgeable about Canadian postal history. Eventually the Metropolitan Toronto Police, the Canadian Stamp Dealers Association and the Anti-Theft Committee of the Royal Philatelic Society of Canada all became involved. It is believed that some 200 items were taken, with about half that number being recovered. Again, as in the case of the Ontario Archives thefts, this material has been distributed widely and recovery is all but impossible. This is due almost entirely to the negligence of the police. The person responsible had not been arrested when charges were laid in 1984. He appeared at the big stamp exhibition in Toronto in June 1987 and was arrested. No followup by the police was done, and when he appeared in Court for his trial, no information was available to the Crown Prosecutor and the Judge was left with no alternative but to stay the charges. At a meeting with a senior Crown Attorney, following a strong letter of protest from the Committee on History to the then Attorney General Ian Scott, Dr. John Johnston, Dr. Mel Bailey and I were told that it would not be possible to bring the charges on again. This has left the Church in something of an invidious position as far as recovery is concerned. A conviction would have put us in a strong position to go after those items in Canada at least. Without that we are hamstrung. This, as he was by 1981, ex-student sold most of these letters through two Toronto stamp and postal history auction houses. Prices seemed to range from $5 to $100 per item. When I come to explain the examples I have selected I will give the postal history value where this is known. William Proudfoot, along with the Rev. Thomas Christie, as I am sure that you all know, was sent to Upper Canada by the United Associate Synod of the Secession Church of Scotland as a missionary in 1832. They initially associated themselves with the Presbytery of York and William Proudfoot did preach for a Call at the Scotch Church, West Gwillimbury Township, Simcoe County. Thomas Christie went to West Flamborough. Proudfoot did not accept this Pastoral Charge, possibly

because the congregation consisted mainly of Gaelic speaking Highlanders, the remnants of the failed Selkirk colony in Manitoba. As a lowlander, he had no knowledge of the tongue and, apparently, little patience with the Gael. However, he did recognise the importance of having Ministers who were fluent in the Gaelic and who could reach those within his Presbytery who spoke the language.[4] Moving further West he initially looked at locating in Brantford, but finally settled in London. By 1840 he had managed to establish a thriving Witness in Western Upper Canada. In his capacity as Presbytery Clerk he conducted a voluminous correspondence with Ministers and others, not only in the Canadas but also with Scotland and several States in the United States - noteably in Michigan, New York and Ohio. This period, 1830's, was one of rapid growth for this part of Upper Canada. Many of the immigrants were of Scottish background and were attracted to the Churches associated with the United Missionary Presbytery. Hand in hand with this increase in population went the establishment of new postal routes and post offices. William Proudfoot appears to have retained much of the correspondence sent to him, the inventory in the Church Archives lists over 1800 letters. Interestingly enough, his diaries are housed in the Weldon Library at University of Western Ontario. These letters are of interest to the postal historian because many of them carry early postmarks from small post offices all over the United Missionary Presbytery. From this point all of the letters used as illustrations are letters taken from the files, sold to postal historians and subsequently recovered. The first letter is from Thomas Christie to William Proudfoot in York, U. C., c/o Thomas Bell, Clerk of the Presbytery of York. The letter is dated 9th April 1833, before Proudfoot had settled in London. There is much of interest in this letter to the social historian. The letter is postmarked DUNDAS with the date, 11 April written in pen. At this particular time Dundas was the only post office in the area, having been opened in 1814.[5]

West Flamborough, where Christie was located did not get a post office until 1840 [6]and present day Hamilton did not get one until 1825.[7] The letter was rated 4½d currency. The postal history value was $40. The next letter did not pass through the mails. This letter is of great importance, especially to the Presbytery of Barrie, because this is the letter of introduction from Rev. James Robson, Clerk of the Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Nova Scotia, to William Proudfoot for Rev. William Fraser. In it Mr. Robson introduces William Fraser as a "Gaelic Pictouan." Proudfoot sent Fraser to West Gwillimbury and here he spent his entire Ministry of well over 40 years. This letter does have postal history interest because it is what is referred to as a "favour letter." An endorsement in the lower left corner of the address side states "Hond. by / Revd. Wm. Fraser." Postal history value $10. A major Canadian postal history specialty deals with the collection and study of Cross-Border mails. These were letters both into and out of Canada via the United States. In the pre-railway days it was often faster to route British Mails to Upper Canada via New York and Queenston than via Halifax, or Quebec and Montreal. I use the next letter as an example. This letter was sent by Rev. Alexander Munro from Inverness and is endorsed at the lower left "Via Liverpool & / New York." While some of the postmarks do not show too clearly, there is INVERNESS 14 APR / 1836; PAID / APR 16 / 1836 (Liverpool). Partially struck over the Paid stamp is a large ½. This was the Additional ½d stagecoach toll charge, in effect in Scotland from 1816 to 1840. Next we have NEW YORK / SHIP/ MAY / 28 - the New York City receiving mark. Next we have the large double-circle QUEENSTON / U. C. JU 8 / 1836. Finally we have a straightline "2ND DELIVERY." This four page letter, which took nearly two months to arrive, gives a rundown on the state of affairs with the United Associate Synod in Inverness and district. But it is also a letter of concern for his son who is settled in Eckfrid and who may not be in good health. He asks Proudfoot

first, to advance his son some money and second, to get him a better position, if possible. There is much in this letter to interest the social historian - the length of time it took the letter to travel - the assumption that a fellow clergyman would provide the requested assistance, even though - as the first line of Rev. Munro's letter states "....I have not the pleasure of being personaly (sic) acquainted with you, I feel freedom in writing to you as being a fellow labouror in the Same Vineyard." Social historians and postal historians alike can reflect on the speed of communication in the period of these letters, at least four months from the time of writing until a reply could be expected. Postal history value $150. We are now going to look at two letters from Rev. William Fraser in West Gwillimbury Township, Simcoe County. Earlier in this paper I stated that many small country post offices were not issued with postmarking devices when the office was established, in some instances for several years after they opened. The next letter is an example. This letter was written by Mr. Fraser on the 18th of April 1838 enclosing his statistical returns for 1837. The letter is interesting because it touches on his stipend and the difficulty the congregation is experiencing in meeting it. It also mentions his apprehension concerning the church property in Richmond Hill - "I fear for anything that Squire Miles will hold fast the title to the Richmond Hill Church property and that it will be wrested from his grasp only to fall into hands which have no right to it." The letter was mailed from Bond Head on the 25th April. The address side of the letter shows an example of a manuscript postmark. The Bond Head post office was established on 6th August 1837 [8] but did not receive a postmarking device for nearly two years. The vertical endorsation in manuscript to the lower left of the address reads "Bond Head / Apl 25th 1838." Prior to the establishment of this post office, the closest post office to the early settlers in the South part of the Simcoe District / County had been at Holland Landing. The rate charged for this

letter is shown in the upper right corner, 9d (cy.). The second letter, is 1½ years later, November 1839. In it we learn that the financial situation of the congregation has not improved, indeed the congregational contribution towards Mr. Fraser's stipend for the preceeding six months appears to be only 16/9d cy. He advised Mr. Proudfoot that he had "drawn upon the fund for £25." The letter goes on to outline the situation in the area. The address side of the letter (fig. 18) has interest for the social, as well as the postal, historian. From the social history side you will note, in contrast to fig. 16, the letter is addressed to William Proudfoot as "Clk. of Missionary Pby. of the Canadas," rather than just to William Proudfoot, London, U. C. From the postal history side we see an early example of the new Bond Head postmark. The postage rate is the same at 9d cy. The next letter, from Rev. George Murray, possibly has more postal history than social history interest. Mr. Murray was in a three point charge - Blenheim, Paris and Mount Pleasant, the latter being shown as a preaching station. Included with his statistics for 1840, is a notation which seems to indicate that he has been Interim Moderator at West Dumfries. His covering letter is headed "Blenheim / 22 March 1841." This is not the present day town of Blenheim, but refers to Blenhein Township in Oxford County. Present day Blenheim is located in Harwich Township, Kent County. Dr. Smith's Ontario Post Office listing shows a post office called Blenheim in Blenheim Township as only being in operation during 1841.[9] The fact that this letter was mailed at Princeton might indicate that either the Blenheim office was already closed, or possibly had not yet opened. The address side of the letter has a manuscript Princeton postmark at the lower left. This is very interesting from a postal history standpoint because it shows an office that had not received a postmarking device nearly six years after the office was established. Princeton was opened in Blenheim Township, Oxford County on 6th May 1836, appears to have been closed for a brief time

and then re-established on 6th July 1841, possibly as a successor to the short-lived Blenheim post office, although there is no official indication of this. [10] The postage rate for this letter, shown at the upper right, is 4½d cy. Two years later Princeton had received a postmarking device but Mr. Murray was still giving his address as Blenheim. The next example, is possibly of more interest to the social historian. This is a letter from Rev. James Dick, written from Montreal, L. C. He has just arrived from Scotland following his appointment by the Synod of the Secession Church as a missionary to the Presbytery in Upper Canada. He states his intention of leaving Montreal for Kingston in two days and asks Mr. Proudfoot to write to him at the post office there with details of the station or stations he will be assigned to. He closes by saying "We have had a long passage no less than 10 weeks since we left Glasgow." This letter bears a nice clear example of the MONTREAL / L. C. double-ring datestamp and the rate charged as 1/6d cy. I have selected the next letter for several reasons. The content is interesting because it makes reference to the magazine William Proudfoot published from time to time. He may have had some doubts about its future but decided to continue, as witness Rev. James Roy's first sentence "....was glad to learn that you had come to the determination to go on with the magazine." Lack of funds in the form of sufficient subscribers may have been the problem, as noted by Mr. Roy in the second paragraph. We are now in the transition period from Upper Canada to Canada West, as can be noted from the address, London, C. W. It would be many years, however, before this change - or even the change from Canada West to Ontario in 1867 - would be reflected in post office postmarking devices. These devices were fairly expensive to produce and were not replaced until they either wore out or were lost. Richmond Hill, as one example, was still using the RICHMOND HILL / U. C. datestamp issued in the early 1840's into the late 1870's. Simcoe, as another example, was still using a C. W. datestamp in

1869, two years after Confederation and these are not isolated examples. Mr. Roy's letter was mailed at St. George. The postmarking device is similar to the Montreal used on Rev. Dick's letter but the date is not typeset. St. George, designated as St. George, Brant in the post office lists, was opened in South Dumfries Township, Brant County on 6th October 1835. [11] The rate charged was 7d cy. The next letter has been selected for a particular reason, which will be explained when I discuss the postal history aspect. It is another letter from Rev. William Fraser in West Gwillimbury dated 23 March 1843. From the opening sentence we can deduce that Mr. Fraser's previous letter was sent unpaid, which would have resulted in a double charge for Mr. Proudfoot. The letter indicates that a bank draft in the amount of £4/5/- cy. is enclosed in payment for subscriptions to Mr. Proudfoot's newsletter. The third paragraph is rather poignant - "It is extremely difficult at any time to get money from some people. The difficulty increases when they suspect that they are not receiving value for it: and the difficulty is greatest when they have it not to give. Money is certainly hard to be got. I know this by experience: and it is very clear in this region at least the last harvest was miserably poor & where the prices of all kinds of produce are ruinously low that the farmers must feel heavily the pressure of the times." This letter addresses Mr. Proudfoot as "Editor Presbyterian Magazine." It is also stamped "FREE" and "MONEY LETTER" in addition to the BOND HEAD / U. C. name stamp. We have already seen from the content of the letter that money was enclosed. The money letter system was the precursor to the registered letter system of today and this is an early example. The "FREE" is something of a puzzle because certainly postage plus a premium should have been paid. In this period postmasters had Franking Privileges, supposedly for official business, which was frequently abused. It is possible that H. R. Archer, the Bond Head postmaster at this time, was a member of Mr. Fraser's congregation and used

his Franking Privilege to spare his Minister a heavy postage charge. The postal history value of this item was $95 and it was returned to the Archives from a postal historian in Vancouver. The next item is another Cross-Border letter which, like the previous example, has been selected for a specific postal history reason. The letter is from Charles Elliott, a teacher, who appears to have moved from Canada West to Xenia, Ohio. This letter is addressed to London, Upper Canada, British America and the endorsation "Via Detroit" to the lower left of the address. In the upper left corner there is a typeset "WINDSOR, C. W. / 18 NOV 1843." This Windsor straightline, as it is referred to, struck in red, is an extrememly rare postmark. For this reason the postal history value of this letter was $300. The next example I have selected is addressed to William Proudfoot's wife Isabel. It was written by her niece, Georgina Aitchison, the daughter of her brother. She is writing to her aunt for advice because, apparently, the conduct of her father is such that she has left his house. She writes "....it grieves me to say that his habits are not improved since he left you...." Reading between the lines here one can perhaps speculate that her father was an abuser of alcohol. Phrases such as "bad habits" or "not conducting himself in a consistent manner" were the usual Victorian euphemisms found from time to time in Kirk Session minutes to describe someone who was an habitual drunkard. This letter was answered the same day that it was received, 11th December. The letter was sent from Goderich, although the address is given as Gairbraid Mill. The Goderich post office was opened on 6th October 1835, [12] and the very nice postmark at the upper left is from the first datestamp. There is no listing for a post office of Gairbraid or Gairbraid Mill. Postal History value $10. William Proudfoot died in 1851 but his work was continued by his son John and the final example is addressed to him. It was sent by the Rev. Archibald Cross in Whitby concerning a Call to Ingersoll and Woodstock. He indicates a preference for St.

Catharines and Port Dalhousie. The letter was mailed in Oshawa, just a small village in 1854. Stamps, as indicated earlier, had been issued by the Province of Canada in 1851 and at the same time postage rates based on distance had been replaced with a uniform rate of 3d cy. per ounce. We can assume that Oshawa was too small to have stamps by the manuscript "3" in the upper right corner. I might point out that in this period Whitby was still the major centre in the area. The post office was opened in 1824, [13] while Oshawa did not get postal facilities until 1841, [14] The Oshawa postmark is not too clear, but the date of mailing can be read as "NO 22." It was received in London on the 24th. The reason I selected this letter, apart from the fact that it is addressed to John Proudfoot, is because it is also from a transition period, this time from a transportation rather than a political viewpoint. The letter would have travelled from Oshawa to Toronto, by the William Weller Royal Mail-coach. From Toronto to Hamilton the letter could have travelled either via lake steamer or Mail-coach. From Hamilton to London it would have been conveyed by the Great Western Railway which had been completed in December 1853. [15] Rail service through Oshawa was instituted in August 1856 upon completion of the section of the Grand Trunk Railway between Bellevile and Toronto. [16] Postal History value of this letter $5 - $10. Letters taken from the Proudfoot collections are slowly being returned, but, as stated earlier, without the authority of a conviction of the person responsible we are not in a strong position to go after the holders of the remaining outstanding items, even if we knew who they are. [17]

In my opinion no group, archivists, dealers or collectors, can entirely escape blame for these thefts. One might wish to hold the Archivists responsible for a lack of security in their establishments. I do not feel that this was entirely the case. All of the Archives involved had registration procedures

in place for visitors, but these were not foolproof. In the case of the Ontario Archives an employee in a position of trust was responsible. In the case of the Presbyterian Archives a student, again one would assume, in a position of trust. I don't feel that one can entirely blame postal historians either, after all, they are going to purchase material that a dealer has for sale. In the case of some of the Proudfoot letters, they were being sold quite openly in the Post Office cum gift shop at Black Creek Pioneer Village. Archivists today are well aware of the postal history phenomenon through the publicity efforts of their own associations and the Royal Philatelic Society of Canada. Twenty years ago this was not the case. Back then many archives were located in basement rooms and were more or less unknown. Quite often they were not staffed on a fulltime basis, with a clerk looking after the records one or two days a week. This was certainly the case with the Simcoe County Archives and I don't suppose this was an isolated example. Archivists were usually very pleased to welcome <u>any</u> visitor who wanted to view their holdings and if the visitor slipped the odd letter into their pocket or brief-case, when the archivists back was turned who would know about it? Certainly not the archivists, who in most cases didn't even know what the full extent of their holdings were. The dealers have to assume a fair proportion of the blame for, in most of the examples cited above, purchasing material without question from people who come into their premises. The opportunity to make a "fast buck" is an unfortunate human trait, witness the Toronto dealer who turned over the Queen's material within two days to another dealer and doubled his money with no effort on his part. The Canadian Stamp Dealers Association is constantly warning its members about such practices. There are many collections of letters and documents legitimately on the market, and these are known to the dealer community. For the most part, items from these collections have been through many hands and have prices and other markings on them.

Dealers have been warned about accepting material from unknown sources with a lack of such markings. Finally, the collectors must also share some of the responsibility. Through much publicity in trade journals and society magazines, postal historians have been well aware since 1984 of the thefts from the Ontario and Presbyterian Archives, but still many people who have this material are refusing to return it. I suppose one could draw an analogy to art thefts, where people will buy stolen art and hide it from view in their homes, just so they alone will have the pleasure of looking at the painting. From time to time the odd Proudfoot item shows up on the market and, through the good offices of one Toronto dealer, we recover it. I hasten to add this does not apply to all collectors, many did respond by returning letters. For example several letters from Rev. Robert Thornton, the United Missionary Presbytery Minister in Whitby and Pickering, were returned to us from the Whitby Archives. The archivist had purchased them at Black Creek. Today archivists are very much aware of what they hold in their archives. In many archives researchers are allowed to work with either micro-film or photocopies only rather than the actual letters or documents. Eight years have now elapsed since the last reported archival theft, hopefully there will be no more.

(1) "Fasti Ecclesiæ Scoticanæ" VOL. IV p. 41.

(2) Scott Standard Postage Stamp Catalogue, vol. 1.

(3) Royal Philatelic Society of Canada Anti-Theft Committee file R84/003.

(4) A Scottish Divine on the frontier of Upper Canada: The Reverend William Proudfoot and the United Secession Mission. S. D. Gill, Ph.D. p 44.

(5) Ontario Post Offices, volume 1, An Alphabetical Listing: R. C. Smith, Ph.D. p 45.

(6) Ibid p. 204.

(7) Ibid p. 66.

(8) Ibid p. 15.

(9) Ibid p. 14.

(10) Ibid p. 142.

(11) Ibid p. 153.

(12) Ibid p. 61.

(13) Ibid p. 206.

(14) Ibid p. 123.

(15) A History of Canadian R. P. O's., L. F. Gillam, FCPS, p. 76.

(16) "The Trunk" - A History of the Montreal & Toronto Railway Post Office, 1856 to 1971, by Michael Millar, FRPSC, p. 8.

(17) Royal Philatelic Society of Canada Anti-Theft Committee file R84/002.

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CHRISTIAN DARWINISM AT KNOX COLLEGE, 1880-1900

Nina Reid-Maroney

It has been 102 years since Knox students and alumni gathered to hear newly-appointed professor Robert Thomson deliver his first address to the College. Thomson's subject was "The Evolution in the Manifestation of the Supernatural." Borrowing the language of evolutionary biologists, Thomson told his audience that God's revelation of his character had adapted and evolved. Against a background of confusion in modern philosophy, Thomson argued, Christianity was "vindicated in this ever-increasing disclosure given of the being and character of God in outward nature, in man, and in the historical revelation which centres in Christ."[1]

By 1890--31 years after On the Origin of Species and almost 20 since the Descent of Man--there was little new or startling about Thomson's insistence that the Darwinian hypothesis was an acceptable way to understand change in the natural world, or in his bold appropriation of the biological metaphor to suggest that the theory of descent with modification might actually enhance the claims of orthodoxy. In fact, between 1883 and 1896, the central premise of Thomson's address appeared in some three dozen

articles and essays published in the Knox College Monthly and Presbyterian Magazine. Contributors, including Knox professors, students and alumni, approached the subject of evolution directly, and with a measure of good cheer. In addition to the presence of articles accepting Darwin's ideas, there was a notable absence of the opposite opinion. Taken together, the work of the Knox writers reveals a community of theologians who purposefully embraced Darwin's theory, while championing the tenets of their orthodox faith.

For Canadians as for their British and American counterparts, the late Victorian period was characterized by a series of intellectual struggles which James Moore termed the "post-Darwinian controversies." Moore has argued that in the period of adjustment to Darwin's ideas, it was often the theologically conservative who were most receptive to Darwin's version of evolution, and who upheld it in its most pure form. According to Moore, these Christian Darwinists, recognized that the theory of "descent with modification" had much in common with the older tradition of British natural theology from which it emerged. Darwin's preoccupation with explaining adaptation had been nurtured in scientific setting steeped in the argument from design. Similarly, Darwin joined his British predecessors in rejecting older versions of evolution, such as Lamarck's theory of an inevitable progression from lower to higher organic forms, because such theories suggested there must be

some self-transforming principle in nature.[2] These two characteristics--the interest in apparent design, and the rejection of transformism--placed Darwin on common ground with natural theologians, even though maintaining such common ground was far from Darwin's own scientific agenda.

The contributors to the Knox College Monthly fit the pattern of Moore's Christian Darwinists. They were adept at casting the Darwinian hypothesis in the language of natural theology, without straining the principles of orthodoxy. My present concern is with two related questions. First, within the framework of Christian Darwinism, how were the Knox theologians affected by the specific terms of their Calvinist heritage? Second, what do the articles in the Knox College Monthly tell us about the context within which the Darwinian hypothesis was interpreted and applied?

In their discussions of Christianity and evolution, the Knox theologians used as their starting point the belief in a particular kind of deity who governed the natural order of things--a God both above, and active in, the affairs of the world. With great care, they also distinguished this personal deity from his creation and from the natural laws according to which it operated. They spoke of an "extra-mundane, super-mundane and intra-mundane intelligence," and of an "infinite personal God, whose relation to the existing cosmos of nature is such that he is immanent in it and yet he also transcends it."[3] The Knox writers were of course theologians before they were

philosophers. The character of God, as they defined it, was a matter of faith, rather than of evidence. As such, it would have to be preserved in the course of developing any scientific view of the world.

This concern with the divine character promoted not only an acceptance of Darwin, but a stance toward the scientific method in general, stretching back through the Scottish Enlightenment to its Calvinist origins.[4] At its heart was the belief that all natural events were not necessary, but contingent on the will of a personal and provident deity. The laws of nature, then, did not constrain the hand of God, nor did they prove his existence to a group of theologians already convinced of his power and presence in their own lives. Natural laws simply described the action of a deity who, in some matters at least, chose to act in patterns readily discerned by the human mind. In this context, we can better understand the Knox writers' insistence that God was "in all, through all, and over all." God's transcendence was tied to his self-existence as well as to his power; God's immanence reminded the believer that a divine presence and a divine attention sustained all earthly phenomena.

In addition, the Knox writers understood that our knowledge about the natural world was impeded by the fallen state of human reason. The epistemology provided by Thomas Reid had taken this into account. As historians of the Scottish Enlightenment point out, to the common-sense

philosopher, "God, souls and matter surely exist as perfectly different substances, but we know little of them save their differences and those practical beliefs and feelings necessary in our conduct in this world."[5] Statements about the natural world and the mysterious deity who presided over it were probable, rather than certain.

If the Calvinist underpinning of common sense had been forgotten by some of its nineteenth-century practitioners, they were not lost on the conservative theologians at Knox College. Surely Calvin's contention that we have a bare apprehension of things divine through our "natural instinct" was echoed in Knox student Archibald Blair's essay on "Nature's Voice to Man's Religious Instincts." Subject and object, man and God, were separated by a gulf bridged in the most tentative manner by impressions which found their way to the human mind. "Minds absorbed with material things," Blair wrote, "may feel these impressions from a higher realm less and less; but they are the glory of human nature, and in the ultimate reckoning with Darwinism the mind of man will insist on giving them their legitimate place."[6] In the end, it was the "religious instinct" which must guide the acceptance or rejection of scientific conclusions. The paucity of human resources in the presence of an inscrutable God conspired to make all science a thoroughly hypothetical business.

On these terms, the Knox writers argued that the Darwinian hypothesis of descent-with-modification, like

other scientific statements, was but a human construct used to describe the action of God. Typically, to illustrate that the relationship between Christianity and science was fundamentally unchanged by the scientific community's acceptance of evolution, they focused on the affinity between the argument from design and Darwin's laws of variation and natural selection. According to Knox alumnus William Hunter, evolution actually lifted the argument from design "to a higher plane" by revealing God's presence through the "slow continuous process" of adaptation:

> If there is one doctrine more strongly insisted upon by the theistic evolutionist, it is that God does not create the machine, wind it up, set it going, and then retire only to step in occasionally to repair, rectify and improve and introduce new parts; but that he remains within his universe, and works out his destiny in accordance with his plan. So he is really brought nearer than before, made resident in nature, directing every event, determining every phenomenon. The forces of nature are simply manifestations of his power. 7

Despite the warnings of others that evolution attacked the biblical doctrine of divine providence, the Knox writers insisted that it had no such power. The student William Dewar, in an 1886 essay on "Biology and Theology," pointed out that evolution was at best a new name to describe events governed, as always, by the will of God. If evolution passed the scrutiny of biologists and gained acceptance as a "working hypothesis," it could never "shut out the Creator from the universe." Rather, evolution addressed only "the field of operation of second causes so called, in which we

see, though 'now through a glass darkly', God working out his beneficent purposes for the welfare of his creatures."[8] The Darwinian laws of variation, then were no different from other scientific theory, which Dewar defined as the product of human reason trying as best it could to understand the operations of an omnipotent and ultimately mysterious God.

In this sense, the Knox theologians plainly held that scientific statements were inseparable from their philosophical implications for Christian belief. F.R. Beattie, author of several articles on the design argument, pointed out that while "science may gather the facts, enable us to classify them, and help us to understand them in some degree," a sound philosophy was needed to interpret them properly. Within its limits, then, scientific inquiry was decidedly useful. Problems came only when the scientific practitioner got out of hand. Presumably this happened to Herbert Spencer, who had granted to evolution the causal powers of God and the status of metaphysical certainty. To Beattie, Spencer's example demonstrated "to what straits bondage to a theory may bring even a great man."[9]

The acceptance of Darwinism as a scientific theory was accompanied by a keen attention in the pages of the <u>Knox College Monthly</u> to the current work of evolutionary biologists--essays on Haeckel's <u>History of Creation</u>, the behaviour of the protoamoeba, and the folly of spontaneous generation. Such inquiries invited comparison with the

reception given to other scientific ideas in other times. As William Hunter recalled, "dismay swept through the hearts of pious people when they saw Voltaire espouse the cause of Newton in 'removing God from the course of nature.'" Hunter considered it a Christian duty not to reject new scientific explanations, but to consider them, weigh their merits, and engage the best of them, recognizing that such theories did not alter the tenets of faith. "Thus," Hunter wrote, the Christian "will obtain the sympathy of men of science, for he sits where they sit, at the feet of nature, and recognizes his mission to be that of an interpreter of nature."[10]

Accordingly, it seemed important to discuss specifics--particularly Darwin's laws of heredity, variation and natural selection. As William Dewar pointed out, the biologist "uses this theory in exactly the same way as the chemist uses his atomic theory. In this way, evolution is being every day put to the severest test, and it will eventually be confirmed or rejected finally, according as it satisfies or falls short of the facts of the science."[11] Care was taken to rehearse the details of evolution, and thereby confine it within the limited scope of a working hypothesis. The proponents of theistic evolution, then, while most orthodox, were also willing to work specifically within the terms which Darwin himself had established. They also used those terms to discredit other applications of evolutionary principles. It was suggested, for instance,

that those evolutionists who denied the power of God would be "hard pressed to account for Darwin's second law of variation [like begets unlike]."[12] A strict attention to Darwin might serve to beat the materialists at their own game.

This approach to science was applied not only to the Darwin of the Origin of Species, but to the ideas proposed in the Descent of Man. There were no difficulties with the notion that man had evolved, as long as this, too, was relegated to the realm of scientific hypothesis. "From the Bible," Dewar noted, "we learn that man's body is of an earthly origin, but that special supervision was exercised over its formation. Now, if it be remembered that evolution can only at most be a law and therefore but a regular mode of God's acting, it is easily seen that special supervision would be possible under it without straining the theory in the least."[13] Hunter concurred with Dewar's judgement: "Man is not the less a work of art because he is gradually formed....Is it too much even for the evolutionist to say that God has 'created him a little lower than the angels and crowned him with glory,' so long as he does not forget the continuous dependence of all creation on its maker?"[14] As always, the problem was not with the theory, but with its improper application by those who placed too much faith in the claims of science. By calmly maintaining that the biblical account of creation was essentially untouched by evolutionary theory, the Knox writers robbed the materialists of their most promising line of attack.

Of course an awareness of the limits of science did not prevent Christian Darwinists from using evolution as new way in which to describe old spiritual truths. This brings us back to Robert Thomson's suggestion that the revelation of the divine character had adapted to meet the "needs, longings and aspirations of human nature." The God-directed adaptation of organic forms to environment supplied Thomson with a language to explain the movement of Christian history, and reminded him that "all the parts of creation still wear, as at the first, a forward look...." Yet even while Thomson filled his address with metaphors supplied by evolutionary biology, he cautioned his audience against the dangerous varieties of the theory. There were, as Hunter said, "distinctions to be drawn here. There are evolutionists and evolutionists."[15] Such warnings reveal the complexity of the Knox writers' encounter with Darwinism, and their deliberate choice of a particular kind of scientific theory.

In making that choice, the Knox writers wanted to separate themselves from the materialists, who tried to substitute the process of evolution for the power of God. But they also wanted to distance the orthodox acceptance of evolution from Hegelian versions of progress. The effort was led by William MacLaren. MacLaren used the pages of the <u>Knox College Monthly</u>, as well as his lectures in theology, to compare Calvinism with other religious systems. He identified the idealist's God with "the eternal necessary

substance which the Pantheist calls God...[it] has neither freedom, personality, self-consciousness nor moral character. It evolves itself necessarily to certain fixed laws in all phenomena of the universe." Accordingly, MacLaren concluded, there could be "no intelligible basis" for religious belief.[16] On this point, Robert Thomson, too, had been careful to avoid confusion. He did not suggest that God himself evolved (for God was immutable) but rather that the "history of the world is an increasing disclosure of God through his attributes."[17] The attempt to avoid the tenets of idealism, even as those ideas were gaining acceptance among other Canadian Presbyterians, is most instructive. Both MacLaren and Thomson suspected that the Hegelians had capitulated in their encounter with evolution. The much feared "Hegelian doctrine of immanency" had driven out the transcendent power of God, making the proponents of this view only slightly less disturbing that materialists of the Spencer stripe.

Clearly Darwinism's arrival at Knox College was attended not by indifference but by an informed attempt interpret Darwin's ideas in the light of orthodoxy. It is also clear that the Knox writers were attuned to the message in James Stalker's "Present Desiderata of Theology," an address delivered to the U.P. College in Edinburgh, and reprinted in the Knox College Monthly in 1890. The author reminded his audience that while the church had found new vigor in its "duty to apply the Gospel to the life of the

population at home and to carry it to the heathen abroad," such work required all the energies of ministers and their congregations. The important business of theological speculation languished, even in the theological colleges, where professors were "tempted aside from their proper work to absorb themselves in all kinds of benevolent enterprises." Unless the church devoted time and attention to new ideas from the world outside, Stalker warned, "even the most saintly devotion to practical work will not save her from losing hold of the minds of men."[18]

The fear of losing hold of the minds of men was a spur to action. From the first issue of the Knox College Monthly, the editors had made attention to the theological challenges of the day part of the publication's mandate, claiming that it behooved "every Christian, certainly every man whose life work is preaching the gospel, to stablish himself in his faith by examining the questions that are raised."[19] The theory of evolution was particularly unavoidable, since, as William Hunter noted, its phrases were used in "current speech and so meet the student at every turn...and we all know that the most formidable opponent of Christianity today is the materialistic evolutionist."[20] The key to understanding the Knox response to Darwin lies in such demonstrated concern for the student of theology. As John Webster Grant reminds us, students at Canadian theological colleges "were familiar with the questions raised by critics, and sought help in

solving their own doubts."[21] The Knox writers thus found themselves drawn into the post-Darwinian controversies to intervene in crises of faith, to proclaim the virtues of the middle ground.

Their appeal was made without significant departure from the familiar argument from design and the philosophy of common sense. While the Knox theologians had little difficulty in adopting the claims of Darwinian science within the fold of orthodox belief, they felt pressure to spread the word before extremists from either side had their way. They fought to silence the opponents of religion who insisted that science and Christian orthodoxy were opposing forces in the great intellectual battle of the modern age. But they also struggled against the equally disturbing opponents of evolution, who by shutting science out of the church, had played into the materialists' hands. The *Knox College Monthly* became the voice of stability and of spiritual repose. Its message was of comfort:

> Enough has been written to show that the fundamental principles of Christianity remain untouched.... The man who believes that God is *immanent* as well as *transcendent*, that evolution is simply a process whose main factor is God, upon whom the universe is dependent every moment, need have no fear whatever that the foundation of his faith in Christianity will be shaken, though the consensus of scientific and philosophical opinion in favour of evolution were complete. 22

The graduating class at the college in 1895 was sent out into the world armed with the reassurance that evolution was "no modern ghost to haunt and terrify us." It described a process but "did not account for it."[23] Such a sanguine attitude toward the Darwinian hypothesis was rooted in a traditional Presbyterian sensibility. While its proponents did not retreat from evolution, their response cannot be called liberal. There was too much Calvinism about them, and too little faith in the power of unaided human reason.

In guarding the sense of ultimate mystery about God and his connection with creation, the Knox theologians drew inspiration from many of their Presbyterian brethren in Britain and in America--particularly from the theological colleges at Edinburgh and Princeton. Thomson, for instance, had studied at Edinburgh's New College under the influential principal Robert Rainy, who combined orthodox theology with avid support for Darwinian science. With others of Calvinist heritage, the Knox writers embraced what Principal Caven called the combination of "scientific radicalism and clerical conservatism." They welcomed participation in a larger debate which carried them beyond the bounds of college and country. And yet their views hold important consequences for our reading of this critical period in the intellectual history of Victorian Canada.

Recent scholarship has suggested that some Canadian Protestants responded to Darwin by abandoning theological speculation and repairing to the work demanded by their

social gospel, while others turned to the idealism of Hegel, promoted in Canadian theological circles by John Watson of Queen's.[25] Our friends at Knox rejected these alternatives, and chose another path. Whether or not their Christian Darwinism proved to be the road less travelled is another question--one that would require some measure of their overall efficacy. It is, however, apparent that the example of the Knox theologians can suggest more general conclusions about the Canadian experience of the "Darwinian Revolution." As Bert Lowenberg suggested some years ago in his discussion of Darwinism in America, the "theistic substratum" of thought can not be avoided by historians seeking to understand the reception given to Darwin's ideas.[25] In the case of the Knox contributors, that substratum included a powerful faith in a personal and inscrutable God. The articles published in the <u>Knox College Monthly</u> undermine the notion that neither the argument from design nor a common-sense epistemology survived contact with Darwin. In fact, both proved remarkably resilient in the hands of the faithful, for whom scientific claims would always be left to play across the surface of a far greater reality.

NOTES

1. Robert Thomson, "The Evolution in the Manifestation of the Supernatural," Knox College Monthly (October 1890) 293-318.

2. James R. Moore, The Post-Darwinian Controversies (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979). See also Michael Ruse, "The Relationship between Science and Religion in Britain, 1830-1870," Church History 45 (1975) 505-32.

3. F.R. Beattie, "The Design Argument--Some Objections Considered," KCM (March 1886) 205.

4. On the Calvinist origins of the Scottish Enlightenment, see Roger L. Emerson, "Calvinism and the Scottish Enlightenment," Literature in Context (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1992) 19-28.

5. ibid, 21.

6. Archibald Blair, "Nature's Voice to Man's Religious Instincts," KCM (February 1885) 133.

7. William Hunter, "Evolution and the Church," KCM (May 1985) 597.

8. William Dewar, "Biology and Theology," KCM (February 1886) 156.

9. F.R. Beattie, "Herbert Spencer's Definition of Life," KCM (January 1889) 115-18.

10. Hunter, "Evolution and the Church," 598; "Can the Old Faith Live with the New," KCM (August 1892) 23.

11. Dewar, "Biology and Theology," 153.

12. Hunter, "Can the Old Faith Live with the New," 249.

13. Dewar, "Biology and Theology," 155.

14. Hunter, "Evolution and the Church," 599.

15. ibid, 593.

16. William MacLaren, "Calvinism in Relation to Other Theistic Systems," KCM (November 1883). MacLaren made similar arguments in his lectures on Systematic Theology, where he accepted the notion that man had evolved "through the direct supernatural agency of God." (lecture notes in systematic theology, Knox College Archives).

17. Thomson, "Evolution in the Manifestation of the Supernatural," 296.

18. James Stalker, "The Present Desiderata of Theology," KCM (July 1890) 122-23.

19. "Prospectus," KCM (February 1883) 2.

20. Hunter, "Evolution and the Church," 591.

21. John Webster Grant, The Church in the Canadian Era (Toronto: McGraw Hill, 1972), 61.

22. Hunter, "Evolution and the Church," 602.

23. J.A. Paterson, "Looking from Pew to Pulpit," address to the graduating class of Knox College, April 1895.

24. On social criticism as an escape from theological speculation among Canadian Protestants in the post-Darwinian era, see Ramsay Cook, The Regenerators: Social Criticism in Late Victorian English Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985). The triumph of idealism over common sense at Queen's is discussed in A.B. McKillop, A Disciplined Intelligence: Critical Inquiry and Canadian Thought in the Victorian Era (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1979).

25. Bert Lowenberg, "Darwinism Comes to America," Mississippi Valley Historical Review (1942-43) 368.

"TO FERTILIZE THE WILDERNESS":

Problems and Progress of the Synod of Nova Scotia in its first Quarter-Century[1]

John S. Moir

The indigenous Synod of Nova Scotia was officially formed by the Burghers and Antiburghers of the province on 3 July 1817, with three presbyteries --Truro, Pictou and Halifax -- 19 ministers (two of them on Prince Edward Island) and nine vacant charges. Only two Presbyterian ministers did not join the Synod -- Archibald Gray of Halifax, and Bruin Romkes Comingo who was by then 93 years old. Of those 19 ministers, 14 came from the Secession tradition, 3 from the Church of Scotland, and 2 were Congregationalists. The new Synod's first working meeting was actually held three months later, in the Truro Meeting House on 8 October 1817. In 1967, when the Synod of the Atlantic Provinces celebrated its sesquicentennial, the late C.B. Fergusson wrote a short history of the events and persons that preceded the creation of this first Presbyterian synod in Canada's history. The intention of this paper is to carry that story through the Synod's first quarter-century, and to assess the progress and the problems it encountered.

With the venerable James MacGregor as moderator of its first sederunt, the Synod proceeded to appoint a "Committee of Missions" to "fertilize the wilderness" as Thomas McCulloch later defined the

[1] This paper was prepared for the 175th anniversary in October 1992 of the Synod of the Atlantic Provinces of the Presbyterian Church in Canada.

Synod's role.[2] Synod's intention to establish a Presbyterian theological academy at Pictou was announced, and subscriptions thereto were invited. Transcribed into the Synod's early minutes is a letter from the Governor, Lord Dalhousie, a staunch Presbyterian but a stauncher member of the Church of Scotland. That letter thanked the Synod for its expression of loyalty, and in return promised the Crown's protection for Synod equal to that protection given "other religious sects and persuasions" in the province. In retrospect, the Governor's choice of words to define the new Presbyterian Church of Nova Scotia may have been prophetic in foreshadowing the Synod's relations with the established Church of Scotland. For the moment, however, the Synod was busily and enthusiastically organizing to carry out its self-declared mission.

A decade after the Synod was formed it had grown from three to four presbyteries and from 19 to 27 ministers, with 7 men licensed in 1825 working in Cape Breton, mainland Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island. In 1817 Nova Scotia had an estimated 93,000 inhabitants, but just one decade later that figure had risen to almost 124,000, an increase of one quarter. By the latter date 30% of Nova Scotians were Presbyterians, making them by a fair margin the largest denomination in the province. Fully one third of these Presbyterians lived in the Pictou District where they comprised more than 91% of the local population. By 1838, just

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[2] A *Memorial from the Committee of Missions of the Presbyterian Church of Nova Scotia to the Glasgow Society for promoting the Religious interest of the Scottish Settlers in British North America; with Observations on the constitution of that Society and upon the proceedings and First Annual Report of the Committee of Directors*. Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1826, p.61.

eleven years later, Nova Scotia's population had passed 200,000, an increase of 61% in a single decade and an increase of 150% in the generation since the formation of the Synod. Most of this increase was, as in other British North American colonies, a result of emigration, and in the case of Nova Scotia the immigrants were predominantly Scots, who generally settled in ethnic blocks. Earlton, for instance, had 60 families, all from Sutherlandshire and all Gaelic-speaking.

The Synod's most ambitious undertakings came in 1819. That year missionaries were despatched to western Nova Scotia, to St. Mary's River and as far north as the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Equally important for the Synod's history, theology was added to the curriculum of Pictou Academy. In 1822 McCulloch reported that the King had declined the Synod's request for financial help to get a professorship of theology for the fledgling seminary.[3] Throughout the next score of years the finance, curriculum and status of that Academy became a major concern of the Synod. Much of the Synod's time, however, was still occupied with routine business. Over the years the Synod dealt with a couple of discipline cases, recommended the principle of temperance to all congregations, and complained in 1826 that dissenters in Nova Scotia "are deprived of several rights which are enjoyed by their fellow subjects who are in connection with the Church of England."[4]

In the beginning the Synod's primary concern was to provide

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[3] Minutes of the Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Nova Scotia, Maritime Conference Archives, United Church of Canada, vol.I, 1817-1842, (hereafter Minutes, PCNS), 1822.

[4] Minutes of Synod PCNS, 29 June 1826.

spiritual services for a population scattered over Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island, and often isolated into numerous small settlements by daunting natural barriers. In 1817 the means at hand, in terms of human and material resources, could not hope to meet such a challenge, at least until a native ministry could be developed. Although the larger and more established settlements already had churches and in most cases ministers, the difficulty of finding ministers and funds to serve the pioneer population in the more isolated and poorer districts was compounded by the related problems of language and mass immigration in the years immediately after the Napoleonic wars.

The Church of Scotland, with its General Assembly in the control of the Moderate party, had shown little if any interest in the religious vacuum that swallowed those of its children who migrated overseas. Pleas from the colonies for ministers, catechists and teachers most often went unanswered, to the deep disappointment of the patient faithful who still wanted the consolation of their forefathers' religion in a new land. Help for the Synod of Nova Scotia, however, suddenly seemed at hand in the mid-1820s. Early in April 1824 a private meeting of leading Evangelical clergy of the Synod of Glasgow and Ayr was held at the Synod House in Glasgow to consider what might be done to meet the religious needs of Presbyterian emigrants, particularly those in the North American colonies.[5]

After a year of investigation and planning, this unofficial

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[5] *Society for Promoting the Religious Interests of the Scottish Settlers in British North America*, 3-page foolscap pamphlet, Maritime Conference Archives, United Church of Canada.

group held its founding convention as "The Glasgow Society for promoting the Interests of Religion and of Liberal Education, among the Settlers in the North American Provinces," a name soon popularly (and fortunately) shortened to, the Glasgow Colonial Society. The Society's original intention was to find ministers who would accept calls to the colonies, and to assist them financially for as much as three years. Later the programme expanded to include catechists, teachers, and the provision of printed religious materials including libraries. Active auxiliaries were formed, often by ladies' groups, who raised funds for missionaries and collected materials for the emigrants.[6]

The Macedonian cry from Nova Scotia had already been heard in Scotland even before the Glasgow Colonial Society was created. The pleas from the colonies for ministers were in fact the motivation for the formation of the Society. In 1823 a resident of East River, Merigomish, wrote to Joseph Gordon, the prominent Edinburgh lawyer who, with others of his family, had assisted emigration from Sutherland to Nova Scotia. He informed Gordon that in his settlement there were eighty unilingual Gaelic-speaking families, but only four Church of Scotland ministers in all of Nova Scotia -- two in Halifax and two others that "preaches gaelic." There were, however, about twenty ministers "of the Burgher & Anti Burgher &

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[6] For an excellent account of the work in Cape Breton by the Glasgow Colonial Society and its auxiliaries see Laurie Stanley, *The Well-Watered Garden: The Presbyterian Church in Cape Breton, 1798-1860*. Sydney, NS: University College of Cape Breton Press, 1883, p.49 *ff*.

several other Sects . . . ."[7] The next year a letter from Guysborough to the Rev. John Martin of St. Andrew's Church, Halifax complained that for lack of ministers Presbyterians were "as lost sheep wandering without a shepherd" and drifting towards other denominations. If the faithful of Guysborough could not get a Kirk minister, they seemed ready to accept an Antiburgher who had already visited them.[8]

No sooner had the formation of the Society been announced in the Scottish newspapers (read avidly by expatriates in the colonies) than such pleading letters became a flood. Petitioners from Earlton declared, "A Minister of the Established Church is the only character for which we are desirous," [9] and those from Horton welcomed the purpose of the Society because they had long been without a minister of their own and depended on occasional visits from the aging pastor of Cornwallis.[10] When forwarding this letter to the Society, John Martin commented, "They are very particular in requesting a Minister from the Established Church of Scotland . . . . None but Ministers from the Established church can expect the countenance of his Majesty's Government or the favour of the local

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[7] Glasgow Colonial Society Papers, United Church Archives (hereafter GCS), vol. I. 2, William Mackenzie to Joseph Gordon, East River, Merigomish, Pictou County, N.S., June 1823. Spelling and punctuation in all quotations has been left unchanged from original form.

[8] GCS, I.7. Duncan McColl to John Martin, Guysborough, N.S., 12 October 1824.

[9] GCS, I. 9. John Sutherland *et al.*, to Robert Burns, Halifax, 22 August 1825.

[10] GCS, Correspondence Book I. 1. Samuel Avery *et al*, Horton, N.S., 27 June 1825.

authorities in these Provinces."[11]

Martin might have added that both Nova Scotia's governor, Lord Dalhousie, and lieutenant-governor, Sir James Kempt, were active members of Scotland's national church, and that Dalhousie was the patron and most generous benefactor of the Glasgow Colonial Society, but Martin had made his point that the Church of Scotland represented respectability and political influence. When writing to the Society's secretaries Kempt assured them that the Nova Scotian government was "well convinced of the benefits which would result to [Scottish immigrants] by receiving Religious Instructions from Pastors regularly educated, licensed and ordained under the Authority of the Church Establishment." Last year while they were both in London, Kempt added, he and Lord Dalhousie had impressed on the imperial government "the utility of granting an annual allowance to a few Missionaries from the Church of Scotland . . . ."[12]

Not all the petitioners who stressed their continuing affiliation to the established church were recent immigrants. From Dartmouth and neighbouring towns some Church of Scotland people said they had been in Nova Scotia for two generations and others of Dutch and German origin had been there as much as seventy years. "We still live in a moral wilderness, without instruction with[out] religious discipline, without Christian fellowship and consolation. We are not reminded of the return of the Lord's day by the stated

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[11] GCS, I. 29, John Martin, to Robert Burns, Halifax, N.S., 22 August 1825.

[12] GCS, I. 53. Sir James Kempt to A. Beith and R. Burns, Halifax, N.S., 19 June 1826.

ordinances of the Christian Sabbath, and our tender offspring are deprived of the friendly Ministrations of an affectionate and pious pastor."[13]

Like many other pastorless settlements, these particular petitioners were already building a church in hopes of attracting a minister. From Lochaber, settled about a generation earlier by 217 Gaelic-speaking Highlanders who were also building a church, a less literate writer complained that as emigrants they did not know they would have to "forsake that Church from whose bosom we have received the sincere milk of the word of truth . . . ." He also complained that the "Pictou Grammarian," McCulloch was apparently ignorant of Lochaber's very existence when he urged a "new Union to bring us under his Jurisdiction" and at the same time slandered "the venerable Church of our ancestors . . . ."[14]

An interested onlooker, the Rev. John Sprott, Relief minister of Musquodoboit and an acquaintance of many of the leading Glasgow Kirkmen, offered Robert Burns, corresponding secretary of the Society and a former classmate of Sprott's, some sage if gratuitous advice on the ministerial needs of Nova Scotia where he had been living for a decade. "Hard is the lot of the Emigrant . . . . The sabbath returns but where are its wonted joys. No temple or missionary of salvation, no songs of Zion usher in that blessed day. The wind roams among the trees but he hears not the voice of

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[13] GCS, Correspondence Book, I. 2. John Farquharson *et al.*, Dartmouth, Preston, Lawrencetown, Cole Harbour, and Porters Lake, n.d.

[14] GCS, I. 78. Donald McKenzie to Robert Burns, Lochaber, N.S., 16 December 1826.

devotion, his children are not Baptized except it be by a Mother's tears." The urgent need was for ministers "to go out in the spirit of the apostles," as missionaries in the primitive church. The Church of Scotland's shame was its indifference. Its sons in Scotland had grown rich on trade with North Americas but, Sprott asked, "Will they do nothing to enlighten her dark and destitute settlements?" "Orthodox Presbyterians are one people and they ought to be united. Let not the golden band of Brotherhood be broken by any indiscreet interference or unkind feeling." [15]

Unkind feelings had, however, already emerged by the time the Glasgow Colonial Society was just one year old. The founders of the Society may have suspected, or even expected, that their appointments of missionaries would be viewed by the Synod as an unwelcome intrusion into the Synod's "wilderness," because the Society's First Annual Report tried to justify or explain the Society's intention. "There need be no cause of discord and animosity" it said,[16] and quoted Genesis 13:8-9, "If thou wilt take to the left hand, then I will go to the right, or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left." This olive branch of peaceable words did not, however, prevent a protracted confrontation between the Synod and the Society.

Confrontation began in the spring of 1826, when Dr. Thomas McCulloch arrived in Britain. He was fund raising for Pictou

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[15] GCS, I. 90. John Sprott to Robert Burns, Musquodoboit, N.S., May, 1827.

[16] *First Annual Report of the Glasgow Society . . . for Promoting the Religious Interests of the Scottish Settlers in British North America*. Glasgow; The Society, 1826, p.

Academy but he also carried a sixty-page *Memorial*, dated August 1825, from the Synod's Committee on Missions to the Glasgow Colonial Society. This document declared that the Presbyterian Church of Nova Scotia appreciated the Society's good intentions, but unlike the Synod the Society did not understand the difficulties of pioneer people. Immigrant Scots were not numerous in Nova Scotia, and being mixed among earlier settlers they were already served by the Synod.[17] Any intrusion by Kirk ministers would therefore be both unnecessary and unwelcome.

McCulloch delivered this document to the Society at its first annual meeting, on 15 April 1826, and early in May he had a lengthy and inconclusive encounter with the directors of the Society. One week later the two parties met again and exchanged angry words. The Society reiterated its policy of intrusion but no interference. McCulloch replied that the Synod and the Academy's theological branch had resources adequate to fill the spiritual needs of all Presbyterians in British North America. After this the increasingly personal debate was continued between McCulloch and Robert Burns, the Society's principal secretary, in the form of letters to the *Edinburgh Star*.

Presbyterians in Nova Scotia were kept well informed of McCulloch's clash with the Glasgow Colonial Society through their local newspapers. George Gillmore, a leading layman of the Kirk in Horton, commented to the Reverend John Martin of Halifax that McCulloch was "a Gentleman of Abilities" who deserved "much Credit" for "promoting the Interest of the Academy at Pictou," but "when I

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[17] *Memorial*, pp. 5-8, 11, 18-19.

read that Doct. McCulloch has Quit his Academy at Pictou and gone Home to Scotland for the Purpose of preventing that most humane of Societies aiding or assisting the Poor people of these Colonies in obtaining either Ministers or teachers . . .I am lost in Wonder and amazement! Is this the way to Support the Cause of Jesus? . . .And must nothing be done for these peoples Souls but what the Good Doctor can do?" Gillmore ended his letter with a serious imputation against McCulloch's motives. "Perhaps the Doctor has an eye to the Lo[a]ves and fishes and as he may not see how he can obtain them himself he is of mind to exert his Influence that other may not."[18]

The Society's answer to McCulloch and to the Synod was a defensive *Supplement* to its first annual report, which repeatedly pointed out that no less than twenty-five letters had been received from the Maritime provinces, all asking for clergymen.[19] Analysis of these letters shows that most of them came from pockets of settlement established after the War of 1812 by Gaelic-speaking Highlanders, many of whom were refugees from the Sutherland clearances. Besides providing ministers for such groups, it was the strategy of the Society and of the Church of Scotland in Nova Scotia to draw Synod congregations, in whole or in part, into allegiance to the Kirk whenever an opportunity arose.

Publicly the controversy between the Kirk and the Synod centred on Pictou Academy which the Kirk viewed as the presumptuous

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[18] GCS, I. 65. George Gillmore to John Martin, Horton, N.S., 16 October 1826.

[19] *Supplement to the First Annual Report . . . containing a Reply to the Memorial of Dr. M'Culloch*. Glasgow: Andrew Young, 1826.

creation and continuing pawn of McCulloch's ambitions. A decade earlier, when theology was to be added to its curriculum, Lord Dalhousie had warned their Academy authorities that the Academy had been planned as "a School and nothing but a School." "A College in Halifax, the Capital of the Province, I do think an Institution highly desireable, but not in a distant corner of it at Pictou. . . . I must, therefore, . . . oppose the extension of your Institution at Pictou beyond what was originally proposed."[20]

The Kirk's attack on Pictou Academy had, however, a more ulterior motive. Dalhousie College, the creation of Lord Dalhousie, was expected to open soon, and the Church of Scotland was intent that it should be under Kirk' control and have no rivals. Early in 1828 the Glasgow Colonial Society was promoting one person as first professor for the college, and supporting Marcus Dods, soon to father the renowned New Testament scholar of the same name, as its president. "Failing Dods", Secretary Burns warned, "McCulloch must be the man, ..."[21] When Dods was not available, the Society recommended Duncan Mearns, professor of divinity in King's College, Aberdeen and a leader in the Moderate party. For a couple of years Mearns dallied with the proposition, but despite repeated rumours of his impending arrival in Nova Scotia, he never appeared.

The most vocal critic of the Academy was the Church of Scotland minister in Pictou, Kenneth John Mackenzie, a Highlander and a highly reputed preacher with a penchant for public

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[20] GCS, II. 104. The Earl of Dalhousie to Edward Mortimer, Halifax, N.S., 12 March 1819.

[21] GCS, I. 141. Robert Burns to David Welsh, Paisley, Scotland, 21 March 1828.

controversy who had arrived in Pictou about 1823. An article in the *Scotsman* in early 1828 criticizing the Glasgow Colonial Society had, in his opinion, originated in Pictou, "the head quarters of the Antiburghers in this Country." He warned the Society that two friends of the Academy were en route to Glasgow who would "fan the flame of discord, and unsparingly vilify the characters of the Kirk Ministers in the Province. The one is a lawyer, Mr. [Jotham] Blanchard the "Zealous Secretary" of the Pictou Academy. The other a Mr. McKay an Insolvent merchant of this place and also a Trustee of the same celebrated hot bed of discord."[22]

Mackenzie continued by quoting a letter from Blanchard to a member of the Kirk, "Your Church will never send preachers abroad who are fit to carry guts to a Bear . . . . Nor will any Established Church, it being the very nature of ecclesiastical establishments to recline in slothful indolence." At a public meeting in Glasgow, Blanchard had praised the unity of Nova Scotian Presbyterianism and blamed all the colony's religious and educational difficulties on Bishop John Inglis. Mackenzie was still convinced that government should support financially those clergy "who by their very connection with establishments are pledged and in principle bound to promote the spread and growth of loyalty and attachment to the Constitution."

Another letter to the Society, from the Kirk's minister at East River, supported Mackenzie's contentions. This writer blamed McCulloch's "selfish and exclusive views" for the Academy's failure

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[22] GCS, I. 173. Kenneth John Mackenzie to Robert Burns, Pictou, N.S., 27 June 1828.

to get government money. The Academy, he added, had few students and was not highly regarded by many Presbyterians. "As to the story of all Presbyterians in this Province being united in to one church, it is just about as true as that Dr. MacGregor & Dr. McCulloch merit all the praise that Anti Burghers lavish on them, ..."[23] In the opinion of James Morrison, the Society's missionary to Dartmouth, the conflict between the Church of Scotland and the Synod seemed to be widening. "Both parties look more fierce & determined & were it not more for civil than sacred law there would be bloodshed among them."[24]

Morrison's colleague at New Glasgow, Donald Allan Fraser, condemned the Synod clergy as "*malignant*, *unprincipled*, and *indefatigable*,"[25] and John Martin of Halifax, a zealot in the Kirk cause according to his own colleagues, was firmly convinced that his party was prospering despite "the most violent opposition and continued abuse from the Seceders in Pictou . . . ." "Our Ministers have proved themselves firm friends to the Government in a very trying crisis [the power struggle between the Assembly and the Council] and as they do not approve of all the revolutionary schemes of the Pictou Antiburghers they have come in for a share of

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[23] GCS, II. 9, Donald Fraser to Robert Burns, East River, Pictou County, N.S., 13 January 1829.

[24] GCS, III. 16. James Morrison to Robert Burns, Halifax, N.S., 4 March 1831.

[25] GCS, I. 169. Donald A. Fraser to Robert Burns, Pictou, N.S., 28 August 1828.

their calumny."[26] Martin believed the Kirk ministers in Nova Scotia should be united in one or more presbyteries, and was achieved in 1833. Meanwhile, however, his equally vocal associate, Kenneth John Mackenzie, announced that, because of the "heartless malignity of a press guided by McCulloch," he was about to publish his own journal, to be called the *Pictou Observer*,[27] "at a very considerable expense."

Suddenly this controversy, which had never been mentioned in the Synod's minutes, became equally absent from the correspondence of the Glasgow Colonial Society. A casual reference by the minister of New Glasgow to certain Presbyterians "who would rather see this country without a religion than that our Church should cultivate its' waste places" stands alone in several hundred letters written by the Society's appointees,[28] and the last word on the topic came in 1838 from Burns' long-time acquaintance, John Sprott, thirteen years the Relief minister of Musquodoboit, a settlement that John Martin uncharitably described as, "unprovided" with a minister "of the everlasting Gospel."[29]

After the arrival of the Society missionaries, Sprott said, "Jealousy distrust and other hateful plants speedily sprung up and

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[26] GCS, III. 17. John Martin to Robert Burns, Halifax, N.S., 4 March 1831. Besides his regular duties in Halifax, Martin conducted a widespread mission centred at Truro.

[27] GCS, III. 34. Kenneth John Mackenzie to David Welsh, Pictou, N.S., 6 May 1831.

[28] GCS, V. 204. Donald A. Fraser to Robert Burns, Pictou, N.S., 29 December 1835.

[29] GCS, VI. 210. John Martin to Robert Burns, Halifax, NS, 19 December 1836

poisoned the Colonial Vineyard. Our Ministers accused the Society of attempting to break up some of our Congregations . . . . War was proclaimed and fighting men threw away the scabbard. I never took any part in these bickerings. I considered them as injurious to all parties. I wrote in favour of an union of all orthodox Presbyterians: they would command more respect if they were united in one general efficient body." Sprott complained, however, that when he himself visited Scotland in 1829, the zealous John Martin had created a schism in Sprott's congregation. "I consider Mr Martin's interference as highly unbecoming. I would not invade his pulpit in his absence. It is easy to collect malcontents in any congregation."[30]

More than a decade had passed since the first Glasgow Colonial Society missionary had arrived in Dartmouth, and much had changed in that time. The province's population had expanded rapidly, but of the Society's twelve missionaries sent to Nova Scotia five had left by 1836. Of the remaining seven, four returned to Scotland in 1844 at the time of the Disruption, one more removed to New Brunswick a year later, and only two remained in Nova Scotia until their deaths. The Society's mission to bring ministers to the spiritual wilderness of Nova Scotia can hardly be counted a success, nor can the efforts of the Church of Scotland to establish respectability, loyalty and government patronage as the exclusive and superior mark of the Kirk among Presbyterians.

Persons and institutions had been attacked by extreme voices

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[30] GCS, VI. 221, John Sprott to Robert Burns, Musquoidoboit, N.S., February 1838.

from both the Kirk and the Synod in a display of divisive action. Perhaps in defence of the Glasgow Colonial Society it should be noted that the most active opponents of the Synod, John Martin and Kenneth John MacKenzie, were not missionaries of the Society. Equally noteworthy, in view of the Synod's claim that the Society's missionaries were invading established areas instead of "fertilizing the wilderness," in fact only one missionary was in Halifax, as a teacher, the rest being as widely dispersed as Yarmouth, Merigomish, Wallace, New Glasgow, St. Mary's River, and two on Cape Breton.

After the formation in 1833 of the Kirk's own synod, with three presbyteries, the Kirk did grow in strength and numbers until by the early 1840s it had twenty ministers. Its primary audience was almost exclusively the more recently arrived Gaelic-speaking children of the established national church of Scotland. Nevertheless, accommodation to the new circumstances had softened attitudes in the direction of the Nova Scotian Synod's expressed goal, "to fertilize the Wilderness." Denominationalism seemed increasingly less of a duty, and unity more of a necessity. Meeting in the summer of 1838, the Synod of Nova Scotia adopted a resolution favouring union with the Church of Scotland, "could it be effected on a proper basis," and a year later it appointed a committee to find out what steps the Church of Scotland had taken.

In 1841, two more years and presumably several committees later, the Synod of Nova Scotia did hear from the convener of the Kirk's union committee, Donald Allan Fraser, the same minister of New Glasgow who had called the Synod of Nova Scotia malignant and

unprincipled. Fraser announced that his Synod had passed a resolution authorizing union discussions, and had asked the General Assembly to pass legislation admitting all Nova Scotian Presbyterian ministers and congregations into full connection with the Kirk. The Synod of Nova Scotia rejected this union proposal as "a rash and inconsiderate measure" that appeared to "assume a superiority over this Synod which does not in fact exist."[31] Obviously it had just been reminded how slowly ecclesiastical imperialism dies.

The Disruption of the Church of Scotland just two years later hastened the Kirk's death in the Nova Scotia. Effectively, that Synod became the Free Church of the region, changing its name first in 1844 to "the Synod of Nova Scotia adhering to the Westminster Standards" and later to "the Free Church of Nova Scotia." The revival of a Church of Scotland Synod in 1854, covering Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island, created a third Presbyterian synod within the province, but one that had only ten ministers, the same number as the Kirk had forty years earlier, and of those ten six had just arrived from Scotland.

Because of the Kirk's loss of those ministers who returned to Scotland after the Disruption and its metamorphosis into a Free Church, another blow had been struck for the cause of the institutional indigenization of Nova Scotian Presbyterianism. When a union of the Free Church and the Synod of Nova Scotia was finally achieved at Pictou in 1860, slightly over half of the ministers were from the Synod of Nova Scotia and slightly less than half from

[31] Minutes of Synod PCNS, 15 July 1841.

the original Kirk body. As for the Glasgow Colonial Society, it had passed from the scene two decades before this union, the victim of politics inside the Church of Scotland.

In 1836, two years after the Evangelicals won control over the General Assembly, they created a standing Committee "for promoting the Religious Interests of Scottish Presbyterians in the Colonies." Since this was an institutional duplication of the voluntary Glasgow Society, that Society was barred from soliciting funds through the church. Laymen could not serve on the Committee, and Robert Burns was the only Society member appointed to the new committee. By 1840 the Glasgow Colonial Society was effectively dead from financial starvation.

Looking back at the first quarter-century in the life of the Synod of Nova Scotia, it is obvious that real progress was made in fertilizing the wilderness despite the problems encountered in the shortage of ministers, the challenge of supplying religious services in two languages, and the distractions caused by the Church of Scotland's missionary, educational and political ambitions. If the Synod underestimated the intense loyalty of recent immigrants, particularly the Gaelic-speaking Highlanders, to the Kirk as their mother church, the Kirk itself, like other transplanted establishments from the Old World, still thought in terms of fixed parish structures and generous aid from an appreciative government. That quintessential North American aspect of indigenization, the practice of voluntarism, was slow to find acceptance by the Kirk in the New World.

Ironically it had been the troublesome John Martin of Halifax

who bridged the Atlantic, by recommending a plan to reconcile parish structure and mission needs. Instead of matching ministers to congregations sight unseen, the Society should support missionaries who would travel widely before being called to a congregation already known to them and vice versa. When implemented, this scheme solved a variety of pastoral problems by taking the church to the people, not the people to the church. One final element promoting change was the passing of an older generation and the consequent transfer of power to younger men, less attached to older loyalties and less active in previous conflicts. The death of McCulloch in 1843, the very year of the Disruption, seems symbolic of the Synod's first quarter-century. The fate of Pictou Academy had by then been resolved, competition from the Glasgow Colonial Society had ended, and prospects of Presbyterian unity had replaced the Synod's rivalry with the ambitious Church of Scotland. Above all, however, the spiritual wilderness had been fertilized to an extent that would have seemed like an impossible dream in 1817.

CANADIAN SOCIETY OF PRESBYTERIAN HISTORY

Financial Statement, 1991-92

Bank Balance, 23 September, 1991	756.42
RECEIPTS	
Memberships, individual	410.00
Memberships, corporate	110.00
Bank interest	3.38
Donation	190.00
Total receipts	713.38
EXPENDITURES	
Printing 1991 _Papers_	204.90
Duplicating	26.68
Postage	127.13
Supplies	40.29
Bank charges (nil)	
Total expenditures	399.00
Actual bank balance October 2, 1992	982.88
Cash on hand	107.97
	$ 1090.85

* * * * * *

Membership

	'89-'90	'90-'91	'91-'92
Individual	41	35	41
Corporate	9	11	11
Total membership	50	46	52

Respectfully submitted,

Secretary-treasurer.