The Canadian Society of Presbyterian History

Papers 1998

The Canadian Society of Presbyterian History

Papers 1998

Editor:
Chris Redmond
523 Westfield Drive, Waterloo, Ontario N2T 2E1

The Canadian Society of Presbyterian History

The papers printed here were read at the Society's annual meeting September 26, 1998, at Knox College, Toronto. The society also heard the paper "Communicating the Gospel in Late 19th Century Ontario: A Glimpse at the Formative Influences of the Rev. James A. Macdonald", by Brian Fraser, Vancouver School of Theology.

For future meetings, generally held each year at the end of September, the Society invites papers that deal with any aspect of Presbyterian and Reformed Church history. Anyone proposing a paper or seeking further information is invited to write to the president of the Society: Rev. Dr. John A. Johnston, 184 Chedoke Avenue, Hamilton, Ontario L8P 4P2.

Membership in the Society is open to any person or institution interested in this field of history. Annual dues are $15, payable to the Canadian Society of Presbyterian History, and may be remitted to Kim Arnold, CSPH Treasurer, c/o Presbyterian Church in Canada Archives and Records Office, 50 Wynford Drive, Don Mills, Ontario M3C 1J7.

Contents

President's letter
John A. Johnston 4

"A. B. Simpson: A Troubled Mystic"
David R. Elliott 5

"A Presbyterian Mission in Industrial Hamilton Becomes a Church, 1913-1926"
George Addison 18

"Canadian Presbyterianism and the Westminster Standards"
William Klempa 39

"The Covenanters of Winnipeg"
Eldon R. Hay 52

President's letter

Accompanying this mailing of the 1998 lectures are the greetings of your president and news of the September 1999 annual meeting, as we prepare to celebrate the 25th anniversary of our organization, the 75th anniversary of the United Church of Canada and the 125th anniversary of the Presbyterian Church in Canada.

Papers will be delivered at Knox College, 59 St. George Street, Toronto, beginning at 10 a.m. on Saturday, September 25, with the society's brief business meeting to take place prior to the noon repast.

I can report that microfilm copies of all the CSPH papers from 1975 through 1986 have been placed in the Presbyterian Archives and are available there for research. Published volumes of the 1997 and earlier years' lectures are available at a nominal price from the secretary, Michael Millar, 293 Shanty Bay Road, Barrie, Ontario L4M 1E6. Payment for 1999 annual memberships ($15) can now be accepted.

Appreciation is extended to Chris Redmond for editing and publishing these 1998 papers.

Please reserve the date of Saturday, September 25, for our quarter-century jubilee, and plan to bring along those of your friends who might now be, or might become in the future, interested in Presbyterian church history through participation in what promises to be a most profitable and informative event.

John Alexander Johnston
President

A. B. Simpson: A Troubled Mystic

David R. Elliott
Parkhill, Ontario

Albert Benjamin Simpson (1843-1919) was a Canadian Presbyterian minister who frequently suffered from severe bouts of emotional depression, psychosis and psychosomatic illness. Out of his difficulties he created a distinctive theology, eventually left the Presbyterian Church and founded his own sect, the Christian and Missionary Alliance, which influenced many aspects of twentieth-century fundamentalism and evangelicalism: sectarianism, mystical spirituality, Pentecostalism, foreign missions emphasis, and the Bible college movement.[1] This paper examines some of the psychological and theological causes of his sectarianism.

A.B. Simpson was born at Bayview, Prince Edward Island. His father was an enterprising shipbuilder, merchant, miller and exporter, but an economic downturn caused the family to move to a farm nine miles from Chatham, Upper Canada, in 1847. The loneliness of farm life in Ontario and the death of a child left deep scars on Mrs. Simpson, who became very depressed. Some of Albert's earliest memories were of his mother weeping and wailing in her room at night, and him trying to comfort her.[2] These experiences made him extremely anxious.

The Simpsons were staunch Presbyterians, and Albert, a very sensitive boy, decided before he was fourteen, that he was going to enter the ministry. Even though his parents

---

[1] The first official history of Simpson's movement appears to have been G.P. Pardington's *Twenty-Five Wonderful Years, 1889-1914: A Popular Sketch of the Christian and Missionary Alliance* (New York: Christian Alliance Publishing Co., 1914). The first biography of Simpson was A.E. Thompson's *A.B. Simpson: His Life and Work* (Harrisburg: Christian Publications, Inc., 1920) which utilized an autobiographical manuscript written by Simpson. Another hagiography but more critical was A.W. Tozer's *Wingspread: Albert B. Simpson: A Study in Spiritual Altitude* (Harrisburg: Christian Publications, Inc., 1943). Tozer had access to Simpson's diary but suppressed important information on Simpson's relationship to Pentecostalism. The centenary of the Christian and Missionary Alliance generated several other studies. See Robert L. Niklaus, John S. Sawin and Samuel J. Stoesz, *Jesus For All: God at Work in The Christian and Missionary Alliance Over One Hundred Years* (Camp Hill, Pa.: Christian Publications, 1986) and a festschrift edited by David F. Hartzfeld and Charles Nienkirchen, *The Birth of a Vision* (Regina: Canadian Theological Seminary, 1986). These works are of varied historical worth; some of the articles in Hartzfeld and Nienkirchen are of critical value. The most recent published study of Simpson's thought is Charles W. Nienkirchen, *A.B. Simpson and the Pentecostal Movement* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1992). Two recent dissertations are also important: William Boyd Bedford, Jr., "'A Larger Christian Life': A.B. Simpson and The Early Years of the Christian and Missionary Alliance" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Virginia, 1992) and Darrel Robert Reid, "'Jesus Only': The Early Life and Presbyterian Ministry of Albert Benjamin Simpson, 1843-1881" (Ph.D. dissertation, Queen's University, 1994).

[2] Virginia Lieson Brereton, *Training God's Army: The American Bible School, 1880-1940* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), pp.41-42; Bedford dissertation, p.28; Reid dissertation, pp.54-55.

had told him that they could not afford to send him to college like his older brother, he was determined to fulfil that ambition.

While attending high school at Chatham young Simpson suffered a severe nervous breakdown that was brought on by a number of factors. Like many Presbyterians at the time he was troubled over whether he was one of the elect. His fears of eternal damnation were heightened when he almost drowned while trying to swim. Shortly afterwards, he attended a revival meeting conducted by the Rev. H. Grattan Guinness, a British evangelist known for his apocalyptic predictions. That night, while walking home through a forest after the service, Simpson became lost and came across some Indian graves which had been broken open. The experience of seeing the exposed bodies shocked him and he became further distressed. After his father found him wandering in the woods and brought him home, Albert underwent another crisis which he has described:

> Then came a fearful crash in which it seemed to me the very heavens were falling. After retiring one night suddenly a star appeared to blaze before my eyes; and as I gazed, my nerves gave way. I sprang from my bed trembling and almost fainting with a sense of impending death, and then fell into a congestive chill of great violence that lasted all night and almost took my life. A physician told me that I must not look at a book for a whole year for my nervous system had collapsed, and I was in the greatest danger. There followed a period of mental and physical agony which no language can describe. I was possessed with the idea that at a certain hour I was to die; and every day as that hour drew near, I became prostrated with dreadful nervousness, watching in agonizing suspense till the hour passed, and wondering that I was still alive.[3]

Simpson was in that state for ten months and then turned for solace to a theological work which painted a different picture of God than the one he knew. Later he reflected, "My whole religious training had left me without any conception of the sweet and simple Gospel of Jesus Christ. The God I knew was a being of great severity...."[4] That book explained that he only had to believe in Jesus as his Saviour and his salvation was assured. With that assurance Simpson's mental health returned to him. Thus, "Jesus as Saviour" became the first plank of his later Four-Fold Gospel.

With his health restored Simpson went on to complete his high school diploma and obtained with it a licence to teach school. At sixteen he began teaching in order to raise money for his college education. Then, in October 1861, he appeared before the Presbytery in London to be examined as a prospective theological student and from there he went on to Knox College in Toronto where he was given advanced placement in the Arts program.

Simpson did well at Knox College and won a number of awards. Upon graduation in 1865 he was offered positions in Dundas and Hamilton. He chose the latter and in September 1865 became the minister of Knox Presbyterian Church, then the second largest Presbyterian church in Canada.[5]

---

[3] Cited in Thompson, p.15. See also A.B. Simpson, *The Gospel of Healing* (Harrisburg, Penn.: Christian Publications, Inc., 1915), p.155.

[4] Thompson, pp. 15-16.

[5] *Hamilton Spectator*, 13 Sept. 1865, p. 2.

Under Simpson's ministry Knox Presbyterian Church grew quickly. He worked hard in his parish and during his time there 750 new members were added.[6] But he had worked so hard that he over-extended himself. His health broke in 1869 and again in 1871. He had a terrible fear of heights and often became very anxious in the pulpit or at the side of an open grave, fearing that he was going to fall.[7] In 1871 he was forced to take a four-month extended vacation to Europe to restore his health. Upon his return he ministered in Hamilton until November 1873 when he received a call to the Chestnut Street Presbyterian Church in Louisville, Kentucky.

Shortly after arriving in Louisville Simpson underwent another emotional crisis. He longed for a deeper spiritual life and sought sanctification, the mystical experience of being made holy. In his search he was highly influenced by a book by W.E. Boardman, one of the founders of the Keswick movement,[8] and another book given to him by a friend, a woman in his church who became a "kindred spirit" in pursuing holiness. He described the latter book as an "old medieval message."[9] Subsequent research has shown it to have been a collection of writings by seventeenth century Quietists such as Madame Guyon, Archbishop Fénelon, and Miguel de Molinos, edited by two Quakers.[10] The central theme of the book was "that God was waiting in the depths of my being to talk to me if I would only get still enough to hear His voice."[11]

Simpson was drawn to this means of divine illumination which had been taught by Madame Guyon. About ten years later he reflected on his quest:

> I thought this would be a very easy matter, and so I began to get still. But I had no sooner commenced than a perfect pandemonium of voices reached my ears, until I could hear nothing but their noise and din. Some of them were my own voice, some of them were my own questions, some of them were my own cares, and some of them were my own prayers. Others were suggestions of the tempter and voices from the world's turmoil. Never before did there seem so many things to be done, to be said, to be thought; and in every direction I was pushed, and pulled, and greeted with noisy acclamations and unspeakable unrest. It seemed necessary for me to listen to some of them, and to answer some of them, but God said, "Be still, and know that I am God." Then came the conflict of thoughts for the morrow, and its duties and cares, but God said, "Be still." And as I listened and slowly learned to obey and shut my ears to every sound, I found after awhile that the other voices ceased, or I ceased to hear them, there was a still, small voice in the depths of my being that began to speak with an inexpressible tenderness, power and comfort. As I listened it became to me the voice of prayer, and the voice of wisdom, and the voice of duty. I did not need to think so hard, or pray so hard, or trust so hard, but that "still small voice" of the Holy Spirit in my heart was God's prayer in my secret soul, was God's answer to all my questions, was God's life and strength for soul and body, and became the substance of all

---

[6] Thompson, pp. 50-51.

[7] Simpson, *The Gospel of Healing*, pp. 156-157.

[8] Niklaus *et al.*, pp. 7 and 277.

[9] A.B. Simpson, *The Holy Spirit or Power From On High* (Harrisburg: Christian Publications, Inc., 1895), pp.160-162.

[10] See Dwayne Ratzlaff, "An Old Medieval Message: A Turning Point in the Life of A.B. Simpson," in Hartzfeld and Nienkirchen, eds., pp.165-172. The book has since been identified as *A Guide to True Peace or The Excellency of Inward and Spiritual Prayer.* See Charles W. Nienkirchen, A.B. Simpson and the Pentecostal Movement, pp.10-11.

[11] Simpson, *The Holy Spirit*, Vol. 1, p. 161.

knowledge, and all prayer, and all blessing; for it was the living God Himself as my Life and my All.[12]

Simpson began to promote the works of Guyon and Fénelon.[13] From their books and his experiences Simpson came to believe that sanctification was a gift of God, not self-perfectionism. It came about by a consecration or a deliberate separation from sin, "death to self," and a dedication to God.[14] Christ became the sanctifier, not man himself, because Christ was now actually living within the body of the Christian.[15] Thus the second plank — Christ the Sanctifier — of his Four-Fold Gospel was formed.

Armed with this new understanding, Simpson was instrumental in arranging in 1875 a revival campaign conducted by D.L. Moody's associates: Major Daniel Whittle and the singer and song-writer Phillip Bliss, who was known for his sentimental gospel songs filled with personal pronouns. Also associated with the revival was Robert Pearsall Smith, who would soon launch the Keswick movement.[16]

During the revival Simpson added the third plank to his distinctive theology. He became a convinced premillennialist following the historicist interpretations of H. Grattan Guinness and A.J. Gordon, who viewed the papacy as the Antichrist and Islam as the False Prophet. Like Guinness he also attempted to set dates for the return of Christ, which he felt was imminent. Simpson also mixed in some aspects of dispensationalism, such as the pre-tribulation Rapture, but then he added another twist. He taught a partial Rapture based on the parable of the ten virgins (Matt. 25: 1-13). Only those Christians who had experienced the baptism of the Holy Spirit (another term he used for sanctification), would be spirited out of the world. The rest of the Christian community would have to experience the Tribulation , a period of time which he did not restrict to seven years.[17]

The revival meetings of Whittle, Bliss and Smith in Louisville had brought a high degree of religious unity to the city, but it was short-lived. While the revival was going on, most of the churches had co-operated by cancelling their Sunday evening services and joining together in the theologically neutral Public Library Hall. After the revival was officially over, Simpson tried to extend its impact by having the Sunday evening union services continue at the Public Library. When the ministerial association refused to go along with the plan, Simpson cancelled his own evening services at Chestnut Street Presbyterian Church and held them at the Public Library Hall. This created much opposition from the other clergy. Later, when he could no longer rent the Public Library Hall, he moved his services to a theatre. As Simpson continued with his revival meetings his theology and sense of worship became less and less Presbyterian; in place of hymns he stressed the gospel songs of Bliss, Sankey and himself. Because of the great crowds he was drawing, Simpson wanted to build a new utilitarian building. That decision

---

[12] *Ibid.*, pp. 161-162.

[13] Nienkirchen, *A.B. Simpson and the Pentecostal Movement*, p. 10.

[14] A. B. Simpson, *The Four-Fold Gospel* (Harrisburg: Christian Publications, Inc., 1887), pp. 27-46.

[15] Thompson, pp. 66-71.

[16] Samuel J. Stoesz, "The Doctrine of Sanctification in the Thought of A.B. Simpson," in Hartzfeld and Nienkirchen, eds., p.112; Reid dissertation, p.434.

[17] Simpson, *The Holy Spirit,* Vol. 2, pp.29-36. For a further discussion of Simpson's eschatology, see Franklin Arthur Pyles, "The Missionary Eschatology of A.B. Simpson," in Hartzfeld and Nienkirchen, eds., pp.29-47.

caused a schism in his church and the dissenters left. In spite of the conflict the project continued.

The pace at which Simpson drove himself, the church conflicts which he generated, and his own marital conflicts took their toll. In 1877 he had a complete physical and nervous breakdown. This had followed a suspicious hunting accident. He spent almost half a year at the mental sanatorium at Clifton Springs, N.Y. where Robert Pearsall Smith had also been treated.[18] Simpson offered his resignation to the church but it was not accepted.

While Simpson was away from Louisville the building plans took on a more elaborate form than Simpson wanted. Eventually the new building, which was called Broadway Tabernacle, cost $105,000 and was heavily mortgaged. Simpson demanded that the congregation pay off the debt immediately. When they would not, or could not, he refused to dedicate the building and accept his salary.

In 1878, through the influence of another Presbyterian minister A.T. Pierson, Simpson became involved with the Plymouth Brethren oriented Believers' Meeting for Bible Study.[19] Soon he began talking about going to China as a missionary. His obsessions caused further conflicts with his wife who regarded him as a lunatic; she refused to go to China.[20]

As Simpson began to change the order of worship to a more Plymouth Brethren form, the conflict between himself and the Session apparently resulted in his resignation in November 1879. His wife was furious with his actions. The marital turmoil became so intense that she reported that "a glint of murder was in his eyes."[21]

Simpson left Kentucky for New York City where he accepted the pulpit of Thirteenth Street Presbyterian Church. Christian and Missionary Alliance historiography suggests that he had chosen that city because there he could become more easily involved in foreign mission work. Soon after arriving he launched what appears to have been the first illustrated foreign missions magazine.[22]

In spite of the success of that magazine and the impact he was having in his evangelistic activities, Simpson continued to have difficulties within his own home as well as disputes with the Session. His wife Margaret had opposed his move to New York City and his visionary activities, such as the missions magazine, which often used up the family budget.[23] Their relationship became increasingly strained and in his diary Simpson referred to her hatred of him. Simpson saw the hand of Satan in his marriage difficulties.[24]

Simpson withdrew more and more from his family and sought solace in his mysticism. He recorded, in a fashion reminiscent of the Nova Scotia mystic Henry Alline,

---

[18] Reid dissertation, p. 331.
[19] *Ibid.*, p. 348.
[20] *Ibid.*, p. 351; Bedford dissertation, p. 56.
[21] Reid, pp. 358-360.
[22] Tozer, p. 94.
[23] Nicklaus *et al.*, pp. 33-38, 278-279.
[24] Reid, pp. 435-436.

that "Jesus has been to me a husband today and yesterday and has often ravished my soul with his love."[25]

The disputes in the church occurred when he tried to impose his own vision of holiness and evangelism upon the congregation. The first involved his attempt to stop dances at young people's functions. The next occurred when he attempted to extend the church's ministry to the poor and the immigrants. He won many converts, but the Session was not prepared to welcome the lower classes into its membership. Under such stresses at home and at work he suffered another complete physical and nervous breakdown. He feared he was on the verge of death.[26]

In order to get help Simpson again went to the sanatorium at Clifton Springs.[27] Next he visited a health spa at Saratoga Springs, but continued to be very depressed. However, there he happened upon a Negro revival meeting and his spirits were lifted by the songs. In August 1881, while visiting a vacation spot at Old Orchard, Maine, Simpson attended faith healing meetings being conducted by Dr. Charles Cullis, who had been involved in establishing the Keswick holiness movement. Simpson came to believe that healing was part of the atonement of Christ. Christ had died not only for human's sin, but also for their sickness. After praying, Simpson claimed he was miraculously healed of heart disease. To prove his healing to himself he went out and climbed a mountain.[28] Thus, divine healing became the fourth plank in his distinctive theology. His Four-Fold Gospel was: Jesus as Saviour, Sanctifier, Healer, and Coming King.[29]

When Simpson returned to New York City divine healing became the new emphasis in his preaching. There was a strong dualism in Simpson's thinking for he believed that most sickness occurred as a result of the Devil's activity.[30] Since sickness was a spiritual matter, it could be cured by prayer; medicines were unnecessary for Christians who could trust God for their healing. Eye glasses were also dispensed with.

When his daughter was critically ill with diphtheria Simpson dismissed the doctor and resorted only to prayer. This created more family tensions.[31] He claimed she was cured by this method. However, when one of his associates did the same with his child, the child died. Later Simpson stated that when children were sick, regular medical means should be used as well, in order to avoid problems with the legal authorities.[32] Still holding to his views on divine healing, he stated that those who could not trust their healing to God should rely on all that science had to offer them. He remarked that "we

---

[25] Cited in Brereton, p. 45.

[26] Thompson, p. 74.

[27] Bedford, p. 73.

[28] Simpson, *The Gospel of Healing*, pp. 161-169.

[29] Simpson, *The Four-Fold Gospel*, pp.47-67. For Simpson's belief that healing was in the atonement see his *How to Receive Divine Healing* (Harrisburg: Christian Publications, Inc., c.1885), pp.2-3.

[30] Simpson, *The Gospel of Healing*, pp. 30-31, 87, 100-101.

[31] Bedford, p. 80.

[32] Thompson, pp.140-141 and John V. Dahms, "The Social Interest and Concern of A.B. Simpson," in Hartzfeld and Nienkirchen. eds., p.55.

should not set ourselves against health laws for the protection of the community, nor make ourselves obnoxious to society because we know a better way."[33]

Simpson added another aspect to his theology in the fall of 1881. He came to reject infant baptism, and in October 1881 he was himself immersed by a Baptist minister.[34] Because he now refused to perform any more infant baptisms and because of his views on divine healing, the Presbytery would not allow him to conduct any more worship and communion services.[35] Simpson resigned from the church in November 1881 and from the Presbyterian denomination altogether. Friends thought he was crazy giving up his position.[36] His wife was again very distressed at his actions and his older brother advised her to divorce him.[37]

That same month Simpson established an independent ministry called the Gospel Tabernacle where he could present his Four-Fold Gospel to all classes of society. He started with seven people and they met in halls, tents, and theatres. Refusing to take a salary he and his family, which included four children, lived off the generosity of his friends. It was not long before his new congregation had an actual membership of 217, with about 700 attending his Sunday evening services.[38] Membership was open to all Christians, but Simpson would only baptize adult believers.

Another of Simpson's innovations was the acceptance of women as elders.[39] Women played a great role in his enterprises and within his theology there was the possibility for the ordination of women.[40] Simpson supported women's suffrage and worked with Frances Willard, the noted feminist and founder of the Women's Christian Temperance Union. Many of his supporters were involved in rescue mission work, established orphanages, and created homes for the reform of prostitutes.

Besides evangelism and social service, Simpson's practice of divine healing attracted many people. He was faced by a steady stream of those seeking healing. He had gained a reputation as a faith healer, although he preferred the term divine healing, since he believed that the healing did not depend upon the faith of the seeker, but rather that it was a product of sanctification. He wrote, "We are healed by the life of Christ in our body. It is a tender union with Him; nearer than the bond of connubial oneness; so near that the very life of His veins is transfused into ours. That is divine healing."[41]

In 1883, to facilitate the many demands for prayer and anointing with oil, Simpson converted his own home into a clinic for Faith and Physical Healing, much to the

---

[33] Simpson, *Four-Fold Gospel*, pp.47-48. See also A.B. Simpson, *The Old Faith and the New Gospels* (New York: Alliance Press Company, 1911), p.103.

[34] Thompson, pp. 85-86; Niklaus *et al.*, pp. 43-44.

[35] Niklaus *et al.*, p. 45.

[36] Brereton, p. 47.

[37] Bedford, p. 318.

[38] Thompson, p. 93.

[39] Tozer, p. 91.

[40] See William H. Howland, "Women Preaching: A Sign of the Last Days," Faithful Witness, 14 June 1890, reproduced in Lindsay Reynolds, *Footprints: The Beginnings of the Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada* (Toronto: Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada, 1981), pp.543-550. See also Leslie A. Andrews, "Restricted Freedom: A.B. Simpson's View of Women," in Hartzfeld and Nienkirchen, eds., pp.219-240.

[41] Simpson, *The Four-Fold Gospel*, p. 61.

consternation of his long-suffering wife.[42] Additional healing homes were opened by some of his disciples.

Another aspect of Simpson's Gospel Tabernacle was its interest in foreign missions. This was related to Simpson's eschatology because he believed that the return of Christ would be hastened if the peoples of the world were evangelized.[43] Simpson's rejection of the established denominations and their efforts was further demonstrated in 1882 when he started another illustrated foreign missions magazine to promote the independent "faith" missions. In 1883 he organized the Missionary Union for the Evangelization of the World and several months later he opened a Missionary Training College in New York City to train missionaries for home and foreign missions. It was modelled after similar institutions which H. Grattan Guinness had established in London, England and a short-lived one which Dr. Cullis had started in Boston several years earlier.[44] Simpson's college school became the mother and/or model for many of the Bible Colleges and Bible Institutes that soon dotted the landscape of North America.

At first the course of study at Simpson's missionary college was a short-term affair lasting between six months and a year. The focus was not to provide an education or to teach theology, but rather to inculcate Simpson's brand of spirituality into the students.[45] Later the program was extended to three years and became more academically oriented.

Simpson also reached out to the black community. Ever since the revival meetings in Louisville he had tried to attract Negroes to his meetings. Believing that blacks could best evangelize the African tribes, he established several mission colleges for blacks. However, racial prejudice in North America, and the refusal of colonial governments to allow black missionaries to enter their countries because they might disturb the social order, militated against the plan. There were, however, some very successful black Alliance congregations in North America.[46]

As Simpson's fame spread he began to address holiness and healing conferences in Britain, Canada, and across the eastern and mid-western United States. By 1886 he was holding his own conferences at Old Orchard, Maine. Those who spoke at his meetings represented the core of the Keswick faith mission and premillennial leadership, many of whom shaped twentieth-century evangelicalism and fundamentalism: Andrew Murray, H. Grattan Guiness, F.B. Meyer, J. Hudson Taylor, A.J. Gordon, A.T. Pierson, R.A. Torrey, George F. Pentecost, D.L. Moody, Major Whittle, James A. Brookes, W.E. Blackstone, C.I. Scofield, Nathaniel West, James M. Gray, Charles A. Blanchard, J. Wilbur Chapman, A.C. Dixon, William Bell Riley, Charles G. Trumbull and Frances E. Willard.[47]

---

[42] Tozer, p. 107.

[43] Simpson, *The Four-Fold Gospel*, pp. 92-93; Thompson, p. 111.

[44] See W.H. Daniels, ed. *Dr. Cullis and His Work: Twenty Years of Blessing in Answer to Prayer* (Boston: Willard Tract Depository, 1885), p.359.

[45] Jacob P. Klassen, "A.B. Simpson and the Tensions in the Preparation of Missionaries," in Hartzfeld and Nienkirchen, eds., pp.241-242.

[46] For the role of blacks in the Simpson's movement see Norris Magnuson, *Salvation in the Slums: Evangelical Social Work, 1865-1920* (Metuchen: The Scarecrow Press, 1977), pp.121-123 and Niklaus et al., pp.167-171.

[47] Thompson, p. 110.

In 1887 Simpson founded two organizations at the Old Orchard conference grounds. The Christian Alliance was dedicated to teaching the Four-Fold Gospel. He claimed that it was not intended as a new denomination but rather as a fellowship of those Christians who held to those beliefs.[48] The other organization, the Evangelical Missionary Alliance, was to send out foreign missionaries and it was supported by the Christian Alliance.

Most of the early missionaries whom Simpson sent out died from disease en route or shortly after their arrival.[49] This seems to have been due to poor training, poor planning, or the prevalent attitude among Alliance members who dismissed medicines.[50] For this he received harsh criticism from the evangelical community.[51]

As well as sending out missionaries, Simpson was organizing branches of the Christian Alliance across the United States. The first organizational meeting in Canada was held in Hamilton in 1889, but Toronto became the headquarters. He found support among marginal Anglicans, Presbyterians, Methodists, Salvationists, and Plymouth Brethren.[52] The leaders of the Canadian Alliance were the Rev. John Salmon and Toronto's mayor William H. Howland.

Both Salmon and Howland became vice-presidents of Simpson's international organization in New York City. Other prominent Canadians involved in the Alliance were William Christie, the biscuit king of Canada; Charles Wilson, ginger ale manufacturer; Manton Treadgold, the mayor of Brampton; and Dr. Jenny K. Trout, the first licensed female medical doctor in Canada and leader of the Women's Christian Temperance Union and the Association for the Advancement of Women.[53]

Although the leadership of the Alliance in Canada was middle-class, its appeal was directed at the lower classes. Its branches held their meetings in homes, halls, storefronts, and abandoned churches. The movement was strongest in Ontario. Simpson made repeated trips to Canada to visit the Alliance branches and to speak at anniversary services of his former church, Knox Presbyterian, in Hamilton. He also held meetings and founded Alliance missions in Vancouver and Winnipeg.

In 1897 Simpson amalgamated the Christian Alliance and the Evangelical Missionary Alliance into the Christian and Missionary Alliance. Later that year Simpson moved his Missionary Training College and healing centre to Nyack, New York, where there was more space and solitude. There he built a new home. He also acquired a good deal of property in the hopes of creating a Christian community for members of his Alliance movement, but the project failed financially and Simpson himself absorbed the loss.[54]

The new Christian and Missionary Alliance, of which Simpson was president, soon took on the characteristics of a denomination. The former Alliance branches organized into churches, ordained clergy, baptized members, and administered communion. The organizational structure tended to be presbyterian, with major decisions being made by

---

[48] *Ibid*, pp. 128-129.

[49] Bedford, pp. 323-331.

[50] Roland V. Bingham, "The Bible and the Body," *The Evangelical Christian and Missionary Witness,* May 1920, p.140.

[51] Klassen, p. 254.

[52] See Reynolds, pp. 106ff.

[53] *Ibid.*, pp. 159-160.

[54] Tozer, p. 108.

the assembled delegates at the annual conventions. This move alienated the Plymouth Brethren members and led to their defection.

Another schism occurred after Pentecostalism made its appearance. Charles F. Parham who created the Pentecostal movement at Topeka, Kansas had been influenced by Simpson.[55] Quite a number of Alliance members were favourable to the pentecostal practice of "speaking in tongues," including vice-president of the Alliance, John Salmon, who experienced it.[56] In his 1907 diary entries Simpson himself struggled with the issue:

> While preaching on Daniel, it came to me, like to him, to set apart a time for prayer and fasting that God would specially bless the work entrusted to me and give me a special anointing of the Holy Ghost. I was the more led to do this in view of the approaching Council, May 29, and the special movement of the Holy Spirit abroad today, that God would show His will about it, and give to me all He has for me — and also for the work.
>
> After one week of waiting on God I could not stop, but continued two, three [days], and up to the Council, and indeed with slight interruptions ever since.
>
> I noted first a quiet but real quickening in my own soul, and great blessing in the Council. God kept us united, and at the close manifested Himself in some of the meetings in a very unusual way. There were several cases of the Gift of Tongues and other extra-ordinary manifestations, some of which were certainly genuine, while others appeared to partake somewhat of the individual peculiarities and eccentricities of the subjects; so that I saw not only the working of the Spirit, but also a very distinct human element, not always edifying or profitable.... At the same time I could not question the reality of the gifts, and I was led to pray much about it, and for God's highest will and glory in connection with it.[57]

In Simpson's definition "speaking in tongues" elevated "the soul above the ordinary modes and expressions of reason and utterance."[58] As Simpson definitely sought to "speak in tongues" he recorded a number of mystical experiences in his diary.

> On the closing Saturday of the Nyack Convention I received, as I waited in the after meeting, a distinct touch of the mighty power of the Holy Spirit — a kind of breaking through, accompanied by a sense of awe and a lighting up of my senses. It was as if a wedge of light and power were being driven through my inmost being and I was all broken open. I welcomed it and felt disappointed when the meeting was abruptly closed by the leader, for I was conscious of a peculiar power resting upon us all and continuing to fill me. I carried it home with me, and for several days the deep sense remained as a sort of "weight of love," in addition to the ordinary and quiet sense of God I have felt so long.[59]

About two weeks later he noted in his diary:

> At the same time I pressed upon Him a new claim for a Mighty Baptism of the Holy Ghost in His complete Pentecostal fullness embracing all the gifts and graces of the Spirit for my special need at this time and for the new conditions and needs of my life and work.

---

[55] See Charles Nienkirchen, "A.B. Simpson: Forerunner and Critic of the Pentecostal Movement," in Hartzfeld and Nienkirchen, eds., p.126, and his book, *A.B. Simpson and the Pentecostal Movement*, pp.26-33.

[56] Edith L. Blumhofer, *Restoring the Faith: The Assemblies of God, Pentecostalism, and American Culture* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), p.78.

[57] Simpson's diary, May 1907, copy obtained from Canadian Theological Seminary Archives, Regina.

[58] Nienkirchen, "A.B. Simpson: Forerunner and Critic of the Pentecostal Movement," p.142.

[59] Simpson's diary, 28 July 1907.

> He met me as I lay upon my face before Him with a distinct illumination, and then as the Presence began to fade and I cried out for Him to stay, He bade me believe and take it all by simple faith as I had taken my healing 26 years before. I did so, and was enabled definitely to believe and claim it all and rest in Him.[60]

In September 1907, while in Hamilton celebrating the anniversary of his ordination there forty-two years before, he made a curious entry in his diary: "Asked God to accept my offering and ordain me anew. The Spirit came with a baptism of holy laughter for an hour or more and I am waiting for all He had yet to give and manifest."[61] [Could we call this the "Hamilton blessing"?] Five years later Simpson was still seeking to "speak in tongues" but it had not happened.

> No extraordinary manifestation of the Spirit in tongues or similar gifts has come. Many of my friends have received such manifestations, but mine has still been a life of fellowship and service. At all times my spirit has been open to God for anything He might be pleased to reveal or bestow.[62]

Because Simpson was open to the Pentecostals' definition of "speaking in tongues" it quickly spread throughout his movement. A number of churches in his association were called Full Gospel Churches.[63] However, Simpson was opposed to the attitude within Pentecostalism, which claimed "speaking in tongues" as a must for all Spirit-filled Christians.[64] As a result, a number of ministers and congregations of the Alliance withdrew and joined the Assemblies of God or other pentecostal groups. The Christian and Missionary Alliance therefore further tightened its denominational control in 1912. Branch churches and organizations were persuaded to incorporate a clause into their constitutions which said that if they ever departed from the Alliance creed their property would revert to the Alliance headquarters in New York City.[65]

Although Simpson died before the major battles of the modernist/fundamentalist controversy occurred, early in the century he was showing the militancy and separatism which later characterized fundamentalism. In his 1911 book *The Old Faith and the New Gospels*, he spoke out strongly against the theory of evolution,[66] Social Darwinism, biblical criticism, and theological liberalism. He denounced the existing schools, colleges, and seminaries and suggested the creation of new educational institutions.[67]

Simpson also attacked modernism and religious syncretism among the denominational foreign missionaries and called for the diversion of funds to the independent missionary societies.

> The New Thought and Higher Criticism of our time have invaded our Boards of Missions and perverted many of the missionaries themselves. Liberal thought on the Mission fields has at length begun to trifle with the old faith and to join hands with that which is good, so called, in the religions of the East, an unholy alliance which God forbids just as much as the alliances of Israel with the Canaan world. The spread of this leaven has

---

[60] *Ibid.*, 9 August 1907.
[61] *Ibid.*, 12 September 1907.
[62] *Ibid.*, 6 October 1912.
[63] Pardington, pp. 93, 118.
[64] Reynolds, p.567 quoting *The Christian and Missionary Alliance*, April 1910, p.78.
[65] Niklaus *et al.*, pp. 116-117.
[66] Simpson, *The Old Faith and the New Gospels*, pp.12-14. Simpson accepted Darwin's view of natural selection as being operative in nature, but maintained the special creation of humans.
[67] *Ibid*, pp. 156-157.

been so rapid that God is visiting it with a serious financial blight in the missionary resources of the great Missionary Societies.

Men of wealth who still believe the Bible refuse to contribute to societies that dishonour Christ and compromise the truth. We cannot blame them. But this makes the necessity all the greater for those who do believe the Bible to give a true Gospel to the heathen world. Those societies who do stand for the Scriptures in their integrity, the deity, death and resurrection of our blessed Lord, and the supernatural in personal religion, are summoned as never before to strengthen their stakes and lengthen their cords and give to the heathen world the first principles of the Gospel of Christ, the only true foundation of faith and hope.[68]

Premillennial pessimism came to dominate Simpson's thought, and he moved away from his earlier interest in Christian social work. In 1897 he wrote:

> Philanthropic schemes and social reforms are absorbing the interest and enthusiasm of thousands of redeemed men and women who ought to be giving their strength and wealth to do the best things and not the second best. We admit there is something good in these enterprises. They have a place and a value, but let the world take care of them.... There... are plenty of people to run social reform and temperance societies; plenty of people to fight the political battle. God wants you to give the gospel to the world, to rise to the higher calling, to do the best things.[69]

Of those evangelical social workers studied by Norris Magnuson,[70] Simpson became the most reactionary and exemplified the "great reversal" in evangelical social attitudes. While some in the Salvation Army saw socialism as an answer to the plight of the poor and worked towards international peace, Simpson attacked socialism and linked it with modernist theology.[71]

Contemporary critics of Simpson's healing theology noted that his theories did not work out in his own life. In 1917 Simpson suffered a stroke or a heart attack. It appeared linked to his excitement at learning that General Allenby had captured Jerusalem; it seemed to Simpson that biblical prophecy was about to unfold.[72] During his final years he had to resort to eyeglasses, which he had earlier cast off as being unnecessary for a person of "the spirit". He was again afflicted by a deep depression and gradually had to relinquish his control over the Alliance organization. During the final years of his life he was hospitalized again at the Clifton Springs Sanatorium.[73] He died there in 1919.

A.B. Simpson left behind him a legacy of 101 published books — consisting of biographies, collections of sermons, commentaries, and hymn books — which the Christian and Missionary Alliance continues to reprint.[74] He composed about 181 hymns of varied quality. Even A.W. Tozer, his biographer, found some of them to be

---

[68] *Ibid.*, pp. 159-160.

[69] Simpson quoted by John W. Dahms, "The Social Interest and Concern of A.B. Simpson," p.49. Overall, Dahms's article is not very convincing for most of his examples of Simpson's social concern occurred before the above quotation.

[70] Norris Magnuson, *Salvation in the Slums.*

[71] Simpson, *The Old Faith and the New Gospels*, pp.63-65, 119-132.

[72] Nienkirchen, *A.B. Simpson and the Pentecostal Movement,* p.56.

[73] Roland V. Bingham, "A Great Leader Taken," *The Evangelical Christian and Missionary Witness*, Dec. 1919, p.367; "The Bible and the Body," *ibid.*, May 1920, p.139; "The Subject of Healing," *ibid.*, June 1920, p.172.

[74] See John Savin, "Publications of Albert B. Simpson," in Hartzfeld and Nienkirchen, eds., pp.279-303.

unsingable;[75] others intended to soothe were set to marching tunes. Yet, Simpson's hymns played a great role in the worship services of the sect. Most of their themes dealt with his belief in sanctification, foreign missions, and the Second Coming.[76] One of the better known songs is "Jesus Loves the Little Children."

While Simpson created his own distinctive theology, he was not doctrinaire about it within his international organizations. Quite a bit of latitude on eschatology, divine healing, and "speaking in tongues" was allowed. Moreover, his doctrine of divine union with Christ, or "habitarianism," laid some of the theoretical groundwork for the anti-Trinitarian "Jesus Only" or "Oneness" theology which became popular in some Pentecostal circles.[77] While his theological distinctives would have alienated him from some fundamentalists, his views did have a great impact upon pentecostalism,[78] faith missions, and a number of Canadian and American fundamentalists including Aimee Semple McPherson, Roland V. Bingham, L.E. Maxwell and Oswald J. Smith.

A.B. Simpson's pilgrimage from Presbyterian minister to sectarian appears to have been very tied to his emotional difficulties. He sought solace in mysticism, but the very individualistic nature of mysticism which seeks direct union with God, unencumbered by outside influences of church, session, presbytery or even the Bible, led him into highly questionable theology, domestic troubles, and ultimately schism.

---

[75] Tozer, pp. 117-118.

[76] Eugene Rivard, "Rediscovering the Music of A.B. Simpson," in Hartzfeld and Nienkirchen, eds., pp.75-105.

[77] Nienkirchen, *A.B. Simpson and the Pentecostal Movement*, pp.46-50. See also D.A. Reed, "Oneness Pentecostalism," in Stanley M. Burgess, Gary B. McGee and Patrick H. Alexander, eds., *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1988), pp.644-651.

[78] See Blumhofer, *Restoring the Faith.*

unsingable;[75] others intended to soothe were set to marching tunes. Yet, Simpson's hymns played a great role in the worship services of the sect. Most of their themes dealt with his belief in sanctification, foreign missions, and the Second Coming.[76] One of the better known songs is "Jesus Loves the Little Children."

While Simpson created his own distinctive theology, he was not doctrinaire about it within his international organizations. Quite a bit of latitude on eschatology, divine healing, and "speaking in tongues" was allowed. Moreover, his doctrine of divine union with Christ, or "habitarianism," laid some of the theoretical groundwork for the anti-Trinitarian "Jesus Only" or "Oneness" theology which became popular in some Pentecostal circles.[77] While his theological distinctives would have alienated him from some fundamentalists, his views did have a great impact upon pentecostalism,[78] faith missions, and a number of Canadian and American fundamentalists including Aimee Semple McPherson, Roland V. Bingham, L.E. Maxwell and Oswald J. Smith.

A.B. Simpson's pilgrimage from Presbyterian minister to sectarian appears to have been very tied to his emotional difficulties. He sought solace in mysticism, but the very individualistic nature of mysticism which seeks direct union with God, unencumbered by outside influences of church, session, presbytery or even the Bible, led him into highly questionable theology, domestic troubles, and ultimately schism.

---

[75] Tozer, pp. 117-118.

[76] Eugene Rivard, "Rediscovering the Music of A.B. Simpson," in Hartzfeld and Nienkirchen, eds., pp.75-105.

[77] Nienkirchen, *A.B. Simpson and the Pentecostal Movement*, pp.46-50. See also D.A. Reed, "Oneness Pentecostalism," in Stanley M. Burgess, Gary B. McGee and Patrick H. Alexander, eds., *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1988), pp.644-651.

[78] See Blumhofer, *Restoring the Faith.*

A Presbyterian Mission in Industrial Hamilton Becomes a Church, 1913-1926

George Addison
Queen's University

The streetscape around St. David's Presbyterian Church on Wentworth Street North in Hamilton contrasted sharply with the affluent commercial and residential neighbourhoods that surrounded Presbyterian churches in the central, east and southern parts of the city. Only a few streets lined with modest working-class homes surrounded St. David's when it was established at the end of World War I. But within a few blocks were some of the major industries of Hamilton. To the north was the harbourfront complex of buildings of International Harvester. To the west was the Otis Elevator factory. To the south were three city blocks of buildings housing Westinghouse manufacturing facilities. To the east and north stretch miles of buildings and yards of the Steel Company of Canada.

St. David's Presbyterian Church and its predecessor, the Hamilton City Mission (1913-1919) [1] ministered to working-class people in this industrial setting. Even the style of its building stands in contrast to the middle-and upper-class churhes to the south. Where churches like Central Presbyterian, St. Paul's Presbyterian, and MacNab Street Presbyterian Churches had grand, spacious sanctuaries and towers, St. David's building is much more modest in style and size. Its Sunday School building, however, was much larger than its sanctuary, indicating the orientation of this congregation's mission in the North End of Hamilton.

This paper examines the history of St. David's in three parts: first, its early history as a mission to immigrants (1912-19); second, church life and culture in the postwar period (1919-26); and third, its stand on the controversy surrounding church union in 1925. In each of these periods, the congregational life and class encounters in this "blue collar church" provide important insights into the culture and religion of the Scottish immigrant workers who settled in the industrial North End of Hamilton before and after World War I.

During the 50 years prior to World War I, Hamilton passed from a commercial to an industrial city, transforming institutions and changing its character in many ways. Not the least change was in the city's religious life. Hamilton was a city of many churches: as the population and wealth of the city expanded, new congregations were established and new church buildings constructed. Church architecture in Hamilton reflected the optimistic spirit of the dominant classes of the "Ambitious City": their churches were spacious and elegant, with great spires and towers reflecting both their vision of the grandeur of God, and also the wealth of the leading financial supporters.

---

[1] The Hamilton City Mission is sometimes referred to as the "Wentworth Street Mission" and the "Caroline Street Mission" in some of the church records.

But another style of church also developed in this period. Growing out of missions to poor working class people, often new immigrants attracted by Hamilton's industrial jobs, a number of more modest working-class churches were established, reflecting not only the fact that all classes of the population were deeply influenced by religion at the time, but also the fact that many working people expressed their religiosity with an independent spirit in their own distinctive churches.

As these churches were established and experienced their formative years, a rich, working-class religious culture developed. This culture reflected both the religious culture *and* the culture of the working class in Hamilton. The cast of characters included activist Protestant businessmen, radical clergy, dedicated Sunday School teachers, and self-educated immigrants. These churches' activities, worship style, as well as the attitudes and language of their people, demark them as a particular religious culture, different from the established middle-class churches in the city, and playing a distinctive role in their working-class neighbourhoods.

In this study, the term "culture" means a set of ideas, beliefs and attitudes through which a group of people interpret their lives. As historian William Westfall put it, culture is "a pattern of interpretation for organizaing the unstructured data of life."[2] In this sense, cultures can coexist and compete with one another in a social setting.

"Religion" in this study refers to more than the sacred rituals, symbols, practices and prayers of the churches at the time. Religion also refers to the ultimate values and beliefs of ordinary people, whether or not they are connected to a religious institution. As American historian Robert Anthony Orsi described popular religion in Italian Harlem, "religion means 'what matters'."[3]

In this study, the term "class" will refer to the position of people in relation to the means of production. Thus, working-class people are for the most part wage-earners and their families. Within the working class there are various layers of people who may be differentiated by level of skill, income, ethnic origin or religion.

A study of a working-class church offers to the social historian a valuable lens to examine the complex life and culture both within the working class, and among the churches of the city.

Historiographic questions

The study of working-class churches necessarily occupies territory at the intersection of two important movements in recent historiography: on the one hand, the new social history of religion; on the other, the new social history of labour and the working class. This study attempts to make use of findings and methodologies from both these areas of current historical study, in order to develop an integrated, blended approach to study working-class religion.

Studies of the history of religion have seen important developments in recent years: from narrow denominational accounts to more serious examinations of the pervasive influence of religion on history, especially in the nineteenth and early twentieth

---

[2] William Westfall, *Two Worlds: the Protestant Culture of Nineteenth-Century Ontario* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989) p. 13.

[3] Robert Anthony Orsi, *The Madonna of 115th Street: Faith and Community in Italian Harlem, 1880-1950* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985) p.xvii.

centuries. The new historians of religion have examined Protestant Evangelicalism, as it progressed from "great awakenings" in the Maritimes and Upper Canada[4], and later became institutionalized into churches and a religious culture that dominated nineteenth-century society.[5] Historians have looked deeply at the controversies within Canadian religion as concern for social issues led to movements for a "social gospel."[6] and debated the roots of "secularization" in Canada. Some historians have more recently illuminated issues of gender, ethnicity, and, occasionally, social class, in historical studies of religion.[7] Study of congregational records has produced some important work,[8] the demonstrates the attitudes and involvement of lay people in churches in the 19th century.

However, religious historians have for the most part emphasized the intellectual views of selected leaders in the pulpit and academy, rather than the ways religion has been expressed among the ordinary worshippers in the pews. Congregational studies have tended to examine the large, fashionable middle-class churches rather than the ethnic or working-class churches, that also have important histories demanding sensitive exploration.

Parallel to the developments described above in the field of religious history has been a remarkable growth in the study of the working class and its culture in history. Historians of the labour movmement in the past tended to concentrate on the development of trade unions, labour political action, or particular strikes and struggles

---

[4] See especially the work of the late George Rawlyk, *The Canada Fire: Radical Evangelicalism in British North America, 1775-1812* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), as well Rawlyk, *Ravished by the Spirit: Religious Revivals, Baptists and Henry Alline* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1984).

[5] For a broad overview of 19th century religion, see John Webster Grant, *A Profusion of Spires: Religion in Nineteenth-Century Ontario* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988). The cultural contrasts between Evangelicalism and the established church are explored by William Westfall, *Two Worlds: The Protestant Culture of Nineteenth-Century Ontario* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989).

[6] See in particular Richard Allen, *The Social Passion: Religion and Social Reform in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973). On the social gospel in Canadian Methodism, see Phyllis Airhart, *Serving the Present Age: Revivalism, Progressivism and the Methodist Tradition in Canada* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992) and Marguerite Van Die, *An Evangelical Mind: Nathanael Burwash and the Methodist Tradition in Canada* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989). The Social Gospel among Presbyterians is discussed in Brian Fraser, *The Social Uplifters: Presbyterian Progressives and the Social Gospel in Canada, 1875-1915* (Waterloo: Corporation for the Study of Religion in Canada, 1988).

[7] See especially Elizabeth Gillan Muir and Marilyn Fardig Whiteley (eds.) *Changing Roles of Women Within the Christian Church in Canada* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1995) as a survey of women in Canadian religion. Brian Clarke, *Piety and Nationalism: Lay Voluntary Associations and the Creation of an Irish-Catholic Community in Toronto, 1850-1895* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993) is an important study of the ethnic Irish community in Toronto. Lynne Marks, *Revivals and Roller Rinks: Religion, Leisure and Identity in Late-Nineteenth-Century Small-Town Ontario* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996) is a study of religion, social class, identity and leisure in three Ontario small towns.

[8] Congregational studies include Doris Mary O'Dell, "The Class Character of Church Participation in Late Nineteenth-Century Belleville, Ontario" (PhD Thesis, Queen's University, 1990), and Peter Hanlon, "Moral Order and the Influence of Social Christianity in an Industrial City, 1890-1899: A Social Profile of the Protestant Lay Leaders of Three Hamilton Churches — Centenary Methodist, Central Presbyterian and Christ's Church Cathedral" (M.A. Thesis, McMaster University, 1984).

that may have retarded or advanced the movement. But more recently, a new generation of historians has utilized the methodologies of the social sciences to look more deeply at the experience of the working class. They broadened the field to study the working class as cultures that existed beyond the workplace into families, neighbourhoods, even sporting leagues and taverns. In his important study of the development of the British working class,[9] E.P. Thompson conceptualized class as not just a relationship with the means of production, but also as a historical process. According to Thompson, workers' collective experiences yielded a particular culture, which was expressed in the discourse, institutions, and customs of the working class as it developed. Following Thompson in Britain and Herbert Gutman[10] in the United States, a number of Canadian labour historians[11] have set out to "re-think" (in Bryan Palmer's terminology) working-class history in this country. What has developed has been a rich and varied approach which has looked at popular culture, traditions, movements and institutions in fresh ways.

But with only a few notable exceptions,[12] the interplay of religion and the working class has rarely been addressed by either the new social historians of labour or the new social historians of religion in Canada. It is almost as if the other field of study did not exist. Historians of the working class rarely mention religion; historians of religion concentrate on elite individuals and their churches while ignoring the contributions of working people.

While studies of working-class religion have been rare in Canada, this has not been the case in Britain, where a series of lively debates have developed over decades. Since French historian Elie Halevy[13] speculated that Evangelical religion had spared England the excesses of the French revolution, historians of all stripes responded with varying estimates of the influence of Methodism among the working class of Britain.[14] While there are profound disagreements among more recent historians over the kind of influence religion had on British working people in the last century, there was a consensus that the boom in religion in late-Victorian times was primarily a middle-class phenomenon, and that the bulk of workers had abandoned the churches with

---

[9] See in particular, E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Gollancz, 1964), and a host of other writings.

[10] See Herbert Gutman, *Work, Culture and Society in Industrializing America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1976). and other writings on the American working class.

[11] See especially Gregory Kealey, *Toronto Workers Respond to Industrial Capitalism, 1868-1892* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980); Craig Heron, *The Canadian Labour Movement* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989); and Bryan D. Palmer, *Working-Class Experience: Rethinking the History of Canadian Labour, 1800-1991* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1992).

[12] Class and religion are explored in Lynne Marks,"Religion, Leisure, and Working-Class Identity" in Paul Craven (ed.) *Labouring Lives: Work and Workers in Nineteenth-Century Ontario* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), as well as in Lynne Marks, *Revivals and Roller Rinks,* Gregory Kealey and Bryan Palmer, *Dreaming of What Might Be: The Knights of Labor in Ontario, 1880-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982) touches on, but does not develop, the religious dimension of the Knights of Labor.

[13] Elie Halevy, *The Birth of Methodism in England* translated and edited by Bernard Semmel (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1971). This work was originally published in 1906.

[14] see Gerald Wayne Olsen, *Religion and Revolution in Early-Industrial England: The Halevy Thesis and Its Critics* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1990) for an overview of the debate, including important excerpts from the writings of a range of historians, including Robert Wearmouth, Eric Hobsbawm and E.P. Thompson.

industrialization by the latter part of the 19th century.[15] This view has been challenged in the last decade by a number of historians Hugh McLeod calls "revisionist"[16] who have looked beyond mere church attendance figures to discover that religion continued to influence working people, even though they seldom attended services. For example, Sarah Williams' study of a working-class community in south London[17] examined religious attitudes and practice, especially "rites of passage" in showing the pervasive influence of religion up to the time of World War I. In his study of Scottish religion, Callum Brown[18] argues that a network of missions, Sunday Schools, and inner-city churches attracted a broad cross-section of the population, including much of the working class, until well into the 20th century. There has also been debate among British historians on the role religion played among working people in late Victorian times. Robert Moore's[19] study of Durham coal miners argues that even though employers and employees might share Methodist allegiances, they utilized their faith in different ways, with some radicals finding a religious basis for social protest.[20] However, Moore points out, the overall effect of Methodism was to "inhibit the development of class consciousness and reduce class conflict."[21] Hugh McLeod counsels against viewing Victorian religion in a one-sided way, since, "the pervasive influence of Christianity in Victorian society was such that it played a major part both in most systems of authority and in most emancipatory movements."[22]

This study owes a great deal to the insights and methods of the British historians in attempting to blend insights from both the historians of religion and the historians of the working class. This integrative approach aims to break new ground by resisting the tendency towards separation of different fields of inquiry. It also owes a great deal to previous studies of Hamilton, Ontario,[23] which provide important data and a significant

---

15 Hugh McLeod, *Religion and Society in England, 1850-1914* (London: MacMillan Press, 1996) p. 3.

16 Ibid. p. 7.

17 Sarah Williams, "Urban Popular Religion and the Rites of Passage" in High McLeod (ed.) *European Religion in the Age of the Great Cities, 1830-1930* (London: Routledge, 1995)

18 Callum G. Brown, *Religion and Society in Scotland Since 1707* (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press, 1997) p. 120.

19 Robert Moore, *Pit-Men, Preachers and Politics: The Effects of Methodism in a Durham Mining Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974)

20 Ibid. p. 224

21 Ibid. p. 26

22 McLeod, *Religion and Society in England,* p. 222.

23 The City of Hamilton has been studied intensively by social historian Michael B. Katz, *The People of Hamilton, Canada West: Family and Class in a Mid-Nineteenth Century City* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975). The Hamilton working class and its organizations were studied by Craig Heron, "Working Class Hamilton, 1896-1930" (PhD Thesis, Dalhousie University, 1981), and by Bryan Palmer, *A Culture in Conflict: Skilled Workers and Industrial Capitalism in Hamilton Ontario, 1860-1914* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1979). The experiences of immigrant workers were heard by Jane Synge "Immigrant Communities — British and Continental European — in Twentieth Century Hamilton" in *Oral History* (Vol. 4, No. 2, Autumn, 1976). Theses by a number of graduate students, including Elizabeth Smyth, "Centenary Methodist Church, 1899: A Study of the Congregation and Lay Leadership of the 'Church in the Heart of Hamilton' at the Turn of the Century" (M.A. Thesis, McMaster University, 1976), and Peter Hanlon, "Moral Order and the Influence of Social Christianity".

baseline for the important changes that were taking place in industry and society at the end of the nineteenth century.

This paper relies on church records of St. David's Presbyterian Church and those of the Presbyterian denomination as well as a number of secondary sources, including newspaper accounts and recollections by local people. There are a number of gaps in the records of St. David's, some probably due to the illness of its first minister, Robert Allan. An interview with Nettie Snaddon, former church secretary, provided important background into the culture of this church. While Session minutes for the church are complete, they provide little information on the broad range of activities of the church. Unfortunately, the only records available are after 1919: records of the Hamilton City Mission and the Layman's Missionary Organization have not been found. However, the Presbytery minutes of the period contained important insights into the controversies of the period.

This study has utilized marriage records to provide a profile of class and ethnic composition of this church. This has been particularly helpful, since all churches at the time used a standardized form provided by the provincial government that includes the address and birthplace of the couple being married, the names of their parents, and the occupation of the bridegroom. The limitation of marriage records is that it only provides data for people of "marrying age" who came to the church for their weddings. The strong advantage of these records is that it provides information of a broad cross-section of people who viewed themselves as part of the church, but may not have been official members. This is important in that it may help locate people who identified with the church through rites of passage like weddings, but may not have been regular attenders.

Industrialization and religion in Hamilton

Beginning in the 1860s and proceeding to World War I, the economy of Hamilton was transformed from that of a commercial city, as described in Michael Katz's important study of the city at mid-century,[24] to an industrial city. As industrialization progressed through the turn of the century, the factories got bigger, demanding less skill from their employees through mass production techniques. Huge factories employing thousands of workers were built along the railway lines near Burlington Bay, in the east end of the city. The city grew rapidly, more than doubling both in the last twenty years of the 19th and in the first twenty years of the 20th century,[25] with waves of immigration both from the rural areas of Canada, and also from Britain and continental Europe. Immigrants passed through neighbourhoods like Hamilton's North End, as working-class families became established, found jobs, places for recreation and worship, and their place in Canadian society.

The churches that welcomed the new immigrants had also been substantially changed since mid-century. There was a wide variety of religious choices in Hamilton, in worship style, Church architecture, theological principles, and also in the social class of the people in the pews. By the 1870s, there were three large Methodist churches downtown (Centenary, First and Wesley), four large prosperous Presbyterian churches (St. Paul's, MacNab Street, Central and Knox) an Anglican and a Roman Catholic

---

[24] Katz, *The People of Hamilton, Canada West.*

[25] Census of Canada, 1901, 1921.

cathedral. There was a German-speaking Lutheran church, a large Baptist congregation, as well as smaller churches representing the Bible Christians, Primitive Methodists, and Plymouth Brethren. Many of the downtown churches sponsored missions in the working-class north and east end neighbourhoods, some of which grew into self-supporting congregations.

The people of Hamilton of all classes overwhelmingly saw themselves as Christians, living in a Christian society that was considered progressive and enlightened. Religion was optimistic and all-encompassing, with most social and political issues seen through religious eyes. Even social discontent was expressed in religious terms. For example, a member of the Knights of Labor in 1885 expressed working-class solidarity in religious terms:

> Brethren, when we fulfil
> The Master's just demands;
> When we leave unto our children
> With pure hearts and clean hands
> The duties he assigned to us
> To raise degraded labor;...
> God's blessing from Kind nature's heart
> Will bless the Knights of Labor.[26]

Indeed, during the brief heyday of the Knights, members of the order used religion to criticize the churches, sometimes seeing the Knights as a sort of workingman's church.[27]

Even business enterprise expressed itself in religious discourse. Note the missionary language employed by a reporter for the *Spectator* describing Wanzer & Co. in 1871:

> Wanzer & Co send their machines to all parts of the world.... Even "Swart Africa from out the drear eclipse of the long Theban years," sends to the New Dominion for sewing machines, and the little magicians play on the banks of the Nile and under the shadow of Table Mountain.... Thus, Wanzer & Co. are not only benefactors of their race in civilized lands, but they send out cargoes of mute but eloquent missionaries, which, if they cannot teach the nations the truths of Christianity, can at least lead them into the way of teaching them first the arts and comforts of civilization.[28]

In contrast to the poet of the Knights of Labor, this late 19th century business promoter saw no contradiction between the mission of expanding Christianity and the expansion of capitalist trade. Indeed, the language employed sounds like the missionary tales in Sunday School magazines. Thus, spokespersons of different class interests both tended to use religious language as part of their basic patterns of thought and speech.

The teachings of the church that welcomed immigrants to Hamilton had also changed since mid-century. Only a generation earlier, Nathanael Burwash recalled how his mother had encouraged in him a sense of sinfulness, so that he could experience conversion as an evangelical Methodist.[29] In that earlier period, Methodists, Baptists, many Presbyterians, and some Anglicans expected that all people needed to undergo a transformational conversion experience in becoming Christians, this was not always the case by the end of the century. While evangelical revivals sponsored by various

---

[26] Kealey and Palmer, *Dreaming of What Might Be,* p. 145.
[27] Palmer, *A Culture in Conflict,* p. 239.
[28] Davey, "Educational Reform and the Working Class" p. 165.
[29] Van Die, *An Evangelical Mind,* p. 20

Protestant churches still encouraged people of all ages to undergo conversion, a number of liberal church leaders were re-considering the doctrine of "infant depravity".[30] The churches of the North End of Hamilton, as this study will show, introduced young people to a broad enculturation of Christian values and teachings,[31] with less emphasis on repentance and conversion that in the previous period. Similarly, under the leadership of Revs. Samuel Banks Nelson and Robert Allan, the North End Presbyterians during and after World War I were evangelical but liberal Christians who believed that their Church's efforts were part of the unfolding Kingdom of God on earth.

Origins: 'Immigrant work' in Hamilton

Unlike most new churches in Hamilton before and after the turn of the century, St. David's was not originally connected with one particular congregation.[32] Rather, St. David's began in the attempt by the denomination to come to grips with the waves of immigration from Britain and continental Europe after the turn of the century. Brian Fraser's book on the Social Gospel impulse in the Presbyterian Church of Canada[33] tells the story of a number of Presbyterian "progressives" who developed a plan to Christianize immigrants as part of their urban ministry strategy. Their plans included immigrant chaplains situated in Europe and major Canadian cities, and "settlement houses" where the work of integrating and converting these new immigrants would take place. Centers called "St. Christopher House" were established in Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg, Edmonton and Vancouver in the years just before World War I. Settlement work, according to Fraser, promised for Presbyterian progressives "the triumph of scientific methods of social research and analysis, efficient civic planning, and organized social work."[34] However, this "scientific" approach meant that the new settlement houses tended to rely not on the laity of the church, but rather on university-educated professionals. In the end, as Fraser points out, the settlement house strategy meant giving up the hope of their proponents that urban missions would grow into self-supporting churches.[35] The activist but largely unsuccessful policies of Presbyterian leaders like C.W. Gordon, J.G. Shearer,[36] and J.A. Macdonald, culminated in the merger of the Board of Social Service and Evangelism with the Home Mission Board in 1914,

---

30 Ibid., p. 31-33.

31 United Church Archives: William Hincks, "My Eighty Years on Earth: Written for my son, Dr. Clarence M. Hincks, and my grandson, Norman William Hincks" (Handwritten autobiography, two volumes, 1939) p. 64-5,

32 Each of the divisions of Presbyterianism had its mission in the growing areas of the city. St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church on Barton Street had begun as a mission (the Wentworth Street Mission) of St. Paul's Presbyterian Church ("Old Kirk" - Church of Scotland). Calvin Presbyterian Church on James Street North originated as a mission of Knox Presbyterian Church (Free Church). Erskine Presbyterian Church on Pearl Street began as a mission of Central Presbyterian Church (Secession). Following Presbyterian Union in 1874, the pattern tended to follow a similar pattern: first, a mission sponsored by an established congregation; later adopted by Presbytery as a "home mission"; then, when achieving stable numbers, recognized as an independent church within Presbytery.

33 Brian Fraser, *The Social Uplifters: Presbyterian Progressives and the Social Gospel in Canada, 1875-1915* (Waterloo: Canadian Corporation for Studies in Religion, 1988).

34 Ibid. p.90

35 Ibid. p. 91.

36 Shearer had previously served as minister of Erskine Church in Hamilton.

projecting a budget of $100,000 for the work.[37] But a financial crisis at the beginning of the war seriously curtailed these efforts. As Fraser concludes: "The Presbyterian progressives had not done an effective job of selling their work to the whole church."[38]

Hamilton did not become a site for a "St. Christopher House". Rather, because of the Scottish origin of so many of the immigrants in the "Steel City", and because the work was controlled by a number of influential laymen, immigrant work in Hamilton evolved in a radically different way. Instead of a settlement house, Hamilton' work with immigrants developed into a robust evangelical mission targeted primarily at Scottish working-class immigrants in the industrial North End of the city. This mission would evolve within a few years into a self-supporting congregation.

In June, 1912, a group of prominent Presbyterian laymen met in the chapel of St. Paul's Presbyterian Church to establish a mission to immigrants in the city.[39] The group hired a 46-year-old Scottish missionary, Robert Allan, as "Superintendent of City Missions and Immigrant Chaplain." Allan had come from Scotland two years earlier with his family, with no formal training in theology or ministry, serving missions in northern Ontario.[40] Robert Allan's eldest daughter, Margaret, trained as a deaconess and joined her father in the mission the next year. This father-daughter team would provide leadership for mission and church in the years to come.

It would be more than a year before Hamilton Presbytery would hear the first report of the work of the mission. In November, 1913, Col. Moodie and Norman Slater from the "Layman's Missionary Organization" appeared before Presbytery to outline the work that had been accomplished. Moodie and Slater reported that Allan had used a tent as a meeting hall the previous summer; now the laymen were requesting approval for placing a portable hall at the corner of Wentworth Street North and Mars Avenue. In order to forestall criticism from neighbouring congregations who might worry about competition from the mission, the motion made it clear that the portable building was set up "not as a permanent church site, but as headquarters for City Mission work."[41]

With this proviso, Allan and his backers set to work building the City Mission. Jean Allan described her father's work as "hospital visitation, prison work, and open air services."[42] Her memoir recounts how mission supporters donated money for "a conveyance which was christened the 'Gospel Wagon'. It had a roof, and a long seat down each side. It could seat about 16 people. There was an extension platform at the back entrance, big enough to hold a portable organ and the person that conducted the services."[43]

---

[37] Fraser, *The Social Uplifters,* pp. 166-168. While optimistic budgets were proposed in the years before World War I, much less was actually raised for the work. In 1914, there was a considerable deficit: only $49,000 was raised while $89,000 was spent by the Board.

[38] Ibid. p. 167.

[39] The only report of this meeting appeared in an article on the church's history in the *Hamilton Herald* March 19, 1924, marking the fourth anniversary of St. David's. The article states that the laymen's group (no women were involved in the decision-making of the church at the time) was chaired by Col. J.R. Moodie, with treasurer C.W. Graham.

[40] Jean Allan, typewritten memoirs, 1989, property of the author.

[41] Minutes, Hamilton Presbytery, Nov. 4, 1913.

[42] Jean Allan, memoirs.

[43] Ibid.

In January, 1914, Presbytery asked the Board of Home Missions to provide funds for Allan's salary ($900 annually) and expenses. "Miss Allan" was engaged as deaconess for the summer.[44] The denomination's annual reports of 1914 and 1915[45] list the Hamilton City Mission as one of the Presbyterian Church's missions to immigrants.

The beginning of World War I in August, 1914, brought immigration to a standstill, and along with it the "settlement work" of the Presbyterian Church. The financial crisis of the Home Mission Board, described above, brought a halt to denominational funding for the Allans' ministry. Presbytery asked repeatedly for funding, but by November, 1915, it had become clear that the financing of the mission was in peril. Rev. Dr. D.R. Drummond of St. Paul's reported to Presbytery from a special commission that "some laymen have promised Mr. Allan's salary. Four months later, Presbytery confirmed that the "City Mission is now the work of Presbyterian Laymen."[46]

The lay committee that financed the work of the Allans was made up of some of the wealthiest and most influential Presbyterians in Hamilton. Chair of the executive board was Col. J.R. Moodie, whose name is associated with the formation of seven Presbyterian churches in the city. Moodie was owner of the Cataract Power Company and Eagle Knitting Co., both important industrial firms. His home on Bay Street, "Blinkbonnie" was the site of many cultural and social events of the day. Moodie was a prominent member of St. Paul's Presbyterian Church, having chaired the building committee that constructed the church's celebrated tower. A prominent Liberal politically, Moodie was also active in the Masonic movement of the city.[47]

C.W. Graham was listed as treasurer of the executive board. He was an elder in MacNab Street Presbyterian Church. He was involved in the ownership of Buntin-Gillies Co., an office supply firm, and D. Nicholson Realty.[48]

Norman Slater, an active layman and elder at Central Presbyterian Church, was one of the most active industrialists of the period. As well as owning N. Slater Co. (later, Slater Steel Co.), he invested widely in real estate in the city. Slater was active in community efforts such as the YMCA, the Rotary Club, and the Chamber of Commerce.[49]

Col. James Chisholm, K.C. was a prominent Hamilton lawyer and businessman, as well as being an elder at MacNab St. Presbyterian Church. Chisholm's name appears prominently in the formation of the Steel Company of Canada.

Also listed on the executive board were R.L. Smith, an elder at Central, and D.B. Dewar, a layman from St. Paul's. George Milne, representative elder from MacNab St., provided liaison with Presbytery and the Home Mission Board. Together, this committee included some of the most powerful businessmen in the city, and was representative of the major churches. It financially supported Hamilton City Mission until it was

---

[44] Minutes, Hamilton Presbytery, Jan. 6, 1914.

[45] Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly, 1914 and 1915,

[46] Minutes, Hamilton Presbytery, March 7, 1916

[47] T. Melville Bailey (ed.) *The Dictionary of Hamilton Biography* (Hamilton: Committee for the Publication of the Dictionary of Hamilton Biography, 1981).

[48] Ibid.

[49] Ibid.

established as a congregation in 1919. During these years, its members would also lend their considerable influence to the Allans and their ministry.

During this period, the City Mission would also find a powerful supporter in the person of Rev. Dr. Samuel Banks Nelson, minister of the former "Free Church" Knox Presbyterian Church. Nelson was a very popular preacher and figure in Hamilton civic life. Nettie Snaddon remembers "lineups around the block" for Knox's evening services, where Nelson would preach.[50] He was also known as a friend and supporter of labour in the city. In 1915, he and Rev. W.E. Gilroy of First Congregational Church appeared at a meeting which publicly supported striking munition workers.[51] Nelson was also known as a defender of the Soviet Union, having visited Russia in the 1920s.[52] Banks supported the Allans' efforts, reporting on their work to Presbytery, and acting as Interim Moderator when it became a self-supporting congregation. Nettie Snaddon recalls that Nelson urged her parents, residents of the North End, to get involved in the mission. Nelson was also nationally known as one of the most outspoken opponents of church union.

When Presbytery met in March 1917, a serious complaint was raised. Neighbouring congregations alleged that the Allans were not doing city-wide mission work, but rather were building a church in the North End. The secretary of Presbytery noted that this violated the permission that had been given to construct a temporary building on Wentworth Street in 1913.[53] Presbytery appointed a committee to look into the allegations. The seriousness of the situation is indicated by the composition of the committee: it included some of the most prominent clergy and laymen in the city. S. Banks Nelson convened, with Revs. Drummond, Smith, Budge, Wilson and Willimon, along with laymen Milne, Moodie, Graham and Slater.

When the committee reported back to Presbytery's next meeting, Nelson proposed a resolution "that the committee recommend the continuance of the work in the Wentworth Street Mission with a view to its establishment as a Home Mission Field." The mission was asked to confer with the sessions of three neighbouring churches: Calvin, St. Andrews, and Westminster.[54]

The next few months saw a series of meetings to smooth the transition from mission to "Home Mission Field" to self-supporting church. The three neighbouring churches were consulted: Calvin and St. Andrews offered no objection, but the session of Westminster opposed expanding the mission "beyond that of a Sabbath School."[55] Presbytery swept aside any objections and sanctioned the continuation of the mission. An interim session headed by Nelson was appointed.[56]

As the mission continued to grow, it became obvious that it needed a permanent building. In July 1918, Nelson reported to Presbytery that a building site had been secured at the corner of Wentworth and Brant Streets, as a gift from an anonymous

---

50 Interview with Nettie Snaddon, January, 1997.
51 Hamilton Public Library, Labour scrapbook.
52 Interview with Nettie Snaddon, Jan. 1997.
53 Minutes, Hamilton Presbytery, March 6, 1917.
54 Minutes, Hamilton Presbytery, May 8, 1917.
55 Minutes, Hamilton Presbytery, Sept. 11, 1917.
56 Ibid.

donor.[57] The land was to be held by a Board of Trustees. Not for the first or last time, the secretary of Presbytery included the following ironic comment: "Inasmuch as the Board of Trustees referred to above was not appointed by either the Presbytery or an organized congregation, some questions were asked as to the Board legally holding property in trust for the Presbyterian Church in Canada. No action was taken in the matter.[58] Clearly, the laymen did not know or care about the proper rules of Presbyterian polity. But with the support of Nelson and the generosity of Moodie and his group, the work went ahead regardless of any objections. The committee forged ahead with plans for a building. Moodie laid the foundation for a new church on December 15, 1918, and the church was opened in March, 1919, with Nelson preaching. Presbytery records would later show that the church cost $12,420 to build, with $700 contributed by the congregation, $5,375 by "other contributors," with another $1,500 promised. The larger amounts undoubtedly came from members of the laymen's committee. Assurances were made that title to the church property would be deeded to the Presbyterian Church in Canada.[59] This would not be the last time that official rules would be set aside by the backers of the new church.

Norman Slater appeared before Presbytery in May, 1919, to present a petition signed by 235 persons called "members, officers and adherents" of the mission on Wentworth St. North. The petition asked that Robert Allan be ordained by Presbytery. As in the case of the building site, the secretary noted irregularities according to Presbyterian polity: "Attention was called to the following, viz: that Mr. Allan made no personal application; that there are no 'members' of said mission inasmuch as there is no organization and no roll; and that the said memorial was not transmitted from a lower court."[60] Rather than have the motion ruled out of order, "action was deferred" by Presbytery so that a proper response could be worked out.

Three weeks later, Nelson reported that Robert Allan had applied for ordination, Slater, using the proper form this time, presented a letter of commendation from the interim Session. A motion was passed asking the "next General Assembly to ordain Mr. Allan."[61]

In Presbyterian polity, the power to ordain a minister belongs to the local Presbytery. However, Robert Allan did not have any of the educational qualifications that the denomination would ordinarily demand, having never attended university or seminary. The Presbyterian Churches of Hamilton were filled with ministers with advanced university degrees. While missionaries and ministers might be approved for frontier and rural ministries, in urban areas like Hamilton, Presbyterians upheld high educational standards for ministers,[62] as well as firm rules for procedure. Only a General Assembly could set aside normal qualifications and give Hamilton Presbytery the power to ordain Robert Allan.

---

[57] The anonymous donor was soon to be revealed as Col. Moodie.

[58] Minutes, Hamilton Presbytery, July 2, 1918.

[59] Minutes, Hamilton Presbytery, September 9, 1919,

[60] Minutes, Hamilton Presbytery, May 6, 1919.

[61] Minutes, Hamilton Presbytery, May 22, 1919.

[62] C.E. Silcox, *Church Union in Canada: Its Causes and Consequences* (New York: Institute of Social and Religious Research, 1933) p. 142.

Meeting in Hamilton that summer, the General Assembly voted to give Hamilton Presbytery "leave to license and ordain Mr. R. Allan."[63] But when the matter returned to Presbytery in September, there was another objection. The committee on Superintendence of Students, through its reporter Donald Tait, moved a recommendation that "Mr. Allan be not licensed until he complete some prescribed courses in Arts and Theology."[64] The report from Tait's committee was received, and, as in previous cases, some powerful heads conferred. The recommendation from Tait's committee was ignored. Nelson moved, seconded by J.A. Wilson, minister of St. Andrew's, that "in view of General Assembly's leave to license Mr. Allan, the recommendation be not adopted by Presbytery, and arrangements be now made to license him.." This was adopted, and the court proceeded with licensing. Robert Allan received a call from the congregation in October, and ordained by Presbytery on November 10. Rev. George Extense preached a sermon from I Corinthians 15: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord."[65]

At this time, the congregation took a new name, after Allan's home church in Scotland: St. David's Presbyterian Church. Thus, through effective local missionary work backed by influential and wealthy lay supporters, St. David's completed the transition from immigrant mission to self-supporting congregation of the Presbyterian Church. But it was a particular kind of church that was established: exclusively working-class and overwhelmingly made up of Scottish immigrants.

The class and ethnic character of the church may be shown through its marriage records, which record the occupation of men being married at the church, and the birthplace of both women and men. Marriage records are a valuable tool for social analysis, since they provide a cross-section of the population of marrying age that may be somewhat broader than church membership. Indeed, recent work by British social historians show that working-class people maintained connections with the church through "rites of passage" like marriages, funerals, baptism, and attendance of their children at Sunday School, even though they were not regular attenders at Sunday services.[66]

The following is the breakdown of occupation and birthplace of couples married at St. David's in the formative years:

Year	**Occupation**			**Birthplace**		
	clerical	unskilled	skilled	Canada	Scotland	Other
1920	0	5	6	5	7	10
1921	0	1	4	1	9	0
1922	3	2	5	6	8	6
1923	1	5	7	7	16	3
1924	0	3	5	1	10	5
1925	0	3	5	2	10	4
1926	2	4	6	6	11	7

---

63 Acts and Proceedings of General Assembly, 1919, p. 87,

64 Minutes, Hamilton Presbytery, September 9, 1919.

65 Minutes, Hamilton Presbytery, November 10, 1919.

66 Sarah Williams, "Urban Popular Religion and the Rites of Passage" in Hugh McLeod (ed.) *European Religion in the Age of the Great Cities, 1830-1930* (London: Routledge, 1995) p. 216-238

These figures[67] clearly show that the congregation was serving an overwhelmingly Scottish-born population, with a preponderance of skilled, rather than unskilled or clerical workers.

Why would wealthy industrialists be interested in a working-class church in the North End? Why would Presbyterian polity be set aside again and again to allow this mission to go forward. These questions can only be addressed by examining the social forces at work in Hamilton at the time. Craig Heron describes the period as the "second industrial revolution" in Canada. If the 1860s and 70s saw the transformation of the city from a commercial to an industrial city, the period around World War I saw a further transformation of industry into mass production manufacturing. New Machines, new management techniques revolutionized industry at this time, changing work routines and rapidly accelerating the growth of large-scale production of steel. This trend was speeded up by war production during World War I. Hamilton saw enormous growth, with some new residents coming from small towns and rural areas of Canada, but also many unskilled and semi-skilled immigrants from Europe and Britain. The city grew from 52,634 in the 1901 census to 114,151 in 1921.[68] Many of the new immigrants settled in the neighbourhoods surrounding the factories in the north and east end of the city. Heron describes the social dislocation and industrial turmoil due to the rapid population and industrial changes that were taking place in Hamilton.[69]

Among the immigrants were large numbers from Scotland. J.A. Bumsted describes a wave of immigration especially from industrialized Glasgow, "where heavy industrial trades had been experiencing economic decline since before World War I."[70] Between 1900 and 1918, which includes the time the Allans were building their mission, some 246,000 immigrants came from Scotland to Canada. Census figures on "Country of Origin" show a dramatic increase in Scottish-born residents in Hamilton during this period:

1901	10,332
1911	14,673
1921	20,263 [71]

Certainly Col. Moodie and the other lay leaders would have a sense of ethnic, if not class solidarity with the new immigrants coming to Hamilton from Scotland. Peter Hanlon's thesis examining lay leaders in prominent Hamilton churches at the turn of the century[72] shows that the fashionable churches were overwhelmingly middle- and upper-class in character. Lay leadership, Hanlon shows, was invariable associated with wealth. But, Hanlon asserts, "within the framework of their highly conservative morality, the lay leaders were genuinely devoted to alleviating the social problems of the day, in spite of the fact that their strong class prejudices made the poor unwelcome in their congregations."[73]

---

[67] Presbyterian Archives: Marriage Records of St. David's Presbyterian Church, 1919-1926.

[68] Census of Canada, 1901, 1921.

[69] Craig Heron, "Hamilton Steelworkers and the Rise of Mass Production" in Bryan Palmer (ed.) *The Character of Class Struggle: Essays in Canadian Working-Class History* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1986) p. 68.

[70] J.M. Bumsted, *The Scots in Canada* (St. John, 1982) p. 14.

[71] Census of Canada, 1901, 1911, 1921.

[72] Peter Francis MacLean Hanlon, "Moral Order and the Influence of Social Christianity"

[73] Ibid. p. 14.

Thus, a mission located in the industrial part of the city, targeted particularly at Scottish immigrant workers, would appeal to the religious outlook of these businessmen. They were optimistic, patriotic, and committed to seeing that newcomers to their community shared their moral values of thrift, hard work, and patriotism, all within the framework of the capitalist system. As Hanlon puts it, their goal was to help improve the moral and material well-being of society "from the basis of a rational capitalistic organization of industrial labour."[74] Thus, these businessmen had a clear class interest in the development of a "respectable" working class, to provide a stable workforce for the industries of Hamilton. From this vantage, a working-class Scottish Presbyterian church could play a positive role in integrating the new immigrants and helping them find a place in the "Ambitious City".

Ironically, as Bumsted points out, Scottish industrial workers brought more than their religious traditions with them; they often also had experience in trade unions and social democratic or Communist political organizations.[75] The later history of the industrial North End saw the development of strong trade unions as well as strong support for independent labour political action. Experience in church could provide needed skills in public speaking and community organizing that could strengthen Canadian labour organizations, and develop, rather than retard, working-class culture.

A working-class Scottish Presbyterian church

Following the ordination of Robert Allan and the renaming of the mission, the wealthy backers went on to other projects, leaving the congregation with a sizable debt, but with positive prospects for growth. The following table shows the yearly progress of the church's membership and Sunday School roll:

Year	*Membership*	*Sunday School roll*
1919	117	250
1920	165	265
1921	175	350
1922	191	385
1923	224	390
1924	253	393
1925	262	400
1926	232	353
1927	238	323

As these figures show,[76] St. David's had a stable and growing membership and Sunday School roll through the period. The controversy over church union does not seem to have made much difference in the continued growth of the congregation. The lower Sunday School figures in 1926-7 probably reflect the fact that Deaconess Margaret Allan was serving other churches as well as St. David's after 1925.

---

74 Ibid. p. 4.

75 Bumsted, *The Scots in Canada* p. 15.

76 Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly, 1919-1926

By providing programs and facilities for integrating working-class immigrants into Canadian life, St. David's may have introduced new churchgoing habits to people who had not been going to church in the old country. Studies of Scottish religion affirm that by the time of World War I, Scottish Protestantism was largely middle class in terms of church attendance, although most workers maintained their allegiance to church and sent their children to Sunday School.[77] Yet, on coming to Canada, many Scottish immigrant workers and their families found their way into Canadian society through a working-class Presbyterian church or a Presbyterian Sunday School like the one on Wentworth Street North.

Jane Synge's oral history account of Hamilton indicates that immigrants she interviewed recalled that the churches were much more important to them in Canada than they had been in their homeland.[78]

The "shape of St. David's church building, with its large Sunday School and modest sanctuary, served the mission of the church well. By 1921 it had become clear that the facilities of the church were inadequate for the many religious and social programs, so the Allans and the lay leaders of the congregation began a campaign for a Sunday School addition to the church. Blocks of wood were sold among the members and supporters of the church for a dime, so that even children could be involved in the campaign to pay for the new building. Some old timers still speak of the wooden "bricks" they bought as children to help the addition project.[79] The Sunday School was built in 1922, this time without the aid of wealthy businessmen: its mortgage was not paid off until March 1956.[80]

Older members recall the many community activities, especially among women that were organized by the church.[81] A photograph taken in front of the church shows the women and children of the church's "cradle roll" that had been organized by Margaret Allan and her female lay activists in the church.

The temporary building that had housed the mission at the corner of Wentworth and Mars Streets was taken down and moved to a site near Fruitland (present-day Stoney Creek) on Lake Ontario. This summer camp for families was operated by the congregation for many years.

The later years of St. David's saw many positive accomplishments, despite the difficult years of the depression. The *Spectator* called St. David's "one of the most progressive churches in the city"[82], pointing to the 13 young men who entered the ministry in the first 17 years of the church's life. Nettie Snaddon recalls St. David's contributing a number of prominent people to the community, including a superintendent of detectives, an alderman, two medical doctors, and a justice of the Supreme Court.[83]

---

[77] Callum G. Brown, *Religion and Society in Scotland since 1707* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997) p. 10-11.

[78] Jane Synge, "Immigrant Communities — British and Continental European in Twentieth Century Hamilton" in *Oral History* (Vol. 4, No. 2, Autumn 1976) p. 38.

[79] Interview with Nettie Snaddon, January 1997,

[80] *Hamilton Spectator*, March 26, 1956.

[81] Interview with Nettie Snaddon, January 1997.

[82] *Hamilton Spectator* November 11, 1936,

[83] Interview with Nettie Snaddon, January 1997.

The church union controversy at St. David's

Hamilton was perhaps the strongest center of opposition to church union among the major cities of Canada. Of the 15 Presbyterian Churches in the city in 1925, only four voted to join the United Church of Canada. In some Hamilton churches, especially middle-class churches where the ministers supported church union, the vote was close. But at St. David's, clergy and lay people strongly opposed the proposed union. The vote, when taken at St. David's was unanimous — not one person voted to join with the Methodists and the Congregationalists to form the United Church of Canada.

St. David's strong opposition to union reflects the homogeneous makeup of the congregation. Scottish immigrants knew little of the background to church union before World War I. They had been attracted to St. David's because of its ethnic and class character, and would feel uneasy about the unknown Methodists and Congregationalists. Moreover, the dogged independence of this working-class church must have led its people to distrust a new, larger denomination where they would be an insignificant part.

The lay businessmen who had helped establish the church were , with the exception of Norman Slater, strongly anti-union. Col. Chisholm was known as one of the most vocal lay opponents of church union.[84] Col. Moodie and D.B. Dewar were involved in a lawsuit to attempt to prevent the union.[85] Indeed, when leaving a substantial bequest to his church, he stipulated in his will that no money should ever go to the United Church of Canada.[86] Slater suppported union, and after the vote, left MacNab Street Church to play a large role in Melrose United Church, as well as a number of church boards.[87]

While Hamilton was just one medium-size city in Canada, the strength of the opposition to church union there had national importance. Hamilton provided important leadership to the anti-union cause, particularly D.R. Drummond and Samuel Banks Nelson. There was also important lay opposition to union in Hamilton that helped the cause. One celebrated event was a debate at MacNab Street Presbyterian Church where layman Tom McQueston, a mainstay of the anti-union forces, debated his brother, Rev. Frank McQueston, who supported union on the basis of his experience in the west.

Furthermore, the success that Hamilton Presbyterians were having in organizing working-class churches after World War I must have provided a counter-weight to the pro-union argument for a pan-Canadian, ethnically-mixed church. Certainly the wave of Scottish immigration to Hamilton provided a receptive audience for Scottish Presbyterianism in the city. In the eyes of many lay people, their Presbyterian churches were strong and growing, with cultural and ethnic identities to unite them; why then join with other churches who might dilute what they already had.

Following the poll at St. David's where the congregation voted 152-0 against union, Thomas Kennedy, a local lay preacher, gave a spirited address. "I am confident," he said, "that the Presbyterian Church will rise Phoenix-like from the ashes of discord

---

[84] Bailey, *The Dictionary of Hamilton Biography*

[85] T. Melville Bailey, *Wee Kirks and Stately Steeples: A History of the Presbytery of Hamilton, 1800-1990* (Hamilton: The Presbytery of Hamilton, 1990) p. 213.

[86] Bailey, *The Dictionary of Hamilton Biography.*

[87] Ibid.

and go forward into the future a pulsating living thing. We were founded on the covenant of grace and we will continue to have God's blessing."[88]

With that appeal to Scottish Presbyterian heritage, and with optimism for the future, St. David's would continue: Presbyterian, Scottish, and working-class.

Bibliography

Primary sources

Presbyterian Archives: Marriage, Baptism and Funeral Records of St. David's Presbyterian Church.

_____: Session Minutes, St. David's Presbyterian Church.

_____: Minutes, Hamilton Presbytery, 1912-1925.

_____: Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, 1912-1925.

United Church Archives: William Hincks, "My Eighty Years on Earth: Written for my Son, Dr. Clarence M. Hincks, and my grandson, Norman William Hincks," (Handwritten autobiography, two volumes, 1939).

Interview with Nettie Snaddon, former church secretary and lifelong member of St. David's Presbyterian Church (January 1997).

Untitled article by Jean Allan on the early years of St. David's Presbyterian Church, (property of the author).

City Directories of Hamilton, Ontario, 1877, 1891, 1901, 1912, 1919.

Government publications

Census of Canada, 1881, 1891, 1901, 1911, 1921.

Newspapers and journals

Canadian Society for Presbyterian History, Papers

The Hamilton Herald

The Hamilton Spectator

Clipping Files, Special Collections, Hamilton Public Library

Theses

Ian E. Davey "Educational Reform and the Working Class: School Attendance in Hamilton, Ontario, 1851-1891" (PhD Thesis, University of Toronto, 1975).

Jennifer Hamblin, "Central Presbyterian Church: A Study of the Congregation and Lay Leadership, 1899." M.A. Research Paper, McMaster University, 1975).

Peter Francis MacLean Hanlon, "Moral Order and the Influence of Social Christianity in an Industrial City, 1890-1899: A Social Profile of the Protestant Lay Leaders of Three Hamilton Churches — Centenary Methodist, Central Presbyterian, and Christ's Church Cathedral" (M.A. Thesis, McMaster University, 1984.

Craig Heron, "Working Class Hamilton, 1896-1930" (PhD Thesis, Dalhousie University, 1981).

Shelley McKeller, "Clergy and Elders: A Study of Congregation and Community Dynamics Surrounding the Church Union Issue of 1925 in Urban Presbyterian Churches in Ontario" (M.A. Research Paper, McMaster University, 1984).

---

[88] *Hamilton Spectator*, March 23, 1925.

Doris Mary O'Dell, "The Class Character of Church Participation in Late Nineteenth-Century Belleville, Ontario" (PhD Thesis, Queen's University, 1990.

Elizabeth M. Smyth, "Centenary Methodist Church, 1899: A Study of the Congregation and Lay Leadership of the 'Church in the Heart of Hamilton' at the Turn of the Century" (M.A. Thesis, McMaster University, 1976).

Books and articles

Phyllis Airhart, *Serving the Present Age: Revivalism, Progressivism and the Methodist Tradition in Canada*(Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992).

Richard Allen, *The Social Passion: Religion and Social Reform in Canada, 1914-28* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973).

T. Melville Bailey (ed.) *The Dictionary of Hamilton Biography* (Hamilton: Committee for the Publication of the Dictionary of Hamilton Biography, 1981).

_____, *The Presbytery of Hamilton, 1836-1967* (Hamilton: Presbytery of Hamilton, 1967).

_____, *Wee Kirks and Stately Steeples: The Presbytery of Hamilton, 1800-1990* (Hamilton: Presbytery of Hamilton, 1990).

Callum G. Brown, *Religion and Society in Scotland Since 1707* (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press, 1997).

J.M. Bumsted, *The Scots in Canada* (St. John: The Government of Canada, 1982).

Douglas F. Campbell, "Presbyterians and the Canadian Church Union: A Study in Social Stratification" in *The Canadian Society of Presbyterian History, Papers* (Toronto, 1986).

S.D. Clark, *Church and Sect in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1948).

Brian Clarke, *Piety and Nationalism: Lay Voluntary Associations and the Creation of an Irish-Catholic Community in Toronto, 1850-1895* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1993).

N. Keith Clifford, *The Resistance to Church Union in Canada, 1904-1939* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1989).

_____: "The Origins of the Church Union Controversy" in *The Canadian Society for Presbyterian History, Papers* (Toronto, 1976).

Ramsay Cook, *The Regenerators: Social Criticism in Late Victorian English Canada* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1985).

Michael J. Doucet, "Working-Class Housing in a Small Nineteenth-Century Canadian City, Hamilton, Ontario, 1852-1881" in Gregory Kealey and Peter Warrian (eds.) *Essays in Canadian Working-Class History* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1976).

_____, and Ian E. Davey, "The Social Geography of a Commercial City," in Michael B. Katz, *The People of Hamilton, Canada West* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975).

Kenneth Fones-Wolf, *Trade Union Gospel: Christianity and Labor in Industrial Philadelphia, 1865-1915* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989).

Brian Fraser, *The Social Uplifters: Presbyterian Progressives and the Social Gospel in Canada, 1875-1915* (Waterloo: The Corporation for the Study of Religion in Canada, 1988).

John Webster Grant, *A Profusion of Spires: Religion in Nineteenth-Century Ontario* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988).

Herbert Gutman, *Work, Culture and Society in Industrializing America* (New York: Alfred A; Knopf, 1976).

Michael Gauvreau, "Beyond the Half Way House: Evangelicalism and the Shaping of English Canadian Culture" in *Acadiensis* (Vol. 20, No. 2, Spring 1991).

Craig Heron,"Hamilton Steelworkers and the Rise of Mass Production" in Bryan D. Palmer (ed.) *The Character of Class Struggle: Essays in Canadian Working-Class History, 1850-1985)* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1986).

Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

Michael B. Katz, *The People of Hamilton, Canada West: Family and Class in a Mid-Nineteenth Century City* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975).

Gregory S. Kealey and Bryan D. Palmer,, *Dreaming of What Might Be: The Knights of Labor in Ontario* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982)

T.W. Laqueur, *Religion and Respectability, Sunday Schools and Working-Class Culture, 1780-1850* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976).

Jama Lazerow, *Religion and the Working Class in Antebellum America* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995).

Lynne Marks, "Religion, Leisure and Working-Class Identity" in Paul Craven (ed.) *Labouring Lives: Work and Workers in Nineteenth-Century Ontario* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995).

_____, *Revivals and Roller Rinks: Religion, Leisure and Identity in Late-Nineteenth Century Small-Town Ontario* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996).

Hugh McLeod, *Piety and Poverty: Working-Class Religion in Berlin, London and New York, 1870-1914* (London: Holmes & Meier, 1996).

_____, *Religion and Society in England, 1850-1914* (London: MacMillan Press, 1996).

_____, *Religion and the Working Class in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (London: MacMillan, 1984).

John S, Moir, *Enduring Witness: A History of the Presbyterian Church in Canada* (Burlington: Welch & Co., 1987).

Robert Moore, *Pit-Men, Preachers and Politics: The Effects of Methodism in a Durham Mining Community* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1974).

Gerald Wayne Olsen, *Religion and Revolution in Early-Industrial England: The Halevy Thesis and Its Critics* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1990).

Bryan D. Palmer, *A Culture in Conflict: Skilled Workers and Industrial Capitalism in Hamilton Ontario, 1860-1914* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1979).

_____, *Working-Class Experience: Rethinking the History of Canadian Labour, 1800-1991* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1992).

W. Sanford Reid (ed.) *The Scottish Tradition in Canada* (Ottawa: Government of Canada, 1976).

Wayne Roberts (ed.) *The Hamilton Working Class, 1820-1977, A Bibliography* (Hamilton: McMaster University Labour Studies Programme, 1978).

C.E. Silcox, *Church Union in Canada: Its Causes and Consequences* (New York, 1933).

Jane Synge, "Immigrant Communities — British and Continental European — in Twentieth Century Hamilton" In *Oral History* (Vol. 4, No. 2, Autumn, 1976).

E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Gollancz, 1964).

Marguerite Van Die, *An Evangelical Mind: Nathanael Burwash and the Methodist Tradition in Canada* (Kingston and Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989).

William Westfall, *Two Worlds: The Protestant Culture of Nineteenth-Century Ontario* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989).

Sarah Williams, "Urban Popular Religion and the Rites of Passage" in Hugh McLeod (ed.) *European Religion in the Age of the Great Cities, 1830- 1930* (London: Routledge, 1995).

Acknowledgements

There were many people who assisted me in researching and preparing this paper, whose research is included in my thesis. My thesis supervisor and teacher, Dr. Marguerite Van Die, has always been available, urging me always to look deeper at and to analyse more thoroughly the material I found in the archives. Thanks, too, to Bryan Palmer, whose enthusiasm for working-class history is infectious, and whose critiques of my work helped me try harder and learn more. My fellow graduate students in the History department at Queen's were usually willing to offer alternative points of view, as well as some humour.

The staff at the Presbyterian Archives and the Hamilton Public Library, were willing to help me find nuggets of history in their collections that might relate to religion and class. Nettie Snaddon, whose whole life has been involved with St. David's, was also helpful. Mel Bailey lent me books and graciously shared his encyclopedic knowledge of Hamilton history.

Queen's University provided a graduate fellowship in my second year. The McLeod Scholarship Committee of the United Church of Canada made two awards to me. My local church, Lakefield and Young's Point Pastoral Charge of the United Church, also supported my work.

Most of all, I must thank my wife and colleague, Kathleen Addison, who convinced me on my 50th birthday that I should get to this work. Her support has made this work possible.

Thanks. This has been a great experience.

Canadian Presbyterianism and the Westminster Standards

William Klempa
Presbyterian College, Montréal
Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Canada

The 350th Anniversary in 1998 of the adoption of the Westminster Larger and Shorter Catechisms by the English Parliament, provides an opportunity to explore the ways in which Canadian Presbyterians have related themselves to the Westminster standards. hese standards include, in addition to the Confession of Faith and the two catechisms, the Form of Presbyterial Church Government and the Directory of Public Worship, which today is relatively unknown but which Horton Davies has described as "the first comprehensive attempt to find an order of worship which would prove acceptable to the whole body of Puritans, Presbyterians and Independents."[1] Sydney Ahlstrom has remarked on the enormous impact on American colonial history of Reformed confessions and in particular, of the "immense influence on the thought and practice of American Congregationalists, Presbyterians and Baptists" of the Westminster standards" making them "by far the most important confessional witness in American colonial history."[2] We can assume a comparable influence of the Westminster standards on Canadian colonial history.

The Westminster standards were carried to Canadian shores by Scottish and Ulster Presbyterian settlers. It has been observed that since the seventeenth century, the Scottish church and its theology have been like an ellipse with two foci: Holy Scripture, which all Presbyterians acknowledged as the Church's "supreme rule of faith and life," and the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, "its principal subordinate standard." Wherever Scottish and Ulster Presbyterians emigrated their Christianity continued to be shaped by them.

Before we explore Canadian Presbyterianism it is helpful then to look briefly at the Church of Scotland's relation to the Westminster standards. In 1647, two years before the English Parliament adopted the Confession, the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland gave approval to it as "most orthodox, and grounded upon the Word of God." All ministers were required to further its teachings. In 1649 the Estates of Parliament ratified and approved the Westminster Confession which effectively replaced the Scots Confession. With the restoration of the monarchy in 1660, the episcopal party gained power and bishops were reinstated and during this period the Westminster standards were set aside. Charles II asserted that Presbyterianism was "no religion for a gentleman," and persecution during his and James VII's reigns led Richard Cameron, leader of

---

[1] Horton Davies, *The Worship of the English Puritans* (London: 1948), 141.

[2] Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), 78-79, 94. See also his statement: "As followed or adapted by later groups and churches, the Westminster Confession of Faith would become by far the most influential doctrinal symbol in American religious history", 131.

the covenanters to declare war. The covenanters organized in conventicles and many died in battle, on the scaffold and hundreds upon hundreds were banished. After the rejection of episcopacy in 1689 and the abolition of bishops the following year, the place of the Westminster Confession was carefully secured by the Confession of Faith Ratification Act in 1690 (c. 7). Its position, along with Presbyterian church government, the Scottish educational system and legal system, was further confirmed by Scottish and English statutes as part of the Union of 1707 which put an end to the Scottish Parliament. Some 281 years later thanks to the efforts of the Scottish National Party and an enlightened Labour government the Scottish Parliament will sit once again in the ancient capital of Scotland.

In the years that followed, the Westminster Confession came to be used more and more as a stick to wave menacingly at Episcopalians and as a touchstone of political correctness against the Jacobites. The Scottish Parliament passed the controversial Act for Settling the Peace and Quiet of the Church in 1693. It required that "no person be admitted or continued for hereafter, to be a minister or preacher within this Church unless that he do also subscribe the Confession of Faith...declaring the same to be the confession of his faith and that he owns the doctrine therein contained to be the true doctrine which he will constantly adhere to." The following year the General Assembly followed the politicians' lead with a formula of adherence that was to be signed by all ministers, including pre-Revolution Episcopalians. This was extended in 1700 to all elders and in 1705 to all licentiates. In 1711, a stricter version was adopted which had as its aim to exclude Episcopalians from ministry in the Church of Scotland. At their ordination, ministers were required to sign the following formula:

> I do hereby declare, that I do sincerely own and believe the whole doctrine contained in the Confession of faith... to be the truths of God, and I do own the same as the confession of my faith.[3]

C. G. McCrie has argued persuasively that the Church allowed ministers "a certain measure of liberty to depart from the Confessional standard"[4] He refers to Thomas Gillespie, the founder of the Relief Church who was allowed to sign the 1711 Formula with an explanation.[5]

When the Church of Scotland fell under the sway of the Moderates there was a tendency to soft-pedal, indeed even to descry the Westminster Confession. John Witherspoon, a leader of the Popular party, and later a signer of the American Declaration of Independence noted in his *Ecclesiatical Characteristics* (1753) that:

> It is a necessary part of the character of a Moderate man never to speak of the Confession but with a sneer; to give sly hints that he does not throughly believe it; and to make the word orthodoxy a term of contempt and reproach.[6]

---

[3] I. Hamilton, "Subscription, Confessional" in *Dictionary of Scottish Church History & Theology*, edited by Nigel M. de S. Cameron (Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1993), 805b.

[4] C. G. M'Crie, *The Confessions of the Church of Scotland* (Edinburgh: McNiven & Wallace 1907), 232.

[5] C.G. M'Crie, 234.

[6] John Witherspoon, *Ecclesiastical Characteristics*: or, *The Arcana of Church Policy*, *Maxim III*, in *The Selected Writings of John Witherspoon*, edited by Thomas Miller (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1990), 69.

During the Moderates' heyday in the 1760s and 1770s this was especially the case. In 1767 the Rev. Alexander Ferguson of Kilwinning wrote an article in the *Scots Magazine* which expressed indifference to some of the central doctrines of Westminster Calvinistic orthodoxy. The correspondence in subsequent volumes of the journal showed support for his views. Charges of heresy brought against him were dismissed by the Moderate-minded presbytery. The leader of the Moderates, Principal William Robertson of Edinburgh University, was a strong advocate of the Westminster Confession. Sir William Moncreiff was of the view that the main reason for Robertson's retirement from the Moderate leadership in 1780 was due to his embarrassment at "the scheme into which many of his friends entered zealously for abolishing subscription to the Confession of Faith and Formula."[7] During this time the devotion of the Evangelicals to the Westminster Confession was strong and solid.

Interestingly, it was not the Church of Scotland but the Secessionist groups that created the first breach in the defensive wall of unqualified subscription to the Westminster Confession of Faith. The first Secession occurred in 1733 not only over the Patronage Act which was introduced in 1712 but also over rationalism which the Erskine brothers, Ebenezer and Ralph believed had infiltrated the Church of Scotland. The Associate Synod , as it was called, split in 1746 over the question of taking the Burgess Oath (prompted by the Jacobite Rebellion of 1745, in which one was required to declare loyalty to the religion of the land; namely, C of S,). It was the Anti-Burghers or the General Associate Synod, the name it was known by, that declared in 1796 that it approved only of spiritual means to recruit members: "the power of the gospel, not the sword of the civil magistrate" thus calling into question Chapter XXIII of the Confession. When the United Secession Church was formed in 1820, Question 2 of the newly revised Formula asked ordinands to affirm only that the Confession was "expressive of the sense" in which they understood the Scriptures." This form of adherence to the Confession was adopted by the United Presbyterian Church in 1847 which no longer required ministers to own the Westminster Confession as the confession of their own faith. Instead they were asked: "Do you acknowledge the Westminster Confession of Faith... as an exhibition of the sense in which you understand the Holy Scriptures...?" According to A. Taylor Innes, in effect this revised formula abolished the older Formula of Subscription.[8]

Yet it was in 1879 that the most significant revision of confessional subscription in Scotland occurred when the United Presbyterian Declaratory Act permitted ministers "liberty of opinion... on such points in the Standards, not entering into the substance of faith, as the interpretation of the 'six days' in the Mosaic account of the creation: the Church guarding against the use of this liberty to the injury of its unity and peace."[9] It should not go without notice that in this new formula, subscription was no longer to a body of doctrine but to an undefined "substance of the faith." The Free Church

---

[7] Sir William Moncreiff, quoted by A. C. Cheyne, "The Confession Through Three Centuries" in *The Westminster Confession in the Church Today*, edited by Alasdair I. C. Heron (Edinburgh: The Saint Andrew Press, 1982), 20.

[8] Alexander Taylor Innes, *The Law of Creeds in Scotland* (Edinburgh: William Blackwoods & Sons, 1867), 438-39.

[9] James Cooper, *Confessions of Faith and Formulas of Subscription* (Glasgow: James Maclehose and Sons, 1907), 101.

followed suit in 1892 with a similarly-worded Declaratory Act.[10] In 1910 the Church of Scotland produced, after it was given Parliamentary permission to do so, an altered formula of subscription which required no more than the acceptance of the Confession as the Church's confession along with belief in "the fundamental doctrines of the Christian Faith contained therein." What was meant by "fundamental doctrines" was not specified. A. C. Cheyne has commented astutely: "None of the major Presbyterian Churches in Scotland was any longer bound in every particular by the utterances of Westminster. The old exclusiveness (and also the old definiteness and consistency) of Reformed theology was at an end, and the confessional revolution has reached its goal."[11]

We are now in a position to explore the scene in the Atlantic Provinces. I have already referred to the Scottish Presbyterian settlers who brought the Bible and the Westminster Confession of Faith with them. Frank H. Patterson has given us the following description of a Presbyterian worshipper in Pictou:

> Every week day...His mind is on pounds and shillings, on profit-and-loss and on pine, fish, ships, mortgages, rents, notes-of-hand and accounts. Figuratively, he has his ledger under his arm and his day-book in his hand. But on Sundays after 1805, he always turns west on Church Street. Then he has, in fact, his Bible under his arm and his Shorter Catechism in his hand and his mind is on Pre-destination, Election, Salvation and Original Sin, on Heaven and Hell, for he is on his way to Prince Street Church.[12]

The first missionaries to the Atlantic Provinces, apart from the Rev. James Lyon who came up from the United States, were Secessionists, either Burgher or Anti-Burgher. Both Secessionist churches took with them the Westminster standards but expressed hesitation regarding Chapter 23 of the Confession especially since it permitted the civil magistrate to interfere with religious matters. In 1817 when the presbyteries of Pictou, Truro and Halifax united to form the Secession Synod of Nova Scotia, the following formulary was used:

> 2. Do you believe that the whole doctrine contained in the Westminster Confession of and Faith and Catechisms, as received by this Church, is a scriptural exhibition of divine truth; and do you engage according to your station to profess and maintain it in the Church?

Since many of the Scots who emigrated to British North America were members of the Church of Scotland, ministers of that church also came to serve the settlers. The Church of Scotland formed synods in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick in 1833. When the disruption creating the Free Church of Scotland occurred in 1843, the following year the two synods in British North America split after the Scottish pattern although patronage was not an issue. It almost appears as if doctrine, particularly the significance of the Westminster Confession became a major issue. The Free churches of Scotland and Canada bound themselves resolutely to the Westminster Confession and the two catechisms as their theological charter. Indeed the full name of the Free Church Synods in the Atlantic provinces were: Synod of Nova Scotia adhering to the Westminster Standard (Free Church) and Synod of New Brunswick adhering to the Standards of the Westminster Confession (Free Church) almost implying that the Church of Scotland was

---

[10] Cf. James Cooper, *op. cit.,* pp. 96-97.

[11] Alexander C. Cheyne, "The Confessions Through Three Centuries", 27.

[12] Frank H. Patterson, *John Patterson: The Founder of Pictou Town* (Truro, NS: Truro Publishing and Printing Co., 1955), 72-73.

no longer sincere in its adherence. The division in Lower and Upper Canada created the Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Canada (Free Church). Although the name of the synod did not include the words, "adhering to the Westminster standard" the synod bound itself as firmly as the two synods in Atlantic Canada to the Westminster documents. In his fine history of Knox College, Brian Fraser, has noted the determination of the Free Church Presbyterians in Upper Canada to inculcate in the Knox students the essential tenets of Westminster Calvinist orthodoxy.[13] Dr. Robert Burns lectured on the Westminster Confession of Faith during the early years of the college's history. Later, this instruction was given by Dr. Michael Willis. Yet it should be noted that the Free Church employed the same ordination vow as the Church of Scotland, namely, "Do you sincerely own and believe the whole doctrine contained in the Confession of Faith..." presumably, with this difference - ordinands were not permitted to cross their fingers behind their backs while taking the vow.

As in the Secessionist churches so also in the Free church, conflict arose about the teaching of the Confession on the relation of church and state. After four years of discussion the Free Church passed the following Declaratory Act in 1854:

> The Synod, in declaring their adherence, as they now again do, to the Confession of Faith,... hereby declare that they do not understand the passages relating to the duty of the civil magistrate, as teaching or sanctioning an Erastian control of the Church by the civil magistrate or the persecution of individuals for conscience sake....[14]

It was the position of Synod that such an interpretation was not only inconsistent with true Christian liberty but also not in accordance with the original intent of the Confession.

The Atlantic Provinces led the way in the movement to reunite the various streams of Presbyterianism in British North America. The Synod of Nova Scotia (Secessionist) and the Synod of Nova Scotia adhering to the Westminster Standards (Free Church) united in 1860 to form the Synod of the Presbyterian Church of the Lower Provinces of British North America. The Basis of Union stated that

> the standards of the United Church shall be the Westminster Confession of Faith, with Catechisms Larger and Shorter" yet "the united body disclaim as unscriptural, all right on the part of the civil magistrate to try to regulate or review the procedure of the courts of Christ's Church, maintaining that the Church is a free institution under law to Jesus, and to be ruled entirely by his authority"... and further "the United Church repudiate the idea of attempting to enforce the belief of profession of Christianity by the powers of the sword, as alike contrary to the law of Christ, the Spirit of the gospel, the rights of conscience, and the liberties of man."

The next union in British North America was between the Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Canada (Free) and the United Presbyterian Church (Secessionist) that took place in 1861. Like the earlier union in the Atlantic provinces, the Basis of Union adopted the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms with the proviso that chapter XXIII was to be interpreted so as to permit no interference in the affairs of the Church on the part of the state, and to allow liberty of conscience

---

13 Brian J. Fraser, *Church, College, and Clergy: A History of Theological Education at Knox College, Toronto 1844-1994* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995, 14-15.

14 *Minutes of Synod*, June, 1854, 13 quoted by Brian J. Fraser, *Church, College and Clergy*, 46.

under the Scriptures to arrive at one's own opinion on this matter providing such opinions were not disruptive of the peace and order of society. Moreover, "fullest forbearance' was to be allowed regarding differences of opinion on the disputed issue of state endowments of the church by the state. An attempt was thereby made to accommodate both United Presbyterian voluntarism and the Free Church establishment but non-intrusionist view.[15]

It was not until 1866 that the Synod of New Brunswick and the Synod of the Lower Provinces of British North America united on the same basis as the 1860 union. This was followed in 1868 by the union of the two maritime Synods in connection with the Church of Scotland. The unions created four Presbyterian churches, two in connection with the Church of Scotland and two representing the Secessionist and Free Church streams.

The four streams, each with its own distinctive view of the relation of church and state and Chapter XXIII of the Confession, came together in 1875 with a Basis of Union that was deliberately vague:

> The Westminster Confession of Faith shall form the subordinate standard of this Church; the Larger and Shorter Catechisms shall be adopted by the church, and appointed to be used for the instruction of the people, it being distinctly understood that nothing contained in the aforesaid Confession or Catechism, regarding the power and duty of the civil magistrate shall be held to sanction any principle or views inconsistent with full liberty of conscience in matters of religion.

The phrase "full liberty of conscience in matters of religion" was not defined. Voluntarism appears to have been favoured and the Church of Scotland streams, as Dr. John A. Johnston has noted, gave up the most regarding the matter of state endowments and the role of the civil magistrate.[16]

No sooner had the union been consummated than the new Church had to face its first heresy trial. In a sermon preached on September 26, 1875 at St. Andrew's Church, Toronto and in remarks made at the opening of the Knox College academic term, the Rev. D. J. Macdonnell questioned the consistency of the Westminster Confession's teaching on eternal punishment with biblical teaching.[17] The whole matter was settled amicably enough when Macdonnell signed a compromise statement, drafted by Principal William Caven and others and accepted unanimously by them. In this statement Macdonnell accepted the teachings of the Westminster Confession of Faith on the "endless duration of the future punishment of the wicked, notwithstanding doubts or difficulties" which still perplexed his mind.[18] Macdonnell's consistent position was that the Confession was subordinate to Scripture. He continued to argue for a simpler and briefer confessional statement. J. F. McCurdy was of the view that the heresy trial was one of the most important chapters in the history of the Presbyterian Church in

---

[15] Allan L. Farris, "The Standards of our Church" in *Presbyterian Record*, vol. (December, 1957), and Brian J. Fraser, *Church, College and Clergy*, 48.

[16] John A. Johnston, *Factors in the Formation of The Presbyterian Church in Canada 1875*, Ph.D. thesis, McGill University, Montreal, 1955, 516.

[17] See *Life and Work of D. J. Macdonnell* edited by J. F. McCurdy (Toronto: William Briggs, 1867), 88-135; J. C. McLelland, "The Macdonnell Heresy Trial", *Canadian Journal of Theology,* IV (4), October, 1958, 273-284; and Brian J. Fraser, *Church, College, and Clergy*, 68-69.

[18] J. F. McCurdy, 128-129; J. C. McLelland, 282.

Canada.[19] It proved to be something of a watershed. The Free/Secessionist stream succeeded in having the teaching of the Confession reaffirmed and the Church of Scotland stream succeeded in allowing that a minister might have some doubts and difficulties not only with regard to Chapter XXIII but also with respect to other parts of the Confession.[20] The compromise statement enabled both groups to live together in the new Church and on the whole to weather the storms created by the historical-critical method in the 1880s and 90s.

In 1875, the same year as union and the heresy trial, Principal William Caven published his *Canada Presbyterian Church Pulpit* essay on "Standards of Our Church., entitled, *A Vindication of Doctrinal Standards.*[21] He argued that no one should "regard the language of the Confession of Faith as incapable of improvement" or that "every detail in the statement of matters of higher importance" needed to be approved. Indeed,

> To require unqualified approval of every word in the Confession were indeed to treat it as our *Supreme* Standard; which the Presbyterian Church, notwithstanding all that may be said to the contrary, has been very careful not to do.[22]

Yet Principal Caven took pains to point out that he was not thereby supporting a laxer idea of subscription. He did not believe that the progress of biblical studies rendered obsolete the Reformation confessions.[23] Yet he did not hesitate to affirm that confessions may be revised:

> Let it be shown from Scripture, that any doctrine in our Confessions is wrong, and the necessity of revision will have been established. All our Creeds and all our teachings are amenable to Scriptures...The Church may not claim infallibility in the interpretation of Scripture and meet with her anathema every one who questions her exegesis. Nay, apart from any challenge given, it may be right and proper that our Formularies should, at times, be carefully revised so as to have them not only in harmony with Scripture but to secure that their presentation of the truth shall be well suited to the peculiar necessities of the period.[24]

In fact, as early as 1871, the Rev. George Munro Grant of Halifax and later principal of Queen's University had argued for a less rigid form of subscription. The current form of subscription had the effect of driving worthy candidates from its ministry. Yet he was

---

[19] J. F. McCurdy, 135.

[20] Brian J. Fraser, *Church, College, and Clergy*, 69 sees the Macdonnell trial as showing a growing tension between the older confessional approach and "a newer progressive approach that focused on the more relational dimensions of piety, based upon the attributes of divine life, light, and love found in the scriptures." Perhaps, but he cites no texts in support of this view. Certainly, Canadian Presbyterians were not unaffected by the winds of change that were beginning to sweep across European and North American Christianity. Concepts such as eternal punishment were exposed to criticism. One is not too clear about what is meant by "more relational dimensions of piety" and the "attributes of divine life, light, and love" (great alliteration). How do these relate to the divine wrath and judgment of sin?

[21] William Caven, "Standards of our Church", *Canada Presbyterian Church Pulpit*, Second Series, 85-120; published as *A Vindication of Doctrinal Standards: With Special Reference to the Standards of the Presbyterian Church* (Toronto: James Campbell and Son, 1875).

[22] William Caven, *A Vindication of Doctrinal Standards*, 4.

[23] William Caven, *A Vindication of Doctrinal Standards,* 5.

[24] William Caven, *A Vindication of Doctrinal Standards*, 10.

doubtful whether a new formula was the answer. He preferred to retain the Confession "without pressing it in every detail."[25]

During the next thirty years a lively debate on the Confession was carried on in various church publications. Some expressed themselves as satisfied with the Westminster Confession as the Church's subordinate standard. Others regarded it as a venerable document that should "be placed on the shelf among historic relics." Still others found part of it unsatisfactory but showed little interest in revision. As H. Keith Markell has pointed out, "the whole debate was productive of little in the way of action...."[26] The only change that was made was regarding Chapter 24:4 of the Confession which stated: "The man may not marry any of his wife's kindred nearer in blood than he may of his own, nor the woman of her husband's kindred nearer in blood than of her own." Professor Markell held that the real issue was what Dr. William Caven called "the liberty of the Church in a constitutional way to revise her standards." Liberty of opinion was permitted regarding this section. Markell's conclusion is worth quoting:

> The Church did not, like many Presbyterian bodies, adopt a Declaratory Act, or modify in any official manner the terms of subscription. This may have owed something to the fact that after 1903 the Presbyterians were engaged in union negotiations with the Methodists and Congregationalists. This entailed, among other things, the preparation of a statement of faith which would be acceptable to all three of the negotiating Churches. In these circumstances there appeared to be little point in undertaking a revision of the Confession, even if there had been any strong inclination to do so.[27]

In 1878, new Questions to be Put To Ministers at Ordination and Induction were adopted under the Barrier Act. The word "infallible" replaced the word "only" before "rule of faith and manners,"in the first question regarding Scripture. This may have well been a response to Vatican I (1870) which proclaimed the doctrine of papal infallibility. In the second question, the candidate or minister was no longer required to declare the Westminster Confession as "the confession of his (your) faith", but simply to promise to adhere faithfully to it in one's teaching.[28]

A lively debate took place in the pages of the *Presbyterian College Journal* in 1890-91 in a symposium on *The Westminster Confession of Faith.* Principal Donald MacVicar opened the discussion by noting that there was a considerable degree of doctrinal restlessness among the Churches which hold the Westminster Standards and made reference to the action of several Presbyterian Churches in Scotland, England, the United States and New Zealand regarding the Confession. He characterized the position of the Canadian Church as conservative. Its energies, he said, were directed at Home and Overseas Missions. He expressed serious reservations about revision.[29]

---

[25] H. Keith Markell, Part II 1850-1925 in *A Short History of the Presbyterian Church in Canada* by Neil G. Smith, Allan L. Farris, H. Keith Markell (Toronto: Presbyterian Publications, n.d.), 67.

[26] H. Keith Markell, 68.

[27] H. Keith Markell, 68.

[28] *The Acts and Proceedings of the First General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada* (Toronto: Presbyterian Printing Office, 1875), 70-71.

[29] Donald M. MacVicar, "The Westminster Confession of Faith" in *The Presbyterian College Journal* ,Vol. X No.1 (Nov., 1890), 5-16 and particularly 12-15 on revision.

Dr. John Campbell, Professor of Apologetics and Church History, followed with an iconoclastic article assailing "the Augustinian ramparts, that have frowned down upon the Christian Church for ages" having in mind, no doubt, the Westminster Confession of Faith, and he called for reformation.[30] Professor Scrimger was more moderate. He said he had no particular grievance against the Confession as it stands but felt that the formula of subscription was a little rigid. While he thought that the Confession was one of the most Catholic documents since the Reformation, he thought it was Calvinistic and needed a dash of Arminianism just as Methodism needed to admit "standing room for Calvinism."[31]He thought that very little would be achieved by revision. In a later article in *The Presbyterian College Journal*, Dr. Scrimger wrote more favourably in support of revision and expressed a preference for a creed that was comprehensive, brief, practical and less intellectual. Anyway Christianity, he opined, is more a life than a creed. [32]

John Laing expressed himself in favour of a Reformed confession or one symbolic book that all Reformed churches might adopt.[33] Dr. James Watson declared: "Upon the whole, the Westminster Confession is our best exhibit of the true Catholic Faith, of that Reformed Faith, which is fundamentally the faith of the future, as it has been the faith of the past. It contains the only saving faith."[34] The Rev. W. T. Herridge concluded the symposium and gave his own personal conclusion, "that it will be better to leave the Westminster Confession alone, and to formulate a new creed more simple and yet more comprehensive, and giving better expression to the religious thought of our time." He was prepared to leave "some blank pages for truths not yet clearly apprehended." In a wholly Arminian manner he stated: "We recognize everywhere the principle of selection or election, but we prefer to view it from the anthropological standpoint, believing that in a certain sense man may be truly said to elect himself." The desire for a simpler creed "does not necessarily mean," he said, "that Presbyterians love Calvinism less, but it does mean that they love Christianity more;" and he stated that he did "not see how that church or any other can be weakened by putting Christianity, according to Calvin, on a lower plane than Christianity according to Christ."[35] Mr. Herridge failed to see that the contrast was not, as he stated it, between Christ and Calvin but between Christianity according to Christ interpreted by Calvin and Christianity according to Christ interpreted by Herridge. Few would choose the latter over the former. Indeed, one can

---

[30] John Campbell, "The Westminster Confession of Faith" in *The Presbyterian College Journal*, Vol. X, No. 2 (Dec., 1890), 95.

[31] John Scrimger, "The Westminster Confession of Faith" in *The Presbyterian College Journal*, Vol. X, No. 2 (Dec., 1890), 173, 175-76.

[32] John Scrimger, "The Revision of the Confession" in *The Presbyterian College Journal,* Vol. XXI, No. 3 (Jan., 1902), 207. Of interest is his observation: "Speculative unrest, and the tendency to heretical novelties arise most frequently in old established churches that have ceased to grow, and are no longer ambitious of recruiting their membership from the outside populations around them. There is nothing like actual contact with sin and human frailty for keeping a church evangelical in its tone, and disposed to lay emphasis upon the doctrines of grace which we believe are substantially the doctrines of the confession," 203.

[33] John Laing, "The Westminster Confession of Faith" in *The Presbyterian College Journal*, Vol. X, No. 4 (Feb., 1891), 322.

[34] James Watson, "The Westminster Confession of Faith" in *The Presbyterian College Journal*, Vol. X, No. 4 (Feb., 1891), 242.

[35] W. T. Herridge, "The Westminster Confession of Faith" in *The Presbyterian College Journal*, Vol. X, No. 6 (April, 1891), 401, 402.

readily understand why MacKenzie King preferred Mrs. Herridge to the Rev. Dr. Herridge.

If the articles in *The Presbyterian College Journal* were representative of different views current in the Church at the end of the nineteenth century and the first part of the twentieth century, it was clear that there was considerable division on the question of adherence to the Westminster Standards. Doctrinal indifference was quite rampant. Prof. Scrimger spoke for many when in 1902 he called for a new creed that "will recognize that Christianity is more a life than a creed, and will acknowledge the real presence of the Spirit of God in the hearts of many who are not disposed to trouble themselves much with creeds of any kind, but who are following in the footsteps of Christ, trying to do good as they have opportunity."[36]

It was in this climate of doctrinal indifference that Church union conversations began and were carried on. Years later W. W. Bryden in his book, *Why I am a Presbyterian* expressed the view that the union movement addressed the problem of the Church's weakness by a merger of organizations in which questions of doctrine were viewed as decidedly secondary in importance. After a Joint Union Committee was set up, a doctrinal Basis of Union was drafted without too much difficulty. Two Presbyterian statements of faith were used: *Articles of Faith* prepared by the Presbyterian Church in England in 1890 and *A Brief Statement of the Reformed Faith* (1902) of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. The first twelve of the twenty articles were based on the latter statement.

Anti-Unionists complained that the Basis of Union was distinguished not so much by what it stated as what it omitted. The boast was that the United Church is unique among the Churches in that it makes no demand regarding doctrine upon those who would enter it or upon those who would become its ministers. Years later, Dr. Bryden stated:

> The Doctrinal Basis which the United Church has adopted is, on the face of it, obviously a sort of compromise. In fact, in the nature of the situation existing when it was drawn up, it had to be. One receives the impression that the doctrinal basis is strictly the product of the minds which were conscious of the fact that they must succeed in erasing the offensive aspects of the older Confessions, that they must soften, modify or accentuate where necessary, in order that those differences concerning which contentions have arisen, and were likely again to arise, might be left as a sort of innuendo. Consciously, or unconsciously, these men were too much under the dominance of the prevailing, popular theological temper and outlook of the later nineteenth and earlier twentieth centuries; a period in which indulgent human sentimentalisms were the governing factors in men's religious thought.[37]

In spite of deficiencies, he thought the Westminster Confession infinitely superior to the Doctrinal Basis. "... [It] is undeniable," he said, "that the framers of that Confession, as was the case with all other Reformed Confessions, had seen God anew."[38] Accordingly, N. Keith Clifford saw resistance to Church Union, not as some suggested, as a reactionary but as a conserving movement whose aim was to preserve The Presbyterian

---

[36] John Scrimger, "The Revision of the Confession", 207.

[37] W. W. Bryden, *Why I Am A Presbyterian* (Toronto: Presbyterian Publications, 1934), 79- 80.

[38] W. W. Bryden, 80.

Church in Canada and to adhere to the Westminster Standards.[39] Keith Clifford believes that the elders who had taken a solemn vow to adhere faithfully to the Confession felt betrayed when their ministers seemed eager to abandon the Confession. Perhaps he is correct in surmising that this was so in some instances but one ventures to believe that if the Confession was disregarded by ministers it was equally, if not more, disregarded by the eldership.

In the years that followed Church Union, there were those who wanted The Presbyterian Church in Canada to bind itself more firmly to the Westminster Standards. Although the Westminster Standards continued to be important, as James D. Smart has argued in an article, "Canadian Presbyterianism Since 1925", the Presbyterian Church began, under the leadership of Dr. Bryden and the influence of Karl Barth, to look at the works of the sixteenth century reformers. " Presbyteries and private groups," Dr. Smart said, "took up the study of the Westminster Confession of Faith, not in any slavish fashion, but comparing it with other confessions and facing the problems raised by it, pressing on to the question of what the Church's confession must be today."[40]

It was out of this kind of struggle with its Reformed heritage that the Articles of Faith Committee was born and began to work on The Declaration of Faith Concerning Church and Nation. In 1942, the Reverend Gordon Peddie of Paris, Ontario published *"The King of Kings"* along with *The Petition of a Memorial of the Presbytery of Paris to the General Assembly, 1942.*[41] In the memorial, Mr. Peddie called for a clarification regarding the relationship of church and state or what the Westminster Confession of Faith called the duty and power of the civil magistrate. This was necessitated by the ambiguity in the 1875 Basis of Union which stipulated that "nothing in the aforesaid Confession or Catechisms regarding the power and duty of the civil magistrate, shall be held to sanction any principles or view inconsistent with full liberty of conscience in matters of religion." Mr. Peddie's concern was prompted by the example of the German Church struggle and the Barmen Declaration. An overture from the Synod of Hamilton and London, also to the 1942 General Assembly, stated in effect that the Church had by its action in 1875 been left without a doctrine of church and state.[42] When the Joint Committee on Church and Nation began its work in earnest in 1950-51, it noted that (1) the virtual removal of Chapter XXIII from the doctrinal standard left the Church with no confessional position on the subject of the relationship of church and state and (2) the introduction of a concept of "liberty of conscience" as a criterion of faith, was in contradiction to Chapter XX of the Confession.[43]

---

[39] N. Keith Clifford, *The Resistance to Church Union in Canada 1904-1939* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1985), 2.

[40]. James D Smart, "Canadian Presbyterianism Since 1925" in *Presbyterian Record* (February, 1954), 19.

[41] Gordon A. Peddie, *"The King of Kings." The Basis of Union of the Presbyterian Church in Canada and its relationship to the present need of the Church for a Confession of Faith in Jesus Christ as Lord of Church and State by Gordon A. Peddie, B.A., together with The Petition of a Memorial of the Presbytery of Paris to the General Assembly, 1942* (Toronto: Thorn Press, 1942).

[42] *Acts and Proceedings of General Assembly,* 1942

[43] Report of the Joint Committee on Church and Nation, *Acts and Proceedings of General Assembly* (1951), 87.

The work on a Declaration of Faith Concerning Church and Nation was completed in 1954 and was adopted under the Barrier Act procedure in 1955. It affirmed that Christ is "both Head of the Church and Head of the Civil State." Christ employs the Church to serve Him in Word, Sacrament and the life of faith and has ordained the State to serve Him in the administration of His justice and benevolence. The Declaration affirmed the Church's responsibility to denounce and resist every form of tyranny. John Moir has rightly noted that the Declaration comes closest to the Free Church position, "the state must pay attention and perhaps money to the ecclesiastical piper, but it is forbidden to call the tune."[44]

In 1970 after sixteen years of work by the Committee on Articles of Faith, General Assembly adopted a new Preamble and Ordination Vows. The Preamble outlined three orders of binding: first, to Jesus Christ; secondly, to Scripture in its witness to Christ; and thirdly, to the subordinate standards. The Westminster Confession of Faith was named as the subordinate standard along with the Declaration of Faith Concerning Church and Nation. At the same time, the Westminster Confession was seen in the light of a longer confessional history which included the "doctrinal heritage in the ecumenical creeds and the confessions of the Reformation." A continuing and eschatological dimension was given to the church's confessional task by adding "and such doctrine as the Church in obedience to Scripture and under the promised guidance of the Holy Spirit, may yet confess in her continuing function of reformulating the faith." The 1878 question regarding the Confession: "Do you believe the Westminster Confession of Faith, as adopted by this Church in the Basis of Union of 1875, to be founded on and agreeable to the Word of God, and in your teaching do you promise faithfully to adhere thereto?" was changed as follows: "Do you accept the subordinate standards of this Church and do you promise to be guided thereby in fostering Christian belief, worship and service among the people?"

The 1998 General Assembly adopted under the Barrier Act, *Living Faith* along with the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Declaration of Faith Concerning Church and Nation, as a subordinate standard.

Several points may be stated in conclusion. First, the Westminster Standards have served Canadian Presbyterians well and these standards continue to inform the Church's faith, worship, life and witness. As in Scotland so here in Canada the Confession has been along with Scripture a twofold foci of an ellipse. Secondly, the impact of the Westminster Standards on Canadian ecclesiastical life has been considerable. I can think of no other confession, apart from the Apostles' and Nicene creeds which has exercised such a great influence and has been the subject of so much discussion and debate. Thirdly, Philip Schaff's comment that "Creeds are not of primary, apostolic, but of secondary, ecclesiastical inspiration" must always be remembered. This is true of the Apostles' and Nicene creeds which are not God's Word but human words in response to God's revelation and this is particularly true of the Westminster Confession of Faith. Fourthly, even though the Westminster Confession was a child of its age, it also needs to be recognized that God, by His Spirit, worked through the complex social, political and

---

44 John S. Moir, "Who Pays the Piper...: Canadian Presbyterianism and Church-State Relations" in *The Burning Bush and a Few Acres of Snow*, edited by William Klempa (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1994), 77.

ecclesiastical situation and through the assembly of divines to produce one of the great formulations of reformed teaching. The impact of Reformed theology from the continent, the testing fires of theological controversies, the political and ecclesiastical strife, all contributed to make the Westminster Confession of Faith, even with all its faulty precision and scholasticism, a landmark in the history of Reformed theology. Fifthly, this was because as W. W. Bryden has said, its framers "had seen God anew." To quote Dr. Bryden:

> It was a *vision of God*, in which God stands transcendent over all ecclesiaticisms, over all affairs of the lives of men and the interests and destinies of nations,... transcendent and commanding over all achievements of man, over man's experiences, over man's thought, or the merits or desserts which he might claim for himself; transcendent and sovereign over all spiritual presumptions, over sins of every kind...There has been no greater religious truth...none more designed to produce the humble, unselfish and yet robust character, than the thought of the "Sovereignty of God".[45]

[45] W. W. Bryden, *Why I Am A Presbyterian*, 82, 83.

The Covenanters of Winnipeg[1]

Eldon Hay
Mount Allison University

Covenanter activity began in Winnipeg in 1910, and it ceased in the mid-1960s. The original Covenanters were from Ireland, and layman S.R. McKelvey was instrumental in drawing them together, forming a Mission Station, then a congregation (in 1914). Winnipeg became a constituent part of the Central Canada Presbytery, formed in 1917, together with Content/Delburne, Alberta; Regina, Saskatchewan; and Lake Reno (in Glenwood), Minnesota. (The presbytery was dissolved in 1934; Winnipeg then becoming part of Iowa Presbytery.) Regina and Content/Delburne congregations were

---

[1] Sources:

"Central Canada Presbytery Minutes" (1917-1934). Original held by the Stated Clerk, Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America [RPCNA], Pittsburgh, PA.

Kings Bench: The Trustees of the Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, Plaintiff, vs. F.F. Reade, John Irwin, Robert McWilliams and Daniel K. Calderwood, Defendants. Original located in the Provincial Archives of Manitoba (Winnipeg), Series J/ATG 12A, Ref, #470/1932, File B-16-3-2.

Rev. Frederick Francis Reade (1882-1981): on the one hand, there are three pastor's pocket record books: "Pastor's Pocket Record" (July 1926 to Dec 31, 1928); (Jan 1, 1929 to Dec. 31, 1931); (1932-1940). On the other hand, there are four pocket financial records: "Pocket Financial Records" (June 1926 to June 1929); (July 1, 1929 to June 30, 1934); July 1934 to Sept 1938); (October 1938 to August 1941). Originals held by Galen Reade Wilson (b. 1956), grandson of Rev. F.F. Reade, and holder of the Reade papers. I gratefully acknowledge his generosity in making these valuable primary sources available; further, Galen Reade Wilson was very helpful in clearing up questions about the documents, and other related queries.

"Winnipeg Ave. R.P. Church Women's Missionary Society Minutes" (1933-1945). Despite the title page, this organization was frequently referred to as the Ladies Missionary Society. Original held by Edgar Dacombe (b. 1924) of St. Paul, Manitoba.

"Winnipeg Congregational Minutes," (1935-1943). Original held by the Stated Clerk, RPCNA, Pittsburgh, PA.

"Winnipeg Session Minutes" (1932-1957). Original held by the Stated Clerk, RPCNA, Pittsburgh, PA. These minutes date from the re-organization of the session, October 1932. Minutes of the Session (1914-1932) have been lost.

Writings: recollections and reminiscences through post, fax, email and telephone: Rev. James Harvey Bishop (b. 1909), of Winnipeg, now a clergyman of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, who took services in the Winnipeg RP Church from 1947 to 1949, when he was a minister of the Church of Scotland on Prince Edward Island (MacDonaldite Section); Rev. Bassam Michael Madany (b. 1928), of South Holland, IL, now a minister of the Christian Reformed Church, who served in Winnipeg as Stated Supply in 1955-56; Miss Ruth Marshall Reade (b. 1913) of Pittsburgh, PA, eldest daughter of Rev. F.F. Reade; Galen Reade Wilson of Dayton, Ohio; Rev. Dr. James Renwick Wright (b. 1918), of Beaver Falls, PA, who served briefly in Winnipeg as a seminary student in 1939.

Writings: reports, letters, communications in the *Christian Nation* and a few in the *Covenanter Witness*. Very few short news reports from the *Winnipeg Tribune* and the *Winnipeg Free Press*.

Writings: responses to the original draft were solicited, and received, from Bassam Michael Madany; Rev. Dr. Robert Marshall More, Jr. (b. 1935) of Waddington, NY; Galen Reade Wilson and James Renwick Wright. Of course, the final version is the author's; I bear sole responsibility for errors of fact and/or interpretation.

made up largely of American ex-patriates; but Winnipeg began and remained largely Irish in origin and outlook. A serious controversy disrupted the Winnipeg Covenanter community in the early 1930s; this resulted in two factions — the Winnipeg Congregation and the Winnipeg Mission Station. This division seriously vitiated the witness of the Covenanters. The remnant Mission Station was dissolved in 1946; the main congregation itself becoming a Mission Station in 1957; the church building was sold in 1967.

Beginnings

At the opening of their first and only church in the city, a Winnipeg newspaper noted that "the Reformed Presbyterians are direct descendants of the Covenanters of Scotland, and are widely known by the name 'Covenanters.' They have ever stood for the inspiration of the Bible, and for purity of worship, believing that the Psalms sung without the aid of instrumental music, is the only divinely appointed medium of praise."[2]

Visiting at the suggestion of the Colorado Presbytery, an American Reformed Presbyterian (RP) clergyman, wrote about coming in the autumn of 1910: "I recently visited Winnipeg in the interests of our Church and was rejoiced to find about twenty persons in the city who had been members of our Church in Belfast, Ireland. I think it very strange that I did not find one Covenanter from the States nor from Scotland ... In looking up Covenanters I was greatly encouraged and assisted by some brethren there, especially by... Mr. S.R. McKelvey."[3] There can be little doubt about the influence of Samuel Richard McKelvey (ca. 1876-1950), who came to Winnipeg about 1907, an employee, and sometime superintendent, of the Northern Shirt Factory.[4] Indeed, "... McKelvey deserves great credit in arranging for meetings, getting the people together, and encouraging them to remain faithful."[5]

Clearly, Covenanters were coming to Winnipeg as to other places: "it is generally believed that the success of Home Rule in Ireland [is leading] a considerable number of Covenanters to seek a refuge on Canadian soil."[6] But not all Covenanters coming to Canada remained so: "there have been many Covenanters in Winnipeg, but most of them have left their first love and gradually become absorbed by other denominations." This visitor noted that the intention of McKelvey and his few Covenanter friends was "to organize a society, hire a hall and build up a mission Sabbath School. This new plan will provide a Covenanter church home, open a field for Christian work on Covenanter lines, and provide a center about which all newcomers may gather."[7] "It was not, however, until June 1912, that those who could not possibly worship with any of the other religious denominations here, agreed to meet every Sabbath, as a prayer meeting; at our first meeting there were four persons present."[8]

---

[2] "Opens Church — New building of the Reformed Presbyterians," *Winnipeg Tribune*, 17 February 1917, n.p.

[3] "Winnipeg, Man.," *Christian Nation*, 9 November 1910, 11-12.

[4] "[Death Notice of] S.R. McKelvey," *Winnipeg Free Press*, 28 January 1950, 31: "Mr. McKelvey came to Canada 43 years ago."

[5] F.E. Allen, "First Impressions of Winnipeg," *Christian Nation*, 8 October 1913, 11.

[6] J.S. Thompson, "Attention Covenanters," *Christian Nation*, 7 February 1912, 15.

[7] Paul Coleman, "Winnipeg, Three Cheers," *Christian Nation*, 24 January 1912.

[8] "Winnipeg, Man.," *Christian Nation*, 18 April 1913, 12.

"Winnipeg was taken under the care of [Pacific Coast] Presbytery as a Mission Station, May 22, 1913."[9] A month later it was reported that "the work [in Winnipeg] continues to make steady progress. A few weeks ago we had to engage a hall, as our place of meeting had become too small to hold us. We were fortunate in securing a beautiful hall in the centre of the city at a moderate rent ... We have sent a petition to Presbytery asking to be organized as a Mission Station."[10] In the autumn of 1913, visitor Rev. Frank Emmet Allen (1884-1977), later to become pastor of the congregation, was quite impressed. He even hazarded a prediction: "There is [talk of church] union in the air here as elsewhere, and as there are no United Presbyterian Churches, if the Presbyterians and the Methodists unite, Presbyterianism will be lost except for the Covenanters."[11] For a time, Covenanter pastors came to the city for periods longer than earlier visitors. Rev. F.E. Allen preached for three months in the fall of 1913; Rev. David Bruce Elsey (1877-1950) was Stated Supply for several months early in 1914 - he did splendid work "looking up and visiting ex-Covenanters."[12]

Nevertheless, it was Rev. Thomas Patton (1852-1920) who, as Stated Supply, reported on the official organization of Winnipeg as a full-fledged congregation, which took place 23 October 1914. Four elders were elected and agreed to serve — S.R. McKelvey, Thomas Dickey (1884-1967), Robert McWilliams (ca. 1874-1936) and Stewart Clydesdale; deacons included A.A. Boone and W.J. Hemphill. Patton noted that "one thing specially ought to be said for this congregation. It has not one tobacco user in its membership. If there is another congregation in the denomination that can say this, I would like to know."[13]

With the coming of World War I, immigration from Ireland was "practically at a standstill;" nevertheless Winnipeg Covenanters felt they had a promising future.[14] Rev. D.B. Elsey "was installed pastor of the congregation, July 7, 1915."[15] The Sabbath School continued to grow; "a Ladies Missionary Society was formed in the month of October," 1915.[16] At the annual meeting of the congregation, 25 July 1916, "it was agreed to purchase a building lot 33 x 99 feet for the sum of fourteen hundred dollars, and to ask the Board of Church Extension for help to erect a building."[17] A building

---

9 "Report of the Pacific Coast Presbytery, *Minutes of the Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church* [*Synod RPCNA Minutes*] (1914), 41.

10 "Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada," *Christian Nation*, 4 June 1913, 11.

11 Rev. F.E. Allen, "First Impressions of Winnipeg," *Christian Nation*, 8 October 1913, 11: "The form of service on Sabbath, morning and evening, has not been what would properly be understood as a prayer meeting. It has been more like a regular preaching service except that in place of hearing a sermon preached the audience listened to a sermon read. They have read many of Spurgeons' sermons, some of Alexander's, Dr. Dick's and Dr. George's. It has been their object every two weeks to read a discourse on some distinctive principle, hence some who have been wavering in the faith have been fortified ... The mid-week prayer meeting has not always taken the form of a regular prayer meeting, but has sometimes, when there were but few there, consisted of the practice of singing the Psalms." There is no word of McKelvey preaching at services, at this early stage.

12 "Organizing at Winnipeg," *Christian Nation*, 22 July 1914, 4.

13 "Winnipeg," *Christian Nation*, 11 November 1914, 6.

14 D.B. Elsey, "Winnipeg, Manitoba," *Christian Nation*, 8 December 1915, 8.

15 "Report of the Pacific Coast Presbytery," *Synod RPCNA Minutes* (1916), 48.

16 Elsey, "Winnipeg, Manitoba," 14. The minutes of the Women's Missionary Society from 1915 to 1932 are not extant.

17 S.R. McKelvey, "Winnipeg, Canada," *Christian Nation*, 23 August 1916, 11.

fund was established, and "some Covenanter congregations in the Old Country ... contributed."[18]

New church erected

The new church was opened 18 February, 1917. It was situated "on the south side of Winnipeg avenue, between Arlington and McPhillips.... Rev. J.C. French, D.D., of Regina, ex-moderator of the R.P. Synod of U.S.A. preached at the morning and evening services." A brief description: "The church building is a brick structure, the windows are of a Gothic design. The auditorium is made to seat 175 persons, with pastor's study at the rear. The basement is fitted up as a Sabbath school room. The building is heated with hot air. It is well lighted by electricity. The enterprise cost the congregation $6,000, over $4,000 of which has been subscribed."[19] S.R. McKelvey, writing in the church paper, obviously desiring that the new church be debt-free, appealed "to brethren throughout the Church to contribute towards this worthy object, so that the banner for Christ's Crown and Covenant may be firmly planted in this great and growing city of the West. All contributions will be thankfully received and acknowledged by the congregation's treasurer."[20] Rev. James McCune (1871-1924),[21] pastor of the Almonte, Ontario, congregation, responded: "Two weeks ago last Sabbath I mentioned from the pulpit the fact of a new church building being erected in Winnipeg and of the efforts of our little band there, and said that if any felt they would like to help a little with the building, I would be glad to forward whatever was given. As a result, from time to time something was handed in. It now amounts to the enclosed draft, sixty-five dollars."[22]

Later in the same year, Central Canada Presbytery was formed, as a result of a memorial to Synod from Regina and Winnipeg Sessions.[23] The presbytery comprised congregations from Lake Reno (Glenwood) Minnesota; Content/Delburne, Alberta; Regina, Saskatchewan; and Winnipeg, Manitoba. Rev. D.B. Elsey and a Winnipeg elder[24] were present at the initial meeting of the new presbytery in Regina, October 9 and 10, 1917.[25] Rev. John Calvin Boyd French (1858-1921) of Regina was elected Moderator; and Rev. Howard George McConaughy (1882-1951) of Content/Delburne, Clerk. Born with the hope of overcoming the sense of isolation in these far-flung Covenanter congregations, the dream was destined never to be fully realized.[26]

---

18 Elsey, "Winnipeg, Manitoba," 13.

19 "Opens Church," *Winnipeg Tribune*, 17 February 1917, n.p.

20 "Winnipeg, Canada," *Christian Nation*, 7 February 1917, 10.

21 McCune "served in Regina [Saskatchewan] a few months before his death" in 1924: James Burt Willson, "The Home-Coming and the Home-Going of James McCune," *Christian Nation*, 27 August 1924, 4.

22 "Winnipeg, Canada," *Christian Nation*, 7 February 1917, 10.

23 "Report of the Committee on Discipline," *Synod RPCNA Minutes* (1917), 127.

24 The elder was Stewart Clydesdale. He had been elected, along with S.R. McKelvey, Thomas Dickey and Robert McWilliams, when the congregation was formed: "Winnipeg," *Christian Nation*, 11 November 1914, 6.

25 "Central Canada Presbytery Minutes," 9, 10 October 1917.

26 See Eldon Hay, "The Central Canada Presbytery - Prospects, Perplexities, Problems," *Canadian Society of Church History Papers* (1998), forthcoming.

Two of the deacons appointed when the Winnipeg RP congregation was organized — A.A. Boone and W.J. Hemphill — became soldiers. Boone was conscripted to serve in the army, in 1917. "He claimed exemption as a conscientious objector, refusing to take the oath of allegiance. His claim was rejected by the local tribunal, and the case was by him appealed to the supreme court at Ottawa."[27] The session (with Rev. D.B. Elsey as moderator and S.R. McKelvey, clerk) expressed its admiration for Boone's stand. The session took up Boone's case: they decided "to submit to the military authorities a substitute oath which could be taken by Covenanters instead of the regular oath of allegiance and, in the event of the authorities refusal to sanction the substitute oath, to claim exemption for all members of the Covenanter Church." A letter was drawn up containing the substitute oath of allegiance:

> I, A.B., make oath that I acknowledge Almighty God as the source of all authority and power in civil government, and Jesus Christ as King of all nations, and exclusive head of the Church, in the supreme authority of his moral laws to decide moral issues in national life. Believing also in the justice of the cause for war of Great Britain and her allies, against Germany and her allies, I hereby promise to serve in the army of Canada until the close of this present war, and shall defend his Majesty King George the fifth, and his successors as supreme representatives of this commonwealth against all enemies, and will observe and obey all orders of the generals and officers set over me in the Lord.

The session had drawn a line in the sand. The answer received from the military authorities wiped out the line. We "beg to point out that no oath at all need be taken by any man who is drafted under the military service act, 1917. The act itself makes the man a soldier, and the form which he is required to sign is different from the attestation paper used in the case of volunteers. The new form called 'Particulars of Recruit,' does not contain any oath whatever."

Fellow Winnipeg deacon, W.J. Hemphill (b. 1878), "soon after the outbreak of the war ... heard his country's call and volunteered for active service."[28] There is no mention of any similar difficulties with the oath for deacon W.J. Hemphill; who later "died at Vimy Ridge, in 1917."[29] In fact, A.A. Boone is the only Canadian Covenanter soldier of whom we know where the oath of allegiance became problematic.[30] And there are records of 15 other Canadian Covenanter service men,[31] including Howard McA.

---

[27] For this entire section, I am indebted to S.R. McKelvey, "An Appeal by the Winnipeg Session to have the Oath of Allegiance Changed," *Christian Nation*, 29 May 1918, 10.

[28] John W. Pritchard's *Soldiers of the [Covenanter] Church* (New York: Christian Nation Publishing Co., 1919), 67.

[29] *Ibid.*

[30] Boone is not mentioned in Pritchard's *Soldiers of the Church.*

[31] Seven others came from the West. From Delburne: Andrew Brody [*sic*: Brodie] (*ibid.*, 35); Alva L. Taylor (*ibid.*, 49) and Lester T. Taylor (*ibid.*, 50). From Regina: Charles Chambers (*ibid.*, 36); John Lowry French (*ibid.*, 39); Alexander Muirhead (*ibid.*, 68-9), who died in service; and James Robinson (*ibid.*, 48).

Six came from Ontario. From Lochiel: Ross Latimer (*ibid.*, 42). From Almonte: Edward Allan Bowes (*ibid.*, 35); Charles W. McGregor (*ibid.*, 44); William Mitchell (*ibid.*, 46); Thomas L. Morton (*ibid.*, 46) and J. Frank Rose (*ibid.*, 48).

Two came from Nova Scotia. From Cornwallis: David Ottis Hayes (*ibid.*, 40); and Herman Wesley Roy (*ibid.*, 69-70), who died in service.

Reid [sic: Reed], son of the then Regina RP pastor, Rev. James Gray Reed (1869-1959).[32]

Rev. D.B. Elsey resigned as Winnipeg pastor, 30 May 1918.[33] After a hiatus of over a year, Rev. F.E. Allen was installed as pastor on 30 September 1919.[34] He was to stay until 1926.

Congregation's apex

Allen's pastorate marks the apex of the Winnipeg Covenanter congregational experience. He had already visited the congregation in its younger days. He was a fine pastor, preacher, teacher and counsellor. He wrote frequently and at length in the church newspaper,[35] some of the articles of a semi-academic nature,[36] writings which were later published in book form.[37] He was ably assisted by his wife, Mary Ellen Dodds (1887-1974), herself the daughter of an esteemed Covenanter family. Mrs. Allen made an impact: "her presence at the services of the sanctuary, the Sabbath School, the prayer meeting, the missionary society, and the homes of the people."[38] When they were in Winnipeg, the Allens were frequently visited by Mary Ellen's sister, Matilda Dodds.[39] Matilda (Tillie) Dodds (ca. 1878-1969) subsequently became the bride of ruling elder S.R. McKelvey, the Rev. F.E. Allen officiating at their wedding in Winnipeg.[40] S.R. McKelvey's considerable abilities seem to have been augmented by this strong Christian woman. The couple had no children.

F.E. Allen's ministry marked a high point of the Covenanter cause in Winnipeg. The congregation had struggled to survive and to grow numerically, so there was little energy for social outreach. There were a few instances, however. "On the 24th December [1916] our pastor received from Clearwater, Manitoba, a large hamper containing several fowls, butter, cake and clothing, for the poor of our city. This was a surprise to us as these good people at Clearwater are altogether unknown to us. However, this gave us a rare opportunity of doing some mission work. The pastor [D.B. Elsey] and elders distributed the contents of this hamper, visiting several homes, leaving a parcel in each home, engaging in prayer, and inviting the people to our services."[41]

---

[32] *Ibid.*, 47 and 182.

[33] "Central Canada Presbytery Minutes," 30 May 1918.

[34] *Ibid.*, 30 September 1919.

[35] "Christian Education," *Christian Nation*, 25 October 1922, 4-5; 1 November 1922, 4-5; 8 November 1922, 4-5. Again, "Synod's Rules with Reference to the Granting of Certificates," *ibid.*, 7 May 1924, 5. Again, "Giving up Masonry," *ibid.*, 16 December 1925.

[36] "Practical Lectures on the Book of Job," *Christian Nation*, 22 August 1923, 4.

[37] *Practical Lectures on the Book of Job* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1926). He had also published *Evolution in the Balances* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1923).

[38] "Winnipeg," *Christian Nation*, 24 March 1926, 10.

[39] Another Dodds sister, Susan Elizabeth (1889-1975) was the wife of influential RP Seminary professor, Rev. James Boyd Tweed (1886-1954).

[40] "Wedding at Winnipeg," *Christian Nation*, 24 March 1920, 11.

[41] S.R.McKelvey, "Winnipeg," *Christian Nation*, 31 January 1917, 2.

Though money was often expended by the Ladies Missionary Society for the local church and its upkeep,[42] this group gave evidence of greater outreach efforts,[43] perhaps most amply exhibited in assisting armed service personnel, through the Red Cross, in World War II.[44] The Sabbath School was always of concern to Covenanters; and the Winnipeg congregation had a large Sabbath School attendance; quite often children of non-Covenanters made up the bulk of those attending. In 1925, "the Sabbath School, which has about 100 members on the roll, is made up almost entirely of children outside of the congregation."[45] Fifteen years later, Sabbath School attendance was still high.[46] While many of these children may have found a church home, evidence suggests that few of them became Covenanters. Ruth Reade writes that "in 1995, I heard [that the former Covenanter] building was being used by another group ... and the folks I saw were mostly those who had been Sabbath School scholars [when the church had been Covenanter]."[47]

There was a good deal of sadness in the Covenanter congregation when, in 1926, Rev. F.E. Allen left Winnipeg.[48] Allen was sorry to leave too, in his final writing paying special tribute to S.R. McKelvey, who, he said, "has given unstintingly of his means, time and labor for the work of the promoting of the congregation. It is doubtful if his energy, punctuality and constant enthusiasm is exceeded by any elder in the church."[49]

Despite the grief over Allen's departure, there was a short hiatus of only a few months, when Rev. Frederick Francis Reade (1882-1981), coming from Pittsburgh Presbytery, was "installed pastor at Winnipeg on Nov. 4, 1926."[50] "From the very first Rev. Reade won his way into the hearts of the people.... We are looking forward to a time of prosperity under the leadership of our new pastor."[51] At the beginning of 1927, a Covenanter Young People's Union was instituted in Winnipeg.[52] Beginning in the autumn of 1927, the Sabbath School received papers published "by the Union Gospel Press of Cleveland, Ohio. We have been getting our S.S. papers from Ireland, but find that the publications of the Union Gospel Press are fully as spiritual and religious in tone and cost less than the papers published in the Old Country."[53] The Sabbath School was "large and encouraging," and, as usual, "having in its classes many children from

---

42 "It was moved, seconded and agreed to contribute $5 towards new matting for the Church aisles" ("Women's Missionary Society Minutes," 3 May 1940).

43 "A missionary letter from Syria was read and a letter from Mrs. Forsburg of Sask. requesting used clothing for the needy in her neighbourhood" (*Ibid.*, 4 December 1936). "A sale of Chinese dolls is in progress to aid Chinese refugees, recommended by Mrs. Mitchell. $4.20 has been realized so far" (*Ibid.*, 6 June 1940).

44 *Ibid.*, 21 May 1941 and thereafter.

45 "Winnipeg, Canada," *Christian Nation*, 12 August 1925, 9.

46 James Renwick Wright (b. 1918), brother of Rev. Hugh Wright, served the (regular) congregation briefly, as a seminary student, in 1939. He commented on the large number of children in the Sabbath School at that time.

47 "Resumé of the Winnipeg Years," n.p. ["Resumé"]: fax to the author, 31 August 1998.

48 "Winnipeg," *Christian Nation*, 24 March 1926, 9, 10.

49 "Farewell in Winnipeg," *Christian Nation*, 9 June 1926, 7.

50 "Report of Central Canada Presbytery," *Synod RPCNA Minutes* (1927), 21.

51 "Winnipeg, Canada," *Christian Nation*, 13 October 1926, 11.

52 "Winnipeg News," *Christian Nation*, 2 March 1927, 9.

53 "Winnipeg Notes," *Christian Nation*, 12 October 1927, 7.

families outside the Church."[54] Later in his ministry in Winnipeg, significant additions were made to the eldership: Daniel Kirk Calderwood (1909-1989),[55] Joseph Adams,[56] and John Irwin.[57]

Despite the auspicious beginning to his pastorate, Reade's ministry tailed off considerably. We do not have session minutes for the period; but news items in the church newspaper drop like a stone. There was a full complement of such items in 1927, the first year of Reade's ministry, as there had been since the earliest days.[58] In 1928, there were no news stories; in 1929, there were none; in 1930, there were none. Another indication of decrease is illustrated from Reade's own pocket record books. In 1926, in the first period of this ministry, there are 189 persons listed; in 1929, in the second period, there are 71. The actual membership did not drop appreciably — participation in communion actually increased slightly in the second period;[59] but the number of adherents dramatically decreases. Something significant seems to have been brewing in the largely Irish-born congregation since the coming of English-born F.F. Reade.

F.F. Reade — whence came this man? Reade was born in Southburgh, Norfolk, England, on 4 December 1882. "His father came from generations of those who attempted to farm the meagre soil of Norfolk, his mother was from the labouring class in London's slums."[60] He was "baptized in the Cranworth Primitive Methodist Church in 1883."[61] The family emigrated to the Montreal, Canada, in 1888 and moved to Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1891. Reade joined the Trinity Methodist Episcopal Church in 1895, when 12 years of age. Attending the Cambridge Reformed Presbyterian Church with friends in his teens, he united with the Covenanter Church in 1903 at 21 years of age.[62] In 1912, he married Mabel Pearl Shay (1885-1970), who had been born in Barrington, Nova Scotia.[63] As already indicated, Reade had been baptized into the

---

54 J.C. McFeeters, D.D., "Winnipeg," *Christian Nation*, 30 November 1927, 12.

55 Calderwood had been received as a member (by certificate from Ballymony, Ulster) 1 August 1928. There was "an election of elders" 5 November 1928; and "installation of Elder" on 30 November 1928. The elder installed was probably Calderwood (Reade, "Pastor's Pocket Record" [July 1926 to Dec. 31, 1928], 141 and 150).

56 "Ordained an elder and installed Thur. Aug. 27, 1931" (Reade, "Pastor's Record Book" [1929-1931], 190-1).

57 Irwin is named, along with Adams and Calderwood, in Reade's "Pocket Record Book" (1932-1940), 13; and named as a (Reade) elder in *Synod RPCNA Minutes* (1933), 135.

58 S.R. McKelvey had been a frequent contributor: between 1916 and 1924 sending no less that twelve letter-communications.

59 On 7 November 1926, 24 of 29 members took communion (Reade's "Pastor's Pocket Record" [July 1926 to Dec 31, 1929], 76-7. On 12 May 1929, 29 of 35 members took communion (Reade's "Pastor's Pocket Record" [Jan 1, 1929 to Dec 31 1931], 76-7).

60 Wilson, email to author, 18 October 1998. "My grandfather's life is a monument to the power of the Holy Spirit to change people ... I trace it to his becoming a Covenanter" (Wilson, email to author, 14 September 1998).

61 "In Memoriam: Frederick Francis Reade, D.D.," *Synod RPCNA Minutes* (1982), 129.

62 *Ibid.*

63 "Reade, Frederick Francis (F.F.) 1882-1981," in Charles McBurney, *Reformed Presbyterian Ministers 1950-1993* (Pittsburgh: Crown & Covenant Publications, 1994), 160. Curiously, McBurney's fine volume makes no mention of Reade's ministry in Boston. "Mabel Shay was 3 when her parents left Nova Scotia and came to Massachusetts in 1888 ... The Reades lived at that time in Cambridge" (Wilson, email to author, 22 September 1998).

Primitive Methodist Church. In England, "the use of the term 'primitive' signified a return to a more basic, scriptural spirituality ... The stress on a primitive scriptural church was carried over into ... a strong advocacy of temperance."[64] Again, in the United States, Reade belonged, for a time, to the Methodist Episcopal Church: that church was the backbone of the prohibition movement in America.

Reade's view on temperance — actually total abstinence for members of the church, and particularly for elders — was in complete harmony with the stand of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, of which both Reade and the Winnipeg congregation were constituent parts. However, Scots and Scots-Irish Covenanters had a stance somewhat at variance with American convictions on the matter. In Ulster, an alcoholic would be disciplined and a tavern-keeper would not be admitted into membership. But drinking in moderation was not frowned upon, nor seen as a barrier either to church membership or the eldership.[65] In North America, as part of their ordination, elders vowed to abstain from alcoholic beverages.[66] The difference between Irish and American sensibilities on drinking was to cause chaos in this Canadian Covenanter congregation. It emerged in late 1930, or early 1931.

The dispute

The Winnipeg dispute was eventually to erupt. There must have been several factors. But the main reason seems clear. Reade could not and did not countenance drinking, especially in an elder. And S.R. McKelvey, an elder, undoubtedly the chief elder, drank. So this is essentially a Reade-McKelvey dispute.

The Reade side. "There was an elder in the Winnipeg church [S.R. McKelvey] who abused... alcohol."[67] In spite of this, he was a "clean living individual." And there was a further difficulty: "it was never possible to actually catch him drunk."[68] Nevertheless Reade, following the North American Synod, undoubtedly "considered the matter as disregard for and contempt of ordination vows."[69] As *primus inter pares* of an enlarged

---

64 Neil Semple, *The Lord's Dominion: The History of Canadian Methodism* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), 113. Semple cites John Petty, *The History of the Primitive Methodist Connexion to 1859* (London: Conference Office, 1960), 40.

65 Telephone conversation with Ulster-born, RP Seminary professor, Rev. Dr. James Renwick Wright, Beaver Falls, PA, 5 September 1998; and an email from Wright to author, 7 November 1998. Wright writes that, in Ulster, "discipline was exercised in cases of excessive drinking," and, at the time under consideration, "there was a statement at the conclusion of the Terms of Communion which stated that those who dealt in strong drink would not be allowed into membership." This statement "was not a Term of Communion - it was given simply for guidance to officers and members of the church, and for a witness to the public."

66 "The North American Synod prepared a *vow* [concerning abstention from alcoholic beverages], based on Scripture in its view, and on the Westminster catechisms of ages past; whereas [Ulster] had no such vow" (Rev. Dr. Robert Marshall More, letter to author, 19 October 1998), emphasis added.

67 It was claimed that McKelvey also used tobacco. He did. But, as the situation progressed, it was McKelvey's use of alcohol - not of tobacco - which proved to be the smoking gun.

68 Wilson, email, 19 August 1998.

69 Ruth Reade, "Resumé," n.p. Ruth Reade is here giving voice to her own conviction; it was undoubtedly felt first by her father.

contingent of elders, moderator Reade "took steps to remove this man from the session."[70]

The McKelvey side. Rev. Reade "was of English extraction ... [and] of Methodist background.... He must have carried 'in his baggage' an attitude of total abstinence from alcoholic beverages that was not the stand of the Irish or Scottish branches of the Covenanter Church, [though] it had become a rule of conduct amongst the USA Covenanters."[71]

The session minutes are not extant. But it is clear that the session and the congregation divided over the matter. McKelvey was supported by Thomas Dickey (one of the original four elders); and by William Scott, not an original, but long standing.[72] (Clydesdale, another original, had dropped out of the picture.) Reade was supported by Robert McWilliams, one of the originals.[73] Other elders supporting Reade were elected, ordained and installed well after his ministry began in Winnipeg: D.K. Calderwood, Joseph Adams, and John Irwin.

Reade went to the session initially. "Reade... tried to oust McKelvey from his position in the local congregation, but he failed,"[74] so says the McKelvey side. Next, according to the other side, Reade "took his case to the [Central Canada] Presbytery, which, not wanting to rock the boat, sent it on to Synod."[75] Because of great geographical distances, the Central Canada Presbytery often operated on the basis of commissions and ad interim commissions — a small executive, as it were, of the Presbytery.

Just such a meeting of an Ad Interim Commission of Presbytery was held at McKelvey's home in Winnipeg on 24 December 1931.[76] Present were Reade as moderator, Winnipeg elders William Scott and S.R. McKelvey, layman L.H. Turner of Lake Reno, and Rev. George MacKay Robb (1903-1992) of the same congregation, who was clerk of that meeting. There the controversy, already in full bloom, becomes a matter of record. Not much reading between the lines is necessary. From the commission minutes, one can see that the Winnipeg session had already raised the matter, in however chaotic a fashion, and now the issue is before the presbytery commission. At the commission meeting, both McKelvey and Reade agreed to certain steps. Reade had apparently been high-handed in his behaviour, he had acted inappropriately in the session. Now, Reade was cautious in what he would assent to, and "while disclaiming any guilt whatever in the matters covered by his part of the agreement, nevertheless for the peace and harmony of the congregation," agreed to four points, the third of which

---

[70] Wilson, email, 19 August 1998: "I pass on what my father told me about [the situation]. Keep in mind that this is third hand." Nevertheless, Wilson's account strikes the author as essentially correct.

[71] Rev. Bassam Michael Madany, email to author, 13 July 1998. Madany (b.1928) served as Stated Supply in Winnipeg in 1955-56. He was well acquainted with Mrs. S.R. McKelvey: "she was a very gracious lady and used to regale me about the abilities of her late husband who used to 'exhort' at the Winnipeg Covenanter Church during the long years of vacancy."

[72] Scott's name is listed as an elder in Reade's "Pastor's Record Book" (1926-1929), 5.

[73] McWilliams was one of the original elders. But he had moved to Regina for a time; so his eldership in Winnipeg was not unbroken. He was re-installed. He is recorded to have been received from Regina, on 27 April 1931 (Reade, "Pastor's Record Book" [1929-1931], 141). He is listed, as an elder, in Reade's "Pastor's Record Book" (1932-1940), 13.

[74] Madany, email to author, 13 July 1998.

[75] Wilson, email to author, 19 August 1998.

[76] McKelvey's address was given as 391 Burnell Street, Winnipeg.

was that "in-so-far as in his power, he will work in peace and harmony with the session in-so-far as he can conscientiously do." On the other hand, a case of discipline was brought before the court, a case against S.R. McKelvey, who capitulated completely in the three points to which he agreed. The matter was settled as follows: "S.R. McKelvey agrees on his part: 1. To confess that he has sinned. 2. To confess that he is truly sorry. 3. To promise that in the future, with God's help, he will abstain from the use of liquor and tobacco."

The commission sought an interpretation of the Book of Discipline, chapter III, section 1, paragraph 7. The law of the church is stated, that "No charge shall be admitted against any member of the church unless it be presented within one year after the fact upon which the charge is founded have come to the knowledge of the accuser." The commission asked, "in the practical working out of this law, shall the time limit of one year be construed as dating back from the time when the first steps were taken to bring the accused to discipline, or shall it be construed as dating back from the time of the actual serving of the libel and the formal institution of process?" The request for a ruling clarification meant, in effect, that McKelvey's apology, however well intentioned, was far too little and much too late. The apology seems to have played little or no part in the following church juridical proceedings.

However, it seems likely that, early in 1932, the group of persons gathered around and supportive of S.R. McKelvey began to meet separately, perhaps in the McKelvey home. In March of 1932, there were two significant events. First, Reade finally completely paid off a McKelvey personal loan of $1,000, contracted in November 1926.[77] Second, on 14 March 1932, Reade and his session[78] granted a letter of standing to S.R. McKelvey.[79] Others in the McKelvey group were given similar letters of standing in the first half of 1932.[80] It may well be that S.R. McKelvey's reputation as a preacher-during-vacancies had its impetus at this juncture, the remnant meeting to worship at the McKelvey home.[81]

---

[77] Reade, "Pocket Financial Record" [June 1926 to June 1929), n.p. The full entry in Reade, "Pocket Financial Record" (July 1, 1929 to June 30, 1934), n.p., reads:

S.R. McKelvey in full 1486.33
1107.63 + 8.95 Int.
365.78 + 3.97 Int.

[78] The (full) Reade session consisted of Robert McWilliams, Daniel K. Calderwood, John Irwin (clerk), and Joseph Adams.

[79] "Pastor's Pocket Record" (1932-40), 22-3.

[80] Thomas Dickey, 29 February 1932 (*ibid.*, 18-9); Mr. and Mrs. George Fulton, 7 March 1932 (*ibid.*, 18-9); Mr. and Mrs. Hugh Hobart, 7 March 1932 (*ibid.*, 20-1); Mrs. James Baillie, 14 March 1932 (*ibid.*, 16-7); Mr. William Scott, 14 March 1932 (*ibid.*, 24-5); Mrs. Matilda McKelvey, 21 March 1932 (*ibid.*, 22-3); Mrs. A.E. Dacombe, 2 May 1932 (*ibid.*, 18-9); Miss Winnie Boyd, 26 May 1932 (*ibid.*, 16-7); Mrs. Agnes Murray, 26 May 1932 (*ibid.*, 22-3).

[81] There seems little notice of him as preacher before the Winnipeg dispute. But it became a McKelvey mainstay thereafter: "there is one fact that I wish particularly to put on record, and which, perhaps, is not known throughout the Church. Here it is. During the vacancies, some of which lasted as long as six months, Mr. McKelvey conducted both the Sabbath services without remuneration" (Rev. James Campbell, "Impressions of the Work at Winnipeg," *Covenanter Witness*, 25 March 1936, 208).

The full Central Canada presbytery met early in June, 1932, in conjunction with a Synod meeting, in Winona Lake, Indiana.[82] Reade was present with others, including a Winnipeg elder who had not previously appeared at presbytery — D.K. Calderwood. There was a matter presented from the Winnipeg session "setting forth the following facts: Mr. Thomas Dickey, *former* treasurer of the congregation, refused to turn over the financial records of the congregation to the present treasurer."[83] The presbytery then constituted itself a committee of discipline. The first matter — a statement by "John Irwin of the Winnipeg congregation, concerning the use of liquor by S.R. McKelvey of the same congregation — was laid on the table." The second matter was "a petition from 12 former members and 13 former adherents of the Winnipeg congregation, asking that they be organized into a Mission Station." It was decided to ask the Synod's home mission board to sit with the presbytery. The home mission board advised Central Canada Presbytery "to refer the matter to Synod and ask for a commission to review the case. Presbytery decided to accept the advice."[84]

The Synod appointed a Judicial Commission to adjudicate matters at Winnipeg. The commission, under the chairmanship of Rev. Robert Wylie Redpath (1892-1939), had two matters on its hands. First, an allegation that an elder had been drinking; and second, a congregation that was deeply divided. One can hear the debate. "A long letter was read from one of the twelve members who have received letters of standing, entering into great detail in regard to conditions at Winnipeg." Also, "a statement, bearing on the case, from an elder in the Winnipeg Session, was read."[85] On the other hand, "F.F. Reade and Elder, D.K. Calderwood from Winnipeg, being present, were heard." But, from the other side, "also [speaking was] F.E. Allen." Indeed, "much information on both sides of the controversy was brought before" the commission.[86]

After much deliberation, the commission reached the following conclusions and plan for adjusting the case:

> 1. The interests of a congregation are of more importance than the interests of any individual or group in the congregation.
>
> 2. When guilt is undeniable, it should be punished, but *when it is seriously questioned*, it is better that the accused go free than that the innocent suffer and a congregation be disrupted.
>
> 3. Usually where a congregation is so divided and distracted that his ministry is acceptable to little more than half of his people, the pastor should withdraw in a Christianlike spirit and seek another field of service.
>
> 4. F.F. Reade shall resign the pastorate of Winnipeg congregation at once, and the Presbytery of Central Canada is directed to dissolve the pastoral relation.[87]

In addition, "a minister is to be appointed Stated Supply at Winnipeg congregation for a year, beginning as soon as possible." Further, "preceding the meeting of Synod of 1933, a new election for elders shall be held at such a time as will make it possible for the election to be held and the new officers to be installed before the meeting of Synod...."

---

82 7 June 1932.

83 *Ibid.*, emphases added.

84 9 June 1932.

85 "Judicial Commission," 9 June 1932, *Synod RPCNA Minutes* (1932), 119.

86 *Ibid.*, 11 June 1932.

87 *Ibid.*, emphases added.

And "all the present elders are directed to resign immediately preceding this election."[88] There were other provisions: interim financial help for Reade, and the Commission which had done the adjudicating was to "be continued as an Ad Interim Commission of Synod for the purpose of securing the Stated Supply provided for in the Commission's report." Soon appointed, the Stated Supply was Rev. James Renwick Willson Stevenson (1860-1936), a former (in 1922) Synod moderator.

At an immediately subsequent meeting of the Central Canada Presbytery held in the same place, a day or so later, "F.F. Reade tendered his resignation as pastor of the Winnipeg congregation."[89] It appeared that the matter was settled. It wasn't — very far from it.

Reade, after tendering his resignation, soon repented of his decision. He went home prepared to fight. He embarked on a series of actions directly opposite the Synod's decision, and counter to his own publicly expressed resignation. He marshalled support from some elders and congregants, and initially from the Central Presbytery. His actions, in complete defiance of the Synod, could not and did not go unchallenged. As a result, there was a law suit launched by the Trustees of the Synod of the RPCNA in the autumn of 1932, though the court did not issue in a decision until March 1933.[90] The proceedings of the court case covers issues not directly related to the story here being related,[91] although it does provide many details of the dispute, stretching as it did over many months. The RPCNA Trustees case is strongly allied with the McKelvie party.

In Winnipeg, Reade carried on as minister of the Winnipeg congregation. In a sworn affidavit, Reade never denied that he did resign as Pastor, but "he did so in mistake of fact, and of Church law; that his resignation was made under compulsion, and in accordance with the instructions of the Synod [whose] powers he now alleges were ultra vires."[92] Throughout the summer, Reade and his party carried on, largely as if Reade had not resigned: the Reade party continued to occupy the church, and Reade to conduct services. The Synod-appointed Stated Supply, Rev. Stevenson "was ... prevented from carrying on the work of the Church and of that [Winnipeg] congregation ... by the conduct of the Defendants [F.F. Reade, John Irwin, Robert McWilliams, and Daniel K. Calderwood] and those associated with them."[93] Rev. Stevenson apparently received letters and telegrams from Winnipeg "informing him that he might not be needed there,"[94] when he nonetheless arrived in Winnipeg, the "door of the Church" was probably locked against him.[95]

---

[88] *Ibid.*

[89] "Central Canada Presbytery Minutes," 14 June 1932.

[90] Kings Bench: The Trustees of the Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, Plaintiff, vs. F.F. Reade, John Irwin, Robert McWilliams and Daniel K. Calderwood, Defendants. Original located in the Provincial Archives of Manitoba (Winnipeg), Series J/ATG 12A, Ref, #470/1932, File B-16-3-2. Hereafter, *Kings Bench: RPCNA Trustees vs. Reade et al.*

[91] Basically, the Synod Trustees claimed that most of Reade's post-Synod actions were *ultra vires*; Reade counter claimed that most of Synod's actions in regard to Winnipeg, during Synod and post-Synod, were *ultra vires*.

[92] "Statement of Defence of F.F. Reade," *Kings Bench: RPCNA Trustees vs. Reade et al.* Reade's statement is dated 1 October 1932.

[93] "Statement of Claim [by the RPCNA Trustees]," *ibid.*

[94] "Committee on Discipline," *Synod RPCNA Minutes* [1933], 134).

[95] *Ibid.*

The RPCNA Trustees-McKelvey party were finally able to take over the sanctuary on Sunday, 21 August 1932. Ruth Reade, F.F. Reade's daughter, describes the matter this way: "Public protest within the church building was made one Sabbath when the 'protestors [the Reade party]' retired to the Sabbath School level and continued the worship service apart from those in the sanctuary."[96] From the other side: "The Defendants and those associated with them on Sunday the 21st of August 1932, separated themselves from the remainder of the congregation and held a meeting in the basement of the Church while the regular service was being conducted in the main forum by the representative of Synod."[97]

Nothing deterred, the Reade party continued to use the Church basement on Sabbaths following, at both morning and evening services.[98] At an early September meeting, an Interim Commission of the Central Canada Presbytery named F.F. Reade as Supply at Winnipeg; the presbytery therefore declaring itself solidly on the Reade side.[99] Again, Reade signed a letter sent out over the Church containing the statement: "The Winnipeg congregation with the session, found the plan [adopted at the 1932 Synod] utterly unacceptable, and the letter was signed, 'The Winnipeg Session, F.F. Reade, Moderator; J. Irwin, Clerk; D. Calderwood, R. McWilliams'."[100]

The congregation was deeply and decisively divided. Twelve members and thirteen adherents, the McKelvey side, were the petitioners originally seeking mission station status. This was a solid and influential group, including its best known and longest standing members and elders, but it was not necessarily the majority.[101] After 21 August, 1932, this group worshipped in the main sanctuary of the Winnipeg RP church. Even given that total numbers in the congregation had shrunk since Reade's early ministry, it seems clear that Reade's wing[102] had more numbers, in terms both of members and adherents.[103] This party worshipped in the basement of the Winnipeg church, after 21 August 1932 — at least for some months.

---

96 "Resumé," n.p.

97 "Statement of Claim [by the RPCNA Trustees]," *Kings Bench: RPCNA Trustees vs. Reade et al.*

98 *Ibid.*

99 The minutes of this commission have not been preserved, since the Synod later declared its decisions *ultra vires*, and its minutes were struck from the record. The 1933 Synod declared that "the majority of members of the commission were from the Winnipeg congregation, so were passing judgement on their own case" ("Committee on Discipline," *Synod RPCNA Minutes* [1933], 136).

100 *Ibid.*, 135.

101 The list of the McKelvey group never appeared in presbytery minutes, but was published in Synod records. Members named were: Thomas Dickey, William Scott, Samuel R. McKelvey, Mrs. S.R. McKelvey, Mrs. A. Dacombe, Mrs. J. Baillie, Winnie Boyd, H.S. Hobart, Mrs. H.S. Hobart, M.J. Stanforth, Wm. J.S. Murray, Roberta Whiteford. Adherents named were: Donald Allan, Archibald E. Dacombe, James Baillie, Peg T. Stanforth, Mary Dickey, J.S. Murray, Jean Whiteford, Mrs. A. Whiteford, Mrs. Ashby, Kenneth Chisholm, Donald Gordon, Joseph Roberts, John Sutherland: "The Judicial Commission appointed by Synod to adjudicate matters at Winnipeg," *Synod RPCNA Minutes* (1932), 117.

102 There is no official list of this party; but Ruth Reade recalls "the [Robert] McWilliams family - 5 adults; the John Irwin family - 2 adults, 3 small children; the Reade family - 3 adults, 3 daughters in early teens; Mrs. George Boal and son Tom; Dan Calderwood - an adult from the Irish R.P. Church; Sam Turton - an adult who belonged to the only R.P. congregation in England; some S.S. scholars and members of Dad's Boy's Club" ("Resumé," n.p.).

103 On 15 May 1932, 19 persons communicated. The total membership on that date was given as 29: Reade's "Pastor's Record Book" (1932-1940), 84-5.

In the only direct writing Reade did on the matter, co-authored with his wife, Mabel, he enthusiastically describes "A Surprise Party at Winnipeg," held in his honour, after coming home from the Synod, in the autumn of 1932. "The event took place on Saturday evening, September 17. A session meeting had been announced, but evidently the congregation felt that the session would not be sufficient in number for the business of the evening; and so they supplemented these - to the number of eighteen people besides the minister's own family. Several who were represented by gifts were unable to be present in person." Reade called attention to the "variety of rodents the Pied Piper assembled: 'Great rats, black rats, lean rats, brawny rats, Brown rats, black rats, gray rats, tawny rats,' etc. Well, the folk in question [here at this assembly] didn't resemble rats, but they did assemble eatables." The Reades concluded: "It was a memorable occasion, coming as it did in the midst of a time of trial and financial stringency, but it bore concrete testimony to the sympathy, love, and loyalty of the Covenanter hearts."[104] The Reade party may have been worshipping in the basement of the church, but this statement breathes defiant confidence.

At a meeting of the now Synod-recognized regular congregation in early October 1932 - the former McKelvey group - a new session was elected - S.R. McKelvey, William Scott and Thomas Dickey. Dickey refused the position; but the two others were installed.[105] A letter had to be written to F.F. Reade "asking him for the communion service, the table cloth, the Sabbath School records, the financial records, and the communion tokens."[106] The McKelvey party was in the ascendancy; though they did not control the entire church building. This was to change.

The change came with the issuing of an injunction order, by Honourable Mr. Justice Montague, of the Kings Bench, brought down on 17 March 1933. The injunction ordered that "the Defendants, F.F. Reade, John Irwin, Robert McWilliams and Daniel K. Calderwood ... are hereby perpetually restrained from entering upon the Church premises commonly known as The Reformed Presbyterian Church of Winnipeg."[107] In Ruth Reade's poignant rendering: "The 'protesters [the Reade party]' were ... barred from the building, presumably by order of ... the Synod."[108]

To the loss sustained by Reade and his party in the secular courts was added the judgement by the Church Synod meeting in June 1933.[109] To the claim, put forward by the Reade side that "the moral issue was completely ignored," the Synod committee responded: "We call attention to the fact that if there is a moral issue involved, it was ignored by the [Reade] session, and not by Synod. The offenses charged against the accused [McKelvey] took place, as alleged, prior to March 14, 1932, and were fully known to the session before that time. Yet, on March 14, 1932, the session granted to

---

104 *Covenanter Witness*, 26 October 1932, 270.

105 "Winnipeg Session Minutes," 7 October 1932.

106 *Ibid.* The letter did not ask Reade for the Session Minutes. In an "Affidavit as to Documents," *Kings Bench: RPCNA Trustees vs. Reade et al*, Reade, signing on behalf of the Defendants, declared on 18 October 1932 that the "Sessional Records of the Winnipeg Congregation of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America" are "in my possession."

107 *Kings Bench: RPCNA Trustees vs. Reade et al.*

108 "Resumé," n.p.

109 *Synod RPCNA Minutes* (1933), 132-9.

the accused a letter of standing that entirely ignored any moral issue."[110] But moving beyond this technicality, the committee stated that "we have made careful investigation as to the nature of the evidence that could be offered to substantiate the charges, and we believe it to be insufficient to warrant the charge that Synod ignored the moral issue."[111] The charge that "the constitutional rights of the congregation were disregarded" was likewise denied.

Reade was adamant. He utterly refused to sign a statement of confession. So, "inasmuch as Mr. Reade refuses to make acknowledgement as ... required, he is hereby placed under suspension from the ministry of the gospel until such acknowledgement shall be made."[112] Reade's elders and the other Covenanters involved in the insubordination were likewise suspended.

The Synod appointed an Ulster licentiate, Hugh Wright (1908-1991), as Stated Supply in Winnipeg. The appointment of an Ulster clergyman seemed to insure that native Irish sensibilities in regard to alcohol use would be regnant. Wright went directly to Winnipeg after the June 1933 meeting of the Synod. He "has been supplying our pulpit since last Synod, his genial smile and Irish wit made him popular with both old and young from his very first arrival among us ... It is his pulpit work that draws folks; those who come to our services want to come again."[113] Operating within the constitutionally backed congregation - the former McKelvey group - Hugh Wright[114] was obviously accepted and loved.

The Reade party was not entirely finished. The 1934 Synod restored Reade, who had finally signed the prerequisite confession.[115] The suspended members of the Reade party, on signing a like statement of confession,[116] were also restored. The Synod admitted its own irregularities in the situation, and recognised the futility of asking the two parties to act in concert: therefore, the restored Reade group members were "recognized as a Mission Station," with Reade as their pastor. There were some conditions: the Mission Station was granted "with the strict provision that no effort be made to draw members from the Sabbath School or [the constitutional] congregation worshipping in the church building, or to interfere in any way with the work of that place." Further, "No supplement is to be expected from the Synod for this Mission

---

110 *Ibid.*, 135.

111 *Ibid.*, 136.

112 *Ibid.*, 138.

113 "Winnipeg," *Covenanter Witness*, 15 November 1933, 319.

114 It was the author's privilege to meet with Rev. Hugh Wright, his wife and daughter, and to be entertained in their home in Ulster, a few years before Wright's death. Not knowing much about the Winnipeg situation at the time, it was not a matter of discussion; what little was mentioned, I've forgotten. But I vividly recall my impression of Hugh Wright - a quiet, articulate, dignified Christian scholar and gentleman.

115 "I do hereby acknowledge my guilt in acts of insubordination before and after the Synod of 1933, and do solemnly promise subordination in the Lord to the authority of Synod in these matters" (*Synod RPCNA Minutes* [1934], 40).

116 "Upon acknowledgment by the Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America of acts of irregularity in connection with the adjudication of the Winnipeg case, we whose names are signed below do humbly acknowledge acts of insubordination to the Synod. We desire to be restored to membership and we shall labor and pray for the peace and welfare of the church" (*Ibid.*).

Station in the hope that all shall eventually unite in one congregation."[117] The former Reade group, now the Winnipeg Mission Station, worshipped "in a building on Notre Dame Avenue that belonged to the Canadian Holiness Mission."[118]

The 1934 Synod also disbanded the Central Canada Presbytery; thenceforth both Winnipeg Congregation and Winnipeg Mission Station were situated in the Presbytery of Iowa.[119]

The aftermath

In Winnipeg, the original congregation had split, and "a lot of hard feelings resulted."[120] The Covenanter movement in Winnipeg was never to regain its pre-Reade strength. The movement was bifurcated; inevitably, the work of each arm was smaller. For instance, the Women's Missionary Society [W.M.S.] reported, in 1925, "a membership of seventeen, with a prosect of three more members at the next meeting. The attendance and gifts have been much better than in any former year."[121] After the congregational division, specific numbers were not advertised in Covenanter newspaper reports, but the minutes show that the average attendance was considerably less than seventeen.[122]

Much more is known about the Winnipeg congregation. The post-1932 minutes of session survive, and tell of faithful and vigorous work under Hugh Wright. Appointed Stated Supply for Winnipeg for a year in 1933, he "was ordained to the gospel ministry, sine titulo, August 10, 1934, at Winona Lake, Indiana ... His name was duly enrolled on the roll of Presbytery. He was transferred to Iowa Presbytery"[123] and was appointed Stated Supply at Winnipeg for an additional year. Called by the Winnipeg congregation, Wright was installed Pastor of the Winnipeg congregation, 30 April 1936.[124] Wright worked diligently, writing semi-scholarly articles,[125] Sabbath School lessons,[126] and was open to using methods designed to evangelize and awaken his own congregation and beyond.[127] Not only are session records extant, but the flow of information to the

---

[117] *Ibid.*

[118] Reade, "Resumé," n.p. It is quite likely that the Reade party had begun to worship in this place immediately after the 17 March 1833 injunction, barring that group from (the basement) of the Winnipeg RP church.

[119] "Report of the Commission on Winnipeg," *Synod RPCNA Minutes* (1934), 40.

[120] Reade, "Resumé," n.p.

[121] "Winnipeg, Canada," *Christian Nation*, 12 August 1925, 9.

[122] "Winnipeg Ave. R.P. Church Women's Missionary Society Minutes" (1933-1945).

[123] "Report of the Pittsburgh Presbytery," *Synod RPCNA Minutes* (1935), 30.

[124] G. MacKay Robb, "Installation at Winnipeg," *Covenanter Witness*, 20 May 1936, 335.

[125] Rev. Hugh Wright, "Shinto (Or Kami-No Muchi) and Christianity," *Covenanter Witness*, 12 December 1934, 375; 19 December 1934, 388-9.

[126] *Covenanter Witness*, 24 June 1936, 411.

[127] Rev. Hugh Wright, "Raising the Budget - One Way to do it - Use Cent-a-Meal Boxes," *Covenanter Witness*, 5 September 1934, 146, 157. Wright also sought to revitalize the Covenanter witness in Regina, SK; this was not successful. "Mr. Wright visited Regina in the fall [of 1934] and again in April [1935]. Prospects for the cause seem hopeless. Only two Covenanter families can help at all. The Lutherans offered $1400 for the property, and the Board, with Mr. Wright's counsel, approved the plan of Synod's Board of Trustees to make the sale" ("Report of the Board of Home Mission," *Synod RPCNA Minutes*, [1935], 107).

church newspaper is largely restored.[128] So the doings of the Sabbath School,[129] Ladies Missionary Society[130] and Covenanter Young People's Union[131] are made known from time to time. Some reports seem particularly cheerful, as if attempting to assure and reassure: "The congregation is in smooth working order. A spirit of unity prevails in all the departments of the church life and work. The members and friends of the congregation have joined hands to help to build the city of God."[132] The same article, by a visiting Ulster clergyman, paid particular tribute to Hugh Wright ("fine Christian character and fitness for his office") and to S.R. McKelvey ("worthy of the highest commendation the church can give"). However, there was no attempt then or later to entice persons in the Mission Station to join with the Congregation; latent enmity kept the two operating in isolation. Nonetheless, the injunction keeping Reade and his Defendants away from the Winnipeg Church was formally rescinded, 22 June 1935.[133]

Wright had come to Winnipeg in June of 1933, and "he preached his farewell sermon on October 2, 1939 ... having accepted the call to become pastor of Derry congregation" in Ulster.[134] In remarkably difficult circumstances, Wright had worked well.[135]

Information about the Mission Station is much more meagre. Ruling elder John Irwin and his wife had returned to Scotland.[136] Ruling elder Joseph Adams was "removed from the roll, 30 January 1933."[137] Ruling elder Robert McWilliams' death in 1936 is marked by an obituary in the church newspaper;[138] thenceforth there was no elder for the Mission Station. A Sabbath School was obviously maintained - a Sabbath School field day is reported in 1938, "in charge of our genial acting superintendent, Mr. S[amuel] Turton."[139] The Winnipeg congregation salary had been supplemented from the RP central treasury, from the beginning of Reade's ministry there: the last payment was made 25 August 1932.[140] Reade family tradition recalls very penurious times.[141]

---

[128] However, no further articles appear with the initials of S.R.M. or the name, S.R. McKelvey. It is possible that some of the later news reports, with no name attached, could have been written by McKelvey.

[129] "News from the North Country," *Covenanter Witness*, 14 April 1937, 239.

[130] "News from the North Country," *Covenanter Witness*, 10 June 1935, 239.

[131] "News from the North Country," *Covenanter Witness*, 8 April 1936, 240.

[132] James Campbell, "Impressions of the Work at Winnipeg," *Covenanter Witness*, 25 March 1936, 207.

[133] "Notice of Vacating Injunction Order," *King's Bench: RPCNA Trustees vs. Reade et al.*

[134] "Winnipeg, Canada," *Covenanter Witness*, 8 February 1939, 93.

[135] Wright went on to have a long and valuable ministry in the congregations, presbyteries and Synod of the RP Church in Ireland. In addition, he was the author of *A Brief History of Colonial Mission Work in Canada and Australia by the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland* (Belfast: Australian Mission Board of the Irish and Scottish Reformed Presbyterian Churches, 1958).

[136] *Synod RPCNA Minutes* (1934), 40: "Mr. and Mrs. John Irvin have removed to Scotland and will no longer be connected with the Winnipeg [Mission Station] group."

[137] Reade, "Pastor's Pocket Record" (1932-1940), 16-17.

[138] *Covenanter Witness*, 9 December 1936, 383.

[139] "Winnipeg Mission," *Covenanter Witness*, 27 July 1938, 63.

[140] Reade, "Pocket Financial Record" (July 1, 1929 to June 30, 1934), n.p.

[141] Reade's financial records for the years 1933 to 1938 contain many references to 'Canvassing' and, less numerously, to 'Commissions.' The meaning of these references is unclear. Wilson notes that "the 'Commissions' notations did not ring any bells with ... my Aunt Ruth. She said that

Although there is no official notice of its existence, the Mission Station had its own Women's Missionary Society; and some or all funds from that group went to the meagre finances[142] of the Reade family.[143] At one point, F.F. Reade requested aid for work in the Mission Station, but church "officers were instructed to remind Mr. Reade of Synod's [1934] action:" no supplement was to be expected from the Synod for this Mission Station.[144] Certainly the Reade family was poor, daughter Ruth writing "there was a time in the 1930s when Dad had to apply for government assistance to make ends meet."[145] Reade put the stark word "relief" in his "Pocket Financial Record"[146] for the first time in June of 1935, and the word is liberally sprinkled throughout the impeccably kept documents as long as the family was in Winnipeg.

Finally, Reade's stay in Winnipeg came to an end: the family moving from the community to Boston in mid-1938.[147] "F.F. Reade, who was received from the Iowa Presbytery July 3, 1939, is the Stated Supply of the Boston congregation."[148] From that point on, Reade's finances and ministry took a dramatic upturn.[149]

A final note about "hard feelings." They no doubt persisted. Yet mention has already been made of the 1935 rescinding of the 1933 injunction barring the Reade party from the Winnipeg RP church. Further, Mrs. Annabelle Henry, D.K. Calderwood's sister, was a member of the Women's Missionary Society, and served as its secretary for

---

Grandpa had supported himself the year he was at Harvard ... selling encyclopedias. I wonder it he was once again selling something (books?) on commission just to bring in some extra cash" (email to author, 16 September 1998).

The meaning of 'Winnipeg' notations seems clearer. Wilson writes: "My mother once told me that at the bottom of the Depression ... Grandpa tended to receive exactly what was put in the offering plate at church" (email to author, 15 September 1998). Early in 1935, there are entries for 6, 13, 20 and 27 (Sabbath days) - beside them the notation 'Winnipeg' (Reade, "Pocket Financial Records" [July 1934 to Sept. 1938], n.p.).

142 Beginning in January 1934, "Winnipeg W.M.S.," with small amounts begin to appear on the credit side in Reade's "Financial Pocket Record" (July 1929 to June 1934, n.p.); they were sustained as long as Reade was in Winnipeg - the last such entry is dated 30 June 1938 ("Financial Pocket Record" [July 1934 to June 1938)], n.p.).

143 The Reade family consisted of F.F. Reade, his wife Mabel, and their three daughters, Ruth (b. 1913); Lois (b. 1920); Esther (b. 1922). "Apart from the Depression, we also had a family difficulty when my maternal grandmother who lived with us suffered a stroke which necessitated the presence of a registered nurse for almost a year. She died in November 1933 when I was in third year university" ("Resumé," n.p.).

144 "Report of Mission Conference," *Synod RPCNA Minutes* (1935), 35.

145 "Resumé," n.p.

146 (July 1934 to Sept 1938), n.p.

147 Reade's "Pastor's Pocket Record" (1932-1940), 158 and 164, show him preaching consistently in Boston beginning 5 June 1938; though there are a couple of return trips to Winnipeg - in the month of August 1938 and again in the month of August 1939.

148 "Report of the New York Presbytery," *Synod RPCNA Minutes* (1940), 72.

149 Ruth Reade writes: "I was glad when in 1960 Dad was elected moderator of Synod. He had served in the Boston congregations from September 1937 to 1953, when he was called to the Almonte, Ontario, congregation. In 1962 he completed 50 years of service in the RP ministry and retired" ("Resumé," n.p.). Geneva College conferred upon him the honorary D.D. in 1959. "Dr. Reade enjoyed poetry, literature, singing, playing the harmonica, and sports ... He passed away at the age of 98 on ... July 5, 1981, in Edmonton, Alberta" ("In Memoriam: Frederick Francis Reade, D.D." *Synod RPCNA Minutes* [1982], 129-30). F.F. Reade and his wife Mabel are buried "in the Beechmont Cemetery, Edmonton, AB" (Wilson, email to author, 23 September 1998).

a time.[150] Daniel K. Calderwood was a pall-bearer at S.R. McKelvey's 1950 funeral.[151] Ruth Reade, in spite of her feelings about the whole matter, when on furlough from missionary endeavours in Cyprus and visiting relatives in Winnipeg, writes that "when I managed a visit to... Winnipeg during any of my furloughs, I did make it a point to attend... worship... at the R.P. Church."[152]

The news about the Mission Station, from being meagre up until mid-1938, when the Reades left, becomes practically non-existent. Its formal demise comes in 1943 or 1944: "The Winnipeg Mission Station was dissolved at the meeting of [the Iowa] Presbytery."[153]

Decline and disappearance

The Winnipeg congregation had a relatively sustained stint as Stated Supply from Rev. Ernest Chalmers Mitchell (1877-1945), beginning in 1940. A career missionary in China, he and his wife returned to the United States on furlough in 1939. "The Board of Foreign Mission has under consideration the question whether it will become possible to return Dr. and Mrs. E.C. Mitchell [to China]. The Board ... advised them ... to seek temporary settlement in the home field."[154] Elected moderator of Synod in June 1940,[155] he became Stated Supply in Winnipeg, the exact date not precisely known.[156] He continued as Stated Supply at Winnipeg, more or less regularly, until his death in December 1945.[157] During his tenure, however, the congregation declined. And although Mitchell and his wife imparted a great deal of information about China, there does not seem to have been the persistent and consistent labour which had marked the Hugh Wright years. Mitchell's was the last multi-year Stated Supply. After his departure there are fewer and fewer church newspaper reports.

Rev. James Harvey Bishop (b. 1909),[158] at the time a minister of the Church of Scotland on Prince Edward Island (MacDonaldite Section) conducted services in the Winnipeg Covenanter Church "from the fall of 1947 to April of 1949." He was not allowed to conduct communion services,[159] nonetheless, Winnipeg Covenanter

---

150 "Women's Missionary Society Minutes," October 1934, onward.

151 *Winnipeg Tribune*, 30 January 1950, 9.

152 "Resumé," n.p.

153 "Report of Iowa Presbytery," *Synod RPCNA Minutes* (1944), 77. The date of the presbytery meeting was not provided.

154 *Synod RPCNA Minutes* (1940), 30.

155 *Ibid.*, 8.

156 He moderated the Session in Winnipeg, for the first time, 1 March 1940 ("Winnipeg Session Minutes"); though in the Report of the Iowa Presbytery in 1940, Winnipeg is declared vacant (*Synod RPCNA Minutes* [1940], 70). In the Rosters of Presbyteries in 1940 and 1941, Mitchell is listed in the South China Presbytery, although his address is in the USA. Mitchell's name appears first as Stated Supply at Winnipeg, with a Winnipeg address, in the 1942 Roster of Presbyteries (*Synod RPCNA Minutes* [1942], 147).

157 Smith, *Covenanter Ministers*, 299, gives the correct date of Mitchell's death as 31 December 1945. The same source, 162, gives an incorrect year - 1943.

158 Harvey Bishop is now a minister of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. I count him among my special and valuable friends. He has lived for some years in Winnipeg, and his knowledge of that city opened many doors most helpful in researching this paper.

159 Bishop, letter to author, 24 May 1994: "I had no connection with Presbytery or Synod. The elders did the business."

congregants noted that he gave "fine sermons."[160] Bishop himself wrote that "When I conducted services [there] ... Mr. McKelvey was the leading elder."[161] Bishop's memories are very favourable: "I enjoyed my stay with the Reformed Presbyterians in Winnipeg. They were a most attentive people, and cooperative."[162]

Winnipeg was visited by a serious flood in 1950, and communion services were delayed on account of it.[163] But 1950 is also the year that S.R. McKelvey died.[164] Besides noting his influence on the early Covenanter movement in Winnipeg, his obituary also outlined his later witness. "Until the close of his life, he led the singing, was superintendent of the Sabbath School, taught an adult class, and during periods without a minister, conducted worship services both morning and evening." Finally, referring again to his later years, "he attended very few meetings of Presbytery and Synod, but was well acquainted with the activities of the church in general." Clearly, "his death removes an active worker."[165] Mrs. McKelvey died 1 April 1969: "for thirty years she and her husband were active in all phases of the work and worship of the Reformed Presbyterian Church which Mr. McKelvey had helped to found in Winnipeg."[166]

A year before S.R. McKelvey died, in 1949, the congregation had elected two elders, Thomas Dickey and James Anderson (ca. 1883-1979). "Mr. Dickey declined to accept the office." But, on 25 September, "Mr. Anderson was ordained and installed."[167] James Anderson was a Scot, and had joined the Covenanters from the Free Church of Scotland.[168] He obviously took up the McKelvey mantle, being appointed Clerk of Session a few weeks after McKelvey's death.[169] The Report of the Iowa Presbytery to Synod in 1951 noted that: "the congregation at Winnipeg has no pastor and for the larger part of the year has not had supplies. They have, however, held regular meetings under the leadership of elder James Anderson."[170]

Miss Ruth Adams (1881-1975), a career missionary in China, then later in Japan, "served the Winnipeg congregation as a missionary," for a few months in 1955, "ministering to the sick, calling on Congregation and Sabbath School members and prospects until the end of October."[171]

Beginning 1 November, 1955, and into 1956, Rev. Bassam Michael Madany (b. 1928) was Stated Supply. Madany had served as a student in Winnipeg in the summer months of 1951 and 1952. Madany had grown up in the Middle East, was called to the ministry, and studied at the Reformed Presbyterian Seminary in Pittsburgh, from 1950 to 1953. Of his experience in Winnipeg Madany writes:

---

160 "Winnipeg, Canada," *Covenanter Witness*, 5 November 1947, 303.

161 Bishop, letter to author, 8 June 1993.

162 Bishop, letter to author, 21 October 1998.

163 "Winnipeg Session Minutes," 2 June 1950.

164 26 January 1950 was the date of McKelvey's death. Officiating at the funeral was Rev. Jesse Coulter Mitchel (1888-1963), who was then residing in Winchester, KS.

165 "[Death of] S.R. McKelvey," *Covenanter Witness*, 26 April 1950.

166 *Winnipeg Free Press*, 3 April 1969, 30.

167 "Winnipeg," *Covenanter Witness*, 16 November 1949, 318.

168 "Winnipeg Session Minutes," 14 May 1948.

169 He became Clerk of Session on 14 February 1950: "Winnipeg Session Minutes."

170 *Synod RPCNA Minutes* (1951), 82.

171 "Report of the Iowa Presbytery," *Synod RPCNA Minutes* (1956), 107.

> It was not easy for me to perform my duties since that was the first time in my life that I had to use English in a very formal way in worship services ... After all, I was not of European descent but a national of a Christian minority from the Middle East ... Prior to my coming to America my academic language was French as well as my native language of Arabic. But it was expected of me to prepare a fresh English sermon every week and that took most of my time. The people were very gracious and put up with my slow deliberate delivery ...
>
> [While I was in Winnipeg] I met my future wife, Shirley Winnifred Dann ... She was the secretary to Grant Dexter, the editor of the Winnipeg Free Press ...
>
> I look back at the years of my connection with the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America and my brief time of service at the Winnipeg church with thanksgiving ...
>
> Eventually I left the denomination and joined a European denomination: the Christian Reformed Church.[172]

Elder William Scott died in 1957;[173] his death meant that, with but one elder — James Anderson — the congregation reverted to a mission station status. James Anderson, as Clerk of Session, signed the last minutes of which we have record, in 1957. (James Anderson died in 1979.)[174] Rev. Wayne Renwick Spear (b. 1935), then minister of Lake Reno (Glenwood, Minnesota) congregation, was sent by Iowa Presbytery early in 1963, to discuss the termination of the congregation,[175] though it lasted in synod minutes some time thereafter. Financial data was last reported in 1964.[176] In 1996, the presbytery indicated that "the Winnipeg group is inactive as of 1 January 1966, because of illness on the part of some members."[177] The Mission Station was listed for the last time in the statistics of the Iowa Presbytery in 1967;[178] the church building was sold the same year.[179]

Despite the controversy, one cannot overlook the devotion, dedication and persistence of persons, pastors and presbyteries before, during and after the dispute: perhaps particularly during the controversy, there were insufficient stores of wisdom and/or common sense. Undoubtedly, the dispute seriously vitiated the Winnipeg witness of the Covenanters. Yet both McKelvey and Reade confessed and were reconciled within the church, if not to each other. Both disputatious groups were authorized by Synod, and eventually both were open to Synod. Active in Winnipeg after the demise of the Mission Station in 1943, the last word comes from Bassam Michael Madany: "I look back... at the Winnipeg Church with thanksgiving."[180]

---

172 Email to author, 13 July 1998.

173 *Winnipeg Free Press*, 4 June 1957, 38.

174 *Winnipeg Free Press*, 19 November 1979, 31: James Anderson died "November 17, 1979 ... aged 96 years."

175 Spear, letter to author, 15 January 1993.

176 *Synod RPCNA Minutes* (1964), 154.

177 *Ibid.* (1966), 98.

178 *Ibid.* (1967), 163.

179 Reported in *ibid.* (1968), 86.

180 Email to author, 13 July 1998.