The Canadian Society of Presbyterian History

1995 Papers

& 20th Anniversary Index

The Canadian Society of Presbyterian History

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INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Isaac Buchanan: Autopsy of a Presbyterian Layman

by

T. Melville Bailey

Springing from a family which once owned a 1400-acre estate called Auchmar on the banks of Loch Lomond, Isaac Buchanan was born in Glasgow on 21 July 1810. His father was a successful Glasgow merchant and elder in the Kirk favouring the Evangelical wing. The studious young son attended local schools in preparation for a university education, but when age 15 he dramatically switched roles and became apprenticed to a dry goods firm. Five years later his employer sent him as a junior partner to open up an agency in Montreal, and the following year one in York. When Isaac and his older brother Peter received their inheritance money they bought the company in Upper Canada and operated a similar firm in Glasgow. Following four lonely years in York, Isaac's membership was finally deposited in St. Andrew's Church, where he later chaired the Trustee Board, became an elder, and helped to found the St. Andrew's Society and the city's first men's club. During the 1837, he donned the uniform of a lieutenant on the government's side.

In 1841, elected to parliament in Toronto for the first time, Buchanan sat as a fire-eating Reformer, but found the life of a private member uncongenial. So, after renting a warehouse in Hamilton, he returned to Scotland for a year, where he married 17-year old Agnes Jarvie. The newlyweds left for Toronto, from which he transferred his business and residence to Hamilton. There he prospered as a wholesale-retail merchant, offered £50 to each of a dozen new Free Church congregations who would use the name Knox, financially supported the opening of Knox College, and laid the corner stone of Hamilton's first Free Church building. But, agitated in 1846 by the abolition of the British Corn Laws which threatened his business, Isaac brashly uprooted his young family by moving them to the Mother Country where he personally crusaded against Free Trade at his own expense. So intense were his trade feelings regarding the reintroduction of protection that he even angrily severed his ties with the Free Kirk which was sympathetic to free trade. Finally, with money almost depleted, the next year Buchanan took his brother's advice and returned to his Hamilton business in 1850, with his wife and five children in tow.

The early 1850s in Canada West proved to be boom years economically. Heading one of Canada's largest businesses, which included as many as thirty branches across Canada, Isaac became a wealthy man thanks to the general prosperity. This allowed him to build the Gothic Auchmar House on Hamilton's mountain brow, a rival to

Dundurn Castle. Soon railways consumed his interest, followed by his improvement of Hamilton's school system, a donation of land for the building of MacNab Street Presbyterian Church, the writing of scores of pamphlets and newspaper articles, founding his adopted city's Board of Trade, proclaiming the need for Canada's reform of her tariff and currency laws, and his election to parliament where he enabled Hamilton to recover from bankruptcy. Such beneficence he continued, supporting Mechanics Institutes libraries, farmer's societies and a host of other organizations.

Neglecting his own business to do all this, in the ensuing slow economy of the later 1850s Isaac finally recognized the enormity of his debts and resigned from the Assembly to patch up his losses. In 1874 he was forced to close the New York and Glasgow firms, to sell his beloved Auchmar, and move to rented quarters. This demeaning life dragged on until 1 October 1883, when death claimed him in straitened financial circumstances.

From these bare bones we now move to an examination of Buchanan's religion. Starting with a fairly inflexible, conservative upbringing, in the mid-1840s he began in earnest to tailor an adult faith, in a manner to suit his every need. To begin, Isaac could claim an inherent faith, but in it he viewed the Church only as an institution, rather than a an opportunity to work out a faith. Certainly he venerated the Church, but he had not derived from it any personal fervour. Feeling that the churches were a necessary element in society, he held little belief in the strength of their convictions. During his early years at York in his mid-twenties, Isaac had ignored the Church entirely, much to the chagrin of his family in Glasgow. Even in 1835, when he attacked the Family Compact whom he called a "stinking snobocracy" on the question of an equitable portion of the Clergy Reserves Fund for the Church of Scotland in Upper Canada, this was seen more as a temporal battle than a spiritual concern. That experience, however, now prompted him to give more attention to synod and congregational matters. On a business visit to Glasgow in 1838, Isaac carried with him a petition from St. Andrew's, York, asking the General Assembly to champion the cause of the colony's rights as an established Church. Ordinarily, he felt he was serving the Church when collecting funds and organizing meetings.

Although ready to fight temporal battles, Isaac did not reveal any thoughts about the "state of his soul." Unsure of himself in religion, he began to formulate a set of rules to guide him in the practice of religion. This "list of duties" was designed not only to give order to his life but to purify his personal conduct and legitimize public action. Biblical passages to support his beliefs were appended. The basis of the young business man's code was that religion should reign supreme in all spheres of activity. When decisions were made in favour of personal benefits, the

paradoxical Buchanan comforted himself with the thought that not only were they wise ones, but that they reflected God's will as well.

Unfortunately, these rules consisted of a balance sheet that could be altered at any time. Secular motives usually won over religious demands. Religion was a dominant force as long as it did not challenge any of his major private interests. Thus Buchanan was able to ignore or rationalize any conflict between the two. This meant that theory and practice were always at war with one another, with the latter always the victor. His code acted as a system of situation ethics, whereby he perceived no conflict between his private and public worlds. Religious convictions could always be modified so as not to interfere with his business schemes. Consequently, all of Isaac's mores moved in constant flux, shifting to support whatever stand was most expedient. Contrary to what it might appear, his religion was not consciously put aside. Instead, his mind operated on two levels, and for him there existed no dichotomy between his faith and practice. Scruples did not appear to touch his conscience. Public accusations of "corruption" and " bribery" he dismissed.

Perhaps Buchanan's failure to finalize his decisions by biblical standards was helped by the current society in Upper Canada. It was an age when prominent people often lived by a split code of ethics. Religion and secular values became common bed-fellows. Too often religion was shaped by events, rather than events shaped by religion. Yet, in his juggling, Isaac must somehow have felt that religion had been served, for he constantly reminded himself that he was "perpetually in a higher presence than that of statesmen and kings."

A small refining of Buchanan's religion occurred in 1843 with his approaching marriage. Up to that point religion to him had never been much of a personal matter. Successful in business, Isaac felt little need for a closeness to God. Moreover, he had become involved in the struggles of the Evangelicals in Scotland, and in Toronto had steered the thinking of the Kirk's membership at St. Andrew's towards possible secession. That, coupled with his impending marriage, caused him to declare the "the hand of God had been . . . prominently displayed." Although Buchanan's religion may have turned a small corner for the better, this did not prevent further tinkering with his code, in order to bring about a desired outcome.

Isaac and Agnes enjoyed a particularly happy union in their castle-like Hamilton home, where some of the couple's eleven children were born. There, for five days in each week, the husband followed a rigid timetable, rising at 6 and retiring at 10. Two hours before breakfast were spent in bible reading, prayer and meditation. Business hours in Hamilton lasted from 9 to 6. After his evening meal, his time was devoted to the family when games, conversation and teaching of morals occupied the

hour. The day's remaining time was spent alone in study and reflection. Every minute had to be productive. In his code, frivolity was considered abhorrent and idleness sinful.

Buchanan's business house tumbled down upon his head in the mid-50s, shattering his faith as well. Since he felt himself to be one of God's elect, he now asked why God had kept back his prizes? Finally Isaac came to admit that his long-held equation between redemption and business success had been wrong. But such an admission brought a spiritual vacuum with it. Church affairs now became irrelevant. Only outward piety remained, disguising inner doubt and despair. God had undeservedly abandoned him!

All was not lost. A momentous turn in Isaac's life took place in 1865. The event must certainly be termed a true conversion. En route from New York City to Montreal by train, on a sabbath day lay-over at St. Albans on Lake Champlain, Buchanan heard a preacher deliver a sermon that gave him a positive faith. Now, he abandoned forever the old balance sheet religion. Now, only the unmerited love of God occupied his praise-filled heart. Once, he had equated his severe business losses with the wrath of God. Now, he wrote, "There can be no sufficient love to God but that which arises from the feeling *that He first loved us.*" Isaac's new-found faith changed forever all his old attempts at accommodating religion to suit business. At last, he could succeed or fail, without harming the state of his soul. Isaac's possession of "God's unspeakable gift" called forth praise from him in these words, ". . . If God in his justice should send me to Hell I would 'praise' him." Following the conversion, religion now became a working key to his life, something that had not been present before, when pride and search for wealth had warped his faith.

Today, more than a hundred years after Isaac's death, what assessment has the passage of time brought for cabinet minister, the honourable Isaac Buchanan? While his role on the Presbyterian stage of the day was significant, can Canada claim him as a noteworthy player?

That is a verdict I will leave with you to decide.

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"The Stool of Repentance":

The Disciplinary Role of Presbyterian Courts of Session in Victorian Canada

by

John S. Moir

Several years ago, when I was researching the history of St. Andrew's Church, Markham, I discovered in the minutes of one of its first Session meetings in 1840 that a young woman had been cited for giving birth out of wedlock. Some simple mathematics, however, disclosed to the elders that the child had been conceived before the congregation had been formed. The Session immediately decided that under these circumstances it had no disciplinary authority in the case, but it warned the young woman not to repeat the offence. My interest in the disciplinary role of Session and its social implications was now aroused, and I began searching Session minutes for other examples of a Session acting as a court of church discipline.

It soon became apparent to me that this research was the physical equivalent of hunting for the proverbial needle in a paper stack. The examples were so limited in number and the process so time-consuming that I could not justify continuing the research at that point. Soon after, however, I discovered in the Presbyterian Church Archives a copy of the M.A. thesis of the late Rev. John Robert Waldie, submitted to Queen's University in 1933 and entitled "The influence of the Kirk Session on the Administration of Justice and Regulation of the Social Life of the Community." Waldie was enamoured of history, especially Canadian and Presbyterian history, and in 1951, when he was convener of the General Assembly's Committee on History, that Committee recommended to the General Assembly the revival of the Presbyterian Historical Society, an early byproduct of the Committee that at one time operated its own historical library.[1]

Waldie's 150-page essay, a copy of which is in the Presbyterian Church Archives, begins with an account of the biblical and historical origins of the Session system and its powers, and then proceeds to examine the work of Session courts in Scotland, in New England, and, in

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[1]. *Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada*, 1951, Appendix p.85.

greater depth, Upper Canadian and Ontario Sessions between 1825 and World War I. With the permission of the author's daughter, Mrs. Kathy Gibson of the Caven Library, I began editing the typescript, hoping in an abridged form to publish and publicize Waldie's findings on Upper Canada. This process, however, uncovered a methodological puzzle that I have failed to solve.

Waldie's research sources for his Upper Canada section were Session records, mostly then still held by the congregations although four sets were in the Ontario Legislative Library and one in the Queen's University Archives. In what I assume was respect for the privacy of Session records, the author cited his authorities simply in an alphabetical sequence from A to Z, giving dates and page references but never any hint as to the congregational source. Comparing a list of these alphabetized footnotes to the list of sources in the Bibliography revealed a further dimension of the problem — thirty sets of Session records are listed in the Bibliography, but only twenty-six in the footnotes.

A lengthy attempt to match the footnotes to the Bibliography entries using the dates of each proved to be futile. Obviously the list in the Bibliography does not follow the alphabetized sequence which has four fewer entries. The only solution will require a comparison of each footnote to the pages of the actual minutes, if these are available. By simply accepting the author's research at face value, however, one can still learn much from his analysis of the functions and powers of Session in the Victorian age of Ontario.

Waldie's study begins by discussing the three most important purposes of church discipline — to vindicate God's glory, to keep the Church pure, and to reclaim the sinner. The first, by emphasizing the divine office of omnipotent judgement, requires the Church as God's earthly representative to enforce His commandments upon every living soul, in order to establish God's glory among men and defend it against attack and denial. Next, the protection of the Church's purity had an obvious internal purpose, but externally the Church's aim to do good would also be apparent to critical observers. To this end Session's careful purging of the roll and its judicatory citation of accused sinners was ordained. Discipline, whatever its form, should however be followed by reconciliation and since, in the Reformed tradition, only God can forgive, Church censures are not punishments but a means of grace to be used to recover the erring souls from sin and error.

In both the Waldensian and Bohemian pre-Reformation churches Session-like courts, based on biblical precedents, had been instituted, and Calvin in turn emphasized the ruling eldership, later suggesting that it was divinely ordained. Session courts appeared among French Protestant by 1559 and in Scotland about a year later. Because of the importance and power of a Session in relation both to the congregation

and the community, the Scottish *First Book of Discipline* of 1560 defined both the qualifications desired in ruling elders and the methods of their election. At the time, however, a system of appeal courts was created as a check against tyrannical actions by Sessions.

Because the Session governs the life of the congregation, its powers refer particularly to the sphere of discipline. To preserve purity and respect within the Church, Session was given the authority to cite scandalous members to appear before them. If three summonses from Session are ignored, the obstinate party may be declared contumacious, but if the person confessed guilt or if the charges are proven, the Session has power to impose censures of several degrees. Least severe is the "admonition," a warning or exhortation often given in private. The more severe "rebuke" (also known as "lesser excommunication,") may involve a suspension from church privileges, but it is the limit of Session's power because full or "greater" excommunication imposed for contumacy or for incest, adultery, triple fornication, flagrant heresy or schism, can only be pronounced by a Presbytery.

Waldie closes his analysis of the powers and practices of Session with a brief discussion of privilege or immunity from charges of libel or slander arising from any case heard by Session, whether initiated by any elder or by a private communicant. He found only two cases involving privilege, both of them in Britain. In the first, involving private letters of admonition from a minister to an alcoholic elder, the judge declared the correspondence to be privileged. In the second, in 1873, the judge again defended the right of privilege.Priilege, he asserted, existed when a charge was made in *bona fide* "in the regular and becoming manner" prescribed by the law and custom of the Church, because the plaintiff is "exercising a right, and, it may be, fulfilling a duty. . . His privilege protects him unless malice is proven."[2] Here the issue of privilege must rest, one suspects for lack of examples or interest in a society where the disciplinary powers of Session seem to have fallen into desuetude.

In beginning his study of the judicial functioning of Sessions in Victorian Canada, Waldie notes that Session records before the 1830s are rare because most congregations developed in response to the flood of immigration that reached Upper Canada about a decade after the end of the Napoleonic wars. From an estimated 95,000 inhabitants in 1814, the colony's population grew by almost 60 per cent in the ten years, and by further 60 per cent in the next seven years, and by 90 per cent more

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[2]. John R. Waldie, "The Influence of the Kirk Session on the Administration of Justice and Regulation of the Social Life of the Community," M.A. thesis, Queen's University, 1933. Unless otherwise indicated, all succeeding notes refer to pages in this thesis.

between 1831 and 1841, or multiplied four and a half times in a little over a quarter century.

Virtually unexplored as yet is the impact of the War of 1812 on religion and religious institutions in Upper Canada, although the parallel between the growth of a provincial political identity and political philosophy and the Canadianization of denominations has been touched on by historians of some of those pioneer churches. Waldie, however, begins his study of Upper Canadian Sessions by citing two examples from Session records concerning the effects of that War. One man denied his Session's authority, stating "I do not belong to this church — for ministers ran off and as soon as they ran off the church and Presbytery were dissolved." A second, charged with dishonesty, claimed that "he would never support another American minister . . . . You are rebels."[3]

Waldie also observes that in contrast to the harshness of a Scottish Session, in Upper Canada a moderator or committee of elders was often able to settle disciplinary issues before the case actually reached a meeting of Session. The hearing of cases in Session followed no certain pattern, however — a man accused of public drunkenness in the winter was not dealt with until the following summer, but defendants who felt they were being unfairly accused usually demanded prompt investigation of the charges.[4]

The Session rule of secrecy was almost universally honoured — Waldie records the only exception that he found — an incident when an elder disseminated gossip about a feud between two members who had already been reconciled.[5]

Waldie suggests that the evidence he had seen indicated that Sessions jealously and successfully guarded their own good name against any attack.[6] This is a conclusion that my limited research supports, but I would add that in every case where an elder was accused by a non-elder, his Session found him not guilty. Similarly, when the conduct of a Moderator was impugned, even though all jurisdiction in such affairs belonged to the Presbytery the Session almost invariably rallied to the defence of the minister. In such cases as I have discovered, the action of Session to protect its Moderator was apparently fully justified — a good example being the Brantford minister accused of

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[3]. 99.

[4]. 105.

[5]. 106.

[6]. 107.

sexual misconduct with his maid. Session minutes recorded only regrets that such an accusation or *fama* had been laid, but surrogate evidence shows that his accuser was his own wife who had tired of his company and was determined to leave him whatever the outcome, which she promptly did.[7]

The variety of cases brought before Sessions is almost infinite, and includes domestic disputes and family disagreements, and even property surveys. The fact that legal counsel was permitted to appear with a plaintiff or defendant implies a popular belief that justice was indeed meted out by the actions of Sessions. Purging the roll of "scandalous persons" was a regular function of Session before each communion, but as a court enforcing church discipline a Session also entertained cases concerning church attendance, neglect of ordinances, sabbath breaking, intemperance, dishonesty, profanity, forgery and an imaginative variety of sexual sins. This however, was obviously not the full complement of cases heard, because several categories are best described as social controls.

In the area of socio-religious problems (the adjective is hyphenated to indicate uncertainty of categorization), many could be lumped together under the Victorian title, "vain amusements." These were defined by one Session to include "gambling or gaming for money, card playing, attending theatres, public balls, horse racing, circus, bowling alleys and such like." These activities, which had "the bad effect of straining the purity of the Christian character — etc. —" must cease forthwith or that Session would not fail to exercise the authority or discipline with which Christ had invested it.[8] The catalogue of lesser or less common offenses in this category includes profanity, gossiping, dishonesty, nonpayment of debts, and one case that I encountered, a request that Session adjudicate certain property boundaries claimed by an elder against a member.

Neglect of ordinances and church attendance were numerically the most common complaints among the major disciplinary concerns of a Session. One penitent admitted missing Sunday service because he was busy drowning a dog.[9] One Session passed a rule to deal with non-attendance — after repeated absences of any pew-holder, a part of their

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[7]. John S. Moir, *The Labour Not in Vain: A History of Alexandra Presbyterian Church, Brantford, Ontario 1845-1995*, (Brantford, ON: Alexandra Presbyterian Church, 1994) p. 36. I am indebted to Professor Marguerite Van Die of Queen's Theological College, Queen's University, who discovered in other sources an explanation for the vaguely-worded minutes of the Session.

[8]. 113.

[9]. 115.

seat would be rented to others. In one case, when the original owner could not be appeased, his name was erased from the roll. Sessions also guarded the Sabbath by complaining to civil and ecclesiastical authorities about Sunday labour in public services, and one Moderator was ordered to report to Presbytery that the Sabbath was being desecrated during the construction of the Great Western Railway.[10]

Intemperance was another common issue brought before the Session courts.[11] In an economy based primarily on the production of grain, the distillation of alcohol allowed for reduction of volume along with the enhancement of the price of the byproduct. When whisky, retailing for 25 cents a gallon, was commonly accepted as a preventative and a cure-all for a wide variety of physical ailments as well as a temporary escape from the chill of a Canadian winter, it is little wonder that alcoholism was endemic in society. The gospel and the machinery of temperance which appeared almost simultaneously in every colony about 1830, had limited success, and in desperation the last generation of Victorians moved on to the gospel of prohibition. For many of the preceding generations and for their Sessions, intemperance was the curse of colonial society, and the liquor traffic was its cause.

The charges were variously phrased — being guilty of the "awful sin of intemperance," "repeated intemperance," "drunk and disorderly," or more poetically, "mashed with liquor."[12] Although the Sessions seemed relentless in pursuit of excessive drinkers, they could be surprisingly tolerant, particularly if the offender confessed repentance in a convincing way. Admonition was the normal penalty in such cases, but if the offence were repeated frequently, suspension was imposed. One such offender admitted that the punishment was just, but he would "still continue to attend the public ordinances of religion."[13]

Alibis for drunkenness were seldom offered, but the commonest one recorded was that the liquor had been taken as medicine.[14] One man explained that he drank too much brandy after he took ill during a journey, whereupon his sympathetic Session restored him to good standing in the congregation. Elsewhere two elders visited two ladies accused of intemperance. One lady claimed she only used liquor medicinally, but the other offered no excuse and instead thanked the

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[10]. 115.

[11]. 120.

[12]. 120.

[13]. 120.

[14]. 121.

elders for their interest and diligence, and promised to reform.[15] Diligence was indeed a watchword for Session in the matter of intemperance, and when one man tried to escape the censure of his elders by joining a different Presbyterian congregation, the Moderator was instructed to write to the Session of the other congregation regarding his case.

The broader social implications of drunkenness did not entirely escape attention when the event caused a scandal in the community. The elders might individually be willing to overlook a first offence, but external pressures might explain a disciplinary action that was taken with apparent reluctance on the part of the Session. One member who had been under the influence of liquor at the Hamilton Exhibition in 1868 expressed his penitence to a committee of two elders, but when he did not come forward to get a communion token the Session directed the Moderator to "encourage him and offer him one."[16]

Although the early Presbyterian churches urged temperance at least, and teetotalism as the most desirable if difficult ideal, by the mid-Victorian period public opinion increasingly condemned the liquor trade as the root of a widespread and multifaceted evil. About 1832 the Session of a newly formed congregation resolved that total abstinence should be a "requisite for membership in this Church."[17] In another congregation when the Temperance Bill was read aloud in 1864 after worship service, there was a show of almost total approval of the bill. The agents of the liquor evil were the numerous local taverns and their keepers who were judged to be as culpable as their patrons. As early as 1834 one Session urged members individually to undertake community action to reduce the number of outlets in their town.[18]

Sessions seem to have taken a particularly vigilant interest in persons who kept hotels. One tavern keeper was refused membership in the local Presbyterian church, another was cited for non-attendance. A husband and wife were suspended for "receiving visitors and selling liquor on the Sabbath" — there is no gradation of the seriousness of the two charges in that case.[19] A malt-maker was refused the sealing

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[15]. 121.

[16]. 120.

[17]. 121.

[18]. 122. For instance, the village of Markham on the plank road for farmers taking grain to Toronto, had eleven taverns on its Main Street, typical in a rural society that complained that there was a tavern on every concession.

[19]. 36.

ordinances because he had to work on the sabbath.[20] When he pointed out that a Free Church minister had baptized five of his children without finding fault with his profession, the elders resolved to have nothing further to do with the malt-maker until he saw the wisdom of their criticism.[21]

There is little evidence through most of the Victorian age that elders linked the prevalent and widespread alcoholism with domestic difficulties. Waldie cites a few cases of bad feeling between family members, but concludes that instances of interference in domestic matters were few, and seldom successful.

Unlike Scottish Sessions, Canadian ones seem to have generally avoided involvement in domestic disputes on the assumption that patriarchal rule was not only biblical, but the best and most efficient ordering of a family. Only when family unity was threatened would a Session attempt to find or impose some disciplinary solution.[22]

Waldie comments that offenses against the Seventh Commandment apparently seldom occurred in some congregations, but frequently did in certain others. My own research brought me to a more general conclusion that supports Waldie's remark and broadens its base. I found that in most congregations the Session did not entertain many disciplinary cases, which may have reflected a very stable congregational and social situation. In a minority of congregations, charges before the court of Session occurred with some frequency, and often involved the same persons. My own conclusion is that certain Presbyterian congregations were litigious by nature and, perhaps for reasons not evident, even prone to quarrelsome or sinful behaviour that constituted a sort of collective recidivism.

Regarding the breaking of the Seventh Commandment, Waldie notes that the Scottish Presbyterian custom of demanding a declaration of sinlessness in this matter was required before marriage, but that this was never the practice in Upper Canada. The result here was what Waldie calls "a rather distasteful portion of the Records" devoted to "antenuptial fornication."[23] The sin usually became known when one or both partners applied for admission to membership, or when baptism was requested for their children. Postnuptial fornication was not mentioned as often as prenuptial, but both issues were dealt with by

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[20]. 122.

[21]. 122.

[22]. 117.

[23]. 118.

Session in a very understanding and forgiving way if the guilty party confessed with repentance. Such full and candid confessions were readily made with surprising frequency in connection with requests for admission or re-admission to membership.[24]

Historian have often noted that in a open frontier situation such as Upper Canada's, competition between denominations approached a kind of ecclesiastical free trade in which an active buyer's market seemed to encourage individuals to take a cafeteria approach to their personal religious practice. It was easy to change allegiances to another denomination, or even to a different branch of Presbyterianism if perfect satisfaction was not provided by one's home congregation. While desertions to Methodism were probably the most common numerically, mere temporary proximity to Roman Catholicism brought a certain precentor into trouble with his Session in 1848. The errant man had purchased tickets for himself and his son and daughter to attend the consecration of a "popish" cathedral — St. Michael's in Toronto — where he sat in a conspicuous position near the organ. The precentor admitted the charge to his Session, but claimed he had attended the function to get a better insight into the abuses of popery. The elders were not impressed or convinced by this motive, so this errant ecumenist was ordered "to abstain from the public exercise of this office till after the solemn season of Communion."[25]

From John Waldie's study of judicial functions of the Presbyterian Session in Upper Canada it is clear that there never was any contact or collusion between the Session or Presbyteries and the judicial and legislative bodies of the colony. No civil court ever turned a case over to the ecclesiastical powers, and no case was ever taken from a Court of Session to a civil Court. Sessions did, however, often consider evidence that had previously been placed before a civil court. Normally a person awaiting trial before a civil court was suspended by the Church pending the decision of the civil court — the Session minutes simply report, "suspend proceedings till it be adjudicated on by the Civil Courts." Further, there is no instance where a Session later brought in a verdict that differed from or contradicted the verdict of the civil court.[26] It is worth noting, as Waldie does, that cases heard before a Session were explicitly

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[24]. 117-119.

[25]. 117.

[26]. 137.

understood and stated to be "privileged," that is protected from any civil action that could possibly arise from the case before Session.[27]

Waldie concludes from his investigation that in exercising its judicial authority, "The Kirk Session became in the Presbyterian communities the mightiest instrument for law and order." "The day came," he continues, "when public sentiment favoured the transference of judicial matters to secular courts; when the law of individualism began to be the predominating influence. When that stage was reached our Canadian Session willingly relinquished most of its former activities."[28] After delineating the social values that Sessions historically upheld and propagated in Canada, and which Waldie believed had made Canada the law-abiding sensible country that he knew, he affirms, "In this way it would appear that the type of mind cultivated and nurtured by consistorial rule in Upper Canada has been one of the chief stabilizing forces both in progress and prosperity, socially and judicially."[29] Three generations later, that heritage seems to have become almost a piece of nostalgia.

John Waldie's purpose was to examine the rise and particularly the exercise of the judicial functions of the Court of Session; he did not attempt to assay in detail the causes of the gradual disappearance of those power. From my own admittedly incomplete, even superficial research, I should like to add my brief impressions of the decline and fall of those judicial powers, with the hope that some younger researcher will find the incentive and time to pursue a broader and deeper study of the topic. To begin with, three developments in Canada during the second half of the Victorian age seem to provide the forces that slowly but inexorably caused "the stool of repentance" to be relegated to the Canadian attic. They were, in alphabetically order, industrialization, secularization, and urbanization.

My impression is that the change first became evident in the city congregations about the time of Confederation. Increasingly, persons cited to appear before the Session on whatever charge refused or simply ignored repeated summonses — in a few instances a new denominational connection is noted but most would appear to have joined the swelling ranks of the "unchurched." The same dilution or rejection of Session's authority spread into the rural congregations, but this occurred at least one generation or even two, after the phenomenon

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[27]. 138.

[28]. 139.

[29]. 140-142.

is obvious in city Sessions. No doubt there were other causes at work promoting this erosion, such as immigration, religious pluralism, increasing social instability, presumed quantitative expansion of the availability and use of alcohol, and the introduction of shift work into areas of the industrial process. Other causes will undoubtedly come to mind, and each will need to be examined after a more extensive analysis of Session records than either John Waldie or myself ever managed.

"Eternal Vigilance":

The Rise of a Legislative Agenda and the Decline in Congregational Activity in Canadian Presbyterianism, 1875-1925

by

Carey Nieuwhof

For the Presbyterian Church in Canada (PCC), the half century between 1875 and 1925 saw remarkable changes in its organizational approach to dealing with social and moral issues like temperance and Sabbath observance. The rise of the social gospel in the 1890s was partly responsible for this metamorphosis, but not entirely.[1] During those fifty years, the national church assumed responsibility for many of the things which used to concern local congregations. In the area of Sabbath observance, for example, Presbyterians had once been encouraged by ministers and by the national church to be vigilant in keeping the Sabbath and to ensure others did the same. Sessions and committees at the presbytery level actively discussed the issue. They even encouraged church members to tell local officials at canals and railroad stations to shut down their operations on the seventh day. But this type of activity in the areas of temperance and Sabbath observance, common in the 1890s and earlier, was almost entirely absent by 1905. What appears to have been a fairly spirited local campaign was thwarted by a shift in the national committee's focus, which, by 1910, dwelt on the need for legislation and the activities of the Lord's Day Alliance (which by 1920

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[1]. This paper is not about the social gospel, but cannot help but encounter it directly and incidentally many times. For accounts dealing specifically with the sources of and rise of the social gospel in Canada, see Richard Allen, "The Social Gospel and the Reform Tradition in Canada, 1890-1928," *Canadian Historical Review* 49 Vol. 4 (1968): 381-399; Richard Allen, *The Social Passion: Religion and Social Reform in Canada 1914-28* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), 14ff.; Ramsay Cook, *The Regenerators: Social Criticism in Late Victorian English Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985); Brian J. Fraser, *The Social Uplifters: Presbyterian Progressives and the Social Gospel in Canada, 1875-1915* (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier Press, 1988); John Webster Grant, *The Church in the Canadian Era* (Updated and Expanded) (Burlington, Ontario: Welch Publishing, 1988), 91-113; David B. Marshall, *Secularizing the Faith: Canadian Protestant Clergy and the Crisis of Belief, 1850-1940* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992.), chs. 5-7; John S. Moir, *Enduring Witness: A History of the Presbyterian Church in Canada* (2nd. Ed.) (Eagle Press Printers, 1987), 170-196.

was no longer the broadly based movement it once was). Temperance too, underwent a similar change. A torrent of nineteenth century temperance activity on the congregational level vaporized by 1910 along with the contribution of women in these efforts.

In both the temperance and Sabbath movements, what began as a call to piety in the 1870s and 1880s became a call for legislation by 1910. Part of this was a reflection of the early twentieth century trend toward the rationalisation of resources according to "scientific" business management principles. Part of it was due to a deeper commitment on the part of the Presbyterian progressives[2] who headed this movement to "Christianize" the nation in their generation. Arguably, national goals required national action. Regardless of the motives, though, there is considerable evidence to show that the rise of national activity aimed largely at legislative remedies corresponded to a proportional decrease in local activity. Even in St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church King Street, a social gospel church twenty years before the social gospel arose nationally, the local, voluntary work of poor relief by the congregation lay in ruins by 1920. These different matters of temperance, sabbatarianism and social work, while apparently unrelated, point toward a single trend of bureaucratization within the PCC and a resultant loss of local interest in these matters by congregations.[3]

THE STRUGGLE OVER THE SABBATH

To suggest that there was an age in which the church operated in an Eden-like setting and every person was pious and devout is to ignore the realities of history. 1875, to be sure, was no golden age. Despite the euphoria which some experienced over church union that year, not all Presbyterians kept the Sabbath. Neither did all Canadians. The state had already seen the need to revert to Sabbath legislation in 1845, passing a

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[2]. This is Brian Fraser's term which he applies to leading figures in Presbyterianism who leaned toward the social gospel. See Fraser, *The Social Uplifters*.

[3]. The strength of these conclusions would have been bolstered by a more detailed look at the congregational records of different churches. Given the length and time frame for this paper, such a study was not possible. Most of my conclusions are drawn from reading fifty years of reports in the *Acts and Proceedings of the Presbyterian Church in Canada* (1875-1925). The reports of various committees give a fairly accurate reading of the state of local congregations though, particularly in the 19th and early 20th century, when these committees took seriously their duty to gather information from congregations. By 1910, however, the committees themselves were far more concerned with what they were doing nationally than what people were doing locally. While local involvement was referred to infrequently, when it was dealt with it was treated vaguely or sometimes with a terse rebuke of local apathy. Arguably, that speaks volumes.

law which forbade swearing, hunting and political meetings on Sundays.[4] Indeed, one of the first resolutions of the newly formed Presbyterian Church in Canada was to lobby the government to "abolish unnecessary Sabbath Labour" on public works and in railway traffic.[5] Despite the immediate call of the new denomination for governmental action, subsequent annual reports were characterised less by calls for legislation than they were by calls for church members to keep the day holy and to ensure others did the same. The 1877 Report of the Committee on Sabbath Observance told Presbyterians that

> Railways can be made to stand still ... [although] a news-loving and money-making people can scarcely be restrained from indulging in the pleasure that comes through the post office, even though the Great Jehovah be dishonoured thereby. All this loudly calls for increased activity on the part of the Church of Christ. Here, as elsewhere, 'eternal vigilance is the price of liberty.'[6]

At this stage, the call for members to guard the Sabbath did not fall on deaf ears. Reports of 1879 and 1881 detail how individuals, acting alone or in concert with other congregants, shut down Sunday running of street cars,[7] opera houses, theatres and the Welland Canal.[8] As the 1881 Report put it:

> Never was there a time when the hostile spirit of worldliness displayed a stronger determination than at present, to level in the dust the sacredness and claims of the Sabbath and never was there a time when the friends of the Sabbath were more active or energetic in its defence.[9]

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[4]. Marshall, *Secularizing the Faith*, 132.

[5]. *Acts and Proceedings of the Presbyterian Church in Canada 1875*, Minutes 82; and "Report of the Committee on Sabbath Observance," 229.

[6]. *Acts and Proceedings, 1877*, "Report of the Committee on Sabbath Observance," cxxxiv.

[7]. *Acts and Proceedings, 1879*, "Report of the Committee on Sabbath Observance," cxliv.

[8]. *Acts and Proceedings, 1881*, "Report of the Assembly's Committee on Sabbath Observance," cxxxviii. Note that this local activity precedes the formation of the Lord's Day Alliance by approximately fifteen years.

[9]. *Ibid.*

Much of the vigilance likely came from the women of the congregations.[10] Although no specific study has been done on the role of Presbyterian women in the Sabbath movement, Marianna Valverde has shown in her study that women were the force behind almost all Victorian social purity voluntary associations.[11] Phyllis Airhart has argued that in Canadian Methodism, women were the force behind the moral-suasion aspect of the Methodist voluntary campaign on temperance.[12] Ruth Compton Brouwer's study has demonstrated how Canadian Presbyterian women made a crucial impact on the missions of the PCC.[13] It is a reasonable working hypothesis, then, to assume that much or most of the congregational level work in the form of voluntary action was performed by women.

There was also ample local action, though, by men at the session and presbytery level. Some sessions and presbyteries informed the Committee of additional problems which their people felt they had to combat. In 1882, it was reported that church members planned to target the Credit Valley Railway, which ran Sunday express trains.[14] Even in 1890, the report detailed over a page of efforts by local congregations to curtail Sabbath desecration, including the formation of local voluntary associations. All presbyteries reported numerous Sabbath violations, ranging from "pleasure walking" to "secret tippling in bar rooms," Sunday funerals, "undue indulgence in sleep on the Sabbath morning" to the more routine reports of the running of street cars and railroads.[15] The

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[10]. There is an historiographical problem here in that the *Acts and Proceedings* do not detail whether it was men or women who did most of the congregational work. Indeed, the reports of the various committees almost invariably came up through sessions and presbyteries, all of which were comprised of men. Further, no study on Presbyterian women in the Sabbath or temperance movements has, to my knowledge, been completed.

[11]. See Marianna Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885-1925* (Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1991).

[12]. Phyllis Airhart, "'Sweeter Manners, Purer Laws': Temperance Societies and the Renovation of Public and Private Morals in Late Victorian Canada" (Unpublished draft), 3-13.

[13]. Ruth Compton Brouwer, "Canadian Women and the Foreign Missionary Movement: A Case Study of Presbyterian Women at Home and in India 1876-1914" Ph.D. Thesis, Toronto: York University, 1987, esp. chs. 1-2.

[14]. *Acts and Proceedings, 1882*, "Report of the General Assembly's Committee on Sabbath Observance," cxlvii.

[15]. *Acts and Proceedings, 1890*, "Report on Sabbath Observance," Appendix 33.

Committee also reported that smaller committees of presbytery had been set up to determine Sabbath breaches and recommend ways to address them.[16]

Requests from sessions and presbyteries arose as to the propriety of church discipline for offenders. In 1882, the Committee advised that with respect to Sunday labourers

> the Church should deal tenderly and faithfully with such persons. Impress on them the duty of resigning situations in which they are required to break the law of God, aid them in finding new situations, and give them, if need be, pecuniary help in the meantime.[17]

If, however, the Sunday worker became obstinate about working on Sundays, "then in no case should the Church compromise her position or break her testimony by retaining such persons in her fellowship, and much the less still the more greedy capitalists."[18] It further clarified its position in 1886 when the Toronto Presbytery asked for the church to "issue a deliverance" to guide sessions in dealing with church membership candidates who worked all or part of Sundays. The committee responded that only work of "mercy" or "necessity" would constitute an exception to the rule.[19]

The role of legislation was not ignored prior to the mid 1890s. It was often raised, but usually within the context of the need for such laws, in the words of the Committee, to be "backed up and enforced by strong public opinion."[20] Another key strategy advocated by the committee was education. Pulpits, Sunday schools and homes were to

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[16]. *Acts and Proceedings, 1889*, "Report on Sabbath Observance" Appendix 14. The Committee's concern for local action was acute in this period. In 1886 it urged employers to refrain from paying employees late on Saturday, the result of which was to leave the buying of groceries for late Saturday evening, causing store workers to miss church or make them "unsuited" for worship on Sunday mornings. The better course, it argued, would be to pay employees earlier in the day or week so shopping could be complete by Saturday afternoon. *Acts and Proceedings 1886*, "Report on Sabbath Observance," clix.

[17]. *Acts and Proceedings, 1882*, "Report of the General Assembly's Committee on Sabbath Observance," cxlvii.

[18]. *Ibid.*

[19]. *Acts and Proceedings, 1886*, Minutes, 52-53.

[20]. *Acts and Proceedings, 1886*, "Report on Sabbath Observance," clix.

be centres of instruction on how to keep the Sabbath holy.[21] The most constant advice, though, was to maintain the public display of personal piety coupled with attempts to morally sway offenders into ceasing their violations. If it led to the formation of local voluntary associations, which it often did, so much the better. If the Committee's reports are accurate, this latter policy was widely practised.

A change in strategy and in tone began to appear by the late 1880s and became marked by the late 1890s. At this point, the lines between secular justification for a day's rest and religious justification began to blur, and the committee increasingly turned to legislation and the emergent Lord's Day Alliance ("L.D.A.") to guide Sabbath action.[22] Already in 1888, the Committee, which had until this point discussed only the spiritual and scriptural reasons for Sabbath observance, argued that one day's rest in seven was "identified with man's physical, social, moral and relational health." Not only was the law written in the decalogue, but "in the very constitution and in the order of things."[23] This shift was also seen in new found interest in sharing Sabbath efforts with trade unions. As early as 1893, the Committee said the church was "in full sympathy" with labour on Sunday closings.[24] In 1895, the committee hinted that it was beginning to lose the battle. It was noted that lacrosse and football games were causing people to travel on Saturday, making them unfit "for the right observance of the Lord's Day." Sunday bicycling was pointed out as on the increase but still evil.[25] 1895 was the last year that a distinct committee on Sabbath observance reported to Assembly. In

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[21]. See, for example, *Acts and Proceedings, 1889*, "Report on Sabbath Observance," Appendix 14, where the Assembly recommended that "the claims and obligations of the Sabbath [be] brought pointedly and prominently before the congregations within their bounds." Also see *Acts and Proceedings, 1890*, "Report on Sabbath Observance," Appendix 35 for a series of recommendations by presbyteries and synods containing their thoughts on what are the most effective strategies. Education is chief among them.

[22]. For general information on the Lord's Day Alliance, see Paul Laverdure, "Canada's Sunday: The Presbyterian Contribution, 1875-1950" chap. in *The Burning Bush and a Few Acres of Snow: The Presbyterian Contribution of Canadian Life and Culture* ed. William Klempa, 83-100. Ottawa: Carlton University Press, 1994.

[23]. *Acts and Proceedings, 1888*, "Report of the Committee on Sabbath Observance," Appendix 14, and *Acts and Proceedings*, 1877, "Report of the Committee on Sabbath Observance," cxxxiv.

[24]. *Acts and Proceedings, 1893*, "Report on Sabbath Observance," Appendix 22.

[25]. *Acts and Proceedings, 1895*, "Sabbath Observance," Appendix 22.

1896, the Committee on Church Life and Work ("the C.C.L.W.") took over the responsibility, and devoted but one short paragraph to the Sabbath issue. In an observation markedly out of keeping with the 1895 report and many earlier than that, the committee wrote that it was "glad to report" that there was "not a great amount of flagrant violation of Sabbath law."[26] Already then, the tone and strategy with which the earlier committee had tackled Sabbath observance was disappearing.

In 1899, the responsibility of Sabbath observance again shifted, this time from the C.C.L.W. to a newly formed Committee on Sabbath Observance and Legislation.[27] Despite the re-creation of a specific committee, the approach of the old committee to encourage congregational action was not resurrected. In fact, the 1900 Report of the Committee on Sabbath Observance and Legislation was little more than a recounting of the activities of the Lord's Day Alliance.[28] The L.D.A. flourished in the early twentieth century. Between 1901 and 1904, membership in the L.D.A. jumped from 8,000 to 25,000. The number of local branches increased by an equally impressive amount.[29] Yet as the L.D.A.'s influence grew, the committee began to report that many congregations felt that "no action was necessary" with respect to protecting the Sabbath themselves. In 1905, work was done in eliminating Sabbath infractions, but more by the efforts of the national

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[26]. *Acts and Proceedings, 1896*, "Report of the Committee on Church Life and Work," Appendix 20.

[27]. Emphasis mine. Part of the reason for the reconstitution of the special committee just four years after the old committee was disbanded might be disclosed in the 1897 minutes. At that General Assembly, the C.C.L.W proposed two motions on the Sabbath which the Assembly passed. The first was a general and rather rhetorical affirmation of the importance of the Sabbath. The second was a resolution expressing appreciation for the "helpful character" of recent Ontario Sabbath legislation. But immediately after these resolutions were passed, William Caven moved a lengthy and far more firmly worded resolution decrying the Lord's Day's desecration "in nearly all Christian countries" and exhorting all Christians "to refrain from all encroachments on its rest". That, too, was adopted. Despite the adoption of both motions, this shows that Caven and others were not satisfied with the treatment of the Sabbath question by the C.C.L.W. *Acts and Proceedings, 1899*, Minutes, 72. J.G. Shearer, the militant Sabbath defender and then-head of the Lord's Day Alliance convened the new committee. William Caven, Principal of Knox and noted sabbatarian and the more theologically liberal G.W. Grant, Principal of the Kirk's Queen's University also sat on the committee.

[28]. *Acts and Proceedings, 1900*, "Report of the Committee on Sabbath Observance and Legislation," 244-45.

[29]. *Acts and Proceedings, 1904*, "Report of the Committee on Sabbath Observance and Legislation," 268-270.

L.D.A., not by the people in the pews.[30] Some post-1900 reports suggest that Sabbath desecration was increasing, not just among people outside of the church but more frequently by church members. In 1903, the committee lamented that people used the day as a "convenience for travel and the transactions of various forms of business and sharing in social life."[31] The 1905 report cited a "growing laxity among our people as to Sabbath driving, visiting, 'teas' and cycling." It also noted the Sunday recreation was becoming far more common.[32] In 1906, the committee remarked that even in families where the Sabbath is kept in name, "religious conversation is by a majority declared to be a lost art."[33]

This touches on one of the pious purposes of Sabbath keeping, namely that it was not to be kept for the sake of legalism, but rather to ensure that the day was as much a complete day of worship as well as rest. Increasingly, the religious rationale supplied by the church for keeping the Sabbath was eroding. The occasional late nineteenth century references to the humanitarian reasons for Sabbath keeping became prominent by about 1908. It reached a climax in 1914 when the Board of Social Services and Evangelism ("the Board")[34] (which in 1907 had assumed responsibility for the Sabbath question) wrote:

> The ministers of the church are seized with the importance of the preservation of the Sabbath as a day of worship not only because of its religious significance, but also because of its importance for the maintenance of the social and political institutes of the state.

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[30]. See the long and rather detailed report in *Acts and Proceedings, 1905*, "Report of the Committee on Church Life and Work," 238-240. The whole issue of the impact of the L.D.A. has not, to my knowledge, been studied in relation to the issue of *who* did the work of the Alliance. Was it the influence of the hierarchy of the L.D.A. that brought about change, or through the efforts of the local membership as well? Was it nominal or active? Even if it was active and at the congregational level, that still leaves the issue of what other Presbyterians were doing about Sabbath observance after the rise of the L.D.A. It seems that they were doing less and less.

[31]. *Acts and Proceedings, 1903*, "Report of the Committee on Sabbath Observance and Legislation," 232.

[32]. *Ibid.*, 239.

[33]. *Acts and Proceedings, 1890*, "Sabbath Observance and Legislation," 253.

[34]. At this time, the Board of Social Service and Evangelism was known as the Board of Social and Moral Reform. It is being referred to by the former name since this was used the longest and is the one used most frequently by other historians as a matter of convenience. See *Acts and Proceedings, 1908*, "The Board of Social and Moral Reform," 248.

> In addition, there is developing a stronger and stronger social consciousness throughout the nation. All exploitation is based upon a selfish individualism which does not take into account the rights of others. Thou shalt not steal.[35]

The Board was far more optimistic in its assessment of the state of Sabbath observance than was former Committee of Sabbath Observance and Legislation. Its 1908 report declared that the Sabbath was almost universally observed across Canada -- something clearly out of step with the opinion of the former committee. While they refined this opinion to accord with reality in subsequent reports, in 1909 it opined that "it would seem that the tendency among the people to claim on the Lord's Day any convenience such as the street car, defending it as more or less of necessity, is next to impossible to arrest."[36] It soldiered on in the fight for a few years longer, but looked almost exclusively to the courts, the legislature and the L.D.A. to provide all solutions. The people in the congregations were virtually never mentioned as potential workers in the struggle. With this, presumably, came the demise of women's action within the Presbyterian church. Women simply were not active at the national level of the church and sat on no official church boards or committees. If local action was dormant, so was the specific congregational action of women. Indeed, as Phyllis Airhart has argued about the Methodist Church, when male denominational leadership took responsibility for national action, the moral-suasion aspects of the campaign ceased or was supposedly taken up by the regulatory arm of government.[37] The shift from voluntary abstinence to prohibitory legislation was under way.

Throughout the Great War, the Board almost ignored the Sabbath issue. By 1918, the brevity of the report and its anaemic tone almost smacks of tokenism. Its sole recommendation to Assembly reads as follows:

> That the Assembly express their conviction that it is essential alike to propriety and good morals that there be during war [on the plea of patriotism] no lowering of the standard of like in industry or

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[35]. The religious had come to function as mere rhetoric to back up a secular rational for Sabbath observance. *Acts and Proceedings, 1914*, "Report of the Board on Social Services and Evangelism," 302.

[36]. *Acts and Proceedings, 1909*, "Report of the Board of Social and Moral Reform" p. 248.

[37]. Airhart, "Sweeter, Purer Laws," 13. The same argument about the role of women within the PCC holds true for the next section of this paper on temperance.

> agriculture whether in the form of Sunday labour or of lengthened hours or lowered wages.
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> The Assembly therefore commend the efforts of all who seek to sustain or raise these standards, and in particular commend the Lord's Day Alliance for its untiring efforts to preserve the weekly Rest Day in its integrity.[38]

In 1920, the Board rather unconvincingly stated that "it is quite certain the Lord's Day Act is generally well observed from ocean to ocean. Doubtless there are infractions in the ports and on the railroads ... by drug stores, restaurants and confectioneries ...; still the fact remains that the Lord's Day Alliance is a mighty power in the preservation of our day of rest."[39] The report was a mere three paragraphs long. While the reports dwindled and at times were entirely lacking (1919, 1921, and 1925 had nothing on Sabbath Observance), a motion from the floor in 1922 showed the issue was not entirely dead among commissioners. The motion urged ministers and sessions to do more, and exhorted members and adherents to "the maintenance of home life and quiet, and strenuously to contend against the world."[40] The motion passed, and the local membership had its say. It is the only voice they had had at the national level in almost fifteen years, and at best sounded like the last gasp of the faithful few.

The change in approach to Sabbath observance between 1875 and 1925 is astounding. Indeed, so is the change between 1900 and 1925. If the Lord's Day Alliance still held the sway which the Board claimed it did in 1920, then its efficacy is at issue given the tremendous decline in Sabbath observance experienced among church goers. The apparent inability of even the L.D.A. to stem the tide may well have been exacerbated by the conduct of the national committee after 1900. As Brian Fraser demonstrates, the new generation of Presbyterian progressives who came to power within the church in the first decade of the twentieth century had centralist and nationalist views about Canada. These were not radical socialists, but rather middle class clergy who lived in the same neighbourhood as prominent businessmen of the day.[41] Sweeping Canada was the idea that society ought to be planned. Cities could be mapped out and planned centrally and business were

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[38]. *Acts and Proceedings, 1918*, Minutes, 29.

[39]. *Acts and Proceedings, 1920*, "Board of Social Service and Evangelism", 15.

[40]. *Acts and Proceedings, 1922*, Minutes, 109.

[41]. Fraser, *The Social Uplifters*, 175.

encouraged rationalise and become more efficient to ensure a competitive edge. Part of this mentality seeped into the church and resulted in the great centralizing tendencies of the progressives.[42] The progressives, caught up in the enthusiasm of the day and at the prospect of a new nation unfolding before them, saw the church as the agent to bring about national change. J.A. Macdonald, editor of the Globe, said in 1909:

> The Church itself is being Christianized, and the civilization in Canadian will not be Christianized until the Church goes back with all its traditions, and all its machinery, and all its agencies, back to Christ to learn his motive, to catch from Him His great ideas ... And Canada, with her hand stretched out across the sea to Britain, across the lakes to the great Republic, binding the two together, for what? -- for the world's redemption, for the world's civilization, with a national policy for world-brotherhood. "A nation shall be born in a day," and who knows, who knows, but that the name of the nation, new-born, shall be Canada?[43]

With a vision as bold as this, local action probably began to look less important than it had to the previous generation. Unlike the reports of the late nineteenth century, then, reports after 1905 rarely mentioned local involvement. The national committee structure had seen fit to bear the torch by itself.

DEALING WITH THE DRINK

The temperance campaign followed a similar general pattern, but differed on specifics. It was not until 1881 that temperance received its own committee. Prior to that, it fell under the rubric of the Committee on the State of Religion, which surveyed, among other things, Sunday schools and the state of family worship. In 1876, the General Assembly received a memorials from the W.C.T.U. and the Dominion Alliance calling for the total suppression of the liquor trade. The Assembly expressed its sympathy with those "seeking to remove or mitigate the evils of intemperance, as well as their desire to co-operate in all well directed efforts to gain this important end."[44] Two years later, in response

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[42]. *Ibid.*, 173-177.

[43]. J.A. Macdonald, "The Christianization of our Civilization" in *Canada's Missionary Congress*, ed. J.A. Macdonald. (Toronto: 1909), 120-121.

[44]. *Acts and Proceedings, 1876*, Minutes, 26, 82.

to another memorial, the Assembly urged on all connected the church, particularly office bearers, to prayerfully consider total abstinence.[45] Until 1881, the national church had not recommended specific congregational action other than exhortation and pious living. That said, temperance was still a serious issue. The Committee on the State of Religion noted that many presbyteries had come out against allowing liquor sellers to celebrate the Lord's Supper, and at least half of all church members were reported to be total abstainers.[46] The Committee noted that few church voluntary organizations existed at this time. The work of the non-church organizations like the W.C.T.U. were said by sessions and presbyteries to be doing adequate work.[47]

The year 1881 saw the formation of the Committee on Temperance, and the issue was given new life. In its first report, the committee recommended that there should be some sort of temperance organization in every congregations, and that ministers and parents ought to teach temperance to those under their care.[48] The next year, it went further, stating that

> The church is a divinely constituted society, and should not leave its work to be done by any secular or self-constituted associations controlled, to some extent, if not largely, by persons who, to say the least, make no profession of religion.[49]

The Committee added that congregational societies tended to be more stable than independent associations, and suggested that the church had all the agencies at her command necessary to battle intemperance. It recommended that presbyteries and sessions consider the best form of temperance organization to create within their bounds.[50] The 1883 Assembly, in a motion from the floor, expressed a desire for prohibitionist legislation, but added that members of the church were to lead in the

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[45]. *Acts and Proceedings, 1878*, Minutes, 52.

[46]. Note that at this stage of the debate, the dominant issue was *temperance*, not prohibition. That was to change later. *Acts and Proceedings, 1881*, "Report on the State of Religion," cxli. In 1881, both this committee and the Committee on Temperance reported on the drink.

[47]. *Ibid.*

[48]. *Ibid*, cxlii.

[49]. *Acts and Proceedings, 1882*, "Report of the Committee on Temperance", cxlix.

[50]. *Ibid.*, Minutes, 53.

battle and urge the establishment of coffee houses in their communities.[51] Congregations reporting to the temperance committee urged "every church in the land, from pastor on down" to become a "living, active Temperance society." Education from the pulpit, in Sunday school and in the home was advised. Congregations also urged the Assembly to endorse the use of the pledge book, in which members vowed themselves to abstention.[52]

Legislation was mentioned by both the committee and congregations as effective, but it was not seen as the panacea it was later identified as.[53] An 1885 resolution is typical of those passed in the seventies and eighties. It applauded the decrease of intemperance and the attentiveness of congregations to the liquor question. While expressing "no opinion on particular legislative measures," it urged church members "to use all means that may seem to them calculated to secure further diminution of the great evil referred to."[54] Still, the committee was delighted at the Canada Temperance Act of 1878, hailing it as a milestone in the march toward a temperate Canada. It only wished more would vote for local option available under the law.[55]

The legislative aspect of the debate heated up in the mid-1880s. In 1887 the committee responded to this by complaining of the potential diversionary effects of addressing the issue through legislation only. It noted that some respondents to its annual questionnaire expressed "their conviction that moral-suasion has simply been held in abeyance during a period of special conflict, when the legal aspects of the question of necessity bulked largely in the minds of the people." The committee stated that "it would be a great mistake to suppose that moral-suasion has been thrown aside as effete or out of date ... [M]oral suasion and legal restraint are wedded together in this noble work and they must never be divorced." The committee reaffirmed the importance of

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[51]. *Acts and Proceedings, 1883*, Minutes, 33.

[52]. *Acts and Proceedings, 1883*, "Report of the Committee on Temperance," clxvi-clxvii.

[53]. For details on the legislative aspects of temperance, see John Webster Grant, *The Church in the Canadian Era*, 80-82, 100-103; and Michael Owen, "This Hydra-headed Monster," 51-91.

[54]. *Acts and Proceedings, 1885*, Minutes, 29.

[55]. Said the Committee of the Canada Temperance Act, "Thus more and more are the people coming to realize that to license wrong is a national crime." *Acts and Proceedings, 1885*, "Report on Temperance," clxix.

education and temperance societies at the congregational level.[56] In 1890, the committee noted that some congregations reported Bands of Hope and other temperance societies (but not as many as they had hoped) and informal acts of moral-suasion and intervention seemed again to be on the increase after their earlier decline.[57] Distressed at the paucity of voluntary associations, the committee in 1892 introduced a comprehensive plan, called the "Plan of Work", designed to make easy the establishment of local temperance associations in churches. The Plan included a model constitution for Sabbath schools, Christian Endeavour or "woman's committee" [sic]. It prescribed that each member would take a pledge to abstinence, and urged the election of an executive and the presentation of annual reports to session. Further, the committee recommended that all presbyteries and sessions establish their own committees on temperance to liaise with the national committee and supervise temperance activities in the congregations.[58] The Plan worked well. In 1894, the national committee reported that most sessions and presbyteries had adopted parts of its Plan of Work for local use. Indeed, 600 pledge books and 13,000 pledge cards were in use by 1894.[59] By 1895, that had risen to 800 pledge books and 14,000 pledge cards.[60] The numbers were 800 and 20,000 respectively just two years later.[61] In 1897, the C.C.L.W., which had assumed responsibility for temperance in 1896, noted that reports from congregations "make the fact more and more evident that the church is doing the most effective work in promoting the cause of temperance, and is God's elect agency for the uplifting of men."[62]

The year 1899 saw a marked change. A plebiscite had been held just a year earlier on the question of prohibition, the demand for which (driven by the church) had been escalating over the last decade.[63] The

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[56]. *Acts and Proceedings, 1887*, "Report on Temperance," Appendix 16.

[57]. *Acts and Proceedings, 1890*, "Report on Temperance," Appendix 36.

[58]. *Acts and Proceedings, 1892*, Appendix 18.

[59]. *Acts and Proceedings, 1894*, "Report on Temperance," Appendix 28.

[60]. *Acts and Proceedings, 1895*, "Report on Temperance", Appendix 27.

[61]. *Acts and Proceedings, 1897*, "Report on Temperance," 267.

[62]. *Ibid.*

[63]. For the church's transition from temperance advocacy to the promotion of prohibition, see especially *Acts and Proceedings, 1893*, "Report on Temperance," Appendix 29, where 95% of respondents said they favoured total prohibition.

C.C.L.W remarked that after the September 1898 referendum, the number of pledge cards and books ordered "plummeted." It deplored this trend and urged congregants to keep going.[64] Arguably, the C.C.L.W. was partially responsible for this. In 1898, it had devoted just three paragraphs to the temperance issue, glossed over the Plan of Work, and argued that the plebiscite was to be the church's major course of action for the next year.[65] Perhaps not surprisingly, then, the C.C.L.W. noted in 1900 that the "great majority" of people and session members "live out total abstinence", but very few "speak of anything of a specific kind being done to extend the principle." There was no longer any common method in use to fight intemperance in congregations it said, and little agitation.[66] By 1902, the C.C.L.W. expressed concern that the cause was "retrograding rather than advancing." The use of liquor was increasing, especially among the wealthy. Despite these concerns, the C.C.L.W. devoted only four short paragraphs to temperance in its report, and made no mention whatever of the Plan of Work. Its only counsel to congregations with respect to defending the cause was that there was "little [to do] beyond the teaching of the pulpit."[67] 1903 saw no report on temperance. In 1904, the C.C.L.W. surveyed congregations on what new societies and associations were formed within its bounds, and, not surprisingly, there were no reports of any temperance organizations at all. It wrote that temperance efforts in the church are "very rare."[68]

By 1901, legislation became a growing concern for the C.C.L.W. In its 1901 report, it endorsed legislated prohibition.[69] This trend escalated and by 1907 the majority of the reports focused on legislative

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[64]. *Acts and Proceedings, 1899*, "Report of the Committee on Church Life and Work," 265-266.

[65]. *Acts and Proceedings, 1898*, "Report of the Committee on Church Life and Work," 285.

[66]. *Acts and Proceedings*, Report of the Committee on Church Life and Work," 230.

[67]. *Acts and Proceedings, 1902*, "Report of the Committee on Church Life and Work," 266.

[68]. *Acts and Proceedings, 1904*, "Report of the Committee on Church Life and Work," 260-61. The chief new societies were the Women's Foreign Missionary Society and Ladies' Aid auxiliaries.

[69]. *Acts and Proceedings, 1901*, "Report of the Committee on Church Life and Work," 206.

efforts.[70] In 1910, the national temperance policy of the PCC was adopted, and it consisted solely of legislative means, urging local veto, prohibition and the abolition of the bar room.[71] Legislative means dominated the reports of the Board until 1925;[72] it had come to view governmental action as the preferred elixir. Yet the Board had effectively acknowledged the problem with over-reliance on legislation in 1912 when it lamented that the legislative movement was stalled because of "lack of strong public sentiment" behind the legislation.[73] Another regret was voiced in 1914. Prohibition had been won on the national level, and the committee showed signs of springing to life. Indeed, it urged congregations to establish local committees at the session level on social service and evangelism. The committee stated that

> no movement of reform is ever effective until it becomes a movement of the people, and it is hoped that sessions and congregations will appoint these committees that through them the membership of the church may be brought into active sympathy with every movement for the suppression of the liquor traffic.[74]

But it had been fifteen years since the national committees of the church had encouraged congregations to become locally involved, the Plan of Work now long forgotten. The call for local action of 1914 was never followed up. Indeed, by 1915, funding for the Board (which was raised

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[70]. *Acts and Proceedings, 1907*, "Church Life and Work," 320-321. The temperance cause received an illusory boost in 1907 when the Committee on Temperance and Moral Reform was struck. This was more of a social gospel committee than a temperance committee though, its chief concerns being the merging social problems of corruption in government, prostitution, gambling, the collection of statistics on moral evil and finally, temperance. One of the first acts of the new committee was to change its name. It found its original caption to be "inconveniently long and likely to prejudice the work of the Report with certain sections of the community." *Ibid.*, 322.

[71]. *Acts and Proceedings, 1910*, 275.

[72]. See, for example, *Acts and Proceedings, 1916*, "Board of Social Service and Evangelism," 11-12; *Acts and Proceedings, 1917*, "Board of Social Service and Evangelism," 24-25; *Acts and Proceedings, 1918*, Minutes, 29, Resolution 1; and *Acts and Proceedings, 1921*, "Board of Social Service and Evangelism," 8.

[73]. *Acts and Proceedings, 1912*, "Board of Social Service and Evangelism," 307.

[74]. *Acts and Proceedings, 1914*, "Board of Social Service and Evangelism," 303.

voluntarily and not allocated from a national budget) was so poor that the Board was subsumed under the Board of Home Missions.[75]

Generally, the Board's zeal for temperance had waned markedly since the onset of the war.[76] In 1918, the Board expressed concern that prohibition was not uniformly enforced, and said it would continue the fight for better legislation. Yet it did not pass any accompanying resolutions, nor issue any directive to congregations or presbyteries.[77] In 1921, the Board trumpeted that "no year in the history of Canada has witnessed as much progress toward the total prohibition of the liquor traffic as 1920." Yet if that is so, it is puzzling as to why the whole issue received one brief paragraph.[78] 1924 featured no report on temperance, but (reminiscent of the way the Sabbath issue had been handled in the 1920s) a motion form the floor of Assembly urged total support of prohibition and specific directives to the British Columbia and Saskatchewan governments to oppose expansion of "liquor liberty" in their provinces.[79] Significantly, this was not a call from the congregations for more local action, but a cry from the floor that the church was not doing enough at the national level. The thinking of the church had been transformed.

OTHER INDICIA OF THE DECLINE OF LOCAL ACTION

While the decline in the local temperance and Sabbath reform movements appear quite similar, a somewhat different but important decline in local action can be seen in one local church which pioneered

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[75]. There is at times truth in the adage that people vote with their chequebooks and their feet, but the connection between this financial crisis and dissatisfaction with the Board has not been studied in detail. Fraser, *The Social Uplifters*, 156.

[76]. Just as the Sabbath debate had shifted to secular justification for its cause, so the Board adopted medical and scientific rationale for prohibition. They also focused on the collection of scientific and medical data and temperance level around the world. Talk of scientific and medical reasons against strong drink transformed what had once been a rather pious movement. *Acts and Proceedings, 1915*, "Report of the Board on Social Service and Evangelism, 1915," 338-341; *Acts and Proceedings, 1911*, "Board of Moral and Social Reform and Evangelism, Annual Report, 1911," 256; *Acts and Proceedings, 1912*, "Board of Social Service and Evangelism," 307; and *Acts and Proceedings, 1913*, "Board of Social Service and Evangelism," 279.

[77]. *Acts and Proceedings, 1918*, "Board of Social Service and Evangelism," 29.

[78]. *Acts and Proceedings, 1921*, "Board of Home Missions and Social Service for the Year 1921," 8.

[79]. *Acts and Proceedings, 1924*, Minutes, 59.

the social gospel in Canada. The rise of the social gospel[80] is generally dated at about 1890,[81] but it was in 1870 that the congregation at St. Andrew's Presbyterian church began to act out the social gospel in its community. In 1870, a "Miss Alexander" began a Sunday school, sewing school and a mother's meeting in response to the squalid conditions in which she found some local boys living. Hamilton Cassels organized a night school teaching reading, writing and arithmetic and dictation to the poor in the community beginning in 1881. In order to meet the growing needs of the poor in downtown, the congregation in 1890 built the Nelson Street Institute to house existing and new groups.[82] The Institute went on to add a gymnasium, a girl's gymnastics' club, a kindergarten, various boy's, men's and girl's clubs a cooking school and a highly successful penny savings bank, designed to help the poor save their money.[83] The amount of work that went on at St. Andrew's in the pre-war era is astounding; all of it was local, unsupported by outside aid. Things began to change toward the Great War, though. In 1911, the night school languished "for reasons other than associated with church."[84] That did not discourage the church, though, for in 1912 a new Institute was built at a cost of $64,000.[85] After the war, the Institute went into steep decline.

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[80]. Broadly speaking, the social gospel involved a renewed and institutionalized response to the crises caused by industrialization; poverty, working conditions, standards of education, sanitation and moral conditions. It was a social and religious movement profoundly concerned about the quality of human life on this earth. Marianna Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap and Water*, 1-33; Allen, *The Social Passion*, 3-5; Allen, "The Social Gospel in Canada," 385, where he describes the range of subjects discussed at G.M. Grant's Queen's Theological Alumni Conference, an important meeting of social gospellers; and Marshall, *Secularizing the Faith*, 26-30.

[81]. Allen, *The Social Passion*, 14ff. See also Brian Fraser, *The Social Uplifters*, esp. 49-71. The progressive Presbyterians Fraser profiles did not graduate from Knox College until the late 1880s. Ramsay Cook, though, places the "ideological birth" at 1883. See *The Regenerators*, 107-108.

[82]. The best accounts of the work of the congregation can be found in J.F. McCurdy, *The Life and Work of D.J. Macdonnell*, (Toronto: William Briggs, 1897), 288-303; and Stuart D. Parker, *The Book of St. Andrew's: A Short History of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Toronto*, (Toronto: Centenary Committee of the Congregation, 1930), 55-134.

[83]. Parker, *St. Andrew's*, 71-78.

[84]. *Ibid.*, 90. Just what Parker meant by this is not clear, and no hints are given. But it was the first sign of decline.

[85]. *Ibid.*, 93.

As the local church history put it, when the war was over, the social work societies found themselves

> disinclined to resume their old activities. The result was inevitable. The close of the War saw the decline of Institutional work. The character of the neighbourhood had changed drastically. Population had increasingly flowed out of the parish, leaving it to sheds and warehouses. New experiences had brought new interests to many of those who had hitherto made the Institute their headquarters. In general, the old order was changing, and the transition period bristled with difficulties and disappointments for those whose hearts were in the work of St. Andrew's ... . But on the whole, St. Andrew's, like other congregations, found it social endeavour greatly hampered.[86]

One would think that as the neighbourhood "changed", the opportunity for more social work would only increase. But if the need remained or intensified, the interest of the church in meeting that need did not. Significantly, it is only the social work that floundered. The Institute, for example, was forced to shut down in 1917 because of fuel rationing, and one might think that this might also be a cause for the decline. But the Women's Auxiliary also had to close because of the fuel shortage, and it rebounded very soundly after the war.[87] Indeed, St. Andrew's itself was a very healthy (but suddenly socially uninterested) church in the 1920s.[88] It likely was not for want of finances that the Institute suffered. In 1918, the PCC sponsored a drive for its Forward Movement to "prosecute church work with renewed vigour." St. Andrew's contributed $26,000 to the fund.[89]

The inaction at St. Andrew's over the war period does not appear to be an anomaly. The Board of Social Service and Evangelism in 1912 began its urban settlement work with the establishment of St. Christopher's House in Toronto. There were 25,000 Presbyterians in the city, but only 20 congregants volunteered to help work at St.

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[86]. *Ibid.*, 101, 103. Stuart Parker was not only the author of this book but the incumbent at St. Andrew's in 1930, when the book was written. His reasons for the shift in support are vague and are quoted almost in their entirety. He offers no real clues as to particular causes for the lack of interest after the war.

[87]. *Ibid.*, 102.

[88]. *Ibid.*, 134ff. Although demographics is cited as a reason for the demise of social work, the church continued to flourish even though people moved away.

[89]. *Ibid.*, 104.

Christopher's. Indeed, the original vision of the Board was to have full-fledged churches serving downtown neighbourhoods backed by enthusiastic lay support. This never materialized either.[90] The drop in interest at St. Andrew's and in Toronto generally coincides with the rise of the social gospel at the national level. By 1908, the Board of Social and Moral Reform had adopted the social gospel agenda. As Brian Fraser details, their vision of a social religion was being tried, but it was failing. The rise and quick fall of the Presbyterian Brotherhood illustrates this failure. Formed in 1907 by the forces driving the newly created Board, the Brotherhood was to consist of lay led voluntary associations designed to implement the social gospel vision in churches. Some work was accomplished, but the Brotherhood died for lack of recruits. In 1912, the board reported that men did not join "largely because of the pressing claims of other work."[91] It was not that the theology was too radical. The unique Presbyterian theology of the social gospel was a combination of nineteenth century liberal evangelical theology and twentieth century social science and did not *offend* the vast majority of Canadians,[92] but neither did it inspire them to local action.[93]

Local action was part of the progressive plan, but not nearly the whole of it. Indeed, central to the social gospel mind was an inherent belief in the value of legislation. Their main goal was to change the consciousness of a nation, argues Brian Fraser, and hence the foundation for a new morality would be comprehensive legislative programmes.[94] If legislation could not produce morality, it could at least produce a social milieu conducive to morality.[95] The race to legislation has several possible motivations. The Calvinist assumption of an inherently sinful humanity might be responsible, but this does not take

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[90]. Fraser, *The Social Uplifters*, 90-94. The twenty came from Bloor Street Presbyterian, where J.G. Shearer and J.A. Macdonald, two prominent Presbyterian progressives, were members.

[91]. *Ibid.*, 128-130.

[92]. *Ibid.*, 1-47, 176.

[93]. *Ibid.*, 165-169. Fraser's book is very helpful, but its main purpose is not to show how readily or unreadily Canadians bought what the progressives were selling. His evidence on this point is incidental, but helpful. His treatment of the subject is more of a theological and intellectual history.

[94]. *Ibid.*, 127.

[95]. Moir, *Enduring Witness*, 193.

into account a parallel phenomenon in Methodism.[96] More certainly, men believed more than women that temperance and Sabbath observance were not so much about personal morality or piety but about proscribing behaviour, so legislation became attractive.[97] Additionally, as we have seen, the push for legislation was partially driven by the ethos toward rationalisation that characterised business and Canadian politics in the twentieth century and by the vision of a new nation that inspired the progressives. For all of these reasons, then, moral legislation became the *sine qua non* for the Presbyterian social gospel. It was indispensable to the early twentieth century conception of social transformation.[98]

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

A call for balance in interpretation is perhaps what is most needed when drawing conclusions on what has been documented in this essay. The debate over the social gospel had not yet polarized into the camps that became evident after 1925. This paper, then, is not suggesting that any noted drop in local activity was ideologically motivated; that is, with "conservative" congregations decrying the "liberal" policies of a national committee. It is much more subtle and far less ideological than that. Indeed, what has been noted is merely a shift in the involvement of local congregations between 1875-1925 in a wide variety of matters, ranging from temperance to Sabbath observance and the social gospel. Throughout most of the nineteenth century local congregations were active and were encouraged to be active by national church committees in moral reform. But by 1900, the national commitment to local action in the temperance and Sabbath movements was waning. By 1905, almost everyone at the congregational level had ceased to figure into any serious plan of action of the national committees. Congregational voluntary associations appear to have fallen off when the Lord's Day Alliance was formed and the committees began to look toward it and toward legislation to solve the Sunday problem. As a result, the unique contribution of the congregations, especially women in the congregations, which made these matters more personal and pious, ceased. As if it were relapsing, the committee in 1907 and again in 1914 chastised members for their failure to be enthused about the national campaign. But the committee showed no other sign that it wanted local involvement,

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[96]. I thank the late Robert Matthewson of Knox College and Phyllis Airhart for helpful comments on this point.

[97]. Airhart, "Sweeter, Purer Laws," 9-10.

[98]. Fraser, *The Social Uplifters*, 148.

and increasingly it looked to Parliament to solve the moral dilemma of drink. A working hypothesis might be that this drop in local action occurred because congregations came to expect that the national committee was in the process of securing victory on the issues. As national action increased and moral-suasion became less important to the church, not only did local action decline, but violation of the Sabbath by church members rose.[99] Piety was dying, and parliament could do little about that.

The rise and fall of the social gospel at St. Andrew's church and at the local level in Toronto provides a different pattern but similar end result. Here, enthused reformers wanted local action, but found none. The Brotherhood failed, as did the Settlement House, in its attempts to attract local volunteers. Indigenous social work at St. Andrew's collapsed during and after the war, and this in a congregation which pioneered social work in the church. All of this occurred within the context of a national committee structure which pushed for legislation designed to secure the same ends that local social work sought to achieve. As the legislative campaign escalated, congregational interest plummeted.

In many aspects of the church's work, congregational action was dormant by the early twentieth century. No other factor describes this phenomenon as well as the reciprocal decline in local activity and the rise in national action. Even though the national Board's enthusiasm for Sabbath observance and temperance may have diminished by 1915, its zeal for social reform had not. Unfortunately for the Board they were faced with the same response by congregations to whatever request the committee put before churches: lethargy. Ironically, it may well have been the Board's own tactics which brought this apathy about.

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[99]. On the issue of Presbyterians breaking the Sabbath and many other issues covered in this paper, there is a striking similarity between the Canadian and American Presbyterian experiences. The chief difference is not in tone or phenomena, but rather in timing. While in Canada local interest in Sabbatarianism dropped at the turn of the century, it happened only in the 1930s and 1940s in America. See Benton Johnston, "On Dropping the Subject: Presbyterians and Sabbath Observance in the Twentieth Century" in *The Presbyterian Predicament: Six Perspectives*, ed. Milton J. Coalter et al. (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990), 90-108.